

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIOGRAPHY OF "ACCESS" AS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION POLICIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

On 26 June 1955 more than five thousand South Africans, white and black, gathered at Kliptown outside Johannesburg to adopt the historic Freedom Charter of the African National Congress (ANC) and to declare that “the doors of learning and culture shall be opened¹.” Over the next four decades, the demand for open and equal access to education would constitute a central platform in the anti-apartheid struggles that brought an ANC-led government to power in 1994. Yet, ten years later (2004) the problem of access continues to preoccupy education planners and activists against the backdrop of some of the most progressive policy positions including a Constitution that recognises education as a basic right. The intellectual puzzle that motivates this study is therefore to explain why, despite its prominence in the anti-apartheid struggles and its recognition in the post-apartheid policies, access continues to be regarded as an intractable problem for the democratic government of the “new” South Africa.

The research strategy adopted in the attempt to unravel this puzzle is to trace the changing meanings of “access to education” under and after apartheid, and its expression in the practices of two case study schools (comparative case studies)

The study recognises a need to interrogate the relationship between the ideal before independence and the reality of implementation of educational rights, particularly where there is not just one policy, but numerous policies that impact on issues of access to education. The key research questions of this study are:

- ◆ How has the concept of “access”, as part of a broader human rights discourse, evolved in the history of South African education?

¹ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html

- ◆ How is the concept of “access”, as an expression of human rights, interpreted in school and classroom practice?

1.2 The Rationale for the Study

Apartheid was a system that denied the majority of South Africans their basic human rights. A key motivation behind the anti-apartheid struggle, therefore, was to assert the significance of human rights in education. Reflecting on the struggle for human rights in education evokes questions such as: What is meant by human rights? How did the understanding of human rights develop over time? How were human rights expressed in education policy after 1994? To what extent are the current discourses of human rights consonant with earlier discourses evoked under apartheid? These questions demonstrate the importance of a study that will knit together the story of human rights in education from the days of the struggle for the abolition of separationist policies of the nationalist government, to the policies and practices that affirm access to education as a basic human right in the post-apartheid period. This study aims to contribute significantly to the dialogue of “access” as a realisation of the basic right to education.

The ascendancy to power of the liberation movement in South Africa resulted in the recognition of education as a human right that is enshrined in the Constitution. In many countries, this recognition resulted in debates about access to education and related concepts. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 is described by (Wonk, 1994:260) as the “first all-inclusive statement of human rights which has, in part, attained legal status in the United States courts”. This document is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The observation of the right to education is an acknowledgement of the centrality of education in a person’s ability to attain other rights. Concerns about the concept of expanded access to education gave rise to the different discourses pertaining to different ways of realising expanded access, namely: equal access to education; equity of access; equality of outcomes and an equal opportunity debate. The discourse arose out of the need to eliminate inequalities caused by racial differential in South Africa (Samoff, 2001).

Simply put, access to education refers to the means of entry that includes the removal of barriers, which is seen as a significant but one step (Rowan, et al)². These researchers insist that real open access to education extends beyond the removal of barriers to what happens after enrolment. In other words, lowering or changing entry requirements to education institutions or even offering financial assistance to students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are only the first steps in the battle to increase access to education. The incorporation of fleeting references about access by researchers “without an in-depth analysis of how the equity dimension of access crosses over into post-enrolment experience” (Rowan et al: 44³), does not recognise the significance of this phase in the life of a student. If there is no support during the post-enrolment phase, it is likely that some learners will not succeed. This raises another aspect of the access discourse that is concerned with equality of outcomes. Equality of access, or what is called equality of opportunity, will only have been truly achieved when there is equality of outcomes. Samoff (2001), warns against a common error of defining equality as equity as this understates the link between discrimination and injustice and fails to explore measures that would address injustice. Samoff (2001) uses a vivid example to explain what equal opportunity or access means:

... How is it possible to know whether or not opportunities have been equal without considering outcome? A careful study might, for example, find no visible gender discrimination in selection to primary school, or in the primary school pedagogy. But if that study also finds that the attrition and failure rates are much higher among girls than among boys, we might conclude that opportunities were not equal after all. Similarly, if regional origin, or race, or ethnicity is clearly visible in examination results, notwithstanding the lack of obvious regional or racial or ethnic discrimination, we might again conclude that in fact opportunities were not equal. That is, measures of access are insufficient for assessing equality of opportunity. Discovering and redressing inequalities of opportunity requires considering outcomes as well as starting points (p.19).

In this research, access to education is understood to mean both the means of entry, which is the first step, and post-enrolment access that is reflected in the outcomes. It is against this background that the study seeks to unravel the concept of “access to education” as an expression of human rights in the new education policies.

² undated

³ undated

1.3 The legal and policy context of “access to education”

I indicated in the opening paragraph that the concept of access to education has remained elusive and intractable, despite some of the most progressive policies underpinned by the values of human rights, equity and redress (DoE, 2000). The complex nature of the meaning of “access to education” lies in how people think and talk about education as a human right and how the representation or non-representation of different voices in education policies, including the Constitution, advance or hinder the realisation of open access to education as a basic human right. The key policy documents for this purpose are: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; the South African Schools Act, Act number 84 of 1996; the National Education Policy Act, Act number 27 of 1996; the White Paper on Education and Training (1995); the Language-in-Education Policy (1997); and Education White Paper 3 for Higher Education (1997).

The relevance of the policy context in this study is twofold. In the first instance, the policy environment reflects the distance we, as the people of South Africa, have travelled since the Kliptown Congress in 1955. Secondly, the policy and the legal framework presented reflect the government’s understanding of the concept of ‘access’ to education, not forgetting that the current policies are the result of compromises that were made in various negotiations during the policy making processes. The analysis will focus on the meanings of access in these policies and whether such meanings represent conceptions of access of the anti-apartheid movement before 1994. For example, the call for compulsory education was made by African parents, teachers and liberals in the early 1940s (Kallaway, 1984), yet, this call was made outside the human rights framework in that liberals had realised that the exclusion of Africans from mass-based education would create shortages in the supply of skilled labour. Similarly, Africans also called for free and compulsory education, not because they understood it to be a basic human right, but because the education of their children was pegged on their taxes, and not treated in the same way as education for Whites.

Equal and open access to education is provided for in two sections of the Constitutions. Section 9 of the Constitution is about the protection and advancement of the principle of ‘equality’ before the law. As such it provides for the equal treatment of every person in all spheres of social life, including language and education (Sachs, 2004). Sections 29 (1) and 29 (b) therefore seek to buttress equality by declaring education to be a basic right and allowing individuals to be taught in the language of their choice, subject to “reasonableness” and “practicability”. Making provision for individuals to choose the language of teaching and learning is meant to ensure equal access to education.

Access to education is not only guaranteed in the South African Constitution, but the Constitution borrows from international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the World Declaration of Education for All (1990) and the Dakar Declaration on Education for All. All these international instruments have one common goal, that is the promotion and advancement of education as a basic human right through expanding access to education. The Republic of South Africa, in the 2000 EFA Report, indicated that it had made considerable progress towards the achievement of the EFA target of universalising basic education by 2015.

The government of South Africa has worked very hard to facilitate access to education. According to the EFA Report (DoE, 2000), South Africa has experienced an increase in average school enrolments from 10,099,214 in 1994 to 12,071,355 in 1998 (an average growth rate of 2,8 percent). However, there was a decrease in Grade 1 enrolments between 1996 and 1998. The Report ascribes the decrease in enrolments to stricter age admission controls. However, the decrease in numbers occurred before the implementation of the age admission policy, which came into effect in 2000. The same report also report a gross enrolment of 96.5 percent, which means that the “education system is able to absorb nearly all its primary school-age population, including those outside the official primary school-age bracket” (DoE, 2000:30). However, the net enrolment ratio was 87.1 percent, which means, “universal education for the official primary school age group has not yet been achieved” (DoE, 2000:32).

1.4 The literature context of the concept of “access to education”

People often question why the right to education is considered to be a basic human right in international law. Koenig (1997:1) states, “the human right to education is inextricably linked to other fundamental human rights -- rights that are universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent...” This is because access to quality education impacts on the realisation of other rights such as the right to work; the right to freedom of thought and expression; the right to an acceptable standard of living; the right to participating in shaping decision in the broader community and the rights to equality between men and women (Koenig, 1997).

Looking at the influence of education on other rights, it is not surprising that the issue of access to education dominates educational discourses in both developed and developing countries. Before focusing on education, it is necessary to understand the general definition of human rights. The human rights glossary compiled by the Human Rights Resource Center in New York defines human rights as the:

rights people are entitled to simply because they are human beings, irrespective of their citizenship, nationality, race, ethnicity, language, sex, sexuality, or ability. Human rights become enforceable when they are codified as conventions, covenants, or treaties or as they become recognised as customary international law (Human Rights Resource Center, 1997:2).

Although the above definition helps in the understanding of the concept of human rights, it is rather broad and covers almost every aspect of human life. In its broadest sense, the concept of human rights may mean different things to different people. To the majority of disadvantaged communities, social transformation is about access to all those things which they were denied, e.g. the right to education, the right to land, the right to freedom of expression, etc.

Knight (2001) emphasises the importance of creating a human rights culture in the classroom. Human rights in the classroom should be considered from two perspectives, that is: (1) “rights are an important curriculum issue that need to be defended, refined and extended by students, (2) rights should exist prior to student entrance into school and thus define the nature of relationship between adult authority and students” (Knight, 2001:257). It is important that teachers encourage students to “critically examine their views” (Knight, 2001:257). However, it is not enough for

teachers to encourage learners to express their views if they (teachers) do not “develop ground rules by which open interchanges can occur across the widest ranges of defence” (Knight, 2001:257).

Knight also stresses the importance of inclusion as a way of facilitating access to education. Reference to inclusiveness evokes other concepts such as ‘equity’, ‘non-discrimination’, ‘access’ and their negative meanings, e.g. ‘inequity’ ‘exclusiveness’, ‘discrimination’, etc. He claims that democratic societies still find many ways to “exclude and schools are no exception” (Knight, 2001:253). He points out formal and less formal ways in which schools can prevent learners from accessing certain kinds of knowledge. Amongst the formal is “tracking, ability grouping via classroom and subject selection” and the less formal could be “differential encouragement given to pupils by classroom teachers” (Knight, 2001:253). At a school level, exclusiveness is maintained by “residential patterns, the structuring of work and various policies and practice that segregate by schooling choice, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference and gender” (Knight, 2001:252).

Human rights in education, particularly in new democracies, have been reported to revolve around the issues of expanded access to education. Samoff (2001) expresses the urgency for expanded access to education eloquently when he says:

For nearly all-African countries, the starting point was an inherited education system that excluded most of the population. For education to transform society, therefore, the first task had to be expanded access, and to do this massively and rapidly. Indeed, expanded access had become both a popular demand of the anti-colonial nationalist movement and a promise of the newly installed leadership (p9).

The anti-apartheid movement and the new leadership also saw expanded access to education as a priority. When the new leadership attained political power, the principal concerns were “expanded access, desegregation, and the redress of inequality” (Samoff, 2001:25). This is evident in position documents such as the ANC’s Framework for Education and Training (1994), and in policies that were passed shortly after 1994. The question to ask is: to what extent were promises for ‘equal access’ to education used as a symbolic gesture? Is there evidence of this

rhetoric in government policy? What does expanded access mean in reality? Does it embrace both formal and epistemological access?

It is important to note that literature on ‘access’ is rife with confusing terminology in which terms such as ‘equity’ and ‘access’ are sometimes used interchangeably. Samoff (2001) also raises this issue. He points out that the World Bank 1995 Review equates ‘equity’ with ‘equality’ by defining equity in terms of access. Referring to the need for universal basic education, the review states that

qualified potential students should not be denied access to institutions because they are poor or female, are from ethnic minorities, live in geographically remote regions, or have special education needs (World Bank, 1995:113, in (Samoff, 2001:17).

To confirm the above, Paquette (1998) also claims that ‘equity’ as a social practice might be in “serious trouble” but is “here to stay” as “no society can pass on any kind of general well-being of its young unless it also offers them broad, generalised access to a reasonably high-quality education” (Paquette, 1998:45). Like the World Bank, Paquette refers to equity in terms of access. In this study access shall be used in its broader sense to refer to both physical and epistemological access. The understanding is that physical and epistemological access is inextricable intertwined and that it would be difficult to realise the one without the other.

This brief discussion on the conceptions of access to education as reflected in the international declaration and covenants, and the historical context of the struggle for access to education that is reflected by the court cases, has given a bird’s eye view of the contestations in education from a global perspective. The next section follows the journey of the concept of ‘access to education’ in the history of education through to the new education policies in South Africa, from the perspective of those who experienced restricted access to education.

1.5 The conceptual context

I used Morrow’s conceptions of “access to education” as a framework within which to examine various conceptions of access to education. Morrow (1994) makes a

distinction between formal access to education, that is registration at an education institution and epistemological access. The latter refers to academic practice or how knowledge is distributed or obtained at an institution. His argument is that claiming one's right to education, which is provided for in Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, does not necessarily include the right to epistemological access. The limitations of Morrow's conception of access to education as a realisation of the Constitutional right are discussed in detail later in the report. Suffice to say that his conception falls out of the human rights framework as it disregards issues of equity such as not only increasing access of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds but also providing support in order to increase their chances of success.

For the benefit of this study, I used various academic writings on the politics of knowledge to extend the definition of epistemological access. Epistemological access at classroom level has been expanded to include the political and social dimensions such as who provides knowledge, what kind of knowledge is made accessible, what kind of knowledge is valued, who is being taught and what is the time allocated to the topic and the language of learning and teaching as well as various teaching styles employed by history teachers. In South Africa, the medium used to access knowledge is very important as the majority of learners (almost 70%) use an additional language for learning.

1.6 Research Design

In order to answer two key research questions, I divided the study into two parts. The first, which attempts to answer the first question, traces the changing meanings of the concept of "access to education" from the Freedom Charter in 1955 to the post apartheid education policies. For this part of the study, documentary sources were analysed and individuals, who were involved in the struggle through intellectual contributions in the NEC and NEPI processes or in the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, were interviewed.

The second part examined the teaching of two historical events in Grade 9, namely, The Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising, in two schools, Soweto High School and Gauteng High School. These schools have dramatic differences, in both

the social and political contexts. The aim was to investigate their conceptions of access to education. I spent an average of three weeks at each school, observing Grade 9 South African history, interviewing history teachers, learners and principals.

The research instruments included interview schedules for selected groups, observation schedules, document analysis schedule and classroom observation schedule. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews, however, the classes were not audiotaped, I therefore wrote detailed notes. The instrumentation and the data gathering process, including data analysis are discussed in detail in the chapter on Research Design.

The data required for the first part of the study was gathered through the review and analysis of documentary evidence of critical events. The selected documents had to satisfy certain criteria – they should have been developed as policy documents; the time in which they were published should fall within the period under investigation and the document should be official policy. Documents did not have to satisfy all the requirements.

1.7 Ensuring Validity

I have ensured the validity of the study by providing thick descriptions for the case studies, including illustrations. Further, I used triangulation by collecting data from four different sources: interviews with principals, learners, teachers and the analysis of school level policies. I also observed classroom and school interactions. For the first question I analysed literary sources and also interviewed key individuals who were involved in the struggle for access to education.

In order to allow other researchers to interrogate the research findings, I transcribed and translated, where applicable, all interviews. I also kept a record of all the data that were collected from different sources. Data capturing was done on MS Word.

1.8 Limitation of the study

The research strategy that I used to trace the changing meanings of the concept of “access to education” required that I undertake documentary analysis, including literature from the 1950s and immediately before that. Since it was difficult to find primary sources, I had to make use of secondary sources such as books written on the subject. Kallaway (1984) and Hyslop (1999) were used extensively in the analysis of the period between 1940s and 1980s. However, Es’kia Mphahlele’s biography was useful to elucidate some of the issues, as he was at Kliptown in 1955. The question on what the drafters meant by the phrase, “the doors of learning and culture shall be opened” had to be distilled from literature because the political and education leaders that I interviewed did not participate at this historic event, and therefore could not give definite answers. The study would have been richer if I had been able to interview a person who had been there, in the same way that some of the interviewees were involved with the People’s Education Movement.

Another limitation is that the results of the case studies are not generalisable. However, the strength of the study is in what we learn about the two cases, and that the thick descriptions will help readers compare the experiences in the two schools with their own experiences, and therefore can make use of the result to understand conceptions of access in similar contexts. The cases also assist in elucidating physical and epistemological access, and forces us to consider epistemological access in policy debates on the promotion of access to education. There is a tendency when access to education is discussed to ignore the nature of the “real curriculum” that learners are exposed to as a result of the recontextualisation of “official knowledge”. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the results are not generalisable, they provide useful insight into the expression of the concept of “access” at the two schools located in different social and political contexts.

The differences in the academic and professional qualifications of the teachers resulted in differences in the quality of interviews. The teachers at Gauteng High School both hold degrees with History as a major subject, whereas the history teacher at Soweto High School has a Primary Teacher’s Certificate and a Senior Certificate. Therefore, the teachers at Gauteng High School were able to articulate clear opinions based on the subject of history and their role as history teachers. They were able to give well considered answers that reflected their practice and values. Their voices are

University of Pretoria etd – Gamede, T (2005)

represented much more elaborately than the teacher at Soweto High School. The voice of the history teacher at Soweto High School is not heard because he could not articulate an opinion, except when indicating what the policy requires of him. However, his classroom practice was very interesting.

When I was analysing data from Gauteng High School, I realised that a comparison between the teaching of South African history and the teaching of general history could be made. The study would have been richer if I had also observed the teaching of general history, as this would have given me an opportunity to compare how it is enacted in the classroom. My comments on general history are based on the analysis of the texts, school practices and the hidden curriculum, rather than how it was taught in the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT OF THE CONCEPT OF ‘ACCESS TO EDUCATION’

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to answer the second part of my first research question: How has the concept of ‘access’ as part of a broader human rights discourse evolved in the history of South African education? The answer to this question has two foci: The first one is to examine the conceptions of access to education from the Congress of the People that adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955; through to the students’ revolt against Bantu Education in 1976; then to the 1980s and the re-emergence of the concept of the People’s Education, and ending with the promulgation of the Interim Constitution in 1993, which laid the foundation for a democratically elected government in 1994. The second part is the examination of the conceptions of access to education in the post-1994 legal and policy framework.

This chapter will focus on the second part of the question, which is the conception of ‘access to education’ as reflected in the education policies of the democratically elected government and the treatment of the concept of ‘access’ in contemporary education policies is a starting point for looking back at how the concept has evolved over time. The relevant policy documents for this purpose are: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; the South African Schools Act, Act number 84 of 1996; the National Education Policy Act, Act No 27 of 1996; the White Paper on Education and Training (1995); Language-in-Education Policy (1997); and Education White Paper 3 for Higher Education (1997). Other policies will only be mentioned in later discussions as and when the need arises.

2.2 The policy-making context in the first five years of democracy

In my interview with the former Director-General of the Department of Education, who had been appointed in 1994 to lead the transformation of education, he pointedly indicated very early in our discussion that any analysis of education policies that does

not take into account the political climate of the time, as well as the constraints of the Interim Constitution, is likely to miss the point. I was rightly embarrassed when he asked me whether I was familiar with the contents of Clause 247 of the Interim Constitution that outlined the transitional arrangements to the new education system. At that time I had not considered the transitional arrangements crucial to this research. Without prolonging my embarrassment about this gap in my knowledge, he advised me to go and read the compilation of submissions (letters and memos) from principals and governing bodies that were sent to the Department of Education in response to the Draft Education Bill in 1996.

After this interview with the former Director-General of Education, it was clear to me that negotiations continued well into the formulation of the early policies, as these were influenced, to a large extent, by the provisions of the Interim Constitution of 1993 that protected certain rights. The sunset clauses are reported to have made the policy-making process problematic. It should be noted that, although for the purposes of this study, the period of negotiation is from 1990-1994, in real terms, this period extended well beyond 1994, as the final Constitution was promulgated in 1996. Commenting on the impact of the Interim Constitution and the negotiations that took place behind closed doors, Mongi recalled:

Those sunset clauses made an indication that the policy-making environment was going to be extremely tricky. First because of the Constitution and what rights were protected within the Constitution. In the first instance it is a human rights constitution. It is a good Constitution to provide for access. On the other hand it protects certain rights like language rights. So anyone who makes policy has to navigate between the protection of various kinds of rights...and, at that particular time, education was a highly contested area. A lot of people have no sense of how much contestation there was '95, '96, '97 in those years because those who thought they had privileges wanted to keep the privileges. Those who didn't have access and privileges wanted change in order to make sure that they had access. That contest was very, very bitter⁴.

What he implied is that conceptions of access in education in this period, should be understood within the context of what was happening at the time. The existing school governing bodies were not happy about what they perceived as the government's attempt to push its own agenda. The topics of dispute are important in this research

⁴ The interview with Mongi was on 30 August 2004.

because these governing bodies wanted to retain powers that they had before the new government took office. They had the power to determine all the policies of the school, including powers to admit, suspend and expel learners.

What is interesting in the submissions to the Department is what was not said. The dispute about the powers of the governing bodies, was more about who would have the power to control access of certain groups of learners to the schools. Below is a sample of comments from principals and governing bodies that were sent to the Department of Education:

We propose that the governing body retain the following rights, powers, and functions to: Develop the mission, goals and objectives of the school...determine the admission policy ...language policy...religious observance... school times...extra-mural activities ...minimum curriculum ... purchase textbooks ...preserve the tradition of the school in the interest of the school... (School 1)

We perceive the contradiction in the term “in the best interest of the school” and then told the learners have “the choice (sic) to choose”. These terms are mutually opposed. We demand that the “choice to choose” be deleted (School 2).

Some schools also expressed fears about the possible influx of non-paying learners if there was equal access to education institutions. In some submissions, they even went so far as to advise the department not to be too lenient on non-paying learners as this would perpetuate the culture of non-payment. Some schools wanted the department to put mechanisms in place to protect them against an influx of non-paying learners, especially if those were not from the feeder community. While it is understandable that schools should serve the immediate community first, the tone in most submissions suggest that schools were anticipating the bussing of learners from townships who would come with all sorts of problems, including the culture of non-payment, and also affecting standards and the ethos of the schools:

...we are of the opinion that any school must give preference to its immediate feeder area and only allow learners from other areas if the facilities of the school allow. We do not want legislators to perceive this request as an effort to perpetuate exclusion of any learner but rather as an effort to provide sound education to members of any community. Transport costs are incurred by pupils living outside the feeder area, and this money should rather be used to pay for schooling at their nearest school. We also reject the idea of *bussing* learners from another area and are convinced that money for transport should be spent on money to improve education in the specific area (School 3).

As a community facility, the school supports the right of access by the entire community defined as the catchment area of that school. The school does, however, wish to protect itself against an *extraordinary influx of pupils from a distant community*. Without in any way wishing to discriminate against poorer individuals within the catchment area, for the financial planning of the school it would seem important that the *demographic profile remain relatively constant over time* (Schools 4).

While we agree with the principle that fee-free access to schools by parents who do not have the means to pay must be protected, we have a problem with *unlimited admission* of non-payers to schools whose parents have voted for fee paying...the ethos of the school will deteriorate if it is no longer financially able to offer its educational package because of an influx of non-payers (School 5).

Extreme care should be taken not to create unwillingness on the part of parents to pay school fees. The rent and services boycotts should provide ample illustrations of what can happen unless rigid and conclusive legislation exists which determine who shall be exempt from payment and how such a shortfall can be compensated.... It is of paramount importance to establish a sound financial parent payment policy and legislation which will prevail for the next five to ten years, otherwise the precedent being set will remain to haunt you and us for many, many years to come (School 6).

The schools also were against the inclusion of learners and the non-educator staff in the school governing body. Reasons for not including learners ranged from a perception that learners were too immature to be involved in matters of school governance to a need for confidentiality, which could not be guaranteed if learners were present at the meetings. Some submissions indicated that it was a prerogative of the principal to control the prefect system in the same way that the government wanted to control the appointment of teachers. The inclusion of non-educators was also a bone of contention. The reasons cited were similar, these people could not possibly preside on matters that affected educators and were not involved in the core business of the school, which is teaching. Below is a sample of the submissions on this matter:

We strongly believe that it is undesirable that learners and non-educators should be members of a governing body. To grant this right to a learner is to grant the right of adulthood to a teenager...they are not sufficiently matured and experienced to participate in the governance of a school (School 7)

The existing provision in the Bill interferes unduly with regard to a long established practice of pupil leadership and the leadership structure at numerous schools.... The Bill should be amended so as to accommodate the prefect body structure in existence at numerous schools which has the support of the learners, educators, parents, local community and school (School 8)

Schools were also not happy about the section of the Bill that protected parents who did not subscribe to the mission and ethos of the school. The feeling was that if parents did not want to subscribe to the ethos and mission of the school, their children should not be admitted, as this would create chaos in terms of discipline. They felt that it would serve no purpose if the governing body of the school was given powers to determine all the policies of the school, including the ethos and mission, while the Bill protected parents who do not want to subscribe to the mission of the school. They felt that the school governing bodies would be like “toothless bulldogs”. The ethos of the school was also used to argue for fee-payments, restricted access to the school and the maintenance of equality. How these are related is often not easy to understand.

We feel that if parents do not subscribe to the mission, goals or objectives of the school, the school should have the right not to accept such an enrolment (School 9).

Control of the budget and not having to seek approval from parents also attracted more comments from schools. They did not feel that it was important for parents to approve the budget, as the SGB had been democratically elected to act on behalf of the parents.

The tone was often negative and suspicious of the government’s intentions. The government was seen as determined to relieve governing bodies of their constitutional rights as juristic persons. There was a feeling that the Department was not negotiating in good faith, that it was “seeking to create the impression of negotiation whilst in actual fact this is non-existent” as the schools were “basically told that legislation will be forced through one way or the other.” This submission continued to say that the behaviour of the Department led to:

...the involuntary conclusion that there is some sort of a hidden agenda with undue haste with which the Minister is seeking to rush this Bill through Parliament. Given the new South Africa with its alleged transparency and its newly found democracy, the proposed modus operandi is, when cut to the bone, devoid of any democracy whatsoever (School 10)

As indicated by the former Director-General, those with privileges wanted to hold onto as many of those privileges as possible, while those who had been excluded from those privileges wanted to enjoy the same privileges as soon as possible. The reality

was that new policies had to reflect what the struggle for education had been about – open access in its broadest sense. Policymakers, particularly the Director-General, had to ensure that educational policies of the new government carried the vision of education of the ruling party, the ANC. Fortunately, this vision had been clearly articulated in the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training, which included the provisions of the “Ready to Govern” document and other policy initiatives. Mongi, who was an official of the Department of Education at the time used the analogy of a stream to explain the policy making process between 1990 and 1994.

You’ll remember that most of the post 1994, actually the early part of post 1994, the policy development did not occur in a vacuum. It was part and parcel of a larger policy development process that came through the Democratic Movement, you know the policy investigations and various conferences at Broederstroom... the ANC yellow book.... So there is a stream. It may have been a big river in some quarters but there was definitely water that was running in a certain direction and ...after the liberation in 1994 that stream has continued, deepened and widened. That is the way I would describe it (Mongi).⁵

The metaphor of a stream that has continued, deepened and widened, is important in that it allows us to visualise the flow of the stream, not only from the negotiation period but from the time of the Freedom Charter until the new policies. A stream is unstoppable, therefore, no matter how hard the opponents of the struggle wanted to stop the stream, they could not. It also refers specifically to the resistance to change discussed earlier in the chapter. No amount of resistance, either by invoking the provision of the Interim Constitution or threatening to challenge the policies in court could stop the water from flowing. What is more important though, is how the concept of access to education has taken shape as the stream deepened and widened.

2.2.1 The White Paper on Education and Training (1995)

This policy is significant in the history of education policies of the democratically elected government in that it was the first policy that was developed by the new Department of Education that replaced all education departments of the National Party government, including the homelands’ departments of education. This policy represented the “first steps to develop a new system”, and as such it covers all

⁵ Mongi was interviewed on 30 August 2004

components of the education system, from pre-primary to higher education. A very important aspect of this policy is that it is based on the provisions of the Interim Constitution, Act 200 of 1993, and was greatly influenced by the transitional arrangements, the infamous ‘sunset clauses’ and the politics of the time.

The White Paper seeks to facilitate the four education rights that are enshrined in the Interim Constitution: “the right to basic education, to equal access to education institutions, to choice of language of instruction and to establish educational institutions of a certain character” (DoE, 1995: 38). These rights are said to apply to every person without distinction. This is important as it warns against selective application or interpretation of these rights. Chapter Four of the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) echoes the provisions of the Constitution by reaffirming education and training as a basic human right. It states that:

The state has an obligation to protect and advance these rights, so that all citizens irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age, have the opportunity to develop their capabilities and potential, and make their full contribution to the society. (DoE, 1995:12)

In order to fulfil the above obligation, the White Paper commits the government to creating an education system that will fulfil the vision of the Freedom Charter, meaning the creation of a system that will ‘open the doors of learning and culture to all’. This would be done by building a “just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners young and old throughout the country” (DoE, 1995:17). The emphasis on expanded access to “lifelong education and training of quality” (DoE, 1995: 21) is in line with the ANC policy documents and the resolutions of the National Education Conference in 1992. The policy does not only call for expanded access to education, but goes a step further by introducing the concept of ‘equal access’ to education institution, which it says must form the basis of this policy, and by implication, all other policies that flow from it. The White Paper also makes a distinction between the provision of schooling and basic education, a point that was indicated in the Declaration of Education for All. To offer basic education, a system should go beyond schooling to provide a wide range of education choices and be sufficiently flexible to allow those who had suffered, as a result of education inequalities, to enter or re-enter the system. The White Paper also sees the

concept of ‘open learning’ as another way of dealing with inadequate infrastructural development. Open learning is defined as an approach that:

combines the principles of learner-centredness, life long learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learner support, the construction of learning programmes in the expectation that learners can succeed, and the maintenance of rigorous quality assurance over design of learning materials and support system. (DoE, 1995:28)

The commitment to the ten years of free and compulsory education, places the responsibility for the cost of schooling, at least at general education level, on the state, however, such a responsibility cannot be borne from public funds alone but “must be shared among a variety of funding partners” (DoE, 1995:31). Subsequently, the South African Schools Act makes provision for a school to charge school fees, subject to certain conditions such as the passing of a resolution by the majority of parents attending the meeting and that such a meeting should have been announced at least 30 days in advance.

The “overarching goal of policy must be to enable all individuals to value, have access to, and succeed in lifelong education and training of good quality” (DoE, 1995:21). This means that education policies aimed at transforming education should not only facilitate physical or formal access of learners into the system but also their success within it. In order to satisfy the Constitutional obligation for “equal access to basic education” (DoE, 1995:21), the White Paper calls for special emphasis on the redress of existing inequalities through equitable deployment of public resources “so that they are used to provide essentially the same quality of learning opportunities to all citizens” (p.21). Although the Constitution does not define basic education, the White Paper borrows this definition from the World Declaration of Education for All, which states that:

Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from education opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning...” (DoE, 2000:40)

It is clear in the above definition that access to basic education is much more than just physical access to schools. It is about satisfying basic educational needs, which includes providing all children with what the World Declaration of Education for All refers to as “essential learning tools” and “content” (knowledge and skills) a person requires to live a productive life.

The White Paper laid the basis for democratic governance of schools, as well as conditions regarding the manner in which the people of South Africa are to enjoy education rights enshrined in the Interim Constitutions. Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and are granted “inalienable right to choose the form of education which is best for their children... including the choice of language to be used as medium of instruction” (DoE, 1995:21). The reference to the individual right to choose the language in which individuals learn and are taught is an acknowledgement of the centrality of language in education. Explaining the impact of Section 32(d) of the Interim Constitution that grants individual learners or their parents the right to choose the language of teaching and learning, paragraph 28 of Chapter 7 reflects the thoughts of people who were involved in the policymaking process:

This section has a direct bearing on the exercise of the right of equal access to education institutions, and thus admission policy and practice of all competent education authorities and education institutions. The right of equal access, and the constitutional prohibition of unfair discrimination on any ground, specifically including language, appear to ensure that preference of a particular language medium of instruction cannot be a reason to refuse admission, provided the condition of “reasonable practicability” can be met. However, where an alternative institution is available to the applicant without undue hardship, offering tuition in the preferred medium, such refusal cannot be deemed to be unfair. (DoE, 1995:42)

The lack of coherence caused by an attempt to balance the rights of individuals with the rights of an institution, makes this document difficult to use. In the first instance, the White Paper contradicts itself by declaring the choice of language of instruction and the form of education as an “inalienable right” while on the other hand making it clear that the school is under no obligation to offer a particular language medium chosen by a learner if that is not reasonably practicable for a school. Instead, “the onus would be on the applicant to change his or her preference, or to apply to another school in the vicinity where the original language preference could be

accommodated” (DoE, 1995:43). It is also not clear who would decide whether the move to an alternative institution would create undue hardship on the side of a learner. Will travelling to a school outside a feeder area be defined as ‘undue hardship’? The cost of travelling and the time it takes?

The use of the term ‘inalienable rights’ is misapplied here because ‘inalienable rights’ are those rights that cannot be taken away. In this instance, it creates an illusion that the choice of language and form of education are inalienable rights, when in reality, these rights are alienable. Since this policy directive was the first policy statement after 1994, one could say that the policy was trying to navigate change whilst maintaining stability in Afrikaans and English medium institutions. It succeeded in protecting the rights of Afrikaans and English speakers, but seems to have been unsuccessful in protecting the education and language rights of indigenous language speakers.

The history of inequalities in education meant that some schools had adequate resources, while others experienced extreme deprivation. In order to improve the situation of disadvantaged schools, the White Paper introduced the principles of equity and redress as the basis on which the allocation and deployment of state’s resources would be calculated. The dimensions of reforms that are related to the issue of access to education include equity in respect of teacher-pupil ratio and class size norms and correcting the skewed teacher qualifications; improving efficiency of the system by identifying causes of high repetition and dropout rates among students and tackling them as soon as possible; and the reviewing of user charges in schools.

With regard to epistemological access, the White Paper calls for an overhaul of the curriculum that was based on Bantu Education and the National Christian Education, by calling for a new curriculum framework and core curriculum that would:

encourage independent and critical thought, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence and form judgements, achieve understanding, recognise the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge, and communicate clearly (DoE, 1995:22)

In addition to the above, the curriculum should also respond to the human resource needs of the country. This means the diversification of programmes to increase participation in scarce skills, such as mathematics, science and technology. The Department of Education would have to introduce programmes and initiatives in these fields of learning.

The White Paper on Education is comprehensive and provides a good foundation for subsequent policies. The issue of access, both physical and epistemological, has been addressed in sufficient detail. However, issues of physical access seem to be given in more detail than curriculum issues. This could be due to the nature of physical access, in that it is easy to describe as it deals with the issues that are quantifiable and measurable, such as adequate facilities, funding, governance and management. The epistemological access alludes to the transformation of the curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods, as well as increased access to scarce skills subjects.

While the concept of access to education has been addressed adequately in respect of governance, funding and the curriculum, the protection of language rights for indigenous South African language speakers seems inadequate. The inclusion of the ‘practicability’ clause in the ANC’s pre1994 documents found its way to the Interim Constitution and to this White Paper. While this clause is understandable, the White Paper exacerbates the situation by putting the interest of the institutions above those of learners who speak a language different to that used by the school.

2.2.2 The Final Constitution (1996)

The Constitution must be read in the context of a new democracy with the emphasis on reconciliation, anti-discrimination, pluralism, and human rights for all. The first section of the Constitution identifies human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms as values that form the basis of our democracy. The focus of this study, which is the evolution of the concept of ‘access’ as an expression of human rights, is covered by Section 29 (1) of the Bill of Rights.

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The right to basic education, including adult basic education; and the right to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

What is important is that the Constitution does not only make provisions for physical access to educational institutions, but also makes statements about “access to knowledge”. The significant clause in this regard is Section 29 (b), which states “Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice...where this is reasonably practicable.” What is also important here is that where the language of choice is not used... the state is persuaded to explore “reasonable educational alternatives”.

Chaskalson (1997) refers to access to education in the language of one’s choice as a ‘qualified’ right due to the practicability clause. The question is: Can access to education be a qualified right? Can accessing the “doors of learning and culture” be restricted by the state? Of interest to this study is the evolution of this right from a fundamental human right as declared in the Freedom Charter and later in the policy framework of the African National Congress, which recognises education and training as a basic human right, to a right that depends on ‘practicability’ in the Interim Constitution, the final Constitution of 1996 and the South African Schools Act of the same year. The effects of the ‘practicability’ clause permeate subsequent policies and legislation.

Section 6 of the Constitution assigns official status to eleven official languages (nine of which are indigenous) and also calls for the establishment of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) which must:

Promote and create conditions for the development and use of all official languages, including Khoi, Nama, and San languages as well as the South African sign language.

The giving and taking away of language rights impact on access to education that is enshrined in the Bill of Rights. The “double speak” here is interesting, that is, Section 6 elevates nine indigenous languages to official status, and in Section 29, this right is taken away because it is made conditional and dependent on ‘practicability’. Bambose (1999:19), as cited in the Department of Education report on language in the

classroom, also criticises the Constitution for adding the ‘practicality’ and ‘expense’ rider in its declaration of 11 official languages. According to him:

Language policies in the African context often suffer from lack of focus and direction, politicisation, and lip service to agreed policies. Inconsistencies, constant changes and waivers of policy are a direct result of these deficiencies. (DoE, 2000:16)

Whilst the White Paper on Education and Training makes it clear that Section 32 of the Interim Constitution (Section 29 of the final constitution) “protects the choice of mother tongue instruction, or of any other preferred language of instruction”, it also acknowledges that such a choice is protected “provided it is reasonably practicable for the educational institution concerned” (DoE, 1995:33). It is difficult not to conclude that the Constitution protects the rights of English and Afrikaans speakers rather than the speakers of indigenous languages, especially in higher classes. Brown is highly critical of the inclusion of single medium schools as an alternative to the language problem in education, as this is seen as pandering to Afrikaans communities:

The inclusion of single medium schools as an option in the Constitution, Section 29 (2), has been seen by some to contradict the very essence of ten years of debate on the nature and recognition of South Africa as a multilingual society. The change from the original working in the Constitution seems to have imported a form of de facto exclusion of learners from schools on the grounds of language, despite a contrary non-discriminatory provision in the Constitution. (Brown, 1998:7)

Brown’s observation is significant because the Norms and Standards for the implementation of the Language-in-Education Policy demand that applicants declare their language choice when they apply for admission. In practice this would mean that parents would not bother to apply if they knew that the language of instruction in a particular school, was not what they wanted for their children. The recent announcement by the Gauteng Department of Education that learners would no longer be required to make a choice before entry has been criticised by Afrikaans medium schools.

2.2.3 The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996

The two policies that are seen as instruments for the realisation of the vision of the White Paper are the South African Schools Act (1996) and Curriculum 2005 (introduced in 1997). Enslin and Pendlebury (2000) view these two policies as instruments for the protection of what they call the two most important principles for democratic education, namely; the principles of “non repression and non discrimination”. Gutman (1987:44) as cited in Enslin and Pendlebury (2000) states that the principle of non-repression prohibits the use of education “to restrict rational deliberation of competing conceptions of the good life and the good society.” Hemmings (2000:69) provides a clearer explanation of ‘non-repression’ when she says, “the principle ensures that students have the freedom to present and critique diverse views. Students have an equal right to choose their positions including those regarded as controversial.” The Principle of non-discrimination also requires that all educable children be given education and does not allow selective repression by excluding certain groups from education (Enslin & Peddlebury, 2000).

In order to realise the principle of non-discrimination, Section 5(1) of the Schools Act demands that “a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way.” In order to operationalise the learners’ right to education, the Act prohibits the exclusion of learners from school on the grounds that a parent is (a) unable to pay or has not paid school fees determined by the governing body; (b) does not subscribe to the mission statement of the school; or (c) has refused to enter into a contract in terms of which the parent waives any claim for damages arising out of the education of the learner (Section 5 (2)). The Act also prohibits ‘entrance tests’ which in the South African context, have been used by some schools to exclude certain learners. The protection of learners who did not subscribe to the mission statement, even though most governing bodies were not happy about this in their submissions to the Minister of Education, is an indication of a negotiated settlement and compromises that were made.

Section 3 (1) of the Act provides for compulsory education by making it a criminal offence for parents not to send their children to school once they reach a specific age. The Act states that:

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... every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such a learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or ninth grade, whichever occurs first (p.3).

The compulsory school going age also protects children below the age of fifteen from labour. In order to give children equal opportunities to attend school, Section 28 (1)(f)(ii) puts a prohibition on children from being required or permitted to perform work or provide services that place at “risk their well-being, education, physical or mental or spiritual health, moral or social development”. An exemption from compulsory attendance can only be granted by the Provincial Head of Department of a province.

The provisions for the enjoyment of education as a basic human right make it difficult for schools to expel or suspend learners from public schools. A learner may only be expelled from a public school by the Head of Department after a fair disciplinary hearing. The South African Schools Act continues to say that:

If a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance in terms of section 3(1) is expelled from a public school, the Head of Department must make an alternative arrangement for his or her placement at a public school (p.5).

A learner or the parent can appeal to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) if they are not satisfied with the decision of the Head of Department. The submissions to the Minister of Education wanted the School Governing Bodies to retain the powers to suspend and expel learners.

The Act also protects learners from Members of Executive Councils who would want to close schools at will. Should he decide to close a school for whatever reason, he must: first inform the governing body of the intention to close the school and give reasons for such; allow the governing body sufficient time to respond; allow the public to make representation at a public hearing or meeting; and only take a decision after they have given due consideration to such representations (DoE, 1995).

The powers to decide all school policies are vested on the governing body. These policies include the language policy, the Code of Conduct for learners, the disciplinary

policy and any other issue that has to do with school governance. The only way that the National Department of Education protects learners against violation of their right to education is to put in place national policies from which the school policies could be drawn.

Another attempt to expand access is seen in the development of the Norms and Standards for Funding (1998). This policy is based on the principle of redress of past inequalities in education provision and the Constitutional guarantee of equality. The Norms and Standards for Funding make provision for “equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees” (DoE, 1999:8). To promote transparency, the governing body of a school is required by this policy to notify all parents in writing about exemptions and the procedures to apply for exemption before the budget meeting. While parents should apply to the governing body for exemption, they have the right to appeal to the Head of Department if they are not happy with the decision of the governing body regarding the granting of relief from the payment of school fees.

Section 12 (1) calls for the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of a province to “provide public schools for the education of learners out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature.” In the case of where there are not enough school places for learners in the province, Sections 3 (3) and (4) require the MEC to rectify the situation and provide an annual report to the Minister “on the progress achieved in doing so” (DoE, 1996:3).

The South African Schools Act gives governing bodies powers to determine the language policy of the school, which is a deviation from the White Paper and the Constitution that gives individuals the right to choose the language of learning and teaching, subject to practicability. The language policy of the school may not be used to discriminate or exclude learners from the school. However, the conditions of the White Paper makes it fairly easy to exclude learners on the basis of language as learners are required to declare their preference of the language of teaching and learning on application, and if it is not ‘reasonably practicable’ for such a school to accommodate the language preference of a learner, it is the learner’s responsibility to look for a school where their language preference would be accommodated. The unintended consequences is that some schools are stretched to their maximum

capacity, while others remain untouched by the increasing number of learners who speak a language different from the school's medium of instruction. The issue of the language of teaching and learning makes it difficult to say with confidence that there is open access for all children from different language backgrounds.

2.2.4 The National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996

The NEPA (Government Gazette No. 17118) endorses the equality of opportunities, and cultural rights. Section 4(a) gives a list of fundamental rights that the Act seeks to advance and protect the fundamental rights enshrined in Chapter 3 of the Interim Constitution:

...in particular the right (i) of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever... (ii) to basic and equal access to education institutions...(v) of every student to be instructed in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable...(vii) of every person to establish, where practicable, education institutions based on a common language, culture or religion, as long as there is no discrimination on the ground of race.

The difficulty with Section 4 is that it lists the fundamental rights that it aims to protect and advance but does not provide suggestions as to how this can be implemented. As a result, “the right to be instructed in the language of one's choice” and the right of “equal access to education institutions” are protected on paper, but may be difficult to protect at institutional level. In the South African education context, language of instruction and equal access to education institutions are interdependent. An Afrikaans-speaking learner who is not proficient in English would not be “admitted” at an English medium institution, unless he is prepared to change his language preference. The issue of race, which is closely linked with language and ethnicity in South Africa, makes it even more difficult to protect everyone's right to quality education. The rationale for granting individuals the right to be taught in the language of choice is an assumption that students would normally choose a language that they are most proficient in, which is likely to be a home language. However, the skewed language-in-education context and the ‘practicability clause’ does not allow the full utilisation of this constitutional right. In terms of access to education, this means that equal access to education institutions could be curtailed by the language choices.

In line with the Constitution, this Act articulates six core values to frame educational transformation: democracy, equality, freedom, social justice, human rights and peace. The Act denotes a pluralistic conception of democracy. There is an emphasis on inclusiveness, accountability, personal development of learners and a need for equity and redress in dealing with those who have been negatively affected by the social and economical imbalances of the past. Most importantly, Section 4 (i) demands that policies contemplated should be directed towards “encouraging independent and critical thought”, which may have implications for the realisation of epistemological access.

The Act also provides for the advancement and protection of fundamental human rights. Besides prohibiting all forms of discrimination, it charges the state with the responsibility to provide basic education and ensure “equal access to education institutions” (Section 4). The focus on access to knowledge is provided for in Section 4b, which requires the system to contribute to “personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation...” This refers to the kind of education that will advance democracy and human rights, as well as give learners skills for peaceful resolution of disputes, and echoes the vision of the Freedom Charter and the People’s Education. The NEC also took a resolution that “education shall aim at the development of a national culture with an accommodation of diversity which does not conflict with other key principles” (Essop, 1992:8).

As the White Paper demands, this Act makes provision for the achievement of equitable education opportunities in education provision, taking into special consideration gender inequalities and the status of women in society (Section 4b). In addition to that, this Act protects the rights of the learners who are physically disabled from being prevented from “receiving an education to the maximum of their ability” (Section 4d). In an effort to advance the rights of the disabled, the Department of Education developed a White Paper for Inclusive Education 6. The long-term goal of the White Paper is:

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the development of an inclusive education and training system that will uncover and address barriers to learning, and recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs (DoE, 2001:45).

The inclusive education system that the paper argues for is the one that would provide expanded access to education of learners with special education needs (LSEN) by adopting an inclusive approach to education. This means acknowledging that special learning needs are a reality for certain learners and that some of these needs, if ignored, would become barriers to effective learning or could even result in learners dropping out or being “pushed” out of the education system. This approach is in agreement with the 1994 Conference for Special Needs Educators, that was held in Samanaca, Spain, which concluded that special needs education was about accommodating all forms of diversity, and not only for people with disabilities. Below are the points that were articulated at the conference:

Children with special needs include those who are currently enrolled in primary school but for various reasons do not progress adequately;

Those who are currently not enrolled in primary schools but could be enrolled if the schools were responsive (the girl child is mentioned specially);

Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire system. (Burden, 1999:19)

An inclusive education system is the opposite of an education system that emphasises difference and attempts to make learners ‘fit in’, and if they do not, they are labelled and separated from mainstream education. The White Paper on Inclusive Education 6, defines an inclusive education and training as, among others:

Acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support;

Enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners; and

Acknowledging and respecting differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases. (DoE, 2001:16)

As indicated above, an inclusive education system, although arguing for the integration of all learners with special education needs in mainstream schools (except those who need medical support), requires a paradigm shift from trying to make them ‘fit in’ to “reconstructing an education system so as to accommodate diversity effectively” (Skritic, 1995:233). Burden (1999:19) concurs with Skritic’s suggestion of changing the system to accommodate diversity and points out that an inclusive approach to education requires that “excellence or quality or standards are re-defined to accommodate diversity”.

2.2.5 The Language-in-Education Policy

The language-in-Education policy is derived from section 29 of the Bill of Rights in the final Constitution (1996), which states that:

Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account: (a) equity; (b) practicability; and (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory law and practice.

The Language-in-Education Policy was introduced by Minister Sibusiso Bhengu in July 1997. The biography of this policy is slightly different from the South African Schools Act and the National Policy Act in that these were finalised and promulgated within the context of the Interim Constitution, whereas the language policy followed the promulgation of the final Constitution in 1996. However, the political climate that the former Director-General of Education talked about also influenced this policy.

The language policy is based on the principle of additive bilingualism or multilingualism. The policy acknowledges the correlation between language and the cognitive development of learners. It seeks to redress the damage caused by language policies that were based on domination of one race by another. As far as access to education is concerned, the policy observes that race based policies affected “either the access of some learners to the education system or their success within it” (DoE, 1997:2). The new language policy therefore, first aims to remove language as a

barrier to education institutions, and also as a barrier to epistemological access. The policy acknowledges two dominant views pertaining to the language of instruction, namely; arguments in favour of cognitive benefits and cost effectiveness of teaching through one medium (home language), and learning additional languages as subjects to those who advocate some kind of structured bilingual education or dual medium education. Whatever the argument, the policy supports the maintenance of home language “while providing access to effective acquisition of additional languages” (p.3). Regarding decisions about the language of teaching and learning, Section 4.1.6 states:

The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation of the education system to promote multilingualism.

In the case of a minor, the parent is expected to make a choice on behalf of the learner. The tension arises between this policy and the South African Schools Act, because the latter gives the powers to determine school policies, including the language policy, to the School Governing Bodies. The National Education Policy Act and both the interim and the final Constitution give the right to choose the language of teaching and learning to the individual. The only plausible reason why the South African Schools Act grants this power to the governing bodies could be the politics and negotiations that came with transitional arrangements. Another argument would be that the SASA assumes that the governing body represents all parents, and therefore, any decision made by a democratically elected governing body is deemed to have been made by the parents. The assumption is that governing bodies will always act in the best interest of the learners and the government, which is not always the case.

