

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CURRICULUM, CONFLICT AND CHANGE: EARLY TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I analysed the construction of Afrikaner nationalist memory and identity and its elevation to a hegemonic official narrative in school textbooks. This had two purposes: firstly, to reveal that the nature of identity based conflict provides a context for understanding the post-conflict changes in education policy; and secondly, it helped to uncover the ways in which vernacular histories or counter-memories, strongly linked to particular visions of group identity, arise because of, and in response to, official history in conflict societies.

This second chapter tells how this historical narrative of conflict between the state sponsored official ‘master narrative’ and the counter narratives, with even role reversal, is engaged in the post-conflict curriculum. Specifically, as the new state takes charge of the inherited narrative of conflict, this chapter demonstrates how the state sought to change it, what choices were made about the change in trajectory, who made those choices, and with what consequences. What emerged from the data was that the depth, direction and pace of curriculum change were conditioned by the terms that settled the conflict and the tacit understanding of compromise that resulted from the political negotiations - an understanding of careful, gradual curriculum change that would not work against the spirit of reconciliation by breaking too radically with the curriculum inherited from the apartheid state. This had implications for the ‘curriculum cleansing’ process of 1995 and the construction of the first post-conflict curriculum in 1996, Curriculum 2005. In the first process, the Afrikaner nationalist interpretation of the past was not fully challenged in the curriculum; in the second, history education disappeared from the formal school curriculum. The process of constructing a new memory and identity for the post-conflict state was instead constructed through an alternative process, the very public hearings of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission. These literally drew upon a wealth of subjugated knowledges in the form of the testimonies it received.

At the most basic level the memory choice for a country emerging from mass violence is between remembering and forgetting with the central critical question being *what should be done with the knowledge of the horrors of the past*.<sup>1</sup> The choices become complicated when the post-conflict society is one in which victims and perpetrators, however defined and identified, have to find a way of continuing to work and live together in a fragile political context.

The politics of negotiation and the continuing employment of apartheid education bureaucrats at national and provincial levels meant that the school curriculum, particularly the ‘cleansing’ process, would be a contested process at all levels. In the construction of Curriculum 2005, the emergence of a strong policy network through which the ANC could work, produced the knowledge and policy position for the changing education system, that avoided engaging with the past and focused on the skills and knowledge needed for a modern economy.<sup>2</sup> The concept of policy networks is particularly useful for attempting to understand the curriculum trajectories of a post-conflict state, particularly taking into account not only the ‘actors of politics’ but also the ‘politics of the actors’:

in other words to the semantic struggles and discursive contexts which define who counts as an actor in a specific setting, and who does not, which institutions are legitimised and authorized to take part in the shaping or implementation of policy-making, and which are not.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This was a question raised by Bernhard Schlink (1998) in his book *The Reader* London: Phoenix: 102 ‘At the same time I ask myself, as I had already begun to ask myself back then: What should our second generation have done, what should it do with the knowledge of the horrors of the extermination of the Jews?’

<sup>2</sup> Fataar, A. (2006) Policy networks in recalibrated political terrain: the case of school curriculum policy and politics in South Africa. *Journal of Education Policy* vol. 21, No. 6: 641-659

<sup>3</sup> Gottweiss (2003): 254 quoted in Fataar (2006): 644

### **Amending the conflict narrative: 1994 - 1995**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994 South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation of God'<sup>4</sup> voted in what became thought of as the miracle elections that were conducted in peace and in a countrywide, overwhelming sense of goodwill between South Africans. A negotiated power-sharing deal<sup>5</sup> resulted in a Government of National Unity (GNU) with Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first democratically elected president was set up after the elections to manage the transition years. Rather than a miracle, the negotiated settlement reached in 1994 had been hard won, with compromises from both the apartheid government and the liberation movements, particularly the African National Congress (ANC) as the largest of the movements. The negotiation process enabled a 'peaceful'<sup>6</sup> transfer of political power and the new government, in contrast to its predecessor, was widely considered to be legitimate.<sup>7</sup>

What was still not clear in 1994 was what kind of collective memory and identity would define the re-imagined 'nation' as it emerged from a divisive and traumatic past. Bundy maintains that in post-apartheid South Africa, the 'primary enquiry remains the National Question.'<sup>8</sup> He asks a number of pertinent questions: What is the apartheid nation? Who belongs or is excluded and on what basis? How does a national identity transcend the particularities of ethnicity and race? While the ANC assumed a broad and inclusive approach to 'We the People', enshrined in the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955, not all South Africans identified themselves with this as was evidenced by the separatist claims during the negotiations of the Afrikaner Right and the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party.<sup>9</sup> Bundy further suggests that attempts 'to

---

<sup>4</sup> This is a phrase that was particularly associated with the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and taken up by President Nelson Mandela.

<sup>5</sup> Sparks, A. (1994) *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution* Cape Town: Struik Book Distributors provides an in-depth analysis of the period of transition.

<sup>6</sup> While the elections in 1994 went off peacefully, the four years during which the negotiations were taking place saw extreme violence.

<sup>7</sup> Pillay, S. (2004) *The Radical Imagination of Peace*, a paper presented to the Second International symposium on Peace Processes in Africa: an experience for Colombia, in Bogotá, D.C., Colombia, November 8-9 2004

<sup>8</sup> Bundy, C. (2007) *New Nation. New History?* in Stolten, E. (2007) *History Making and Present Day Politics* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet:79

<sup>9</sup> Bundy (2007): 83

imagine the nation in post-apartheid South Africa has been heavily freighted with the burden of race.’<sup>10</sup>

So rather than a people with a cohesive national identity the Government of National Unity inherited a traumatised country of racial inequality, racialised identities and deeply ingrained attitudes of superiority and inferiority; a country in which privilege and power had been racialised,<sup>11</sup> and in which there was a broad array of competing subjugated knowledges, each jostling for position, and even primacy, in the official sanitised version of the nation’s past in an emerging new master narrative. The country had been divided geographically into a number of ‘homelands’ for the various ‘tribes’ which were intended to become independent, as well as segregated living areas for those who remained in the towns and cities. The education system had been severely fragmented, divided into 18 different education departments, some located in the ‘homeland’ areas, others controlling white education in the various provinces and still others controlling education for ‘race’ groups nationally.<sup>12</sup> Each of these departments had its own inherited traditions and particular identities grounded in the socio-cultural contexts in which the departments were based. Because of this fragmentation when, in 1995, these ex-departments were amalgamated to become one national and nine provincial education departments, each provincial department had its own inherited memories and distinctive identity.

While all apartheid education departments had been ultimately controlled by white Afrikaners who had occupied the top management positions, the capacity of the ordinary officials differed widely. Not only that, but in setting up the 9 provincial departments, some provinces inherited relatively efficient infrastructure and systems, while others had no infrastructure and little expertise from which to draw. The

---

<sup>10</sup> Bundy (2007): 79

<sup>11</sup> Mamdani, M. (1998) *In their own voices: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, in (2000) *Beyond Racism: Embracing an interdependent future*, Atlanta: The Southern Education Foundation. See also Ramphela, M. (2008) *Laying Ghosts to Rest: Dilemmas of the transformation in South Africa* Cape Town: Tafelberg. Ramphela talks of the ‘stubborn ghosts’ of the past.

<sup>12</sup> For example, education for black South Africans within the white area of South Africa was nationally controlled. Apart from the homelands South Africa had four provinces each of which had control of education in their own province aligned to the white national Department of Education.

continued fragmented and unequal state of the education departments makes it extremely difficult to generalise about education in South Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Education in apartheid South Africa had been highly politicised, not only in its reflection of the Afrikaner nationalist *zeitgeist*, but in black resistance to an inferior system of education imposed on them. From the creation of Bantu Education in 1953, it had been the arena of fierce resistance to apartheid, particularly after the Soweto uprising of 1976. In the mass action of the mid-1980s, schools became sites of youth struggle against the apartheid regime. With such a legacy and the urgent need to make education decisions about what to do with the traumatic knowledge, the choice of the first Minister of Education, the little known Sibusisu Bengu, was puzzling. As a returning exile, it has been argued that he was out of touch with the education policy debates of the early 1990s and with conditions in schools.<sup>14</sup> To many, impatient for change, he appeared to be unable to take the initiative in launching educational change. However, perhaps his appointment should rather be assessed in the context of the need for a stable transfer of power, and policies that would ensure a smooth transition as much as they would address social transformation.<sup>15</sup> The political settlement had provided for power sharing for a number of years which in turn guaranteed apartheid bureaucrats job security for five years.<sup>16</sup> Fataar has argued that this compromise ensconced a conservative hold over the bureaucracy that curtailed

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, my particular [insider] perspective is as a curriculum planner from the Western Cape. Of all provinces the Western Cape was the only one to retain a National Party majority in the provincial elections in 1994. During apartheid the Western Cape had been a 'Coloured preferential area' of employment. With the amalgamation of education departments, the dominant institutional culture was derived from the ex-Coloured department (the House of Representatives) which had been male and authoritarian and heavily influenced by the top management being white Afrikaner males. The Western Cape was majority Afrikaans-speaking, but with the high population movement into the province from the Eastern Cape, this is changing, as is the racial profile. It is a relatively well-resourced province with more urban than rural schools, so although we have some isolated rural schools, the province does not have, what in education jargon are known as 'deep' rural areas. While I have been involved in national processes of curriculum development, my perceptions are inevitably framed by my knowledge of the Western Cape.

<sup>14</sup> Ramphele (2008): 157

<sup>15</sup> The fragility of the new democracy was recognised by Blade Nzimande who noted that the situation was explosive and that South Africa was on the brink of civil war. Policies were therefore crafted in a context where ensuring a smooth transition was as important as developing policies for social transformation. Quoted in Christie, P. (2008) *Changing Schools in South Africa: Opening the Doors of Learning*. Cape Town: Heinemann: 157

<sup>16</sup> See Sparks, A. (1994) *Tomorrow is another country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution* Cape Town: Struik Book Distributors. Sparks provides an indepth analysis of the transition.

the power of the Minister of Education and delayed policy revision.<sup>17</sup> However, with hindsight, the political context made an immediate radical revision of the apartheid syllabi difficult.

The extent of the fragility of the political stability in South Africa immediately after 1994, and therefore the tacit understanding that compromise was necessary in education policy, did not appear to be widely appreciated beyond the ANC in government. There was pressure from outside of parliamentary and formal education structures for immediate, and in the case of history, radical, revision of apartheid syllabi. Late in 1994, in the absence of any visible moves by the Minister of Education to undertake education reform, the National Education and Training Forum (NETF)<sup>18</sup> which had been set up as a broad stakeholder forum in 1992, approached Minister Bengu to provide political support for short-term syllabus revisions as the establishment of a long-term curriculum framework was expected to take at least two years.<sup>19</sup> The broad goal of the syllabus revision that ensued was to remove the most glaring racist, sexist and outdated content inherited from the apartheid syllabi.<sup>20</sup> While most post-conflict states attempt to remove offensive content from the history curriculum, the majority do this by focussing on the textbooks. South Africa attempted a ‘cleansing process’ of curriculum without changing textbooks, which had particular implications for the continued dominance of the conflict narrative in history education.

The revision process was significantly different from the more secretive apartheid curriculum development processes carried out behind closed doors without any public scrutiny by the apartheid regime’s curriculum ‘experts’. Responding to the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) calls to democratise curriculum processes, the

---

<sup>17</sup> Fataar (2006): 645

<sup>18</sup> The NETF was set up in 1992 in response to pressure to address the education crisis in a broad stakeholder forum. The NETF included representatives of the apartheid government and extra-parliamentary organizations.

<sup>19</sup> Jansen, J. (1998) ‘Essential Alterations’? A Critical Analysis of the State’s Syllabus Revision Process. *Perspectives in Education* Vol. 17. Issue 2: 2. See also Jansen (1999c): 56-67

<sup>20</sup> Jansen, J. (2000) Rethinking Education Policy Making in South Africa: Symbols of Change, Signals of Conflict in Kraak, A. & Young, M. (n.d.) *Education in Retrospect: Policy and Implementation Since 1990* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council & London: Institute of Education, University of London: 43

various sub-committees that were set up were constituted around stakeholder representation. This revealed both strengths and weaknesses. The committees consisted of representatives of various teacher and student unions, and representatives from the Committee of Heads of Education Departments. While this did indeed open the process to a wide range of influences and also public scrutiny, stakeholder representation meant that the subject committees might not necessarily include subject experts. The committees also included inherited and emergent interests which in the case of history, led to a number of critical contestations. A further departure was the invitation from the Minister for public participation in the process. The cleansing process had huge symbolic value, demonstrating in the interregnum, in which political manoeuvring was constrained by the politics of compromise, how values like participation, could drive curriculum reform. However it was questionable whether this could be sustained into a new bureaucracy.

The History sub-committee reflected the political compromise as well as the ‘democratisation’ of curriculum processes: it consisted of a national departmental official who had served on apartheid-era syllabus committees as well as five representatives of teacher organisations, a high school and a university student. However, there were no academics and no representatives of professional history bodies or history teaching associations.<sup>21</sup> This meant that there was no continuity with the 1992 conferences and 1993 colloquia, and history teachers were left out of the process. As history teachers they did not fit into a ‘constituency’ that could be recognised as a stakeholder, nor were they organised regionally or nationally as a history educator body; there was no clear place, therefore no collective voice, for them in a stakeholder forum.<sup>22</sup>

The History sub-committee brought together competing interests between the former apartheid bureaucrats and those aligned to the transforming state promoted by the

---

<sup>21</sup> Lowry, Stephen (1995) ‘A review of the history curriculum process’ in Reid, J. & Siebörger, R., *Proceedings of the Workshop on School History Textbook Writing From Principles... to Practice*. Cape Town: Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), University of Cape Town, quoted in Siebörger, R. (2001): 2

<sup>22</sup> There was a Society for History Teaching but at that time it was an organisation of Afrikaner Nationalist historians and was not specifically a teacher organisation.

Mandela government. The most experienced person on the sub-committee in terms of curriculum processes was the former apartheid Department of National Education official, absorbed into the new national Department of Education (DoE).<sup>23</sup> He acted as secretary, a position which was to prove critical to maintaining influence over the revision process. His position on the sub-committee generated resentment among some participants and moves were made within the committee to ‘ensure that the secretary did not exercise an undue influence on the proceedings’.<sup>24</sup> As such, and understandably, he was seen as a potential medium for transmitting the very messages and embedding apartheid ideology in new policies that would give the new state its *raison d’etre*. In this very early stage of transition, the inherited apartheid era bureaucrats were still able to exercise significant influence through their control of agendas, the relevant documentation and protocols, and their verbal and literary skills and dexterity.

The Minister’s brief to the working sub-committees was:

- the evaluation of existing core syllabuses with regard to inaccuracies resulting, *inter alia*, from the new constitutional dispensation, as well as outdated and contentious content;
- recommendations regarding the adaptation of the above-mentioned syllabuses in the interim period until a fully revised school curriculum is implemented;
- recommendations with regard to the possible consolidation of core syllabuses in cases where more than one core syllabus per subject is currently in use;
- recommendations resulting from the evaluation/consolidation of the syllabuses, with regard to textbooks, bearing in mind the proviso that amendments shall not necessitate new textbooks;
- possible implications resulting from the syllabus proposals, with regard to the evaluation/examination of learners;

---

<sup>23</sup> Louis Kriel. He is still with the national Department of Education and was active in the most recent Further Education and Training curriculum writing processes.

<sup>24</sup> Report of history committee quoted in Jansen (1999c): 57-67



- recommendations regarding the preparation of support material in the case of syllabuses which have to be amended.<sup>25</sup>

The History sub-committee received many more submissions than any other subject,<sup>26</sup> indicating a rejection of the Afrikaner Nationalist interpretation dominant in the textbooks, as well as the extent of the interest in the construction of new history and identity that is, its major, even dominant role, in the emergent new nationalism that would underpin political and social harmony. At this point, the History Education Group still hoped that the way was open for them to exercise some influence on the syllabus revisions in terms of both content and the skills and processes that History could support in educating pupils for citizenship in a liberal, plural democracy and sent in a submission. However, the Minister's brief was narrowly interpreted by the ex-apartheid officials on the History sub-committee, effectively ensuring that there would be little change in what was taught in history classrooms in the new South Africa.<sup>27</sup> Because of the narrow interpretation, many of the proposals received by the history sub-committee were regarded as falling outside of the Minister's brief because they dealt with longer term issues, and were therefore ignored.<sup>28</sup>

The major problem encountered in the history education revision process was the ministerial directive that the revisions were not to necessitate new textbooks. As it was the textbooks approved for school use during apartheid, rather than the history syllabus itself, that contained the Afrikaner nationalist perspective, distorted history and offensive stereotypes, not allowing new textbooks effectively nullified any meaningful revisions that might have been made to the syllabus itself. The process of

---

<sup>25</sup> Brief from the letter of appointment sent to all participants by the Director General of the Department of Education dated 6 September 1994 quoted in Lowry (1995):2

<sup>26</sup> There were about a 100 submissions. Lowry, S (1995) '*A Review of the history curriculum process*', Paper delivered at a workshop on 'School History Textbook Writing – from Principles to Practice, Cape Town; See also Siebörger (2001)

<sup>27</sup> Record of a public meeting held on 30 July 1995 at the Education Building of the University of Cape Town to discuss the History Curriculum process. The author attended the meeting at the record was circulated after the meeting to those who had attended. There was a question and answer session with Stephen Lowry after he presented his paper, *A Review of the history curriculum process*, and with John Samuel from the national Department of Education.

