THE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSITION: ITS IMPACT ON TEACHER EDUCATION WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA

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Teacher Training Reform: What is at Stake?
Defining the Problem

This paper deals with the management of societies in transition and, more specifically, the management of teacher education in societies in transition. Since no firmly established and generally accepted theory in this field exists, a broad overview is preferred to an in-depth analysis.

In this paper societies in transition are defined as societies in a state of radical social, economic and political change (Tucker et al, 1991). While the process has no clear point at which it starts or stops, there is clear evidence that old paradigms are extensively modified or replaced during transition.

In presenting a broad overview it is necessary to determine whether the problem has general currency and to ask questions regarding the manner in which transition impacts on teacher education, what theoretical approaches have been offered to the management of societies in transition and what the implications are for the management of teacher education in South Africa.
The Currency of the Problem

South Africa is an example of a society in transition. A new political dispensation is currently evolving. Legislation enacted during 1991 has irrevocably altered the social structure of South African society and it is generally suggested (see Sunter, 1989) that amended economic attitudes and policies are also required in order to establish a legitimate and viable South African society.

South Africa is not unique in this respect. The USSR for example, is currently in a period of radical political, economic and social change (Gorbachev, 1991). The Soviet experience is only one instance of a phenomenon which has, in some measure or other, affected every single state of what used to be the East Bloc. In South America a number of states have in the recent past moved from military rule and interventionist economic policies to forms of democracy and market economies.

Even more stable societies may be perceived as experiencing transition. Britain, during the Thatcher years, certainly experienced fundamental changes in its basic political paradigm, economic ground rules and social structures. A victory for private enterprise, the privatisation of state enterprises and social changes including fundamental changes to educational structures (GB, 1988) would seem to support this interpretation. The fusion of West and East Germany, likewise, has introduced a period of transition for the Germans.

Since it is clear that a number of societies are currently in
transition and many may be so in future, the impact of societies in transition on their educational structures, including those for teacher education, is a valid theme for discussion at a comparative education conference such as this one.

The Problem Defined in Terms of Teacher Education

In identifying the challenges which a society in transition sets to its teacher education sector, it is assumed that an education system

- operates within a given context and has to take into consideration existing parameters

- accepts the preparation of people for the society they live in as one of its main functions (cf. RSA, 1984)

- has an internal authority structure which can be said to be weakly coupled (Weicks, 1978)

- is an interwoven structure in which many interest groups are closely associated to ensure that the system produces education of a type which also serves their specific needs (Stone, 1981)

- has goals which are often ambiguously articulated since they have to accommodate sometimes conflicting interests of the various stakeholders (Baldridge, 1983)

- must be accepted as legitimate by its clients to the extent that
they are willing to use the services it provides (Wasburn, 1982).

In cases where societal transition is completed successfully, such a transition will by definition result in political, economic, social and other changes. These changes will occur in the paradigms underlying practice in various fields, the value systems which support such practice, the attitudes of the community and the actual skills involved. Such transition must result in the alteration of education, practices which are related to the changes in the various fields and at the level of theory, supporting values, attitudes and skills. These alterations will be reflected in changes in teacher education as well.

Many would hold that education should be systematically used as an agent of change. This is a debatable viewpoint which is not pursued here. It is simply accepted that, unless an education system maintains a large measure of coherence with its supportive society, a dysfunction will occur, leading to increasing marginalisation or even rejection of the system.

Merely to mirror what is happening in society requires that teacher education institutions in transitional societies amend their curricula, both overt and hidden. This is the first task of teacher education in such societies. Present programmes must change in such a way that they maintain coherence with the changes occurring in the society at large, in order to ensure that they do not become irrelevant.