The role of the language policy in facilitating access to education, particularly epistemological access, is reflected in paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.3.2:

To promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education (4,3.1);

and

To pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners... (4.3.2).

It is not clear what is meant by “equitable and meaningful access to education”. Does this refer to the fact that the policy ‘allows’ individuals to choose the medium of instruction? If so, what does this mean in cases where the language of teaching and learning is determined by the governing body? Paragraph 4.3.2 acknowledges the correlation between language and epistemological access. The recognition of the centrality of language in epistemological access is also reflected in the following paragraphs, which is one of the aims of the current language policy:

To counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home language and languages of learning and teaching (4.3.5).

Although the above acknowledges the key role of language in the realisation of the right to quality education, and the damage that may be caused by mismatches between home language and the language of learning and teaching, it does not provide suggestions of how the impact of an inappropriate medium of instruction could be avoided. The policy is silent on who would be charged with the responsibility to counter the disadvantages caused by these mismatches. Does countering the mismatches mean offering language support programmes to learners who are faced with an unfamiliar language of learning and teaching? Does it mean helping teachers, through in-service training and at pre-service level understand the significance of language in the learning process. The latter question is very important when considering a statement in the NEPI Report saying that teachers, whether they were teaching a home language or an additional language, did not understand the role of language in the learning process (NECC, 1992).

The provisions for languages as subjects are at times incongruent with the principle of additive multilingualism on which the policy is based and with the concept of language as a vehicle for epistemological access. First, in Grade 1 and 2, learners are required to offer at least one language, whereas at Grade 3 they are required to offer at least two languages, one of which is the language of teaching and learning. However, for promotional purposes, from Grade 5 onwards, the learner needs to pass only one language (p.5). This effectively means that some learners could enter the Further Education and Training Phase with only one language. In the FET phase, learners are

expected to pass at least two languages. Therefore, there is tension between the requirements that allow learners to enter the FET phase having passed only one language, but requires the same learner to pass at least two languages, one of which must be a language of learning and teaching in the Senior Certificate.

Epistemological access is compromised at two levels in this policy. Firstly, it is compromised at the level of choice, in that the choice of the language of teaching and learning is, in reality, vested in the governing body of the school. The second compromised level is reached when a learner is allowed to progress from lower grades to Grade 10 having passed only one language, which is not necessarily the language of learning and teaching. The NCCRD Report (2000) raises a concern of how a learner who has repeatedly failed a language, which happens to be the language of learning and teaching, could successfully access knowledge. Is it practical to expect this learner to obtain a good pass in matric? If this learner manages to pass, how is he going to cope in higher education? At which higher education institution would this kind of learner be admitted? It remains to be seen whether the doors of learning and culture are really open for this learner.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), attempts to compensate for the broad statements made in the Language-in-Education Policy by spelling out what is expected from the learner, and when additional languages should be introduced. At times, it takes a stand that contradicts the LiEP, even though it clears some issues for the teacher, and perhaps, parents as well. The RNCS concurs with the language policy on the principle of an additive approach to multilingualism, by making provision for the learning of home language, and one additional language. It also makes it compulsory for all learners to learn an African language for “a minimum of three years by the end of the General Education and Training band” (DoE: 2002:4). In terms of the requirements for a first additional language, the curriculum states that:

The first additional language assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they arrive at school. The curriculum starts by developing learner’s ability to understand and speak the language.... learners are able to transfer the literacies they acquired in their home language to their first additional language as a language of learning and teaching. By the end of Grade 9, these learners should be able to use

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their home language and first additional language effectively and with confidence for a variety of purposes including learning. (DoE, 2002:4)

The first additional language is what is normally referred to as a second language or L2. The majority of former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools and schools that were under homeland governments offer English as a second language, and also use it for learning. According to the LiEP, an additional language need not be introduced in Grade 1, although it could be introduced. In the discussion on languages for learning and teaching, the RNCS recommends the use of learner's home language wherever possible, and especially in the Foundation Phase. The tension arises where the RNCS spells out the conditions for language teaching where learners have to make a transition from home language to an additional language, as a language of learning and teaching. The three provisions are:

The additional language should be introduced as a subject in Grade 1.

The home language should continue to be used alongside the additional language for as long as possible.

When learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, teachers and other educators should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching. (DoE, 2002:5)

These plans, though well intentioned, raise a number of points that are incompatible with the LiEP. The first requirement would mean that Grade 1 learners in former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools would be burdened with two languages, their home language and an additional language, which is English in this case, or they will have to offer only English, which is problematic as they would later be required to pass two languages at FET level. Since the second point recommends the "use of home language alongside the additional language", it means that students should also be able to read and write the home language. It seems as if there is a fine line between these requirements and the pre-1994 policies that were operating in former DET schools, and that difference is that learners in former DET schools are not forced to take Afrikaans as a subject or to use it as a language of learning and teaching.

The RNCS statement does not state clearly whether learners would be required to achieve all the outcomes for promotional requirements. This is very important for the language issue, because if a learner fails to satisfy Outcome five, that has to do with the language of teaching, such a learner's ability to access knowledge would be restricted. Outcome five states that "the learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as access, process and use information for learning" (DoE, 2002:7). In fact, learners must achieve all six outcomes in the language of learning for them to participate effectively in the construction of knowledge.

The last recommendation that makes provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, responds to the aim of the language policy that seeks to 'counter the mismatches between home language and the language of learning and teaching'. As indicated earlier in the discussion, the LiEP does not explain what it means by 'countering the mismatches'. The recommendation for special assistance can be interpreted as one way of countering the mismatches between home language and the language of teaching and learning. It is important to note that this recommendation does not place any obligation on the school to provide this kind of assistance and it is difficult for parents to demand the introduction of supplementary classes. The cost implications of such supplementary classes have not been taken into consideration. Therefore, unless the LiEP is amended, schools may use their discretion and perhaps pass the cost to learners.

The Language Policy for Higher Education that was gazetted in November 2002 puts the issue of the medium of instruction upfront and is honest about it – that is, the status quo of English and Afrikaans as languages of teaching and learning in higher education institutions will remain until such time that official indigenous languages are ready to be used for learning and teaching at this level. It also allows Afrikaans medium institutions to use Afrikaans as a "primary, but not the sole, medium of instruction". It is difficult to imagine how this use of Afrikaans could be enacted in practice and whether it would facilitate epistemological access, as there is a high probability that learners who are not proficient in Afrikaans would not benefit from this arrangement.

2.2.6 The higher education policy framework

South Africa emerged from a racially divided higher education system in which the state dictated where and what students could study based on the colour of their skin. As such, the transformation of higher education became one of the top priorities of the new government. *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* that was gazetted in July 1997 outlines challenges facing education with regard to access to higher education:

...inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along lines of races, gender, class and geography - ... gross discrepancies in the participation rates of students from different population groups, indefensible imbalances in the ratios of black and female staff compared to whites and males, and equally untenable disparities between historically black and historically white institutions in terms of facilities and capacities. (1.4)

...a chronic mismatch between the output of higher education and the needs of a modernising economy. In particular, there is a shortage of highly trained graduates in fields such as science, engineering, technology and commerce (largely as a result of discriminatory practices that have limited the access of black and women students... (1.4)

In order to meet the challenges indicated above, the Education White Paper 3 calls for a national higher education plan that would set the agenda for transformation. This would include targets for the reconfiguration of the system into a non-racial, non-sexist single co-ordinated system and for increasing the participation rates of previously disadvantaged groups in higher education.

The White Paper opts for equity of access rather than equal access to higher education, which is, in principle different and places different obligations on the state. It outlines the vision of a higher education system that will:

promote equity of access and fair chances of success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for the past inequalities. (1.14)

The distinction between equal access and equity of access and fair chances of access is important in that it acknowledges that equality of access to higher education is not an attainable goal, as initially flagged at the NEC in 1992. The principle of equity and redress:

...requires fair opportunities both to enter higher education programmes and to succeed in them. Applying the principle of equity implies, on the one hand, a critical identification of existing inequalities which are the product of policies, structures and practices based on racial, gender and disability and other forms of discrimination or disadvantage, such transformation involves not only abolishing all existing forms of unjust differentiation, but also measures of empowerment, including financial support to bring about equal opportunity for individuals and institutions. (1.18)

The change in the racial composition of the student body has been striking. In 2001, the headcount enrolments, including distance education, shows that 61% of all students in the public higher education system were African, 27% percent were White, 7% were Indian and 5% were Coloured. In the same year, the statistics indicate that:

serious inequalities of outcome continue to exist in the higher education system. In 2001 the average success rate of African students in contact undergraduate programmes at universities was only 65%, compared to an average of 85% for White students. This 20 percentage point difference between African and White undergraduate success rates did not occur in the technikon sector, but it was nonetheless clear that inequalities also existed in this sector in 2001. The success rate of African students in contact undergraduate programmes at technikons in 2001 was 67%, compared to an average of 80% for White students. (DoE, 2003:46)

Judging from the above information, one can safely say that the principle of equity of access in terms of admissions to higher education institutions is increasingly being implemented, but this is not matched by equity of outcomes. The Plan for Higher Education makes provision for improved efficiency of the higher education system by setting targets for increased graduation rates. Limited academic programmes for students who are under-prepared for higher education and student financial aid are identified in the NPHE as two factors that contribute to low graduation rates of African students. The first factor is about epistemological access, while the latter has to do with restrictions to physical access.

The National Plan for Higher Education, which reflects government response to this inefficiency of the system, is an undertaking to take academic programmes as an integral component of a new funding formula. The rationale for this move is to encourage universities and technikons to put in place appropriate academic

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development programmes to increase the chances of success for learners who are under-prepared for the demands of higher education. The seriousness with which the Department of Education viewed the disjuncture between equity of access and equity of outcomes is demonstrated by the government's move to provide earmarked funding to institutions, while working on the new funding formula, so that they could:

introduce, or continue to offer, extended curricula in key subject areas, as a means of improving access and success rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. (DoE, 2001:25)

The commitment of higher education policies to improved efficiency of the system is also reflected in the demands made to higher education institutions. For example, higher education institutions were requested to indicate whether they had academic programmes or other strategies in place and their impact on throughput and graduation rates. Half of the higher education institutions are reported to have submitted comprehensive plans that:

met the stipulated criteria, indicating an understanding of the role of academic development programmes, as well as integration of existing programmes into the academic activities of the institutions concerned. (DoE, 2001:25)

The institutions referred to above, show an understanding of the principle of equity of access to mean broadly, an increase in enrolments of students from groups that were excluded before, and a need to increase opportunities of their success within the system. The other institutions showed a lack of understanding of the broad principle of equity of access to higher education. These universities submitted plans, that emphasised physical access, and very little understanding of the need to improve opportunities for the success of learners they admit on the basis of equity of access to education. In most instances:

the emphasis in most institutions' proposals is still predominantly on access, in the sense of providing places for students who do not meet standard admission criteria, rather than long-term student success and graduation. For example, very few institutions make provision for students who meet the normal admission criteria to pursue extended curricula programmes. The fact that they meet the normal admission criteria does not necessarily imply that they are not at risk, as is evident from the high failure and drop out rates in general. (DoE, 2001:25)

The last point about the failure of students who had normal university entrance is an acknowledgement by the Department of Education that the current senior certificate ensures physical access to institutions and certain academic disciplines, but is not always an accurate predictor of success at university. Learners could pass senior certificate, and obtain the right scores for admission in particular fields of study, but be under-prepared for the demands of higher education.

Another problem was the lack of financial resources. The commitment of government to increase participation rate of able students who have inadequate or no financial resources was demonstrated by the conversion of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) into a statutory agency in 2000. This financial aid scheme was established in 1996, and was managed and administered by the Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA). The conversion meant that the government could contribute directly to the fund. In 2003, the government allocated an amount of just under R1 billion to the NSFAS.

The financial aid scheme and the funding of the academic development programmes are an indication of the government's commitment to epistemological and physical access of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.3 Reflections on the current policies

Collectively, the policy text, though sometimes fraught with internal and external contradictions, provides a useful framework for the promotion of access to education. The South African Schools Act (1996), which provides a framework for school governance deals with the concept of access to education from a human rights perspective as it prohibits all forms of unfair discrimination. The principle of democratic governance, which was carried over from the People's Education Movement, gives parents an opportunity to participate in the development of school policies, including decisions pertaining to user fees. This policy ensures that SGBs do not abuse their powers by making it unlawful for schools to deny access to learners who are unable to pay school fees or who do not subscribe to the ethos of the school.

Looking at the SASA alone, one could say that the “doors of learning” are literally open in that no learner may be denied access to a school if they fulfil certain requirements such as the zoning principle (where this applies) and the age requirement. On the surface, the zoning principle seems reasonable, or even necessary. However, if we go back to the dispute between the Department of Education and governing bodies of mostly White schools⁶ which were not happy with the Draft Education Bill in 1996, the dispute was primarily about the perceived threat of the influx of learners from “distant communities”, many of whom would fall into the non-fee paying category. As it stands, the zoning principle favours those who live in affluent communities or those who reside in areas where there are good schools. Therefore, while the principle of catchment areas might have been a fair control measure in countries with an even distribution of good schools or schools that are perceived to offer quality education, in a country with gross structural inequalities such a system has a ‘lock in’ effect, in that learners in disadvantaged communities find it difficult to enrol in suburban schools, while those living in these areas continue to enjoy the benefits of progressive policies. The strict application of the catchment areas, therefore, is not compatible with apartheid town-planning where residential areas are still based on race, with the majority of the black population having schools that are grossly under-resourced. Under these circumstances, the zoning system effectively takes away the freedom of choice by prescribing where a learner may attend, particularly those who do not have financial resources to pay for education in private schools. The zoning system curtails equal physical access to educational institutions.

The competition for limited places in good schools has resulted in the schools that are in high demand, charging exorbitant user fees. In practice, equal access to education institutions cannot possibly be achieved in this environment. This observation was confirmed by Mazwi and Jay who felt that, theoretically, access to education is ensured by the Constitution and current policies. Therefore at the level of policy, the “doors of learning and culture” are open. Whereas, in practice access to good schools depends on the ability to pay user fees and as such the “doors of learning and culture” are not fully open for those who cannot pay for education in good schools:

⁶ Letters were from white Afrikaans and English-medium schools.

From the policy view and the constitutional requirement, our constitution is very clear on these issues, it is law that they (schools) must be opened. In fact from the point of view of law and even in practice, they are open, however, it's always the challenge that obviously affects us, where a large number of people in certain times, and certain disciplines, still remain predominantly White. White, Coloured and Indian. The reason is not because they shut other people out, but it's because of the resources that they have. They are able to pay high fees. Your independent schools, people will need money. Who can access money from other sources to allow them to attend those schools and be able to pay those high fees, to pay for learning material that can cost a lot of money, so the schools are quite an expense. So in that sense you can say, technically, the doors of learning are open but at the level of practice there are still constraints, but those constraints are not based on policy. It is just reality that there are some people who can't because they can't afford it at this level, that is why this government has made education free and compulsory up to a certain level, that is Grade 9. At that level then, one can say this government has made that possible (access to education) (Mazwi)⁷

Similar views about the most progressive policies being watered down or diluted by financial constraints were echoed by the other respondents. Even with the new funding formula that is based on equity and redress, affordability still plays a major role in determining who will get access to which schools. Jay, one of the interviewees who was involved in the People's Education Movement, was of the view that access to schools, for poor communities, was still largely circumscribed by affordability and institutional culture. He jokingly remarked, "access means if you can afford it, then you know you get let into the door" because access "is about money" (Jay).⁸

The issue of affordability dates back to the dispute between the government and schools, in which White schools wanted policy-making powers, including decisions pertaining to user fees, to be vested on the governing bodies. As a result, compulsory and free education, while it is enshrined in policies and is made possible by the Norms and Standards for Funding, is often not available in practice. There are reported cases where principals withheld critical information from parents who are unable to pay, until the school had tried everything to extract payment from the parent. Jay's experience of the implementation of the Norms and Standards for School Funding is:

The information is not made available upfront. The information is only made available when people have difficulties and when they have pushed and prodded and hassled them and then they say okay by the way you can apply for partial exemption or for full exemption.

⁷ An interview with Mazwi took place on 16 July 2004. He was involved in the struggle against apartheid education.

⁸ Interview with Jay on 13 September 2004.

The meaning of the concept of “access to education” as we see it in current policies was, on one hand, influenced by the period of intense negotiations and compromises between the liberation movement and the National Party government, and on the other hand, the reality of financial constraints that the ruling party anticipated. For example, the decision that only nine years of schooling would be free and compulsory was mooted in the ANC-policy text, entitled *Ready to Govern*, adopted at the National Conference in 1992. Motala and Vally (2002), in an article on the People’s Education, quoted the NECC comment on the *Draft White Paper for Education and Training* that welcomed the break with the past, but criticised it for:

The fudging of the issue of free and compulsory education, the absence of specific redress measures which would lead to a redistribution of services, the conciliatory tone of the White Paper (which attempted to talk to the White electorate, the old bureaucracy, and business rather than disadvantaged black communities). (NECC, 1994 quoted in Motala & Vally, 2002:86)

Consensus politics is said to have resulted in the watered down policies that promoted access to education, however, I would venture to say that the financial realities influenced the decisions at the National Education Conference. Jack Gerwel, in his Keynote Address, mentioned the fact that the masses wanted free and compulsory education at all levels, including higher education, but finally the NEC had to accept that that was not possible.

The question that arose repeatedly after my interviews with Jay, Muzi, and Nicholas was whether we could, without fear of contradiction, say that there was open access to education. The type of open access that people envisaged in the Freedom Charter and People’s Education, and in other periods of struggle against apartheid education.

Social and policy researchers are beginning to question the continuities and discontinuities between the ideals of the liberation movement before 1994, and education policies after apartheid. Some of these discontinuities are justifiable, while others are not. Regarding the concept of access to education, the discontinuities could be linked to the fiscal realities that the ruling party had to face, while others stem from a need to appease Whites. The White Paper on Education and Training (1995), SASA and NEPA promulgated in 1996 reveal a preoccupation with the elimination of “legal

racism”, and therefore, for the most part, addresses white schools and pay less attention to other school sectors. For example, the non-discriminatory clauses in the NEPA and SASA allow communities to establish schools that would serve special interests such as language and religion, as long as there is no discrimination on the ground of race. The case of ethnicity which learners might face in African schools is not mentioned as an issue.

Emphasis on equal access to educational institutions seem to have been narrowly defined to mean ‘equal access to former White, Coloured and Indian schools’, otherwise why are we still talking about learners who attend classes under trees when the policies make it clear that where there are no schools, the MEC would have to make sure these are built. Some African children in rural areas are still in the same situation they were in before 1994, learning under trees and in unsafe structures, hence the President’s call to ensure that no learners had to endure these conditions, and the Minister of Education taking this a step further by declaring that her priority was “to eliminate mud schools and other unsafe school buildings in the course of this financial year” (Pandor, 4:2004)⁹.

An emphasis on the eradication of overt exclusions that dominates the policies has downplayed other forms of exclusion prevailing in schools. School practices that carry subtle messages are beyond the reach of the South African Schools Act and related policies. Access to the institutional culture, where the ability or inability to understand certain messages determines academic performance, should be the main concern. Jay gives a powerful example, in the form of a joke, about the award evenings in predominantly White schools where black learners get awards for ‘diligence’ and ‘cheerfulness’ while White learners get awards for best academic performance. He remarked:

But you should go to some of these award evenings. And then those kids who get the best in their class get rewarded and the best in the grades, and the majority of those kids are white kids at these section 21 schools. Then they also get awards at primary school, you know, a cheerful giver and then you see a black kid coming up. Diligence! There’s a black kid coming.

⁹ Ms Naledi Pandor, was appointed as the Education Minister in the third term of the ANC-led government in April 2004. The undertaking to build schools for learners in poor communities was made in her budget vote speech on 18 June 2004.

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Diligence, but I mean ... and she doesn't actually make it in terms of, you know, the academic work and so on.

Jay's words draw us to another aspect of the concept of access to education, namely, epistemological access. While the previously disadvantaged groups enjoy the benefits of progressive policies that have done away with the "colour bar", to use the language of the Freedom Charter, there is something that these learners are not cracking, that is, the impenetrable culture of these institutions, the alien nature of knowledge which is closely linked to who decides what is "valuable knowledge" in these schools. Jay emphasises the importance of access to knowledge:

...the point is how do you change the culture of the schools in terms of what it is that they teach and who teaches? So again coming back to your question about access.... access to me is about gaining institutional entry but it's also about what is taught by whom, to whom and you know that is quite an important thing.

He continues to say that:

The questions about the curricula – access in terms of the curriculum – is very important because unless one deals with that problem, you know, one will find a whole range of things that will kind of go wrong. In fact, the kind of stereotypes of black people being stupid, you know not culturally as advanced as white people and so on. Those stereotypes, they'll be reinforced, as it were, if you don't deal with that.

Can anyone lay the blame at the door of the government for the above situation in schools? Perhaps, the question should be phrased differently: how can the government ensure that the Constitutional principles of equity, redress, non-racialism and non-discrimination are integrated into school practices? How can we expand access to include equality of outcomes? C2005 provides opportunities for addressing these issues in the Life Orientation learning area. However, without a change in the culture of the schools, even the most progressive curriculum will not be able to change attitudes of teachers.

Finally, the Language-in-Education Policy creates an illusion of a break with the past, and an illusion of individual choice when in actual fact, some learners have no choice to make, due to the "practicability clause". Second, the only break with the past that could be seen is that learners in ex-DET schools do not have to offer Afrikaans. However, the Revised National Curriculum Statement suggests that learners who will

change over to using an additional language for learning must offer that language from Grade 1, which could have negative effects if this additional language is not taught properly.

The last point is about the origins of the practicability clause in the choice of language for learning. This clause has its origins in the ANC document, *Ready to Govern*. The document uses the rider “unless where impractical” or “where it is not practical”. Equal access to knowledge is not possible in situations where learners are not proficient in the language of learning and teaching.

The state could be criticised for not putting in place good English language programmes, either by building the capacity of English language teachers in African schools or learner-centred programmes provided by credible NGOs. In the RNCS, the government passes the responsibility of countering the negative effect of mismatches between home language and the language of learning and teaching to the former Indian, Coloured and White schools by stating that:

When learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, teachers and other educators should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching.

Overall, in the post apartheid period, the concept of “access to education” seems to have been driven by an understanding of education as a human right, which led to the government committing to free and compulsory education, and the provision of schools, even though the government knew that the delivery would be curtailed by fiscal constraints. This is evident in the cautiousness with which the liberation movement, in the first policy documents, *Ready to Govern* had qualified its commitment to the issue of language, and equalising education expenditure by the ‘efficient’ use of existing resources rather than promising more money. The shift from being a liberation movement, criticising and making demands, to being a government that is required to turn the vision into programmes that can deliver

expanded access to education is evident in Robert's¹⁰ reminiscence of his days in the Department of Education:

We are no longer a liberation movement. We are not fighting a liberation struggle. We are now a liberation movement that is extending the floor of entitlement to build an inclusive society on the basis of social democratic systems. Doors of learning and teaching, doors of learning and culture shall be opened *progressively*. Doors of learning and culture shall be opened *progressively* to all. And we shall build an inclusive society *progressively*

The word *progressively* demonstrates the realisation that the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution would be determined by the socio-economic conditions in the country. In short, what the above means is that “access to education” as it appears in education policies is part of a broad programme to achieve freedom and human dignity. However, the achievement of the policy ideals is dependent on the socio-economic realities, hence the use of “progressively”.

¹⁰ Robert was a leading member of the People's Education Movement who joined the Department of Education after the first democratic elections.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE CONCEPT OF "ACCESS" TO EDUCATION

One of the founding provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Government Gazette No. 17678) is “equal dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human dignity and freedoms” (Section 1(a)). The protection and advancement of equality is enshrined in Section 9 of the Constitution and prohibits all forms of unfair discrimination. Arising from Section 9 is Section 29 of the Constitution that grants the “right to basic education and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible”.

The rationale for the conception of education as a human right is the centrality of education in the enjoyment of other rights. Delivering a Keynote Address at the Transvaal Teachers’ Association Conference on 22 September 1989, Judge Cameron explained that the idea behind enshrining the right to education among the fundamental human rights in international declarations and conventions seem to rest on three premises:

That education is an indispensable component of human dignity; ... it is a necessary corollary of the development of the human personality; and ... is an additional essential to enable the individual’s participation in the democratic processes of his or her society. Education as a means to dignity, to development and to democracy are thus the central ideas. (Cameron, 1989:6)

At the time of the address, education provision in South Africa was based on the grand policy of apartheid. Over a million of the black youth were out of school because of the breakdown in the culture of learning and teaching, the disillusionment with Bantu Education, and the broad political instability prevailing at the time. The attainment of political power resulted in different government departments developing policies aimed at the institutionalisation of the Constitution. The Department of Education had to work towards the transformation of a fragmented education system(s) into an inclusive unitary education system. In an interview, Robert, who

had been involved in the policy making process after 1994 indicated that the new department had to work on the institutionalisation of education policies that would lead to the progressive opening of the doors of learning and culture and that “would build an inclusive society, progressively” (Robert¹¹). My interest lies in the biography of the concept of ‘access to education’ within a human’s right discourse in education policies. I examined the meanings of the concept from the Congress of the People in 1955 to its integration in education policies of the current government. The second part of the examination of the concept of “access to education” includes the interpretation and implementation of the concept at school and classroom levels. Since there is no one theory of investigating the concept, I have selected a few South African and other authors who have written about the concept from different dimensions to build a conceptual framework that would be used to frame the research. The point of departure is Morrow’s article which makes distinction between epistemological and formal access to education.

This chapter discusses academic works that have been used as a lens to examine various conceptions of access at different periods in the history of education struggle in South Africa. There is no one theory on the concept of access and equality.

Morrow’s (1994) conception of access has been used to guide, inform and assess the conceptions of access to education as a human right of all South Africans. In his article entitled *Entitlement and Achievement in Education*, Morrow (1994) provides a useful distinction between what he calls formal (physical) access to education and epistemological access. He points out that “...mere formal access to institutions which distribute knowledge is different from, and not a sufficient condition for, epistemological access” (Morrow, 1994:40). Morrow argues that for a person to be registered as a student at a university or any educational institution is “not yet to have gained access to knowledge which the university distributes” (Morrow, 1994:40). He further points out that when people claim their right to education there is a tendency to “obscure the distinction between formal and epistemological access” (p.40). He ascribes this confusion to the ambivalent use of the concept of education to refer to

¹¹ Robert was interviewed on 10 April 2004

“both the system of institutions which have the distribution of knowledge as their formal aim and the actual process of acquiring knowledge” (p.40).

Central to Morrow’s argument is his belief that the culture of entitlement undermines or threatens educational achievements. He then goes on to defend or call for the protection of epistemological access through setting standards for educational and academic achievement. As far as he is concerned, one “cannot talk in the same way about entitlement to formal access and entitlement to epistemological access”, as entitlement “assumes that someone other than the potential beneficiary must supply whatever is needed for the fulfilment of the entitlement” (p.40). In an interview in 2003, Morrow reiterated his original idea that one cannot be entitled to something that requires one’s own effort to produce.

He rejects the culture of entitlement because “entitlement to access can easily slide over into entitlement to succeed” (p. 35). Epistemological access is about learning the standards of practice, that is, “learning how to become a participant in an academic practice” (p.40). Only those who are willing to learn will achieve epistemological access. The material conditions, both historical and institutional, as well as learning facilities such as libraries and good books do not guarantee epistemological access. Even teachers can only contribute successfully to the learner’s epistemological access if both parties pay attention to “the requirements of practice” and “acknowledge that standards of practice are independent of the decisions... of the teacher and the learner” (p.42). In other words, epistemological access depends more on a person “to whom educational achievement can be ascribed” (p.40), and that person is the learner himself.

The article also makes a point about the cooperative nature of the teaching act. With regard to teaching, he says that teachers must know that they have a responsibility to identify those learners who are on the right track but need help and those who are completely lost. He argues that teachers who are reluctant to give learners challenging tasks or “misleadingly simplify the practice to which learners are trying to gain access” (p.40) are betraying the practice and learners.

Morrow stresses the agency of the learner in educational achievement as of paramount importance, that is, for educational achievement to occur there has to be some operational action from the side of the learner. These are all the activities that contribute to learning how to participate in some “socially-constructed practice, which is regarded as valuable” (p.38). However, he says that the culture of entitlement turns this on its head in that it shifts the normal responsibility of failure to some other agent like the “teachers, curriculum, the institution or the system” (p.35). His response when I asked him whether he was not placing the burden of success solely on the learner is worth quoting at length so that it shows the logic of his argument:

Agents can get assistance from all types of sources, and if they are lucky to have a good teacher who helps them, that is fine. But in as far as academic judgement is concerned, I want to kind of put a qualification to that, at university, you need to do the best that you can in a situation that you are in. If you are unlucky and you don't have good teachers, well, that's bad luck, ... but I mean at the end of the day, it is dependent on you. It is dependent on your agency. I like the analogies with sport. Formal access means, okay, you can join this running club, you have the right to join the running club, you got to pay R50 joining fee, then you can join the running club. Once you join the running club, we can't guarantee that you will win the Marathon next week. When the marathon comes, you, the agent, need to improve. You might have a very good coach. You might get advice from other runners. You might get help from all over the place, but at the end of the day, it's you who's got to run that marathon. You need to carry the responsibility whether you win the marathon or not. You can't blame the club or the coach or other runners. You need to take responsibility. The logic of that is quite clear, when you win the marathon, we give you the medal. We don't give the medal to the coach. The coach might have helped you a lot, but we don't give the medal to the coach, we give it to you. If you are doing a degree, we give a medal to you, in this case the degree. Not to your teacher. We give it to you, and that is an acknowledgement that you have put in the effort, and you have been an agent in your own learning. You have made this achievement.

The author believes that the demand for access to education is at the “centre of the culture of entitlement” (p.40). He ascribes the breakdown in the culture of learning to the lack of understanding among teachers and learners of what systematic learning ought to be and its contribution to personal growth. Whilst he acknowledges that the breakdown in the culture of learning was partly due to political turmoil and oppression, he believes that, “such political rhetoric can be used to evade responsibility” (p.34).

He identifies protest politics; the inversion of the burden of responsibility; and the occlusion of achievement or its “delegitimation” as the main characteristics of the culture of entitlement. The article argues that there is a very close link between agency and achievement. When one applies this theory to educational achievements, it means educational achievement can only happen when a learner undertakes activities which “contribute to learning how to participate in some socially-constructed practice which is regarded as valuable” (p.38). Therefore, judgements about educational or academic achievements should be within “the framework of criteria for success in the shared practice in question” (p.39). Academic achievement, according to Morrow, should be about satisfying the academic standards relevant to a particular field. They have nothing to do with the background of the learner or context. However, if a learner or student puts in the effort, if a learner works hard but is denied a certificate because of prejudice, then such a learner can say she is entitled to pass because she has done what is required from her.

Morrow’s conception of access to education provides some useful insights into concepts such as academic and educational achievement; formal and epistemological access as well the learner’s role as a key agent of educational achievement. He also provides useful insights into what it means to struggle for epistemological access. Learning how to become a “participant in an academic practice is to learn the intrinsic disciplines and constitutive standards of practice” (p.39). Finally, Morrow makes two important observations (a) that learning how to be a participant in academic practice or any practice can also be described as ‘gaining access’ to the practice in question; and (b) that the field of education is a contested area.

The limitation or gap in Morrow’s conception of access to education is that he does not discuss access to education within the framework of human rights. Instead, Morrow sees the demand for expanded access to education in negative terms, in that he associates it with the culture of entitlement. Whilst he makes a case for access to education, this is overshadowed by what seems to be a restricted understanding of the interrelatedness of formal access to educational institutions and epistemological access. Logically, when learners claim their right to education, they refer to both the right to register at an academic institution and the right to access knowledge that is offered by those institutions. In the same way that Morrow believes that the right or

“entitlement to epistemological access has a strange ring to it” (p.40), so does a claim that a right to education can only mean the right of admission to an educational institution but not the right to access academic practice (or knowledge) in those institutions. The emphasis on hard work and a willingness to learn the rules of the academic practice, underplays the fact that epistemological access requires more than the ‘willingness’ to abide by existing rules but also the willingness of the institution and teachers to provide an environment conducive to maximum learning. If it means changing the institutional culture and practices of an institution to accommodate a new social order, that should be considered.

Morrow seems to be protecting academic or educational institutions, particularly the previously advantaged institutions, more than the integrity of academic practice. In fact, he seems to agree with the need for expanded access to education but only on his own terms or the terms of institutions. In other words, learners can demand formal access but they need to abide by the values of the academic institution, irrespective of whether such an institution is responsive to their needs or not.

Morrow does not problematise the insularity or non-responsiveness of educational institutions to social change. Instead, he accepts this as an innate characteristic of the educational institution. His sharp and eloquent remarks demonstrate his difficulty with demands directed at educational institutions to respond to social change in the country:

...It is also true that educational institutions, and especially universities are constitutive rather than service institutions. Their founding rationale is not to supply the economy with person power, to shore up or undermine a particular political dispensation or to supply protected employment to people who find it difficult to hold jobs in other markets...The guiding ideal of universities is to constitute the realm of academic learning; to provide an institutional home for academic practice and access to them. (1994:43)

The flaw in this argument is that it does not take into consideration the fact that educational institutions are not islands, but are part of a bigger social context, therefore changes in the political landscape will affect the way people in a country talk and think about knowledge production and access to such knowledge, as well as

the values underpinning such knowledge. To think otherwise is to say that educational institutions do not exist to serve social interest but their own interest.

Another limitation is that he places the burden to achieve epistemological access to learners, and by so doing, underestimates the role of resources and environmental factors, and even dismisses the impact of bad teachers as bad luck. The onus rests on the learners to do their best out of a bad situation. He grudgingly acknowledges the role of the context or environment in achievement. On this he says:

There are, of course, many things which might help me to do it (learning), or to do it more effectively. We might think here of historical and institutional conditions, various kinds of resources... access to good books, the company of other serious learners, the sympathetic assistance of teachers, etc....But all these things can, at best, only facilitate, and never guarantee, my epistemological access; I must be trying to learn. (p.40)

Morrow's paper is a reaction to the political climate in which black students were demanding access to education institutions from which they had been previously excluded. This became clear in an interview when he was asked what he was responding to with his article, he answered:

The background to this is that at the University of the ..., students got hold of the slogan - pass one pass all! They were opposed to anybody failing exams. And we had big fights. People were burning the tyres at the road of the university because they were not succeeding. Who was blocking them? White professors. You see, like me, they wrote this exam and they failed. It is unfortunate that didn't work out. But they failed and others passed. The students said - pass one pass all! There was one stage in which they said, if anybody is going to fail, then everybody must fail. You see, what is happening here is that in their minds, they think they are entitled to pass. They are entitled to the achievement because "the doors of learning shall be opened". So, they are entitled to get it. Even if they did not do any work, they did not do any assignments or anything like that. That is irrelevant. So here I am. I am entitled to get this degree and I am entitled to pass the exam. This paper is about that. This paper says, look there is something very odd about this.

He continues to say:

What the paper argues is that, in principle - pass one pass all - must be wrong, because you cannot confuse entitlement and achievement. Achievement is something quite different from entitlement ... Remember in the 1980s there was talk about the breakdown in the culture of learning. That is also part of the background of this paper. To say, one possible reason for the breakdown

in the culture of learning is that students think they are entitled to all these things. And the culture of teaching and learning requires people to work hard.

Although no one can dispute the fact that the agency of the learner or student is important, the flaw of the above argument is that in his reaction to student protests, which could have been new to the establishment at which he was teaching, Morrow fails to problematise the outrageous demand of “Pass one pass all!” He does not entertain the possibility that they might have been expressing genuine concerns about assessment instruments or education practices that were employed at the time. Robert remarked (in interview) that even though there are still protests against financial exclusion, one hardly hears about protests against academic exclusions, “probably because students have accepted the assessment practices of higher education institutions”.

Attributing the culture of entitlement among students as a probable cause for the breakdown in the culture of learning and teaching is difficult to understand. At best it demonstrates some kind of a blind spot about the state of black education in the 1980s, a time when students continued to resist inferior education and academic financial exclusions; and also a time when some students decided to adopt the slogan – ‘liberation before education’. The paper does not take cognisance of the politics of the time versus the institutional practices of the many higher education institutions. Morrow continues to maintain the separation between physical and epistemological access. He insists that:

...there might be a duty to the government to provide as much as possible to everybody, institutions with qualified higher education teachers, libraries and all the other things that go with it, but nobody can claim they have a right to get a degree simple because they got into university. That’s the issue. You could say I have a right to claim formal access to this university, and that government or somebody should reduce the fees because I have a right to study here. But then having gone in, then you don’t have a right to be successful. If you want to be successful, you gonna try and be active and do things. If you don’t succeed, you can’t blame it on other people (interview)

Once again, while Morrow is right in that enrolment at institutions does not guarantee success and that students must work hard, he misses the point that institutions also have a duty to support learners, especially in contexts where there had been unequal access to quality secondary education. The article would have been richer if it included arguments for and against equity of access and provided solutions on how

the equity agenda could be implemented without compromising the concept of achievement. His questioning of the ‘right to education’ claimed by the groups who have been excluded from enjoying these rights and his labelling of this claim as ‘entitlement’ borrows from Kenneth King’s¹² 1993 article entitled: *Education Policy in a Climate of Entitlement: The South African Case*.

In his critique of the NEPI reports, King questions the wisdom of using the language of “redress, access and affirmation” (1993:199) as a point of departure. This language presupposes:

the discourse of inclusion and openness that cannot easily accommodate the traditional criteria and conventions of selection and excellence. Selectivity and excellence were traditions so intimately entwined with discrimination as to find them now almost illegitimate categories of discussion. (King, 1993:199.)

The NEPI reports are also seen as emphasising the agenda of entitlement and comprehensive inclusion, which both work against the concept of excellence and quality. King warns against the “danger of jettisoning popular symbols of excellence in the search for comprehensive educational renewal” (King, 1993:200). It does not matter to him that the NEPI Framework Report and the report on post-secondary education point out the tensions between development and redress and between quality and increased access which would inevitable force the government to choose between “economic and development or equity programmes” (NECC, 1992:208). King dismisses academic development programmes in higher education institutions as symbols of entitlement and claims that such programmes demonstrate the thinking that “it is the lecturer, the curriculum and the university that need to change – not the student” (King, 1993:200).

King and Morrow’s reactions to the concept of increased access to higher education is important in this study, as it reflects the contestations and the contentiousness of the concept of access to education and its implications for the redistribution of scarce resources. King’s emphasis of the concept of ‘selectivity and excellence’ and a

¹² Kenneth King was a visiting professor in the Education Faculty at the University of the Western from 1 to 21 May 1993. It is reported that this article is a result of two sets of comments that were made at the meetings of University staff during his visit

seemingly preoccupation with the protection of standards are relevant to the extent that they represent arguments for controlled access to privileged education institutions. Kings seems oblivious of the fact that ‘excellence’, ‘achievement’ and ‘quality’ are socially constructed concepts that would need to be redefined in a reconstructed inclusive education system (Burden, 1999). King criticises what he terms the South African version of the Education-for-All lobby that is “not just concerned with *equal access* to education for all, but is also looking for some kind of *equal success*” (King, 1993:202). The use of the language of equality and excellence to criticise increased access to education without giving options how the education system could increase access to education without compromising quality and excellence, leads his argument into the trap of the New Right that attacks everything that has to do with equity. The uncritical use of the ‘quality-excellence’ concepts has been criticised by Angus who wrote in 1991 that:

the current debate throughout Australia and the Western world seems to be largely characterised by notions of ‘quality’ and associated concepts of excellence, efficiency and standards. They are used glibly by different people to mean different things, and in the current context they have become part of a slogan system which denote a focus on narrow curriculum, more rigid testing of pupils and teachers and a view of education as a commodity in which consumers, parents and their children will invest for maximum returns...the language of quality and excellence in education has been appropriated by the New Right into the a lexicon ...which enthuses and inspires some while signifying the exclusion of others.(Angus, 1991:246)

He continues to say that very often an easy target of these attacks on increased access to education is the notion of equity:

Any suggestion that schools should contribute to ‘equality of outcomes’ is wilfully misrepresented by the Right as an advocacy of ‘social engineering’ that is designed to drag everyone, including the most talented, down to the level of ‘the lowest common denominator’. (Angus, 1991:246)

Epistemological access, within Morrow’s conception, presupposes that the rules for access to academic practice are clear and open to every learner. It rules out the existence of a hidden curriculum that favours some and excludes others. The notion that children’s learning experiences and their prior knowledge and the marginalisation of certain forms of knowledge could compromise access to knowledge is underplayed (Robertson & Hill, 2001). Apple reminds us that even in the context of a national

curriculum, one should not lose sight of the fact that official knowledge is taught “within specific kinds of institutions, with their own histories, tensions, political economies, hierarchies, and bureaucratic interests” (Apple, 2003:7). This means that the selection of knowledge at school or institutional level would be influenced by external and internal contexts that would favour some learners and probably exclude others.

Hill addresses the issue of whether the national curriculum controlled by national governments can contribute to increased equal opportunities and lead to “more equal outcomes between different social groups” (Hill, 2001:95). This question is especially relevant to the case studies that are presented in Chapters 6 and 7, which were driven by the need to find out whether learners attending schools in different social and historical context would have equal access to the curriculum.

The utility of Morrow’s conception to this study

The Morrowean conception of access is useful in so far as it provides the distinction between formal and physical access, but needs to be complimented by other works in order to get a broader view of different conceptions of access. For example, Jansen (2001) agrees with Morrow (1994) when he makes a point that physical access alone is not a sufficient condition for epistemological access. He also provides a clearer description of epistemological access. To him epistemological access is about learners accessing different forms of knowledge, including “how it is organised, its value basis, its politics, and its power”. This requires a shift from the old way of teaching in which learners are only regarded as passive consumers of knowledge to a new pedagogy that allows learners to engage in knowledge construction.

Jansen (2001:3-4) maintains that even though the new curriculum has introduced new concepts and new ways of teaching, the knowledge required is “still formal, abstract, and devoid of meaning as far as everyday life is concerned”. Schools need to create opportunities for exposure to different forms of knowing and learning, or what Jansen calls ‘alternative ways of thinking and living’. Unlike, Morrow who places a larger responsibility on learners to access academic practice, Jansen sees institutions and

teachers as key in facilitating epistemological access for learners. He also raises the point about the need for relevance of knowledge to the learners.

Apple makes the point that the politics of the curriculum extend beyond the issue of knowledge, and asks questions such as “who should select it, how it should be organized, taught, and evaluated, and once again who should be involved in asking and answering these questions” (Apple, 2003:7). He continues to say that, no matter how one looks at the politics of knowledge, “out of the vast universe of possible knowledge, only some knowledge and ways of organising it get declared to be legitimate or ‘official’ knowledge” (Apple, 2003:7). Hill confirms the political nature of the curriculum by stating that:

The inherent political nature of any curriculum becomes apparent when it is subjected to particular questions about the power relations it defines. For example, whose curriculum is it? Who selected the curriculum content? Does it represent and affirm the ideology, values and attitudes of a particular social group of people. Does it therefore invalidate and disempower the values and attitudes it does not present? Does it give some children /students an easier time and others a harder time? (Hill,2001:96-97)

Another valuable contribution to the debate on epistemological access is from the viewpoint of the pedagogy of human rights that sees the purpose of education as the development of “human personal and full potential” (CEDAL, 1996:4). This full potential can be attained by:

enabling learners creatively and analytically to construct knowledge and be able to deconstruct fallacious or distorted knowledge concerning their own situations in society and history and reconstructing that knowledge by using critical, reflective, and moral faculties which it is the facilitator’s task to assist them acquiring. (CEDAL, 1996: 4)

The issue of access to education is also dealt with elaborately in the Values in Education Report (2000). The report points to a need for schools to encourage receptivity to new ideas, the development of critical thinking, the promotion of a reading culture, mathematical literacy, the promotion of debating societies and the ability to apply scientific solutions in problem solving. Apart from the need to develop the above-mentioned skills, epistemological access is also about validating certain kinds of knowledge. In diverse societies, the kind of knowledge that is validated in the classroom is determined by groups that are economically dominant.

The implications for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are that the cultural capital that they bring to the classroom is not recognised (Bourdieu, 1977). Sometimes teachers intentionally or unintentionally ignore the diversity of the student population by refusing to change in ways that will validate the history and experiences of less dominant groups (Cummins, 1998). From a human rights perspective, this represents “symbolic violence” (Nieto, 1998) against the so-called devalued groups (Nieto, 1998 and Bourdieu, 1977).

Although I have used Morrowean conception to guide, inform and assess the realisation of access to education, in this study, epistemological access at classroom level has been expanded to include other dimension of access such as: who provides knowledge, what kind of knowledge is made accessible, what kind of knowledge is valued, who is being taught and what is the time allocated to the topic. The other dimension of epistemological access reflects how the topic is taught. This will include elements of the lesson such as the medium of teaching and learning and the use of language and teaching strategies. In South Africa, the medium used to access knowledge is very important because the majority of learners are required to learn in an additional language. Educationists and language researchers have acknowledged the extent to which learning in an additional language impacts on the academic performance of learners.

Epistemological access is not only about the obvious curriculum issues like who selects the curriculum and who decides on the evaluation instruments and how all these are interpreted at school and classroom level. Even with the core curriculum or syllabi, studies show that there are “striking differences between official curricula and what actually happens in schools or in the creation of texts to meet official guidelines” (Wong & Apple, 2003:95). Research indicates that despite official control of the curriculum, oftentimes there is little change in the execution of lessons in the classroom:

Teachers continue [d] to produce socially and politically conservative curricula independently of formal administrative intervention or parental direction... [because]... the ideological conservatism of teachers, their limited resources, the social resolution of tension between the pursuit of academic success and student failure, and a pattern of interlocking but exclusive social

networks continue [d] to set limits to curriculum decision-making. (Rice, 1983:40, quoted in Angus, 1991:249)

It will be interesting to observe how teachers in different social contexts in South Africa, teach different parts of the new curriculum, particularly, the subject content that was not considered as ‘official’ or ‘legitimate’ knowledge, such as the struggle for human rights in South Africa. The focus is how this ‘official knowledge’ gets legitimatised in different classroom context, if it is taught. Apple (2003) has warned us that not all ‘official’ knowledge is enacted in the classroom.

I have elaborated on Morrow’s conceptions of access to education by using other sources to supplement his conception of access. This conceptual framework has been used to interrogate different conceptions of access by tracing the biography of the concept from the Congress of the People in 1955 up until its integration in education policies. The conception of physical or formal access is self-explanatory and includes registration as a student and physical facilities that are available to learners that make education possible.

In telling the story of epistemological access, I have used the lenses derived from the selected authors that I have cited in the discussion on access to the curriculum and the politics of knowledge inside the classroom. The two case studies focus on how learners are admitted to the school (physical access), and the teaching of two historical events: the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising. Were these events taught in the same way? What was the hidden curriculum or subtle messages about these events or South African history in general, in the two schools? The focus of the case studies is on the interpretation of the concept of “access to education” at school and inside the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Investigating the biography of the concept of ‘access to education’ in the history of education in South Africa requires multiple methods that help unravel the complexities embedded in the contextual nature of the concept. First, one has to decide how far back to go in history and decide on a starting point. Second, one has to decide on the best and most accessible data collection methods that will not compromise the integrity of the study. I made the decision that I would begin from the Congress of the People. It was described as a watershed in that it was the biggest gathering in which people of all races met to discuss and adopt a document that reflected their common vision for a democratic South Africa. In 1994, the new South Africa was born and the ruling party had to take responsibility for the creation of a unitary education system that would ‘open the doors of learning and culture’ to all. This research is an attempt to answer the following key questions about education as a human right: How has the concept of “access to education” as part of a broader human rights discourse, evolved in the history of South African education and how is the concept of “access to education” as an expression of human rights, interpreted at school and classroom practice?

4.2 Research Methodology

In order to answer the research questions on how the concept of “access” as part of a broader human rights discourse has evolved in the history of South African education and how the concept of “access” as an expression of human rights was interpreted at school and classroom level, I arranged my research into two parts.

In the first part, I answer the first question of how the concept of “access” as a political ideal, travelled over time until its inclusion in the final Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and its realisation in subsequent education policies.

I traced, through a succession of interviews and analysis of key policy documents, the evolution of “access” to education within a human rights discourse from the Freedom Charter in 1955 to the contemporary policies of the post-apartheid government in South Africa. The targets for interviews were political and educational leaders who were involved in policy initiatives such as the National Education Policy Investigation; the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, the National Education Conference and the current policies. The aim was to obtain authentic data, where possible, of how the concept of “access” evolved over time in education policy deliberations that preceded, anticipated, and followed a change in government and how certain consensus and conflict solutions were reached. For example, a critical moment in the “access” debate was at the NEC Conference in 1992 at Broederstroom where it was agreed that free access to all was a difficult goal to attain, within the context of gross education inequalities and scarce resources (Gerwel, 1992).

The second part of the study investigated the conceptions of access to education at school and classroom levels. It paid attention to the manifestation of the concept in real school contexts. I used comparative case studies of two high schools from different social contexts. The first school was in a township that was well known for its involvement in the Soweto Uprising of 1976. The second was a predominantly white middle class high school in Pretoria that was removed from these historical events. These schools are worlds apart in terms of their history and experiences of learners, parents and teachers. The socio-economic context of the schools also differ in that the first school serves working class communities in which most learners could be described as from poor families and even indigent, yet the school has produced some of South Africa’s high flying politicians. On the other hand, Gauteng High School is situated in a high-middle class suburb and has also produced people of high standing.