<sup>28</sup> Lowry (1995) '*A Review of the history curriculum process*'. A paper delivered at a workshop on 'School History Textbook Writing – from Principles to Practice, Cape Town.; See also Siebörger (2001)

aligning the various versions of the core syllabus brought further challenges that were eventually resolved by a compromise. Underpinning the debate were often deeply held implicit beliefs about the power of narratives that school education reinforced. During the apartheid era, only the syllabuses used in white, coloured and Indian education included South African history after 1948. The syllabus for use in black schools ended with the National Party victory of 1948. As a compromise, and after strong protests to the national Department of Education, apartheid and resistance was included in the final version of the revised syllabus, ending in 1976. However, the section was made optional because of the lack of new textbooks. Supplementary resources were, in fact, developed by the History Syllabus Committee for the interim syllabus, but there was strong resistance from the progressive history education community to their dissemination to schools, as the materials once reviewed were considered to be ‘quite useless and probably even harmful...since these simply perpetuate the old ideological and pedagogical baggage’.<sup>29</sup> Without money to access appropriate resources, black pupils were again denied a history, and teachers in well-resourced white schools could choose to focus entirely on Afrikaner political history as in the past, and avoid engaging with the immediate apartheid past.

The revision process had opened the way for the continued legitimacy of the Afrikaner nationalist interpretation in history education. Apart from the addition of apartheid and resistance which was new to all ex-education departments, the interim history syllabus was essentially that of the existing core syllabus used in white schools. As a result, one of the most offensive textbooks within former white education continued to be in great demand by schools from the former black education departments, as it was perceived to be the key to successful examination results in Grade 12.<sup>30</sup> The last year of Grade 12 pupils to be examined on this syllabus was 2007. The table below indicates the alignment of the syllabi:<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Press Statement issued by the Workshop on School History Textbook Writing, Cape Town, 30 July 1995. Copy sent to all participants.

<sup>30</sup> At least that was what we experienced in the Western Cape when the Subject Advisers visited schools. The book was Lintvelt, et. al. *Timelines* quoted in the previous chapter

<sup>31</sup> Lintvelt, H.G.J. et al. (1987) *Timelines 10* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (white education); Malan, S. F. et al (1987) *New History to the Point* Johannesburg: Educum Publishers (black education); Seleti, Y. et al. (1999) *Looking into the Past* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (interim syllabus).

SA history in white schools pre-1995	SA history in black schools – pre-1995	1995 interim syllabus
<p><b>SA 1910 – 1924</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main features of SA society in 1910</li> <li>• Political development</li> <li>• Economic and social development</li> <li>• The First World War</li> <li>• The Smuts Government</li> </ul>	<p><b>SA 1910 – 1924</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main features of SA society in 1910</li> <li>• Political parties and their policies</li> <li>• Economic and social development</li> <li>• The First World War</li> <li>• The Smuts government</li> </ul>	<p><b>SA 1910 – 1924</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main features of SA society in 1910</li> <li>• Political development</li> <li>• Economic and social development</li> <li>• The First World War</li> <li>• The Smuts Government</li> </ul>
<p><b>SA 1924 – 1948</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pact government</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Coalition, fusion and split</li> <li>• Participation in the Second World War</li> <li>• South Africa as a member of the UNO and the SWA issue</li> <li>• Political parties during and after the Second World War</li> <li>• The 1948 election and the fall of the Smuts government</li> </ul>	<p><b>SA 1929 – 1948</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Pact Government</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• The rule of the United South African Party 1933-1938 (Coalition, fusion and split)</li> <li>• South Africa and the Second World War</li> <li>• Smuts’ premiership in the post-war years</li> <li>• The election of 1948 and the fall of the Smuts Government</li> </ul>	<p><b>SA 1924 – 1948</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pact government: segregation</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Coalition, fusion and split</li> <li>• Participation in the Second World War</li> <li>• Effects on the Second World War on SA politics</li> <li>• The 1948 election and the fall of the Smuts government</li> </ul>
<p><b>SA 1948 – 1970</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political development and the founding of the Republic</li> <li>• Policy on race relations and the reaction to this</li> <li>• Economic development and social change 1948 to 1970</li> <li>• South Africa’s foreign policy</li> </ul>		<p><b>S A 1948 – 1994</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The move towards and establishment of a Republic, 1948 – 1961</li> <li>• The policy of apartheid and initial resistance 1949 - 1960</li> <li>• Apartheid and resistance 1960 - 1975</li> <li>• SA foreign policy and growth of international opposition to apartheid</li> <li>• SA 1976 – 1994: the coming of democracy.</li> </ul>

The interim syllabuses were to go through a further process – that of ‘provincialisation’ by the various provincial Departments of Education – which served as yet another political filter. In the Western Cape where the education department was still largely controlled by old apartheid bureaucrats, the provincial

---

By this time SA 1910 – 24 had been phased out so this book had omitted it although it was in the interim syllabus.

history committee was made up mostly of male officials from the ex-departments.<sup>32</sup> Within the committee the political legitimacy was with the Chair who was a SADTU representative. However, the white Afrikaner contingent closed ranks when challenges to the Afrikaner nationalist narrative emerged from the group. During the early transition, authority in the Western Cape Education Department was still vested in the old bureaucracy who refused to allow a History Committee newsletter to be sent to history teachers, because attention was drawn to the Afrikaner nationalist myths around the Great Trek in an article on how to use the ‘old’ history textbooks in the classroom.<sup>33</sup>

The History syllabus revision process revealed the strengths and weaknesses of democratising curriculum revision during transition periods when the agents of the previous regime could effectively subvert change. While the process did indeed open up debate and widen participation, the need to use the experience of the old apartheid bureaucracy, particularly at national level, provided space for the continued promotion of old interests though in less overt, but potentially influential ways. In the case of the history syllabus, the result was that the old bureaucracy ‘spiked any really new approach to the syllabus’ suggested by the committee.<sup>34</sup> Because of minimal revisions to the history syllabus in 1994 a further generation of pupils would continue to be exposed to the attitudes and values of Afrikaner nationalist history that had supported the apartheid state.

---

<sup>32</sup> The Western Cape Interim Syllabus Committee included Jean September (SADTU – Chair), Rob Siebörger (Tertiary Institutions), Charlie Haupt (ex-HOR), Edward Smuts (ex-HOR), Jurie Joubert (ex-DET), Floris Smit (ex-CED), Joop Joubert (ex-CED College of Education), Anton Hendricks (SAOU), Xolani Sonaba (SADTU), Gail Weldon (Independent Schools Association).

<sup>33</sup> Jansen (1999). The extent to which departmental officials would go to retain control over the Afrikaner nationalist narrative occurred during the provincialisation of the interim curriculum in the Western Cape in 1995. In an attempt to minimise the impact of not having new history material, I was asked by the Chairperson of the WC Interim Syllabus Committee to write an article on how to use the old history textbooks in schools for a newsletter that would be sent to schools. The article referred to Afrikaner nationalist ‘myths’ such as that of the ‘empty land’ in the textbooks that had served to legitimise white occupation of the interior of southern Africa in the mid-1850s. When the newsletter was submitted to the Western Cape Education Department for printing there was a violent reaction. The committee was confronted by a group of Afrikaans officials and I was accused of undermining Afrikaners. There was a clear inability to distinguish between white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and an Afrikaner nationalist interpretation of history. The WCED refused to send the newsletter to schools – to the white, Afrikaner males of the old bureaucracy, a criticism of the national narrative was perceived to be an attack on them.

<sup>34</sup> Lowry (1995) Lowry identified this as the heart of the conflict that developed within the history sub-committee.

Two trends emerged from the revision process that would have implications for education policy construction in the coming years: the stakeholder process already discussed; and the location of curriculum revision within the national Department of Education. While the stakeholder representation on the interim subject committees had broadened the process in a way that made it more legitimate, it had also to an extent legitimised ‘state-led curriculum initiatives, given the broad base of participation in the committees’<sup>35</sup> and through this, legitimised the control over curriculum processes of the bureaucrats of the old order.<sup>36</sup> The principle of stakeholder representation in curriculum development would become a feature of the next curriculum revision.

The compromised process of curriculum change during the early transition set a precedent for subsequent reform of history education. During the 1994 revision process, the strength of experience lay with the apartheid era bureaucrats rather than with the newly politically appointed officials. The senior bureaucrats inherited from the apartheid Department of National Education retained final editorship of the documents, contributing to the narrow technical and limited interpretation of the Minister’s brief.<sup>37</sup> The continuing power of the old bureaucracy to influence the curriculum processes from within, was demonstrated when the recommendations of the History sub-committee for the interim history syllabus were mysteriously changed at Departmental level before publication. This was done without any consultation with the History sub-committee.<sup>38</sup> After understandably strong protest from the sub-committee and threat of legal action, the document was withdrawn for reconsideration. These dynamics were to change with a number of new appointments in key top positions in the national department of education.

---

<sup>35</sup> Jansen, J. (1999c) The school curriculum since apartheid: intersections of politics and policy in the South African transition, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 31, Issue 2: 57-67

<sup>36</sup> Lowry (1995)

<sup>37</sup> Jansen (1999c): 57-67

<sup>38</sup> Lowry (1995)

The experience of the History sub-committee provides an interesting insight into the way in which the inherited bureaucracy was able to influence the process. The report of the chairperson of the History sub-committee, Stephen Lowry and the record of the proceedings of a public meeting to discuss the draft interim syllabus, indicate a lack of time, as most of the committee were full-time teachers, and capacity, a gap seized on by the full-time bureaucracy. It was indicated that the officials interpreted the brief narrowly partly to exclude the public submissions, as the narrow interpretation had come after the History sub-committee had presented a 40 page document to Interim Committee of Heads of Education. It was at this point that the officials took control of the document and redrafted it in terms of their understanding of the brief.<sup>39</sup> In the view of a new political appointee at the national Department of Education, John Samuel, the NETF had been focussed on short term changes and making proposals on how the curriculum development process could be managed, and did not recognise the power gap created in the Department of Education soon after the establishment of the Government of National Unity. They had therefore failed to take up the challenge in the post-May 1994 period to place the issue of curriculum development firmly on the national agenda.<sup>40</sup>

The struggles around the interim history syllabus were a reflection of the politics of transition. The nature of the revision process as the result of political negotiation and compromise was explicitly acknowledged by the Chairman of the History Sub-committee at a public meeting in Cape Town in July 1995.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Neville Alexander while strongly criticising the interim history syllabus that had been put out for comment, and calling for an independent curriculum development unit of experts, clearly understood the political dynamics in operation. He noted that:

Curriculum was fundamentally a political issue and that the nature of the compromise settlement in the country necessarily impacted both upon the curriculum itself and the way it developed...While the

---

<sup>39</sup> Response by Lowry to a question. Record of the public meeting, 30 July 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Record of the presentation by John Samuel to the public meeting, 30 July 1995.

<sup>41</sup> *Record of the public meeting held on Sunday, 30 July 1995, at the Education building of the University of Cape Town to discuss the History curriculum process.* This document was distributed to all those who had attended the meeting. Stephen Lowry was Chairperson of the History Sub-committee.

government could not abdicate its responsibility, it could also not monopolize the curriculum debate.<sup>42</sup>

The aspirations of those within the history education community demanding radical change were frustrated as a result of the political context which could not allow a conflict of memories. While the History sub-committee was able to win a skirmish in reversing the unilateral changes made by the Department of Education official, it was not able to win the battle, as ultimately new political appointees in top positions at the Department of Education did not support the calls for radical changes to the history syllabus. As John Samuel stated at the public meeting, the process of curriculum development needed to be developmental, as a phasing-in process was not only desirable but politically expedient. He further did not support the call for a national conference to discuss the history syllabus as ‘it was time to go forward, to have a plan of action and take responsibility, collectively, for future developments’.<sup>43</sup> The meeting did, however, make a final appeal in a letter to the Director General of Education, calling for a public debate about history before a new curriculum is put in place.<sup>44</sup>

### **Curriculum 2005 and the denial of memory in history education**

By 1996 it had become increasingly imperative to the ANC in government to have a new curriculum in place before the next general election in 1999 as the government had to be seen to be delivering on its promises in education.<sup>45</sup> A new curriculum was needed that would bring about the realisation of a new society and promote the unity and the common citizenship and destiny of all South Africans irrespective of race, class, gender or ethnic background.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> *Record of a public meeting*, 30 July 1995. Copy sent to all participants.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>44</sup> Letter to the Director General, 7 August 1995. A copy was sent to all who had attended the public meeting.

<sup>45</sup> Siebörger, R. (1997) *How the outcomes came out. A personal account of and reflections on the initial process of development of Curriculum 2005*. A paper delivered at Kenton-at-the-Gap Conference, Hermanus, 21 October-1 November: 1

<sup>46</sup> ANC Education Department, 1994

Recognising that education policy was a crucial signifier of the re-imagined nation in a post-conflict society, several key new education policies, deriving their values from the South African Constitution had been put in place by mid-1996. One of the first was the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 which aimed to provide a generic document that framed the core values and vision of the new government and which symbolised the consolidation of political power of the ANC through the education policy process.<sup>47</sup> In it the stated goal of post-apartheid education was the promotion of a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society with well-informed and critical citizens.<sup>48</sup> What was now urgently needed was a new curriculum that would give expression to these policies and that would be able to deliver both democratic and effective economic citizens. Significantly, the education discourses did not at any time engage with locating the new South Africa within an understanding and consciousness of the past, in order to strengthen democracy for the present and future. Neither did the first post-apartheid education framework policy that was introduced in 1996.

In July 1996, a draft *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training*<sup>49</sup>, for the development of a new curriculum, was published. Unlike the Constitution and other new education policy documents, it did not take the past as a point of departure. Its discourse was that of the economic nation with the focus on the present and future. The critical skills were considered to be those most needed for citizens in successful modern economies – for commerce and industry. It also included the need to promote the development of a national identity and an awareness of South Africa's role and responsibility with regard to Africa and the rest of the world – but these were economic roles and responsibilities. It was soon very clear that national identity was not to be located in an understanding of our past, but in the recognition of our diverse society, multilingualism, co-operation, civic responsibility

---

<sup>47</sup> Jansen, J.D. (2000a) Rethinking Education Policy Making in South Africa: Symbols of Change, Signals of Conflict in Kraak, A. & Young, M. (n.d.) *Education in Retrospect: Policy and Implementation Since 1990* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council & London: Institute of Education, University of London: 43 – original emphasis

<sup>48</sup> Department of Education (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training*

<sup>49</sup> DoE (1996b) *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training*, amended document revised by the Curriculum Development Working Group of the NCDC (July)



and the ability to participate in all aspects of society and an understanding of the national, provincial, local and regional development needs in the present.<sup>50</sup> This document provided the framework for the development of the first post-apartheid curriculum which became known as Curriculum 2005.

The curriculum development process was unwieldy and rushed, and resulted in a highly complicated ‘transformational’ outcomes-based education (OBE) that was adopted as policy (Curriculum 2005) in March 1997. From the beginning an unfortunate trend emerged with the identification of Curriculum 2005 with patriotism towards the new state. It was introduced to the people of South Africa with appropriate publicity, in itself a rite of passage, to signal the change from the old to the new era:

the introduction of OBE as curriculum policy was consummated in a dramatic public relations display in March 1997 when the Minister of Education officially launched Curriculum 2005 (read: ‘outcomes-based education’) in Cape Town with the equivalent number of balloons in the colours of the recently adopted national flag: curriculum and patriotism were firmly linked.<sup>51</sup>

Linking the new curriculum and patriotism undermined any critical engagement with Curriculum 2005 among officials within the provincial education departments and contributed to many curriculum officials adopting an autocratic and authoritarian approach to teachers during the provincial advocacy programmes if there was any hint of teachers wanting to engage in critical discourse.<sup>52</sup> This was particularly prevalent among newly appointed education officials, who had formerly participated in the struggle against apartheid. It was deeply insidious, undermining the very democratisation of South Africa by casting implementation in the mould of totalitarianism.

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid: 14

<sup>51</sup> Jansen, J.D. (1999a) Setting the Scene: Historiographies of Curriculum Policy in South Africa, in Jansen, J. & Christie, P. (eds) (1999) *Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-based Education in South Africa* Cape Town: Juta & Co: 10

<sup>52</sup> Information about the implementation of C2005 comes largely from my personal involvement in it. I was appointed to the Western Cape Education Department in 1997. I never ceased to be fascinated at the way in which former ‘struggle veterans’ became authoritarian when dealing with teachers.