Teacher education however, is not only involved with initial training of aspirant teachers. Of equal importance is the need to change the
theoretical models, value systems, attitudes and skills of teachers already in practice. Many of these teachers may feel that they have a vested interest in the status quo, may feel insecure in their changing environments or simply find the adoption of behavioural patterns required, too difficult to contemplate (see Toffler, 1981). Since it is the functioning educational system which requires change, it is of the greatest importance to modify the attitudes and behavioural patterns of these teachers. This then could be defined as the second area which demands attention from teacher education: that of in-service training. Any amendments required in PRESET must be mirrored in INSET programs. However, it must be borne in mind that INSET is dealing with a public which is professionally established and hence behaviour patterns and attitudes may be more firmly fixed than those of young students keen to join the teaching profession. Amended INSET programs should therefore be geared to deal with behaviour and professional patterns which are firmly entrenched as a result of long experience. Furthermore, since INSET is often provided by educational advisors allied to the system, provision needs to be made for such uncritical adherence to the status quo as might exist.

The professional inertias suggested here has been amply demonstrated to exist in a number of countries (see Cozijnsen and Hoksbergen, 1986 with regard to the Netherlands and Cohen and March, 1974 with regard to the United States of America). It provides a demanding challenge to teacher education since the teachers in the system not only need to be orientated regarding new attitudes, values and skills, but also need to change their teaching practice in accordance with this new knowledge. It is also a demanding challenge since this has to be done without
affecting freedom of conscience.

An education system is a weakly coupled structure in which authority lines are maintained only while the value systems of the policy makers are largely similar to those held by the teaching professionals actively in practice (Heese, 1988). Furthermore such value system correspondence is highly unlikely during periods of transition. Consequently it can be expected that the implementation of methodological innovation and changes of teaching content, particularly those associated with new value systems, will be difficult to implement on a system-wide basis.

In times of transition the number of stakeholders the education system needs to involve, increases because those groups supportive of the transition are hardly likely to be the same as those groups which originally implemented the status quo. These new groups should be accommodated for they must participate in the development of the paradigm shifts which intellectually underpin the transition. Furthermore their participation is required in order to ensure the legitimacy of the system in transition.

Those stakeholders who have been involved in the system should also remain involved not only to ensure that conflict during the transition is minimized, but also to garner their support for the new paradigm.

Particularly in societies which accommodate diverse language, cultural, religious and ethnic groups, a balance must be found between that which is on the one hand common to all, inhibits discrimination, contributes
to national unity and is supportive of the new paradigm, and which on the other hand is necessary to recognise diversity so that minority groups will feel secure and consequently be prepared to co-operate and participate in a new and larger order.

The adaptation or reformulation of goals in order to make them compatible with the paradigms of the transition taking place while maintaining this balance also present problems to the teacher education sector. From the preceding reference to the stakeholders involved, it is clear that during the period of transition diversity of opinion on suitable goals for the education system increases rather than decreases. None the less, goals need to be formulated continually in order to ensure that the transition occurring elsewhere in the society is mirrored by parallel movement in the education system.

Theoretical Models for the Management of Transition

Transitions manifest themselves in very many forms. Some take place over a long period of time and without the conscious intervention of an identifiable leadership oligarchy. Examples of such transitions are the great socio-economic political transitions of the past, namely the Agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, the Renaissance and the Christian Reformation in the West. Others take place over very short periods of time and are the outcome of the direct actions of the populace at large. While they may take place under the direction of the leadership elite and even seem to have an embodying paradigm, they are largely spontaneous and cannot be said to be managed in all but the most rudimentary way. A number of revolutions, including the French
Revolution and the Russian Revolution are examples of this.

There are however, examples of societies in transition where change is perhaps as far-reaching as these examples mentioned above but which show clear evidence of having been managed. Transition in Britain during the eighties is an example of this.

If we consider this last group, those transitions which are managed, three approaches to such management are offered by theorists. In the South African context for instance, it has been suggested that social and economic change should precede political transition (Tucker et al., 1991). It is said that the violence and instability which has recently been endemic in South African society and fortunately shows signs of abating, will not entirely stop until such time as the most basic needs of people are addressed. This would need a significant and observable change in living standards to be brought about by the provision of adequate housing, medical services and education not only by the State but also by the involvement of private enterprise.