My interest is on the conceptions of access to education at these two very different high schools, Soweto High School¹³, in Soweto outside Johannesburg and Gauteng

¹³ Soweto High School is a pseudonym, and according to my knowledge there is no school with this name in Soweto.

High School¹⁴. In the first instance my interest was on how national policies that are meant to facilitate access were implemented. The second point was how two historical events: The Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising, were taught in the light of the fact that ‘official knowledge’ is taught within schools that have their “own histories, tensions, political economics, hierarchies and bureaucratic needs and interest” (Apple, 2003:7). The first question that comes to mind is whether the prevailing histories, tensions and politics would have had any impact on curriculum choices made by teachers.

Why did I choose these events for my research? The rationale for my choice was that 16 June 1976 and the Sharpeville Massacre were not part of the curriculum in the old syllabus and now that the resistance to apartheid has been included as part of the new Grade 9 curriculum, it was interesting to discover whether these events were actually taught and if they were, how it was handled. This is important when one thinks about Apple’s idea of official knowledge that comes from above, which, in spite of government prescriptions, teachers will still find ways of reconstructing the curriculum in a manner that suits them (Apple, 1993). June 16 is about the struggle for education and how the students in Soweto went on a ‘peaceful’ march to protest against Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching. It made sense to choose an event that is relevant to the youth. Added to this, both days, because of their historical significance, have been declared public holidays by the ANC-led government, and because people died in both instances, the teaching of these events, in some ways, affirms the ‘legitimacy’ of the struggle against apartheid. Additionally, history in South Africa has always been a contentious issue with blacks feeling that their history was marginalised in the syllabi of the old government, and even in cases where it was taught, it was held that it was full of racist misrepresentations. It was important for me to examine how these historical events were enacted in two different classrooms.

Once I had decided on the schools, I had to decide on how I was going to collect data for the case studies. I decided that I would first observe teaching of the two historical events, then follow up with in-depth systematic, but semi-structured interviews of the

¹⁴ Gauteng High School is also a pseudonym, and according to my knowledge, there is no school with this name in Gauteng Province.

two History teachers and two groups of learners, comprising of six members each, selected from the two history classes that I observed. This assisted in my understanding of the context within which the selected teachers operate as well as their understanding of the topics in relation to human rights. Principals were interviewed last, after I had been at the school for a reasonable length of time.

4.3 Instrumentation

I developed a package of data gathering instruments for all the data gathering activities that I had planned. These consisted of four different interview schedules for political and educational leaders, principals, teachers and learners. For interview purposes, the interview schedule for political and educational leaders was deliberately divided into distinct periods, with the following landmarks (see Appendix A for the interview schedule):

- (i) The meaning of access during and since the time of the Kliptown Congress (Freedom Charter);
- (ii) The meaning of access during the period of negotiation (1990-1994); and
- (iii) The meaning of access during and after the installation of the new government (1994 –2004).

Questions derived from the above periods were preceded by two introductory questions on the interviewee's understanding of the 'concept of access to education' and another one that was meant to elicit responses that would demonstrate whether or not the respondent believed access to education to be a fundamental human right.

The principal's interview schedule focussed on physical access. Questions covered school policies, student enrolment, parent and community involvement. The rationale for including parent structures was based on the question of the level of parent involvement and the composition of the School Governing Body that could impact on the level of accessibility of the school. After all, a governing body that is not representative could well make decisions that favour certain group of learners while excluding others. The principals' interview schedule is Appendix B.

The educator's interview schedule focused on epistemological access. The scope of questions covered the teaching of sensitive events like the Sharpeville Massacre and

the Soweto Uprising; the selection of content; planning; the choice of textbooks and supplementary material; learners' engagement; and the training and academic background of teachers. I also included a question on whether educators believed that they were sufficiently competent to deal with learners from diverse political and social backgrounds. The aim was to compare educator's teaching style and levels of engagement they could elicit from learners. The educators' interview schedule is Appendix C.

The learner's interview schedule aimed at soliciting a wide range of responses that would reveal their understanding of significant historical days such as, Human Rights Day and Youth Day which are linked to the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising, respectively. The interview schedule also included the affective aspect of history, that is, whether they like history or not; their feelings about the school as well as competence in the language of learning and teaching.

I developed a classroom observation schedule that would direct focus on certain aspects of the classroom practice. The observation schedule had four columns that I used as a guide to keep me focused on teaching styles, learner-participation, text produced by students as well as the resources used in the lesson. I then wrote free hand narratives of each lesson based on the headings of the observation schedule below. Refer to Appendix D for the learners' interview schedule.

A free-hand narrative description of classroom activities

	Activity/Lesson	Interaction	Student Transcripts	Resources/text
1	<u>Student engagement</u> What are students required to? How do students engage in the activity? Do learners have files or workbooks in which they complete activities?	Do learners ask question? What kinds of questions do the learners ask? Do learners respond to questions asked by the teacher?	<u>Analysis of Student Transcripts</u> Copies of texts produced by learners, group or individual students (if available)	<u>Analysis of literary sources from which the teachers draw</u> What textbooks or texts do the teacher draw-on to compose the teaching of the Sharpeville Massacre or Soweto Uprising e.g. Video material, invited speakers, etc?

Table 1: An example of a comprehensive classroom observation schedule that includes components of appendix (F, G and H)

I also developed a form for the analysis of the text used in the classroom (Appendix F). Literary sources used by the educator are arguably the most important part of the curriculum as they provide useful information about whose ‘official’ knowledge is represented. Texts used in the classroom can also provide useful subtle messages about how certain groups of people are represented or misrepresented. A textbook is therefore one classroom artefact on which all other activities are based, as teachers rely on it to organise what would be taught. Apple (1993:49) explains the politics of text selection in this way:

textbooks are surely important in and of themselves. They signify, through their content *and* form, particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organising that vast universe of possible knowledge. They embody what Raymond Williams called selective tradition: someone’s selection, someone’s vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group’s cultural capital disenfranchising other’s.

My initial visits to the schools were to discuss my research plan with teachers and also to request the textbooks or texts so that I could be familiar with these before I began classroom observations. The texts teachers gave me were different despite the fact that both were public schools under one provincial department. At Gauteng High School, I was given ‘student notes’ or a reader, which was a compilation of texts taken from various textbooks. The Head of the History Department could not give me anything else because the reader was also used as a year plan for Grade 9 History. At Soweto High School, the teacher gave me three different books that had been supplied by the Gauteng Department of Education.

Another point to consider is that teachers do find ways to defend or alter the relations between state power and knowledge. Therefore one “cannot assume that what is ‘in’ the text is actually taught. Nor can one assume that what is taught is actually learned” (Apple, 1993:61). Apple also talks about the recontextualisation of knowledge inside classrooms. This means that, no matter how much state planning goes to the curriculum, in the end, teachers will reconstruct that official knowledge.

4.4 Data Gathering

The data required for the first part of the study was gathered through the review and analysis of documentary evidence of critical events in the struggle against apartheid education. Apart from the interviews, the changing meanings or shifts in emphasis in various conceptions of access to education were obtained by analysing policy documents that were produced during the negotiation phase, including the Interim Constitution, Act 200 of 1993. The intellectual analysis of the concept also includes selected papers, commentary and academic material on the history of the education struggle in South Africa. The sampling criteria for document selection was as follows:

- (i) Documents should have been developed with an aim to inform policy e.g. NEPI documents or critical events such as the National Education Conference in 1992 and documents released by anti-apartheid movement such as the NECC.
- (ii) The time factor, i.e. when was the document released (Freedom Charter in 1955, policies which came shortly after independence - 1995, 1996, 1997 and the most recent policies.
- (iii) The third criterion was that the document should be an official policy document.

A document did not need to satisfy all three criteria.

For the purpose of analysis and ease of reference, documents were arranged into three major periods discussed below:

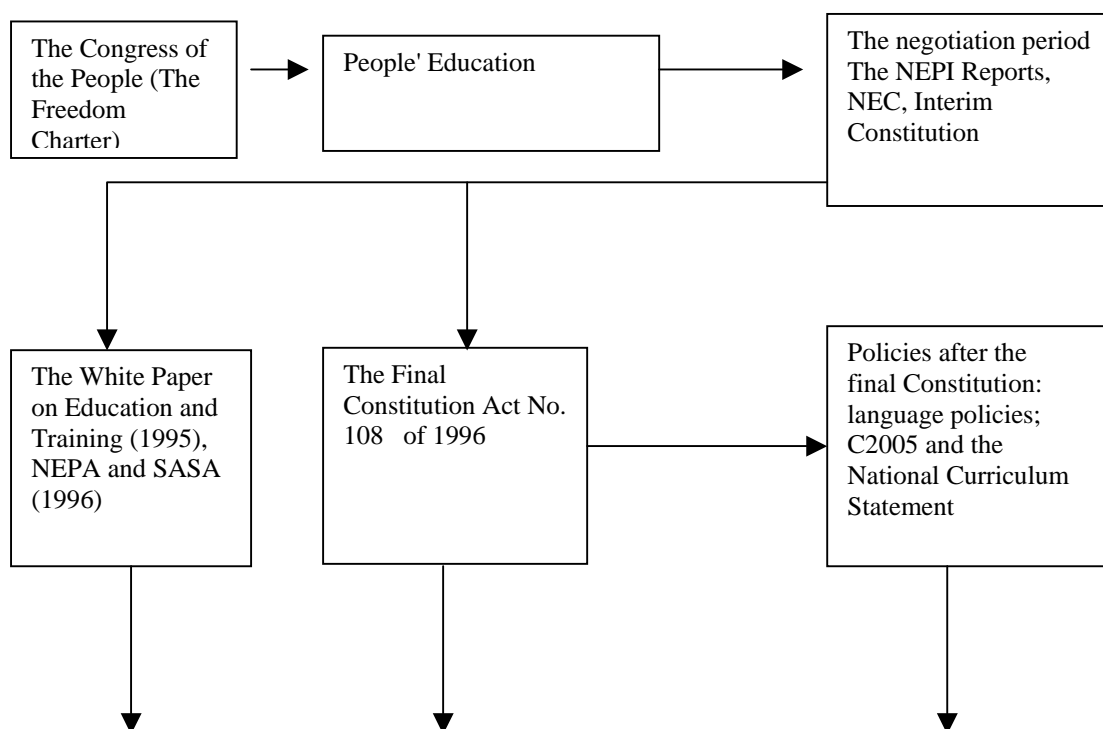
The first period examines the meaning of access during and since the time of the Kliptown Congress and the Freedom Charter (1955-1989). The difficulty I experienced in finding sources from which I could distil the conceptions of access to education just before and the years after the adoption of the Freedom Charter, and the decade thereafter, necessitated the use of Kallaway's (1984) and Hyslop's (1999) authoritative works on the history of black education from 1940-1990 as the primary source from which to trace the journey of the concept of access to education. Other authors have been accessed to supplement the main sources. I also identified signposts for various conceptions of access to education. These were the Congress of

the People, the decade of the 1970s with the Soweto Uprising and the People's Education that became a national campaign aimed at providing a politically accepted education alternative to Bantu Education and its structures.

The second period, examines the meaning of access during the period of negotiations (1990-1994). The policy documents in this periods are: *the National Education Policy Investigation Reports; the 1992 National Education Conference Report, The ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa adopted at the NEC and The Interim Constitution of 1993*. The analysis showed that, although this period is loosely identified as from 1990-1994, in practice, the negotiations went beyond 1994 and influenced the first education policies. The influence of a negotiated settlement on early education policies has been discussed in detail in the analysis of new education policies such as the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995.

The third period which examines the meaning of access during and after the installation of the new government (1994-2004) includes the analysis of selected framework policies, and not all the policies of the Department of Education.

The diagram below indicates signposts of important policies and critical moments in the biography of the concept of “access to education”.



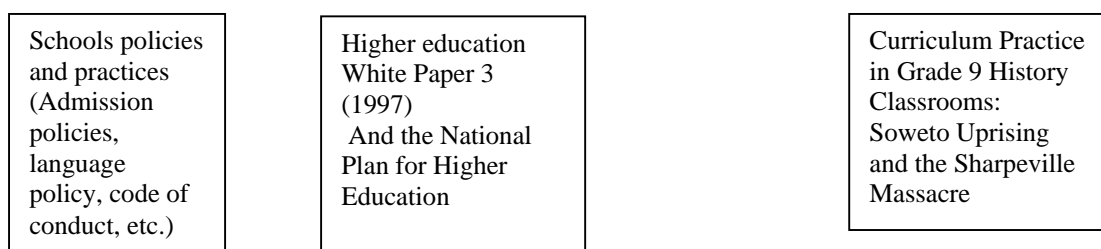


Diagram 1: Signposts

The analysis of the above documents was followed by in-depth interviews of key individuals who were involved in policymaking processes, both within and outside government. The real names of these people have been changed to conceal their identities.

The data was collected through a succession of interviews of political and educational leaders who were involved in the struggle, either by engaging in intellectual debates on the issues pertaining to the conceptions of access to education in South Africa or by participating in policy initiatives of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee. Some interviewees had graduated from such initiatives to become senior officials who served in the Department of Education after the African National Congress (ANC) won the first democratic elections in 1994. In some ways the employment of education activists by the new Department of Education may be seen as a continuation of the policy making process that began in the negotiation phase (in 1990), when the liberation movement was ‘preparing to govern’.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain oral accounts, where possible, of how the concept of “access to education” evolved over time in education policy deliberations that preceded, anticipated, and followed a change in government and how certain compromises were reached. Apart from obtaining first-hand accounts of some key role-players’ conceptions of access when they were in the education struggle and their reflections were also significant in understanding how their conceptions were influenced by the context and realities of what was ‘doable’ when they worked as policymakers within the new Department of Education. The voices of education activists who did not join the government, but went to the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) provided another important post-apartheid

University of Pretoria etd – Gamede, T (2005)

perspective. The authentic data provided by some participants on the internal dynamics of the policy-making processes enriched the study. Below are brief biographical details of the interviewees:

Muzi grew up in a small rural community in Mooi River, Natal. This community did not have a high school for Africans, and Muzi and other learners in the village formed a fundraising organisation that raised funds to provide financial assistance to learners who did not have financial resources to attend high school in the neighbouring townships of Pietermaritzburg and Howick. Muzi later settled in Soweto and was involved in civic organisations and the Soweto Parents' Committee, which later became the National Education Crisis Committee. He now works for a large investment company in Johannesburg.

Robert was also involved in the struggle against apartheid education and served as a General Secretary of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee. He also gave a presentation at the National Education Conference at Broederstroom in 1992 on the revival of the culture of learning and teaching. Robert was appointed as a senior official in the new Department of Education. At the time of the research, Robert held an important position in a large parastatal.

Mongi was the first Director-General of the Department of Education, which means that he presided over the development and implementation of education policies during the first five years of democracy. At the time of the interview he was working at an education institution.

Mazwi was a prominent community member in a township North of Pretoria and was also involved in the struggle against apartheid education. In the period of the People's Education, he made speeches at conferences on the concept of People's Education. Mazwi holds a senior position in the administration of the City of Pretoria.

Nicholas was involved in the negotiation period between 1990 and 1994. He was the convener of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). He also worked for the Education Development Trust and at the time of the interview he was a Chief Executive Officer of a large policy research organisation.

Jay made an intellectual input on the writing of papers on Adult Education (AE) and the People's Education. At the time of the interview, he was a director in a statutory organisation that deals with quality assurance issues.

Gaining access to the above participants was not easy. Therefore, I wanted to make things as easy for them as possible, by sending them a brief summary of my intended study that explained broadly why my research was important, and why they were relevant for the study. I then made appointments to see the interviewees. The interviews were restricted to approximately an hour because all had busy schedules. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I had to select important questions that I knew would elicit the core of their conceptions of access and their reflections on the actualisation of the concept in education policies and at school levels. In some cases I would ask a basic question on their conceptions of access to education and the responses would cover most of what I wanted. In such cases, I would only ask specific questions to fill in the gaps.

The second question on how the concept of access as an expression of human rights is interpreted at school and classroom level was answered through two case studies that were an in-depth qualitative study of the conceptions of access to education and its manifestation at school and classroom level. Three History teachers were observed and also interviewed. The purpose was to examine their understandings of the concept of "access to education" in relation to epistemological access and how their understanding influenced their classroom practices. In-depth interviews took place at the end of the observation period. However, we had informal conversations in between classes.

Access to Gauteng High School was not difficult. The principal's office gave permission and referred me to the Head of the History Department. At the meeting with the Head of Department in February 2003, he gave me the names of teachers that I would observe. The Head also provided me with a reader or 'student notes' that all Grade 9 classes were using. In our conversation about the teaching of history in the school, the Head of the History Department expressed views about the new history curriculum that are very important if one considers the fact that he had compiled the

‘student notes’ and that he was the only person to make policy decisions about the teaching of history in the whole school. In actual fact, the Head had powers to ‘declare what would be official knowledge’ in the history curriculum of the school. At the end of our meeting, the Head introduced me to the two selected Grade 9 teachers. He also indicated to me that I would have to wait until October 2003 to observe the teaching of South African history, as it was taught in the last term, and only if there was time left before the final examination.

Gaining access to the Grade 9 teacher at Soweto High School was slightly different. First the principal gave me the name of the teacher that I would observe. My first meeting with the teacher was aimed at explaining the purpose of my research and to request his year plan and textbooks or any text that he was using in the teaching of Grade 9. He handed me three textbooks that had been supplied by the Department of Education and the plan of the school, including Grade 9 Human and Social Sciences curriculum. However, he did not have a micro plan of the content that he was planning to cover either that term or in a year.

Seeing that my interest was in the teaching of specific historical events, I decided not to test the instruments at separate schools. Instead, I resolved to observe all the lessons and classroom activities that preceded the teaching of the actual events that were the target of my research. The reason for this was to give myself sufficient time to understand the teaching styles of those teachers that I would be observing and to refine my observation instrument to suit the teacher’s style. The other reason was to get to know the practices of a particular school so that I would situate my observation of epistemological access within the context of the school.

At Gauteng High School, there was no period dedicated to a specific event in South African history, save for two periods that were used to show a historical film: *A Dry White Season*. The teachers followed student notes and ended up teaching South African history in a form of ‘headline’ coverage. I then decided that I would write notes of everything that took place or was taught or mentioned in history classes and thereafter I would go over the notes to select the content that was relevant to my research.

At Soweto High School, the teacher spent more time on the two events and also on the apartheid laws that led to the Sharpeville March and the Soweto Uprising. It was therefore relatively easy to take detailed notes on the teaching of the two events, and to write the narrative in the manner that the teacher presented it.

I spent approximately four weeks at Gauteng High School. The reason was that all Grade 9 learners had to do Common Tasks Assessment (CTAs). CTAs are a policy requirement for Grade 9 learners in all public schools. I stayed at the school until the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre had been taught. When I left the school, learners were to start writing their final examinations within a week. Teachers at Gauteng High School did not miss a day of school and they informed me if there were events that were going to affect their classes. The Grade 9 History teacher at Soweto High School fell ill and was on sick leave for a whole week. However, this did not have a negative impact on the programme for classroom observations because the two events were taught, but I had to go back to Soweto for more information later in the year.

It is important to point out that at Gauteng High School I observed two classes with two different teachers, while at Soweto High School there was only one teacher for two classes.

4.5 Data analysis and writing up the research

Since this study is about the biography of the concept of ‘access to education’ within a human rights discourse in education policies, the primary unit of analysis is the concept of ‘access to education’. The secondary units of analysis are the classroom and the school.

The data I obtained through interviews was divided into two types. The first was data from the political and education leaders and then the school level data. It was therefore important that I use a multi-level framework analysis, which meant analysing data at different levels so that I could answer the two research questions. The first part was the analysis of historical documents such as the Freedom Charter and key literature on the struggle against apartheid education. This part of the story

has been integrated into the discussion on the ‘intellectual legacy of the concept of access to education’. The second part of the question has been answered through the analysis of education policies and telling a story of how the concept of “access to education” is reflected in current education policies.

The second part of the data that I analysed was the data collected from schools. These data have been used to answer the second question of my research, that is, how the concept of access to education is interpreted at school and classroom level. The data from principal interviews have been used to understand how schools interpreted government policies aimed at increasing access to education institutions. The data from teachers were analysed to explore ways in which teachers dealt with two historical events mentioned earlier in the discussion. It was important for me to get a sense of how teachers dealt with sensitive historical events and of how choices were made regarding the selection of material that was used, particularly textbooks and other artefacts.

The writing up of the research report was at two levels. Since this was a multi-case study, each case was written up separately at a descriptive level. This level took place concurrently with the gathering of data from various sources. The second level was analytic and interpretive. At this level, I included a chapter in which I compared the two cases. Both cases were written like a story, using informal language where appropriate. I also had to use subheadings sparingly so as to preserve the flow of the story.

4.6 Interpretation of data

To analyse and interpret data from interviews I relied largely on Freeman’s 1996 article entitled, *To Take them at their Word: Language Data in the Study of Teachers’ Knowledge*. Freeman provides two levels of analysing discourse or interviews, namely: representational and presentation. The representational level is a lower order level that takes speakers at their word. What they say is taken to be true and uncontested. The presentational level pays attention to the use of language, the circumstances of the speaker and the context. This method of analysing interviews

ensures that the validity of data comes from “within the language itself” (Freeman, 1996:750). Thus confirming Freeman’s assertion that:

The truth or accuracy of data cannot simply be confirmed through a process of triangulation or reference to an external world. Instead, it is established in part by the understanding it triggers in those who hear or read it (Freeman, 1996:750).

4.7 Transcriptions and data coding

I started by transcribing the tapes myself, but decided later to enlist two qualified persons to transcribe the audio-taped interviews for me. The first person was a bilingual female who spoke English and Afrikaans. I gave her transcripts from Gauteng High School that is a predominantly white school. The second service provider was a female who spoke English and Xitsonga as well as Sesotho sa Lebowa. She transcribed the interviews I recorded at Soweto High School. It was important for me to get appropriate service providers who would understand different accents and language use. All the interviews were transcribed almost verbatim except in instances where the speakers were inaudible. For quality assurance, I also listened to the tapes to identify inaccuracies before printing the documents.

For data coding, I read the texts and underlined the words and phrases related to the concept of ‘access to education’. Then I re-read again until the text made sense and all the time noting patterns or issues that appeared more than once within an interview and across interviews. These were later arranged into themes.

4.8 Ensuring Validity

Validity in educational research, particularly in case study research has been debated for a long time. Whilst researchers with a positivist orientation have always questioned the validity of case study research, some are beginning to accept that it is possible to increase validity even in case study research. In my study, validity has been ensured by applying the following strategies:

4.8.1 Thick, rich descriptions

The thesis includes thick, rich descriptions providing as much detail as possible about the school context, events that took place in the school and the classroom as well as citations of interviews. The purpose of the descriptions is to create a picture of the settings in the reader's mind. Thick descriptions are also useful in that they enable readers "to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts" (Creswell & Miller, 200:129).

4.8.2 Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data. What is most important about triangulation is that the data collected from different sources should converge on the "same set of findings" (Yin: 1999:79). In this study, data was collected by means of interviews with various key people, principals, teachers and learners. Classroom observations, analysis of school policies and policy documents provided a rich data for the study.

4.8.3 The audit trail

In order to allow other researchers to interrogate the research findings, I transcribed and translated, where applicable, all interviews. I also kept a record of all the data that were collected from different sources. Data capturing was done on MS Word.

CHAPTER 5

THE INTELLECTUAL LEGACY OF THE CONCEPT ‘ACCESS TO EDUCATION’

The doors of learning and culture shall be opened! (The Freedom Charter, 1955)

The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgment, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society (Declaration of the Right of the Child, 1959)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the intellectual legacy of the concept of ‘access to education’ in South Africa. The thrust of this chapter is to present the changing meanings or conceptions of ‘access to education’ as reflected in the struggle against apartheid education over time. This critical narrative follows the journey of the concept since the vision to open the ‘doors of learning and culture’ appeared in the Freedom Charter in 1955, to the integration of the concept in the education policies of the first democratically elected government, post 1994.

The narrative has been built on data collected through a succession of interviews with political and educational leaders who were involved in the struggle, through intellectual debates on issues pertaining to the conceptions of access to education in South Africa or through participation in various policy initiatives such as the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC). Some interviewees have graduated from such initiatives to become senior officials in the government Department of Education after the African National Congress (ANC) won the first democratic elections in 1994. In some way, the employment of education activists by the new Department of Education could be seen as a continuation of the policy making process that began in the negotiation phase (in 1990), when the liberation movement was ‘preparing to govern’. This point was made by Nicholas, who was involved in the negotiation period in 1992.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain oral accounts, where possible, of how the concept of ‘access’ evolved over time in the struggles against apartheid education to negotiations with the apartheid government up to policies of the new government. It also examines the process of how certain conflicts, consensus and compromises were reached. Apart from obtaining first hand accounts of some key role-players’ conceptions of access when they were in the education struggle, their retrospective accounts are also significant in understanding how their conceptions were influenced by the context and realities of what was doable when they worked as policymakers in the new Department of Education. The voices of education activists who did not join government, but went to the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), provided another important post-apartheid perspective on the concept of ‘access’.

In addition to interviews, the changing meanings or shifts in emphasis in various conceptions of the term were obtained by analysing policy documents that were produced during the negotiation phase, including the Interim Constitution, Act 200 of 1993. The intellectual analysis of the concept also includes selected papers, commentary and academic material on the history of the education struggle in South Africa.

For the purpose of analysis and ease of reference, documents have been categorised into three main periods, namely:

- (i) The meaning of access since the time of the Kliptown Congress, where the Freedom Charter (1955-1989) was adopted. For information on the period before the Freedom Charter and immediately after, I used Kallaway (1984) and Hyslop (1999) as main authoritative sources because from which I distilled conceptions of access to education. Other signposts, in addition to the Congress of the People, is the decade of the 1970s with the Soweto Uprising and the era of the People’s Education in the 1980s, that developed into a national campaign to provide a politically acceptable education alternative to Bantu Education and its structures.
- (ii) The meaning of access during the period of negotiations (1990-1994). Although this period is loosely identified as covering the years 1990-1994,

it is important to understand that, in practice, the negotiations went beyond 1994 into the first education policies. The former Director-General in the Department of Education pointed out in an interview that the early years of policy-development after 1994 were characterised by the privileged trying to retain those privileges and the previously disadvantaged wanting to share the privileges, wanting access to education institutions where they were previously excluded. The influence of a negotiated settlement on early education policies has been discussed in detail in the analysis of new education policies in the Chapter 2.

- (iii) The meaning of access in the decade following the installation of the first democratic government (1994-2004).

The struggle against apartheid education in general, and Bantu Education in particular, was primarily a struggle for equal access to education. In an attempt to trace the biography of the concept of 'access to education' in South Africa, I also refer to how the international community has tried to concretise the right to education by putting in place mechanisms to increase access to education. For example, in an attempt to universalise basic education, the Education for All Conference at Jomtien, tried to foster compliance among member nations by setting targets for the year 2015 in which all children would have access to free and compulsory basic education (Jansen, 2003). A brief expose of the international conceptions of education as a human right include references to the following selected international declarations and conventions: The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); The World Declaration on Education for All (1990); and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

By way of example, I have used three incidents from the United States education system in the 1950s to demonstrate that the struggle for access to education was not a uniquely South African story. At the time that black South Africans were up in arms about the Eiselen Report¹⁵ and the promulgation and implementation of the Bantu

¹⁵ A Commission of Bantu School that was appointed in 1949 to investigate African, Coloured and Indian School education and make recommendations to the National Party Government. The Commission completed its work and issued a Report in 1951. The report was named after the Commission Chair, Dr Eiselen.

Education Act of 1953, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was in and out of courts, fighting laws that excluded African American children from enjoying equal access to education (Orfield, 2004).

5.2 CONCEPTIONS OF ACCESS REFLECTED IN SELECTED INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

It is important to locate the South African struggle for access to education against the backdrop of international movements striving for mass-based education.

5.2.1 The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) makes provision for the enjoyment of education as a human right by declaring in article 26 that:

Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

In addition to facilitating formal access to education by declaring elementary stages ‘free and compulsory’, the declaration went further to describe the kind of education that should be provided. It stipulated that education shall be:

directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious. (Burden, 1991:16)

One could assume, at least at a superficial level, that the inclusion of education as a right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was meant to ensure that nations created space for their young to acquire functional literacy and numeracy as well as skills that would enable them to participate effectively in the economy of their countries. At the time of the declaration, the international community was aware that nations were not providing equal access to education to all children. As recently as 1950, the education institutions in the United States were still segregated on the basis of race (Orfield, 2004). Although the United States government had accepted the importance of education as a human right and had taken measures to equalise

educational facilities, there was still resistance against ‘open access’ to education institutions. This demonstrates the point that access to education has always been a contested terrain.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is said to have been steadfast in questioning the legitimacy and the morality of the law that continued to segregate learners on the basis of colour. This civil rights movement set out to prove, in a series of court cases that the “separate but equal”¹⁶ doctrine did not meet the “equality criterion”. In 1950, the court ruled in favour of a black student at the University of Oklahoma who had been permitted to attend classes but had been fenced off from other students. In another case, the University of Texas Law School had been ordered to admit a black student. The State of Texas had initially created a makeshift law school in order to avoid admitting blacks into the University of Texas Law School¹⁷.

In both cases, the emphasis was on physical access to education, what the judges referred to as ‘tangible’ aspects of education, namely, buildings, curricula, qualification of teachers and salaries. However, the important landmark in the history of American education is *Brown v. the Board of Education Case*. Judge Albie Sachs describes it as the most important judgement of the 20th century. This case represents a shift in the conception of access to education as merely the provision of facilities or enrolment of students at school and universities, to what the judges referred to as the ‘intangible’ aspects of education. The Supreme Court of the United States made a landmark ruling that would shape the concept of access to education in the United States Education System. The court heard argument that the education system that segregated children on the basis of race, even though the tangible facilities had been equalised, was providing unequal education and was therefore unconstitutional. On May 17 1954, five justices were unanimous in the landmark ruling that separate cannot be equal! Delivering the opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Warren said:

¹⁶ usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/fact/democrac/36.htm

¹⁷ usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/fact/democrac/36.htm

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is the principle (sic) instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful whether any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of minority groups of equal education opportunities? We believe it does.¹⁸

Apart from demonstrating the point that the struggle for access to education is not unique to South Africa, the cases also make valuable points about conceptions of access to education.

First, oppressed people are inclined to foreground formal access to education in their struggle for equality in education. This is because physical access is ‘tangible’, measurable, visible, comparable, and easy to describe.

Second, governments are also more inclined to respond to the charges of unequal access to education by providing more facilities and a core curriculum in an attempt to equalise access to education.

The third conception is epistemological access, and because it is ‘intangible’ and does not lend itself to objective measurement, it remains relatively obscured, and is difficult to include in the debates about access to education.

Judge Albie Sachs, speaking at the Specialist International Comparative Conference on Equal Education Opportunities, 50th Anniversary of *Brown v Board of Education*, referred to *Brown* as the “greatest legal decision of the 20th Century in the world.”¹⁹ He continued to say that this judgement was also a “huge victory” for human dignity,

¹⁸ www.Nationalcenter.org/brown.html

¹⁹ Transcripts produced by the University of Pretoria

and was not only a challenge to the United States, but “it was a challenge to apartheid...to colonialism...” (Sachs, 2004).

Legislating on the national core curriculum, whilst helpful and important, would not necessarily eliminate unequal access to knowledge as it is difficult, if not impossible, to control the covert curriculum and other ‘intangible’ aspects of the learning experience. The reference of the Court to the role of education as helping children to adjust ‘normally to their environment’ could be interpreted to mean that integrated schools provide a richer learning experience, in the form of inter-social and intercultural experiences, than single-race or single-ethnic education institutions.

5.2.2 The World Declaration on Education for All (1990)

Concerned about elitist approaches to education that left the poor and illiterate on the margins of the world economies, the international community congregated at the World Conference on Education for All (in 1990) at Jomtien, Thailand, to address the question of education as a human right that should be made available to all. Burden claims that the term ‘Education for All’:

Originated during the last few decades as the conviction grew that all learners have the right to enjoy equal access to quality education, irrespective of their perceived potential or circumstances. (Burden, 1999:10)

The World Declaration of Education for All and the Framework for Action for Meeting Basic Learning Needs provide the international vision of the expansion of basic education, which is broader than primary schooling (DoE, 2000). Article 1 of the Declaration says the following about basic education:

Every person-child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from education opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning...” (DoE, 1995: 40)

According to the Department of Education Report (2000), Article 2 of the Declaration, expanded access to basic education includes:

Universalising access to basic education; focuses on learning acquisition; broadening the scope for basic education; enhancing the environment for learning and strengthening partnerships. (p.1)

The provision of this Declaration complements Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by providing detail of what basic education should entail. The Framework of Action for Meeting Basic Learning Needs provides an implementation plan to maximise compliance with the Declaration.

The Jomtien Conference had set targets for the complete universalisation of access to basic education by 2000, which was not met by member nations (Jansen, 2003). In his questioning of the value of setting ‘targets’ that are difficult to meet, Jansen raises the different interpretation of universal primary schooling. He asks whether it means:

That all children in the relevant age-cohort should complete the final year of primary schooling in 2015. That all children should eventually complete primary schooling by 2015. That the school system has the capacity to enrol all eligible primary children by 2015. That by 2015 all children should be able to join and complete primary school. (Jansen, 2003:8)

While these questions are meant to question the mechanics and politics of target setting, they also demonstrate the complexity of the concept of access to education. Jansen (2003) also calls for clarity of concepts such as ‘primary schooling’ and ‘basic education’, as these would have implications on the strategies to meet targets for universal education. Targets, as a way to monitor compliance, could impact negatively on the good intentions of increasing access to education in that they could fall into the trap of overemphasising physical access (counting physical enrolments and completion rates) at the expense of epistemological access (Jansen, 2003).

5.2.3 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child attempts to address the rights of children to quality education. It addresses different aspects of education provision such as the provision of basic education, post-compulsory education, technical and higher education. Article 28 demands that:

Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available to all.
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education. Make them available to every child and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.
- (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.
- (d) Make vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all.
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates. (Burden, 1999:17)

In addition to ensuring basic education needs of every child, the Convention also seeks to promote and encourage co-operation between countries so that they can share technical and scientific information that will benefit the child.

5.3 THE MEANING OF ACCESS SINCE THE TIME OF THE KLIPTOWN CONGRESS AND THE ADOPTION OF THE FREEDOM CHARTER (1955- 1989)

The key issue at this time was the birth of the concept of ‘access to education’ embedded in the memorable phrase ‘the doors of learning and culture shall be opened’ What did this mean in terms of access? What was it responding to in the historical context of the time? What happened to the meaning of access to education from 1955 onwards? As an African and a qualified linguist, I believe in the power of words. I believe that people choose words that accurately convey their feelings in relation to whom they are speaking. Therefore, to me, it was interesting that the people who drafted the Freedom Charter chose to use the metaphor of opening doors to reflect how people felt about being shut out of the education system. Why did they not say something like “people shall have access to education” or “education shall be a human right”? Why choose the analogy of a door? There is no way of knowing why, except to situate these words within what was happening before and after the declaration of the Freedom Charter.

To answer these questions, important landmarks in the history of the concept of access to education would be examined. The discussion includes attempts by education leaders to protest against the Bantu Education Act; protests against the 1959 law that was to separate higher education institutions according to race and ethnicity; the 1976 student revolt; and the birth of ‘people’s education’ between 1984/85. The last section examines the conceptions of access that framed the negotiations in the period 1990-1994.

In order to situate the concept of ‘access in education’ within the prevailing education and social conditions of the 1950s, the discussion first looks back at the state of education provision for Africans before the Freedom Charter and before the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Jonathan Hyslop, in his book *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1940 –1990* and Peter Kallaway (1984) in *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*, provide an authoritative historical account and analysis of the state of education for the people who were classified as natives and later Africans, from 1940 until the promulgation of Bantu Education Act and the resistance to it. For the purpose of this study, the analysis will extract only on the issues that are related to access to education during this period.

5.3.1 Conceptions of access to education in African schools

Prior to the rise to power of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1948, the education of Africans was primarily mission school education. During this time, there were a few black “elites”, who had been educated in the prestigious mission colleges such as Lovedale and Healdtown (Hyslop, 1999). The call for the opening of the ‘doors of learning and culture’ did not occur in a vacuum. During the 1940s and early 1950s the majority of urban black youth were outside the schooling system because of the shortage of schools for black people. Commenting on the plight of youth in the decade between 1940-1950, Hyslop records that:

The provincially administered system of black education, which depended heavily on mission schools with their limited state subsidy, bypassed the mass of black urban youth. (Hyslop, 1999:2)

The uncontrollability of the urban black youth and the increase in crime rate were both attributed to the shortage of schools. As a result “a wide spectrum of dominant class opinion had come to see the extension of mass schooling as an answer to the problem” (Hyslop, 1999:2). The demand for popular education is said to have been too much for the mission schooling system that was already in a “state of near collapse” (Hyslop, 1999:2), as it was too poor and small to cope with large numbers of pupils. Despite overcrowded classrooms and overworked teachers, “parents were desperate to get their children into schools filled beyond capacity” (Lodge, 1984:266). These conditions created space for the government to begin selling the policy of Bantu Education that would provide mass education to blacks and in that way “maintain economic stability while trying to address urgent problems of urban restructuring and political control” (Hyslop, 1999:2). Another reason for the demand of mass schooling was to provide for the needs of the industry, as schooling systems were expected to assist economic growth (Molteno, 1984). The preoccupation with the economy could also be seen in the way that those who wanted mass schooling for blacks used the ‘the needs of the industry’ as a motivation. Similarly, opponents of mass-based schooling for blacks also used industry as a motivation. Molteno states:

There was calculated opposition to the development of schooling from within the dominant classes on the grounds that it could be politically dangerous and even economically disadvantageous to capitalist interest. (Molteno, 1984:72)

Another issue of concern with the mission schooling system was the high drop-out rate among the minority of urban black youth that attended mission schools. Hyslop (1999) attributes the high-drop out rates to poor state provision, especially in the Cape where only 50 percent of learners who entered school were reported to have studied beyond the “first two years of school and only two percent reached beyond Standard 6” (quoting Edgar Brooks: 1999:3). The high drop-out rate in this period is confirmed by Venter²⁰ (1979) who, in defence of the National Party government against accusations that it was not doing enough to improve black education, pointed out that “before 1960, only one out of every 20 pupils admitted to primary school eventually passed Standard 8” (Venter, 1979:8).

²⁰ Venter was the Chief Research Officer for the Human Sciences Research Council and had been invited to present a paper as a response to four papers that were presented at the 10th anniversary of the Human Science Research Council on 17-20 September 1979.

The call for mass education put pressure on the mission schools to admit more learners than they could afford to with their limited resources, which led to even high drop-out rates. By overextending themselves, “the schools failed both the potential pupils they excluded and the minority of actual pupils they took in” (Hyslop, 1999:3). Here we see the interplay between physical and epistemological access. The lack of space and overcrowding had a negative impact on the quality of education, and this in turn, led to even more learners failing or dropping out. This gave the apartheid government more ammunition to criticise mission education, as if the conditions in schools were not the creation of the government.

The call for free universal education came from different quarters. It appeared on the banners and posters at a mass demonstration of black teachers in 1944 (Molteno, 1984). The teachers were protesting against low salaries and better working conditions. Another call is reported to have been from the Natal Bantu Parent’s Association in 1939, who demanded for native children schooling that was equal to that of other non-Europeans and also free (Molteno, 1984). Later, in 1946-1947, in his presidential address to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), Edgar Brookes is reported to have called for compulsory education for black children. This call was not based on the understanding of children’s right to education or the economic needs of the country but compulsory education was seen as a mechanism to keep urban black youth off the streets, and in that way combat crime (Hyslop, 1999). The issue of compulsory education for black children as a measure to combat crime is captured eloquently in the De Villiers Commission Report in 1948 (as quoted in Hyslop: 1999). It says:

A number of witnesses, including responsible municipal officials contended, in evidence before this Commission, that juvenile delinquency among Natives was assuming alarming proportions, especially on the Rand, and that compelling all Native children of school age to attend school would reduce the incidence of delinquency. It was argued that the children, being usefully occupied during part of the day, would acquire habits of orderliness and industry, and become amenable to discipline. (Hyslop, 1999:4)

The release of the infamous Eiselen Report in 1951 and its recommendations of Bantu Education came as a blow to the already troubled education for Africans. It is said that teachers and parents did not understand the impact the proposed education system

would have on learners. Parents were grateful that their children would be accommodated in schools and the curriculum content was not paramount in their minds. Speaking about their attempts at warning black parents about the implications of Bantu Education, Mphahlele in his biography written by Manganyi claims that:

In general, African parents in those days were not the kind that would spend sleepless nights over matters of this kind in spite of the fact that it was a period of political ferment against ‘unjust laws’. (Manganyi, 1983:99)

Parents were not the only ones who did not understand the full implications of Bantu Education. Kallaway (2002:12) raises the point that research done on one of the premier churches that were involved with African education “demonstrates convincingly that there was a good deal of naïveté and relief on the part of the White mission authorities when the proposals were first announced”. They were happy that the government was finally taking full responsibility for the education of Africans. The African National Congress is also reported to have been caught napping. Mphahlele says that it took a long time for the ANC to ‘digest’ the message of their campaign in 1951 and 1952. As late as 1956, Professor Z.K. Mathews, after Chief Albert Luthuli had called for a Commission of Enquiry into Bantu Education, is reported in Mphahlele’s biography to have said in a letter to a friend:

the more I think about the system of education under review, the more I am satisfied that the underlying philosophy and the administration of it are even more important than the content of syllabus, etc. (Manganyi, 1983:145)

The fact that many parents, some teachers, white mission authorities and even the liberation movement did not initially understand the full implications of Bantu Education can only be understood within the context of the lack of education infrastructure, coupled with a desperate need for mass education for blacks. For this group, the need to see children and youths in schools superseded the need to scrutinise the implications of Bantu Education for epistemological access.

The above discussion demonstrates how the meaning of access, during this period, was shaped largely by the context of deprivation, and therefore prized physical access and infrastructure over the curriculum, or epistemological access. The Freedom

Charter could be seen as the first attempt by the liberation movement to spell out in written form the kind of education that the people wanted. It can also be seen as the beginning of a formal starting point at not only spelling out what the ‘people’ wanted as far as education was concerned, but also as a first attempt at shaping the people’s conceptions of access to education. From that time onwards, the concept of access to education travelled, took the twists and turns, highs and lows, until the beginning of the 1970’s decade that would see the Soweto Uprising. At times, people were swept along by the “mighty torrents of history” (Manganyi, 1983:145).

5.3.2 The Freedom Charter, 1955

This historic document is seen as a milestone in the fight for equality and freedom for all South Africans. This is reflected in a letter²¹ written by Nelson Mandela in June 1956, in which he stated that the adoption of the Freedom Charter was recognised by the local and international community as an “event of major political significance” in the life of South Africa. Mandela quotes Chief Albert Luthuli’s message to the Congress of the People. Luthuli was the President of the ANC and had been banned from attending gatherings. The message said:

Why will this assembly be significant and unique? Its size, I hope, will make it unique. But above all its multi-racial nature and its noble objectives will make it unique, because it will be the first time in the history of our multiracial nation that its people from all walks of life will meet as equals, irrespective of race, colour and creed, to formulate a Freedom Charter for all people in the country.²²

The Freedom Charter, besides being seen as an inclusive document that came out of a historic congress of all races, it is seen by most Africans as a revolutionary document which states in “simple and clear terms the demand of the people” (Unknown delegate, 1980:2²³). In an essay written on the 25th anniversary of the Congress of the People in 1980, a delegate to the Congress of the People describes the submissions that different regions sent to the organisers and how the demands were similar:

²¹ A quote from one of many letters written by Mandela for the Liberation journal between 1955-1959.

²² (www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1950s/nm55-56.html)

²³ (www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1950s/nm55-56.html)

University of Pretoria etd – Gamede, T (2005)

Day-by-day as the meetings were held and the resolutions began to roll in, it was remarkable to see the similarities of the demands voiced on all sides although not really surprising when one considers that the people everywhere suffered from the same disabilities. The complaint everywhere was first and foremost about the iniquitous pass laws, then about Bantu Education, forced removals²⁴ ...

The same delegate thought that, by adopting the Freedom Charter, the Congress of the People had “signposted the way to another and better South Africa”. He continues to say that “in the Freedom Charter the people set out the details of the kind of South African society they wanted to see when the day for liberation comes”.²⁵ With regard to education, the Freedom Charter envisaged a South Africa in which “the doors of learning and culture shall be opened”. Still on education, the Freedom Charter continues to say that:

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit

Teachers shall have all rights of other citizens; and

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

Key people who were interviewed and had played various roles in the struggle against Bantu Education, felt that the analysis of the provisions of the Freedom Charter, particularly the reference to the opening of the doors of “learning and culture” should be understood within the context of what was happening at the time. Mazwi²⁶ reports that at the time “the Apartheid government was literally hell-bent on ensuring that blacks got inferior education”. To him the concept of access to education that is contained in the metaphor has always been open-ended. It meant physical access to schools, but also access to skills that were required in order to get better jobs. He says the doors did not refer to access to education in a narrow sense but also included

²⁴ Delegate writing in Sechaba in 1985. A newsletter of the African National Congress

²⁵ Delegate writing in Sechaba in 1985. A newsletter of the African National Congress

²⁶ Community leader in the struggle against apartheid, pre-1994. See research design for detail.

capacity building in various skills. According to him, the reasons for the emphasis on education and training was that:

Already at that time, all those leaders that came together were quite aware of the criticalness of education in the democratisation of the people, in ensuring that freedom meant something. Otherwise through your vote you can get your freedom, but you remain ignorant, you remain sickly, you remain unskilled, then that kind of freedom remains empty. So therefore, in order to make freedom meaningful there was then this emphasis on education and training.

The emphasis on empowerment of the young people is reflected in the Freedom Charter's reference to not only education that is "free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children" but also in the statement that "higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit".²⁷

Here we see an attempt at addressing the physical dimension. Tothill (1991:57) claims that, the reference to open access to higher education and the giving of "indications of future funding" is a sign that the Freedom Charter was also concerned about equity.

Mazwi also points out that the political and educational leaders at the time were also aware of the correlation between literacy and economic prosperity. They were aware that countries with high standards of literacy and numeracy tended to do well. That is why, the demand for "open doors of learning and culture" was, according to the Congress of the People, a "non negotiable". The concern about literacy is reflected in the Freedom Charter's statement that "adult literacy shall be ended by a mass state education plan" (Freedom Charter). The Freedom Charter was responding to the context in which the majority of black youth and adults were illiterate.

Muzi²⁸ who was actively involved in the various structures or social movements that fought for the transformation of education, felt that the opening of the doors of learning and culture in the Freedom Charter was "an intellectual response by the

²⁷ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html

²⁸ Muzi is a pseudonym of an informant who grew up in Mooi River and played a key role in the civic structures and Soweto Parents Crises Committee, which later became the National Education Co-ordinating Committee. See the research design for more detail.

people at the time to what Bantu Education was unleashing on the people”. According to this response Bantu Education was a tool that “really promised to close all the doors of learning to black people by providing a specific kind of education”. However, Muzi conceded that, because of a large pool of people outside the education system it was:

quite conceivable that the drafters of the Freedom Charter acknowledged that education needed to be extended to reach more and more people. In fact I think at the time they meant free compulsory education.

After the Congress of the People, the Freedom Charter became widely quoted as it was seen as a blueprint of education that the liberation movement would want for the new society. The statement that the “colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished” refers to the Congress of the People’s vision of a non-racial society. It would seem that the dominant conception underlying the Freedom Charter’s concept of “access” was to drop the barriers (“bar”) to physical access to black South Africans. The Freedom Charter’s concerns about nation building or what Tothill (1991) calls community building is reflected in the statement, “The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace.”²⁹

The dimensions of the concept of access to education in this period (1955) can be distilled from the activities that took place to oppose Bantu Education. The primary one being the ANC campaign between 1955 and 1956 that came with the establishment of the African Education Movement (AEM), a structure that was set up to provide alternative education during ANC’s school boycott from 1955-56 (Lodge, 1984). The AEM aimed to establish private schools; cultural clubs and home education programmes. Once established, it was envisaged that parents would withdraw their children from government schools and enrol them in ‘cultural clubs’, which were alternative schools conducting education on an informal basis as they were not allowed to operate as schools (Lodge, 1984). This gesture, on its own, is indicative of the fact that at a political level, liberation movements began to understand that access to education was more than the provision of school places to learners. Establishing cultural clubs was a symbolic rejection of the type of education

²⁹ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html

that was offered in Bantu Education schools. Still, the ordinary people preferred their children to attend government schools because these schools could, at least, provide some form of childcare facilities and educational certification. This choice demonstrates the variations in people's conceptions during this period. One conception emphasised epistemological access at the expense of physical access to education. For this group, probably leaders of the liberation movement, it was better to withdraw learners from state schools. The other side, the ordinary man in the street, adopted a 'half a loaf is better than nothing' attitude, or even went further to use the schools as safe places for their children. The certification also meant better access to the job market.