Curriculum 2005 clearly signalled the transition to a state that had broken with the apartheid past. The introduction to the curriculum policy documents contained a vision of the ‘new’ South African citizens who would be able to build social cohesion, support democracy and contribute to an economically prosperous country and set this ideal citizen against apartheid racist ideology:

In the past the curriculum has perpetuated race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and has emphasised separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood. It is therefore imperative that the curriculum be restructured to reflect the values and principles of our new democratic society...[supporting the] following vision for South Africa: ‘A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice.’<sup>53</sup>

However, the new outcomes-based curriculum was complicated and the language impenetrable for those unaccustomed to the academic discourse of curriculum studies, that is, the vast majority of teachers and others involved in implementation. It was characterised by the ‘radical’ integration of knowledge within eight learning areas that took the place of subjects. Across the curriculum there were 66 Specific Outcomes, hundreds of Assessment Criteria as well as Range Statements.<sup>54</sup> History and Geography were subsumed into Human and Social Sciences (HSS) where they did not appear in any recognisable form, mostly mutating into democracy and citizenship education and environment. The three organising principles of HSS which were meant to be used for integration, were Social Processes and Organisation; Environment, Resources, Development; Citizenship and Civics. The design features of Curriculum 2005 were far too complicated to be made sense of by the majority of teachers and curriculum advisers who were given the task of introducing Curriculum 2005 to the teachers. This contributed to the authoritarian approach of curriculum officials as

---

<sup>53</sup> Department of Education (1997) *Intermediate Phase Policy Document* (DoE, Pretoria):1

<sup>54</sup> Department of Education (1997) *Curriculum 2005*

there was a deep sense of insecurity in relation to the new curriculum. Curriculum officials were quite simply out of their depth and were having to respond to questions that they could not answer. The easiest response was to retreat into a form of authoritarianism that understandably drew upon apartheid era precedents and practices.<sup>55</sup>

The reason for the complexity probably lay in the overtly political nature of Curriculum 2005 as symbolic of the new state. Jansen makes a strong argument for the making of Curriculum 2005 as part of the ‘struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism’ that would signal the shift from apartheid to a post-apartheid society.<sup>56</sup> He argues that policy making during this period demonstrated ‘the preoccupation of the state with settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in the realm of practice’ and that Curriculum 2005 was symbolic rather than a policy that was intended to be implemented.<sup>57</sup> The then Deputy Director General in the national Department of Education, Ihron Rensburg, concurred when he characterised 1994 to 1999 as a period marked by ‘symbolic change statements and announcements to signal the transition to a new order while managing the fears of national minorities’.<sup>58</sup> Curriculum 2005, he claimed, had its ‘theoretical and epistemological roots within the anti-apartheid and national liberation struggle, rather than in the emerging state though it was legitimated by it. It was the ‘flagship post-apartheid outcomes-based curriculum transformation programme’.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Personal experience and observation of and discussion with colleagues over the years of attempted implementation. As a provincial Human and Social Sciences group we actually set out to subvert the new curriculum in attempting to make sense of HSS through reorganising the specific outcomes to as far as possible, provide history, geography and civic education foci.

<sup>56</sup> Jansen (2000a) Rethinking Education Policy Making in South Africa: symbols of Change, Signals of conflict, in Kraak, A. & Young, M. (n.d.):46; Jansen, J.D. (2002) Political symbolism as policy craft: explaining non-reform in South African education after apartheid in *Journal of Education Policy* Vol. 17, No. 2: 200

<sup>57</sup> Jansen, J.D. (2002) Political symbolism as policy craft: explaining non-reform in South African education after apartheid in *Journal of Education Policy* Vol. 17, No. 2: 201

<sup>58</sup> Rensburg, I. (2000) Reflections from the Inside: Key Policy Assumptions and How They Have Shaped Policy Making and Implementation in South Africa, 1994-2000, Kraak, A & Young, M (n.d.): 121

<sup>59</sup> Rensburg (2000): 122. Critics have pointed to the conceptual confusion of C2005, drawing as it did on both the competency debates and the popular rhetoric of People’s Education. It has been suggested that the radical rhetoric of People’s Education provided an essential legitimacy to a curriculum that is otherwise highly technicist and conservative. See for example, Kraak, A (1999) Competing Education & Training Policy Discourses: A ‘Systemic’ Versus ‘Unit Standards’ Framework, in Jansen, J and

However, the symbolic nature of Curriculum 2005 does not sufficiently explain the disappearance of history education, and by implication master and minor narratives. Curriculum 2005, in signalling a new state and identity, was located in the concept of collective amnesia that implicitly argued that the past was too contentious, too emotionally charged and too great a source of potential conflict to grapple with so soon. While this may have been understandable in, for example, the context of a country such as post-Third Reich Germany in which there were, therefore, few victims to demand remembrance. It was less understandable in South Africa where the victims, living side by side with former perpetrators, were in fact in the majority, not only in society but in the new government. It is only when considered within the context of the tacit agreement for compromise, mentioned earlier, that it begins to make sense. Its not that apartheid was not mentioned in the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area at all, but there was no engagement with apartheid as a system, no sense of moral outrage at a crime against humanity, merely a requirement to analyse the impact of apartheid on [economic] development.

The first Specific Outcome of HSS, which ironically was only included after the Chairperson of the Mathematics Learning Area Committee asked how a Human and Social Sciences Learning Area could be developed without any South African history in it, dealt with the way in which ‘South African Society has changed and developed over time’.<sup>60</sup> Apartheid was mentioned in two of the related six Assessment Criteria of the Outcome:

SO 1: AC 4: The impact of Apartheid on development is analysed

SO 1: AC 5: Patterns of continuity and change in post-Apartheid South Africa are analysed

The failure to include history education lies in the intersection of a number of complex and often competing interests in post-apartheid politics and education: global

---

Christie, P (eds), *Changing Curriculum, Studies on Outcomes-based Education in South Africa* Cape Town: Juta & Co: 21-58

<sup>60</sup> The HSS policy document; interview with Rob Sieborger

and national policy networks that identified within the economic nation; competing interests and legitimacy in the Human and Social Sciences writing group during the pressurised writing process; post-colonial responses to colonial narratives; and finally, response to a traumatic past.

Firstly, the rejection of history education can be located in South Africa's attempts to reposition itself in the global order and considerations for boosting the national economy. Stakeholder curriculum processes during this early transition were dominated by the trade unions in close collaboration with sections of business.<sup>61</sup> The choice of outcomes-based education as curriculum technology, according to Fataar, is tied to the hegemonic role played by the labour dominated policy network inside the new government.<sup>62</sup> It can also be understood in the context of global educational policy networks and policy borrowing. According to Spreen:

Examining borrowing is instructive because it lodges the analysis of educational policy making within an international context by mapping out the complex ways in which international social and cultural ties, political and economic relationships, democratic imperatives, and shifting roles of global and local participation all influence policy decisions.<sup>63</sup>

There were strong links between Curriculum 2005 and the *Studies of Society and Environment for Australian Schools* and *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum* which had gone the route of integrating former subjects into learning areas.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Fataar (2006): 646

<sup>62</sup> Fataar (2006): 647

<sup>63</sup> Spreen, C.A. (2004) Appropriating Borrowed Policies: Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa. Steiner-Khamsi (ed) (2004) *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending* New York: Teachers College Press: 101. See also Jansen, J. (2004) Importing Outcomes-Based Education into South Africa: policy borrowing in a post-communist world. In Phillips, D. & Ochs, K. (eds) *Education Policy Borrowing: historical perspectives* Oxford Issues in Comparative Education, Oxford University Press: 199-220

<sup>64</sup> Curriculum Corporation (1994) *A statement on studies of society and environment for Australian schools: a joint project of the States, Territories and the Commonwealth of Australia initiated by the Australian Education Council* Carlton, Vic.: Curriculum Corporation; Ministry of Education (1995) *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum Revised Draft*. Carlton: Board of Studies

Curriculum 2005 was always overtly economically orientated. The origin of the move towards outcomes-based education within South Africa appears to have been in the National Training Board (NTB) and the labour union, COSATU.<sup>65</sup> The NTB and COSATU produced a policy document, the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) which laid the basis for a future national training strategy. The aim of the strategy was to provide for the recognition of the skills or competencies workers gained in the workplace. The debates about competencies were, thus, largely situated within the labour movement and business with little integration with educational ideas even though schools were incorporated into the framework.<sup>66</sup> Once taken up into the school system, the competencies became ‘outcomes’, which focussed on the knowledge and skills needed in the world of work should a learner exit the system after Grade 9. The labour representatives were all self-identified leftists, fully supportive of the integration agenda.<sup>67</sup>

A national Department of Education briefing document on the development of outcomes-based education made the economic intentions of the new curriculum very clear:

South Africa has recently undergone a political change which removed the oppressive government of the past forty years. A massive undertaking to reconstruct South African society and create economic growth is being undertaken in order to improve the quality of life of South African citizens and redress the inequalities of the past. In order to achieve this there is a strong focus on economic growth and job creation...the transformation of the Labour Market is seen as being a key step in the creation of growth. This would require a clear change in

---

<sup>65</sup> Cross et. al. (2002) From Policy to Practice: curriculum reform in South African education, in *Comparative Education* Volume 38 No. 2: 171-187 quoting Christie (1994) and Jansen (1999a)

<sup>66</sup> Cross, M., Mungadi, R. & Rouhani, S. (2002) From Policy to Practice: curriculum reform in South African education, in *Comparative Education* Volume 38 No. 2:171-187.

<sup>67</sup> Fataar (2006): 648

the nature of the South African education system. Hence the move towards an outcomes-based approach to education.<sup>68</sup>

Rensburg, by stating that the criticism of the lack of History in Curriculum 2005 was misplaced since the curriculum goals of compulsory education differed from that of further education, supported this view. He insisted that the critique should have been within a consideration of the goals of compulsory education.<sup>69</sup> An analysis of the Critical and Specific Outcomes of Curriculum 2005 reveals that they were predominantly about the economic nation and what was considered to be of value to the job market when exiting the school system. The belief was that transformational OBE would provide learners with the ‘knowledge, competence and orientations’ needed for success in a ‘complex, challenging, high-tech future’ after leaving school.<sup>70</sup> Bantu Education during apartheid had been about providing basic skills for labour in the economy – Curriculum 2005 emphasized science and technology as a rejection of apartheid education and as a means of providing the knowledge and skills for participation in the global economy. History education in an economic context was considered to be valueless.

In focussing on transmission of a learnt Afrikaner master narrative in history education during apartheid, Afrikaner nationalist history together with fundamental pedagogics, had contributed to a view of history education as content, transmitted to pupils in a Freirean ‘banking system’. Few, it seemed, could conceive of school history as a subject that incorporated a range of skills, protocols, second order concepts and procedures – all of which are central to history education as an investigative discipline. So not only had the official narrative been offensive, and history education used for political indoctrination, the pedagogical content knowledge experienced under apartheid made it seem that history education was therefore irrelevant in a technological age.

---

<sup>68</sup> Simpson, L (n.d.) *An Outcomes-Based Approach to Educational and Curriculum Development in South Africa*, presented at a Department of Education Workshop, 30/31 July 1998: 4. Llanley Simpson was a young political appointee to the DoE.

<sup>69</sup> Rensburg (2000): 124

<sup>70</sup> Simpson (n.d.): 8

Whether or not Curriculum 2005 could have achieved its economic goals is irrelevant at this point. Many teachers, particularly in under-resourced and rural schools who had suffered the most during apartheid, believed that Curriculum 2005 could bring real economic transformation to the country and assist with job creation.<sup>71</sup> This is the cruelty of producing a curriculum that was visionary and symbolic. Curriculum 2005 was unable to deliver the knowledge and skills necessary for a global world. In a country such as South Africa with its enormous disparities in education, the minority with access to private education or well-resourced and expensive state schools, would continue to be recipients of a close to world class education, while the majority would continue to lack the resources and teaching to close the knowledge gap.

South Africa's perceived role in a global economy, was also aligned with the then emerging thinking that would enable an African Renaissance. The notion of an African Renaissance, closely identified with Thabo Mbeki, is linked to the vision of a strong economic role for South Africa within southern Africa, as well as Africa as a whole. In Mbeki's view, the idea of the African Renaissance is as much about a struggle against Africa's marginalisation in economic and political terms as it is about the celebration and development of African cultures.<sup>72</sup> Science and technology feature strongly, as it did in Curriculum 2005. It is a philosophy which is forward-looking while invoking the romance, rather than the substance, of the past<sup>73</sup> and is more about South Africans having an African identity than about being South African. African Renaissance within South Africa means 'centring of the majority experience in the national life of South Africa'; about 'how we can make the diverse instrument of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Kros, C. (2000) Effacing History: an examination of curriculum development and History textbooks after 1994. A paper presented at *Memory and History: Remembering, Forgetting and Forgiving in the life of the Nation and the Community*, Cape Town 9-11 August. She quotes a teacher from the then Northern Province as welcoming a 'more advanced outcomes based education' believing it would assist in job creation. 'by the end of Grade 9 the pupil can do something for himself – maybe make a business – run a shop.,

<sup>72</sup> Tikly, L. (2001) Globalisation and Education in the postcolonial world: towards a conceptual framework *Comparative Education* Vol. 37, No. 2: 151 – 171:169

<sup>73</sup> Dubow, S. (2006) *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 270. This was amply demonstrated in Mbeki's stirring 'I am an African' statement on the acceptance of the South African Constitution. It not only draws on a romantic version of the past, but is more about 'Africanness' than about being a South African.



state serve the interests of the newly liberated'.<sup>74</sup> For Africa, the African Renaissance is about Africans today recognising 'themselves as a political force and market of the future'.<sup>75</sup> And the African Renaissance, in focussing on the future, regards 'yesterday as a foreign country – tomorrow [belonging] to us!'<sup>76</sup> In this vision, history education is irrelevant. Education is about the skills necessary for participation in the global economy, but more particularly about taking the lead in a new Africa that faces the future and not the past. In Curriculum 2005 the economic development was the overwhelming priority - yesterday was another country, not to be engaged with – a technological tomorrow was what was important.

Secondly, the excision of history education from the new curriculum could be seen to be located in the dynamics of the writing process itself. Within the various education departments, from national to the newly constituted provincial education departments there were contesting interests with the political appointment of senior bureaucrats, particularly in the national Department of Education and the old bureaucracy whose positions had been protected for five years under the provisions of the political settlement. Critical to the analysis of curriculum revision is the 'competition and negotiation among social actors, who vie to influence the determination of norms and values that the state will uphold over others'.<sup>77</sup> In national political processes such as curriculum construction 'authorship and voice' reflected in the final product is related to 'both the positioning of the voice and the authority of who speaks' with the question of power being critical – 'who exercises power, how and through which voice'.<sup>78</sup> Any attempt to explain what happened to history needs to take cognisance of 'the competition and negotiation of social actors' on a number of levels.

---

<sup>74</sup> Ndebele, N.S. (2000) In their own Voices: African Renaissance *Beyond Racism: Brazil, South Africa, The United States*, (SEF, Atlanta): 21

<sup>75</sup> Makgoba, M.W., Shope, T. & Mazwai, T. (1999) Introduction to Makgoba, M.W. (ed) *African Renaissance* Cape Town: Mafube Tafelberg: viii

<sup>76</sup> Mbeki, T (1999) Prologue to Makgoba, M.W. (1999) *African Renaissance* Cape Town: Mafube Tafelberg: xxi. The full quote is: Yesterday is a foreign country – tomorrow belongs to us! Mbeki was quoting a delegation of a section of Afrikaner youth leaders who had met with him.

<sup>77</sup> Chisholm, L. (2005) The politics of curriculum review and revision in South Africa in regional context, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, Vol. 35, No. 1, March 2005: 79-100, quoting Steiner-Khamsi (2000): 95 and 85

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

Authority and positionality of voice, therefore legitimacy, were key factors at work within the Human and Social Sciences (HSS) working group. The exercise of power and voice during the process was the result of powerful, though often not overt, struggles, that were shaped by the particular context of the apartheid legacy and the negotiated transition after conflict. There was a clear ideological high ground among the newly appointed bureaucrats; and the possibility of subversion from the ‘inherited’ bureaucracy of the apartheid education departments. Therefore evidence suggests that the stakeholder composition of the writing groups and the ‘residual ideologies’ from the past and the emergent ideologies, in particular the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area into which history education was subsumed, played a significant role in the form of the final document. This was further shaped by agency - by what the members of the writing group, within the emergent political context, ‘did and said’ during the course of the writing.

The curriculum writing process was clumsy, unwieldy with the largest writing group being Human and Social Science (over 50 people).<sup>79</sup> Precedent having been set by the cleansing process of the interim syllabus, control of the curriculum development process was located within the national Department of Education. This was a stakeholder process of democratising curriculum development with a mix of new ‘political’ appointees to the national and provincial departments and of old apartheid bureaucrats. Two of the three in overall charge of the process were apartheid era bureaucrats. The majority of those who participated in the various writing groups were from the nine provincial education departments. These too, included a significant proportion of ‘inherited’ bureaucrats. In the interests of ‘neutrality’ a national DoE official was elected Chairperson of Human and Social Sciences Learning Area Committee and the scribe was the same national Department of Education official who had been the secretariat for the interim History syllabus process and who had had an investigation launched against him.<sup>80</sup> Although the roles of the chairperson and scribe were defined, both were from the old inherited

---

<sup>79</sup> September, J, Lotz, H, Kriel, L, Potenza, E, Cohen, S, Siebörger, R & Earl, J (1996) *Learning Area Committee Report: Human and Social Sciences* (November)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

bureaucracy with vested interests in attempting to exert influence over the curriculum processes.