A second approach holds that meaningful economic and social change is not possible unless it is preceded by political change. Only political empowerment will create an environment conducive to economic and social entitlement (Van Zyl Slabbert, as quoted by Tucker et al. 1991), and only after political change will interational sanctions be lifted and economic and social development follow.

The third model offered is one where managers of transition implement changes in a way which superficially seems to be haphazard, but, when
the whole pattern emerges, shows that it was clearly planned (see Groth, 1979) . It may encompass a mixture of the first two models.

Examples of each of these three patterns can be found in history. In Britain for instance, transition was led by political change. This was followed reasonably rapidly by a revitalisation of the British economy. The social changes which were effected had to wait until last. In so far as the Pacific Basin can be said to be in transition, I am told that economic change has preceded political change in some countries. The Huntington model too mirrors historical processes of which examples exist, namely that of a society in transition which has a leadership element, but, on reflection, it seems as if the process is not subjected to rational management.

Since examples have been cited of each model in operation, the process needs to be analysed further in order to determine under which circumstances which model is appropriate. The Huntington hypothesis utilises obfuscation which must lead to the confusion of the populace. In those transitions where the establishment of a democratic society is one of the goals, it would seem that this method of management is largely inappropriate. Its implementation would not lead to an informed electorate nor to legitimacy which is derived from knowing approval of political actions. If the Huntington hypothesis is largely discounted as a modern instrument for the management of transition, what about the other two? Under which circumstances should political change precede social and economic change and vice versa?

In order to answer this question one must look at those forces which
drive society and perhaps it is useful to turn to the traditional Maslow point of view, which assumes the existence of a hierarchy of needs which motivate individuals. While this doctrine is generally applied to individuals, an analysis of the dominant needs within a society might well give some indication as to which approach to follow. If lower order subsistence needs such as food, housing and basic medical services are urgently required then one would assume that economic change would be a prerequisite for successful political change. In those societies however, where the basic needs are met to the extent that life is tolerable, then higher needs including the wish for individuals to express themselves politically come into play. One would then expect two parameters in particular to determine which approach would offer the greatest chances of success. These are the level of poverty prevailing in the society and the level of political awareness. Using this measure one would expect transition in the Pacific Basin to have been driven initially by economic reform while transition in Britain should be driven by political change. This indeed has been found to be the case.

A further point to be considered is the time scale of the transition. If the transition is to be largely peaceful, the pace of the individual changes should not create new needs strong enough to destabilise the process. Soviet experience demonstrates that change can be too slow (leading to the putch). Gorbachev realised this and moved swiftly when power was restored to him.

On this evidence I would suggest, albeit hesitantly, that transformation is best managed if contextual factors are studied
thoroughly, priority of action is determined by analysing the dominant needs of the particular society at that time and steps are taken at a rate which ensures that new destabilising needs do not engulf the process.

South African Teacher Education in Current Context

The problem areas described briefly below apply to education in general, but also to teacher education. The status quo from which we would like to move away displays a number of deficiencies:

(1) The present system enjoys little support among a majority of South Africans who find its racial base, as expressed in separate education departments for the various population groups, unacceptable. This is amplified by inequality as far as the financing of education, the average qualifications of teachers and facilities are concerned. At the same time redundant or underutilized facilities exist in some education departments as a result of a decreasing growth rate and a trend towards urbanization, while a shortage is experienced in others. In general, dividing the education system along population lines has also played into the hands of forces polarizing the South African population.

(2) The present system has not succeeded in solving the problem of accommodating ever increasing numbers of pupils and students. During the past five years learner numbers in our schools have increased annually by an overall annual average of 4.4%. This
growth would reasonably require schools for 325 000 additional Black pupils annually. It would mean 325 schools catering for a 2 1000 pupils each. At a cost of approximately R2 million per school this means about R650 million annually for school buildings only. Without a strongly growing economy such growth figures can only lead to a build up of even greater backlogs than those already existing. Assuming an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:30, approximately 10 000 additional teachers would be required to ensure that education standards are maintained.