The focus on the nature and content of education that the African National Congress envisaged for black children can be traced as far back as 1955. Hyslop (1999:71) quotes a 1955 ANC leadership document that defines People's Education for the first time as:

a democratic-liberatory education... it will be democratic in control, organisation and purpose...It will be liberatory in objective because its main object will be to equip the people and the youth to fulfil their historic task of liberating themselves.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the period before and after the Freedom Charter going to the 1970s was a period of reckoning. It was a period, in which black parents became aware of a need to fight for the rights of their children to get quality education, the education that they thought the mission schools were giving them. The discontent about education in mission schools was a consequence of the quality of food (caused by lack of funds) and discipline rather than the curriculum content. Commenting on the shortage of funding and the negative impact this had on the retention of white teachers and attitudes of black students who thought that the mission schools were being spiteful by giving them bad food, Hyslop states:

By the 40s there was no significant sector of dominant class opinion, including missionaries themselves, which did not favour greater state intervention in black education. Heads of mission schools issued a statement at a 1947 meeting in Port Elizabeth that the institutions could not bear their financial burden without greater government involvement. (1999:8)

The ANC is said to have called for some kind of state intervention in 1943 (Lodge, 1984). At the time the high drop-out rates and the exclusion of a large number of urban black youth because of the shortage of schools do not seem to have caused enormous problems, probably because black parents thought that the missionaries were doing them a favour by providing education to their children. They did not think of education as a human right.

The question that could be asked is: to what extent was physical access in focus in the decade after 1940s-1950s? One would say that the shortage of schools and the general lack of funding for black education, which resulted in the shortage of well trained teachers and the high staff turnover of White teachers (mission schools could not afford to pay them the same salaries as what their counterparts were earning in government schools) pushed parents and opinion makers in education to think about physical access first. As mentioned in the above discussion, administrators and educationists were more concerned about the unfavourable crime statistics and the ill discipline of urban black youth which they attributed to the shortage of schools. For this constituency, physical access of children to school was a priority. Further, parents saw these schools as day care centres to keep their children safe and under control when they were at work (Hyslop, 1999). Parents who were themselves illiterate or functionally illiterate did not necessarily understand the effects that Bantu Education would have on their children.

It would be incorrect to claim that this period was characterised by a preoccupation with physical access to education. The reports about how teachers opposed the Eiselen Report between 1951–52 are an indication that some educational leaders understood the impact that Bantu Education would have on access to knowledge for black learners. Mphahlele recalls that:

We travelled to various parts of the Transvaal to address teachers' and parents' meetings.... we warned people against the dangers of the proposed system not only for the child but also for Africans as a people with a historical destiny. This education for slavery had to be resisted because its philosophical underpinnings were wrong. (Manganyi, 1983:98)

By referring to the philosophical underpinnings of Bantu Education, one would argue Mphahlele is referring to epistemological access. He was referring to Bantu Education as a tool of hegemonic control of blacks by whites, and most importantly, he was referring to the fact that Bantu Education was aimed at educating blacks for certain low level positions in the labour market. Interestingly, the ANC is said to have taken a long time to grasp the impact that Bantu Education would have on the education of Africans.

The debates before and after the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, until the Soweto Uprising of 1976 do not seem to have been motivated by an understanding of basic education as a human right. What emerges clearly in this period are struggles that were based on pragmatic reasons, such as a need to increase the employability of black youth, the need to get urban black youth off the streets; and for the missionaries, a need to have the black elite that would assist them in their missionary work of converting people into the Christian faith. It would seem that people were not even aware of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

The other piece of legislation that the National Party government promulgated to consolidate Bantu Education and to make sure it reached the highest level of the education system was the Extension of the University Act of 1959 which laid ground for the establishment of racially and ethnically segregated universities, as a way of consolidating the policy of Bantu Education.

If a black person wanted to attend a white university or a university that was not designated for them, they had to ask for a special permission and motivate why they wanted to attend that university.

5.3.3 The conceptions of the concept of access to education of white liberals

So far, the discussion on the conceptions of access to education in the 1950s to the 1970s has been dominated by the conceptions of access to education of black people and their leaders. An important component that has not been discussed are the

contributions of White liberals in the debate on expanded access to education for black children. According to Hyslop (1999), white liberals formed a very important pressure group. First, the English press is reported to have played a very important role in criticising the government's reluctance to invest on black education and the "lack of secondary and skill training" (1999:137), that was the result of the government's decision to block the expansion of secondary and technical high schools in urban areas in an attempt to force African students to turn to homelands for high school education. The Education Panel (EP), which was a formation of white liberals who opposed Bantu Education, made calls to government that reflected their understanding of the concept of access to education. Their calls for increased spending on black education and teacher training as well as an end to school fees reflects an acknowledgement of the importance of physical access to education, even though their arguments were not based on a human right's framework but on concerns about the implications on the economy of the country. They warned government that:

Unless there was a liberalisation of racial restrictions and more skills training for blacks, the shortage of skilled labour would increase and economic growth would be threatened. (Hyslop, 1999:138)

Their conception of the epistemological dimension indicates the psyche of people who did not want to "rock the boat" too much by suggesting radical changes. Another interpretation could be that they still did not believe that Bantu Education was completely bad for blacks, for instance, even though they called for the 'liberalisation of racial restrictions', they believed that teachers should share the same culture or be the same cultural group as their students. In South Africa, it is common knowledge that 'cultural group' is often used as a euphemism for racial group. In this context, it is not difficult to unmask the meaning of the phrase 'cultural group'. Otherwise why would they recommend the use of Coloured teachers in African schools, unless they assumed that it would be easy for them to fit in because they were of mixed race.

Another glimpse at the Education Panel's conceptions of access to education is revealed in their advocacy for a two-tier system:

One based on the 'best modern standards'. The other aimed at educating the balance of the population as best it can.... The EP argued the division should no longer be on strictly racial lines. There should be an 'advanced

section' of black education, which was equal in quality to White education. (Hyslop, 1999:138)

This paragraph indicates some kind of discomfort with, and not a rejection of (a) schools based on racial divisions; (b) blanket application of Bantu Education for all blacks instead of selecting black children who were perceived as intelligent and putting them in an 'advanced section' of black education, and the rest getting the education that was aimed at "educating the balance of the population as best it can". In other words the rest of black children would continue in Bantu Education schools.

Proposing a two-tier system is an indication that the Education Panel was aware of the limitations of the education content (quality) of Bantu Education, even though they did not think that all blacks had a right to quality education. This suggestion also reflects prejudices that White liberals had about Africans, namely, that they did not believe that all black children were capable of handling the kind of education that was provided to White children, but only a selected few could. It is also not clear what the Education Panel meant by an 'advanced section' for intelligent little black boys and girls. Was this to be located in black schools or White schools? Where would the White children fit in this system? Would they also be divided into intelligent and the average lumped together with black children? It is difficult to say what the White liberals were thinking, at that time. Did they think that it was right for different racial groups to have the same curriculum? The problem is that the suggestion of a two-tier model fell outside the argument of education as a human right.

Fast forward to the early and mid 1970s and you encounter learners who had a high sense of political consciousness (Kallaway, 1984) and who could understand the negative impact of learning and being taught in a language that they did not understand well and that their teachers did not understand either. Although the political context at the time was much more complex, but for the purpose of this project, the language question is understood to have been a detonator of the powder keg that was Bantu Education. The actions of these learners reflect the centrality of language in education. The fact that overcrowded classrooms caused by the shortage of secondary schools and the restructuring of education for blacks, were not enough to cause a revolt until the Bantu Education Department tried to enforce the 50-50

language policy, is testimony to the fact that concerns about physical access, in this situation, took a back seat.

It would be incorrect and perhaps too simplistic to label periods as either foregrounding physical or epistemological access to education because people's conceptions were determined by context. In the early 1970s in Soweto, the focus was on fighting Afrikaans and therefore more about access to the curriculum. In the very same period, one rural area in KwaZulu had no high school, and therefore the focus was on finding high school places for learners who had finished primary school. A respondent commented that in Mooi River, where he grew up, they had no high school and had to raise funds to send students to high schools in Pietermaritzburg. The Black Consciousness Movement seemed to have reached the rural village of Mooi River. Commenting about their bursary project in the 1970s, the respondent said:

I think it was the era of Black Consciousness. Self-reliance was very important. The emphasis was self-reliance. The community taking responsibility for its own destiny or the destiny of its own children. That was the thinking. And I think it was heavily influenced by the black consciousness of the time. Well we indeed succeeded for a few years. It became difficult to sustain it. I think some of us had finished school at the time and working far away from Mooi River. Some moved to Durban and Johannesburg and it became difficult to sustain the project. (Muzi)

In this small rural village with a deprived education infrastructure and poor social conditions, physical access to education was the focus. The pragmatic approach was to first remove the physical barriers. They needed to make sure that more of their counterparts got a senior certificate. Physical access was conceived as a lower order need, one could not think about higher order needs like epistemological access where there were no basic educational resources. Again Muzi:

We took a pragmatic approach. Initially we were focusing on physical access. What are the barriers? We need to help people of this local community of Mooi River, where people don't have matric. We need to give them an opportunity to get matric. ... What are the main obstacles? What are the barriers? It was primarily financial barriers. We mobilised for the building of a high school, which actually materialised further down the line. Let's mobilise for the building of a high school. That's going to take a while for us to achieve that. Therefore in the meantime, let's give a financial platform for kids to be able to go to secondary / higher school in Pietermaritzburg,

Howick, Escort... We funded a few to boarding schools. Therefore, it was purely financial access at that stage. And we did not really have capacity to begin to say how appropriate? Neither did we believe that we had the power as the Mooi River community, to influence the content....

The above response raises a very important point about the dimensions of access to education, and how these are satisfied as needs. First, he makes a point that physical access is not only basic but is also achievable if communities are prepared to work hard. The epistemological dimension, on the other hand, is difficult to attain because it is not as 'tangible', and requires some kind of collective power to challenge it. They were too busy trying to put together the resources that would facilitate physical access to high school to even begin to examine or ask questions about the appropriateness of the curriculum. He also admits that as a small rural community, they did not think that they had the "power to influence the content". However, when he became a member of the NECC, a national body, they were able to speak on curriculum issues.

5.4 The People's Education Movement (1984 - 1989)

The political situation subsequent to the Soweto Uprising was marked by a complete breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning in township schools. No amount of government spending could convince black children to appreciate improvement in a system that they regarded as oppressive. However, at the NECC conference in Durban (1986), it was decided that students should go back to school, as it would be easy to organise them in schools. Part of the resolution was that "if schools were to be sites of struggle then it had to be at all levels, including struggles over the curriculum" (Naidoo, 1990:134). Commenting on the shifting of debate from concerns about physical access to concerns about epistemological access, Muzi who was part of the Parents' Associations and later the NECC recalled:

Bantu Education, in terms of physical access, actually Bantu Education brought more schools than the mission education before... If I am not mistaken, before then, you only had mission schools, and the church could only provide so many schools. So, Bantu Education then opened more schools. You had more African high schools opened in some townships, like aboSbonelo in KwaMashu, as a result of Bantu Education. I don't think the debate was: Are we having more or less schools because of Bantu Education? That was more about the type of education. The pinnacle of Verwoerd education was not that black kids must not have education.

Concerned with the indefinite breakdown of schooling and an understanding that students could not be organised to fight an illegitimate education system outside school, parents and education leaders began discussing ways in which students could be mobilised to go back to school. The concept of “People’s Education” emerged or re-emerged as a tool to mobilise the youth to go back to school, and to provide them, as far as possible, with an alternative to Bantu Education. It was clear in people’s minds that going back to school to fight the system from within was not sufficient. It had to go beyond that, to include education for liberation. Something that would be much more attractive than what Bantu Education had to offer. Remembering those days, Muzi, who had been actively involved in the civic structures said:

I lived in Soweto as part of the Civic Association. We started an education project to be the Soweto Crisis Committee, which ultimately became the National Education Crisis Committee when we convened the whole country to become the national body. It was the same processes again. It was about mobilising our people first. Mobilising people to resist what was happening at the time, but to also begin to lay the foundation that will prepare to govern. Hence the talk about People’s Education.

Resisting apartheid education, according to Tothill (1991) had two important implications: firstly, the definition of People’s Education tended to be constructed in terms of what it was opposed to, rather than what it stood for, as a result this term remained theoretically elusive. Secondly, the concept, though it belongs to the radical tradition, was used to pull together all those who were opposed to apartheid. This “attracted both radical and liberals to the movement, and allowed differences between the two positions to be glossed over” (Tothill, 1991:53). Consequently, people found it difficult to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the concept.

Another important issue that is not entirely relevant to this study but is important in so far as it relates to the concept of access to education in that some academics have charged that though the intentions of People’s Education were good, the concept itself had not been subjected to scrutiny. The term ‘the people’ in the “People’s Education for the People’s Power” had raised much debate. First there were those who felt that this term includes and excludes at the same time (Sarinjeive, 1991). Sarinjeive drew his conclusions from the manner in which the term had been used in speeches by the proponents of the People’s Education. He referred to Zwelakhe Sisulu’s Keynote

Address in March 1986 as having said that the ‘people’ refers to all sections of the South African population; Molobi was understood to have identified teachers, parents, students, certain subject committees as the ‘people’; whereas Mkhathshwa in his Keynote Address at a conference in December 1986 had referred to the ‘people’ as the “oppressed” which Sarinjeive interprets as “African People”. Drawing conclusion from the speeches Sarinjeive concluded:

From the actual words of the discourse it is evident the semantic space around the supposedly all-embracing word ‘people’ not only expands but also contracts. At one time it includes and at other times it excludes various groups of the ‘people’. (Sarinjeive, 1991:50)

Words are context-bound, and by its very nature, the study of semantics acknowledges the meanings of words in various contexts. Therefore, Sarinjeive can be criticised for ignoring context and the origins of the concept of the People’s Education. If one takes the relationship between the NECC and the African National Congress, and then goes back to the Freedom Charter and the Congress of the People, the ‘people’ has always been used to refer to the people of all races and all those who were committed to a non-racial society. Further, the concept should be seen for what it was attempting to do, that is, lure black students back to school by making education attractive and relevant to them in the context of the struggle for liberation, while at the same time laying the foundation for future education policies (Motala & Vally, 2002).

Levin (1991), agrees with Sarinjeive that the concept requires conceptual rigour, however, he points out that what is more important is to look at how the whole concept of “People’s Education for People’s Power”, answers the education question in South Africa, rather than to nitpick at what each word means. He forwards two predominant meanings that originate in the context of the struggle against apartheid. “the first stems from the ANC tradition and refers to all the oppressed: African, Coloured and Indian, as well as to progressive White democrats” (Levin, 1991:5). The second meaning originated from the Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness traditions and excludes White democrats, who were also not seen as oppressors.

Levin identifies transforming Bantu Education or eradicating inequalities that characterise Bantu Education as but only part of the education question in South

Africa. The other part is about transforming the whole education in South Africa, including White education that was based on the Christian National Education ideology. For the purpose of this research, the relevance of the term relates to how it facilitates, restricts or deals with the concept of access to education. Wolpe (1991) describes the vision of the NECC in its declaration of the kind of education that it envisaged for the future South Africa, the NECC resolved that it would be the education that:

- i) enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system;
- ii) eliminates capitalist norms of competition, individualism, and stunted intellectual development and one that encourages collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis;
- iii) eliminates illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of any person by another;
- iv) allows students, parents, teachers and workers to be mobilised into appropriate organisational structures which enable them to enhance the struggle for People's Power and to participate actively in the initiation and management of People's Education in all its forms; and
- v) enables workers to resist exploitation and oppression at their work place. (Wolpe, 1991:79-80)

Tothill (1991) points to a connection between these principles and the values of the Freedom Charter. She sees People's Education as an attempt by the mass democratic movement to:

elaborate and implement the educational implications of the Freedom Charter, which are based on communalist and egalitarian values. (Tothill, 1991:57)

Put differently, the People's Education was about educating people for liberation. It goes back to the Freedom Charter's declarations that "the People shall Govern", and for them to get there, and to govern successfully, they needed more than what Bantu Education or the Christian National Education could give. Muzi put this clearly when he said:

The People's Education was all about an attempt to get people ready to govern. The development of a capacity to govern. And governance requires various skills. And it was really about the preparation of those skills. And I

think the concept was right.... We were yearning for education that would prepare people to govern. Give people the capacity to be able to govern their lives. Looking back now, I'd say we were talking empowerment. But that was not the language of the time. Essentially learning to govern yourself within the government structures. Within the local government structures. Look at that, we were a civic body, concerned about the governance of Soweto. To what extent was our education preparing to govern?

Looking at what Muzi said and the principles of the People's Education, it becomes apparent that at this time in the history of black education in South Africa (1985-), the focus of the liberation movement was more on epistemological access than physical access. The reason is that Bantu Education did extend mass education, even though the education provision was not adequate. Asking pertinent and simple questions such as "to what extent is our education preparing us to govern?" or "what type of education do people need to be able to function in a democratic society, in which they would be required to govern?". The concerns about access to knowledge become clear when one looks at the effort that went into seeing that 'the people' acquired the requisite skills that would enable them to participate in the democratic government and the country's economy. Again, Muzi:

I don't know whether you know about the Education Aid Programme. We funded a large number of students across the country. Again the principle we took was to say: If suddenly you wake up tomorrow in this area... (we were talking about regions. South Africa was divided into 14 regions). If in this region of the Northern or the Eastern Transvaal, you suddenly had to govern yourself, what are the skills that you would find lacking? We ran workshops and the community would identify the skills that would be in great shortage if they suddenly would govern themselves. And then we would find in this area, key people who would go and study for these skills.

Candidates who were eventually awarded bursaries had been selected by the people in that region. In a way, the leaders lived 'people's education' or practiced the principles that had been identified as important in People's Education. The project involving people taking responsibility for their lives, even though the NECC had a closed relationship with the African National Congress, reflects some shades of the black consciousness philosophy. People doing things for themselves in a communistic manner.

The People's Education Movement covered various aspects of school or institutional life, from the curriculum to governance and management. However, reference to a

kind of “education that allows students, parents, teachers and workers to be mobilised into appropriate organisational structures which enable them to enhance the struggle for People’s Power and to participate actively in the initiation and management of People’s Education in all its forms”, detracts from the culture of learning and teaching. While on the surface, this point could be interpreted as advocating for stakeholder or community participation in school governance and management, it could also be interpreted as a call for a kind of education that would allow learners to continue with the struggle for liberation within the schooling system. The People’s Education, as a mobilisation strategy, was clarified by Eric Molobi in his address at the twentieth Richard Feetham Memorial Lecture, when he explained the aims of People’s Education. He stated:

Our position is that since education as we have known it has been used as a tool of oppression, People’s Education will be an education that must help us to achieve people’s power. People’s Education is therefore decidedly political and partisan with regard to oppression and exploitation. (Molobi quoted in Cameron, 1989:7)

What does not come out clearly from the principles is how People’s Education was going to increase access to education, in a broader sense, apart from calling youth to end the boycott. While Muzi was very clear that part of the initiative for People’s Education was to increase access of black youth to tertiary institutions, this is not reflected clearly in the principles. Unless Muzi was referring to the NECC’s efforts to improve matric results by conducting extra classes and preparing study guides. Recalling related activities that were intended at facilitating access to higher education, he said:

We felt that access to tertiary education was to be massive, because it is those who have had access to university education who shape policies that are going to govern those who haven’t had access to university education. And then we really think that black people, especially Africans, must be given access to that, so that they can take part in policy discourse when we get to that stage. To what extent we succeeded, I don’t know.

At the time when the call for People’s Education was made in the mid 1980s, no reference was made to the shortage of schools, or to material resources. There are two ways that one could interpret this ‘silence’. One explanation is that the focus was on luring the youth back to the education system, and a curriculum with a strong political content would do that, otherwise, it would be difficult to convince the youth

to go back to the same curriculum that had been demonised. An observation by Muzi was that in Soweto, the focus was not on the number of schools, but on the nature and content of Bantu Education, as Bantu Education has built many schools.

Another explanation stems out of Molobi's admission that People's Education was educating learners' for people's power. The shift of emphasis from physical resources to relevant education content (relevant for the attainment of people's power), reflects another shift from the education needs of learners to using education as a strategy for achieving the primary goal of the liberation movement, namely, access to political power. The rationale being, access to political power would ensure access to quality education for all. In this context of political instability and violence, going back to school became necessary in so far as it would lead to political power. However, the NECC initiatives to increase matric pass rates and the granting of bursaries for scarce skills demonstrates the complexity or multiplicity of the NECC activities, which were, at times contradictory.

We see the foregrounding of epistemological access in the People's Education in the aims that Tothill (1991) distils from the resolutions of the NECC about what the People's Education would entail:

- i) Empowerment: that is equipping people to resist exploitation;
- ii) Preparing people to be good citizens. (Tothill, 1991: 58)

Tothill mentions the tension between individualism and 'empowerment', as empowerment is to a certain extent "concerned about the autonomy of the individual". I believe that this observation loses sight of the fact that an education could empower learners as individuals, so that they could use their skills and talents to the benefit of their communities. Highlighting this tension does not take into consideration other values of the Freedom Charter and the People's Education, for instance that the curriculum would include teaching youth "to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace" (Freedom Charter). On the other hand, the People's Education also refers to the education that would encourage "collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis" and also eliminating "illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of any person by

another”. This is education that is intended to develop individual and communalistic values, while at the same time, promoting cognitive development of young people, and because it tries to mediate between community and individual needs it is bound to encounter tensions. What is important is how these tensions would be managed. If the politics overshadowed the cognitive aspect, or individual overshadowed the communalistic values, then there would be cause for concern.

I would also venture to say that empowerment that is reflected in the principles for People’s Education is not only about “equipping people” to resist exploitation but is also about facilitating skills that would enable them to understand the world around them (enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the apartheid system); skills to participate effectively in the struggle for liberation; and above all, skills that would enable them to govern their lives, including their educational institutions. As Muzi put it, “we were yearning for education that would prepare people to govern. Give people the capacity to be able to govern their lives”.

5.5 Reflections on this period

It has, thus, been shown that the period from the 1950s to the end of the People’s Education was a difficult period in the South African education system. The political turmoil and the turbulence in black education are reflected in the conceptions of access to education during this period. First, African and political and education leaders called for government intervention in the education of Africans as mission education could not provide sufficient schools for the growing numbers of urban black youth due to the process of urbanisation. At this point the focus was on formal access to all education institutions as parents simple wanted their children to have schools to attend. At the same time, certain white liberals were also calling for some kind of schooling for black youth so that they could provide semi-skilled labour.

The recommendations of the Eiselen Report in 1951 saw some kind of movement towards thinking about epistemological access. However, due to the fact that the Eiselen Report promised some kind of mass-based schooling, or easy access to schools, many people were happy for the intervention and less concerned about the kind of knowledge that their children would have access to. We see a few teachers,

like Esk'ia Mphahlele, trying to influence people to reject the Report as it would institutionalise education that would be detrimental to the African child, but still people did not take this seriously. The split between those who focussed on formal access and a few who questioned the epistemology that this education was bringing, demonstrates the fluidity and the complex nature of the concept of access to education. The ANC and its leadership, appear to have been unaware of the dangers inherent in the proposal, and this reflects the complex nature of the education system that the Report was proposing. Some people just saw it as mass-based schooling and did not interrogate epistemological access. However, that cannot be entirely true because the ANC schools boycott from 1955-1956 showed the first concerted effort by the liberation movement to reject the knowledge offered in African schools and to establish alternative schools that would provide alternative education.

The foregrounding of epistemological access during the boycott was short-lived because of a painful realisation that parents needed government schools for reasons that ranged from using schools as safe places for their children to obtaining certification that would facilitate access to the labour market. The demise of the boycott underscores the hierarchical nature of physical and epistemological access. It says, physical access is the bedrock on which to base the process of knowledge production and distribution. It also says that people cannot tackle issues pertaining to epistemological access unless the basics are in place.

The relationship of interdependency of the two concepts becomes clear in the 1980s when there were schools, but learners still stayed away because of the focus on epistemological access. Muzi's comment that struggle was not about how many schools they had because Bantu Education built the greatest number of schools. According to Muzi, Verwoerd did not say that blacks should not be provided with schools, but merely prescribed the education that they should get. That is why the People's Education highlighted epistemological access. At this point, we begin to hear the discourse of human rights, Cameron (1989) referring to the People's Education as education for human rights.

The illustration below shows the conceptions of access to education from a liberal and a radical view. The liberals called for increased access to education for Africans, not

because of education as a human right, but to serve the needs of the economy. They also did not think that all blacks were capable of participating in the kind of education that was meant for Whites, hence their suggestion for a two-tier system one based on the “best modern standards” and another for the average black children. The diagram also demonstrates the interdependent but hierarchical relationship between physical and epistemological access.

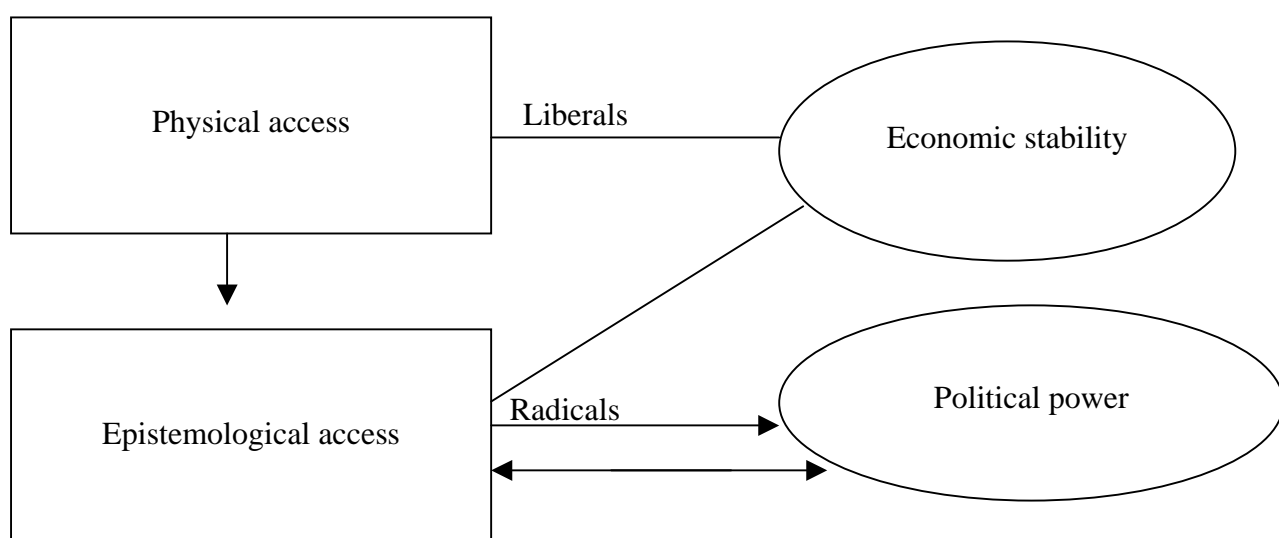


Diagram 2: The relationship between physical and epistemological access to education

Deducing from the above, there is no doubt that the meaning of access to education and the shift in emphasis, were largely determined by the social and political contexts in the country, but also within and between communities. In one community, they might be struggling for a school, whilst in another, they had moved on to epistemological access. These meanings could also co-exist within a community in competition with each other, as we have seen in the ANC school boycott in 1955-56.

5.6 THE MEANING OF ACCESS DURING THE PERIOD OF NEGOTIATIONS (1990-1994)

The year 1990 is rightly described as a turning point in South Africa’s political history, because of the release of Nelson Mandela, and the unbanning of the ANC and other liberation movements. Liberation movements had to be seen to be negotiating in

good faith with the National Party Government. For education, this also meant that the call that the NECC had made in the mid-to-the late 1980's to the youth to go back to school, had to be intensified. Nelson Mandela repeated the call and the youth responded. The youth went back to school, but the understanding was that the National Party government and the liberation movements would reach a political settlement soon.

Education leaders also had to think seriously and realistically about how the education system would be transformed to cater for the educational needs of all South Africans. This was a challenging time for all people who were involved in education, especially for the liberation movement. In the first instance, the black youth could not wait until the political settlement had been reached before certain changes were made. The conditions in schools had to be improved. The challenge was how to work with the De Klerk government or convince him to attend to the most pressing needs of black schools. The second challenge was to embark on long-term plans so that when the time to 'govern' came, the 'people' would be ready.

This section therefore, examines the conceptions of access during the period from 1990 to 1994. The activities during this period included the formation of the Joint Working Group, which was a result of an earlier meeting between Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk, in which Mandela appealed to the government to improve the conditions in black schools (Essop, 1992). The group was called the Education Delegation and consisted of a wide range of stakeholders, including some provincial education departments.

An important step for the liberation movement was the setting up of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) in December 1990. The NEPI was to conduct research in the key areas of education policy and to report back to the African National Congress in August 1992 (NECC, 1992). The other activities and documents included for discussion are:

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- ◆ The occupation of empty and unused White schools that had been closed down because of dwindling numbers of white learners. This campaign was led by the NECC in 1991.
- ◆ The Report of the two-day National Education Conference (NEC), from 6-8 March 1992, at Broederstroom. The conference was convened by the Education Delegation, working closely with the political and trade union organisations of the liberation movement. At this conference, the people toyed with the idea of free education, including higher education, but this changed during the deliberations to compulsory basic education and training.
- ◆ The adoption of the first policy document of the ANC entitled: *Ready to Govern* by the NEC marked an important point in the education agenda because it meant that the liberation movement had their own education policy to table for negotiations. In this period, the National Party Government tried to drive the education agenda by putting their own policy document, the Education Renewal Strategy.

The pinnacle of the negotiation period was the promulgation of the Interim Constitutions in 1993, and the trade-offs that were made to ensure a peaceful transition to the democratic government.

The focus of my investigation was on the following documents: debates and conclusions of the National Education Conference; the NEPI research reports and the Framework document; the yellow book of the African National Congress; the ANC's Policy Framework on Education and Training; and the document entitled *Ready to Govern*. The main questions, which framed the examination of the concept or access in the early 1990s, were: What exactly does the document claim about "access" to education? To what extent is physical access (that is access to education in general, to all schools or universities) in focus? To what extent is epistemological access (that is access to knowledge, to the curriculum.) in focus? To what extent is "access" linked to the broader discourse of human rights?

5.6.1 The symbolic ‘occupation’ of white schools

Before I get into the conceptions of the term as reflected in the selected policy documents, it is important to first discuss one event that took place in 1991, that is, the occupation of White schools by black learners in Johannesburg and Pretoria that was organised by the NECC. In Cape Town, there were planned visits to White schools. The occupation was ignited by the discontent with the government’s lack of response to problems in black schools, that was said to be the main reason for the poor matric performance of schools under the Department of Education and Training (DET). The mood at the time is reflected in the words of the Assistant-General of the NECC who was quoted to have said:

We initiated meetings with the state to get them to address some of the problems. We were trying to create proper conditions against the background of the poor matric results in 1990, where there was a 36.4 percent pass rate in African schools. Most of the problems are massive overcrowding since the call to go back to school, the failure of the state to deliver textbooks and to repair existing buildings and general shortage of schools. It was becoming very clear that the state was not responding to the thousands of kids roaming the streets, who were turned away from schools after the rush for places. (Daniels, 1991:21)

The secretary continued to juxtapose the teacher-student ratio in black schools with that in White schools. At the time, this was 1:60 in urban areas and 1:90 in rural areas. White schools were reported to have at times 18 learners in a class that had a capacity of 1:30 (Daniels, 1991). Through this campaign, physical access to education was put back in the agenda for education transformation. It also began to say that, even though the De Klerk government had released Mandela and had agreed to enter into negotiations with the liberation movement, he was not ready for the transformation that would lead to ‘open’ access to education. The fact that White schools continued to be closed down, instead of making them available to the Department of Education and Training bears testimony to that. The attempts by the Minister of Education, Sam de Beer, to solve the problem of dwindling student numbers in White schools by allowing schools to choose from certain school models in October 1990, demonstrates the length to which the current government was prepared to go to shape ‘access’ of other races to White schools. The common denominator among the three models was that the number of White learners should remain above 50 percent.

The conceptions of access distilled from the occupation of empty White schools is the extension of the concept of physical access not to mean only the building of more schools for each racial and ethnic group, but also the efficient use of existing resources. In the early 1990s, the liberation movement was more concerned with total education transformation, rather than a piecemeal approach, tinkering around important issues. This did not mean that the resource debate, which is related to the concept of physical access to education, was pushed to the back burner again, as had happened with the People's Education Campaign, but it simply meant that the whole education debate, the education question, had to be given attention. Attempts by the NECC to assist students with examinations at the same time as they were leading the campaign for the symbolic occupation of White schools, is an indication that the campaign to revive the culture of learning and teaching was afforded equal significance.

5.6.2 The National Education Conference

The National Education Conference in 1992, is described in the book: *Back to Learning: the National Education Conference*, as an “attempt by the liberation movement to break out of the impasse in the education terrain as well as to seize policy initiative from the state” (Essop, 1992:5). These words can be understood in the context of the failure of the Joint Working Group and the publication of the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) by the state. The ERS was the state's proposal for education reforms in South Africa. This conference, therefore, is important in that the conclusions and debates were to shape education policies of the envisaged democratic government. For the purpose of this study, the primary question is whether the concept of access to education was addressed and how this was done.

The answer is yes, the concept of access to education was addressed from the very beginning when the conveners were planning who to invite. The decision was to invite political, trade unions and educational organisations of the anti-apartheid movement, and only those who could demonstrate “an ongoing commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle and the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society” (Essop, 1992:6). On top of this, organisations had to demonstrate:

- (i) acceptance that the root cause for the crisis in education is the fragmentation spawned by apartheid in its various forms and structures;
- (ii) the rejection of the authoritarian and undemocratic content and structures of apartheid education;
- (iii) belief that the real solution lies in the creation of a unified education system, which is non-racial, non-sexist and organised along democratic lines. (Essop, 1992:6)

The identification of the above points as the main selection criteria for the participation shows a bias towards certain conceptions of access to education. Accepting that the crisis in education has its roots in the “fragmentation spawned by apartheid of various forms and structures” and to demonstrate a belief that the “real solution” was a single non-racial, non-sexist, education system demonstrate a conception of total ‘open access’ to education institutions that would not be based on race or any form of discrimination. Reference to the rejection of “authoritarian and undemocratic content and structures of apartheid education” can be interpreted as referring, not only to the rejection of the curriculum content of Bantu Education, but also the rejection of the curriculum underpinned by the philosophy of National Christian Education. What the conveners were saying here was that the participants should not only reject Bantu Education, but also the philosophy on which education for Whites was based.

The resolution of the conference identified human dignity, liberty and justice, democracy, equality and national development as values that should underpin a democratic education system (Essop, 1992). In line with these principles, the NEC resolved that “education is a basic human right” and in order to make this right a reality for all South Africans, it also resolved that “education and training must be provided to all on a democratic and unitary basis, opposing discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and age” (Essop, 1992:7). The reference to age is important in that the NEC anticipated a situation in which the youth that has been delayed by political instability in the country could be given an opportunity to re-enter the education system. The emphasis on a unitary system signifies a rejection of a fragmented education provision that characterised apartheid education. In line with

the values of equality and justice, the NEC's resolutions also provided for the expansion of access to education for the disadvantaged groups who had largely been excluded from education, such as women and rural communities, so as to redress the imbalances of the past. The redress aspect of the resolution also included adults, students and youth among the disadvantaged groups. In other words, this meant that over-aged youth and adults, who had been affected by restricted access to education, could claim their right to education and training. Opportunities for extended access to education should be "integrated within a coherent and comprehensive national development policy" (Essop, 1992:8). What this resolution says about expanded access to education and training is that the knowledge and skills taught should be aligned to the human resource needs of the country.

The conception of education as a human right, and the need to expand access to education and training, as well as to make sure that the education policies were aligned to the human resource needs of the country meant that the NEC had to identify key principles that would promote these core values. The first of these is an acknowledgement that "the state has a central responsibility in the provision of education and training". What is interesting is that out of eleven key principles identified as essential in the realisation of education as a basic human right, there was silence on 'compulsory free education' which had been aligned with the ANC's stand on education provision. Declaring the provision of education and training as the 'central responsibility' of the state was the closest that the NEC came to assigning responsibility on who has to finance the 'education for all' policy. Compulsory basic education and training is mentioned in so far as this relates to a need for schools "to provide a good basic education" so that such learners should have more chances of success at tertiary level.

Another principle that is relevant to expanded access to education and training, is a declaration that there "shall be special emphasis on the redress of education inequalities" (Essop, 1992:8), that could take the form of directing more funding to historically black schools.

Apart from seeing expanded physical access to education as essential in the realisation of education as a basic human right, the NEC went further to describe the

kind of education they envisaged for the country. In line with the provisions of the Freedom Charter and the People's Education, such an education would 'encourage national peace, justice and stability' (Essop, 1992:8). Such an education would also encourage "co-operation, critical thinking and civic responsible, and shall equip individuals for participation in all aspects of society" (Essop, 1992:9). These considerations were obviously an attempt by the NEC to eradicate apartheid education and all that it stood for, especially its philosophical underpinnings that were based on racial domination, isolation of racial and ethnic groups and a lack of independent thought. Logically, the kind of content that learners would be exposed to and methods of teaching and learning would have to be aligned to a democratic ethos of the new government.

The resolutions also provide for horizontal and vertical mobility within the system. The NEC called for mechanisms that would facilitate 'flexibility of access' between general or formative education and other education sectors, including the adult education and non-formal sector. This would be done by putting in place 'nationally determined standards' that would be used for "accreditation and certification for formal and non-formal education and training, with due recognition of prior learning and experience" (Essop, 1992:8). The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is primarily to facilitate access to education, by making provision for vertical and horizontal mobility within the education system.

The Keynote Address delivered by Jake Gerwel identified equality, non-racialism, non-sexism, affirmative action and democracy as the framework principles that should guide policy formulation in education. These principles would also shape key components of the education system by answering questions such as:

What kind of overall financial and regulatory control should be exercised and how should this mediate who has **access** to which institution...what mixture of institutions should there be and what should the curriculum be; how should the delivery of resources - financial, material and staff - be determined. (Gerwel, 1992:22, emphasis added)

Faced with these difficult questions and the reality of budgetary constraints, the liberation movement, under the banner of the NEC, admitted, probably for the first

time, that equality was not an achievable goal (Gerwel, 1992). Another very important admission was that:

the development of black human resources will take place only in respect of the occupational categories that are relevant to the development process. The decision to favour those occupation has to be taken at the immediate expense of the provision of education to broader categories of people, for example, limiting pre-primary and/or adult education or lowering the level of compulsory schooling or reducing the availability of non-science courses in the tertiary. (Gerwel, 1992:23).

What this actually means was that equality, in terms of allocating resources was too expensive and out of touch with reality. The reality was that the new government would have to make difficult choices and that these would directly or indirectly impact on who had access to which institutions. It would seem that it was also against this background that the conference declared education a human right but shied away from using the terms ‘free’ and ‘compulsory’ education in the resolutions.

Gerwel (1992) also acknowledges that choosing one occupation or sector at the expense of others was difficult to sell to the masses and to key education stakeholders, as these constituencies continued to call for equality in education. They continued to call for:

Universal compulsory schooling up to matric, upgrading of black universities to the level of national universities, unlimited access to tertiary education, the full provision of pre-primary education, and the vast expansion of adult education. (Gerwel, 1992:23)

Jake Gerwel also acknowledged that the equal rights argument and the development argument had to be mediated carefully, so that one did not end up sidelining the equity argument, all of which would have an impact on the notion of expanding access to education.

With regard to post-secondary education, the keynote address raised a number of pertinent questions pertaining to the concept of extended or expanded access to education. First, is there a contradiction between quantity of access and quality, if there is, how could this be managed? Is this question more relevant in the argument for expanding access to post secondary education or higher education? Again, the NEC had to admit that learners from black rural and township schools were under-

prepared for the challenges of higher education. In an effort to find answers, the NEC toyed with the idea of: (a) identifying and targeting good township and rural schools and developing them to produce quality matriculants for higher education; (b) making provision for an additional year at school; or (c) providing support, in the form of academic development programmes at tertiary level (Gerwel, 1992). In the end, all the NEC could say was that the new government, through the new education department would have to enter into negotiations with predominantly White institutions so as to:

win their support for radical changes in the composition of the student body and the teaching and administrative staff to reflect the racial and gender composition of the population. (Gerwel, 1992:26)

Questions that continue to arise about access to tertiary education and the fact that the NEC could not reach any consensus about the issue could be seen as an indication of the complexity of the concept of access at tertiary education level. In spite of the NEC's acknowledgement of the inability of the education system to produce good quality matriculants who would have no problems with access to elite White universities and technikons, the NEC made it clear that there would be no sacred cows. These institutions needed to change, even if it meant, "linking subsidies to the proportionate recruitment of staff and students" (Gerwel: 1992, 26).

While the speaker pointed out the importance of adult education in various ways, including "contributing to the educational equality as well as to the strengthening of community based organisations" (Gerwel, 1992:27), the keynote address devoted only two paragraphs to this very important issue. The irony is that, the address points out that adult education "has been and continues to be ignored by the present government" but it also spends minimum time, at the end of the presentation, to point out the problems of higher education and why it would be difficult to fund adult education.

5.6.3 Reviving the culture of learning and teaching

Before the Conference, even before the discussions about a conference took place, the education community and liberation movement, as well as parents were concerned

about the breakdown in the culture of learning in black schools. Ihron Rensburg, the then General Secretary of the NECC, is quoted as saying that the black schooling system was marked by “an observable lack of interest and commitment to learning and teaching” (Meintjies, 1992:48).

In the short term, the code of conduct was to “get learners into the habit of learning and to raise pass rates”, while in the long term it was “to improve the quality of education” (Meintjies, 1992:55). The call for the renewal of the culture of learning and teaching by the NEC should be understood within a broad context of trying to create an enabling environment for teaching and learning while negotiations for a political settlement were in process. At the same time, other voices were beginning to question the wisdom of school boycotts after the dismal failure of the matrics in 1990 and 1991. Some people, like Mamphela Ramphele, blamed what she called the ‘culture of entitlement’, that is, expecting other people to solve one’s problems. Other political commentators ‘advised’ learners to go back to school as staying away from school would only hurt them. Ihron Rensburg, referring to the code of conduct, hoped that this would bring a ‘culture of responsibility’. This language was an acknowledgement of the damage caused by the apartheid regime, however, it also implied that black students and teachers had to take responsibility for their own learning. A point made later by Wally Morrow (1994) in his paper on the culture of entitlement, and how it affected the way learners thought about issues of access to and success within the education system.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that the NEC conference did not occur in a vacuum; some of the resolutions, such as the code of conduct and aspects of a curriculum that would be suitable for a democratic education system, had been carried over from the work of the NECC. The NECC, as Gerwel (1992:69) reminded the conference delegates, had done “unparalleled work in motivating scholars and students to stay in school and be more strategic about their hatred for Bantu Education”. He continued to say that, through the guidance of the NECC, black learners began to demand “access to state-provided schooling as a basic right” (p.70). The occupation of empty and unused White schools is a good example of this.

The NEC, was referred to as a watershed, a turning point in the politics of education in South Africa, because it brought together political and educational organisations with divergent views. It managed to make resolutions in some cases detailed, in others not, about issues pertaining to access to education. In that respect, it would not be incorrect to say that deliberations at the conference were about access to education in its broadest sense. It focussed on physical access – in terms of issues such as declaring education a human right, and framing the discussion as such. The funding of education was discussed in terms of what was logical from a budgetary point of view, but also what would be an acceptable funding formula within a human rights framework. The acceptance by the NEC that equality was not an ‘attainable goal’, but at the same time continued to look for options that would be equitable, such as more funding for previously disadvantaged schools demonstrates a nuanced and sophisticated conception of access to education. On the other hand, reference to a curriculum that would promote critical thinking, cooperation, good citizenship and peace is an extension of the framework provided by the Freedom Charter, and is a focus on epistemological access.

The keynote address and the NEC Report: *Back to Learning*, could be criticised for the silence on free education. However, one can understand that delegates were being cautious by not committing the new government too soon. Criticism may also be levelled at the NEC for resolving that education shall be a basic human right, but without specifying levels. The strength of the conference was that it began to question or initiate debate on the implications of concepts such as ‘equity and equality of access’ as they relate to the capability of the state to provide education to all. The concept of open access to tertiary institutions and quality, in terms of the senior certificate and graduation rates, all have to do with access to education, and how this would play out in practice.

5.7 Ready to Govern

The document *Ready to Govern*³⁰ is significant in that it is the first policy document that the ANC released to the public, as providing the movement's vision for the future. The document outlined the following objectives:

- (i) To strive for the achievement of the right of all South Africans, as a whole, to political and economic self-determination in a united South Africa;
- (ii) To overcome the legacy of inequality and injustice created by colonialism and apartheid, in a swift, progressive and principled way;
- (iii) To develop a sustainable economy and state infrastructure that will progressively improve the quality of life of all South Africans; and
- (iv) To encourage the flourishing of the feeling that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, to promote a common loyalty to and pride in the country and create a universal sense of freedom and security within its borders.

Regarding the provision of education in South Africa, the ANC's vision for the future is that:

Education and training is a basic human right and that all individuals should have access to lifelong education and training irrespective of race, class gender, creed, age, sexual orientation and physical or mental disability.

The document also proposes that the right to education and training should be included in the "Bill of Rights that should establish principles and mechanisms to ensure that there is an enforceable expanding minimum floor of entitlements for all" (ANC, 1992: 32). In order to 'expand the minimum floor of entitlements', the state is expected to take the responsibility for the provision of education and to redress the inequalities caused by the apartheid education policies.

The policy document, commits to the expansion of basic education by providing a "minimum of ten years of free and compulsory education", however, the inclusion of a free one year pre-school education is subject to whether that would be possible. The document calls for a framework and infrastructure that would address early childhood education. The responsibility for early childhood educare would be shared between the state, employers and the community.

³⁰ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/readyto.html

The document does not commit to increasing the education budget, but suggests that the new government would equalise the per capita expenditure between black and white schools, and redistribute savings to provide free and compulsory basic education to disadvantaged groups. The ANC also undertakes to redress the imbalances in the provision of post-compulsory education, that is, the Further Education and Training Phase, by putting in place institutional and financial mechanisms that would ensure maximum “flexibility and mobility between different levels of the education and training system-both formal and informal” (ANC, 1992:33), and providing various forms of financial assistance to those who would wish to continue to the further education and training phase.

With regard to the administration and management of education, the policy document anticipates a complete break with the past, by proposing a unitary education system underpinned by democratic principles. According to the document, there will be a national structure, taking responsibility for the policy formulation and development, and the regional or local structures that will be responsible for the implementation of national policies.

The policy document proposes a new core curriculum that would promote critical thinking, cooperation, the development of human potential and social responsibility. This curriculum will also reflect:

the norms and values of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society which is relevant to both the needs of individual, as well as the social and economic needs of the society. (ANC, 1992: 34)

Expanded access to the curriculum means that previously disadvantaged groups will be encouraged and supported, where possible, to participate in academic fields from which they had been previously excluded.

Regarding the education language policy, the document states that: “all individuals must have access through their mother tongue and a language of wider communication to all avenues of social, political, economic and education life” (ANC, 1992:35). However, there is tension between the policy’s recognition of multilingualism and then committing to “providing access to a minimum of two

languages”, English and a regional lingua franca. Strictly speaking, the document is committing to bilingualism, that can be interpreted as subtractive multilingualism. In cases where there is more than one lingua franca, the ANC commits to making these accessible to each, “except where not possible because of practical constraints” (ANC, 1992:35) which is an escape clause that appears in education policies of the department. This is discussed in detail in the chapter on new policies.

5.8 The National Education Policy Investigation

Another important policy initiative that brought together researchers and education activist and leaders was the National Education Policy Investigation that was established in late 1990 to undertake policy research that would explore policy options for the new government.

The significance of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) lies in the fact that this was one concerted and focused attempt at structured research on the prevailing policy situation which was aimed at suggesting policy options for the new government in South Africa. Although there were thirteen study groups, only the documents that are relevant to this study will be analysed. The research and policy options were based on the following five principles: non-sexism; non-racism; democracy; a unitary system; and redress.

5.8.1 The language report

Language was singled out by the investigation unit as one of the components in education that can either facilitate access to education and educational institutions or act as a barrier to physical and epistemological access. The report identifies three components of school language polices:

- (i) The teaching of language as subjects;
- (ii) The use of language for teaching and learning; and
- (iii) Language as medium of communication within the school and with the school community or external stakeholders.

The third component of the language policy of the school is different in that it does not impact on learners directly, but needs careful consideration as it could play a role in facilitating or hindering parental or community participation in the life of the school, and in discussions and debates about educational matters, such as the language of meetings, fund raising and letters to parents.

While the report does not discuss the effects of the language of communication on learners, one can deduce from the short discussion on parent involvement, that when parents are not able to communicate effectively with the school principal, the School Governing Body and teachers, it is logical that their involvement could be diminished and this could have a negative impact on the success of their children in the school. To this effect, the report points out that the language of communication with learners within the school need not necessarily be the same as the language of communication with parents and the community. The way to maximise parental and community access to the school, the school management should ensure that the language policy does not alienate parents but should promote and encourage active participation. This also applies to parents who speak the same language as the school, but who might have a different dialect or accent. The report says:

It is important to note that that parents may feel marginalized not only in cases where their language is different from that of the school administration, or where they are not proficient in it. If they feel that their accent or dialect is likely to trigger negative stereotyping among other members of the school community, they may well prefer to remain silent. (NECC, 1992: 11)

The Report also observes that parents might be willing to participate, in spite of the language barriers, but their children could feel ashamed and diminished by their parents' lack of proficiency in the language of the school. The role of learners in preventing access of parents to the school is explained below:

In some cases, parents would be willing to come to school, speak to teachers, and participate in school events, but their children might prefer them not to, if they have reason to believe that their parents' speech (whether L1 or L2) would be disparaged by other children and parents, or by the teachers. (NECC,1992:11)

In this situation, learners may try innovative ways to discourage their parents from coming to school or, when they do, from speaking out. According to the report this

could include hiding invitations to school events. If this fails, they could find “more overt ways of discouraging them from appearing at the school” (NECC, 1992:11).