The provincial representatives who were part of the inherited bureaucracy were associated with a discarded education system, which would have made them reluctant to take any stance that could be interpreted as opposing the emerging curriculum, whatever they thought about it. The Afrikaners amongst them, given the daily revelations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, no doubt felt easier without history in the curriculum and would certainly not have fought for its inclusion in Human and Social Sciences. However, what is interesting in this instance, is that the group in whose interests it would have been to suppress apartheid memory in history education (old Afrikaner bureaucracy), was not the group that had the voice of power in the creation of Human and Social Sciences in Curriculum 2005. As it turned out, remaining silent was in their best interests as those who were positioned for power were either not historians and/or were fully supportive of the philosophy of Curriculum 2005 and therefore against history in the curriculum.<sup>81</sup>

For those who had legitimacy, Curriculum 2005 needed to be so far removed from apartheid education that it could be seen to be eradicating apartheid. The representatives of the largest teacher union, the South African Democratic Teacher Union or SADTU, which had its genesis in the struggle against apartheid, fully supported the new curriculum and carried with them the legitimacy of being ANC-aligned and active during the anti-apartheid struggles. SADTU representatives, therefore, had a legitimacy that the other teacher union representatives did not have. However, what is interesting is that many SADTU-aligned teachers at least in the Western Cape must have been part of the Peoples' History movement which drew on vernacular history and counter memory, as an expression of resistance against the apartheid regime.

---

<sup>81</sup> For example, Ihron Rensburg, newly appointed Deputy Director General for GET in the DoE, who gave a deputation from the Historical Association short shrift when they appealed to him to rescue history in the curriculum before it was too late, and John Carneson who became the dominant voice within the HSS LAC. Neither were historians but both had strong ANC and anti-apartheid credentials.

The representatives from the South African Society for History Teaching and the Society of South African Geographers were not only male, but also white and therefore lacked legitimacy. When the representative presented a submission from the Society of South African Geographers requesting that Geography be given the status of a ninth Learning Area, he was seen to be making an attempt to derail the integrity of the new learning areas and the submission was rejected out of hand.<sup>82</sup> A later attempt made by the history representatives to have a stronger history focus within the Learning Area led to a major confrontation, again revealing the legitimate/illegitimate fault line.<sup>83</sup> What was clearly demonstrated during this process was the political irrelevance and impotence of the history community. Two delegations to the Department of Education and the Minister of Education were repulsed.<sup>84</sup> They simply had no access to the key figures within the government who were currently determining education policy; and they were talking in a language that ran counter to the entire thinking behind Curriculum 2005.

Other factors reinforced the rejection of history education: although once the basic OBE curricular framework had been determined, this exclusion was axiomatic. A further consideration is that the lack of history education within the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area may simply have been the outcome of the unrealistic writing timeframes and the pressures put on the writing groups:

Participants were requested not to talk in ‘old language’ such as history; the department required the consultancy services of ‘forward looking’ people. There were deadlines, white males with laptops, disks, alienating language and authoritarian voices that demanded ‘products’ by the hour.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup>September, J., Lotz, H., Kriel, L., Potenza, E., Cohen, S, Siebörger, R. & Earl, J. (1996) Learning Area Committee Report: Human and Social Sciences (November)

<sup>83</sup> Siebörger, R. (2005) email to the author. John Carneson, whose background was integrated studies, led the resistance to anything resembling old subjects within the Learning Area. It may, therefore, have had nothing to do with resistance to history per se.

<sup>84</sup> Bam, J. (2000) Negotiating history, truth and reconciliation and globalisation: An analysis of the suppression of historical consciousness in South African schools as a case study, *Mots Pluriels*, No. 13, <http://arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1300jb.html>, Accessed 4 April 2007

<sup>85</sup> Bam (2000): 4. June Bam wrote from personal experience as a member of the National Reference Group for the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area.

This left unfinished the process of writing by the Learning Area Committees and there was a subsequent rushed finalisation of Curriculum 2005 by an appointed, and paid, 15-member Technical Committee. At this point, power was centralised in a Technical Committee, assisted by Canadian advisers, which was answerable only to the Minister.<sup>86</sup> It was the work of this committee that signalled the failure of the stakeholder process in the construction of education policy. It also had the effect that the Technical Committee was given far more influence over the eventual outcomes than it would, or should, have had, as it reduced the hundreds of outcomes that had been written by the Learning Area Committees by the end of November 1996, to the eventual sixty-six of March 1997. The Technical Committee interacted with the Phase committees and with a small group of nominated people from the LACs (the Reference group), and took significant decisions without seeking endorsement from others.<sup>87</sup> Clearly it was not intended that there should be any debate about the nature of the new curriculum, but even had there been, meaningful debate would not have been possible given the rushed nature of the process.

Thirdly, the rejection of history was also located in a 'post-colonial' response to what could have been argued to have been a 'colonial' history curriculum under apartheid. Literary critic, Bill Ashcroft, has identified four reactions to the discourse of history in post-colonial societies.<sup>88</sup> Firstly, there is *acceptance* of the historical discourse and one's location in it. Secondly, there is *rejection* of the colonial discourse with the concept of history being challenged as a cultural construct and alongside this, a third reaction and also mode of resistance, which is the *interjection* of counter-narratives into the popular arena – an acceptance of the basic narrative, but suggesting that there is an alternative, truer picture, than the one being told. This characterises the vernacular narratives of Peoples' History described in the previous chapter. The fourth reaction he suggests is the strategy of *interpolation*, interruption of the dominant discourse by destabilizing the very forms through which the dominant

---

<sup>86</sup> Siebörger, R. (1997) *How the outcomes came out. A personal account of and reflections on the initial process of development of Curriculum 2005*. A paper delivered at Kenton-at-the-Gap Conference, Hermanus, 21 October-1 November: 3

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ashcroft, B (2001) *Post-colonial Transformation* London: Routledge

discourse is produced, consumed and exchanged. It draws attention to history as a representational practice; it is about thinking about how history is constructed.

It is conceivable, that recognising the deeply insidious way in which history education during apartheid reinforced the unequal relations of power and in Freirean terms, may have led the oppressed to be shaped by the discourses of the oppressors, that complete *rejection* would seem the only reasonable way of decolonising minds. There were certainly those located in the struggle against apartheid who felt such a ‘deep aversion’ to the manipulation of history and history textbooks during apartheid that history education was ‘symbolic of apartheid; removing history was removing apartheid.’<sup>89</sup> This is Ashcroft’s *rejection*, though not just of the colonial narrative, but of history education *per se*. There had been a precedent for the idea of removing history from the curriculum in one of the NEPI reports of 1992<sup>90</sup> and although the report had not suggested this as a serious option, it gave expression to important concerns about history, which could have influenced the post-1994 curriculum developers to drop history from the school curriculum.<sup>91</sup>

Lastly, and conceivably the most important, reason is closely linked to the politics of compromise: that possibly rejection was because the past was still too contentious, painful, too present and too likely to be a cause of discord and conflict to deal with, particularly when perpetrators and victims had to find a way of moving forward together. So it was easier to suppress the past and to dissolve it into something new than to deal with it – that the misuse of history under apartheid and a fear of confronting the past might have been a strong guiding force for several of the people designing Curriculum 2005 in de-emphasising history.<sup>92</sup>

For the white community, there was the fear of facing the extent to which they had been enmeshed in the crimes of apartheid. Enmeshing is not only about perpetrators

---

<sup>89</sup> Chisholm, L. (2004) The History Curriculum in the (revised) national curriculum statement: an introduction in Jeppie, S (ed) *Toward new Histories for South Africa* Cape Town: Juta Gariep: 177-188

<sup>90</sup> NEPI (1992): 73

<sup>91</sup> Cross, et. al. (2002): 171-187

<sup>92</sup> Lewin, T. (2001): 53

who actually committed the crimes, or encouraged or assisted in them; it is also about bystander behaviour. There is enmeshing through knowing but not acting, through looking or looking away and through not helping.<sup>93</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission revelations, which will be discussed below, made the extent of the criminal activities of the apartheid regime abundantly clear making it difficult for white South Africans not to find evil in what they had lost and, by association, in themselves.<sup>94</sup> They could not deny that crimes against humanity had been committed in their name, but focussing on the most brutal crimes committed under apartheid made it even more difficult for whites to admit to at least some measure of complicity. And for victims, the trauma may have been too fresh, too deep for that traumatic knowledge to be written into a school curriculum. The fact that none of these issues were discussed during the Human and Social Sciences writing process<sup>95</sup> does not mean that they were not present and not deeply real.

Curriculum 2005 had put the past behind it – but with potentially unexpected, even dangerous consequences. Giroux has argued that if we ask history no questions it will remain silent and that it is under cover of such silences that history can be revisited with injustices and inhumanity that have, in the past, placed the world in peril. We need to confront history's structured silences.<sup>96</sup> In similar vein, psychoanalysts suggest that suppressing a violent past is psychologically dangerous, not only for victims but also for perpetrators as well as the second generation of both. Several studies in Germany have confirmed a relationship between personal problems, even mental disturbances, among post-war Germans and the emotional burdens of an unprocessed Nazi past.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the logic of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that its work should be reflected in the new curriculum that would underpin and promote social, political and racial harmony.

---

<sup>93</sup> Schlink, B. (2003) *The Presence of the Past* lecture delivered at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. No page numbers.

<sup>94</sup> This concept is discussed in the preface to Mitscherlich, A. & Mitscherlich, M. (1975) *The Inability to Mourn* New York: Grove Press Inc.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Rob Siebörger.

<sup>96</sup> Giroux, H.A. (1988) *Teachers as Intellectual, Towards a critical pedagogy of learning* Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers Inc.

<sup>97</sup> Neumann, W. (2002) The Presence of the past: using memory work to search for psychological traces of the Nazi past in contemporary Germans, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, Vol. 30, No. 1: 6

An important question in any post-conflict society is what to do with the traumatic knowledge; what might constitute too much remembering or too much forgetting and who would have the right to decide. When are societies morally obligated to remember and why? According to a German author and lawyer, Bernhard Schlink, there is only one reason that remembering is morally obligatory:

the right of the victims and their relatives and descendants to be recognised in their identity that has been shaped by that specific past, by those specific crimes, by those atrocities – and also in their right to grant forgiveness and reconciliation, or to refuse it.<sup>98</sup>

This, in contrast to Curriculum 2005, would be a major focus of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which began its hearings almost simultaneously with the construction of Curriculum 2005. While the formal curriculum denied memory, the extended curriculum, represented by the testimonies of the TRC, was being shaped into the core of a new official memory.

### **Broadening curriculum: the TRC and emerging official memory**

A central issue in post-conflict societies is how that society should relate to the past. The politics of compromise in South Africa shifted the locus of relating to the past from history education to public testimony in the form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings. By broadening the understanding of education and history education, relating to the past through public testimony, however, can be considered an important facet of history education. Such testimonies were powerful carriers of the messages encoded in their transmitters, of ‘subjugated knowledges’ and ‘counter memories’. Such public practices of memory have a testamentary, transitive function bearing ‘an educative legacy to those who come after’. Critically for a post-conflict state, remembrance provides possibilities for ethical learning and confronting and coming to terms not only with the stories of the past, but also with ourselves, as we are in the present.<sup>99</sup> It could also be argued that the TRC was able to relieve the

---

<sup>98</sup> Schlink, Bernard (2003)

<sup>99</sup> Simon (2001)



public school curriculum of the burden of dealing with trauma in the interests of racial accommodation (politically) and economic integration (globally).

The Truth and Reconciliation process was significant, not only because psychologically it was important that South Africans should begin to engage with the traumatic legacy of apartheid but also because it began a very public political process of constructing a ‘foundation myth’ or official narrative and a new chosen trauma at the very time during which the curriculum process was advocating collective amnesia. The TRC raised questions of what practices of response to the testimonies might ‘enable an opening into learning’ creating the possibilities of new histories.<sup>100</sup> It would have been reasonable to expect that the TRC hearings would have had some influence on the formal curriculum being constructed.

The TRC hearings drew together the politics of memory, identity and emotion enabling a confrontation with the apartheid past as no other process did. The interim Constitution laid the foundation for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was formed on 5 December 1995 under the chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. On 27 May 1994 Dullah Omar, Minister of Justice, had announced to Parliament that a commission of truth and reconciliation would be set up to enable South Africa to come to terms with its past. He emphasised that reconciliation was not just about indemnity through amnesty and forgetting the past:

We cannot forgive on behalf of the victims, nor do we have the moral right to do so. It is the victims themselves who must speak. Their voices need to be heard. The fundamental issue for all South Africans is therefore to come to terms with our past on the only moral basis possible, namely that the truth be told and that truth be acknowledged.<sup>101</sup>

In the current spirit of reconciliation it was not to be an Afrikaner witch hunt or a ploy to ‘haul violators of human rights before court to face charges’, rather a ‘necessary

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Hansard, 27 May 1994, col. 187 quoted in Boraine, A. (2000) *A country unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* Cape Town: Oxford University Press

exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally acceptable basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation'.<sup>102</sup> The underlying concepts were that of reconciliation and restorative justice (in contrast to vengeance and retributive justice).

The South African TRC was not the first, but what set it apart from the others was that perpetrators as well as victims testified before the Commission. It was a product of the negotiated political settlement. On the one hand, the representatives of the still ruling apartheid regime wanted a blanket amnesty; on the other, there were many among the victims who wanted closure through a Nuremberg-style prosecution of perpetrators. The fragile political situation just before the 1994 elections needed the support of the apartheid security forces to ensure a peaceful transition. This was gained through the amnesty provisions of the TRC - amnesty in return for full disclosure of the truth about politically motivated human rights violations during apartheid. Without the amnesty provisions, there would also have been no incentive for perpetrators to reveal the policies, practices and specific crimes committed.

However, the TRC focused on a limited period of the most violent of human rights abuses, thereby containing the narrative that was being forged through the hearings. The hearings began on 16 April 1996 and for the next two years South Africans 'went through a very public ritual about confronting the past'.<sup>103</sup>

The confrontation with the past was deliberately through the medium of a public space. Witnessing the pain and trauma of the victims were key elements in the psychological reorientation of the perpetrators:

Week after week; voice after voice; account after account...It is not so much the deaths, and the names of the dead, but the web of infinite sorrow woven around them. It keeps on coming and coming.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Dullah Omar quoted in Boraine (2000): 45

<sup>103</sup> James Campbell quoted in Bundy, C (2007) *New nation. New History? Constructing the Past in post-apartheid South Africa*, in Stolten, H.E. (ed) (2007) *History making and Present Day Politics, The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet:90

<sup>104</sup> Krog, A. (2002) *Country of my Skull* (Second Edition) Johannesburg: Random House: 32

Throughout apartheid there had been organisations such as Black Sash and the Institute of Race Relations that had tracked the deaths in detention and had made every effort under draconian media laws to bring apartheid brutality into the public eye. For those who had chosen to find out as much as they could about what was happening during the dark days of apartheid, the revelations of the TRC were not a complete surprise, though the extent of the brutality was far wider and deeper than expected. There were those white South Africans who remained defiantly unmoved about accepting joint responsibility for the past, that is, the recognition that they as an ethnic, social and culturally homogeneous group were collectively agents of repression. But for many, and in particular for Afrikaners, there was the trauma and guilt of those ‘recognising evil in oneself’ by association with an evil regime.<sup>105</sup> The Afrikaner poet and writer, Antje Krog, captured the impact the TRC revelations had upon them:

Wordless, lost. While Afrikaner surnames like Barnard, Nieuwoudt, van Zyl, van Wyk peel off victims’ lips... And hundreds of Afrikaners are walking down this road – on their own with their own fears and shame and guilt. And some say it, most just live it. We are so utterly sorry. We are deeply ashamed and gripped with remorse. But hear us, we are from here. We will live it right – here – with you, for you.<sup>106</sup>

The uncensored post-apartheid media played a crucial role in ensuring widespread national acceptance. Because the public hearings, broadcast daily on television and radio, included testimonies of both victims and perpetrators, it ensured that South Africans could not deny their violent past. Here, literally, were the suppressed versions of the past – thousands of counter narratives to the official master narrative of the apartheid state. One of the effects the revelations had on white South Africans was that, although they refused collectively to own the past, they in effect moved

---

<sup>105</sup> The psychologists, Mitscherlich, A. & Mitscherlich, M. (1975) *The Inability to Mourn* New York: Grove Press Inc. wrote of the German people who had overwhelmingly supported the Nazi regime, having to come to terms with that evil, and by doing so, recognising the evil in oneself. This, they suggest, led to the inability to mourn in immediate post-war Germany and thus silence about the Nazi past.