(3) Maintaining standards is another challenge. At present 15 % of Black pupils entering school can be expected to reach grade 12 after 12 years of schooling. This figure is indicative of an inordinately high drop-out rate, brought about by backlogs in the provisioning of education, by political destabilization, by the use of English instead of the mother tongue as medium of instruction, by an oral culture as background instead of a modern written culture, etc. If the drop-out rate is to be reduced, more facilities and more teachers will be needed. This is indeed already happening and, as a result of steps taken, the pupil numbers in secondary schools have doubled since 1987. The same trend is evident in the number of senior certificates awarded to pupils.

It is clear that maintaining standards in the face of this unprecedented demand for education is one of the most daunting challenges facing education planners and managers in South Africa.

An analysis of the 1990 pass rates for the various educational
levels of Blake pupils makes it clear that from the first school year till the seventh the pass rate varies from 74% to 85%; and from the eighth to the eleventh year the pass rate varies between 61% and 63%; but in the twelfth year when an external examination is written, it plunges to a 34% pass rate. These figures indeed indicate the possibility of a large measure of "automatic promotion" from the first to the 11th grade, obviously resulting in many pupils being ill-equipped to face the rigorous school-leaving examination. It may also be indicative of relatively low standards and underqualified teachers.

(4) A fourth flaw in the present system is a strong tendency to be elitist. There is need to bring into the system an emphasis on career education and greater relevance to the world of work. An analysis of the present situation gives evidence of a small number of pupils choosing subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science. In this regard the percentages of Black pupils taking these subjects in 1988 were as low as 15.1% and 32.3% respectively. Furthermore, it can be shown that pupils from all population groups tend to choose mainly general or humanities-oriented study programmes. A dire need exists for more pupils to follow vocationally oriented or vocational study programmes. In this regard it seems necessary to reconsider the present school curriculum fundamentally with a view to a far greater emphasis on the world of work and entrepreneurship. The imbalance presently existing in the South African education system in this regard is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that for each student at technical colleges, 2 students are found at
technikons (technical higher institutions) and 7 students at universities.

(5) The system is also much too expensive to be affordable. Over the three year period 1981/82 and 1990/91 the total education budget increased by 57%. If one takes the increasing cost of education into account, this nominal increase represents a decrease of 6% in real terms. This decrease must be seen against the background of an economic depression, an annual increase of 4.4% in clientele and the fact that R1 out of every R5 of the national budget already goes to education.

Identifying the Dominant Needs

In order to apply the model evolved above to the South African situation, it becomes necessary to analyse the hierarchy of needs currently driving South African society. While South African society is highly fragmented and polarised and a complete needs analysis would be extremely complex, a simplified view may still illustrate some of the main points of the argument. I shall do a needs analysis of the population more or less of European descent and of the population of African descent.

The status quo has developed into an environment in which the so called White population is politically empowered and has, generally speaking and relative to world norms, a reasonably high standard of living. Although only 74% of those pupils entering the system complete 12 years of schooling and although only 38% of the initial cohort enter
tertiary education, the education system is to a large extent geared to facilitate entrance to the tertiary education sector and not as much to the encouragement of entrepreneurship and the generation of wealth. It tends to provide entrance into the managerial and professional classes of society. This imbalance is currently being addressed and the necessity for more emphasis on career and technical education is widely acknowledged, but governmental initiatives currently being undertaken are often opposed. Also within the Black population the emphasis is to a very large extent on schooling which it is hoped will lead to white collar jobs.

The Black community is largely poor, often lacking good housing and health services. Revolutionary rhetoric has associated political empowerment with the righting of obvious imbalances in personal wealth and welfare in the South African community. None the less, the prevalence of poverty would indicate that social reforms should at least go hand in hand with political reforms.