Whilst the language of communication outside the classroom and school could have adverse effect on the learners’ full participation in the life of the school, the more direct consequences pertain to language as medium of instruction as this is a tool with which the learners participate in the act of learning. If one takes a more conventional form of classroom activities in which one, a teacher teaches or transmits knowledge and the other, the learner, learns through language, then a breakdown in communication between the teacher and a learner would contaminate the process of meaning making and knowledge construction. From a human rights discourse, the breakdown in classroom communication violates the learner’s right to meaningful quality education. The recent UMALUSI report on the standard of the senior certificate, revealed that the high failure rate and the majority of candidates who opt for standard grade, and who do not do well, are those who have English as a second language. Since most learners who take English as a second language are black, UMALUSI is concerned that if this trend continues, this might limit the pool of black students who have access to higher education. This means that at a curriculum level, “the doors of learning and culture” are not completely open for this group of learners.

The NEPI report acknowledges the significant role played by the language of instruction and advises that all teachers should be trained to understand the role of language in all aspects of the education of learners. The fact that:

teachers are often unaware of the complex role of language in cognition, in the construction of knowledge and in the formation of individual and group identity... the gaps in the training of teachers seriously affect their ability to use the medium of instruction, whatever it is and whether it is L1 or L2, in the best interest of their pupils. (NECC, 1992:14)

The recognition of the role of language in the cognitive development of the child, as well as the need to accommodate the diverse linguistic population of the school, is acknowledged in the new Language-in-Education Policy. The language policies of the two schools in my case studies have English as the language of teaching and learning, with Afrikaans and other African languages as second languages.

The contentiousness of the issue of the language of teaching and learning dates as far back as 1905 when, African elites resisted mother-tongue instruction because they perceived better education to be accessible and available through the dominant languages. Whilst one could say that the elites of the time did not understand the pedagogic advantages of learning through a language that one knows best, one could also argue that English was taught in such a way that African children acquired sufficient proficiency in the language to use it effectively for learning.

The Bantu Education Act, Act No. 47 of 1953 saw the replacement of mission education with Bantu Education. At this time, the Department of Native Affairs, through the Bantu Education Act legislated compulsory mother-tongue instruction in the early years of school. The difference between this Act and the resistance in 1905 is that the recipients of the Act were not given a choice. Mother tongue instruction was made compulsory in the first year of school. At first glance, this was a good move as research has shown that the stage of basic concept formation and acquisition in young children happens best in the home language. However, this pronouncement should be seen within the broad framework of the Bantu Education Act, which was to limit access to quality education for all Africans. Proof of this can be seen in the apartheid government's indifference to the optimal time for the transition to learning and being taught in a second or third language. Learners were further burdened with the learning of an extra two languages (English and Afrikaans) from the first year. The report explains this eloquently when it states:

The child was introduced to one official language at the start of schooling, and the other language six months later... In the higher primary classes half the subjects were to be taught through the medium of English and the other half through the medium of Afrikaans... students also had to use their mother tongue for some subjects which were not 'exam subjects'... (NECC: 1992:28)

In this situation, access to knowledge through language for these learners was also minimal in that adequate resources did not accompany this three-language policy. As a result, some provincial education departments could not implement this policy and most teachers could not teach in Afrikaans (NECC,1992).

The policies for Whites, Coloureds and Indians were also driven by ideological principles rather than educational considerations. This can be seen in the deviation from Jan Hofmeyr's speech of 1906 in which he spoke in favour of a dual medium approach for English and Afrikaans speaking children:

I prefer myself to see our children of different denominations and different languages educated in one and the same school. I think that this is more in harmony with a bilingual system and I would arrange schools accordingly....I would like the English boy to learn Dutch from the Dutch boy, and the Dutch boy to learn English from his English comrade in the school and with whom he is going to mix in life after school.... I feel that every child should be taught at the commencement of his school career in the language of his parents, i.e., his own language, then as soon as possible, you should have mixed classes. And, if the teacher knows Dutch as well as English, he can teach in two languages in the same class, and the children will learn more of the two languages in this way than they would otherwise do. (NECC, 1992:30)

The Apartheid government in 1948 insisted on separate schools for the English and Afrikaans speaking and all ethnic groups. Once more, this shows that the mother-tongue policy as it applied to African children was meant to ensure that they had as little access as possible to quality education. The right to learn in a language of one's choice was also taken away from English and Afrikaans parents by the National Policy Act of 1967. The issues of language were controlled by the central government. Learners classified as Coloured and Indian had to be taught in a language dominant in that area. However, a complication with the Coloured children was that the Afrikaans they spoke at home was often different from the standard Afrikaans spoken at school, which had implication for meaningful access to education.

What one takes from this historical narrative is that the architects of apartheid policies understood the centrality of language in promoting or denying access to education. It is clear from the above discussion that the language policies and their implementation were used as instruments to either facilitate access to education and provision or hinder access to and success within the education system.

The report provides a useful description of the language policies prior to the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, nevertheless, it can be criticised for

providing broad language policy options for the new government without discussing how these could affect the issues of access to education. Further, the report does not situate the concept of access to education within a 'human rights discourse'. The only time where the report makes reference to the issue of language as a right is where it recommends that when children are unfamiliar with a second language, the transition to that language as a medium of instruction should be timed very carefully. The report shies away from specifying the 'right' time or saying whether the transition in Standard 2 (Grade 4), which prevailed in the early 1990s, had been effective or not. It would have been useful if it had provided an analysis of how the language of learning and teaching has affected access of certain groups to education over time.

5.8.2 The post-secondary education report

According to the report, post secondary education (PSE) refers to what we know today as higher or tertiary education. At the time of the investigation, post-secondary education was fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, in the same way as the primary and secondary education. The participation of different racial groups was unequal, with the African students representing only nine percent of the student population. It is therefore not surprising that the report discusses the issues of access, equity and quality in detail.

The most useful part of the report is the discussion of the concepts of knowledge, knowledge production, the act of knowledge transmission and access to knowledge. The highlighting of the above concepts provides a framework within which the concept of access to education – physical and epistemological, was understood by the study group. Regarding physical access to higher education, Gerwel is quoted as saying that institutions:

must become increasingly open so that students from the disadvantaged majority make up much of larger proportion of their intake, and they must ensure that they offer education of quality. (NECC, 1992:1)

Another very important reference is from Lyotard's work that provides conditions or dimensions to the act of accessing knowledge. According Lyotard (1987), a good and coherent policy will attempt to answer questions such as: Who transmits learning?

What is transmitted? To whom? Through what medium? In what form? With what effect?

The juxtaposition of these two conceptions of access to education demonstrates an understanding that increased participation of students from groups that were previously excluded from higher education institutions is not only through physical access or by enrolment, but should also be about knowledge. Lyotard highlights the complexity of epistemological access by introducing the role of participants, the mode, the nature, content and form of what is transmitted and the outcome of the learning act. Lyotard's questions do not only apply to post-secondary education, but to education in general. "Questioning the act of transmitting knowledge" in the context of a push to increase student enrolments in higher education institutions confirms the importance of paying attention to all forms of access to education. In other words, increasing physical or formal access while refusing to deal with the complexities of epistemological access and how it impacts on the students' participation in knowledge construction does not do justice to the need for increased access to education.

The report also draws attention to the fact that racial separation of institutions resulted in students being exposed to different kinds of knowledge, for example, the type of knowledge disseminated in the pre-1994 period could be called "White male knowledge, because it either reflected the cultural heritage of White males or served their interests" (NECC, 1992:6). This observation is significant as it places the act of knowledge construction at the centre of access to education. By implication, this observation means that education policies that are meant to open "the doors of learning and culture to all" should address the demographic and structural changes as well as the culture of knowledge construction, its nature and content. Morrow's conceptions of access to academic practice and that this is at the centre of student failure is relevant in this regard.

The variations in the transmission of knowledge are reflected in the two case studies done as part of an attempt to trace the biography of the concept of access to education. The case studies examine how two schools, with different historical experiences and

social backgrounds, interpreted and taught specific historic events as part of the new curriculum.

Regarding access to higher education, the policy options provided by the report include the concept of “equal access for all”, “a modified equal access option” and an “equal opportunities” option. The last option is reflected in the National Plan for Higher Education which identifies the desired participation rates of designated groups and how these could be achieved in order to boost South Africa’s economic growth. The involvement of government in the financial assistance of poor students is an indication of the government’s commitment to expand access to higher education institutions. The equal opportunity option as it appears in current policies is based on the principle that ‘no student should be excluded from higher education just because they cannot afford fees’.

The report also advocates for a balance between expanding access and the issue of quality and development. To this end it states:

The problems of unequal access to PSE in South Africa do not end with the admission of disadvantaged students to PSE institutions. The scale of the inequalities in the broader South African society has been so great that student support and development after admission must be essential ingredients of the programmes of all PSE institutions. (NECC, 1992:104)

There is no ambiguity with respect to the need for total access to education, however, the report does not situate the options it provides within a human rights discourse. Instead, the options reflect an instrumental approach in that the Report advocates government support for higher education for economic growth. The NEC presentation on the other hand, examines both the equality rights and development arguments, and makes it clear that the equity argument cannot be sidelined.

5.8.3 Education planning, systems and structures report

At the time of publication, South Africa was characterised by unequal and uneven education provisioning that had resulted in certain realities, namely, the highest educational attainment rates among Whites and lowest among blacks. Statistics at the beginning of the 1990s showed a very grim picture of African children spending an

average of 11 years at school, but often leaving school before Grade 9 or Standard 7. A stark contrast to the majority of White children who completed Standard 10 and proceeded on to tertiary education. It is therefore understandable that research also included a focus group on education planning, systems and structures.

Preparing to govern meant taking a long hard look at how the disparities between privileged and underprivileged schools could be addressed by the new democratic government. In addition to the upgrading and expansion of the education system to meet the challenges for economic reconstruction, the new education system recommended by the research group would have to “address ... the requirements of redress and the empowerment of the oppressed majority” (NECC, 1992:38). Empowerment would include the “mass access to high quality general education as an essential foundation for further education and training” (NECC, 1992:38), a point also made at the NEC conference. The improvement of universal basic education was to be the first priority in education development (NECC, 1992). The report also points to the interrelatedness between improved basic education and the effects that would have on other levels of the education system, post-primary education and tertiary education (NECC, 1992). What the report alludes to, is that it would be meaningless to invest on basic education if this was done at the expense of other levels of the education system. Conversely, it would also be meaningless to invest on higher education if the pool that supplies higher education with suitable candidates dries up.

The report provides various alternatives to the democratic government regarding education planning, systems and structures. However, the emphasis seems to be on one facet of education provisioning, which is resource allocation. The issue of education spending is reported to be high by international standards, which made it difficult for the research group to call for more spending. As a result, the report spends more time discussing how resource allocations could be redistributed from White privileged schools to black under-resourced schools.

5.8.4 The curriculum report

The curriculum is core business of education institutions. It forms an important part of epistemological access, which is about the type of knowledge to which learners are

overtly and covertly exposed. It is also about what teachers are able and willing to do in the classroom (NECC, 1992). This is critical because it goes to the heart of what learners are eventually exposed to. The report argues for a change in curriculum. According to the study group:

curriculum policies need to enhance the learning experiences of the majority of students and be geared towards improving progression and retention rates. This implies teaching the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the majority of students with a quality of educational experience which will enable them to participate as citizens in the key institutions of a democratic society, and to work in a modern economy. (NECC, 1992:89)

The above paragraph demonstrates the study group's understanding of epistemological access and the need to maximise the success rate or progression rate of students within the system. It is not clear how the system would "enhance the learning experience of students" so that they are better prepared to take their place in the democratic society. The report goes on to say that in this case the principles of "equality in a unitary system may guide curriculum policy". The question is, "equality" of what? Is it equality of access to different kinds of knowledge? Equality in the provision of resources? What does equality in a unitary system mean?

The report is an important contribution to the curriculum debate in South Africa. However, it shies away from discussing access to the curriculum in detail. Instead, it provides far too many options to the future government without identifying one that could work in the South African context. However, this is understandable as putting forward 'options' was a way of hedging the ANC's political choices. Although it acknowledges the role of teachers in successful curriculum change and also highlights the importance of appropriate in-service training, it does not address the issue of enactment in various classroom contexts. Another point is that the concept of equity and redress are sometimes used without reference to equity of access as demonstrated in the following paragraph:

In terms of redress, curriculum policies need to embody principles of equity in resource distribution, and develop strategies to address historical imbalances. This is particularly important to rural schools, since the majority of students attend school in homelands and rural areas. Similarly, if non-sexism is a goal of curriculum policy, strategies for equity principles need to be explored. (NECC, 1992:89)

While equity of access is implied in the above paragraph, the issue of epistemological access is not clear. What are these historical imbalances from a curriculum point of view? Does it mean acknowledging certain forms of knowledge that were marginalized before? Does it mean the revision of dominant forms of knowledge that South Africans are accustomed to? Why single out rural schools if we accept that epistemological access is about access to knowledge? The writers seem to conflate the issue of access to knowledge and resource allocation (physical access). What brings the reader back to epistemological access is the reference to a curriculum that is not gender biased. The case studies in the next chapters will show that, even if the Department prescribes a core curriculum, it is enacted differently in various school and classroom contexts.

5.8.5 Governance and administration report

This report raises important issues about the relationship between the governance and administration of a school or educational institution and the practices of exclusion or inclusion of certain groups of learners from such institutions. The arrangements that give parents control over the admission policies, and raising funds for the school may have the effect of opening the formerly white schools to only those black children whose parents can afford to pay the additional fees. Thus, even where schools are no longer racially exclusive, “they will effectively exclude from the best education facilities in the country the children of rural, poor, and working-class parents” (NECC, 1992:23).

The report is disappointingly silent on how the above scenario could be avoided. Instead the report suggests points that should be included in the debate about governance and administration.

5.8.6 The ANC’s Policy Framework for Education and Training

A very significant discussion in the evolution of the concept of access in education policies is the African National Congress’ policy framework that was released in 1994. The report reflects some of the resolutions on access to education that were adopted by the NEC in March 1992. The Policy addresses both concepts of access,

namely, physical and epistemological access. The Framework seeks to take on the challenge posed by the Freedom Charter to “open the doors of learning and culture to all”, implying that this policy framework would expand access to education for all South Africans. Another point highlighted in the policy is that of “education and training as a basic human right” (ANC, 1994:3).

In order to make this right a reality, the Framework outlines major policy initiatives that would provide quality education for all. “The introduction of ten years of free and compulsory general education... starting from reception year” (ANC, 1994:10), was seen as an “absolute priority” for the ANC led government. In order to achieve universal free general education, the policy framework commits to investing in “additional facilities and teachers” (ANC, 1994:10). The policy also commits to redesigning the post-compulsory stage to accommodate the need for a new further education certificate. The physical access to education would also mean that, in the early years, no learner would be excluded from a school on the basis of language proficiency in the language or languages of learning and teaching of the institution. The onus to provide language support programmes for such learners rests on the school.

The policy acknowledges that expanded access to improved education services would take place in the context of fiscal constraints. Therefore, rather than increasing education expenditure, the government would have to think about “reallocating funds from less productive to more productive application, encouraging managerial competence and efficiency at all levels of education administration...” (ANC, 1994:35). The discussion on the significance of basic education implies that the savings that would be accrued from cost cutting measures would be passed on to this sector. The financing of higher education, on the other hand, seems to be murky.

Higher education: The policy framework is unequivocal about a need for the gradual increase in graduation rates or outputs from colleges, technikons and universities as well as the need for “rapid changes in the structure of enrolments” (ANC, 1994:36). The policy framework demands that institutions become more innovative in their admissions criteria and procedures, so that the admission policies go beyond formal school qualifications, to include the recognition of prior learning in the assessment of

a student's potential to succeed. Academic support programmes would then be put in place to assist students who are under-prepared for higher education.

Although the Framework wants increased enrolment rates in higher education institutions, especially in scarce skills disciplines such as the technical, scientific and professionally based programmes, it is not clear how these programmes would be funded. The call for improvement in enrolment and graduation rates is interesting when followed by the following statement:

Given the urgent priority for increase in public expenditure on the school system, and the overall budgetary constraints which are likely to be faced, the present methods of financing higher education will need to be reformed, either by passing more of the costs of higher education to its direct beneficiaries, or to their subsequent employers. (ANC, 1994:36)

The contradiction is also more profound when one takes into consideration the fact that the policy is referring to increased higher education participation for the disadvantaged majority, the group that is likely to have been served by 'free' education, otherwise they would have been excluded from the system. The statement reflects the debate that moves in and out of the human rights framework. If access to basic education facilitates access to higher education which increases "access to jobs and thus improvement to the distribution of income" (ANC, 1994:36), why would a party that has the majority of members coming from the disadvantaged communities, be so non-committal about the funding of higher education? A plausible explanation would be that the party understands that 'equality' of access is an unattainable goal and obviously does not want to commit too soon to the insurmountable task of financing higher education.

5.8.7 The ANC's conception of epistemological access

The policy highlights important points about epistemological access. The curriculum is seen as an entry point towards enhancing the learning experiences of all learners. One way of facilitating meaningful access to knowledge and knowledge production is to appreciate that "language is essential to thinking and learning" and to allow learners to "learn in the language or languages which best suit this purpose" (ANC,

1994:68). Logically, the language that best suits the purpose of learning would be the one that the learner knows best or is proficient in.

In pointing out that the individuals have the right to choose “which language or languages to study and to use as language of learning” (ANC, 1994:67), demonstrates the seriousness with which the party understands access to education as also meaning the right of every learner to participate, meaningfully, in the construction of knowledge. However, the tension arises when, in the same breadth, the framework, points to the fact that such a choice should be guided by “reasonableness”. This means affordability and availability of human resources to support the study and use of chosen languages. Once again, the issue of the concept of ‘access’ within a human rights discourse comes to the fore. The ease with which the policy moves in out of the human rights framework is hard to ignore. It raises questions of choosing a language of instruction as a human right issue and silently acknowledges the preference for the maintenance of the status quo.

Access to a diverse curriculum also receives attention in the policy framework. Concerns about unequal access to the curriculum and differences in the enactment of the curriculum in various learning and social contexts is illustrated in the paragraph below:

The inequalities in the provision of black and White education are further reflected in the unequal resourcing of the curriculum-in-use. Even where the syllabus is roughly equivalent, differences in the preparation of teachers, in the provision of resources such as libraries, textbooks, laboratories, etc. mean that the curriculum that is experienced is not equal. The latter has resulted in the failure of the curriculum to offer equal access to knowledge. This is evident in the limits on subject choices in black schools...and the marginalisation of some forms of knowledge such as the cultural and life experience of the majority of our people. (ANC, 1994:71-72)

In order to redress these past imbalances the Framework proposes the development of an outcomes based “national core curriculum for General Education Certificate and the Further Education Certificate” (ANC, 1994: 72). What the policy does not envisage is that variations in the enactment of the core curriculum caused by differing social context and orientation of teachers, would, to a large extent, determine the learners’ experiences of the curriculum. Learners can work towards the attainment of

the same outcomes, but the content that teachers use to teach certain skills could be different.

In conclusion, the analysis of the NEPI reports and the Policy Framework of the African National Congress reveals an understanding of both conceptions of access to education. The Policy Framework of the ANC, that is, the latest publication before the installation of a new government demonstrates a vision of general education as a basic human right, but also a slippage between the concept of access within the human rights discourse and what is feasible in the context of fiscal constraints. The emphasis on physical access to education is demonstrated in the way the policy is able to give detail of how physical access will be facilitated by way of “free and compulsory” basic education and preventing exclusion on the basis of language.

5.9 The Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The right to education is provided for in Section 32 of the Interim Constitution, Act 200 of 1993. The four distinct rights are the right to:

- (a) basic education and equal access to educational institutions;
- (b) instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable; and
- (c) establish, where practicable, educational institutions based on a common culture, language, religion, provided that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of race. (DoE, 1995:40)

Enshrining these rights in the Constitutions means that government has to make provision for the realisation of this right by way of providing adequate facilities and work out a plan to ensure that children entering the system, at the least, complete the full cycle of basic education (DoE, 1995).

Another very important clause that had implications for the governance and management of education institutions was the transitional arrangements and special provisions regarding existing educational institutions. Section 247 prevented the new government from altering “the rights, powers and functions of the governing bodies, management councils or similar authorities of departmental, community-managed or

state-aided...schools”³¹ without entering into bona fide negotiations and reaching agreement with such bodies. This also applied to controlling bodies of universities and technikons.

However, should the parties (government and controlling bodies) fail to reach agreement, the Constitution allows the provincial and national government to alter such rights and powers provided that affected bodies would be “entitled to challenge the validity of any such alteration in terms of the Constitution” (Section 247 (3)).

The influence of these transitional arrangements on the first few policies of the Department of education has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2. These arrangements made the making process difficult, and sometimes resulted in policies that were difficult to implement.

5.10 CONCLUSION

What have we learned from the biography of “access to education” in the above historical periods?

Physical and epistemological access is context bound. First, good education, in the pre-apartheid and pre-Bantu Education periods before 1953, was only for the black elite. As such even the mission schools were divided into the elite and the poorer institutions, in which the students were sometimes housed in tin shacks. At this time, black education was characterised by a lack of adequate infrastructure and human resources. The result was a large number of urban black youth outside the schooling system. In this context, parents, teachers and opinion makers alike, began to call for a system that would have black learners in school, instead of committing crime in the streets. Hence the emphasis on physical access. Mass schooling for blacks, on the surface seemed attractive and useful. At this time, in the 1940s and 1950s, some even called for compulsory education, not because it had been declared a basic human right in the World Declaration for Human Rights (1948), but to remove black youth from the streets.

³¹ www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/sf10000.html

In the light of the above, it is understandable that the majority of black people, especially those who had no experience of mission education, did not understand what Bantu Education would mean to them. Besides, even the ANC is said to have taken a long time to grasp the real dangers of the proposed policy on Bantu Education (Manganyi, 1983).

The struggle for access to education, in the period between 1974 and the early 80s continued unabated, even though there had been an increase in government spending on black education, which meant more schools (at least in urban areas) and more trained teachers. During this period, the demand for epistemological access was dominant as the issue of language of learning and teaching became a detonator. Teachers and learners, and even parents and school committees, could accept overcrowded classrooms and the shortage of teachers, but not with Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning.

The call for the People's Education for People's Power entrenched the position of epistemological access in the debates on education as a basic human right. Emphasis was placed on the skills and knowledge that should be provided by education. The human rights aspect is implied in that, access to education would enable people to access other rights such as the right to govern and the right not to be exploited.

We have seen, at the end of the first period (1955-1989), that the concept of 'access to education' changed according to the context. During this period the shortage of schools in the 1940s and 1950s and the general lack of education provisioning left the majority of black youth out of the mission schooling system. Consequently, the focus was on physical access. People wanted the kind of education system that would provide schools for the masses. I am using the term, 'schools for the masses' instead of mass education because the initial focus was on mass schooling rather mass education. However, also in the 1950s, the concerns raised by teachers about educational content and the philosophy of Bantu Education, as well as the attempt by the ANC to provide 'cultural clubs' to provide alternative education demonstrate an understanding of the significance of epistemological access, even though this seems to

have been restricted to people at the higher levels of educational and political leadership.

The 1976 Uprising and the period of People's Education show a shift from being concerned about physical resources to the kind of skills and knowledge that were required or that Bantu Education was not providing. At this time, unhappiness was more about epistemological access. At the same time, the struggle for access to education in Mooi River, where there was no high school in the area leads one to conclude that conceptions of access to education are hierarchical, but also interdependent. Physical access is a starting point as it provides the right environment for access to knowledge.

The need for mass-based schooling was not expressed as a human rights issue. It is important to note that during this period, there was no explicit reference to education as a human right in South Africa. Even calls by liberals for compulsory education do not seem to have been based on the conception of education as a human right, but rather on the concerns about the economy and other social issues such as getting black children to school.

The period of negotiation was characterised by the language of human rights. Access to education was seen as a human right that should be enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The NEPI reports, NEC report and subsequent ANC policy documents agree on this point and begin defining the steps that the new government would have take to facilitate access to education. The focus was not only on facilitating physical access but also on ensuring that the core curriculum would provide for the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are in line with the human resource needs of the country. This document also suggest values that should be promoted by the curriculum.

The negotiation period culminated into the Interim Constitution of 1993. The right to education was enshrined in section 32 of the Constitution. This was by no means the end of negotiations. As I indicated earlier in the discussion, in reality, the negotiation period went beyond 1994 into the first education policies, as have been seen in earlier discussions on current policies.

CHAPTER 6

CONCEPTIONS OF ACCESS AT GAUTENG HIGH SCHOOL

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I traced the conceptions of access to education from the Congress of the People in 1955 through to the commitment to universal quality Education for All at Jomtien in 1990 up to post-1994 government policies on access to education. The biography has shown the embeddedness of the concept of ‘access to education’ in the context prevailing at various times in the history of education. Further, the previous chapter showed that the struggle of access to education as a basic human right is not unique to South Africa. The international declarations and conventions that commit countries to making education available to all were necessary due to the realisation that not all countries had policies that committed them to expanding access to education.

In South Africa, the claiming of the right to education by those who had been denied this right by the apartheid state and the concomitant debates on what this would mean in practice, led to many attempts at defining the concept of access to education. What did these people mean by claiming equal right to education? What did it mean to claim the right to education? Does having the right to be registered also mean you are claiming the right to succeed? In the chapter on the conceptual framework, I indicated that I would use Morrow’s conception of access to education as a lens through which I examine conceptions of access at school and classroom level. I also made the point that Morrow’s conceptions would be supplemented by authoritative writings on access to knowledge and the curriculum. Morrow (1994) makes a distinction between formal or physical access and epistemological access. Formal access to education is easy to define and understand because it refers to enrolment at a school or any academic institution. It also refers to physical resources such as school buildings, library buildings, sporting activities, funding and any other thing that has to do with the education provision.

On the other hand, epistemological access is about access to knowledge. In other words, it is about the curriculum in its broadest sense. The curriculum extends beyond the issue of knowledge, and asks questions such as “who should select it, how it should be organized, taught, and evaluated, and once again who should be involved in asking and answering these questions” (Apple, 2003:7). Even with the core curriculum or syllabi, studies show that there still are “striking differences between official curricula and what actually happens in schools or in the creation of texts to meet official guidelines” (Wong & Apple, 2003:95). This is because what is declared as official curriculum and what really takes place in the classroom, once learners have been admitted, is recontextualised and therefore affected by the external and internal circumstances.

This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the conceptions of access at Gauteng High School. How does the school respond to the government policies³² that are aimed at increasing access to education? Secondly, regarding epistemological access, how is the Grade 9 history curriculum mediated at the school? This includes the selection of topics, selection of texts, scheduling and assessment.

This chapter describes how the concept of access is enacted at the school. The school was selected because of its distinctive social and political history. It is a predominantly white high school in Pretoria. As is the case with most white schools, this school was not involved or affected by the historical events that rocked black townships during the resistance to the Bantu Education policy which effectively denied black children access to meaningful and quality education. When Soweto erupted in 1976, learners at this school had no idea of what was happening to their black counterparts about 78 km away. However, it is important to note that Gauteng High Schools also has a rich history stretching back a hundred years. Students from this school fought in both the World Wars and many lost their lives fighting for what they believed in.

³²White Paper on Education and Training, 1995; the South African Schools Act; Language-in-language policies; Policies on inclusive education

Through document analysis and interviews with individuals who were involved in the debates about access to education in South Africa, I have examined how the concept of ‘access’ was understood and interpreted and how it has evolved over time, until its integration in post 1994 education policies and its implementation at school level. Gauteng High School is compared with a high school in Soweto. The Soweto school is one of the schools that were in the forefront of the struggle to reject the imposition of Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning in African schools. Socially, the school serves the disadvantaged community of Naledi, right in the heartland of Soweto.

The research focussed on how the concept of access, as embedded in government policies, is interpreted at school and classroom level. The forms of data collected from the school include school policy documents, interviews with the principal, classroom observations, interviews with two history teachers and the analysis of documentary evidence; namely, textbooks, worksheets and the final year examination question paper.

I observed and interviewed two Grade 9 history teachers, a male and a female. My focus was on the teaching of the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising. The Sharpeville Massacre took place in 1960 during a peaceful march against a law that required African males aged 16 and above to have Reference Books and to produce them on demand. The Soweto Uprising refers to the student march that took place in 1976 to protest against a policy that required African students to do half of their subjects in Afrikaans and half in English. I visited the school from 20 October when public schools reopened for the last term in 2003.

6.1.1 The school context

Gauteng High School is a former white school, situated in one of the major cities in Gauteng, not very far from one of the prominent higher education institutions in Gauteng. This school is one of four schools less than a kilometre from each other. These schools cater for Afrikaans and English speaking girls and boys. Further down the street is a technical high school. All these schools were meant to serve the white community in Pretoria.

The concentration of high schools within walking distance from each other reflects the education provision of the apartheid government and how the concept of access to education for English and Afrikaans speaking boys and girls was ensured. It also reflects the system that understood the value of access to education in terms of the physical infrastructure such as school buildings and sporting facilities, and in terms of the instruments to facilitate learning and knowledge production such as language. It is also remarkable that in the neighbourhood there is a university of high repute, even though it caters mainly for Afrikaans speaking students. This did not matter because approximately 50 km away, there is also an English medium university of high repute.

The fact that there is also a technical high school down the road confirms a commitment to provide access even to those who are not academically inclined³³. All these schools have boarding facilities. Obviously the problem with this over-investment is that it was done at the expense of the majority of boys and girl who had to be satisfied with the bare minimum provided by missionary schools at first and later by the central government.

Gauteng High School is situated in an affluent suburb that can be classified as higher middle class. Nearby is a newly renovated shopping complex. At the time of the research, houses in this area were priced at over R600 000 and single bedroom flat rentals were around R2500.00. As a result, the area is fast becoming a no-go area for middle-income parents who want to enter the property market in the predominantly white suburbs of Brooklyn and Menlo Park, New Muckleneuk and Lynnwood. This inclusion of the community context provides the background with which readers should understand the fees charged by the school that are in tandem with the high cost and standard of living in the neighbourhood.

6.2 PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL

The school is in the city, but from the road, one can hardly see the buildings, except for the name of the school at the gate. Turning into the school premises was not a

³³ the role of technical high schools was to provide for those who were understood to be incapable of following academic subjects at high school.

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problem, but once I drove through the security point and had declared my intentions, it felt like I was in the English countryside. A rich countryside. The drive between the main gate and the grounds of the school was remarkably long. I followed a small road with green trees lining up the sides as if they were in salute of whoever drives through the serene surroundings. I thought I might have missed the turn, when, all of a sudden, I saw the school buildings. The reason why I did not panic is because my mind was trying to take it all in.



Picture 1: Showing the school grounds with a street lined with trees

The school grounds are extensive, with a huge building in the middle that looks like a magnificent town hall in a colonial architectural style. This building is used as an administrative block with the reception downstairs and the principal's office, the staff room and offices for heads of subjects and teachers upstairs. The classrooms and a magnificent media centre are at the back. The front of the school, with this huge colonial building resembles an English countryside that many South Africans only see in the movies. The surroundings are almost intimidating.



Picture 2: Administrative block. Classrooms behind the building

Before I entered the administrative building where I was going to meet the subject head, I realised that I was in an unfamiliar territory and I felt all my insecurities about my own high school education coming back. I was paralysed. I thought about the school where I did my matric in Clermont, outside Durban, a school that had been built by a Good Samaritan in 1942, whereas this high school has been in existence for 100 years. I began to think about the reasons why I wanted to do research in this school and whether I would make it through the day. I had to tell myself that this was a school like any other, and that I was not to be intimidated by anything. It was a public school and I was a member of the public after all.

I wanted to get beneath the surface, I wanted to unravel what makes the school tick, I wanted to unpack how the concept of access to education, within the context of government policy, was interpreted and enacted in this school. The school has a good reputation because it is perceived to have upheld very high academic standards. A point made by principals, teachers and learners. When learners were asked why they chose the school and whether their parents decided on the school, the answers were either the parents chose the school because it was the best in the area or they themselves had always knew that they wanted to attend the school, because they had heard that it had excellent sporting facilities and a wide range of extra-mural activities.

While I was still deciding whether to go in or not, I saw two boys, walking briskly in the direction of where I wanted to go. They looked as if they were late for their class or eager to reach their destination. Before I could ask them for directions, they stopped and enquired, politely, whether I would like some help. I thanked them and answered in the negative. The boys then walked past me. The boys' demeanour changed my feelings, and all my discomfort about the unfamiliar surroundings disappeared. I confidently walked across the parking area and entered the administrative building to announce my arrival.

The inside of the building was cold and highly polished. Again, I was not sure whether to turn left or right, but I decided to turn to my right. A neatly dressed woman at reception picked up the telephone to announce my arrival to the Head of the History Department, who promptly came down to reception to take me to what would be my first classroom visit at the school. I later discovered that the school has another campus near the sporting fields. This campus also has its own facilities and a staff room.

On entering the classroom, the boys stood up to greet and the teacher offered me a seat at the back of the class. The classroom was upstairs, on the first floor. The setting looked like a laboratory with high tables and chairs. The walls were covered with geography and history related pictures, but there was nothing related to South African history.

My first classroom experience in the school was uneventful. I was informed by the teacher that, according to government policy, all Grade 9 learners were required to sit for the Common Task Assessment, commonly known as CTAs. The CTAs are similar to examinations in that they are a way of assessing learner performance for promotional purposes. Afterwards, I gathered from the teacher that the CTAs were time consuming and that doing CTAs would have been a useful exercise, had it not been for the timing. Especially in the case of this school because learners were also going to sit for the final year examination. Therefore, for all intents and purposes, doing CTAs actually meant sitting for two examinations within weeks of each other. What made the timing even more awkward was that because of the position of South

African history in the programme of the school, learners had to do the CTAs before the section of South African history had been taught. In other words, they were being assessed on the work they had not yet been taught. The enactment of the history curriculum in the school will be discussed in detail under epistemological access in the school. First, the discussion will be on physical access and how this plays out in the admission policy and other policies of the school.

The brief exposition of my first day at school could be linked to physical access to the school. The drive to the school grounds and the unfamiliarity with the surroundings could happen to anyone who comes to the school, particularly parents of prospective students. Obviously, the effect of the intimidating surroundings is countered by the politeness, respect and professionalism one receives from the administrative and professional staff, as well as from students.

In my interview with the principal, I got an impression that the school had always been working for open access to the school. The school's admission policy is aligned to the admission policy of the National Departmental of Education. The first preference is given to students who reside in the school's natural feeder area. The policy also accommodates learners "who reside outside the natural feeder area but who have specific educationally justifiable reasons for wishing to attend the school, for example, subject requirements such as third language, music and computer studies" (Admission policy of the school). However, these learners could only be considered after learners living in the demarcated feeder zone have been admitted.

The school policy is silent about students with parents who are working in the feeder area. The principal's response to that was that the demand for places at the school is very high and because of that the school is compelled to turn away a large number of learners every year. The school turned away between 200 to 400 learners who had applied for admission in the 2004 academic year. The high demand for places, therefore, forces the school to give consideration only to those learners living within the natural feeder area.

Another important point about the admission policy of the school is that the boarding places are filled up first. The unintended consequence of this policy pronouncement is

that it might limit access or make it difficult for learners from the neighbouring townships, who might want to attend the school, but could not necessarily afford to live in the hostels. Further, the principle of filling the boarding places first could have a limiting effect on the admission of day learners even though they reside within the natural feeder area. Particularly, when one considers the fact that the law does not compel a school to admit learners, no matter where they live, if the school is fully enrolled.

On the surface, the school seemed to be in line with the policy framework and the legal requirements that promote increased access to education. Broadly, the policies require public schools to admit learners who apply if such learners meet the admission criteria with regard to ‘zoning’, and if there are still places. However, the selection process has a built-in mechanism of filtering out those students who are perceived to be at risk of dropping-out or under-performing either academically or in sport or extra-mural activities. Weak students or students who do not participate in extra-mural activities or sport would be identified and then discouraged from enrolling at the school. Below is the principal’s explanation of how potentially at risk students are discouraged:

What we do is, because we are very committed to holistic education. We believe that the extra-mural programme, the sporting programme, the cultural programme, the pastoral programme and the academic programme all have value as a package.... *When we get applications, and we see from the application that the boy is struggling academically or is a non-participator in primary school, we then do not accept them automatically. We write to parents and say, we notice that academically he is very weak and the academic standard here is high ... and he is also a non-participator. We suggest that you consider whether this is the right school for him, and by all means you are entitled to come here because of where you live, but you must not take what is the easy option, you must take the right decision that you make for your child. And please think about it. ... You are welcome to come and see me and discuss it. And they will come and would say our child had done badly because there has been a divorce in the family...and then we would say okay, come. And sometimes they would say he does not participate in sport because we live far away from the school. Or he does not participate because we can’t afford this and that or cricket bats or whatever, and then we make a decision and they make a decision. Yes, we would like him to come here or “no, this school might not be suitable, we will send him to another school”.* It is all done in a few cases. If I say few, its probably 20 or 30 letters like that among 700 applications. There is no problem about access at all.

On the surface, such a letter from the principal of a school could be said to be in the best interest of the student, as it could prevent frustration and behavioural problems later in the year. Another interpretation is that such a letter could discourage parents from taking their child to the school and they would be forced to look for a school outside the feeder area, a situation that would have financial implications for them. Giving parents an opportunity to say for themselves “this school might not be suitable, we will send him to another school” gives parents an illusion of having made the decision to take their child to another school, when in fact, this was a subtle refusal of access without violating government policy. This practice also seems to suggest that there are schools that are always ready to admit weak and non-participating students. It is difficult to understand how this practice could be said to be in the interest of students when what it does is shift the responsibility of having to deal with problem students to other schools outside the feeder area.

The language used to discourage access to the school is remarkably interesting. Phrases such as “we don’t think this is the right school for him”, or advising parents “not to take an easy option” but to do what is “right for their child” appeals to the parents’ natural instincts to protect their children, while at the same time making the principal sound caring. The parents’ desire to want the best for their children would make them, in this case, want to protect their children by looking for an alternative school for their child. Parents would not realise that what the school actually means is that their child is not suitable for the school. This is evident in the principal’s own words about what often happens in instances where the Department of Education intervenes by using the legal framework to force the school to admit learners who have been turned away.

We do find it sometimes, that the Department will say, these people live in the area, they must come to³⁴ [Gauteng High], and we say, we don’t *think this is the right school for them*. They say by law you got to take him. I say okay, I give up. And then after 6 months you have a huge social problem from this child because he is *not suitable for this school*...

The last sentence contradicts what parents and the Department of Education are made to believe, that the school is not suitable or right for the student, rather than the other

³⁴ The real name of the school has been omitted.

way round. It brings to the fore the real reason for the school's reluctance to admit a student that is deemed not suitable for the school as he does not fit its profile or ethos. This is important, because it begins to ask pertinent questions about open access to the school, and whether schools should not be sharing the responsibility of improving the chances of educational success of all learners, including weak students. Another question is, if the school selects only students who are strong academically and in sport and other-extra mural activities, can we really say it is a good school? The reality of the situation is that, the above scenario could be a vicious circle in that weak students go to weak schools, and because such schools are not likely to have adequate or outstanding facilities, including expert teachers, these weak students are not likely to get help. Consequently, they drop out of school or manifest those social problems that the stronger school avoided.

The reluctance to admit weak learners in the school appears to be incongruent with the schools past initiative of creating opportunities for learners from township schools to study at the school. As early as 1988-89, the School Governing Body obtained a mandate from parents, through a referendum, to admit other racial groups. It went further and started a bridging school to help students from disadvantaged schools in the township to cope with academic standards in the school by offering an intensive one-year programme and then integrating them to Form 1 the following year. By the principal's account, this was the school's first step towards transformation. With pride in his voice, the principal gave an account of how the school reached out to township schools:

And what we did, which I think was unique in the country, we realised that there will be a lot of little boys from formerly township schools, who might wish to come here but who wouldn't cope academically because of the deprivation in many township schools. So we started our own bridging school... Those boys would have technically passed Standard 5 in township schools. But when we did our investigation and paperwork we discovered that some of them would, academically, be up to three years behind their white counterparts. So what we did is, we started our own bridging school in a campus down here, where we had a class of 25 little boys, previously disadvantaged, who could not cope academically. But we integrated them into the school in everything. In sport, in music and in physical education. But we devised our own curriculum for them. We employed our own teachers. We employed 3 teachers, just for one class. And they did not only have their own curriculum to help them catch up, but also we did a few trips for them... That was almost like an occupational therapy group as well. I

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mean we guaranteed that after a year they would then go on into standard 6 or Form 1. They would have lost a year, but as long as they were young enough it didn't really matter. We ran that programme for 5 years.

One can see from the above that the school had, in the past, voluntarily opened access to students from disadvantaged communities and even though the bridging programme is no longer operational, the school still has various relationships with schools in the townships, ranging from donating furniture to offering bursaries to top students in selected schools. At the time of the research, the school had two bursary holders from a township primary school with which the school has a relationship. In the light of the school's contribution towards the upliftment of disadvantaged communities, how does one explain the school's seemingly contradictory behaviour of discouraging weak students from enrolling at the school on one hand, while selecting students from township primary schools and offering them bursaries to study at the school? Why did the school seek a mandate from parents to admit black students even before this became the law? A plausible explanation of this seemingly contradictory behaviour can only be understood in the context of a white liberal tradition of reaching out to poor communities or to the previously disadvantaged on their own terms. By striking a relationship with one or two township primary schools, the school would have control on the type of township student it enrolls. The 'right' learner for the school.

6.2.1 School costs

The cost of having a child at Gauteng High School is not cheap. In 2004, the total cost of education at the school was R28 400.00, made up of R11 200 for tuition and an additional R17 200 for boarding in the hostels. The amount excludes the cost of school uniforms, and kits for various sporting codes. In spite of the high fees, the school complies with the South African Schools Act because it does not deny access to learners on the basis of a lack of capability to pay the fees. Instead, it applies different ways of facilitating access by offering bursaries to deserving learners. According to the principal in 2003 the school disbursed approximately R650 000.00 in bursaries. Additionally, the school also apply the funding formula of the Department of Education, which means that some students are granted partial exemption, while others are granted full exemptions. Access to extra-mural activities,

including sport, is facilitated by providing kits to students who would otherwise be excluded from such activities.

The information about financial assistance is communicated to all parents by including a statement in the letter of acceptance that parents should contact the financial office if there are any problems regarding their ability to pay the school fees. Those who inform the office about financial problems would then be requested to complete special forms and also submit evidence of their income status such as salary slips and tax returns. The principal with the assistance of the governing body then looks at the submissions and decide on the type of financial relief that is suitable for each candidate. The decision whether the school grants bursaries or uses the funding formula depends on the estimated running costs of the school for each academic year. According to the principal, bursary disbursements are preferable because they keep the school liquid in that even though the students are not paying, the school is getting a benefactor to pay.

The budgeting policy of the school allows it to know in advance how much will be needed in the following year. For example, in 2004 the school's budget was estimated at R22 million. The school has two financial officers who manage the school's budget. The running costs include salaries of 46 teachers who are paid by the governing body. The reason for hiring additional teachers is to enable teachers in promotional posts, heads of subjects, housemasters and management, sufficient time to do administrative work in the school day and to keep the number of learners in each class under 30. The official Departmental allocation is 35 teachers including the principal.

6.2.2 Quality education and student numbers

Keeping classes under 30 means that each grade will have 300 students. The total enrolment is supposed to be 1500 students but the principal indicated that in 2004, the school would have 1531 enrolments, which was against his wishes. The reason for keeping student numbers at a manageable level is very important to the principal because it affects the quality of education they offer. He states that:

...obviously the bigger your school gets, the more difficult to manage and not to manage in an academic sense but to manage in a pastoral sense. Because to me education is not about putting a person in a desk. It's about, once a person is in that desk, its actually doing the right thing for that person. Being able to assist academically, socially, emotionally, whatever the problems are because in my experience, I know that there is a kind of backup that they should get.

The above paragraph reflects conception of access to education as meaning more than physical access to the school. It also means epistemological access and access to other services. According to him there is convergence between the ability of the school to provide all services to learners, including academic assistance, and student numbers. As the principal put it, 'it is about doing the right thing for the student'.

6.2.3 Language

As discussed in the previous section, the language policy of the Department is based on additive multilingualism, a principle in the Language-in-Education Policy that requires learners to learn at least two but preferably three languages. The language policy of the school complies with this policy in that it allows students to learn a variety of languages, including an indigenous African language. English is the only official language of the school, and also the sole medium of teaching and learning as well as the language of communication and administration. Due to the importance placed on English in the school, all students are expected to offer it as a first language, then Afrikaans or Sesotho sa Lebowa (Sepedi) at second language level. Students are also encouraged to learn a foreign language at third language level. This could be either Latin, French or German.

Students who are not sufficiently proficient in English are required to attend additional English classes instead of taking a foreign language as a third language. Such students are expected to master standard English, which, according to school policy, "facilitates communication in the international community" (1998:2). The school's commitment to the mastery of Standard English is interesting in the light of the current debates among language scholars about the concept of a standard language across and within nations.

Although the school does not use language as a tool to exclude learners, the admission policy of the school makes provision for the administering of an English test to facilitate “placement in the correct grade” (p1). The need for English language testing, according to the admission policy of the school, is necessitated by the presence of a large number of Embassies and High Commissions within the school’s natural feeder area. The refusal of access to the school on the basis of language happens rarely, and has only been applied in cases where an applicant had no command of English. This position is reviewed after “an intensive English course” or in the worst-case scenario, “a language specific school is recommended” for the learner (p.1). It is important to note that the South African Schools Act prohibits any form of testing for admission purposes. This raises pertinent questions about the rights of foreign nationals to access education in this country.

6.2.4 Parent involvement

According to the principal, the school encourages parents to participate in any way they can in the education of their children and in the life of the school. This is backed by the school’s mission statement, which states:

We believe that successful education is a partnership between the home and school. Therefore an atmosphere of openness, mutual trust and respect must exist amongst partners, i.e. parents, staff and the boys (Mission Statement).

Apart from encouraging parents to attend meetings, the school has two structures through which parents can participate in the life of the school, namely, the School Governing Body (SGB) and the Parent Association. The governing body was established in terms of government policy and includes all the stakeholders such as parent representatives, teachers, non-teaching staff and students, in the case of a high school. The SGB is responsible for the governance of the school, whilst the Parent Association is based on rendering service to the school.

The governing body has nine members, three black and six white. The gender composition is three females and six males. Among the three who are black, one person is a non-professional member of staff and the other a black student. The school tries to ensure that governing body members have a broad spectrum of skills

that could benefit the school, namely, a legal person, an engineer or builder or architect, a financial person, etc.

The Parent Association, on the other hand, consists of a “group of moms and dads who just want to become involved in the education of their sons” (principal interview). The association is involved in rendering services such as the running of the school tuck shop, stationary shop, entertainment of visitors and organising seminars for parents on topical issues such as drug abuse. The chairperson of the association may not be an elected member of the SGB so that he can be co-opted into the governing body. New parents are encouraged to sign up for duty and if they are not available during the week, they can help on Saturdays when there are school matches or visitors. The principal encourages parents to participate by calling for obligatory meetings, at which parents meet teachers. Every year, the principal also invites new mothers to a cocktail to address them on what is expected from them.

Whilst it could be argued that participation in the governing body and parent association does not have a direct impact on learners’ access to the school, having a structured way of participation creates opportunities for new parents to get to know the school, thereby making it easy for them to access teachers or the principal should the need arise. The flip side of the coin is that parents who do not participate in rendering a service to the school could be seen as uncooperative or not interested in the education of their children. This could make it difficult for such parents to approach teachers and even the principal when there are problems. The use of language such as “its for moms and dads who just want to become involved in the education of their sons” when referring to the parent associations presupposes that those who do not sign-up for duty or who do not become involved are not interested in the education of their children.

6.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS AT THE SCHOOL

The ANC policy document called for a South Africa in which educational institutions will be increasingly open “so that students from the disadvantaged majority make up much of a larger proportion of their intake, and they must ensure that they offer education of quality” (NECC, 1992:1). Once the schools and universities are open to all, Lyotard’s work points to various dimensions of accessing knowledge. Most

researchers and educationists believe that a good and coherent curriculum policy would attempt to answer questions such as who transmits learning? What is transmitted? To whom? Through what medium? In what form? With what effect? This section, therefore, enters the classroom and looks at what knowledge was transmitted and the resources used. The first part of this section looks at the literary sources such as textbooks, worksheets and examination papers. This is later followed by the analysis of the classroom practices from data collected from teacher interviews and classroom observations.

6.3.1 Analysis of literary sources

I indicated in the research design that as I gained access to the school, I made arrangements to meet with the relevant teachers to brief them about my research and to request textbooks, worksheets, class time tables and any other information about the teaching of history. In the case of Gauteng High School, the principal had referred me to the subject head.

On entering the office of the Head of the History Department, I could not help noticing shelves lined with history books available to all history teachers. This was in addition to books available at the media centre. The History Department also has different kinds of artefacts³⁵ that it has collected over the years. The head teacher has also travelled overseas and brought back some relevant material for use by the History Department.

At the meeting, the subject head explained to me how the History Department at the school functioned. He also indicated to me that the school did not use textbooks recommended by the Department of Education because he had compiled a reader or 'student notes' to be used by all Grade 9 teachers. These had also been supplied to all Grade 9 learners. The reader includes exercises or activities for learners. The reader was also used by all Grade 9 teachers as a plan for the year. Teachers were required to teach the content in the same sequence. The examinations were also based on the reader.

³⁵ Letters from the World Wars, World War music, original tickets of food rations used during the wars, etc.

The subject head admitted that he was not happy with the Department's policy on the teaching of history because the Department wanted to move away from the history that had been dominated by a certain section of the population but went on to do the same thing. According to him, the new history curriculum reflects the values of one section of the population. He had raised his concerns by way of a written submission to the committee that was working on the Revised National Curriculum Statement but he had been ignored.