<sup>106</sup> Krog, 2002: 44 and 99

from saying ‘it could not have happened’ to ‘I did not know it was happening’. While this was also a form of passive denial, it did acknowledge the violence committed in the service of the apartheid regime, and *ipso facto*, in the ‘service’ of white South Africans.

The TRC was a very public process through which the post-apartheid South African regime established its new order by defining that order through judgement on the old. It is recognised that the TRC was shaped by the mandate of political compromise as a political act of ‘nation building’. Though the TRC looked at apartheid through the experience of a tiny minority of political activists and state security forces, of perpetrators and a few thousand victims, the testimonies can be regarded as important knowledge which constitutes a new archive of previously silenced South African history.<sup>107</sup> However, this was a deliberately contained and managed process of constructing a particular official memory,<sup>108</sup> perhaps even a foundational myth, for the new ‘nation’; a politically useful narrative of chosen trauma which also opened the way for vernacular memories to flourish.<sup>109</sup> For all its flaws, the TRC process did serve the purpose of sufficiently coming to terms with the evils of apartheid in order for a new state to be formed and a new community [and identity] to be imagined.<sup>110</sup> In a real sense it had a catalytic social function, enabling transition to occur in a peaceful, non-violent way.

Psychologists and political scientists agree that reconciliation between victims and perpetrators is a crucial element of the ability to move forward after internecine violence. A comparative study on transition from authoritarian rule emphasised that:

It is difficult to imagine how a society can return to some degree of functioning which would provide social and ideological support for

---

<sup>107</sup> Du Pisani, J. & Kwang-Su, K. (2004) Establishing the Truth about the Apartheid Past: Historians and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol.8, Issue 1, Fall: <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i1a5.htm>

<sup>108</sup> Christie, P. (2006) Beyond reconciliation: reflections of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its implications for ethical pedagogy, draft paper.

<sup>109</sup> For example, the Cape Town Memory Project and the Guguletu Seven and Amy Biehl memorials in Cape Town.

<sup>110</sup> Christie, P. (2006) Beyond reconciliation: reflections of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its implications for ethical pedagogy, draft paper.

political democracy without somehow coming to terms with the most painful elements of its own past. By refusing to confront and to purge itself of its worst fears and resentments, such a society would be *burying not just its past but the very ethical values it needs to make its future liveable*.<sup>111</sup>

Psychoanalysts studying trauma resulting from mass violence point out that the traumatic memories of the past are not forgotten.<sup>112</sup> Research also suggests that unresolved trauma in the form of memories, will be consciously and unconsciously transmitted from generation to generation - ‘inter- or transgenerational transmission of trauma’ – with the potential for causing and inflaming future conflicts.<sup>113</sup> The past continues to torment because it is not the past; for such societies, crimes can never be locked in the historical past – rather, they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance.<sup>114</sup> This is Volkan’s ‘chosen trauma’ – the mental and physical representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic losses, feel helpless and victimized by another group and share a humiliating injury. He regards this as the key to understanding transgenerational transmission of trauma. Unless the victim group is able to enter a process of mourning, the cycle will not be broken.<sup>115</sup> Also of importance, however, is the recognition of trauma in the perpetrators and the potential psychological damage if the survivors of that group do not face responsibility and guilt becomes a barrier to mourning that what has been lost.<sup>116</sup> According to Minow, a Harvard law professor, people who actually commit atrocities

---

<sup>111</sup> O’Donnell, G. & Schmitter, P.C. (1986) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore):30. Quoted in Sparks, A. (2003) *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa* Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball: 160 Author’s italics.

<sup>112</sup> Lumsden, M. (1997). Breaking the cycle of violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 34 (4), 377-383 cited in Naidu & Adonis (2007)

<sup>113</sup> Volkan, V. (2006) *Trauma, Mourning, Memorials and Forgiveness*. An address given at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, 22 November 2006

<sup>114</sup> Michael Ignatieff, quoted in Minow, M. (1998) *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*. Boston: Beacon Press: 13-14

<sup>115</sup> Mourning is the psychic process by which an individual copes with a loss. Mitscherlich, A. & Mitscherlich, M. (1975) *The Inability to Mourn* New York: Grove Press Inc: xxv

<sup>116</sup> This is at the core of the Mitscherlich’s book, *The Inability to Mourn*, writing about post-Nazi West Germany.

do not succeed in getting rid of their post-traumatic symptoms. Rather, they seem to ‘suffer the most severe and intractable disturbances’.<sup>117</sup>

Psychoanalysts such as Volkan, suggest that the TRC was an emotionally cathartic event, opening up a window for societal mourning and becoming what could be considered to be a public memorial of conscience.<sup>118</sup> These were the stories, the histories that ‘insist remembrance be accountable to the demand for non-indifference’, that should be in the centre of ethical practice and pedagogy of remembrance with the ‘responsibility of memory giving countenance to those who have provided testament’.<sup>119</sup> It would have been reasonable, therefore, to assume that any new political education curriculum would have supported memory against forgetting and included the narratives of the apartheid past.

The TRC process was about the victims of torture and security force brutality; apartheid as a system that divided South Africans and destroyed the lives of millions both economically and psychologically, was not ‘on trial’. Mamdani called this the ‘truth that the TRC is obscuring’. For him it was crucial that the country recognise:

...the experience of apartheid as a banal reality for sixteen million people arrested for pass law violations, for four million victims of forced removals, and for the millions who went through Bantu education.<sup>120</sup>

It could be argued that this was an orchestrated and contained process creating a particular official memory for political purposes that did little to help ordinary citizens to accept responsibility (whites) for having supported or been associated with apartheid:

The TRC invites beneficiaries to join victims in a public outrage against perpetrators. It invites beneficiaries to say: ‘If only we had

---

<sup>117</sup> Minow (1998): 8

<sup>118</sup> Volkan, (2006)

<sup>119</sup> Simon, R., DiPaolantonio, M., Clamen, M. (2001) *Remembrance as praxis and the ethics of the inter-human Culture Machine* No. 4 (The Ethico-Political Issue)

[http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/frm\\_f1.htm](http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/frm_f1.htm) Accessed 14 January 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Mamdani (1998)

known. We did not know this when we voted time after time for the regime of White power and White privilege.’ So beneficiaries, too, are presented as victims. By reducing apartheid to its worst perpetrators, is not the TRC turning into a rescue operation for beneficiaries?<sup>121</sup>

The rejection of history education together with the politics of memory located in the TRC meant that the majority of white South Africans were able to engage in the politics of avoidance. They could avoid taking either collective or individual responsibility for supporting the system of apartheid or even of benefiting from apartheid and could even claim not to have known what was going on. It also opened the way for white South Africans to say we should put the past behind us. Curriculum 2005 was doing just that to great effect.

What, then, should the role (if any) of history education have been in the process of remembering and forgetting? What should the curriculum have done with the traumatic knowledge of the testimonies of perpetrators and victims to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? This moves us into the realm of the ‘ethical practice and pedagogy of remembrance’, of the stories and histories that ‘insist remembrance be accountable to the demand for non-indifference’ (of the ‘banal reality of apartheid’) with the ‘responsibility of memory giving countenance to those who have provided testament’.<sup>122</sup> For those who provided testament to the TRC, particularly victims, it would have been reasonable to believe that history education in the post-apartheid state would be central to the process of remembrance.

Giroux views history as possibility and believes that teachers, as researchers, assuming the role of transformative intellectuals, need to grapple with concepts such as ‘liberating memory’, uncovering the horror of past suffering and the dignity of resistance. While this is a vision that is far from the realities of the post-conflict classrooms of a country such as South Africa, without history education there was no

---

<sup>121</sup> Mamdani (1998): 19

<sup>122</sup> Simon, R., DiPaolantonio, M., Clamen, M. (2001)

possibility of even dreaming the vision. The power and politics that played out in the curriculum processes had closed the door on the past.

### **Renegotiating public memory**

The implementation of Curriculum 2005 began in 1997. Two years later the centenary commemoration of the South African War (1899-1902)<sup>123</sup> demonstrated that in spite of the denial of memory in Curriculum 2005, the past continued to have political and ideological relevance in the present. The commemorations provided fascinating insights into what can happen to former hegemonic official narratives constructed to support emerging group identity defined in relation to ‘the other’ when that ‘other’ now has the political power. The Anglo-Boer War camp narratives, for so long so exclusively associated with Afrikaner victimhood and chosen trauma, were recast into a narrative that provided for the inclusion of new victims – the former ‘other’.

The South African War was the first major historical event to be commemorated since 1994. As a narrative that had been cast in a particular mould, the chosen trauma of white Afrikaners, there was no question that the National Party would commemorate the centenary; it was not quite so clear what stand the ANC would take. However, this was an event that was difficult to ignore. It attracted international interest and participation on the one hand, and on the other, it might conceivably have been used, as the 1938 Great Trek celebrations, to stir up right-wing Afrikaner nationalism. The decision was taken by government to adopt the commemorations as a national legacy project, but alongside other projects such as the Nelson Mandela museum, the Constitutional Court and Freedom Park.<sup>124</sup>

While there was never any serious threat of re-invigorating rightwing Afrikaner nationalism, the commemorations did, according to the historian, Grundlingh, provide an opportunity for re-negotiating Afrikaner identity after the loss of political power

---

<sup>123</sup> Generally known as the Anglo-Boer War, it has come to be called the South African War as more evidence of wider participation of South Africans and of soldiers from other British colonies has been revealed through research.

<sup>124</sup> Grundlingh (2007), Reframing remembrance in Stolten, H.E. (2007) *History Making and Present Day Politics, The Meaning of Collective Memory* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet: 197



and the threat to old cultural sureties.<sup>125</sup> Over the years the memory of the war had been cast in the particular mould of Afrikaner group identity, though extensive research by English historians had shown that soldiers from other British colonies had taken part in it, as had black South Africans, thousands of whom had died in concentration camps. Afrikaner historians were faced with two options: to continue to interpret their past in narrow nationalist terms, or to refashion it to conform with a new reality in order to have continued political relevance. Significantly, Afrikaner historians chose the more inclusive path:

There was a strong awareness that the apartheid past had failed and that Afrikaners now had to adapt to a new order. In line with this realisation, for the most part, a deliberate attempt was made to acknowledge the role of black people [in the South African War] and view the conflict not only in local but also in international terms.<sup>126</sup>

For Afrikaner ‘culture brokers’ it was also an attempt to project what had become for them a politically uncertain world, a common bond of suffering between Afrikaners and black South Africans, with British imperialism in the dock. But it was also an opportunity, in the face of the disturbing revelations of the TRC, for Afrikaners to ‘showcase a heroic period in Afrikaner history for which they did not have to apologise’.<sup>127</sup>

Public commemorations usually celebrate official concerns more than vernacular ones, containing powerful symbolic expressions – metaphors, signs and rituals – that give meaning to competing interpretations of the past and present reality.<sup>128</sup> For the ANC, with the representatives of other Commonwealth countries present, it was an occasion to highlight the passing of the colonial era and place the focus on the new government.<sup>129</sup> According to Bodnar, public memory is produced from political

---

<sup>125</sup> Grundlingh (2007), Reframing remembrance in Stolten, H.E. (2007) *History Making and Present Day Politics, The Meaning of Collective Memory* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet: 208

<sup>126</sup> Jacobs. F (2002) Die herdenking van die Anglo-Boereoorlog in oënskou, *Knapsak*, vol. 14, No. 1, May: 3-10. Quoted in Grundlingh, A, (2007) Reframing remembrance, Stolten, H.E. (ed) *History making and Present Day Politics, The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaintitutet: 209

<sup>127</sup> Grundlingh (2007): 204

<sup>128</sup> Bodnar, J. (1994) *Remaking America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 16

<sup>129</sup> Grundlingh (2007): 198

discussions that involve fundamental issues about the existence of a society: its organisations, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present. It is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that helps a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future.<sup>130</sup> However, in a divided society the political discussions and the body of beliefs and ideas are far more complex. In this event the new and the old ruling elite were competing for symbolic spaces in which to claim a particular interpretation of the past and it called for recasting memory on both sides. But this did not mean that all were satisfied with the recast meaning of past and present. While official commemorative events may have been about national identity, there were many local commemorations among Afrikaners which were re-situating the memories of the Anglo-Boer war in vernacular culture.

### **Conclusion**

The production of memory, individual and collective, takes place within a complex set of power relations and at times it may be perceived to be in a group's best interest to alter or suppress certain memories. This has implications for curriculum. The years of the Government of National Unity, when inherited interests had to be accommodated and compromises made in the interests of stabilizing a fragile democracy, shaped the expression of memory and identity in the school curriculum and the public sphere in particular ways.

Curriculum 2005 heralded what Giroux has expressed as 'a crisis of historical consciousness' that would affect the ability of South Africans to remember those 'lessons' of the past that illuminate the developmental preconditions of individual liberty and social freedom.<sup>131</sup> This argument insists that history education provides a vehicle for the development of 'a collective critical consciousness, and that through developing historical consciousness those who study history are enabled to highlight

---

<sup>130</sup> Bodnar (1994): 14-15

<sup>131</sup> Giroux, H. (1997) *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope. Theory, Culture and Schooling* Oxford: Westview Press: 5. Quoted in Bam, J. (2000) Negotiating history, truth and reconciliation and globalisation: An analysis of the suppression of historical consciousness in South African schools as a case study. *Mots Pluriels*, No. 13, <http://.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1300jb.html>, Accessed 4 April 2007:4

the contradictions in society.<sup>132</sup> And by extension, without history education it would be difficult to develop a critical consciousness, so necessary for a well-functioning democracy. In many ways, the failure to engage in a meaningful way with the apartheid past could be construed as a form of revictimising the victims. However, the victims were given voice in the extended curriculum that encompassed the TRC hearings.

Teachers and pupils were ambivalent about the disappearance of history in Curriculum 2005. There was anger and concern from specialist history teachers, particularly in senior schools.<sup>133</sup> Not only did they feel cheated by the lack of value placed on history, but they also feared job losses or being forced to teach unknown subjects when the implementation reached their grades.<sup>134</sup> In fact, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 never did catch up with them, so for them these fears proved to be unfounded. A Grade 6 teacher with 61 pupils in his class was relieved that he would no longer have to teach history and geography as they were ‘too monotonous’ and History, he felt, posed a danger in taking his pupils back rather than forward. Two of his colleagues further felt that History even after the end of apartheid was still propagating ideas of European superiority and old ethnic stereotypes.<sup>135</sup> However, at the same school, a teacher made a call for History to be retained in order to teach about the apartheid past.

Pupils interviewed in 1998 were unsure about engaging with the apartheid past. It was, for them, a past that was still too present. As one noted, it made them think of revenge on white people, but they didn’t want to think that way. ‘I think history is a wrong subject, just because I’ve told myself that we must make peace in our land’. A fellow student agreed: ‘I think we must forget history and think of the future.’ And yet another felt: ‘I don’t think we can talk about things because it makes pain for other

---

<sup>132</sup> Giroux (1997): 5

<sup>133</sup> At least in the Western Cape where these concerns were voiced in the various curriculum workshops held by the Western Cape Education Department during the implementation of C2005, and during schools visits in support of the interim syllabus.

<sup>134</sup> Giroux (1997)

<sup>135</sup> Kros (2000). Interviews conducted in the Northern Province. No page numbers.

people and their families. And then the pain comes again. They must put it in the past and plan for the future.’<sup>136</sup>

A report compiled by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) a year later (1999) included interviews with teachers and students from around the country. Many noted that learning about and remembering the past was important for various reasons:

‘If we didn’t learn about the past it would be much harder to understand why things are the way they are. (Pupil A)

It is important for the younger generation to learn about the past. Otherwise they wouldn’t understand and know where they are coming from. They need to know how things have changed, how it used to be in the old time and how people struggled for them. (Teacher A)

It’s important to know about the past, but [one] can’t cling to the past and be trapped. We should not develop an attitude based on the past. We need to look at the past and see how change has come and that there are now opportunities.<sup>137</sup> (Pupil B)

While at the beginning of 1999 it seemed that there would be no place for history in the curriculum, the situation was to change, South Africa had her second democratic elections, and a new Minister of Education who was passionate about History, Prof. Kader Asmal, was appointed. The following chapter tells of the reassessment of Curriculum 2005 that re-opened the memory debates and allowed for the recovery of memory within history education.