Education in particular is seen as a vehicle for social and economic upliftment. The legitimacy of the current education system is rejected vigorously by the majority of black communities and in the light of the pre-eminent position which education holds in their aspirations, any delay in addressing educational issues must increase polarisation and decrease the chances of successful and peaceful transition.

If educational change in the RSA is a matter of extreme urgency, then altering existing patterns of teacher education is of even greater importance, since teacher education reform should actually precede
reform within the school system. Simply stated, teacher education should lead transformation in education.

**Implications for the Management of Teacher Education in South Africa**

Having established the priority which should be afforded changes in teacher education, attention can now be paid to some of the steps which need to be taken.

Education services in South Africa will not become fully functional until legitimacy is restored. If teacher education is to lead, then the restructuring of teacher education management structures should be a matter of the highest priority. This immediately presents a problem because two clearly opposite points of view have to be reconciled through a process of negotiation, namely a demand for central national control, versus a demand for devolution of authority to protect regional and minority interests. This is not a differentiation of opinion between Blacks and Whites, but also between Blacks and Blacks and Whites and Whites. The type of option which could provide a satisfactory compromise might be found in a depoliticized central control of national policy and recognition of the autonomy of all teacher training institutions.

South Africa's projected new education dispensation within a new constitution must still be negotiated. According to the results of an in-depth investigation launched since last year with inputs by many stakeholders, the result of which has been published in a discussion
paper, an eventual new education dispensation could be visualised as follows:

- Race or population group will not feature in the structuring of the provision of education in a future education model for South Africa. Opportunities for all will be provided without regard of race, sex or creed.

- A new dispensation will tangibly embody and express national unity, but will also accommodate diversity in respect of language, religion and culture.

- A balance will be struck between centralised and decentralised authority, and devolution of power will be a guiding principle.

- The new education model will provide for the fair sharing of responsibilities for education between political authorities at various levels and different stakeholders, parent communities, and the organised teaching profession in order to ensure effective and relevant education.

- Non-formal education within the framework of a qualification structure will be handled as a matter of priority.

- It will have to be a less expensive system, and financial responsibilities for providing education will have to be shared by stakeholders.
- The curriculum will be relevant to the world of work and not one-sidedly elitist.

Teacher education will be required to provide the theoretical basis, values, attitudes and skills required not only to implement the new system, but also to effect the transition.

Reformation of PRESET and INSET programmes thus clearly present a challenge. If the programmes are to be functional, they should be prefaced by goals appropriate to the transformed society and built on a system of common values which form the basis of a new constitutional dispensation and the education system, recognizing legitimate diversity and the interests of university groups.

No such common set of values exists. As approximately 80% of the population claim to be Christians, the Christian ethos coupled with freedom of religion, and a common love for one country may well prove to be the node around which such a value system may be established eventually. At this time, however, there is no consensus on political paradigms, economic models or even social structures for a transformed South Africa.

In order that the common values, goals and structures appropriate to teacher education in a transitional South Africa can emerge, an education conference or forum is envisaged and should be created in which all stakeholders will be represented and which will debate these issues publicly.
The final challenge is to ensure that new techniques, and programes based on new attitudes and values are implemented as soon as a measure of consensus is reached about them.

In this process, the role of the management of schools in encouraging and supporting change and creating the necessary structures including "district cadres" has been widely recognised. The fact that managerial support of the headmaster is required to ensure the effective implementation of these changes has also been widely documented (Joyce, Murphy, Showers & Murphy, 1989). The requirement that school management staff be trained in the managerial skills required to give such support, is a further challenge to teacher education.

In conclusion, it must be said that the management of transition remains a delicate process. The negotiating skills required to coax the needed consensus into existence are formidable. So too is the level of sensitivity to the needs of others. In this complex process, also in the field of teacher education, South Africa needs the understanding and support of the international community.
Bibliography