Interviews with teachers revealed that in order to maintain uniformity across five Grade 9 history classrooms, teachers were expected to follow student notes in the same order and time. Teachers could bring extra material or extra worksheets and even set their own tests, as long as they understood that such materials were only for enrichment and would not be included in the examination. Both teachers agreed that following the reader was necessary to maintain the same standard but was somewhat restrictive. They also argued that the subject head had used a number of books when putting together the student notes.

In line with the philosophy of the school to provide “quality structured, disciplined, intellectual education and training and encourage creativity limited only by the ability of the student” through appointing teachers who are well qualified in the subjects they teach, both teachers majored in history at university. This is an interesting point, when one considers the fact that these teachers were expected to follow notes compiled by the subject head with the assistance of one history teacher. These qualified teachers had no say in what went into the reader. All they could do was to add whatever they wanted in their classes, but with the knowledge that those would be only for enrichment, not for examination purposes.

My analysis of the reader revealed some interesting points about the position of South African history in relation to other history topics included in the reader. To begin with, the reader has 92 pages, 13 of which are dedicated to South African history and the rest consists of what is called general history or European history, namely, World War I and II and the cold war. To be precise, the subject content is divided into eleven units. World War I takes five units (Units 1-5), units 6 and 7 are about Adolf

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Hitler, his rise and his Foreign Policy, while Units 8 and 9 cover World War II, followed by the Arab-Israeli conflict as Unit 10 and the last Unit, Unit 11 is South African history. The Arab-Israeli conflict and South African history are allocated 11 and 13 pages, respectively. The privileging of general history demonstrates the privileging of white male knowledge and the marginalisation of African knowledge alluded to in the NEPI report (1992) and the ANC's Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994). However, it is not just the privileging of general history, but the school's history is linked to the World Wars.

By pushing South African history to the last unit of the year, it means that the unit is likely to be rushed or not taught if time does not allow. This in a situation where the text is already arranged in order of priority and teachers are expected to follow that order.

The content of Unit 11 covers the Union of South Africa until 1948; the National Party government and the policy of Apartheid (apartheid laws); Separate Development; Resistance to Apartheid; and Moves to a Democratic Order. Each of these topics is accompanied by an activity for learners. The Resistance to Apartheid was the only section without an activity.

Brief notes about the National Party government cover the following major apartheid laws: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949; the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950; the Population Registration Act of 1950; The Group Areas Act of 1950; the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Naturally, the section on apartheid laws is followed by the history of resistance which gives a short paragraph each on the Defiance Campaign, the Freedom Charter, the Sharpeville March, the Rivonia Trial and the Soweto Uprising.

It is important to note that the teaching periods in the school were about 45 minutes long, and the timetable was structured in such a manner that teachers saw a class twice per week. In the three-week period in which I was at the school, the first week was dedicated to the Common Task Assessment, which is a policy requirement for all public schools. This took four periods between the two classes observed. Since learners did the CTAs before teachers started with South African history, it led to a

situation in which learners were assessed on the section before they were taught the subject matter. This resulted in learners taking much longer to work through the tasks.

Overall, when this situation is put in the context of the positioning of South African history in the history curriculum, it confirms that this section is not taken seriously, at least at Grade 9 level. Another point to consider is that the CTAs were not taken seriously by the school because students were still going to sit for an internal examination. This was confirmed by the subject head who thought that the CTAs were a waste of time because they were of low academic standard. According to him, the Department was wrong to impose blanket rules on all schools. What was remarkable was how that attitude trickled down to learners. When the two groups of learners were asked, separately, what they would want the Minister of Education to know or to change if they were given an opportunity to communicate with him, they all indicated that they would ask the Minister not to force public schools to do the CTAs. Some even remarked, “there is nobody in this school who will leave school at the end of Grade 9 anyway”. They also felt that doing CTAs was like sitting for two final examinations at the end of the year. One group of students jokingly said that they would tell the Minister that their school was the best and that he should not change anything. He should also not even consider changing the name of the school. An attitude that reflects resentment of the authority that was perceived to be interfering with the established practices of the school.

Learners also reiterated the subject head’s point that the CTAs were not sufficiently challenging. To them the CTA questions were like normal class work questions. When pushed, they acknowledged that there were some tricky questions. They also expressed the view that CTAs were for other schools not for them. The teachers were diplomatic but also expressed feelings that they did not think that Department regulations should be applied to all schools. Some schools should be allowed to “do their own thing” as their “academic standards” were already high. They thought that the Department of Education should concentrate on the schools that needed improving or upliftment.

The following themes emanated from the data collected by means of interviewing teachers and students as well as from classroom observation: time constraints;

constraints arising from content selection; awareness; teaching of history as hard cold fact; and the covert curriculum.

The teachers' responses on how they presented or talked about sensitive topics such as the Sharpeville Massacre and Soweto Uprising, revealed views that could be described as liberal. For example, they believed that the teaching of history should enable learners to recognise the suffering of the people who were involved in these events and the role of the state in that suffering. At the same time they saw their role as presenters of historical facts, which should be done without emotion, and in a manner that would not offend or blame others who had no control on what was happening. Below is an extract from an interview that reflects how this teacher understood her work:

I think, in all the subjects, History is the one you know you are going to get a reaction, and that you are going to hurt people's feelings... I have always been open, and I've always been liberal in my teaching. But I don't want to make people feel that they are to blame. So that they walk out of there feeling that it's their fault, what happened. They weren't in control at that time. The situation about Germany, South African history, the Jewish-German history, Nazi Germany. We've got German students in class. Same thing, exactly the same thing. You have to be very aware. Make sure you are. And if straight away, I pick up somebody who has been offended, I ask them to remain behind. (Female teacher)

Another teacher, responding to the same subject of talking about sensitive issues in the South African history curriculum, said that he tells his learners to put themselves in the shoes of black people at the time of the National Party rule. He asks them what they would have done if they were black growing up in South Africa at the time, going to black schools and what they would be doing when they left school? When asked whether he would have approached the subject differently had the class been predominantly black, he answered:

I don't think so, probably I'll approach it in the same way. People are entitled to their viewpoint anyway. But also, strange enough, with some black kids growing up, when they were born, it might have been 1987-88, they have no idea what apartheid is, unless their parents, from previously disadvantaged communities have told them, but there are none of those kids in the school, they have their parents in town, so they have no real idea. So I will treat it the same way.

Teachers also believed that parents influenced learners' reaction and understanding of historical events that took place during the resistance to apartheid policies. For example, learners who were asked by the teacher to explain why they felt hurt and blamed during a specific history lesson, often gave answers that the teachers thought reflected the views of their parents rather than their own. The same applies to those who questioned the role of black students in the Soweto Uprising and of the people who were massacred during the Sharpeville protest. In such instances, teachers saw their role as that of presenting objective facts and allowing learners to make up their minds:

I say to them you must make up your mind, what you believe, we are just presenting the facts as they are; we don't want to get emotional about it. We try to leave the emotive side out of it, and when you are describing events like Blood River or whatever, do it in a factual way so that whatever facts, they can make up their own minds what they feel about it. So I always believe that as long as they can justify how they feel, but it can't be an unreasonable, ridiculous reason about why they don't want to do the project or whatever. (Female teacher)

One interesting comment from a white child was, "Ja, but blacks were not just standing still. They were throwing stones you know". Then I say, I know they were throwing stones but don't you think that the way the police responded was a bit excessive. Fine, they were not just standing there or innocent but the way the police responded by opening fire, wasn't that a bit much? (Male teacher)

The reaction of both teachers to learners they thought had conservative views or views that were incongruent with the new democratic order was that this could not be left unchallenged, it should be questioned. However, the reason for probing was to allow learners to make up their minds about what they wanted to believe happened at the time. They also wanted to understand why learners had such views, rather than trying to change those views. This is reflected in the previous excerpt from the female teacher as well as by that of the other teacher below:

You know, you can't take that view because may be its something they hear from parents talking and they come with those views and so on. You try and question and try to understand why they have that view after 10 years of freedom. You try and question to find out if it is their view, have they thought about it or it's just their parents talking. (Male teacher commenting on the learner's remark that black students were not innocent victims)

6.3.2 Insufficient teaching time for South African History

Teaching South African history in the last term of the year left teachers with insufficient time to cover the period from 1910 to the new democratic order. As a result, the teaching was superficial and only covered prominent events without interrogating them in detail. Concerns about time and the impact it had on their teaching emerged in our discussion about teaching styles and the need to create opportunities for learners' voices and experiences. When asked whether the lessons would have been more enriching if they had explored the learners' experiences or allowed more views, both the teachers agreed but raised concerns about time constraints:

Definitely, unfortunately, the teaching of South African history is so rushed. We actually had a meeting just now, to try and ask if we can't do it at the beginning of the year. Just to give it some more time. So that you can actually say all that, what is your point of view? What actually happens in wartime? What did your parents say? And try and get some other perspective. I mean there is a huge benefit in discussing it. I mean their parents have personal experiences of it. Otherwise we teach facts, and they see no connection. We need to tap into that... their experiences. (Female teacher)

We had to get through the work and we didn't have time to do other things... One boy in my other class told me that his mother was black and father coloured. Yes, you can allow them to talk about their personal experiences... You could ask questions to which all would have their own input and so on. The problem with that is that we ran out of time. (Male teacher)

The excerpts from teachers' interviews do not only show the negative effect of time allocation on the teaching styles used in this section of history, but it also robs learners of the opportunity to learn from the experiences of their fellow classmates.

It would seem that teachers saw the role of South African history in the curriculum as that of creating awareness of the past and how that affected the people's lives. This could be done in many ways, including, the use of films or video footage. One teacher felt that the 'shock value' of graphic films such as the one they had shown was useful to make learners aware of the past reality of the political situation in South Africa.

This teacher also had not briefed learners in advance about what they were going to see

because he thought that would have reduced the shock-value of the film, *A Dry White Season*³⁶. His response was:

Sometimes it's the shock value. You need to say this is the reality of the situation. You can't ignore it. You can't pretend as if everybody lived happily because they didn't. The kids responded in different ways. I mean the film as well, and many of the white kids said, "Was that really bad?" Then you say, yes, it was *that* bad and you try to bring that point across. I mean you can't have the age restriction because that is what they need to know. If we have to move forward, may be they will have a little bit of tolerance in them. (Male teacher)

The second teacher's responses demonstrate the power of visual images, especially video footage, in the teaching of historical events. Although she had prepared the learners on what they were going to watch, still the power of video footage left them shell shocked, but also aware of what it was like. She explained this eloquently in the following excerpt:

They walked out of there shell shocked and shaken. I had to take 30 minutes to explain to them what just happened. I kept on asking them how come you are so shaken with what you have seen, when we have watched the holocaust, we watched World War I, and there are terrific things on battle fields and here they walked out of there stunned? They couldn't handle it. We discussed then why they have been affected by this video footage so greatly? And it was all about the fact that it was here. It's them. Their people who were affected by this. I think why it shocked them is that suddenly they were aware that it's our history...not just something on paper. They saw what actually happened.

She continues to say that the level of ignorance about historical events such as the Soweto Uprising is exacerbated by the fact that learners live sheltered lives which make them ignorant about things that one may think are common knowledge. She says that, until that film, some of the boys did not know where Soweto is situated.

Some of the boys did not actually know where Soweto is or what it is. They've never heard of it. Soweto. They only know Johannesburg. They don't know that Soweto is in Jo'burg. That is a mind-boggling thing... (Female teacher)

³⁶ *The Dry White Season* is based on Andre Brink's novel. It is about the violence perpetuated by the police during the Soweto revolt.

Apart from creating awareness amongst learners, one teacher felt that it was important for teachers, for her, to be ‘aware’ of how different people were affected so that she would be sensitive when dealing with a class of learners from diverse backgrounds. Responding to whether she thought she was competent to teach history to learners from diverse backgrounds she said:

I don't think I will say I am 100% competent and no way can I have any experience of what would have been like in any of those different groups, whether German, Black, Jewish, whatever community. I am what I am from where I come from. So, the only way that I can answer that is, I am *aware*. I am *aware* of different groups and different people and cultures. I have always thought that you have to be *aware* and be open. (Female teacher)

This teacher also felt that teaching these sensitive topics and having to watch historical events on film created space for her to raise questions about her own existence at the time, her ignorance about what was going on around her. Her thoughts about how the film affected her and the questions it raised are captured in her words below:

Even for myself, I read the book, but I was affected. Even though I was a liberal, I asked myself, where was I when this was going on? What was I doing? How come I don't recall the helicopters flying and newspapers and all that. And I was 13. I was their age. I was in boarding school, girls' school. The world out there did not exist. I did not know what was going on. I was totally secluded and I told them why. For me it was a greater shock than the boys. (Female teacher, her feelings after watching *The Dry White Season*)

6.3.3 The covert curriculum in the school

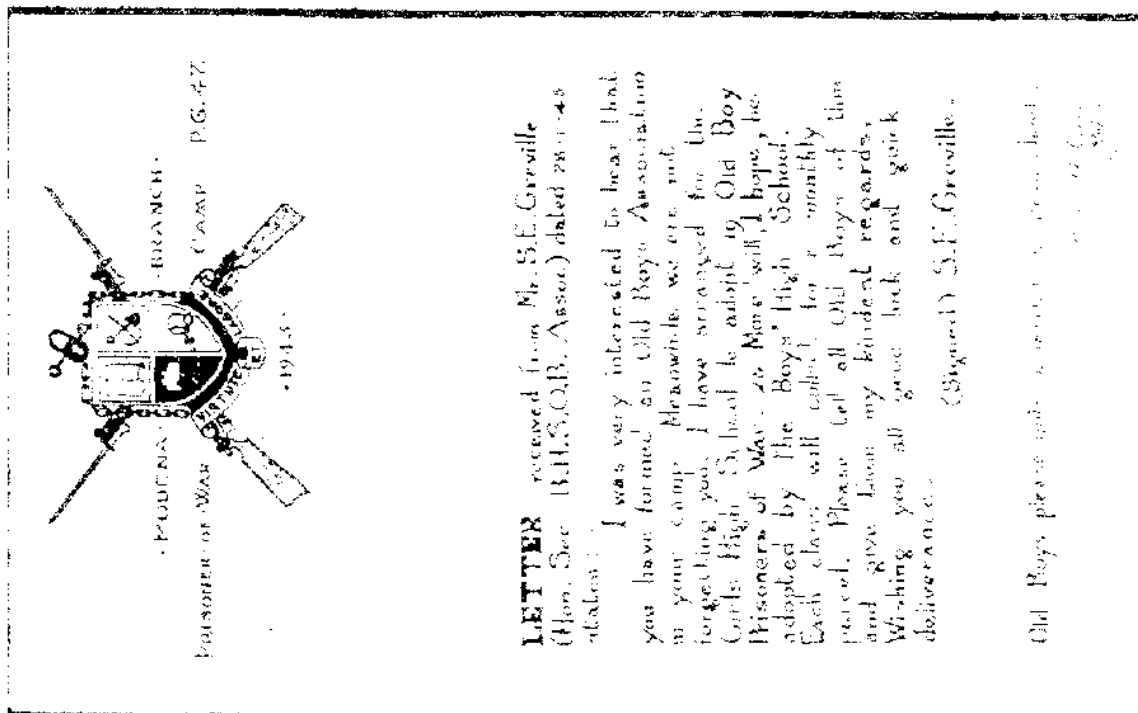
The response of learners to questions about the significance of Human Rights Day and Youth Day revealed that learners did not actually know why these days were celebrated and could not relate these public holidays to the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre even though the interview took place two days after they had watched the film. Their responses ranged from giving broad answers such as “Human Rights day means we are all equal” to comments such as “we don't know, all we are interested in is the red block on the calendar which means we are not coming to school” (Grade 9 learner).

They also reported that their teachers had not discussed the significance of the days with them. One teacher also admitted that she did not talk about these public holidays or used them to initiate dialogue in class and that she was doing related work outside the classroom. She said:

We haven't really at all. In a historical sense. I belong to the Society for National and International Affairs celebrations... we do a lot of work on Freedom Day. That is the forum in which all of that is used. Very, very small society at the moment... I think we need to draw more boys into it. To make them more aware, emotionally, socially, but I have not done it in my classroom. I don't use them. Not the significance at all. (Female teacher)

The other teacher reported that he often took 10-15 minutes before a public holiday to explain the significance of the day to learners. What was interesting to me was that, when I was at the school, the school participated in the celebration of International Remembrance Day. On this day, the international community celebrates their heroes who fought or participated in World Wars. The whole school assembled in the hall and there were dignitaries from the South African Navy and the Military.

There was an address by an admiral who told learners about the contribution of South Africa and the sinking of the ship, Imendi, with South African soldiers. He told students that they should be proud because some of the heroes had been students at the school. He also acknowledged the contribution made by black soldiers in the War. A roll of honour and the laying of wreaths for those who were killed formed part of the ceremony. The copy of the programme contained a copy of a letter that was written by a prisoner of war, who had been a student at the school:



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The commemoration of Remembrance Day stands in stark contrast to the school's indifference to public holidays that are significant to the new democratic order. Most importantly, the observance of the International Remembrance Day, when understood

in the context of a school that does not celebrate days that are significant to the history of South Africa, raises questions about the hidden curriculum in the school and the forms of knowledge it promotes. In other words the kind of knowledge or knowledges that learners have access to.

It is also worth noting that when teachers and principal were interviewed, all were silent on the concept of 'diversity'. I got an impression that the school was more set on emphasising *sameness*. Phrases such as "colour doesn't matter", "boys are colourless", "colour is not an issue", the school is "non racial" came up frequently in the principal's talk. One can read two sides to the story. The first side, the bright side, is that learners of all races are treated with equal respect and dignity. The dark side is that emphasising sameness could be interpreted as intolerance to diversity in that it avoids talking about difference. The principal's assertion that "I don't see colour", "boys are colourless" universalises whiteness and does not see black.

The teaching of history: observations

As alluded to in the earlier discussion, the actual teaching time of South African history was about four weeks, including a week that was taken up by the CTAs. This, as teachers observed, had an impact on the coverage of recommended topics such as the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprisings. Most importantly, the time allocation had an impact on the teaching strategies as teachers were rushed to cover everything. Below is a brief exposition of the content that was covered before a discussion on Sharpeville Day:

- (i) The first period in both Grade 9 classes focussed on how the National Party used policies to discriminate against the majority of the people and how this was justified on biblical grounds. This included a short discussion of the Group Areas Act and how people were relocated. In one class, the teacher referred to the set work that learners were reading on District 6, and to the fact that now people were trying to 'relocate back' to where they were removed. Learners were also required to explain terms such as democracy, liberty, grand apartheid, toy-toying and the concept of the Group Areas Act.

- (ii) The concept of separate development and the concept of ‘dividing the majority’ and how different ethnic groups were allocated homelands at which they could govern themselves and vote. Learners were required to answer questions like: Why didn’t the rest of the world recognise the homelands? Why was the national defence force so strong at the time?
- (iii) When did South Africa become a first world country? Learners also had to do an activity on the policy of separate development, which was colouring in the homelands created in South Africa on the map.
- (iv) Resistance to apartheid was introduced by referring to the National Day of Protest on 20 June 1950 and the Congress of the People in 1955 where the demands for a democratic South Africa were discussed. The lessons also included the explanation of terms such as passive resistance, strikes, boycotts and non-cooperation. In one class the question was, “what are the black people protesting about?”

Sharpeville Day

All lessons taught by the two teachers were teacher-fronted, with very little questioning. Those questions were primarily directed at assessing the learners’ understanding of broad concepts rather than creating dialogue or allowing contrasting views. Similarly, the questions raised by learners were mainly aimed at seeking clarity rather than raising contrasting views. There was no instance in which the teachers’ representation of the Sharpeville Massacre was challenged. Below is the text that is in the student notes.

Sharpeville 21 March 1960

Resistance by the blacks being forced to carry Pass Books with them resulted in protests to this law in 1960. The Pass Laws prevented blacks from freely moving around the country.

Every African who has attained the age of 16 years must be in possession of a Reference Book. Any policeman may call at any time on any African to produce his Reference Book. An African unable to do so because he has left it at home is guilty of a criminal offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment for not longer than one month.

On 21 March 1960 a crowd gathered at Sharpeville police station near Vereeniging to protest these pass laws. The police opened fire on these protestors killing 69 and wounding 186. People all over the world were outraged by the brutal killings and the economy suffered as many foreign companies withdrew funds from South Africa. The government declared a State of Emergency and banned the ANC and PAC. Increasing international pressure led to South Africa becoming a Republic outside of the Commonwealth in 1961.




Figure 1: Representation of the Sharpeville Day.

The Sharpeville March of 1960 was discussed as an example of the people's resistance to a law that required African males to carry reference books and produce them on demand. The teacher mentioned the killing of 69 marchers by the police and that the international community was outraged and the South African government was forced into an enclosed economy. The engagement of learners was limited to the following questions:

- Why would black policemen do this to their own people? Upon which other learners responded by saying that the policemen were protecting their jobs.
- By pulling out, what was the international community saying?
- What does that do to the people (meaning disinvestment)?
- Why did the police open fire?

With regard to June 1976, learners were shown the film *The Dry White Season* by Andre Brink. The film is about a black worker whose son is shot by the police during the 1976 Uprisings. In brief, the theme of the film is police brutality and how whites

that sympathised with blacks were also harassed by the state. The film was extremely violent and graphic.

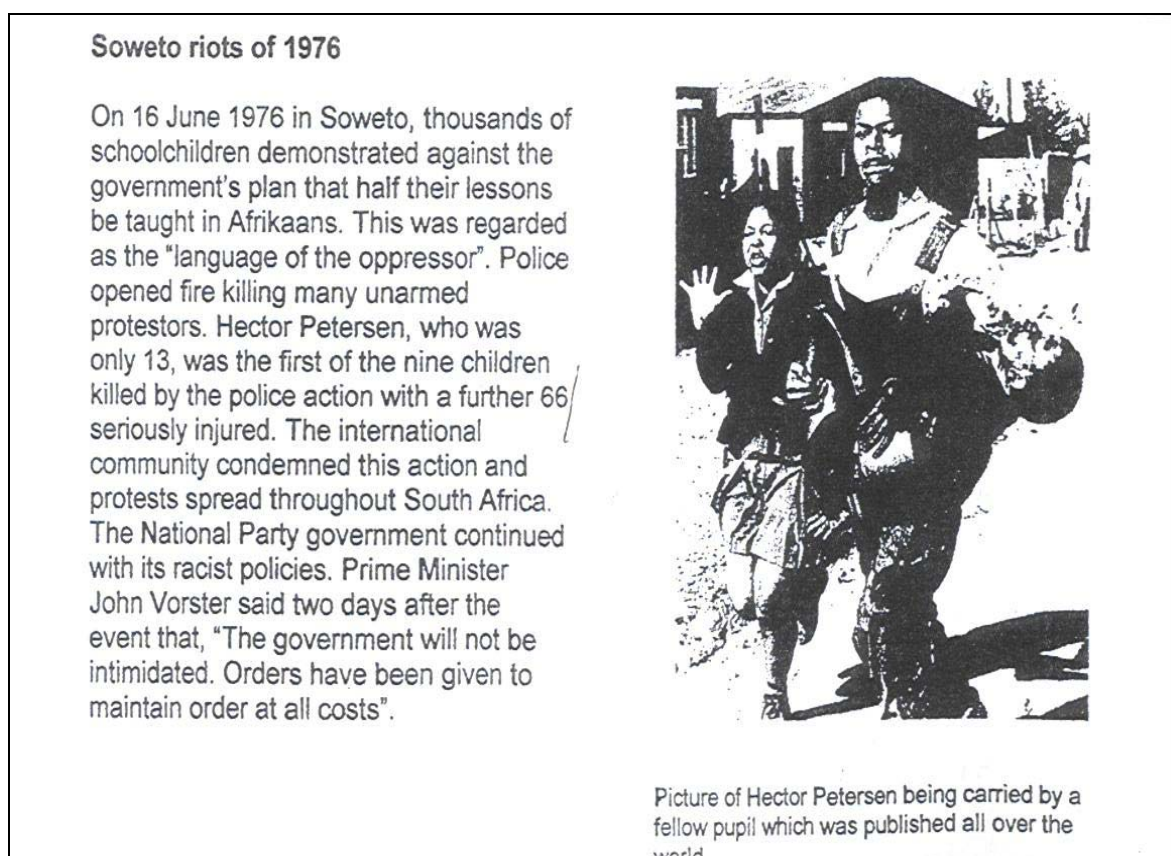


Figure 2: Hector Peterson during the Soweto Uprising

The two teachers approached the teaching of Soweto Uprising differently. The first teacher neither prepared learners for what they were going to see, nor discussed the film afterwards. His only comment was "what you have seen is not far from the truth". The other teacher informed learners about what they were going to see. This teacher also took about 30 minutes after the film to discuss what the learners saw and how they felt about it. The teacher reported that the learners were disturbed or shaken by the film and the level of violence against students. Most importantly, learners were shocked because they could not believe that this happened in this country.

In the final examination question paper, out of 48 marks allocated to South African History, only three questions assessed some kind of knowledge of the Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprisings. These have been given below:

Give one word or phrase for the following

Protest against the carrying of Reference Books in 1960 (1)

The first victim of police action during the Soweto riots in 1976 (1)

The history of Resistance to Apartheid is not assessed in the reader. Although all sections of the reader are accompanied by assessment activities, the history of the resistance is followed by the section on Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk, and that is assessed. This could be interpreted as further marginalisation of the ‘voices’ of those who were involved, or the discomfort with this part of South African history.

Overall the assessment of South African history was not congruent with the amount of time given to the content. As indicated, it was taught in the last term and was rushed. South African History was also allocated only 13 of the 93 pages, yet in the final examination, South African history was allocated 48 marks. The 52 percent were allocated to general history, and the Arab-Israeli conflict was not assessed because it had not been taught.

6.4 Reflections

It would seem that the enactment of government policies in relation to the principle of access to learners has two faces. One face is visible and aligned to government policies that promote increased access to education and prohibits any form of discrimination. This face ensures that the school adopts a non-confrontation deviation from policy by ensuring that the deviations are subtle and smart, such as admitting only most promising students while ‘advising’ parents of ‘unsuitable’ applicants to think about an alternative school that is in the ‘best interest of the child’. In the latter case the denial of access is subtle and difficult to prove. The use of language to get people do what the school wants is remarkably clever and indirect.

The emphasising of general history at the expense of South African history is difficult to understand without examining the culture of the school, which is based on 100 years of the English tradition. The English character of the school can be distilled

from the principal's description of the school as "providing English, non-racial education". According to the principal, the school was in high demand because parents wanted that English character and ethos for their children. Therefore, reluctance to shed or modify this institutional culture, which was seen as the defining character of the school, seemed to be the main reason of non-change in the Grade 9 history curriculum in particular, and in the school practices in general.

Conceptually, the teaching of South African history cannot be divorced from the issue of race. Even if the teachers were teaching the Union of South Africa, they would still have to talk about the British and the Boers and the exclusions of blacks. Therefore the statement such as, learners are "colourless", and that race is a "non-issue" is a denial of race and this paradigm of "race denial" influenced the choice of history topics and how these were presented in text and enacted in the classroom.

Logically, acknowledging race would compel teachers to highlight knowledge that they were denying. A point of departure that ignores race allows teachers to shift the blame of racial oppression to the racist National Party Government, so that they do not have to face questions about why the National Party rule survived for so long. They did not have to talk about who kept the National Party rule alive by repeatedly voting it into power. Claiming to be non-racial and that race does not count in the school silences anyone who want to talk about race, or socialises students and teachers into de-emphasising content that would bring up the race issue. The contradiction is profound here, in that by claiming to offer an 'English medium non-racial education', the school is not being non-racial but is aligning itself to an English ethos with a race, and that race is British. It is also claiming an English culture because there is nothing like a 'non-cultural' education. The claim to an English medium, non-racial ethos could also be seen as an attempt by the school to project the opposite of an Afrikaans nationalist ethos that would be expected from an Afrikaans medium school. The point I am making here is that the marginalisation of Sharpeville Day and the Soweto Uprising was about the culture of the school, rather than individual teachers.

The example of the celebration of the International Day of Remembrance is relevant here. It was celebrated because it created a different discourse to the celebration of

Sharpeville Day and Youth Day. It created a discourse in which learners and teachers talked about the contribution of the school to the defeat of fascism or the concept of racial superiority, while the celebration of Sharpeville Day or Youth Day would have raised the issue of race in South Africa and the victory of the liberation struggle three decades later. The celebration of the International Remembrance Day also demonstrates an international outlook rather than the appreciation of local histories and knowledge.

The issue is also about the issue of quality and standards. Quality is defined and judged by first world standards, in this case British. The judging of behaviours by first world values is also clear in the way teachers frequently refer to the international community. For instance, the Sharpeville killings and killing of students during the Soweto Uprising caused outrage on the international front, but neither teachers nor students alluded to how the recipients of state repression must have felt.

The dissatisfaction of the subject head about the value basis of the new South African history curriculum cannot be divorced from the overall institutional culture. It could be interpreted as a contributing factor in the privileging of general history, or the marginalisation of South African history in the Grade 9 curriculum because of the authority he had to decide on what should be taught and when, and what qualified as a relevant text for the Grade 9 history curriculum in the school. The case of how teachers work around the declared “official knowledge” by either resorting to “mentioning” where the knowledge pertaining to non-dominant groups is only mentioned without developing the theme or looking at it from the perspective of the non-dominant group (Apple, 1993 and Apple, 2003) is relevant in this regard. In order to satisfy two masters, the Department on one hand and the culture of the school on the other, South African history was pushed to the end of the year where only the ‘headlines’ were taught. The subtle message to learners is that this part of the curriculum did not matter. Why was I surprised when all learners in the two groups that were interviewed said they liked general history? Perhaps I had not realised how powerful is the institutional culture in the psyche of learners and even teachers. The subtle messages from school practices were that general history is important.

I must say, in conclusion, that my first reaction was that teachers, mainly the subject head, was the cause of the ‘minority’ status of South African history in the curriculum, but a close look at the school practices pointed me to an overarching institutional culture that is based on the ideology of British colonialism or imperialism that existed before the school was taken over by the apartheid government.

The privileging of general history is not limited to Grade 9; the school itself privileges general history. The celebration of the International Day of Remembrance reveals an international Eurocentric orientation. How could one otherwise explain the indifference towards Human Rights Day and Youth Day, and even Freedom Day³⁷? The school has had 100 years in which it had to look outside South Africa in an attempt to ensure that it was different from Afrikaans medium schools.

Teachers saw themselves as neutral and objective players whose role was to mediate facts without ‘emotion’ and in a way that was ‘safe’ so that nobody felt blamed for something that they did not have control over, as it was the apartheid regime that repressed and oppressed blacks, leading to the Sharpeville March and the Soweto Uprising.

On the last day of my classroom observations, the students and I watched the last part of the film (*The Dry White Season*), that told the story of the student uprisings through the eyes of a man who lost his young son due to police brutality. The African man worked as a gardener in the home of the white couple. In the story, we see the employer risking his life to help the black man prove that his son was murdered by the police. At the end of the film, all the teacher said to students was “What you saw is not far from the truth”. As I drove away from the school, I was struggling with the teacher’s comments and what he actually meant. I kept on asking myself - what was not far from the truth? That there were good white people who were also involved? That the Soweto Uprising was not a racial issue because there were whites who helped blacks, and that only the state apparatus, in the form of the police and the

³⁷ I learned in 2004 that one learner who had attended Freedom Day celebrations in April 2004 organised by the Department of Education in Cape Town, went back to the school and initiated the Freedom Day celebration in April 2004.

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armed forces were to blame? I thought this was a way to de-emphasise the race issue, in line with the culture of the school.

CHAPTER 7

CONCEPTIONS OF ACCESS AT SOWETO HIGH SCHOOL

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes how the concept of “access to education” was understood and enacted at Soweto High School, in Johannesburg, South Africa. As in the previous chapter, Soweto High School was selected because of its particular social and political history. This school was at the forefront of the 1976 student resistance to Bantu Education policies and the uprising that was sparked by the government’s insistence on the language policy that forced students to learn half of their subjects through the medium of Afrikaans and half through the medium of English. According to oral accounts by the Grade 9 history teacher, the vice-president of the South African Student Movement, Khotso Seahlolo, was a Grade 11 pupil at this school, whilst Tsietsi Mashinini was the President of the Movement and a student at nearby Morris Isaacson High School.

As already indicated, Morrow (1994) argues that there is a distinction between formal or physical access and epistemological access to education. Mere formal access to an institution means registering as a student or gaining access to a school, which is different from epistemological access, which has to do with access to knowledge or academic practice. According to Morrow, claiming one’s right to education that is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is understandable and can be done, but access to knowledge is different and is not a guaranteed right.

Although I have used Morrow’s distinctions to analyse the case studies, I have used supplementary sources to understand what happens once a learner has been admitted. In this respect I have used literature on the politics of knowledge to extend Morrow’s conception of epistemological access to include other dimensions such as: who provides knowledge, what kind of knowledge is made accessible, what kind of knowledge is valued, who is being taught and what is the time allocated to the topic. Physical access has also been expanded to include the physical infrastructure, school

fees, teachers and forms of discipline. In other words all factors that create a good teaching and learning environment.

In order to understand the conceptions of access to education at Soweto High School, this chapter focuses on how the national education policy's concept of access was interpreted and implemented at school and classroom level. The data includes classroom observations of two Grade 9 history classes, interviews with the principal, the Grade 9 teacher and two groups of Grade 9 learners. The documentary evidence that was analysed consists of textbooks, test and examination papers and various school policies such as the admission policy, codes of conduct and school development plans.

According to the ethnic demarcation of the apartheid government, the high school was intended for Sesotho speaking learners only. This explains why there are five high schools within a walking distance of Soweto High School. Each of them was allocated to specific ethnic and language groups. At the time of the research, the school had shed its ethnic identity and now provides education to all learners who can offer either isiZulu, Sesotho or Setswana as subjects at first language level.

7.1.1 The school context

The neighbourhood of the school can be described as working class or even poor. In front of the school is a row of neat four-roomed houses. However, it is hard to describe with any accuracy the structures at the back and side of the school, as there are houses and a number of informal structures at the back of the houses. The school and these structures were separated by a wire-fence that was falling apart. I later learnt, in my conversation with learners, that boys in the school were using it as an escape route if they wanted to bunk classes. A group of Grade 9s, when asked what they would ask the Minister to change or do for the school if they were to write to her, all agreed that it would have to be the fence first. One girl said: "I would say to her, please come and fix the fence because most boys, they jump that side." Girls were also concerned that the fence was enabling boys who were not enrolled at to the school to enter the school premises unnoticed.

7.2 PHYSICAL ACCESS AT SOWETO HIGH SCHOOL

7.2.1 My first journey to the school

Soweto High School is in Naledi, right in the heart of Soweto, south of Johannesburg. From Pretoria, the easiest route is along the N1 highway. You drive pass the Johannesburg city centre on your left until the Soweto off-ramp. Although I had been to Soweto several times, it was the first time that I was driving there alone. This may account for the sinking feeling I had when I had to leave the safety of the highway to drive into the township. The consolation was that the history teacher, Mr Moshidi,³⁸ had offered to meet me outside Chris Hani Hospital so that I would not have to ask for directions from strangers. Little did I know that he would change his mind at the last moment and that I would only discover this when I was already in Soweto. When I informed him that I was approaching the hospital as we had agreed that I would, he casually told me to proceed on my own because he was unable to meet me halfway. He was sorry for not informing me in time, but assured me that I would not get lost as long as I followed the directions. He also instructed me to drive like someone who was familiar with the area, and not ask for directions from strangers under any circumstances.

Realising I could not turn back, I proceeded with caution. I could not help thinking about all the horror stories I have read about in the media and heard about car hijackings in Soweto.

Soweto High School is definitely not what the Department of Education officials cynically call ‘the highway school’ - a term used for schools that are frequently visited by researchers because they are situated near highways and are easily accessible. When you go to this school, you leave the safety of the highway and the township main road and drive right into the heart of the township. Driving on the inner township roads was not easy, particularly to a person who was not familiar with driving in Soweto. I had to keep to my side of the road and make sure that I was ready for any bus or taxi that could decide to stop without notice in front of me, let

³⁸ Mr Moshidi is a pseudonym of the Grade 9 History teacher.

alone trying to avoid drivers who would decide to use my side of the road, even though we were driving in opposite directions.

I drove until I thought I had passed the school. At last, I saw a service station with long queues of people waiting to board taxis to town. I decided that I would ask for directions at the service station. My common sense told me that nobody would give me trouble in front of all those people who were waiting for transport. My trust in humankind paid off. A kind lady at the counter gave me directions to the school. The school was about 500 metres from the service station.

7.2.2 My first day at the school

The appearance of the school was not a surprise to me. I have been to many township schools and I have learned that they do not differ very much. The only difference is that my visit to this school was in April 2004, the month when South Africa was celebrating ten years of democracy. I could not help asking myself whether the community around the school had anything to celebrate in terms of access to education. When I arrived at about 10:30, the gate was locked with a chain and a big padlock. It was an old gate constructed from a steel frame and wire, that showed signs of rust and bore the scars of years of service. In front of the school, just across the road were rows of four-roomed houses. Adjacent to the school, on my left, was a vacant plot. I felt uneasy waiting at the gate but there was no way of announcing my arrival other than to hoot and I did not feel I could do that. There was no security guard as at Gauteng High School. I would simply have to wait until someone saw me, which took a while. Those 10-15 minutes felt like hours.

Schools are public spaces. If the gates are locked, it could indicate a number of things that are not very positive; namely (a) to ensure safety of learners and teachers because the neighbourhood is not safe; (b) to prevent unwelcome elements from entering the school grounds; or (c) to prevent students from leaving the school without permission. None of these gave me comforting thoughts about my safety in the school.

The parking area had only four cars, in stark contrast to Gauteng High School where parking was at a premium. I parked my car and proceeded to the administrative block

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to announce my arrival. The Grade 9 teacher walked with me towards the direction of his class. He then requested me to wait in his 'office'. Unlike the teachers at the other school, who had well furnished offices with computers and telephones, his office was an old room that had previously been the principal's office before the new block was built. It had a brown steel door that could not be closed from inside. The floor was dark cement, which looked as if it had once been polished. The paint on the walls had been white but had become a shade that is difficult to describe. There were shelves against the walls, with stacks of textbooks, exercise books, and old newspapers. In the middle of the room were two tables and an old orange plastic chair that was missing the backrest. Just being in that room, even for a few minutes was sobering to me. It was hard to believe that there were still teachers who had to sit and work under such conditions. I realized that nothing in this office would motivate me to wake up in the morning and look forward to going to work, unless I had incredible love for what I do or unless I had nowhere else to go. It was a winter and bitterly cold. I decided that I could not sit there, with windows that could not close properly, so I waited in my car.



Picture 3: Grade 9 Block, in a state of disrepair

As I was sitting in the car, a mature gentleman came to ask me whether I had been helped. He apologised for asking me but explained that it was the policy of the school

to make people feel welcome. I later learnt that the man was the Chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) and that the SGB and the teachers had an incredibly good relationship.

After my first meeting with the history teacher, he introduced me to the principal, who made me feel welcome in the school. I was also introduced to the administrative staff and they were told to help me with whatever I needed. The principal told me to feel free to walk around and chat with whoever I wanted to chat with, and also to participate in the activities of the school if I so desired. When I left the school in the afternoon, I felt safe and enthusiastic about my research. I could not help thinking about the differences between Soweto High School and Gauteng High School.

7.2.3 The admission policy of the school

The admission policy of the school is supposed to be aligned with national and provincial government policies governing physical access to schools. Although the copy of the admission policy provided sufficient information pertaining to the conditions of admission to Soweto High School, the interview with the principal helped to provide practical dimensions as to how learners were admitted to the school. What emerged clearly was that this school, like all the schools under the Gauteng Department of Education, were expected to admit learners according to the policy that demarcates catchment area or what the principal at Gauteng High School called “natural feeder areas”. The only difference was that, in practice, Soweto High School did not admit learners strictly according to the assigned catchment area. The principal explained:

When you ask me about the admission policy, you are talking about us getting children to the school. Well most of these things are decided higher up, at provincial and national level. In other words, you are not supposed not to admit a child unless there is a very good reason for it. So we admit children. In many respects we are supposed to admit children from the so-called imaginary catchment area here. I am saying imaginary because you can't delimit these things. So we basically admit children so long as they come with their parents and they come within a reasonable distance from the school, but we end up admitting children further on because they come with the reason that they could not get admission in those areas. So, basically we want to help everybody. So, when you talk admission, we basically admit children.

The school's primary objective of helping all learners as long as they had legitimate reasons why they could not be admitted at schools in their catchment areas, did not apply to learners who were considered "over-age" for the grade for which they were applying. The principal was very clear about the fact that, although he understood the rights of all children to education, he still had to think about the interests of younger learners. He explained that admitting older learners was likely to impact negatively on discipline. He said:

Off course when you come to the issues of age versus the grade the child is doing, then you are going to look at it very seriously because if you take the wrong age, you are going to be stuck with the child. You see, in most cases, once the child is old for the grade, it basically means that there is something that the child is not doing right. The child is late in his or her schooling. So, once you have that problem it usually impact on a lot of other things e.g. discipline and so on. Once you have a 13 year-old sitting with a 15 year old, normally there is a problem in terms of discipline. So if you are 15 years old and you are sitting with a 17 year-old, it doesn't make things right to you as a child. These are things you have to be extremely careful about because on the one hand you are looking at the child's right and on the other hand you have to balance that one child's right with that of the rest of other children. Because once a child is late for the grade, usually there is a problem

The principal admitted that the act of turning learners away because they were considered too old for the Grade was an act of selfishness on the part of the school, but argued that the competition between schools and the pressure to deliver good results militated against older learners as schools did not want to admit "a child that would be stuck in the system" and had to be "pushed" for whatever reason. He also admitted that principals and admission committees treated the issue of older learners selfishly because "they look at the interest of the schools", particularly where this could affect the discipline of the school negatively.

The concern about learners who were older than the class norm is not unique to the school. This matter was raised by a large number of schools when they were invited to comment on the South African Schools Bill in May 1996. Below is a sample of comments from letters and memos sent to the Department of Education by governing bodies and schools:

We argue that an age norm for a class must be established and that no child will attend such a level if he or she is more than one year above or below

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the level. That such a child be then sent to a special class of a school which caters for such children ...

We note that the Bill does not specify a maximum age per level (Grade or Standard). Where will the Minister place children who are far above the average age of others at the same educational level? (DoE: Comments South African Schools Bill)³⁹

In the school's determination not to admit learners who were potentially at risk of failing Grade 12, the admission policy stipulates the following about the category of learners who would be admitted to the school:

New learners will be admitted from Grade 8 to Grade11 in the third⁴⁰ term... Grade 12 learners from within or out of the school will NOT be admitted unless under extreme circumstances and upon agreement of ALL stakeholders which will depend on the circumstances of the application. (School policy, 2000:1)

When one looks at the admission policies of this school and Gauteng High School, what is common between them is that both schools, for whatever reasons, put their own interests first when deciding to admit learners. The principal at Gauteng High referred to learners "who were not suitable or right for the schools", while this principal referred to learners "who add negative energy to the school". The decision not to admit Grade 12 learners from other schools or from within the school who want to repeat matric also confirms the point that principals base their decisions of who to admit on their potential to succeed in Grade 12. They could not be guaranteed that learners who come to the school at Grade 12 would have been sufficiently prepared for Grade 12 examination at the previous schools. Other reasons for not admitting learners at Soweto High include:

- a) A learner fraudulently seeking admission by producing forged documentation, attempting to bribe the stakeholders in any way whatsoever or behaving in a manner that is of a suspicious nature.
- b) A learner not accompanied by a biological parent or guardian.

³⁹ These quotes were taken from letters and submissions that were sent by principals, School Committees and governing bodies to the Department of Education commenting on the South African Schools Bill in 1996. The copies were handed to the University of Pretoria by the former Director-General of the Department of Education.

⁴⁰ Learners need to apply for the next academic year, on the third term of the current year, for example, for 2005 school year, they should apply in the third term of 2004.

- c) A learner who poses a threat to the schooling environment in any way whatsoever. (School Admission Policy)

According to the principal, the rule that a learner should be accompanied by a biological parent or legal guardian is applied more strictly when dealing with late applications, such as learners who wish to come to the school when the term has already started. He explains why the school was so inflexible on this rule:

If a child arrives here when we are not doing admissions anymore, that child needs to come with their parents. Normally children have to come with their parents, but more so now. There had to be very good evidence. We don't want to take reasons brought by parents. In our experience, parents are never honest when they bring a problem child. They normally come and tell us a lot of lies. We normally want evidence of the problem, like evidence from social workers or medical reports. We once admitted children in this school during the height of violence in KwaZulu-Natal. We took some two girls here. And we took them without their parents... We knew that things were terribly bad that side and these kids came here with some parent, surrogate parent if you like... We had terrible problems with them.

Although it is indicated earlier that the two schools seem to put institutional interest, first by only admitting learners who were not at risk of failing, it would seem that the school did, in this instance, take into account the interest of the learners by admitting them even though they were not accompanied by a biological parent or guardian. However, the school policy, regardless of what happened before, raises a sensitive issue about the reality of parentless households because of an increase in the number of deaths due to the AIDS pandemic. The chances of access to education for such children could be unfairly curtailed by the rigid application of this rule. The principal was unequivocal in that they would stick to their guns, no matter what excuses are proffered by the would-be pupils.

7.2.4 The school enrolment

At the time of the research the school had a total enrolment of 911 learners, 508 girls and 405 boys. The discussion about whether the school was fully enrolled raised the issue of the definition of full enrolment in relation to the physical resources available in the school. In responding to whether the school was fully enrolled, the principal stated:

To me that is a double-edged question. First of all we do not have enough furniture in the school. From that angle I think we are fully enrolled. On the other hand we do have space because this school used to be a huge school. We do have classes that we could utilise to take more learners, but we would have problems with furniture. That's why I am saying that your question is a double-edged sword.

The impact of open access to all schools that came with the abolition of racially segregated schools had also affected the student enrolment at Soweto High School. According to the principal, parents voted with their feet by sending their children to Lenasia, and those who could afford to do so, sent theirs to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Parents, who could not afford to pay the cost of education in Lenasia and the northern suburbs, became more discerning and also chose what they perceived to be good schools in the area. Discipline became a major rallying point, as schools that were perceived to be disciplined were chosen over schools that were perceived to be lacking in discipline. Parents were reported to be getting information about a school by word of mouth and making decisions without bothering to verify the information.

Another cause of the decrease or increase in student enrolments in Soweto schools is the reputation of the principal. If the principal is not seen to be doing a good job, parents will send their children to other schools in the area. In the previous years, the school had suffered as a result of what the principal called the "bush telegraph". To explain what has happened to the school, he recalled the following:

Here there is a lot of what we call bush telegraphy. You sit here as the principal, you think you are doing your work, but you are not being perceived to be doing your work. This is one of the things that happened to this school, particularly because of a lot of problems that crept in. Even though those things are a thing of the past now, we are working hard to make sure that the school portrays a good environment. Particularly in terms of discipline. Because to me that is very important. You can have dilapidated buildings, which is not a good thing, but you can still have good discipline. We have an old school, but we are trying our best now, and I think I have cooperation from everybody to ensure discipline. It is not an easy thing to change people's perception. Presiding over change is not an easy thing to do. But we are doing it slowly.

The principal ascribes the lack of discipline in most township schools to the political climate before 1994, where schools became "centres of the struggle" and in the meantime "lost academic excellence". Township schools also experienced the

negative impact of crime which was the consequent of the criminal elements that infiltrated the legitimate struggle against Bantu Education. This was also confirmed by Grade 9D learners who indicated that if they were to write a letter to the Minister to request anything, they would request her “to at least make the rules tight for the school” because the school was one of the schools that had been corrupted. They described corruption at the school in recent years as learners smoking, drinking in the school premises and breaking windows during parties. According to these learners, these problems were still happening. One learner remarked:

Even now we still see children doing drugs, we still see children getting drunk inside the school premises and what I would like the Minister to do, is too make the rules tight for the teachers so that the teachers can make them most tight for the children. I do believe that this school has improved but not enough for me.

Learners gave various reasons why they were studying at the school. These ranged from those who were at the school because other schools had been fully enrolled, to those who were at the school because their relatives had been students at the school or they lived near the school. Another reason that came up was the history of the school and that the school had been home to politicians like Reverend Frank Chikane, Popo Molefe and Khotso Seahlolo. Some of the learners’ reasons why they chose Soweto High School are listed below:

It has a rich history.

This fight for the democratic thing started here. Many leaders are from this school.

We like it because lots of things happened at this school. So we wanted to come here so that they could tell us what exactly happened here, and get more information and the people who are staying around the school to tell us what happened so that we should know exactly what is June 16

7.2.5 The cost of education at the school

The principal believed that parents could not cite the school fees as the reason why they did not send their children to the school. The cost of education at this school is relatively low. The school fees is R100.00 a year and is payable on registration for new students and by the end of January for other students. There is also no sliding scale in the payment of fees. The reason given by the principal was that some parents

could easily afford to pay for two or more children while others might find it difficult to pay

just for one child. Therefore, instead of a blanket rule on the sliding scale principle, each case is treated on merit.