---

<sup>136</sup> Drydan, S. (1999) *Mirror of a nation in transition: Case studies of history teachers and students in Cape Town schools*. Unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cape Town: 122

<sup>137</sup> Naidu, E. & Adonis, C. (2007) *History On Their Own Terms: The Relevance of the Past for a New Generation*, CSVR Report. The first quotation was from a Herzlia Student, a private Jewish school in Cape Town, the last two from Kulani High students, a government school in Cape Town: 17-18

## CHAPTER SIX

### HISTORY EDUCATION AND THE RECOVERY OF MEMORY: THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENTS

#### **Introduction**

The first chapter of the South African case study examined the construction of the conflict narrative in history. This provided the context for examining the question in the following chapter that is so critical to post-conflict societies: *what should be done with the traumatic knowledge?* Chapter Five focused on the early transition in South Africa after the first democratic elections of 1994. The negotiated settlement had particular curricular implications in the first phase of the attempts to realign the conflict curriculum with the democratic ideals of the new state. The political imperatives resulted in an almost unaltered conflict narrative continuing in the senior school for the next decade. In the first major post-apartheid curriculum change, Curriculum 2005, under the influence of the labour policy networks and attempts to reposition South Africa within the global economy, the ‘traumatic knowledge’ was avoided in what could be considered to be collective amnesia in the formal curriculum. History education was rejected even while a new official narrative was being constructed through the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This third South African chapter tells the story of how the initial moves to introduce a new curriculum that signalled the new identity of the post-apartheid society, were revisited under a new political leadership and the influence of a different policy network. This resulted in the reinsertion of history in the school curriculum. This chapter explores how and why this restoration of history in the curriculum now took place, how far it could go, and with what consequences. What emerged from the research was that a combination of the political context after 1999 and the agency exercised by the second Minister of Education provided the critical context for the reintroduction of history education. The emergence of an academic policy network, which called for greater form and structure within school knowledge, would not have

been possible during the early transition, characterised by compromise and reconciliation.

The shifting political terrain and the increased criticism of Curriculum 2005 from a wide range of interest groups provided the context for the emergence of an academic policy network that destabilised the stakeholders' hold over policy making and sidelined the labour network dominated by trade unions and the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) that had informed Curriculum 2005.<sup>1</sup> Each network occupied a different ideological and political space: the labour network had influenced the policy process from within the government; the academic policy network that replaced it mobilised knowledge and research in the liberal universities to gain its ascendancy.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, each was able to acquire the political legitimacy that enabled them to exercise curriculum influence. But, as far as the re-instatement of history education, it needed ANC aligned academics to raise questions about the future of history education in the curriculum to provide the political legitimacy for the return of history education.<sup>3</sup>

The political discourse that provided the context for the revision of the curriculum was of the democratic values located in the South African Constitution, rather than of memory and identity located in a new official narrative. This in turn had particular implications for the form the history curriculum was to take. Rather than substituting one dominant narrative for another, the curriculum acknowledged the diverse histories that contributed to collective memory in South Africa. It also provided for the development of skills, processes and critical thinking that support democratic practices. However, in the public spaces, the official programmes of commemoration and of memorials and monuments to the heroes of the struggle against apartheid, continued with the construction of a new narrative begun with the TRC process. These public programmes occupy ideological space and provide visible symbolic and emotional acts that speak to the past trauma and are intended to forge a new national

---

<sup>1</sup> Fataar, A. (2006) Policy networks in recalibrated terrain: school curriculum policy and politics in South Africa. *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 21(6): 641-659

<sup>2</sup> Ibid: 650

<sup>3</sup> Ibid: 654

identity. However, in the same way as an official hegemonic narrative within history education, there are indications that this new narrative is becoming as divisive as the Afrikaner nationalist one. However, the diverse histories approach provides space for the resurrection and acknowledgement of Foucault's 'subjugated knowledges' taking the form of counter memories and vernacular histories.

### **The struggle of memory over forgetting<sup>4</sup>: the politics of the new curriculum**

The second democratic elections in South Africa were held in 1999. The ANC won an outright victory and the period of Government of National Unity came to an end. By 1999 it was becoming increasingly evident that the South African education system was in trouble. A link was made between poor pupil achievement in South Africa and the new curriculum - literacy and numeracy levels were dropping. It became clear that implementation of Curriculum 2005 was not going as planned. Furthermore, the inequalities between well and poorly resourced schools, rather than being addressed, were deepening dramatically with learners in poorly resourced schools falling even further behind those in the well-resourced, well-run schools.<sup>5</sup>

Within the ANC it was becoming a matter of some urgency that there should be a government shift in emphasis in education from the period of 'symbolic' policy development to accelerated policy implementation or delivery.<sup>6</sup> Prof Kader Asmal, who had had an excellent record as Minister of Water Affairs, was appointed the second Minister of Education in the hope that he would be able to speed up policy implementation. The flurry of activity unleashed by Asmal, gave an immediate sense of purpose and direction to a ministry that had been desultory to that point. There had been considerable criticism of Curriculum 2005 from a number of leftist academics since its launch.<sup>7</sup> However, Fataar notes that:

---

<sup>4</sup> Minister Asmal used this quote adapted from Milan Kundera on a number of occasions.

<sup>5</sup> Jansen and Chisholm have both written extensively on the failure of C2005 and the revision of that curriculum. The JET report, *Getting Learning Right* was also influential. As a WCED official I experienced the growing gap between the schools in the Western Cape and the issues that teachers were having with trying to implement C2005.

<sup>6</sup> Rensburg (2000): 121

<sup>7</sup> For example, from academics at the Education Policy Unit at Wits University; from academics in Faculties of Education in universities around the country; and in particular from Jansen who, Fataar

it was the more strategically coded criticism and positioning by a different group of academics that opened the way for a different network to animate the curriculum policy terrain.<sup>8</sup>

The new Minister's role in establishing a different policy approach in line with implementation facilitated the academic policy network's position in the curriculum review process. The crisis in education was officially acknowledged in mid-1999 when Asmal launched his *Call to Action* and the *Tirisano* (working together) framework of principles and strategies for achieving the educational goals of the national Education Department.<sup>9</sup> Asmal supported the principle of outcomes-based education<sup>10</sup> but distanced himself from the transformational OBE of Curriculum 2005 that had resulted in the disappearance of history education. The *Tirisano* document did not put forward anything that was radically different, but significantly Asmal's language, in contrast to the vocational, technicist and managerial discourses that were then dominating education, was located in a 'discourse of revolution, Africanism and humanism'.<sup>11</sup>

Education was seen not merely as an economic good and a necessity for economic growth, but as something both intrinsic to democracy and the right of citizens that needed to contribute to the realisation of the democratic promise – a system of teaching and learning within the context of clearly understood rights and responsibilities and values – rather than education for the economy. As he stated:

A theme that runs through all our work is the need for South Africans to celebrate their common identity on the basis of a shared set of values and expectations...I want to ensure that our educational system

---

suggests, 'perhaps single-handedly laid the basis for an atmosphere of persistent instability, which prevented the curriculum from settling into a comfort zone of broad acceptability. Fataar (2006): 651

<sup>8</sup> Fataar (2006): 651. A number of the academics had links to the production of the JET report, *Getting Learning Right*.

<sup>9</sup> DoE (1999) *Tirisano – A Call to Action*

<sup>10</sup> In a speech to parliament on 13 January 2000, Asmal stated his commitment to making outcomes based education a success but implementation needed reviewing.

<http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/0001171112a1001.htm> Accessed 17 June 2008

<sup>11</sup> Chisholm, L. (1999) The Nine Point Plan, A Radical Shift. *Education Monitor, Indicator SA*, Vol. 16, No. 3: 56



contributes to the shared values on which nation-building will develop and that the fissures and alienation of the past are eradicated.<sup>12</sup>

In this view, education is an ethical practice of finding a way of living together in a post-conflict society which would be framed within the values of the Constitution and would help to build democracy – in other words, the Constitution would provide the basis for developing a South African identity.<sup>13</sup>

Both economic and democratic discourses had co-existed within the ANC since the 1960s. The democratic discourse was associated with the theory of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which by the late 1990s included the notion of a democratic society as ‘an industrial society, composed of *individuals*, that has democratic institutions...’<sup>14</sup> Therefore national identity is not separate from democracy; rather democracy is treated as a question of nation-building. This was reflected in the ANC’s *Resolution on the National Question* adopted at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference in 1997 which defined the NDR as ‘an act addressing the national question: to create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society’.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, for Mbeki, who became South Africa’s second democratically elected head of government in 1999, the ‘national question’ is explicitly related to that of the ‘democratic question’.<sup>16</sup>

The reintroduction of history education was not intended to provide a collective memory and identity but to provide history education with a strong ethical bias within a values framework. In his address to parliament on the TRC final report Asmal noted:

---

<sup>12</sup> Asmal: Speech to parliament 13 January 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Address by the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, MP, in the debate on the Truth and Reconciliation Report, National Assembly, Cape Town, 15 April 2003, <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03041515461001.htm> Accessed 13 June 2008

<sup>14</sup> Chipkin, I (2003) *The South African Nation Transformation 51* [http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?opiton=com\\_content&task=view&id=366&itemid=6](http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?opiton=com_content&task=view&id=366&itemid=6)

:34 Accessed 13 June 2008. My emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> Bundy (2007): 82

<sup>16</sup> Chipkin (2003): 28

a simple factual record of the apartheid past, devoid of an *ethical* basis, would be of little value. What matters is not merely the fact that we remember history but the *way in which we remember it*.<sup>17</sup>

Together with Chilean, Jose Zalaquett, Asmal believed that a ‘society cannot reconcile itself on the grounds of a divided memory. Since memory is identity, this would result in a divided identity’.<sup>18</sup> Reconciliation and national identity could potentially be achieved through the democratic nation.

Three documents developed after the launch of the Tirisano programme, brought history education into the centre of the national debate. They appeared in rapid succession in 2000 and were to be seminal to the reclaiming of history education within the curriculum. The first was the report of the Review Committee, appointed by Asmal to review Curriculum 2005;<sup>19</sup> the second the report *Values, Education and Democracy* of a Working Group on Values in Education, formed by the Minister;<sup>20</sup> and the third the *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education*.<sup>21</sup>

In a departure from the previous stakeholder processes, the members of the Curriculum Review Committee were appointed by the Minister in 2000 as individuals and were drawn largely from education faculties of liberal English-speaking universities. Prof Linda Chisholm was appointed Chair of the Committee. The appointment of the Review Committee was controversial.<sup>22</sup> The Committee represented the academic policy network which contrasted sharply with the labour-led

---

<sup>17</sup> Address of the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, MP, in the debate on the Truth and Reconciliation Report, National Assembly, Cape Town, 15 April 2003 Accessed 13 June 2008. My emphasis.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Department of Education (DoE) (2000) *A South African curriculum for the twenty first century: report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. Presented to the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, Pretoria

<sup>20</sup> The Department of Education of South Africa (2000), *Values, Education and Democracy* Report of the Working Group on Values in Education

<sup>21</sup> The Department of Education of South Africa (2000) *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education*

<sup>22</sup> Chisholm, L. (2003a) The state of curriculum reform in south Africa: The issue of Curriculum 2005, Daniel, J., Habib, A. & Southall, R. (eds) *The State of the Nation South Africa 2003-2004* Cape Town: HSRC Press; Fataar (2006): 651

policy network that had dominated the creation of Curriculum 2005.<sup>23</sup> It also deviated from the stakeholder politics of the Curriculum 2005 process.

The Review Committee proposed that the curriculum should be revised and streamlined, retaining a broad outcomes-based framework; that human rights and civic responsibility should be infused into the learning areas; and, most significantly for History, that Geography and History should form the core of a Social Sciences Learning Area, ensuring the distinctive concepts and ‘ways of thinking’ of each is fostered and developed.<sup>24</sup> There was, however, nothing in this about history as a memory system for constructing a new national narrative and collective identity.

The recommendations of the report triggered intense debates within the ANC and the DoE. The key players were the Minister of Education, South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), Departments of Education and the Cabinet – all ANC aligned.<sup>25</sup> The fall-out amongst senior ANC, SADTU and middle-level departmental bureaucrats was significant.<sup>26</sup> The proposals for change were regarded as displacing Curriculum 2005, the key policy of the Bantu period, which had symbolised South Africa’s political transformation, to which many bureaucrats were emotionally attached. Many of the Department of Education officials saw the proposed changes as a ‘back-to-basics’ move.<sup>27</sup> The call to bring history back into the curriculum was also controversial; it implied bringing subjects in a recognisable form into the curriculum when the underlying rationale of Curriculum 2005 was the radical integration of knowledge; it implied bringing back content when the constructivist perspective that

---

<sup>23</sup> Fataar, A. (2006) Policy networks in recalibrated terrain: school curriculum policy and politics in South Africa, *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 21(6), 641-659. The major teacher union South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) was unhappy at the lack of representation on the Review Committee. SADTU and those allied to SADTU had been dominant in the construction of Curriculum 2005 and strongly supported it.

<sup>24</sup> Department of Education (DoE) (2000) *A South African curriculum for the twenty first century: report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. Presented to the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, Pretoria: 138

<sup>25</sup> Chisholm, L. (2003b) The Politics of Curriculum Review and Revision in South Africa, presented at the ‘Oxford’ International Conference on Education and Development, 9 – 11 September 2003 at the session on Culture, Context and the Quality of Education: 4

<sup>26</sup> Chisholm (2003a): 277

<sup>27</sup> Jansen (2000): 53

had informed Curriculum 2005 had been framed in the opposition to content<sup>28</sup> which was regarded to be the epitome of the undesirable;<sup>29</sup> and as discussed in the previous chapter, history education had, among others, been rejected because of the political ideologies and orientation of the apartheid era; because it was perceived to be without value for the economy; and because of the traumatic and painful past.

The key initiative within the democratic discourse and of education as an ethical practice was the setting up of the Values in Education working group in February 2000. Their task was to formulate a set of values important for education.<sup>30</sup> In their report, *Values, Education and Democracy*, the Working Group made a strong appeal for the reinstatement of history in the curriculum as a way of promoting ‘human values’:

We are persuaded that the teaching of history is central to the promotion of all human values, including that of tolerance...There is good and bad history...more than any other discipline, good history put to good use taught by imaginative teachers can promote reconciliation and reciprocal respect of a meaningful kind.<sup>31</sup>

Asmal’s view of the importance of history education for promoting democratic values rather than for the construction of new collective memory and identity was articulated in his introduction to a publication of a series of papers given at a history education conference convened by the Minister in October 2002:

the study of history is useful. It helps to empower an informed citizenry; it develops knowledge and skills in creative imagination and critical reflection; and its depth and breadth may actually help sustain a more open, equitable and tolerant society...[this is the] humanising, liberating potential of history...As I have tried to suggest, we must

---

<sup>28</sup> Chisholm, L. (2005b) The Making of South Africa’s National Curriculum Statement, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* Vol. 37, No. 2: 193-208.

<sup>29</sup> Chisholm, L. (2004) The History Curriculum in the (revised) national curriculum statement: an introduction, in Jeppie, S. (ed) *Toward new Histories for South Africa* Cape Town: Juta Gariep: 184

<sup>30</sup> The working group came up with a set of six values: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and honour.

<sup>31</sup> The Department of Education of South Africa (2000), *Values, Education and Democracy* Report of the Working Group on Values in Education: 23 & 24

seek the value of history in its humanising capacity...Historical study is an excellent example of education as a public good...teaching and learning in the study of history provides a necessary counter-weight to the prevailing assumption in our contemporary world that all values are necessarily determined by the market.<sup>32</sup>

The Values in Education Report identified three aspects of history education as particularly relevant to post-apartheid South Africa:

- the teaching of the history of human evolution in order to demystify racial difference;
- a general and comprehensive history of all the people ‘who happen to reside in South Africa who in turn are connected to the people of Africa, Asia and Europe to encourage openness;
- and a history of past abuses of human rights to ‘serve as a powerful reminder of the folly of repetition’.

While apartheid was not specifically mentioned, the ‘record’ left by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was.<sup>33</sup>

The Values in Education Report endorsed the Review Committee’s recommendation that history be strengthened in schools and proposed that ‘panels of historians, archaeologists and human biologists be appointed to make recommendations regarding the strengthening of history teaching and teacher training.’<sup>34</sup> It was the report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education, which appeared in December 2000 that in the renewed history debate, for the first time, located the construction of post-apartheid memory and identity firmly within the construction of memory and identity in history education. The Report noted that:

in historical terms, we are living in a country which is currently attempting to remake itself in time...the study of history is especially

---

<sup>32</sup> Asmal, K. (2004) Foreword to Jeppie, S (ed) (2004): xi, xii

<sup>33</sup> DoE (2000) Report of the Working Group on Values in Education: 24

<sup>34</sup> Doe (2000) Report of the Working Groups on Values in Education: 25

urgent as it helps to prevent amnesia, checks triumphalism, opposes the manipulative or instrumental use of the past...the study of history:

- is important in the construction of identity...[fostering] a proper understanding of the growth of multiple and overlapping human identities...
- enables us to listen to formerly subjugated voices and to redress the invisibility of the formerly marginalised...
- is deliberately about the crucial role of memory in society. In a country like South Africa, which has a fractured national memory, the development of common historical memories...can play an integrative role in our culture and polity'.<sup>35</sup>

The Report further considered the lack of history in C2005 as having 'insufficient space and scholarly authority to challenge many of the old racial ideas which were the ideological ramparts of apartheid'<sup>36</sup> and which were becoming of increasing concern in schools.<sup>37</sup>

The Minister's commitment to strengthening history education was further demonstrated by the formation of the Ministerial Committee for History and the South African History Project (SAHP), both launched in August 2001. The South African History Project was also located in the Values in Education Initiative becoming part of the Race and Values directorate of the national Department of Education. The Project had five broad objectives:

- to encourage the recording of unwritten histories through the oral tradition
- to create forums which discuss the nature of history and history teaching in schools and devise strategies on how it can be improved and strengthened

---

<sup>35</sup> The Department of Education of South Africa (2000) *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education*: 6 & 7

<sup>36</sup> *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education*: 10

<sup>37</sup> Asmal: Speech to parliament 13 January 2000.