In line with the Norms and Standards for Funding, the financial policy of the school allows for exemption, but only under “extreme circumstances” (p.2), and only after consultation with the School Governing Body, the Finance Committee, the Register Class Educator and the School Management Team. The principal reported that although parents were aware of their rights to apply for exemption, they had never utilised that right because they knew that they would not qualify. Parents are ‘encouraged’ to either pay or render a service to the school:

Parents know that they don't qualify. We discuss these things all the time in our parents' meetings. And, I have often said to parents that even people who are not working, I cannot believe that they can say they can't afford R100 in a year. And I have said to them, you are free to come here, to make an appointment with me and the SGB chairperson, so that we interview you and determine whether you qualify and if need be, we can even drive to your home. And sometimes, even by going to these children's homes you can see that these parents can afford. R100 is a very small amount for the education of their children. So I normally say to parents, “If you say to me you cannot pay, you are going to begin to tell me, what do you eat everyday. How is it that you are alive but you cannot afford R100? Even if you get a government grant. We say, even if you can come and pay R10 a month, we'll say thank you very much. Whatever you can afford per month, bring it here.” We put it straight to them. In other words the only person who can come here is a person who will say, “I truly have nothing.” And we say to such people, okay fine, tell us what you can do for the school in lieu of school fees.

It is evident that the school adheres to the national policy on school funding by allowing parents to pay in instalments, whatever they could afford. The national policy also allows schools, through school governing bodies, to encourage all parents, including those exempted from paying fees, “to render a service to the school or to make voluntary contributions to the school fund in terms of sections 20(1)(h) and 37(2) of the Act”. However, the manner in which Soweto High School ‘encourages’ parents to pay up could be interpreted as a subtle coercion. The financial policy of the school makes it clear that:

University of Pretoria etd – Gamede, T (2005)

any parent exempted from financial obligation shall provide a service or services to the school as deemed fit by the School Management Team to cover the said exemption. (p.2)

The policy does not say parents are encouraged or requested to render voluntary service in lieu of school fees. Moreover, the fact that the governing body and the school management team decide what it deems 'fit to cover' the fees, borders on penalising parents for being poor. Most importantly, asking parents what they eat everyday if they cannot afford R100.00 sounds pragmatic but could be humiliating to a parent who does not receive a government grant and has to depend on neighbours and relatives for food. These tactics could be interpreted as a total disregard for the parents right to be treated with dignity, even if they are poor or one suspects that they are lying.

Having said the above, it is important to point out that in 2004, the school had decided against increasing the fees because it had to take into account that it was serving a community with a very low-income threshold. Most learners in the school could be described as coming from poor households. Therefore, for the school, it was better not to increase school fees so that more learners could afford, rather than risk decreasing the income of the school by reducing the number of learners who could pay. According to the principal, raising school fees often works against the school because it begins to hit the school in terms of enrolments and no principal would like to see figures going down.

A perceived culture of entitlement seems to be the reason why some learners do not pay school fees. During the interview, the principal made a point that out of 50 Grade 12 learners, only four had paid the school fees in April. He remarked:

And you see this list, it is a list of children who have paid school fees in Grade 12, and it's four out of fifty. R100.00 school fees. They will tell you that they do not have money... I am dealing with children who grew up in this transitional culture of entitlement in this country, where children think they are entitled to free education. Even if parents are prepared to pay this R100, sometimes it is the very child who says mama don't pay. Sometimes they take the money and use it.

The school deals with non-payment by writing letters to parents requesting them to come in person and explain why the fees are outstanding. This should be done within

a specified period set by the principal. Learners who fail to pay the whole amount by the end of January have to pay an additional R50.00 fine for late payment. New students who have to buy the school uniform have to spend not less than R300.00. This means that, in total, a new student spends about R400.00 in the first year.

7.2.6 Parent involvement

The only structure in the school that creates space for parents to participate in the affairs of the school is the governing body. The governing body has nine members, three females and six males. Amongst the three females, only one is from the parent component. The chairperson is male, whilst his deputy is female. The deputy chairperson is a previous chairperson of the governing body.

The principal described the relationship between teachers and the governing body as cordial and professional. As a consequence of this relationship, the governing body is given space to do their work of governing the school and provide support to teachers where necessary. The governing body is also aware that it should leave the administration of the school and teaching to the principal and teachers. The principal had been instrumental in facilitating the relationship between the two groups. He had worked hard to make each party appreciate the job that the other was doing. His comments about both parties were:

The current SGB is the most effective I have seen. Well there are a number of reasons for that. The teachers by their very nature have a tendency to look down upon parents. Saying what is it that the parent knows. Historically, teachers have tended to reject SGBs on that basis. But one of the things we have done in this school in particular is to make sure that teachers feel good about the governing body and vice versa. And to that extent there is absolutely no tension between the teachers and the SGB. You know, its very few schools where you can go in and find the principal sitting with the SGB chairperson, and teachers come and sit and talk to that person.

The existing relationship between the school and the governing body makes it easy for the governing body to initiate meetings and invite teachers if they have something to discuss. This is because the principal ensures that all teachers understand the role and functions of the governing body. They understand that their visit to the school is

not meant to check on the teachers, but to attend to issues of school governance and provide support to the school.

However, the involvement of ordinary parents outside the governing body structure was reported to be much more difficult. The principal cited the educational background of parents as a barrier to their involvement in the life of the school:

The educational background of the majority of our parents makes it difficult for them to come freely to the school. Because parents who are not very schooled (for lack of a better word), they almost don't want to see themselves at school because they have an inferiority complex about themselves.

Such parents, according to the principal, do not think that they have anything to say to their children once they are in high school. They do not see their role in the life of their children anymore. Instead, they think that the school is best placed to discipline children and teach them good values. These are the kind of parents who when reprimanding a child, would say, "I will tell your teacher. I will tell your principal. What do they teach you at school?" The principal also said that such parents forget that they transfer values about life to their children on a daily basis. These parents could be incorrectly perceived to be disinterested in the education of their children, when in reality, they are too terrified to go anywhere near the school.

To counteract parent apathy and raise their interest in the life of the school, the governing body often invites parents to meetings and discuss with them the general issues pertaining to school governance. The school governing body often tries hard to make parents aware that, regardless of education background, they have a role to play because of their life experiences. The chairperson motivates them to come forward and use their talents to the benefit of the school. In one of his motivational talks, he is reported to have told parents that they were also from university. "A different kind of university, the university of life". By validating and affirming their experiences, the chairperson was making a point that even if parents did not reach Grade 12, they know better than their children and must never think that they cannot tell them what to do or think that they have no role to play in the life of the school. As a result of the chairperson's encouragement, parents were reported to be slowly overcoming their fear of the school, and at times taking the initiative of doing things for the school.

The relationship between the school and parents became clear to me when, during an interview with the principal, a parent came to the principal's office to offer him sweet potatoes she had just harvested from the school garden. The principal explained to me that the school could not afford to maintain the garden and when the parents saw grass and weeds growing, they approached the principal to allow them to use the garden as a vegetable garden. The garden had been put to good use and was feeding indigent families who did not have the means to buy vegetables.

7.2.7 Access to resources

The issue of the shortage of resources was raised by both the principal and learners. On the issue of whether the school was fully enrolled, he indicated that the school could accommodate more learners if it was not for the shortage of furniture. He also referred to the school as dilapidated. However, learners were more vocal and less diplomatic about the state of disrepair of the older buildings. When asked what they would ask the Minister to do or change or what they would tell the Minister about their school if they were to write her a letter, their responses were most revealing about the unsatisfactory state of physical resources in the school. Below is a sample of responses from Grade 9 learners:

First thing I would say to her, could you please come and fix our school because it's horrible. Like we don't have enough furniture or equipment. Like our roof is falling apart.

I would ask her to come and fix the fence because most of the boys they jump that side. Maybe make a stronger fence not this weak one, one that is like steel, strong steel.

They also need to renew the buildings. Our school has a very good history, but it is so old and untidy. Even if we try so hard to clean it, it's the same. That is not nice.

It is also worth mentioning that the school only has a soccer field but no netball court, even though there is a netball team. In a school where girls are a majority, it is difficult to understand why the school could have a soccer field but not a netball court. Learners lamented the lack of extramural activities and sporting codes. Drama and debate were reported to be limited to the senior grades.

7.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS AT SOWETO HIGH SCHOOL

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, epistemological access is concerned with access to knowledge. Epistemological access has a social and political dimension because it is drawn by a particular group of people with certain values and political consciousness (NECC, 1992). Since the curriculum is the vehicle for epistemological access, this section examines the selection of content, its organisation, its location in the year plan and how it is taught.

For analytical purposes, the focus was on the teaching of two historical events: The Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising. What was the hidden curriculum or subtle messages about these events or South African history in general?

Apart from the need for more extramural activities and sporting codes and the renovation of the school, learners also demonstrated a remarkable level of awareness about the need to improve the quality of education in their school by adding more books to what was available at the library and teaching them more about computers. Commenting on the inadequate use of the existing computer lab, one girl said:

And I think we are behind about this computer stuff. Other schools have already started with them. So we just see them there and we just feed the eyes. So some of us would finish school without using the computer.

They also thought that library books were inadequate for the whole school and would like the Minister to bring more interesting books as the stock that was in the library was boring. Free access to the library was also brought up as an issue because at the time of the research only Grades 11 and 12 had access to the library.

Learners of Soweto High School felt that the unique history of their school and what they were taught in the history classes gave them an advantage over learners who were attending schools that were not involved in the events that took place in 1976. When asked why they were so upset about the failure of a visit by a white school, as

they had been promised, and why they wanted to compete with that school, the response was:

... we want them to see that they don't learn History more. My younger sibling studies at Swartfontein. She doesn't know who is Hector Peterson, why is he so special? She doesn't know what happened about Hector Peterson. It would be our school against Forest Hill High. It will be drama, debate and all those things. So that it becomes more creative, so that they see how much we understand this.

Their understanding of the 1976 events was also demonstrated by the way they responded to questions about the celebration of public holidays such as Youth Day, Freedom Day and Human Rights Day. The responses to what they understood about Youth Day and why it was celebrated showed understanding of why June 1976 had occurred. The following responses of learners came to the fore:

The way I understand Youth Day, like it's the day the youth took part, or action that they could also fight for their own rights. So you see, not like it's up to an adult to fight for you, no. So they took part in a very interesting way, like for them to march and stuff. Instead of consulting adults, they also did their own thing, you see.

It was June 1976 and the students were marching. They were tired of being taught Afrikaans, you see. Just think about the way they were taught and now. This is the new edition. ...We are not learning Bantu Education anymore. We are not doing all those subjects in Afrikaans. Just imagine in Maths, you were supposed to do it in Afrikaans, like 'een plus twee', do you understand that?

Their understanding of the sacrifices made by their counterparts in 1976 was profound. This was demonstrated by their irritation with those learners who they perceived as not making use of the opportunities for increased access to good education. For some reason, some of them also believed that they were getting free education. A girl who explained that she was living with her grandparents and that life at home was not as good commented:

Many people died for this education that we are getting today and we are happy. Some of them don't appreciate it. They are leaving school and they don't understand what is being done. They don't understand that there are people who died for this education that we are getting. They just leave... the way I see it, they, blacks are leaving school more than whites, that is the way I see it and then I feel like they are doing a big mistake.

This class also believed that access to education leads to a brighter future. A small girl who had been quiet since the beginning of an interview, used her situation to explain why it was important to go to school, instead of giving in to problems at home. This small girl also referred to the correlation between access to education and a good life:

Others runaway from homes because of abuse, you see like someone, let's say for me I'm staying with my grandma and grandpa and my grandpa is not my mom's father. So obviously he would never treat me like his own children, so I understand. The only thing that I'm going to tell myself is to humble myself; and go to school and study; I know that I will be something in life.

A girl from the orphanage agreed, saying that learners who seek instant gratification by turning to crime in order to finance expensive lifestyles were going to end up in the streets. She saw deferring gratification by going to school as the only way to get out of poverty and suffering. She also used her situation at the orphanage to explain the point:

I must use the opportunity - the one that I am getting now. I know that lots of people don't have it, so I don't want to waste it. Just like others like myself, I can't say I have a good life and everything, no I don't live like other kids, but I'm able to wake up and come to school everyday to learn because I know that I'm in a difficult situation. And I know that the opportunity I'm getting someone is not getting it.

Human Rights and Freedom Day did not seem to elicit the same emotional responses mentioned in the above paragraphs. Their responses ranged from seeing Freedom Day as only the remembrance of the first democratic elections in which everybody who qualified had an opportunity to vote to seeing it as a reflection of the ability of black Africans to do extraordinary things. Some understood Freedom Day as the day in which the black people of South Africa voted for the first time on 27 April 1994.

When asked what was the significance of voting, one learner explained, "We were free to vote and free to have equal rights and no Bantu Education..." Another student continued:

To me on Freedom Day, 27 April 1994, it was the day in which the first black president was elected here in South Africa. So, I think it's very much important because it is about equal rights.

When the other student was asked to explain why the inauguration of the first black president was important and relevant to him, he responded:

I mean it was like the first thing to happen in South African, the first black to be the president of South Africa - the president of South Africa. So it was like liberation to *us*, *we* were liberated since that day. *We* have like full potential to do anything and to go anywhere because we know that our president is now a black man

The use of the first person in learners' responses, "*we* were free to vote", "it was like liberation to *us*", "*we* were liberated since that day", "*we* have full potential to do anything", is significant in that it shows the position of the learners in relation to what these historic moments represent to them. We see the affect intersecting with factual knowledge. Learners are not divorced from the situation, to them what happened on those days happened to them and for them. It contradicts the view of the history teacher at Gauteng High School who said that Grade 9 learners did not understand apartheid because they were probably born in 1988-89 and would not have experienced it. These learners speak in the first person as if they were there. From their responses, it is clear that they have a deeper understanding of what the events that took place on these days meant to them. It meant liberation, it validated their human potential to do things they have been made to believe they are incapable of doing.

Human Rights Day also had its fair share of responses, but not as deep in thought and emotion as responses about the celebration of June 16 and Freedom Day. However, they were able to give the correct date on which Human Rights Day is celebrated and also the reason why this day should be celebrated:

What I can say is that people of Sharpeville marched and they said, we are tired of Dom Pas, and we are tired of you wanting us Dom Pass everyday. Wherever we go, is Dom Pass. Equal rights were not shared equally, okay. So when they were marching they said, 'we are tired of Dom Pas. We don't want this thing. We want equal freedom'.

...when in a swimming pool, there were like whites only and blacks only. What is that? They were tired because it was only black people who were supposed to carry Dom Pass. Whites were moving freely, but for them all the time, if they were going to buy, there was a whites only queue. There was apartheid and separations, they were tired.

First, it is important to note that these learners were able to talk about these public holidays in an integrated manner, for example, the first response also refers to the rejection of pass laws as a fight for freedom. The second quote refers to the rejection of pass laws, and other discriminatory laws and practices such as the Separate Amenities Act (separate swimming pools) and separate queues.

When learners were asked where they had learnt or heard about these public holidays, the majority pointed out that they had learnt about them mainly at this school, from their history teacher and through the celebrations that often took place at the school. The school had celebrated Human Rights Day in March by inviting speakers to come and address learners on why the day was important. Freedom Rights Day was celebrated when I was at the school. A speaker from the local community came to talk about the contribution of the school in the struggle against apartheid. The participation of the school in the Soweto Uprising became the centre of the speeches. Newspapers and the home were also cited as sources of information regarding the celebration of these public holidays.

A disturbing theme that emerged as a contributing factor to learners dropping out of school was physical and verbal abuse that was meted out to learners by some teachers. The physical abuse took the form of ‘caning’ learners for a number of reasons, such as late coming, failure to clean the school or failure to execute the teacher’s instructions. Verbal abuse took different forms, such as teachers swearing at learners, learners being told that they were too old for the grades they were in and teachers comparing learners to their children who were attending former white schools. Following below are the samples of complaints that capture the learners feelings about corporal punishment and verbal abuse they were subjected to:

They beat us everyday, even at the gate. Okay I can understand that something I’m doing is wrong or right, but we are old enough to understand those things. Like these boys who smoke, would you tell me that they don’t know what they are doing is wrong, they know. They are just doing it. But they will beat you, just for laughing. (Grade 9C)

There is one teacher who likes to compare us to her children. She likes to do that to older learners who are 18 years or so, and say, “Oh! My child is doing matric, what about you? You are sitting here.” She likes to criticize us, like if ever you are not on the age that you are supposed to in a standard, she would tell you the way you are so old. She doesn’t understand that there are people

who have problems, like slow learners. You see maybe other kids, grow up on farms and it's only now that they want to come and learn, she doesn't understand that. (Grade 9 C)

Regarding the issue of corporal punishment, this is not only against policy, but is also illegal. Additionally, for learners to identify corporal punishment and verbal abuse by teachers as one of the reasons why some learners drop out of school and waive their right to education is an indictment on the school. It points to the teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of access and their role in making increased access to education a reality to learners under their care. The question that arises is whether the principal was aware of this act of policy violation. In my opinion, it would be difficult to hide this if it takes place openly at the gate. At another level, the use of the cane at the gate could symbolise teachers as key agents who can either facilitate or hinder access to the school.

Corporal punishment at the school can be understood within the context of the principal who is trying hard to turn the school around by applying strict disciplinary measures. This is collaborated by the principal's firmly held belief on the merits of discipline. The word 'discipline' appears frequently in his responses. Referring to why parents preferred one school over the other, he said:

... even the schools in the same area, parents began to be highly discriminatory in terms of where they want to send their children. Where they perceive that there is lack of *discipline*, they would choose a school that is perceived to be more *disciplined*. So, in a big way, the profile of the principal counts. Here there is a lot of what we call the bush telegraph. You sit here as the principal, you think you are doing your work, but you are not being perceived to be doing your work. This is one of the things that happened to this school particularly... we are working hard to make sure that the school portrays a good environment. Particularly in terms of *discipline*. Because to me that is very important. You can have dilapidated buildings, which is not a good thing, but you can still have good *discipline*. We have an old school, but we are trying our best now, and I think I have cooperation from everybody to ensure *discipline* (Interview-principal).

Again when commenting about the dress code of teachers in the school, there was a slant towards creating discipline rather than teachers being exemplary or role models. According to him, for any kind of dress that "attracts undue attention from children", the ramifications "go to discipline". Once you have an outrageous way of doing things, whatever, not just dress sense, "it goes back to discipline". He made a point

that women should not, when turning to write on the board, expose themselves because that will go to “discipline”.

By his own admission, the toy-toying culture of the mid 1980s and early 1990s exposed the school to criminal elements and that had a negative impact on the functionality of the school, so much so that the school’s matric results had not been excellent in recent years, even though the school used to produce great results many years ago. Consequently, the principal had been working hard to bring the school where it had been before 1976. However, the application of negative reinforcement in the form of corporal punishment is ironic in that it is meant to enforce discipline among learners, but could be interpreted as lack of discipline on the part of the school as they use illegal means to “turn the school around”. Further, the endeavours to improve the functionality of the school, are in actual fact, endeavours to improve access to education in its broadest sense, therefore, using negative discipline measures is paradoxical in that it is at cross purposes with the concept of access to education.

One of the things that learners were going to ask the Minister if they had a chance was that she brings white teachers to work at the school. Surprised at the remark, I asked why they wanted white teachers in the school and they pointed out that there were already two male teachers of Indian origin at the school. Therefore, in order to complete the process of racial integration, they would like to see whites joining the teaching staff. The boy who had raised this issue explained:

I mean to like make it clear to our eyes that apartheid is gone forever. That we are all equal no matter black or white. It doesn’t matter, the colour is just the skin.

The point about racial integration of the teaching staff and the one raised earlier about the learners’ desire to compete with former white schools could be understood as the learners’ interpretation of increased access to education. In their minds, open access and real transformation in education means: (a) playing and competing with schools that were previously reserved for other race groups; (b) having opportunities to share their knowledge with these schools; and (c) being taught by a racially integrated teaching staff. These learners were aware of the reality that prevents them from getting physical access to schools that were reserved for other racial groups, but

believe that the knowledge that they are exposed to, including who teaches them should transcend physical boundaries.

7.3.1 The language policy of the school

The preamble to the school language policy states that the school “will ensure that learners are instructed⁴¹ (sic) in at least two languages, one of which will be on first language basis and the other on second language basis” (2000:1). The first language (L1) options are isiZulu, Setswana and Sesotho and English is a second language and also the language of learning and teaching. English is also used as the language of administration and management, as well as for internal and external communication. However, the principal indicated that although parents’ meetings were conducted mainly in English, parents were allowed to express themselves in any African language if they wished to do so. The school also encouraged teachers to try to use an African language when communicating with individual parents, where possible.

When asked what language they preferred for learning or to be taught in, only one out of 12 students (two groups) preferred a dual-medium approach (English and Sesotho). The rest were unequivocal in their preference for English as the only language they wanted to learn and be taught in. Contrary to my assessment of their ability to communicate in English, these learners felt that they were sufficiently proficient in English to use it for learning. It was only after repeated probing that some agreed that they could understand but sometimes found it difficult to respond in English. Even then, they still felt that English was important and was the only way to go. Below is how a learner explained her facility in English:

English I do understand quite well but like, there is a language that you understand but you don’t know to talk back, like Sotho. But I do speak English is just that, sometimes I’m shy of making mistakes. You make a mistake in class they would laugh at you. So most of the time I speak Zulu but just I always speak English.

The learners’ preference for English even though they lack adequate proficiency in the language seemed to be based on instrumental reasons that English is the de facto medium of communication in situations where people speak different languages.

⁴¹ This means that learners should offer at least two languages.

They agreed with the learner who said that he preferred English because their class was multilingual, and therefore if a teacher were to use Sesotho, which is his first language, the speakers of Nguni languages would not understand but if he spoke English, all the learners would understand him. Another reason they preferred English was that it would open doors to better jobs and upward social mobility. This is confirmed in a learner's words who said "I wish I could talk more and express myself more and more. Because you won't even find a job if you don't know English". What did not occur to them was that the lack of proficiency in the language of teaching and learning had a negative impact on their chances to epistemological access, which would in turn, reduce their chances of access to better jobs.

The prestige that goes with English also seemed to underlie some of the learners' preference of English. To them, representing their school in any language other than English sounded like a joke. A learner laughingly remarked:

English is something that we know and you can express yourself in. I mean if I want to represent my school, and they would say okay, make a choice - in which language do you want to represent your school? I cannot say Zulu or Sotho, no I couldn't do that. But I don't know what about the other person but for me English is the one. English is the best. So and even History the way it is, it's all about English so for me it's English. (Grade 9D)

What did not occur to these learners was that their level of English proficiency could be a barrier to effective learning. They themselves pointed out that they could understand but it was sometimes difficult "to talk back". What this means in reality is that in multilingual contexts like Soweto there are languages that one can understand but does not have the facility to function effectively in them. They do not understand that the learner's facility in the language of learning and teaching should be more than just a language that one picks up in the street.

The language issue is discussed under epistemological access in this school because the interview revealed that language did not circumscribe physical access to the school, but instead, the level of proficiency in the language of teaching and learning, to a larger extent, affected access to knowledge in the history classes. The discussion below focuses on the teaching and learning of South African history in Grade 9. The focus is on the teaching of the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre; the

analysis of literary sources used by the teacher; learners' work and their understanding of history.

7.3.2 Access to knowledge: the curriculum as a vehicle for epistemological access

The classroom was in an old block at the far end of the school. The floor looked as if it had once been tiled but a large part had peeled off in such a way that the floor was almost bare. The walls were painted in black and white and also looked very old. In the corner, in front, was an old steel cupboard without doors. The desks were old and falling apart, including the one that I had to share it with a learner. Against the wall, on the notice board, was a huge poster of the defiance campaign, 1951 – 1953 and the world map and other information charts. The classroom was bright. The number of students in the one class totalled 33 and the other class 35.



Picture 4: showing the inside Grade 9 history classroom at Soweto High School

The Grade 9 teacher was a middle-aged black male, who had been teaching in one of the Soweto schools during the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The school where he had taught was within a walking distance from Soweto High School. He regularly used to visit the teachers at Soweto High School. Before I did classroom visits, I first examined the literary sources he was using to prepare his lessons.

7.3.3 The analysis of the literary sources

The teacher uses three books for planning. However, in class, he did not use a book for the duration of my observations at the school. He made it clear to me that the books were only for preparation and for ensuring that he does not give more detail than is necessary. All three books he was using had been supplied by the Gauteng Department of Education.

Human and Social Sciences Today by McGaw; Natrass, D and Roberts, B.

This book provides topics that cover history and geography as well as topics on environmental issues. Out of a total of 9 chapters, four chapters are dedicated to geography and environmental studies, whilst another four have a history focus. Out of four chapters with a history focus, only one chapter is dedicated to general history or European history. The remaining three are primarily on South African history. Since the book is outcomes education based, the content is also integrated, which means that one finds references to other components even though the main focus of a chapter might be history or geography or the environment, for example, the chapter on population density and distribution includes a historical component of how the Apartheid government controlled population density through forced removals and the creation of homelands.

The references to June 1976 and the Sharpeville Massacre are minimal. The book refers to all historic events such as the 1976 Student Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre in the form of a time line of twentieth-century South Africa, from 1869 – 1999. Each of the apartheid laws, including the resistance to them, is given in a few lines. This means that the teacher would have to do more research on the topics he wants to teach.

Social Science Matters by Erika Coetzee and Sue Heese

The name of the book and the 2001 publication date are an indication that this book was published to service outcomes based education. The book is arranged into five modules as follows: two with a geography focus, one on general history, one module on apartheid laws and the last module dedicated to the events of 16 June 1976. The

book is colourful and interactive. Below is the picture of the Sharpeville Massacre that the teacher at Soweto High School showed learners, along with the one in *Making History*.



Figure:3: Bodies of Sharpeville Marchers

Making history by Dugmore, C; Mulholland, P; Nussey, R and Siebörger, R

This book predates Curriculum 2005 and therefore focuses on history and not social sciences. Out of eight chapters, three are dedicated to international history, namely: the world wars, the Middle East and the United Nations. One chapter focuses on independent African States in the SADC region, while four chapters cover South African history. The 1976 Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre are addressed in much more detail than in the other books. Below is the picture that was taken after the Sharpeville shooting, that shows white policeman throwing a body of a victim into a truck.



Figure 4: Showing policemen (after the march) throwing the body of a victim in the truck

These are pictures that the teacher showed learners at the end of the lesson. The difference between these pictures and the one in the student notebook of Gauteng High School is discussed with the lesson.

7.3.5 Planning

The documents provided by the teacher indicate some kind of planning at school level. This means that the teacher had a plan showing Programme Organisers, all the learning areas and different grades. The plan indicates four (4) programme organisers for Grade 9, namely, tourism, infrastructure, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. Logically, he should have been able to draw his own year plan and lesson plans based on the school's year plan. The school's OBE plan also shows the specific outcomes that would or should be achieved as well as the assessment criteria. However, the teacher did not do micro planning, which made it difficult to assess whether the content taught actually achieved the set outcomes.

During the interview it became apparent that the teacher did not have his own plan that he had developed from the school plan. The documents that he gave me as part of his plan were photocopies of sections of the current curriculum policy. It was

difficult to assess which outcomes did he want to achieve with the lessons that he taught.

7.3.6 Classroom observations

The teacher did not use either of these textbooks during lessons on the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre. Instead he had scribbled notes that he used for himself and only wrote keywords on the board. When I asked him about this, he indicated to me that he had been teaching history for years and that the apartheid laws and the resistance to them were part of his growing up. He had experienced the pass laws that led to the Sharpeville March as he had been teaching in Soweto, and was therefore familiar with the events that led to the 1976 Uprising. He also pointed out to me that he used at least three books as sources but always tried to select the one with simple content.

The first week in class

As at Gauteng High School, the first week of my observation was exploratory and was meant to refine the observation instrument should it become necessary. The first few lessons were on various apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act; the introduction of the Population Register (that classified people into racial groups and forced blacks to carry passbooks); the Separate Amenities Act and the Bantu Education Act.

The teacher also talked about the effects of Apartheid laws on the lives of the people. He indicated that these laws, among other things, took away the dignity of the people; reduced blacks to migrant labourers; restricted people's movements; required blacks to produce passbooks on demand; invaded people's privacy and prohibited people to live where they wanted to.

Reflections on the first lessons before observation of selected historic events

There was very little meaningful engagement from the side of learners, except for expressions of disbelief when the teacher mentioned things such as blacks having to

ask for permission to enter white areas and adult males being subjected to random searches. The lesson also was not aligned to outcomes based education. It was primarily teacher-fronted, with very little room for active interaction with and among learners. The assessment was knowledge based rather than skills based. Below are questions that the teacher asked at the end of the lesson:

- a) Which organisation came to power in 1948?
- b) Who came with apartheid?
- c) What does Apartheid mean?

7.3.7 The teaching of the Sharpeville Massacre

The teacher explained to learners the different forms of resistance such as peaceful demonstrations and the defiance campaign. He then told the story of Sharpeville Day. He started by going back to the pass laws and how this restricted people's movements and dehumanised black people. He took the whole period, approximately 35 minutes to narrate the story and only stopped to write keywords on the board.

The story in the box is a reconstruction of the notes. Since he was talking slowly, I wrote the notes down in my observation schedule as if I was writing minutes. They are as close to verbatim as possible.

The story of the Sharpeville Massacre

People were getting angrier and angrier everyday, about these pass laws. Sometimes, a man would wake up to go to the shop to buy something and a police car would stop him and tell him to show the passbook. If he did not produce it because he had forgotten it at home, he would be thrown in a police van. The van will go around the township, up and down, up and down, until the police were satisfied that the streets were clean. Then they would take all the men arrested to the police station. If they did not have money to pay the fine, they would spend a night in jail.

Then one day people decided not to go to work. The old people (meaning adults) gathered with the passbooks. They began to move slowly, marching and singing and saying the slogans that said they wanted their land back. They marched peacefully to the police station. When they arrived there, they took out their passbooks. The government had organised the police reinforcements from other areas. When they arrived at the police station, they found the police at the gate. One by one they burned their passbooks. By burning passbooks, they were inviting something from the police. They expected that the government would do something. They expected to be locked up.

Unfortunately things did not go as planned. One policeman panicked. There was chaos. People started running and the police were shooting at them. On that day class, 69 innocent people died and 180 were injured. Many of them were shot at the back as they tried to run away. In the next 6 months, about 11000 people of all races were arrested. Some people skipped the country.

The above lesson is a cameo that I developed as the teacher was presenting the lesson, narrative style as if telling a story. Learners followed the teacher's story, and all I could hear were sighs and expressions of disbelief and comments such as 'Ka nete, meneer' (Is it true, sir?). It took the teacher the whole period to tell the story. At the end of the story he told learners to go and think about the story because they would be required to answer questions the following day.

The questions asked by the teacher

1. Class, the police said the people were carrying guns. Do you agree with this?
2. How many people were shot dead?
3. Which document was given to the to people at the age of 16?
4. Which political organisations led the resistance? They said it was time to stand up and break minor laws.
5. Why do we say it was a peaceful march that ended in tragedy?
6. What was the government trying to do by arresting leaders?
7. What happened to those who did not want to be arrested?
8. Why did the government ban PAC and ANC?
9. Do we still have the laws that existed before?
10. When did apartheid end or die? (**Answer:** When Mandela was released from prison)
11. When was it buried? (**Answer:** At the elections in 1994)

The questions demonstrate a very low level of history teaching. However, the teacher's style of telling a story was fascinating and even though the lesson could not be described as interactive, there was no doubt that the learners followed and understood the content. They had no difficulty answering the questions based on the

story and even managed to give information that the teacher did not include in the story. The only question that learners could not answer was Question 7. This could be attributed to the ambiguity of the question. Some students thought that the teacher wanted to know what happened to the people who resisted arrest, when in fact, he wanted to know how people avoided arrest, when the police cracked down on PAC and ANC members. The answer that he was expecting was that such people went into exile.

The answers to Questions 10 and 11 took me by surprise. Firstly, to say that apartheid 'died' in 1990 with the release of Nelson Mandela and that it was 'buried' in April 1994, when "all people voted and Mandela became president" was very interesting to me. The association of Mandela's release with the death of apartheid, and the first democratic elections as the burial brings to question the spaces teachers of history occupy or are expected to occupy as objective mediators of 'truth' or history as 'fact'. The use of the metaphor of death to refer to the days leading to the democratic elections, and extend that metaphor to an act of burial on April 27, 1994 creates an image of finality and closure to that painful chapter in the history of black South Africans. What was even more interesting was the ease with which learners seemed to have understood these metaphors and the acceptance of the answers without contestation. The teacher had not used these metaphors in the presentations before and after the lesson on the Sharpeville Massacre.

The manner in which this event was taught at the school is different from how it was taught by the two teachers at the other school. This shows that learners in different contexts, taught by teachers with different political and social orientations, are likely to be exposed to various interpretations of knowledge.

7.3.7 The teaching of the Soweto Uprising

The teaching of the Soweto Uprising was presented as a response by learners to an apartheid law, which was meant to deprive black children of good and meaningful education similar to that of their white counterparts. He indicated that blacks were already subjected to inferior education, and the introduction of a language policy that required black learners to learn part of their subjects in Afrikaans and others in

English was a catalyst. This was called the 50-50 policy, even though this was not entirely accurate as some of the non-examination subjects such as religious education could be taught in an indigenous language. Below is a picture from the textbook, *Making History* by Dugmore et al, discussed earlier:



Figure 5: Hector Peterson - Soweto High School

Similar to the lesson on the Sharpeville Massacre, the teacher told the story of how affected learners were dissatisfied with the 50-50 policy and how they appealed to their teachers to do something but nothing positive happened. Students were also

unhappy about the beer-halls that had been opened by the government so that adults would spend more time at these places instead of paying attention to what was happening in schools.

The story as told by the teacher

In 1975 students at Naledi High School and neighbouring schools came with an idea of forming a student organisation. This was called the Soweto Students Representative Council. A male student from this school was elected as a vice-president, while a student from the neighbouring school, Tsietsi Mashinini, was elected as president.

In 1976, after having many meetings, students decided to hold a peaceful march. Marching started at this school, through to Morris Isaacson High School and marched slowly to Orlando Stadium. From Morris Isaacson, they followed that tarred road (pointing outside) and all the while the police were watching. The crowd grew bigger. White policemen were standing with guns at the ready. One policeman threw a police gas canister. *We* later found that they were not using only teargas, but also live ammunition.

A small boy from the nearby primary school, Tsepang Primary school, was the first victim who died that day. His name was Hector Peterson. Soweto went into flames and there was chaos. Learners went and burnt beer-halls and some property. Many students went into exile - more to train as soldiers. When they arrived there, they joined military wings of different organisations that were already underground (Umkhonto wesizwe for the ANC and Poqo for the PAC).

The teacher also told students about the incident in which the police had jumped over the fence behind the school planning to arrest learners who were suspected to be ringleaders. He explained how students turned the vehicle upside down and burnt it, and how those policemen had to be rescued by reinforcements. He ended by saying, “ students in 1976, sacrificed their lives for you, so that you can have a better education. Students of this school such as Khotso Seahlulo.”

Reflections on the lesson

The lesson was teacher-fronted, with students listening with fascination. I noticed that they were not taking down notes. When the teacher asked whether they had any questions or whether there was anything they wanted to add, a girl stood up and

asked, “How many people died that day? Why do all the people talk about Hector Peterson alone?” The teacher’s response was that the focus on Hector Peterson was because he was the youngest student and the first learner to be shot by the police on that day.

The first question to be asked by the teacher was the difference between Bantu Education and the current education learners’ are getting. The answers from learners were that Bantu Education made blacks: (a) to work for white bosses; (b) not being (sic) able to do something like business; (c) inferior to whites; and (d) have in mind that they will always work for a white boss. They did not explain how the current education was different, except that it is implied in their description of what Bantu Education did to black Africans.

Apart from questions requiring one-word answers, the teacher also told students that June 16 was now celebrated as a public holiday. It is celebrated as an “achievement of a better education for all, an attainment of equality”, he said. The teacher raised the issue of the Freedom Charter and whether learners thought that the ‘doors of learning were open’ to them. To which they said yes, because “we can go to any school we like”, “wherever we want” and “can choose any subjects”. These responses demonstrate the learners understanding of the concept of access. It would seem that learners also have a fairly good idea that it is not only physical access such as choosing the school that is important, but the opportunity to choose subjects is equally important.

Another interesting response on why they thought students marched in 1976, was that “because they were oppressing *us*”, and another learner said “yes, and *we* also wanted the same education like white children”. I could not help noticing that learners had used the first person plural in their responses. For a person who had not been in that class, it would be difficult to understand the seemingly ‘incorrect’ use of the first person instead of the third person. But for me, that made sense. The story-telling approach, accompanied by references to the names of students, streets followed by the marchers and sections of the township, re-enacted the event and appealed to their emotions. The oppression the teacher talked about in the previous lessons, the Sharpeville Massacre, the wishes of the learners who marched in 1976, became their

experiences and wishes. The question of access to different forms of knowledge or knowledges and the learning context(s) comes to the fore.

The teaching style of the history teacher seems to be a key factor in the learners' attitudes towards history. When they were asked whether they liked history they all agreed. And when they were asked to motivate their answers, their responses ranged from what they perceived as an opportunity to learn about the past and how their leaders fought to ensure that they got quality education to the general curiosity about the lives of political leaders. Learners thought that the teacher's experiential knowledge made the lesson interesting. His ability to make the subject interesting was explained eloquently by one learner who said:

Our teacher is the one who makes it more interesting because you can see that he is not reading notes, he knows what he is talking about.... Unlike other teachers maybe, I don't know but you would see them opening textbooks and reading everything in class, you can see that he doesn't know the concept. We learn from the person who knows, and who was there and saw the things in those times.... He teaches us well and he is interesting, even the way he talks, you can feel that he was there. Unlike others for example, they take textbooks, and our teacher doesn't read from the book or copy from it, he knows.

In addition to making the content interesting, learners reported that the teacher always made sure that they understood before proceeding to the new content. They felt that he gave them time to know and internalise what they have learned, instead of encouraging them to 'cram'. The story telling style and the fact that he did not read from the textbook also came up as a reason why learners liked history.

7.4 Reflections on access at Soweto High School

Policies promoting access to education discussed earlier do not seem to have impacted positively on the school with regard to physical access. The school is still under-resourced and with some buildings showing disturbing signs of disrepair. The physical environment of learners did not look conducive to effective learning, while the working conditions of teachers left much to be desired.

Institutional interests were paramount in decisions concerning the admission of learners to the school. This could be seen in the way that the principal explained the school's concerns about learners who were above the age norm for the grade. While the issue of discipline is important, putting the interest of the school as the primary reason for refusing access seems to be outside the human rights framework. Further, the inadequate education provision coupled with the inadequate resource and the use of negative disciplinary measures seem to have a negative effect on physical access to the school.

The principal's views on discipline seems to be interpreted by some teachers as license to carry on with corporal punishment even though this is prohibited by policy, and has been declared illegal. This also highlights the role of teachers as agents that facilitate or hinder access to the school. The fact that learners identified corporal punishment and verbal abuse by some teachers as contributing to the drop-out of learners from the school identifies teachers as a key push and pull force in the school.

Epistemological access

Despite the physical condition of the school, epistemological access seemed to be one area in which the school showed signs of celebrating and embracing new forms of knowledge. In other words, in the Grade 9 History curriculum, the school has made a complete break with apartheid knowledge pertaining to history and racist interpretation of that knowledge.

First, the adoption of an oral history approach as a form of mediating knowledge gave an interesting perspective to the teaching of the two selected events, Sharpeville Day and the Soweto Uprising. While the old grand narratives of the apartheid history marginalised, the history of resistance to apartheid and even gave it a racist interpretation, the new history that the school has adopted highlights the significance of the history of resistance.

The new grand narrative of resistance to apartheid is shaped by small narratives. The Sharpeville Massacre has moved from the position of being described as an illegal terrorist march to being represented as an event in which innocent civilians who were frustrated by an inhumane law that stripped them of their dignity, decided to fight for

their right to be treated with dignity. The protestors are the protagonists, while the apartheid state and its organs (the police and the armed forces) are now represented in this grand narrative as villains. The celebration of Sharpeville Day by the school demonstrates an acceptance of this grand narrative. This is a story of victorious protagonists who died for human rights.

The Soweto Uprising also takes the same form of a new narrative that was not allowed in the apartheid curriculum, but which now forms part of “official knowledge” that should be learned in the schools. The grand narrative represents the students of 1976 as heroes who took to the streets to show their frustration against an intransigent government that did not want to listen to their grievances. The destruction of property that took place after the march is now represented as an attack on the “symbols of apartheid”, thus absolving learners of any blame.

This 1976 protest does not only form part of this grand narrative of resistance to apartheid but has a special meaning because it is also a narrative of the school. It demonstrates the contribution of the school to the liberation of black South Africans, and therefore enhances the historical significance of the school in the struggle against apartheid education. It is not by accident that Grade 9 learners in the school felt that they should be grateful to their 1976 counterparts who risked their lives so that they could receive equal education.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the institutional culture provides an environment that nurtures the new grand narrative of resistance to apartheid. The celebration of the Sharpeville Day, Youth Day and Freedom Day therefore, become part of this dominant narrative. The re-interpretation or re-arrangement of historical knowledge has been well received by the institutional culture at Soweto High School, whereas these new narratives have not been given centre stage at Gauteng High School.

CHAPTER 8

A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF SOWETO AND GAUTENG HIGH SCHOOL

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the two preceding chapters I discussed the conceptions of access to education at Soweto and Gauteng High School. The chapters were an attempt to answer the second question of my research, which examines the interpretation of the concept of “access to education” as an expression of human rights at school and classroom level. The purpose of this chapter is to provide further analysis of the case studies by examining the differences and the similarities between the conceptions of access at the two schools.

The first part of the study examined the historical conceptions of access to education by tracing the concept through different historical periods, beginning from the Congress of the People and culminating into the Interim Constitution in 1993, which laid the basis for the first democratic elections. This part of the study responded to the first question of the research by tracing the evolution of the concept of access in the history of education in South Africa. In the chapter on the intellectual legacy of the concept of ‘access to education’, I indicated that it (the concept) has shown itself to be fluid and context bound. The example I made in the earlier discussion is that, in the same period that schools in Soweto were demanding more technical high schools and were beginning to demand meaningful access to knowledge by refusing to use Afrikaans as a second medium of instruction, a small rural community in Mooi River in Natal had no high school. Therefore the Mooi River community was more concerned with getting financial resources to send needy learners to high schools in the neighbouring townships and boarding schools, and thus, had not even begun to question the relevance of the knowledge they had access to. To this small community questioning the nature and content of the curriculum was unthinkable because the most pressing need was gaining formal access to high schools in the neighbouring townships while they fought for the building of a high school in Mooi River.

After a protracted struggle for access to education in South Africa, the inclusion of the right to education in the Bill of Rights was a victory to all South African, especially to those who had been denied this right. The policies that followed the enshrining of the right to education in the Constitution identified increased access to education as a fundamental principle for the realisation of this constitutional right (the SASA, 1996; NEPA 1996). The question was how the concept of ‘access’ that has been integrated in education policies was given expression at school and classroom level. The conceptions of access at the two schools revealed similarities and differences between the schools. Most importantly, it confirmed the fluidity of the concept of ‘access’ in its manifestation at school level. The cross case analysis, the purpose of this chapter, attempts not only to highlight the differences and similarities in the conceptions of access to education at the two schools, but also to explain the phenomena that took place.

I have also indicated that it would be simplistic to reduce the conceptions of access to education to be either a struggle for formal access to education institutions or for epistemological access. Whether the emphasis was on physical or epistemological access depended largely on the social and political context of the school. The fluidity of the concept of ‘access’ lies in the fact that these terms cannot take a specific shape at a site of learning and then be frozen in time, but are constantly shaped or reshaped as people continue to debate the implications of declaring education a human right. As we continue to debate meanings of increased access to education, we also need to examine the interpretations of government policies by those who are expected to implement these policies at school.

It is important to recall that the two schools were chosen for the study because of the distinct spaces they occupy in the social and political history of education in South Africa. Soweto High School is located in history as one of the schools that were actively involved in the struggle against Bantu Education, and more specifically against the use of Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching in half of the key subjects in African schools. The school also serves working class communities in and around Naledi, a section of Soweto. Prior to the 1976 Uprising, the school is reported to have had good matric results, but has since struggled to maintain its good

reputation. At the time of the research, the school was one of the schools that had been targeted for intervention by the Gauteng Department of Education.

Gauteng High School serves the higher-middle class community in Pretoria and does not have the same history of struggling against Bantu Education. Like most white schools in this period, the school was a public school, enjoying the benefits that were the preserve of white education. The history of the school reveals that many of the Old Boys fought in the World Wars, during which the Old Boys Club originated (according to a letter from a soldier). Towards the end of the 1980s, the school held a referendum in which parents voted for the opening of the school to other race groups. This, however, became a 'non-issue' when Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990 and the school felt that the political landscape was about to change anyway. The school did not stop there, but it also initiated an intensive bridging programme for selected learners from township schools who had passed Standard 5, to prepare them for admission in Form 1 or Standard 6 at the school. The bridging programme was funded by the school and it ran for five years.

The question is, how do the two schools, with their distinct history and social setting, compare in their conceptions of access to education in the transformed education system to which both contributed in different ways. The analysis follows the same format of individual cases, with physical and epistemological access discussed separately.

8.2 PHYSICAL ACCESS AT THE TWO SCHOOLS

Physical access has to do with gaining access into an education institution (Morrow, 1994), in this case, Soweto High School and Gauteng High School. I indicated in my earlier discussion that access to education is enshrined in the Bill of Rights which states that "everyone has a right to basic education, including adult education and further education, and the state through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" (Section 29 (1)). Flowing from the Constitution is the South African Schools Act (1996), which prohibits unfair discrimination in the admission of learners. This effectively means that the school

must admit learners and serve their education needs as long as they fulfil the admission criteria. For example, if there is a zoning system, a learner may not be denied access to a school if they reside within the feeder zone of a school or they reside with their parents at an employer's home in the feeder zone (DoE, 1996). Learners who live outside the feeder zone, but whose parents work in the feeder zone, are only considered after learners who reside in the feeder zone have been admitted. Once these two categories of learners have been admitted, the school may admit learners from other areas on a 'first come, first served' basis.

In order to realise the principle of non-discrimination, Section 5(1) of the Schools Act prohibits the exclusion of learners from school on the grounds that a parent is (a) unable to pay or has not paid school fees determined by the governing body; (b) does not subscribe to the mission statement of the school; or (c) has refused to enter into a contract in terms of which the parent waives any claim for damages arising out of the education of the learner (Section 5 (2)).

The admission policies of the two schools are in line with the South African Schools Act and other government policies that are intended to facilitate physical access to education. The demand for places at Gauteng High School exceeds available places, resulting in the school giving preference to learners who live in the natural feeder area, and having to turn away between 200 - 400 learners every year. The principal indicated that, because of the high demand of places at the school, the school could not accommodate the second and third category of learners. However, the admission policy of the school also makes provision for the admission of learners who "reside outside the natural feeder area but who have specific requirements such as third language, music, art and computer studies".

Soweto High School also follows the same admission criteria prescribed by the Gauteng Department of Education, to which both schools belong. The principal of Soweto High School indicated that the feeder zone principle did not work in his school because the school had to accommodate learners from outside the catchment area who had been turned down at their feeder schools because the school places had been filled. To him the catchment areas were only 'imaginary'. Therefore, in practice, the

school was in the business of helping children as long as they lived within a reasonable distance from the school.

No matter how much the school claims to be making decisions that are to the best interest of learners, it became clear to me that in both schools, when principals had to make decisions, the interest of the school took precedence over the interest of a learner. In an excerpt cited previously, the principal of the Soweto High School claims that the school wants ‘to help everybody’, provided that those learners were not ‘over-age’ for the grade they were applying for, because “once the child is old for the grade, it basically means that there is something that the learner is not doing right”. The principal did not want to admit a ‘wrong’ learner as the school might get ‘stuck’ with that learner. Getting stuck with a wrong learner means that such a learner would not be able to succeed in the senior certificate examination. Pressure from the Department of Education and competition between schools was reported to be the main reason why Soweto High School, and high schools in general, were careful not to admit learners that were at risk of failing the matric examination.

Gauteng High School also had mechanisms to identify at-risk learners, and discourage them from enrolling at the school. Once an applicant has been identified as weak academically and did not participate in any sport or extra mural activities, the principal ‘advised’ parents to seek an alternative school as Gauteng High School was “not right for the child”. The only difference between Gauteng High School and Soweto High School is that refusing to admit learners because they are over-age does not violate the national policy, as long as the principal refers the applicant to an adult education centre. On the other hand, it would be against government policy to refuse to admit learners just because they are weak or do not fit the ethos of the school. If they satisfy the admission criteria, including the age norm for the grade, the school must admit the learners. Therefore, in order to avoid confrontation with the Department of Education or possible litigation by parents, if the principal suspects that an applicant is ‘not suitable’ for the school, he uses a language that would convince the parents of that learner that Gauteng High School is ‘not the right school’ for that learner instead of the other way round.

Physical access is not only about enrolment at an institution but also includes physical resources, such as furniture, recreational facilities, classrooms, safety, forms of discipline and other quantifiable facilities. The education resources at the schools were vastly different. Learners at Gauteng High Schools had access to different kinds of sporting and cultural activities such as swimming, water polo, rugby, cricket and different forms of music, including a band. The school also boasted a well-resourced media centre with a permanent member of staff, which means that the library was always open. The grounds are huge with adequate physical infrastructure in the form of classrooms, a big hall, staff rooms in the two campuses, teachers' offices with all teachers having their own computers and a principal's office with a personal assistant.

Soweto High School was the opposite. It had the bare minimum. The administrative block did not compare with Gauteng High School. The office that was supposed to be for the principal's personal assistant was used as an administrative office with office equipment such as a photocopier, fax machine and computers. The staff room had two tables and no chairs, resulting in teachers remaining in their classrooms during break. The old principal's office, that was used by the Grade 9 history teacher and a colleague as an office, was in a state of disrepair. The block that housed the Grade 9 history classes had a roof that looked as if it had not been painted for years. The principal referred to the school as dilapidated. There were no extra mural facilities for the Grade 9 learners apart from a football court. The shortage of furniture prevented the school from admitting more than a thousand learners even though the capacity of the school could accommodate many more than the current number of registered learners. In essence, the school was under-utilised.

Differences in physical facilities influenced the way learners thought about their schools. Learners at Gauteng High School thought their school was not in need of improvement or change and when asked what they would ask the Minister to do if they were given a chance to ask her for anything, they said they would tell her not to change anything in the school because it was "the best". Instead, they felt that she should exempt them from some policies, as they should be treated differently to other schools.

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Learners at Soweto High School said they would ask the Minister to renovate the school, 'repair the fence' and bring interesting books for the library. They also wanted the Minister to tighten discipline in the school. While these demands may seem unrelated to the issue of access to education, some girls indicated that sometimes thinking about the conditions at the school was discouraging and that they had considered not going to school. These conditions could hinder access to education in that they deny learners a good learning environment that provides for the physical and cognitive development. Learners in Soweto High School are denied the opportunity to develop full potential in non-academic activities such as sport.

An important consideration about access to education, particularly equal access to education institutions is the cost of education at a particular education institution. The fees charged play an important role in either facilitating access into the institution or denying it. In this regard, Soweto High School charges R100.00 per annum, and the cost of uniform is in the region of R300.00. Whereas education at Gauteng High School costs just over R28, 000.00 for both tuition and boarding fees. The school has a bursary scheme for students who need financial assistance, and also makes use of the government funding formula provided in the Norms and Standards for Funding (1998). The school also provides sporting kits to learners who cannot afford these. In the principal's opinion, these measures were put in place to ensure open access to all learners who have been admitted to school. The fees at Soweto High School are low, but the school also had a problem of non-payment. However, parents were not granted exemption from paying school fees, as these were considered affordable. In both schools, learners are not refused access on the basis of their inability to pay school fees.

By way of concluding this section, it would seem that the admission of policies of the schools were aligned to the government policies that are intended to ensure equal access to education institutions. However, this did not stop the principals from turning certain learners away, such as over age learners and late applicants who were not accompanied by parents at Soweto High School, and 'weak' learners at Gauteng High School. Principals, in the end, look after the interest of their schools when they

admit learners. The next section compares what happens to the students who had been admitted.

8.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS

Epistemological access recall is about access to knowledge or academic practice at an institution (Morrow, 1994). It is about knowledge that is made accessible to learners through the curriculum. This section compares the curriculum that was taught in the History Grade 9, as well as other practices that either facilitated or denied access to certain forms of knowledge. The data was obtained from classroom observation of two historical events, the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre, as well as from interviews with teachers and learners. The text used by teachers and learners provided valuable information in my understanding of the kind of knowledge learners had available to them.

We learnt from the conceptual framework that the curriculum is a vehicle for epistemological access and includes “the aims and objectives; the selection of content to be taught; ways of teaching and learning; and forms of assessment” (NECC, 1992:102). It is also indicated in the conceptual framework that the curriculum has a social and political dimensions to it. This is because:

it is drawn by particular groups of people and because of this it reflects particular points of view and values; it is anchored in the experiences of particular social groups; and it produces particular patterns of successes and failures; Accordingly, the curriculum must be understood in its social and historical context (NECC, 1992:102).

Confirming the above, (Hill, 2001) suggests that to unmask the political and social dimension of the curriculum, one should ask questions such as:

Whose curriculum is it? Who selected the curriculum content? Does it represent and affirm the ideology, values and attitudes of a particular social group of people. Does it therefore invalidate and disempower the values and attitudes it does not present? Does it give some children/students an easier time and other a harder time? (p.96-97)

The above excerpts demonstrate that the curriculum cannot and, indeed, should not be expected to be value-free and apolitical. The national curriculum therefore, can either

reflect the values of the ruling party, or policy developers could make a conscious decision to accommodate other cultures and perspectives, in other words, to try to ensure that learners have access to a wide variety of knowledge or viewpoints.

It is also important to note that the national curriculum is a way of ensuring that learners have access to the same kind of knowledge. In Hill's words, "the national curriculum is, to a large extent, operationalizing the belief that the same body of formal curriculum content should be available to all ...within the primary and secondary state school systems" (2001:97). What the state does not take into account is that the politics of knowledge at the point of implementation is much more complicated, because what has been declared by the national government as 'official knowledge' gets recontextualised and in the process enhanced or diluted (Apple, 1993 & 2003).

The NEPI Framework report was correct in saying that curriculum policies need to "address differences between curriculum-in-use and the formal curriculum because simply using the same syllabuses for everyone will not necessarily bring equality" (NECC, 1992:102). I indicated earlier in the conceptual framework that the debate about curriculum-in-use or what is eventually taught is not only about the differences that are caused by unequal distribution of resources but also about strategic and everyday choices that teachers make in their execution of the national curriculum.

The questions such as "Whose curriculum is it?" and the politics of knowledge at school level provide a good basis for the comparison of the two case studies. I shall compare all aspect of the case study, beginning from how the curriculum is organised at school or classroom level, the values it promotes, the time allocated to South African history in general, and to the teaching of the selected historical events in particular.

The questions that Hill (2001) suggests should be asked to interrogate the power relations that are defined by the curriculum, apply to school contexts as well. Whose curriculum is taught at Gauteng and Soweto High School? Who selected the curriculum content in the texts? Another very important question in the two case

studies is not whether the history curriculum represents a variety of cultures and perspectives, but it is also about the extent to which different voices are represented.

The logical starting point is the textbook or texts, since this forms the core around which the teaching and learning activities are organised and ordered. Overall, the texts used in the two settings were so different that one would think that these schools did not fall under the same provincial Department of Education.

At Gauteng High School, the Grade 9 history texts, in the form of student notes was compiled by the subject head, with the assistance of one teacher. Teachers and learners knew that the student notes were the core curriculum, and that any extra material that teachers brought to class was only for enrichment and would not be examined. Learners also knew that any assessment on the extra material would not count in the final examination. In essence this means that at Gauteng High School, the power to select the 'real' history curriculum for Grade 9 was vested in the subject head and not the history teachers. Therefore, what is included or excluded in the texts (student notes) reflects the orientation or views of the compilers in the same way that the contents of a book reflects the views of the authors, or the state, if the textbooks were commissioned by the state. However, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that the ideology of the school or the constitutional culture plays a primary role in what is taught.

The first question I posed after paging through the student notes was what exactly the arrangement of the text says about South African History in Grade 9 at the school, taking into account the following claims about textbooks:

Textbooks are surely important in and of themselves. They signify, through their content *and* form, particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organising that vast universe of possible knowledge. They embody what Raymond Williams called selective tradition: someone's selection, someone's vision of...legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group's cultural capital disenfranchising other's. (Apple, 1993)

The selection and ordering of the content demonstrates a view of history that privileges general history and the cultures embedded in it, while leaving South African history where it was before 1994. The subject head made a decision not only

to allocate a small physical space to South African history, but also put it in an ‘uncertain’ position, where the chances of it not being taught were high considering various pressures at the end of the year. The subject head himself was not sure whether it would be taught and was at pains to dissuade me from waiting for October.

Jansen (2001) sees institutions and teachers as key in facilitating epistemological access for learners. The converse is also true, that teachers and institutions can also decide which knowledge they want learners to have access to, irrespective of the national curriculum. In fact Wong and Apple (2003:95) insist that there are “striking differences between official curricula and what actually happens in schools or in the creation of texts to meet official guidelines”. At this school, there is a vast difference between the national curriculum and what is taught.

In the Grade 9 Human and Social Sciences Curriculum, South African history and the history of Africa takes precedence over general history. The history of other countries is taught in a way that shows relations to South Africa, and not as independent content. Specific Outcome 1 (SO1) says that learners must “demonstrate a critical understanding of how the South African society has changed and developed” (DoE, 1997:4). The Performance Indicators (PIs), among others, say that a teacher would know when SO1 has been achieved when learners:

...give an account of changes experienced by the communities, including struggles over land, resources and political right... analyse the impact of imperialism and nationalism on different classes in South Africa... identify key stages in the development of African nationalism and the struggle for decolonisation and liberation in South Africa...apply the concepts of colonialism and imperialism in identifying key relationships between Southern Africa and the rest of the world... (DoE, 1997:5-7).

At Gauteng High School the emphasis is on general history and the South African history section includes snippets on the Union of South Africa from 1910-1948. The National Party government and the major apartheid laws take up seven pages and consist of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949; the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950; the Population Registration Act of 1950; the Group Areas Act of 1950; the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The section on apartheid laws is followed by the history of Resistance to Apartheid, which is allocated two pages, comprising of one short paragraph each on

the Defiance Campaign; the Freedom Charter; the Sharpeville March (1960); the Rivonia Trial; and the Soweto Riots of 1976. It would be difficult to achieve SO1 with the amount of content that is in Unit 11.

The text of the Sharpeville Massacre is presented in one paragraph that is indicated in the case study. The accompanying picture or visual image says more about the culture of the school than the person who selected the material. First, the paragraph briefly explains what happened on 21 March 1960. It explains why people were marching but it avoids suggesting numbers; it says, “the police opened fire on these protestors” but does not say why. Were the police provoked or they panicked? Were the marchers armed? Then it makes a point that the international community was outraged. It does not say anything about the feelings of white South Africans. Were they also outraged? What about the feelings of Africans and other black South Africans?

An intriguing point is that the visual image (the picture) that is part of the text does not show the pictures that one often see in books, that is a picture of the corpses of victims on the ground or the picture that shows white policemen carelessly throwing a dead body into the back of a truck. By deciding to put a picture of a white policeman in uniform seemingly patrolling and keeping peace, the compilers refused to ‘give the victims a face’ or a ‘voice’. The compilers avoid using ‘race’ as an analytic tool. Where there is a victim there is also a perpetrator, and therefore, giving the victims a ‘face’ would have forced the compilers to say who killed them and why? The text, as it stands, evokes questions about why these people were killed. Any person who reads the text would assume that protestors must have done something ‘wrong’. This is in contrast with the photographs in books that the history teacher at Soweto High School showed learners. An interesting point here is that, teachers at Gauteng High School showed learners the same photograph that was used at Soweto High School.

June 16 is presented in a brief paragraph with the famous picture of Hector Peterson being carried by Mbuyisa after he had been shot. Why did the compilers include this picture but not the pictures of the protestors who were massacred in Sharpeville? The only logical explanation would seem to be that the Hector Peterson photograph is the ‘face’ or ‘brand’ of the Soweto Uprising, therefore the compilers could not ignore it. Whereas, the photographs of the Sharpeville Massacre are not as easily recognisable

as that of Hector Peterson. The text on the Soweto Uprising is not as sanitised as the Sharpeville Massacre. It says why learners were marching and also that they were not armed. It again comments about the feelings of the international community, that the international community condemned ‘this action’. However; it does not say anything about the feelings of the people in South Africa. What did white South Africans say? Did they also condemn or did they agree with the government? What did the black community say? By referring to students marching against the “racist policies” of the National Party Government, the text adopts a liberal analysis of blaming the apartheid government without looking at the role of the wider white community.

The approach to the teaching of history at Soweto High School was different from Gauteng High School, in that the teacher used textbooks provided by the Gauteng Department of Education. These books had a substantial coverage of South African history. One of the books does not include general history, and according to the teacher, Grade 9 pupils were not required to do general history as part of the curriculum. Even the Common Tasks Assessment from the Department of Education did not cover general history. He did not use any of the books in class, but indicated to me that what he normally did before going to class was to choose the book that had more information on a particular historical event that he wanted to teach. In his preparation for the lesson he had used *Social Science Matters* and *Making History* to show learners pictures of the Sharpeville Massacre. He had also used *Making History* for the content.

Teaching the Soweto Uprising and what happened on 16 June 1976 did not need much preparation for him because he was a teacher at the time, teaching at a primary school not very far from Naledi High School where some of the students met in the mornings. He used *Making History* to remind himself about the facts, and to show learners the picture of Hector Peterson being carried away by an older male student. The difference between student notes used at Gauteng High School, and the books that are provided by the Department of Education that this Soweto teacher used as references is that the textbooks have more information on the two events.

The texts include more details and represent the Sharpeville Massacre from the perspective of the victim. *Social Science Matters* shows a picture of bodies scattered

on the ground. This gives a ‘face’ to the victims and to a vigilant student, seeing bodies lying face down would indicate that the victims had been shot from the back while they were running. The other illustration in *Making History* shows the photograph of white policemen carelessly throwing a dead body into the back of a truck. The text also indicates that,

Although most accounts state that the protest was peaceful, the police panicked and opened fire on the crowd without warning. Sixty-nine people were killed and a hundred and eighty were wounded. Many of them were shot in the back as they tried to run away. (Dugmore & Mulholland et al, 1997: 136)

These points are not included in the text used at Gauteng High School, nor does the text refer to the shooting of protestors as a massacre. In an attempt to maintain objectivity, the compilers left out important points that demonstrated a discomfort with, or ‘subtle’ rejection of, the new narratives of resistance to apartheid.

The representation of the Soweto Uprising in the book contains much more information than the text used at Gauteng High School. The Soweto teacher had used *Making History* to prepare for the lesson, and this was also a book that he had used to show the picture of Hector Peterson being carried away by an older student. Above Hector Peterson’s photograph is another illustration showing students carrying banners reading “To hell with Afrikaans” and “We do not want Afrikaans”. The text also provides more information about the build up to the protest. It says that the “education authorities refused to listen to the protest and declared that defiance would not be tolerated” (Dugmore & Mulholland et al, 1997:141). It also says that learners had not been granted permission to hold a march, but had not thought that police “would shoot at them because they were unarmed” (p.142). The text also says the police opened fire without warning. The book goes further to explain what happened after the shooting, that protests spread throughout the country and that students attacked “symbols of apartheid such as schools and state-owned beer halls” (p.141). By the “end of the year, six hundred students had been killed” (p.141). All these points are not mentioned in the text used at Gauteng High School, except for the point that marchers were unarmed.

Going back to the question of the ‘real’ curriculum that learners are exposed to, one can conclude that as far as the texts or textbooks were concerned, learners at Soweto

High School had access to more South African history, and to more detail on the theme of repression and insurrection. Most importantly, the books that are used in the teaching of events tell the stories from the perspective of victims who became heroes. The second point is that Soweto High School seemed to teach the 'official knowledge' specified in the Senior Phase curriculum and the culture of the school provides an enabling environment for the teaching of the new grand narratives.

Gauteng High School is different. One can view the compilation reader as a rejection of the 'official knowledge' identified by the state. However, this is done with subtlety, and in such a way that when one looks at the student notes, one is led to believe that the history that was excluded from the curriculum by the old regime has been included, but on scratching the surface, it would seem that South African history is still on the periphery and that general history enjoys the mainstream status. Whose knowledge is of most worth? Whose curriculum are learners exposed to? The analysis of the texts alone indicates that, in spite of the national curriculum, learners at the school were exposed to a liberal curriculum interpretation that refused to use or even acknowledge race as an analytical tool, and by so doing, refuses to face the question of unequal power relations that, in the South African context has a class and racial dimension. The school's avoidance of race is not only reflected in the text but also emerged from the use of language in the interviews with the principal and teachers, for example, the principal repeatedly stated that at the school, they did not 'see race', that 'race was not an issue' and that learners were 'colourless'.

In an attempt to avoid talking about race, the school seems to emphasise *sameness* which might be interpreted as denying diversity, or more harshly as intolerance of diversity, as emphasis on sameness may suppress voices which may want to talk about diversity or who may wish to be recognised as different. The denial of race as an issue is contradictory to the school's recognition of other differences, for example, learners who belong to different religions were excused from assembly because this included scripture reading.

Having analysed the texts used in both school, I can safely say that learners at the two schools had access to different kinds of historical knowledge depending on the historical context and culture of the schools. Gauteng High School showed a bias

towards general history while Soweto High School showed bias towards South African history. However, it is important to note that Soweto High School was more aligned to the national curriculum, while Gauteng High School only included the bare minimum in order to ‘comply’ with the Department of Education’s policy.

Moving from the texts to curriculum planning, I came across different approaches. The teacher at Soweto High School had an OBE plan. The only problem was that this was a meso plan for the whole school and the teacher did not have a micro plan for his classes. It is difficult to say whether the teacher had the capacity to draw an Outcomes Based Education plan. When I asked him for his micro plan, he kept on showing me the mesoplan, that indicated the Programme Organisers and the specific outcomes to be achieved. He could not explain how he worked from the Programme Organisers. My conclusion was that this teacher could not draw a micro-plan and was inadequately prepared for the Outcomes Based Curriculum.

Curriculum planning at Gauteng High School was not in line with Outcomes Based Education. Teachers followed the student notes faithfully. The notes had been prepared by the Head of the History Department and had to be followed from beginning to end. The student notes had assessment activities for learners. However, the section on resistance to apartheid was the only one without an activity. What one can deduce from the strict adherence to student notes is that the Grade 9 history curriculum had been ‘teacher-proofed’, which was surprising considering that oftentimes, it is governments that often teacher-proof the implementation of policies rather than school managements. In essence, the school was following two history curricula. The mainstream curriculum was the one dominated by general history with South African history accommodated later in the year. The school then observes the legal requirements for all public schools by participating in the Common Task Assessment in October and November. After the CTAs, Grade 9 learners were subjected to an internal examination aimed at maintaining standards.

The discussion on the choice and selection of texts at the two schools revealed contrasting attitudes towards curriculum change. First, the teacher at Soweto High School seemed to accept the new history curriculum and all the textbooks supplied by the Department of Education for this purpose. His only complaint was that the

training workshops had not been adequate because he had attended a one-week course, and was left on his own with the textbooks and the policy guidelines. He also did not see anything wrong with the history curriculum that did not include general history at Grade 9 level. In a way, this teacher accepted the ‘new official knowledge’ because it affirmed and validated his history and the history of the school. Soweto High School was one of the schools that were in the forefront in the 1976 protest against Bantu Education. Thus, the knowledge that was not valued before was now valued and included as part of the mainstream curriculum. Learners were also positive about the knowledge they had access to, even going to the extent of pointing out that learners in former white schools were losing out because they did not know the history of resistance to apartheid.

It would appear at Gauteng High School, in order to create the illusion of complying with government policy, the newly declared ‘official knowledge’ was simply added-on at the end. This goes back to an observation made by the former Director-General in the Department of Education, referring on the policy making process after 1994, he said:

people have no sense of how much contestation there was...in those years because those who thought they had privileges wanted to keep the privileges. Those who didn't have access and privileges wanted change in order to make sure that they have access. That contest was bitter.

What we see in the teaching of Grade 9 history at the school could be interpreted as a struggle to defend what the school holds dear or regards as valuable knowledge. Apple (1993:11) refers to the textbook as an artefact that “constitutes the real curriculum in most schools”. Providing learners and teachers with ‘own texts’ protects the space occupied by general history, while preventing the distribution of knowledge that is deemed less worthy. Apple intimates that writing about cultural incorporation is also relevant to understand the positioning of South African History in the Grade 9 history curriculum at the school. He argues that sometimes the dominant group responds to the demands for the inclusion of knowledge and perspectives of the less powerful group through the process of ‘mentioning’ where:

in essence very little is dropped from textbooks. Major ideological frameworks do not get markedly changed...Progressive items are perhaps mentioned, then, but are not developed in depth. Dominance is partly

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maintained here through compromise and the process of “mentioning”. Here, limited and isolated elements of the history and culture of less powerful groups are included in the texts...but without any substantive elaboration of the view of the world as seen from their perspectives. (Apple, 1993:56)

The other dimension of epistemological access is how the topic is taught. This includes elements of the lesson such as time allocation, assessment, medium of teaching and learning and the use of language and teaching strategies. The Sharpeville Massacre and the Soweto Uprising were taught in both schools. At Soweto High School, the history of the resistance to apartheid was taught in April, while at Gauteng High School, South African history was taught in the last term and had to make way for the final examinations in late November. The last two lessons at Gauteng High School were a film, *A Dry White Season*, which is a story of police brutality that followed 16 June 1976.

The assessment of the two historic events was very low key. The questions asked by teachers were lower order questions that did not require higher order reasoning from learners. Questions like, why would black policemen do this to their own people? By pulling out, what was the international community saying? What did that do to the people (meaning disinvestments)? And why did the police open fire? A deviation from the student notes is that both teachers showed learners the photograph of the corpses of the marchers who were massacred. This picture is not included in the reader.

At Gauteng High School, the Soweto Uprising was not taught in a conventional sense. Learners were taken to the media centre for two periods to watch the film that showed student riots and the extreme brutality of the police, and how whites who sympathised with blacks were harassed by the state. One teacher at the school briefed learners about what the film was about, and also spent some time discussing the film afterwards, whereas another one did not brief his learners and also did not discuss the film afterwards. There was no assessment of the lesson. The student notes do not have assessment activities for the section on Resistance to Apartheid, a deviation from the normal format of the student notes.

The teaching of the Soweto Uprising at Soweto High School was detailed and the teacher took the whole period of 35 minutes to narrate the story as indicated in the case study, and another period assessing learners. His narration made the lesson come alive in that he also mentioned the names of student leaders who were involved. The lesson was like a re-enactment of the event, and learners were emotionally involved to such an extent that some used the first person to ask questions or when they answered the teacher's questions.

The learners' understanding of the event was demonstrated in the interviews when learners indicated that it was important for them to take advantage of education opportunities because there were people who died for the rights that they (the learners) now enjoy.

The teacher also used the same narrative style to teach the Sharpeville Massacre. He spent two periods on the event. One for the narration and learners asking questions of clarity and the next period for the assessment. The similarities between this teacher and the teachers at Gauteng High School were the lower order questions that he asked. Questions such as - The police said the people were carrying guns. Do you agree with this? How many people were shot dead? Which document was given to people at the age of 16?

We have seen that learners at both schools were exposed to the two historical events. However, the manner in which these were taught and the amount of time spent differed widely. The hidden curriculum, in the form of subtle messages from teachers and the activities of the school are also important to compare. The hidden curriculum refers to:

the values, attitudes and culturally loaded expectations expressed through school/institutional arrangements, through pedagogic relationships, and through rewards and punishments typical of the daily life in schools. It is suggested that, with exceptions, the hidden curriculum serves to reproduce educational, social and economical inequalities. (Hill, 2001:96)

The school activities at Soweto High School included the celebration of Human Rights Day, Freedom Day and Youth Day. All these included speeches from members of the community or other dignitaries. The Freedom Day celebrations,

which took place when I was at the school, took the same format. There were speakers from the community who talked about the school's contribution to freedom that was attained in 1994 when South Africans voted for the first democratic government. One can safely say that these events serve to buttress the knowledge that the learners had access to, the history of resistance, especially with regard to the two events. The elevation of the history of resistance to apartheid to 'official knowledge' status that is worthy of learning also has a hidden message of saying to learners at Soweto High School that their history is important. The learners saw those who did not know this history as lacking. This is evident in the earlier example of one boy's reference to a sibling who was attending a former white school and did not know who Hector Peterson was.

On the other hand, the hidden curriculum at Gauteng High School places more importance on the general history than on South African history. First the school, in 2003 and the years before that, did not celebrate Human Rights Day and Youth Day, or even Freedom Day, even though the historic events that are associated with these holidays, are part of the Grade 9 Curriculum. One teacher indicated that he took 10 – 15 minutes to explain the historical significance of public holidays that are in the curriculum, while the other one said that even though she was a member of the Society for National and International Affairs which did a "lot of work on Freedom Day" she had not used the holidays to initiate debate or refer to them in the Grade 9 history classes.

The school's valuing of general history became clear to me when the school celebrated the International Remembrance Day. This Day is celebrated worldwide in honour of the soldiers who fought in the World Wars. There were guests from the South African Navy, and there was a formal roll call and the laying of wreaths outside the hall. Soldiers who fell were called by name before laying a wreath for each. The event took place in the morning and all the periods were shifted back by an hour.

Emphasis on general history also led Grade 9 learners into thinking that knowledge of South African history was not important. This was clear in their responses in the interview. Their responses to the meanings of Human Rights Day, Youth Day and Freedom Day were, on the whole, superficial.

The insignificant space occupied by South African history was also reflected in their responses to whether they liked history and to motivate their responses. They liked general history and they used their understanding of general history, the First World War and Second World War, and the Cold War, to understand apartheid in South Africa instead of starting locally and using local history to understand general history. Below is the sample of responses from the two groups of Grade 9 learners at Gauteng High School:

I enjoy World War 1...and the wars. The Cold War...

Yes, wars are nice. I like to know what America did and Russia did.

And like Britain and America and France make a good ally and you have this attack in your mind against Germany and things like that.

... How in History people went about they weren't given equality in Hitler's times and the holocaust and how he discriminated against Jews and with our South African history about apartheid and we are basically just told how wrong it was for the human rights, their rights and equality.

At Soweto High School, learners liked what they were taught in history classes. However, it is difficult to say how they would have responded if general history was included in the Grade 9 curriculum. They liked the history of resistance to apartheid and some wanted to know more about the people who they perceived as their heroes.

Yes, I would like it if he adds more, that he tells us about the leaders, just like I said earlier. For me the first time I heard that Popo Molefe was studying here at the school, is last week or so. I mean ... like we should know more about our leaders of today, who fought for our rights not like only from ... High. Like Mandela we want to know, like what was their biography (lives) in the old days, where they were staying and grow up also Walter Sisulu and all. We just know only here and there, we want to know and all others. Also Thabo Mbeki, for him to be a president, like he was supposed to be a political member, the way I heard he was not even staying around here. He was exiled.

The teaching style of teachers at Gauteng High School and Soweto High School were almost similar in that all the lessons were teacher-fronted, except for the time when learners at Gauteng High School watched a film of the Soweto Uprising. The learner engagement in both cases was minimal. However, the teacher at Soweto High School presented the events in a narrative style that took the form of a story. One could say

there was minimal engagement because learners were quiet until he finished, but cognitively they were involved because when the teacher asked them questions the next day, they were able to give correct answers. In both schools, the level of assessment during teaching was limited to a few lower order questions.

The final examination at Gauteng High School had only two questions of one mark each (for the Soweto Uprising and Sharpeville Day) out of 48 marks allocated to South African History. While at Soweto High School learners wrote one test and a June examination. In both cases, the two events were allocated two and three questions respectively.

It would seem that the standard of assessment of the events in both schools was low. The test and June examination question papers were recall questions and there were no comprehension and analytic skills required. These were fill in the missing word, multiple choice and one-word answers.

The teaching styles and assessment strategies used to teach South African history at Gauteng High School, and the assessment strategies at Soweto High School confirm what is indicated in the conceptual framework that no matter what the state can do to control what happens in the classroom, in most cases teachers change very slowly if at all. Instead they:

...continue[d] to produce socially and politically conservative curricula independently of formal administrative intervention or parental direction... [because]... the ideological conservatism of teachers, their limited resources, the social resolution of tension between the pursuit of academic success and student failure, and a pattern of interlocking but exclusive social networks continue [d] to set limits to curriculum decision-making. (Rice, 1983:40 quoted in Angus, 1991:249)

As far as access to knowledge is concerned, teachers will continue with the way they have been teaching because of their ideological orientation, the need to ensure that their learners succeed and their social networks. If their networks resist change, they will also not see a reason why they should change. The above applies more to Gauteng High School where history classes are the same as they were before the new curriculum.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The above discussion confirms what emerged from the three preceding chapters about the contextual nature and the fluidity of the concept of access to education. Physical access to the two institutions in the case study was clearly in line with government policy. However, the analysis has shown that school principals would find ways to discourage at-risk learners from enrolling at their schools without breaching government policy.

The comparison has demonstrated that learners attending the two schools had unequal access to knowledge, even though both are attending public schools that are supposed to be implementing national curriculum. In the same way that principals find ways to deny access to certain learners who are ‘not right’ for the school, teachers also find ways of preserving or even defending knowledge that they hold dear without violating policy. For example, the Grade 9 history curriculum is dominated by general history, which takes up the first three school terms and South African history is taught in the last term in the form of ‘headline’ news.

The hidden curriculum or subtle messages and values serve to enhance or weaken the national curriculum by sending messages of what knowledge is worth learning or is not worth spending time on. The celebration of certain public holidays such as Human Rights Day, Freedom Day and Youth Day at Soweto High School created an informal space to discuss the historical significance of the Soweto Uprising and Sharpeville Day. The celebration of the International Remembrance Day by Gauteng High School, while the school did not celebrate the days of national historical significance, demonstrates the kind of knowledge that the school values and therefore makes accessible to learners.

Deducing from the case studies, one may confirm what researchers who write about the politics of knowledge have been saying for a long time, that equal access to knowledge is not possible for learners who attend different schools (Hill, 2001; Apple, 1993 and 1999). Epistemological access is governed by institutional culture, the history and the ideology.

As I was writing and thinking about the two schools, what they were doing or not doing, whether they were complying with national policy or not, I realised that teachers do not act in a vacuum, but within a powerful institutional culture prodding and pushing them towards a certain direction. The history of Gauteng Boys High School, with its involvement in the World Wars is different from the history of Soweto High School, therefore the approach to the same curriculum topics cannot be the same. What we see competing here are the two grand narratives, each wanting to be at the centre. What does this mean for epistemological access? I believe, it means epistemological access is largely controlled by institutional culture, especially that which has to do with the history of an institution.

CHAPTER 9

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

9.1 Introduction

The study was intended to investigate the biography of the concept of access to education as part of a broader human rights discourse as expressed through the recent history of South African education. My point of departure was the Congress of the People that took place in June 1955 in Kliptown, outside Johannesburg. The vision of the Freedom Charter⁴² was of an education system that would provide equal opportunities to all who live in South Africa. Hence, the memorable phrase: “the doors of learning and culture shall be opened”. While the Freedom Charter was in no way a policy document but a mobilising tool, the crux of the matter is that it was the first document that outlined the vision of the liberation movement. Some call it a blue print for a democratic South Africa. It envisaged a South Africa in which the government would take responsibility for the education of all South Africa’s children and a South Africa that would prohibit all forms of racism in education.

Realising the similarities between the struggles for equal access to education in the United States of America and South Africa, I made references to the fact that, while South Africans were resisting the segregationist education policies, the African Americans were fighting the same battles in the United States. The landmark judgement of *Brown vs the Board of Education* in 1954 was a watershed in the history of the American education system. Five judges were unanimous in their ruling that, “separate but equal” was inherently flawed and could not possibly be equal even if physical resources and teacher provision were equalised (Orfield, 2004). The reason was that “separate but equal” did not take cognisance of the ‘intangible’ aspects of education. This ruling effectively said that learners attending separate schools could not possibly be exposed to the same knowledge, even if the curriculum was the same.

In trying to understand various conceptions of access to education, the first question that I asked was - how has the concept of “access to education” as part of a broader human rights discourse evolved in the history of South African education? This

⁴² www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html

question was answered through documentary analysis and interviews with education and political leaders who had played different roles in the struggle against apartheid education in the last three decades. The second question was directed at the conceptions of access to education at school and classroom level. The question was - how is the concept of "access" as an expression of human rights interpreted at the level of the school and classroom practice?

I am not going to repeat Morrow's distinctions between physical access and epistemological access, save to say that findings have confirmed Morrow's assertion that attaining physical access is not the same as attaining epistemological access. I should point out that my argument was not whether Morrow's argument about access to education was right or wrong, but questioning the assertion that "the right to education" could only refer to physical access and not epistemological access. Morrow believes that there is something odd about claiming the right to epistemological access because when one does that, one is actually claiming the "right to succeed". As indicated earlier in my critique of Morrow's argument, I believe there is something strange in thinking that we could acknowledge the right to education for all, and demand expanded access to education for the previously disadvantaged individuals, but once admitted we say they should 'catch-up' by themselves.

Morrow is correct when he states in that being a student in an institution does not guarantee success. However, there is something wrong in thinking that we can put in place policies that promote increased access to education for the previously disadvantaged learners, and ignore support structures that will increase their chances of success. This goes back to the *equal access or equal opportunity* and *equal outcomes* debate. Equal outcomes, not in the negative sense of meaning the lowering of standards, but equal outcomes or equity of access, which means ensuring the equality of outcome by providing support and taking a conscious decision to adopt an inclusive institutional culture.

Morrow is right in that we cannot talk in the same way about "entitlement to formal access and entitlement to epistemological access", but it is odd that institutions could say, "We are admitting you here because the policy requires us to do that, but we will

continue marginalizing you, your cultural capital and extramural activities that you like and are good at. We will continue using the language that you do not understand and we will continue alienating you in every way we can and we will not give you support because the Constitution guarantees you the right to be in this institution but does not say we should change the culture of this institution to suit you. Neither does the Constitution guarantee you access to knowledge that we produce. In short we will ignore you. If you want to survive here, you must allow the process of assimilation to take place.”

The above scenario shows the absurdity of trying to separate physical and epistemological access. The analogy of an athlete who joins the club that Morrow uses to argue that while learners can claim the right to physical access, they cannot claim the right to epistemological access, does not acknowledge the reason that education is a human right simply because it gives a person access to knowledge that they can use in accessing other rights. If schools and education institutions were not the ‘distributors’ or ‘producers’ of knowledge, physical access to these institutions would be meaningless. Therefore, learners cannot be left to fend for themselves without providing them with the necessary support. We cannot say that if a learner has good teachers who are prepared to help them they are lucky and if they do not have, well “bad luck”. While the importance of the agency of the learner cannot be overemphasised, it is important to acknowledge that epistemological access would be difficult if not impossible, without a supportive learning environment. In my opinion teachers cannot be regarded as a secondary factor in the epistemological access debate.

While Morrow (1994) was useful in framing the analysis, I had to expand his conception of epistemological access to include the pedagogic, social and political dimension of knowledge. I have used a number of authors such as Jansen (2001) who sees epistemological access as including different aspects of knowledge such as “how it is organised, its value basis, its politics, and its power” (Jansen, 2001:2-3). Apple (2003) concurs with Jansen (2001) and takes the argument a step further by stating that the politics of knowledge decides “who should select it, how it should be organized, taught, and evaluated, and once again who should be involved in asking and answering these questions” (Apple, 2003:7).

9.2 Findings

In tracing the concept of access from the Kliptown Congress through the period of the People's Education from the mid-1980s, to the current policies the data has revealed significant findings about the concept of "access to education". Overall, the exploration of the concept of access to education contributes to the understanding of the complexities of access to education. Below are the findings

The first finding of this study is that the ways in which students experience access to knowledge (epistemological access) is strongly dependent on the history and politics of the school context and the institutional culture, rather than the formal prescriptions laid down in the school curriculum

Soweto High School and Gauteng High School provide sufficient reason to begin discussing the relationship and tensions between epistemological access and physical access. These case studies have revealed differences in the teaching of the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre. Soweto High School used the theme of repression and insurrection, where Africans were represented as victims and the state organs as perpetrators of violence against unarmed victims. Resistance to apartheid was also taught from the perspective of the victims thereby giving them a voice.

On the other hand, Gauteng High School used a text that suppressed the voices of the victims and used a 'headline' approach where the text consisted of a paragraph and a picture for each topic. The teaching at the school also revealed an instance of teacher-proofing the Grade 9 curriculum or 'locking' it in such a way that it allows minimum compliance with the national history curriculum. Even the parts of South African history that are 'let in' remain in the periphery, and when they are taught, it is done at a superficial level.

The institutional culture of both schools provided an enabling environment for the variations in the teaching of the history of resistance to apartheid. The history of the struggle against apartheid at Soweto High School gives this school a reason to

celebrate the new narratives that show them as victors who have contributed to the struggle against apartheid, while the proclaimed English medium non-racial ethos of Gauteng High School shows discomfort with the subject of race, especially its use as an analytical tool. The teaching and the text, are in line with a liberal interpretation of history that blames the ‘racist apartheid government’ as a way of shifting the blame from ordinary white people who had ‘no control’ of the situation. Gauteng High School also has a rich military history as students and teachers participated in the world wars. The emphasis on the world wars is a way of validating their own history.

The second finding of this study is that even when students enjoy physical access to schools, they have highly uneven, even unequal, access to knowledge within those schools.

The two teachers at Gauteng High school covered the same amount of work in the history curriculum, however, the way they interacted with learners was different and their treatment of the film,- “The Dry White Season” through which the Soweto Uprising was taught was different. The first teacher did not brief learners about what the film was about, nor discuss it afterwards, except to say that what the learners had seen was “not very far from the truth”. What the learners thought and what they felt was not explored. The other teacher, however, discussed the film afterwards. Learners were asked to explain how they felt and why they were shocked by what they had seen, which opened the topic for discussion. According to the teacher, many learners had never heard about Soweto and therefore did not make a connection between Soweto and Johannesburg. They had not been shocked by the world wars and the holocaust because that happened overseas and to them death in the wars was academic while the violence of the Soweto Uprising happened here, at home. “It was them” who were involved. Teachers demonstrated an ability of not only accommodating the new narratives, but also in trying to show the victims’ perspective.

The third finding is that despite the awareness and understanding of what good education entails, without physical access, it is difficult for individuals to entertain discussions about epistemological access, which is a higher order form of the

fulfilment of the right to education as the concept of access tends to be hierarchical. Physical access seems to be not different from the first level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

In tracing the evolution of the concept of "access to education" it became clear to me that the meaning of the concept of access to education remained fluid as it was continually shaped and reshaped by context. This means that, depending on the context, people tended to emphasise either physical or epistemological access in their demands for increased access to education. Varying contexts allowed a shift in emphasis in the discourses that were used in the debates for increased access to education for African children and other groups who had been excluded from the type of education reserved for white scholars that were excluded from enjoying education that was reserved for white children.

The shortage of schools under mission education in the 1940's and the low government expenditure on African education gave rise to the *discourse of equalisation*. In this discourse, the disenfranchised argued for equal spending on their education that would upgrade the facilities to the same standard as those used by whites. For example, in 1944, African teachers protested against low salaries and demanded better working conditions, "free universal education and more schools" (Molteno, 1984:84). In the same year Indian teachers also threatened a strike if their salaries were not raised (Molteno, 1984). The shortage of schools made it easier for the National Party government to 'sell' the Bantu Education policy to African parents as this promised some form of mass-based schooling for the urban black youth, who could not be accommodated in the over-stretched mission schools (Kallaway, 1984). The fact that even the ANC leadership took a while to understand what the impact of Bantu Education on African children would be, indicates the eagerness of African parents for mass-based education.

Therefore, the emphasis on physical access in this period is understandable, and is also evident in the metaphor of the "doors of learning and culture" that would be opened to all in a democratic South Africa. The elimination of the "colour bar" that the Freedom Charter mentioned could be interpreted as a demand for racially integrated education institutions or, in the language of the time, the lifting of the

“colour bar” in education and other cultural activities. However, the ANC campaign for the boycott of government schools and for the establishment of alternative schools to provide alternative education from 1955-1956 demonstrates an understanding, at least at leadership level, that access to education goes beyond formal enrolment to the kind of knowledge that learners have access to. But still, parents preferred to send their children to government schools because they provided childcare facilities and some kind of certification for the job market.

The tension between the radicals who wanted their children out of school rather than allow them to be exposed to inappropriate knowledge and those who decided to use the schools for other benefits such as “childcare” and for certification, demonstrate the significance of physical access as the foundation for epistemological access. It indicates that people in deprived or under-resourced conditions do not have the luxury to debate the theory of knowledge and its politics. The school boycott could not be sustained because parents were not ready to talk about the intricacies of epistemological access when their children had no school to attend.

The debate on epistemological access and equality of outcomes assumes that there are sufficient schools and adequate facilities for all children of school-going age. At this point, people begin taking interest in the process of knowledge construction and distribution that takes place within schools and behind the ‘doors of learning’. Muzi articulated the relationship between physical and epistemological access very well when he pointed out that in his village in Mooi River, they focussed on what they could do to assist children in the community to study up to matric (there was one primary school and no high school in the area). They raised funds to get the needy but capable learners to high schools in the neighbouring townships and did not even think about the kind of knowledge that those learners were going to have access to in those schools. Whereas when he was living in Soweto and got involved in the NECC, they had sufficient schools to begin questioning the value and the relevance of knowledge distributed in education institutions that were serving blacks.

The implication is that if the state does not provide adequate education infrastructure to all communities, it becomes difficult to initiate a debate about quality education and standards, when there are learners who have to learn inside mud huts or under

trees. If the President and the Minister of Education are still talking about “ensuring that there are no children learning in mud houses”, is it fair to introduce the debate on epistemological access and discuss the merits and demerits of certain kinds of knowledge under those circumstances? If we say it is not fair, and that we should give the government space to provide basic facilities to poor communities, what happens to the debate on epistemological access? Again, these questions reflect the fluidity and the boundedness of the concept of “access to education” to prevailing contexts. If we wait for the slow pace of education provision, the quality debate will remain in the background, and this is denying epistemological access (access to quality education) to those learners who are already at Soweto High School and Gauteng High School. In my interviews with Nicholas, Muzi and Mazwi, they felt that the quality debate was lagging behind and that it should be brought to the centre of the education rights debate as quality has a direct impact on education output.

The fourth finding is that despite claims that current policies promote increased access to education, it was not possible to detect or find reports of any significant degree of quality outcomes as a result of the implementation of the principle of “equality of access” to education. In some instances increased access to education has not resulted to quality output.

Commenting about the epistemological access in lower grades, Nicholas, who works for a big research organisation, raised concerns about the standard of literacy teaching in primary schools. He states:

Reading and writing components⁴³ of that...are very poor. We're not talking about that (*quality*) and that is the key to access. It starts there. It starts in Grade 1. We're not teaching those kids. We're not giving the system. We are throwing the potential of the country down the drain. I'm going to these schools and I see these things... they want to learn and they are getting let down systematically year after year. They are not getting it. And until we start talking about quality at every level of the schooling system epistemological access systematically through every grade in the schooling ...⁴⁴

⁴³ Referring to the results of systemic evaluation in Grade 3.

⁴⁴ Nicholas was talking about his experiences in his visit to schools.

Muzi, who works for an investment company also felt that the government has only succeeded in the first part of the debate, and that is providing a policy environment that enables formal access to education institutions, be they schools or universities. However, the epistemological part lags behind, as such, unequal access to knowledge denies a certain category of African graduates the right to compete effectively in the job market:

The tragic observation that I have made is that two graduates, one from the University of Zululand, from the University of Venda. If we have got a vacancy that kid is not ready to work for us. It is kids who have gone to Natal University. That is a tragic observation and I asked or I shared that with other people from other companies, that's exactly the same thing. We have a bunch of people with Bcom Degrees from Unibo from whatever. They are qualitatively different. The way they relate to the world and present themselves. They are competing for access into the workplace. There is a vast difference in the capacity of our young black, I am talking pure African students. I am not talking about whites. I am talking comparing African students

At the time that he said this, Muzi worked for a big investment company and had had experience of the variations in the quality of graduates from historically black and historically white universities. Another example of increased physical access to education with disappointing outcomes can be seen from the higher education graduation rates. Statistically in 2001, 61% of headcount enrolments were African, 27% White, 7% Indian and 5% Coloured. However there were serious inequalities in education outcomes, with the 65% success rate among African in undergraduate programmes, compared to 85% success rate among White students at universities. The success rate at technikons was 67% African students and 80% White students.

Mazwi, who now holds a high position in a local government structure, also felt that the debate now should be shifted to quality because the doors are technically open at policy level. He concurs with Muzi's observation about access to knowledge and the quality of output evident in our graduates. He contends that most graduates were not employed because they were unemployable:

...I always say to unemployed graduates, I always say, you know what guys? I don't want to be rude but because we are comrades let me be very frank with you, and probably most of you are unemployed because you are unemployable. And that's the hard reality, and it's not your fault...

All these people who led the struggle against apartheid education agreed that the quality discourse needs attention. They were also unanimous in saying that the prevailing policy environment provides an enabling environment for increased physical access to education institution.

Examining policy and practice at school and classroom level has allowed the juxtaposition of physical and epistemological access and thereby forcing the researcher to take cognisance of various aspects of the access debate. For example, the selection processes, cost of education, availability of teachers who are adequately qualified and the overt and covert curriculum. This fluidity of the concept, moving to and fro, backwards and forwards and sometimes fraught with tension and controversy even among the people from the same political persuasions demonstrates the complexity of the concept and the need to interrogate all the layers of the concept of access to education. A narrow approach to the 'right to education' could defeat the provision of the Constitution. The academic community and government should constantly question whether education institutions are still in line with the vision of the Constitution.

Another significant revelation was that, in spite of the legal and policy framework guaranteeing the "right to education"; principals tended to leave the human right framework to defend institutional interest. Gauteng High School discourages weak learners from seeking enrolment at the school by persuading parents to apply to other schools because Gauteng High School is "not right" for their child. On the other hand, the principal of Soweto High School used language that ignored the 'right to dignity' of parents who could not pay school fees. While encouraging parents who could not afford school fees to pay in kind, allowing the SGB or teachers to decide what work they would do, is diametrically different from encouraging parents to volunteer by doing what they are good at.

9.3 Reflections

On reflecting about my research, it became clear to me that there were discontinuities in the meanings or conceptions of access to education over time and in different social and political contexts.

Thinking back about my conversation with principals, the school policies appeared to be based on human rights principles, while in practice, institutional interests took precedence over the interests of learners. The use of language that persuaded learners to 'exclude themselves' from the school at Gauteng High School and the denial of access to certain types of learners are examples of subtle denial of access to education.

Another realisation was that schools are able to create an illusion of change while maintaining the status quo by means of minimal compliance to government policy. This may be called a 'dislocation' between national policy and school practices. At Gauteng High School, Grade 9 learners did the CTAs to comply with national policy requirements, but also wrote the final examination to 'maintain' standards, while at Soweto High School the history teacher followed the Department of Education textbooks, but displayed ignorance on the theoretical aspects of the new curriculum. As a result, this teacher did not have a micro plan drawn from the year plan of the school.

I asked myself whether it would be easy for a person outside the school to know what happens behind the closed doors of the classroom. How can we reduce or prevent the dislocation between policy and practice? A solution may be by tightening the assessment mechanism for the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) and Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC). This would have the effect of rewarding those who had made a genuine effort to comply with government policy while penalising those who did not. However, the issue of marginalisation cannot be solved through assessment alone. For example, out of 100 marks, 47 were allocated to South African history in the final examination of Gauteng High School. Therefore, with regard to the final examination, South African history was fairly represented, while it was marginalised in teaching and time allocation. The debate on quality should include the appropriateness of what schools are teaching when compared to the national curriculum.

A much bigger question that transcends the two schools is to ask whether equal epistemological access is possible or even desirable. Is it fair to expect two schools in

different social and political contexts, to pay equal attention to the teaching of certain subject content? I would reply that according to the data from the case studies it would not be fair as teachers have different orientations, different networks and different experiences. However, it would be fair to expect teachers in public schools to follow the national curriculum even if there are variations caused by implementing in varying contexts, as official knowledge is taught “within specific kinds of institutions, with their own histories, tensions, political economies, hierarchies, and bureaucratic interests” (Apple, 2003:7). It would also be fair to demand that teachers rise above their history and social circumstances by opening their minds to other forms and facets of knowledge.

If every teacher in every school was allowed to select whatever they liked, regardless of the national curriculum, political power would remain meaningless as teachers could continue “ghetto-ising” some parts of the curriculum to the detriment of all learners. From a pedagogic perspective, over-emphasising any aspect of history is as bad as side-lining South African History, because either way, learners are denied the opportunity to understand and appreciate the experiences of the “other”.

9.4 Implications for further research

There is a need to open dialogue on the concept of access to education in its broadest sense. Currently, we have adopted an instrumentalist approach to the debate of the right to education, that is, to provide an enabling legal framework and take it for granted that access to education has been granted to every one. We continue pretending that we understand what exactly the concept means. We also assume that we all have a common understanding of what the Constitution means by the right to education.

It would be interesting to return to schools and observe the teaching of different historical events by different teachers, even in a different grade.

The Department of Education needs to rise to the challenge and allow dialogue on the effects, both positive and negative, of the instruments/mechanisms that are used to increase access to education, such as entrance requirements in higher education and

pass requirement in the whole system, particularly in the Senior Certificate examination.

It would also be interesting to investigate the concept of ‘dislocation’ between policy and practice, and to explore ways of achieving national policy goals without teacher-proofing policy.

9.5 Final reflections

Writing this dissertation has been a long and thoughtful and sometimes painful process for me. Painful because the more I read about the concept of “access to education”, the more I realised how complex the concept was. Following the journey of the concept sometimes brought hopelessness and despair when I spent weeks at Soweto high School and saw how hopeful learners were. They were convinced that the education they are getting at their school was much better than Bantu Education. They were also confident that they could go to any school they wanted to, and they could offer any subject they wanted to because the messages they get from the media, and politicians indicate that there are no barriers. I could not say to them that it is not as simple as that. I could not say to them that even when you have been admitted at the institution of your choice, that is only the first hurdle. However, they made me realise that the policy and legal framework that promote access to education give people reason to hope, if only we can get epistemological access right.

What I have learned has been written down as findings. However, I must say that one thought returned continually as I continued reading and talking to people, is that the concept of “access to education” appears to be self-explanatory, when in actual fact is very complex. Sometimes we think we are speaking the same language when we talk about access to education, we think we know exactly what others mean, and that they know exactly what we mean. There is a need to raise the level of debate on the concept.

9.6 Conclusion

As a final point, an important question that the reader may ask after reading this dissertation is, how it contributes to new knowledge? The answer is that this dissertation contributes to knowledge by its nuanced exploration of the complexities of access to education as a human right. Most importantly it pushes the boundaries of knowledge pertaining to both physical and epistemological access at the time when each of these are crucial points in the education development agenda.

The case studies give a clear message that we need to think carefully about the concept of access as a human right. Is it realisable? What are the threats? It is only when education leaders know what they are dealing with, that they will be able to minimise threats and create opportunities for the full realisation of the right to education.