- to undertake studies and initiate activities that will strengthen history teaching in the context of the National Curriculum Statement
- to establish initiatives that will bring history researchers and scholars together to review, revise and (re)write history textbooks
- to initiate activities that will resurrect interest in the study of history by young people.<sup>38</sup>

**Strengthening and streamlining the curriculum: the Revised National Curriculum Statement (General Education and Training) and the National Curriculum Statement (Further Education and Training)**

On the 19 June 2000 the Council of [Provincial] Education Ministers (CEM) issued a statement supporting the establishment of a ‘dedicated team of curriculum experts...to develop the National Curriculum Statements’ and endorsing most of the Review Committee’s report stating that:

In view of the numerous and compelling representations made about the importance of history...Council directs the above-mentioned team to pay particular attention to the place of history...in the curriculum.<sup>39</sup>

By recommending the appointment of a ‘dedicated team of curriculum experts’ the Council of Education Ministers supported the move away from stakeholder involvement in curriculum development to a more centralised control over policy processes.<sup>40</sup>

There were two consecutive curriculum writing processes between 2001 and 2004, which resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for General Education and Training (GET) (Grades R – 9) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Further Education and Training (FET) (Grades 10 – 12). For the most part I will deal with the two processes as one, highlighting differences when they occur.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Department of Education, *The South African History Project : A Values in Education Initiative Update 2002*

<sup>39</sup> *Decision of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) on the Recommendations of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*, 19 June 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Jansen (2000): 54

<sup>41</sup> I will be writing much of this mainly from personal experience. I was a member of the history writing group for the revision of the GET curriculum, and appointed convenor of the history writing

The Minister appointed Ministerial Project Committees (MPC) to coordinate the writing processes. These combined academics with departmental officials, with academics Prof Linda Chisholm as Chair of the first process (GET) and Dr Cassius Lubisi the Chair of the second (FET) process. This was a radical departure from the stakeholder process of curriculum construction of the original Curriculum 2005.

The curriculum revision process was informed by a strong values and human rights framework.<sup>42</sup> The Review Committee had recommended a stronger integration of human rights and civic responsibility into the curriculum. A briefing document for the revision of Curriculum 2005 clearly stated that ‘post-apartheid education is premised on certain core values and the respect for human rights and democracy’.<sup>43</sup> A number of sub-committees were set up by the Human Rights Commission to monitor the emerging Learning Area and Subject Statements.<sup>44</sup> They met with the writing groups, providing guidance in the infusion of human rights into the individual Learning Areas and Subjects. Although all Learning Areas and Subjects were to infuse issues of human rights into their curriculum statements, particular attention was given to the emerging history curriculum as history education was considered to be a one of the most important vehicles for transmission of human rights and social justice.

The ‘Constitution, Values and Nation-building’ was central to the vision of the revised curriculum statements:

The promotion of values is important...to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values different from those that underpinned apartheid education. The kind of learner envisaged...is one who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a

---

group of the FET process. I was also at the time a member of the South African History Project set up by the Minister of Education.

<sup>42</sup> The key documents listed to inform the development of the learning area statements in the GET included the DoE (2000) *Values in Education Document* and Ministerial Project Committee (2001) *Human Rights, Values and Democracy in the National Curriculum Statement* (A background document) Pretoria.

<sup>43</sup> Ministerial Project Committee (2001) *Human Rights, Values and Democracy in the National Curriculum Statement* (A background document) Pretoria: 1

<sup>44</sup> Ministerial Project Committee (DoE) (2001) *Documents for the Launch and Briefing Workshop Strengthening and Streamlining C2005*. Pretoria: Department of Education



society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice.<sup>45</sup>

The curriculum revision process was contested at the level of the Ministerial Project Committee (MPC) between those members who represented the academic policy network and the Department officials, as well as in the learning area and subject writing teams. At MPC level what was at stake was the control over the entire process, which would mean control over the extent of the revisions to Curriculum 2005. Ironically in this process, those newly appointed Department of Education bureaucrats at the time of the construction of Curriculum 2005 who had represented the emerging ideologies, were within the MPC for the revision process, the inherited bureaucracy whose ‘residual ideologies’ conflicted with those emerging during the revision of Curriculum 2005.<sup>46</sup> The bureaucrats who had driven the development of Curriculum 2005 had invested emotional energy and ideology into its construction. The revision of Curriculum 2005 implied failure and therefore, on a number of levels and at different times, they attempted to stall the revision process. This included the process of selection of the members of some the Learning Area working group committees, through which the Department attempted to ensure some continuity between the first and second versions of Curriculum 2005 and to prevent ‘outsiders’ from recreating the curriculum from scratch.<sup>47</sup>

The contestations within the writing groups occurred at various levels. In the General Education and Training revision process, tension emerged between those who had been appointed by the national Department of Education as part of the attempt to stall the revision process;<sup>48</sup> and those who supported the re-instatement of history education. Two further issues were deeply contested within the writing groups in both General Education and Training and Further Education and Training although they

---

<sup>45</sup> DoE (2002) *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools)* Pretoria: DoE quoted in Chisholm, L. (2005)

<sup>46</sup> Ball, S. (1990) *Politics and Policy making in Education: Explorations in Policy Sociology* London: Routledge: 3

<sup>47</sup> Chisholm (2003b): 6

<sup>48</sup> Personal conversations held with working group members some time into the writing process.

manifested themselves differently: firstly the nature of history education and secondly the selection of appropriate narratives.

In the General Education and Training process, the debates about the nature of history education became entangled with the attempts to ensure that Social Sciences (the name of the new Learning Area) did not differ much from the old Human and Social Sciences. This position was essentially about a learning area that would again integrate history and geography. The contrasting position was developing a history curriculum that took its form from the approach in history education which had become known as ‘doing history’ – history as a process of enquiry and interpretation.<sup>49</sup> In the Further Education and Training writing group, the debate about the nature of history education was whether or not history should be regarded as a science with the possibility of establishing neutral or objective facts. The belief in the scientific approach to history was the inheritance of fundamental pedagogics and the staffing of not only white Afrikaans-language universities, but also the history departments of black universities, with Afrikaner nationalist historians. The debate had been long since settled in English-language universities: history and history education were considered by most to be political and ideological and by all to be open to interpretation. It took the intervention of the ‘Field Expert’, a member of the MPC assigned to the working groups to help provide expertise, who was himself a black academic historian, to mediate the debate and to address the issue of the extent of the Afrikaner Nationalist influence in the black universities.<sup>50</sup> The debate was

---

<sup>49</sup> The concept of ‘doing history’ derives from J.H. Hexter writing some 30 years ago. Briefly what he suggested is that the discrete facts of history are as a series of points without lines. The historian weaves a web of interpretation between these points to give them shape and meaning to tell a story of the past. In doing this the historian uses the ‘first record’ i.e. all the material remains of the past, but brings to it a ‘second record’ i.e. all the mental attributes and experience the historian brings to bear when working on the first record. Doing history is a process of enquiry, evidence-based interpretation and construction of the past, a debate and the study of the human condition. A good explanation of ‘doing history’ can be found in Dean, J. (2002) *Doing History: theory, practice and pedagogy*, in Jeppie (ed): 99-116

<sup>50</sup> An indication of how strong the view still is of history as facts was illustrated in a recent article in a newspaper about the protest against a cartoon in a History textbook used in KwaZulu-Natal, which, the IFP say, will damage the legacy left by the IFP leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. “Reverend Musa Zondi, spokesperson for the IFP, told the *Mail & Guardian Online* on Tuesday: “History is fact. We can’t accept this book as fact. It is biased propaganda. In one of the places [in the textbook] there is a cartoon done by Zapiro showing the leader of the IFP signing on to the new South Africa with [the] blood of the innocents from the political violence. All the other parties have a write-up regarding the agreement

never really settled and black colleagues continued to hold the view that historical research was scientific, but did not re-open the discussions during the writing process.<sup>51</sup>

The debates around appropriate content knowledge were not only about memory, identity but also about legitimacy. Whose narratives would form the new collective memory with its linked collective identity and who had the right to decide? Ironically, however, these were not debates that drew on vernacular memories located in vernacular cultures, but about vernacular memory and identity, filtered through the lens of white revisionist or radical historians researching and writing in the 1970s and 1980s. Historiography plays a key role in the construction of a common memory: those who control images of the past shape the present and possible ideas of the future.<sup>52</sup> Historiography in post-conflict societies generally becomes an important site for the recovery and re-organisation of collective memory suppressed during the previous regime. In South Africa, however, the output of historical research of two decades of revisionist historians had already contributed to organising and shaping counter-memories during apartheid. Their interpretations underpinned the 1992 and 1993 history debates and both the General Education and Training and Further Education and Training history writing groups drew almost unquestioningly on their work to create a content framework. This could be regarded as continued suppression of vernacular narratives by ‘colonial’ historians that might otherwise have been privileged in the post-conflict curriculum.

Sprenen has argued that it is useful to examine policy borrowing as it reveals the complex ways in which policy decisions are influenced by the shifting roles of global and local participation.<sup>53</sup> History in the National Curriculum Statements demonstrates

---

for the new South Africa, but, with the IFP, only the cartoon is used. The ANC spilled as much blood." "History must be factual. It is fact the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. If it rose in the north and set in the south, it has to be fact. Events of the past must be tabulated in historical fact. Children who are taught history cannot exercise judgement," said Zondi. ' *Mail & Guardian Online*, 14 May 2008

<sup>51</sup> Personal communications with group members.

<sup>52</sup> Levy, D (1999) The Future of the Past: Historiographical Disputes and Competing Memories in Germany and Israel, *History and Theory* 38, No. 1: 51

<sup>53</sup> Sprenen, C.A. (2004) Appropriating Borrowed Policies: Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa. Steiner-Khamsi (ed) (2004) *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending* New York:

this, reflecting not only the debates within the progressive history community in South Africa in the early 1990s referred to in Chapter 5, but also the influence of the strong links that two of the General Education and Training History writing team had with the developments of history education in the United Kingdom (UK) and with a particular approach developed by the UK-based Nuffield Primary History Programme.<sup>54</sup> Once the internal contestations within the history writing group had been resolved, the dominance of the academic policy network and the high profile given to history education by Minister Asmal, enabled the History writing team to push the boundaries of the brief given to the writing groups.<sup>55</sup> The brief required that each team produce:

- A detailed list of learning outcomes and assessment standards by grade (from Grade R – 9). These elaborate what learners should be able to do and how learners can or should demonstrate their grasp of each learning outcome (evidence of integrated skills and knowledge or understanding).<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, the form and content of the learning outcomes and assessment were specified.

Learning Outcomes should

- specify the sequence of core knowledge/content and skills to be taught in each learning area at each grade level

---

Teachers College Press: 101. See also Jansen, J. (2004) Importing Outcomes-Based Education into South Africa: policy borrowing in a post-communist world. Phillips, D. & Ochs, K. (eds) *Education Policy Borrowing: historical perspectives* Oxford Issues in Comparative Education, Oxford University Press.

<sup>54</sup> June Bam, whose role was the overall Management of the GET Social Sciences Writing Team and myself.

<sup>55</sup> While we had support from the academic members of the Ministerial Project Committee, we experienced some antagonism from the DoE officials who had been part of the original C2005 process. The MPC was, however, dominated by the academic network. The members were: Linda Chisholm (Chair), Salama Hendricks (DoE), Edcent Williams (DoE), Lebs Mphahlele (DoE), Prof. John Volmink, Prof. Thembi Magi, Penny Vinjevold, Fathima Dada. Linda Chisholm was appointed as Mentor of the Social Sciences working group, which provided added support for the emerging history curriculum. (DoE (2001) *Briefing Documents*) The Secretariat headed up by Salama Hendricks was composed of DoE officials. My experience in the follow-up processes was that she in particular tried to reassert influence once the Learning Area writing had finished and the supporting documents were being created to try through Learning Programme Guidelines to nudge the new Learning Area Statements closer to C2005. It seemed we had to be tirelessly vigilant to retain the integrity of the new Social Sciences Learning Area.

<sup>56</sup> DoE (2001) *Road Map for the Development of the NCS: Principles and Design Briefing Document* DoE Ministerial Project Committee: January/February 2001: 5

- represent an integrated skill and content statement

Assessment Standards should

- describe the expected level and range of performance for each learning outcome at each grade.<sup>57</sup>

The brief was clearly aligned as closely as possible to the original Curriculum 2005, but was inimical to an enquiry-based history curriculum. The main aspects of the brief were carried out in the new history curriculum – learning outcomes, assessment standards and content per grade. However, the content framework was separated from the Learning Outcomes, abandoning the principle of integrating content within the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards demanded by the brief.<sup>58</sup>

The Learning Outcomes that were finally adopted were: Historical Enquiry, Historical [conceptual] Knowledge and Understanding, and Historical Interpretation for the General Education and Training Band (GET); and Enquiry Skills, Historical Concepts, Knowledge Construction and Communication and Heritage for the Further Education and Training Band (FET).<sup>59</sup> There was fierce debate in the FET writing group about the inclusion of a fifth Learning Outcome that would have required pupils to ‘demonstrate knowledge of career opportunities’ for those who took history. This reflected the persistence of the notion that history had to demonstrate economic value in order to be able to compete with other, more commercially orientated subjects.<sup>60</sup>

A basic aim of both the GET and FET was to provide teachers and pupils with the tools (skills and processes) that would enable them to engage in what Applebee has termed ‘knowledge-in-action’ – a curriculum which would allow pupils to take part in disciplinary practices through appropriate activities.<sup>61</sup> In developing skills and

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid: 5

<sup>58</sup> DoE (2002) *Revised national Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) Social Sciences Policy*

<sup>59</sup> DoE (2002) *Revised national Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) Social Sciences Policy*;

DoE (2003) *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) History*

<sup>60</sup> Own notes during the writing process.

<sup>61</sup> Applebee, A (1996) *Curriculum as Conversation: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning* (University of Chicago Press) Applebee’s notion of ‘curriculum as conversation’ –

processes associated with historical enquiry and engaging with issues of interpretation and bias, it was hoped that no historical narrative could again become hegemonic, dominating to the exclusion of other narratives. Pupils would be taught to recognise distortions and manipulation in history texts. These could be demonstrated in the context of a content framework that detailed content per grade.

The rewriting of the history curriculum had not followed the predictable course evident in other post-conflict societies, such as Eastern Europe, of denouncing the past and celebrating the present and new heroes; rather what was created was an official history which aimed ‘at permitting the unofficial, the hidden, to become visible’.<sup>62</sup> One official narrative was not replaced by another; rather there was an attempt to provide for diverse memories, usually subjugated knowledges, recognising the South African diversity. The curriculum attempted to redress ‘the invisibility of the formerly marginalized and subjugated voices’ as well as locating South African history more clearly within African continent.<sup>63</sup> In the content framework the curriculum reflects two of the four categories identified by Ashcroft as responses to ‘colonial’ history – that of *interjection* as well as *interpolation*.<sup>64</sup> As far as content was concerned it clearly opened the way for the interjection of counter narratives. It did not reject the old narratives, but placed them in the context of a broader canvas of narratives from vernacular histories, previously marginalised in history education, clearly indicating an alternative, ‘truer’ picture than the one previously told. The content framework when placed in relation to the learning outcomes which required enquiry skills and a critical analysis of narratives of the past to recognise bias in

---

‘knowledge-in-action’ allows pupils to take part in disciplinary practices through appropriate activities. Through engaging with the content, pupils learn to participate in conversations by appropriating the conventions that have traditionally structured speech [or practice] in particular disciplines (in this case, history) – they enter into the particular traditions of knowing and doing. To do this effectively, demands the appropriate pedagogical content knowledge and range and depth of content around which to structure conversations.

<sup>62</sup> Chisholm, L (2004): 188

<sup>63</sup> DoE (2002) National Curriculum Statement: History

<sup>64</sup> Refer to the discussion in the previous chapter. Ashcroft (2001) The curriculum was structured around the interplay between propositional (know that) knowledge and procedural (know how) knowledge – bringing together the narratives of the past with evidence and the enquiry process.

authorship and provide for *interpolation* or the interruption of the dominant narrative by destabilising the very forms through which the dominant narrative was produced.<sup>65</sup>

Given the ongoing divisions and racialised identities that are the legacy of apartheid within South African society and the perceived lack of a cohesive national identity, evidence suggests that a history curriculum that has the possibility of constructing identity located in the democratic nation has a greater potential for contributing to post-conflict reconciliation and national identity, than a curriculum that substitutes one dominant official narrative for another. In the aftermath of internecine identity-based conflict in societies in which victims and perpetrators have to co-exist, nation-building can best be served by a curriculum that supports democratic traditions and enables, what Giroux has termed, border crossing. The new ‘official history’ through a commitment to the idea that historical ‘truth’ can be subjected to rigorous analysis by entering conversations structured by the ‘disciplinary traditions’ and that there are complex histories within the South African experience, provided potential opportunities for ‘border crossing’ and for thinking one another’s histories. The history curriculum became an ‘open’ rather than ‘closed’ text.

According to Giroux’s concept of border pedagogy, pupils need to be provided with opportunities to engage with texts that both affirm and interrogate the complexity of their histories. They are not seen as a cohesive group, but young people whose ‘multilayered and often contradictory voices and experiences, intermingle with the weight of particular histories that will fit easily into the master narrative.’<sup>66</sup> It is also about creating classroom (and curriculum) conditions that facilitate pupils’ ability to speak, write and listen in a ‘multiperspectival language’. Within this discourse, pupils are engaged as border-crossers who challenge, cross, remap and rewrite borders as they enter into counter-discourse with established boundaries of knowledge, assisting

---

<sup>65</sup> This is about understanding how historical narratives are constructed and for what purpose. The Learning Outcomes for Social Sciences History from as early as Grade 5 require pupils to ‘recognise that there can be more than one version of an historical event; and Grades 8 and 9 to evaluate sources for reliability, to identify bias and stereotypes, to analyse information in sources, construct and justify an argument using evidence from sources.

<sup>66</sup> Giroux, HA (1992) *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* London: Routledge: 30-40

those deemed ‘other’ to reclaim their own histories and voices. Instead of a common culture, he calls for the construction of a new common language, a democratic language. This is the crux of identity located in the democratic nation: it is a view of national identity that includes diverse traditions, histories, and the expansion of democratic public life.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, curriculum needs to make the relationship between authority, ethics and power central to a pedagogy that is intended to expand rather than close down the possibilities of a democratic society.<sup>68</sup> It could be argued that the new curriculum has, all things being equal, the potential for delivering on the national democratic revolution. However, things are seldom equal, particularly in a post conflict society of deep division not only along identity but economic lines. Therefore, there are major caveats: in a society with a divided and traumatic past such a history curriculum might allow for avoidance by former perpetrators and the continuation of the previous master narrative on the one hand and/or by traumatised victims on the other; and secondly, with the continued legacy of inequality in education, this is a curriculum that may remain out of the reach of some, both teachers and pupils.

It furthermore goes without saying that the construction of a ‘democratic’ curriculum provides no guarantees that democratic ideals and practices will be transferred to the classrooms. Not only is there the much written-about gap between policy and practice that occurs in any classroom, but in South Africa there are huge gaps between the best and worst resourced classroom; between various forms of teacher training; in the depth of subject knowledge; there are differing understandings about the nature of history education; about democracy; and more important, the legacy of apartheid in our deeply racialised identities influences both interpretation of history curriculum and the way in which teachers engage with the apartheid past in their classrooms.<sup>69</sup> In

---

<sup>67</sup> Giroux, H.A. (1997) *Pedagogy and politics of hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling* Boulder: Westview Press: 158, 193, 198, 268

<sup>68</sup> Giroux, H A (1994) Slacking Off: Border Youth and Postmodern Education, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 14: 2 (Fall): 347-366 [http://henryagiroux.com/online\\_articles/slacking\\_off.htm](http://henryagiroux.com/online_articles/slacking_off.htm) Accessed 8 May 2008

<sup>69</sup> There has been evidence of this in the evaluations and the opening journaling of the teachers who have participated in the *Facing the Past – Transforming our Future and Advanced Teacher Programme*. One of the components of the programme is to explore the way in which we in South



addition, the pupils bring learned attitudes and values from family and community into the classroom and at times these are in direct contrast to the values of the curriculum as research in the different context of Northern Ireland has revealed. There is a powerful social curriculum operating in South Africa. What pupils learn through observations of public life can be more powerful than what they might learn in schools.<sup>70</sup>

If the curriculum provides opportunities for ‘border crossings’, these have to be facilitated by the teachers within a democratic space. However, the power relations within South African classrooms by and large continue to be authoritarian and the residual attitudes and values of teachers trained during apartheid are largely unaddressed. Critical pedagogy while providing a wonderful vision of possibility and hope has little to contribute when it comes to the practical issues of implementation particularly within a post conflict and developing world context.

Deriving education values from a negotiated Constitution also does not mean that all citizens will accept such a values-based curriculum. A strong challenge came from a constituency whose values, in contrast to those of the Constitution, revealed narrow conceptions of culture and identity. They also revealed a fear of exposing their children to the intellectual and social diversity that the curriculum promoted. This was the fundamental Christian lobby which voiced objections to values embedded in the new curriculum and in particular, to the emerging history curriculum. The group accused the curriculum of being biased and Marxist and an attempt to indoctrinate learners. In a letter to a Cape Town newspaper, the *Cape Times* in October 2001, they claimed that the curriculum and history were:

informed by Marxist presuppositions. Marxism is steeped in an ideology of conflict, believing in the necessity of violent revolution to bring about social change...[and] this continuous focus on domination,

---

Africa have been shaped by apartheid and the ways in which this, mostly unconsciously, affects the way particularly apartheid is taught.

<sup>70</sup> Jansen, J. (2004) *Teologie kroniek? Theology Chronicle: The Politics of Salvation : Values, Ideology and the South African National Curriculum VERBUM ET ECCLESIA Jrg 25 (2)* In my own experience of visiting schools in an area in which poaching gangs are active, teachers have spoken of some of the academically most promising girls’ ambition is to be the girl friend of a gang leader.

exploitation and abuse will surely produce a generation of angry young people, primed for violent social action.<sup>71</sup>

The revision of Curriculum 2005 raises issues of political and personal agency. The Minister had become a powerful political lobby for history education and had opened the way for redefining positions around history education, reopening a discourse that had become taboo. The socio-political context had, however, provided both opportunities and constraints: the National Democratic Revolution debates within the ANC had contributed to the political context which enabled the emergence of an academic policy network resulting in curriculum revision; there was a growing concern about the increased racism in schools and a call from Mbeki to ‘deal frankly with questions of race and racism...pervasive throughout South African society and not least in our schools’;<sup>72</sup> and the Minister was able to make strategic use of the academic policy network, the Review Committee and the Values in Education Working Group and their reports to counter the opposition from SADTU, from within the ANC and from the Department of Education officials who had played a central role in the construction of Curriculum 2005.

The Minister exercised influence at two other levels to ensure that the history curriculum both reflected and asserted the political discourse of values and the democratic nation. Firstly, he took a personal and often direct interest particularly in the emerging FET History curriculum (National Curriculum Statement) in the work of the subject writing groups during the writing process. He held regular meetings with the field expert and the DoE co-ordinator, to interrogate them on the progress of the work to date. It was on his insistence, for example, that the origins of humans appeared in the FET history curriculum, even though it was already in the GET.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Cape Times, October 2001. What was interesting about the fundamental Christian lobby was that it cut across racial lines.

<sup>72</sup> Asmal: Speech to parliament 13 January 2000.

<sup>73</sup> However, he did not always get his way with the insertion of content. He had been given Jared Diamond’s book, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, which broadly suggests that the availability of natural resources were the determining factor in the unequal technological development of continents. He wanted this perspective included in the curriculum. He was dissuaded by the counter arguments of the Field Expert. My own notes of that time as well as information from Yonah Seleti. Interview with Prof Yonah Seleti, 20 May 2008.

Secondly, he was also able to exert influence through the national Ministerial Committee for History and the South African History Project. Three members of the six-member history writing team, including the convenor of the writing team, were on the staff of the South African History Project (SAHP).<sup>74</sup> The field expert who had been appointed to the Social Sciences in FET was also the Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for History, a body hand-picked by the Minister.<sup>75</sup> A sub-committee of the Ministerial Committee for History met regularly with the convenor and the other two members of the SAHP who were on the writing team to review the progress of the FET history curriculum and to make significant input. The perception certainly was that the minister exercised substantial agency during the curriculum writing processes.<sup>76</sup>

### **Public history and the construction of official memory**

While a democratic curriculum can, theoretically at least, contribute to the strengthening of democracy in transitional societies, it does not satisfy the political imperative for a ‘usable past’ that will provide a new official narrative that can serve to legitimise the post-conflict state. The context of the negotiated settlement, the Government of National Unity set up in 1994 and Mandela’s programme of reconciliation meant that South Africa had not followed the expected trajectory of most other post-conflict states in destroying the official monuments and memorials of the previous oppressive regime. The dramatic media images of toppling statues were not repeated in South Africa. As a result, there was an emotional as well as political imperative to claim ideological space in this landscape of colonial and apartheid memorials to white domination in South Africa, and to interpolate the struggle narrative with the official narrative of the apartheid regime in the public history education arena. The History curriculum for the Further Education and Training furthermore, consciously included a learning outcome that requires critical interaction with heritage, which includes monuments and memorials, commemorative events and

---

<sup>74</sup> Pototo Sangoni, Claire Dyer and myself.

<sup>75</sup> Prof Yonah Seleti

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Prof. Yonah Seleti, 20 May 2008. Also my own perception as convenor of the History writing team.

oral history, among others. This bridges the gap that can occur between history education and history in the public domain.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission process began the construction of a new official narrative located in the traumatic South African past. The Final Report of the TRC released on 21 March 2003, a significant date being the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre and now Human Rights Day, made recommendations about ‘symbolic reparations such as monuments and museums’ to commemorate the victims of apartheid and facilitate the communal process of remembering and commemorating the pain and the victories of the past.<sup>77</sup> The Report emphasized that it had been apartheid as a system that was the crime against humanity and that ‘virtually every black South African’ could be considered to be a victim of human rights abuse.<sup>78</sup> The proposed programme of memorials would locate commemoration within communities drawing on vernacular cultures and memories to help to process the pain and trauma of those who did not testify at the TRC.

However, while the TRC Report emphasised the importance of community involvement in a programme of memorials, when President Mbeki accepted the TRC Final Report in Parliament on 15 April, he spoke rather to official public memory projects, announcing that a trust had been set up to implement the main commemoration project, Freedom Park, near Pretoria.<sup>79</sup> On 16 December 2004, President Mbeki elaborated in an address commemorating the week of reconciliation at the site of the newly-launched Freedom Park. He noted:

The creation of this Freedom Park is in part a response to the recommendations of the TRC, that we should retain the national

---

<sup>77</sup> TRC Report, volume Six, Section Two, Chapter Seven: Report of the Reparation & Rehabilitation Committee, Implications and Concluding Comments: 163

<sup>78</sup> Ibid: 160-161

<sup>79</sup> Statement by President Thabo Mbeki to the National Houses of Parliament and the Nation, on the occasion of the tabling of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Cape Town, 15 April 2003.

memory of our past and collectively honour those who fought and sacrificed for our freedom...<sup>80</sup>

Other major monuments in this programme include Robben Island, the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, the Women's Gaol on Constitution Hill in Johannesburg and the Hector Pietersen Memorial Museum in Orlando West, Soweto.

Memorials and monuments are intended to preserve carefully selected memories for the present and future. They are a means of attempting to shape peoples' perceptions of the current socio-political order, as well as attempting to forge national identity, which is particularly important for post-conflict societies. According to Bodnar, public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions and is produced from a political discussion that involves fundamental issues about the 'entire existence of a society: its organisations, structure of power and the very meaning of its past and present'.<sup>81</sup> For him, public memory is symbolic, incorporating a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand its past, present and by implication, its future:

The major focus... is not the past, however, but serious matters in the present such as the nature of power and the question of loyalty to both official and vernacular cultures. Public memory speaks primarily about the structure of power in society because that power is always in question...<sup>82</sup>

Mbeki's programme of memorials is a visible, symbolic and emotional statement of power, staking an ideological claim to public spaces. This has resulted in the emergence of an exclusive official narrative located in the liberation struggle that not

---

<sup>80</sup> President Mbeki (2004), Address at commemoration of the week of reconciliation Freedom Park, Salvokop, City of Tshwane, 16th December 2004  
<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2004/tm1216.html> Freedom Park has become a somewhat confusing monument with the dominant theme being the apartheid heroes and freedom within democracy, but the part of the memorial is *Isivivane*, the symbolic resting place of all those who died in the many significant conflicts that helped to shape South Africa. Among these are the pre-colonial conflicts, slavery, genocide, wars of resistance, the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, the first and second world wars, and the liberation struggle and the inscription of names of those who died in all of these conflicts on a memorial wall. Freedom Park Information website:  
<http://www.freedompark.org.za/>

<sup>81</sup> Bodnar (1994): 14

<sup>82</sup> Ibid: 15

only excludes white South Africans, but that also excludes many of the victims of apartheid as well. It has also given the perception, at least among a number of principals in Western Cape schools, that one official narrative has replaced another in the school curriculum and because of this they are not encouraging their pupils to take history.<sup>83</sup>

While official memorials and commemorations are generally intended to evoke feelings of patriotism and national unity, in a post-conflict and still divided society such as South Africa, there is the potential for conflicting vernacular and official interests over a public memory that has become too exclusive. The implicit purpose of monuments is to foster a particular historical consciousness for transmission to the next generation,<sup>84</sup> but in interpreting history and fixing the narrative, they tend to close debate about the past. This carries with it the potential for creating deeper divisions. In such cases, local memorials located in vernacular cultures become sites of counter-memory. Examples of such sites include the memorial to those killed in the Trojan Horse incidents or the memorial to Amy Biehl, both in suburbs of Cape Town, which allow for continued discourses about the past in a way that carries greater potential than national official monuments for processing the trauma of ordinary people.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Information from conversations that I have had with principals.

<sup>84</sup> Marschall, S (2004) Gestures of compensation: post-apartheid monuments and memorials  
*Transformation* 55

[http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=category&sectionid=3&id=61&Itemid=6](http://www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=3&id=61&Itemid=6) : 79

<sup>85</sup> Michael Miranda, 11, Jonathan Claasen, 21, and 16-year-old Shaun Magmoed were killed on October 15, 1985 in Thornton Road, Athlone, when security force members, hiding in wooden crates on the back of what looked like a SA Transport Services truck, opened fire with shotguns on people they claimed had been throwing stones at the vehicle. The event was dubbed the "Trojan Horse" incident and sparked an international outcry. On August 25, 1993, while Amy Biehl, a Fulbright student from the United States, was driving three black colleagues back to Cape Town's Guguletu Township, a group of youths pelted her car with stones and forced it to stop. Dozens of young men then surrounded the car repeating the militant Pan Africanist Congress chant, "*One settler [white person], one bullet!*" Amy was pulled from the car, struck in the head with a brick as she tried to flee, and then beaten and stabbed in the heart while she lay on the ground. During the attack, Amy's black friends yelled that she was a "comrade" to no avail. Amy was carried back to the car after the attack by her friends who then drove her to the nearest police station where she died. Amy was 26 years old at the time of her murder.

## **Conclusion**

What should be done with the traumatic knowledge of the past? In societies emerging from conflict, the politics of memory and identity are integral to signalling a re-constituted nation. The construction of memory occurs on a number of ideological levels, and if curriculum is not considered broadly, as encompassing not only the formal national curriculum but the other sites of memory and ideological spaces, then the educative nature of such programmes may be missed.

There is a close relationship between political discourses and educational discourses and when the structures of state are not entrenched but still shifting, then the official-vernacular history nexus also shifts, as does the relationship between public practices of memory, official and vernacular histories and history education. The ascendancy of first the labour, then the academic policy network, and the influence of each on the value placed on history education, was related to the shifting discourses within government and education. What influences the choices made and who has the legitimacy to make the choices about memory and identity is closely linked to dominant political discourses.

The political context, in which the transition from conflict to democracy happens, as well as the ongoing legacy of a painful past, is critical to understanding the education policy choices. In this regard, African states have particular pressures if they need to rely on development aid. South Africa took a deliberate decision not to accept such aid, but the need to participate in the global economy networks had fiscal implications which in turn had implications for education policy. In South Africa, the initial transformation agenda was curtailed with the change in economic policy from Reconstruction and Development to a more conservative fiscal approach. The periods of the two economic policies broadly coincided with the two major education policy developments: Curriculum 2005 and the (Revised) National Curriculum Statements. In the first, history education was perceived as having no economic value and therefore no place in the curriculum. In the second, history education was regarded as central to a values-driven curriculum.

However in the broader history education arena, the question of a new collective memory and identity was never in doubt. Claiming of the ideological memory space is critical to the identity of a new society that has broken with the identity-based conflict of the past. In South Africa, given the negotiated political settlement, some of the ideological spaces had to be shared, but after 1999 there has been an increasingly confident programme of constructing a particular, ANC, version of the past. There is an educative purpose in this programme of commemoration that provides moral and political legitimacy for the current government.

The next chapter places the South African story about curriculum change in comparative relief by examining how these processes unfold in post-conflict Rwanda. The focus of this study is the construction of memory and identity in curriculum in societies emerging from conflict. In order to understand these processes, a brief historical context for each country is provided. In each case, this compared the construction of the conflict narrative and the nature of the conflict. However, it is unethical to attempt comparisons of trauma. There can be no hierarchy of suffering. Further comparisons are made of the links between the political and curriculum processes of the construction of memory and identity in the post-conflict states within the context of the legacy of trauma. My contention is that it is critical to understand this legacy and the intergenerational transfer of trauma in order to gain insight into memory, identity and the history curriculum.