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## *Public sector reforms and policy-making: A case of education in an emerging developmental South Africa*

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Reforming the public sector in South Africa began in earnest immediately after the first democratic elections in 1994. The appointment of the Presidential Review Commission to investigate the required reforms was one of the significant steps taken. According to the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (Department of Public Service and Administration 1995), government opted for the strategic change management approach. This model was believed to encapsulate the vision and mission of a transformed, integrated and equitable public service, based on the following principles: new forms of managerial leadership, decentralisation of decision-making power, democratisation of internal work procedures, inclusion of civil society organisations in the governance process, and development of an appropriate professional culture and ethos. In essence, the aspects of the model adopted typify reforms associated with the new public management and third generation reforms as described in the relevant literature (see, for instance, Halligan 2007).

This chapter discusses some of the significant reforms in policy-making that have found expression in South Africa's education policies and programmes since the advent of democracy. In addition, a brief perspective on South Africa's public policy-making processes is presented. The chapter examines education policy and/or reforms, using as the lens a notion of a developmental state. In this respect, a working definition of a developmental state is proposed, namely that a developmental state is 'one that is active in pursuing its agenda, working with social partners, and has the capacity and is appropriately organized for its predetermined developmental objectives' (Gumede 2008a: 9).

In the main, it is argued that if democratic South Africa is to produce informed, productive and progressive citizens who value and practise the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), it has to have an education system to match. Therefore, transforming the previously inequitable and fragmented system into an integrated and equitable one was not only important, but also a constitutional and moral imperative. In the same breath, the chapter contends that serious challenges remain, especially with regard to the contradictions brought

about by the implementation of the reforms. As such, and as a start, more attention should be devoted to the situation of the previously disadvantaged and to the former 'white' schools. Second, the gaps that exist between the skills needed by the economy and the labour supplied need urgent attention. Third, the challenges confronting the higher education system imply that there is still more to be done. Finally, South Africa is yet to determine explicitly the kind of education that is in line with the long-term plan or vision of the country. In other words, education policy is often reactive in South Africa instead of proactively guiding the education sector. Reforms should take place in time, guided by the context and future trajectory of a society instead of responding to ever-changing short-term interests of influential role-players.

As an important aside, perhaps, it is crucial to note that the discussion is located within the context of a grim backdrop in relation to the socio-economic status of the primary beneficiaries of education: the youth. Since the advent of democracy, one of the most vexing policy challenges facing government is that of widespread and continued youth unemployment. According to the report *Towards a Fifteen Year Review* (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services in the Presidency 2008), in 2007 youth unemployment stood at 22 per cent for young males and 35 per cent for young females. According to Smith (2011), 32.7 per cent of those in the 15- to 24-year-old cohort are not employed and not attending an education institution. As expected, the majority of youth within this bracket are black, female and unskilled. Another way of presenting the challenge of unemployment, in the context of education and training, is using the notion of *not in education, employment or training* (NEET). Cloete and Butler-Adam (2012) report that there were 3 200 000 young people in the 18- to 25-year-old age group who were NEET in 2010.

In the context of socio-economic transformation, this chapter argues that reforms of the education system since 1994 have been necessary and have worked relatively well in improving the governance of the education system, access to education and so forth. This is visible in the notable strides being made towards more inclusive, equitable and efficient policy-making processes between government and social partners and among the national and provincial levels as facilitated by various pertinent policies and legislation. This has, in turn, seen relatively significant increases in the participation and enrolment figures at school and higher education levels since the end of apartheid (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services in the Presidency 2008: 23).

The first section briefly discusses broad public sector policy reforms. Thereafter, I present perspectives on public policy-making in South Africa, within the context of creating a developmental state. The final section of the chapter discusses outcomes of the reforms undertaken in education.

### ***Public sector policy reforms in South Africa***

It is broadly agreed that within public sector management there has been a progression from the 'traditional administration' models, to 'managerialism' to 'new

public management' (NPM), to what can now be termed 'third generation reforms' (TGRs) such as the 'integrated governance' model. In a nutshell, the NPM is an approach to managing the public services in a manner that applies principles of management traditionally associated with the private sector or market economy. Halligan (2007, drawing on Hood 1991) mentions 'disaggregation, privatization and private focus' as the features of the NPM that are 'at the forefront' (2007: 219). Bale and Dale (1998) list the following elements as descriptors of the NPM notion:

... a move away from input controls, rules, and procedures towards output measurement and performance targets – the accountability framework; the devolution of management control with improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms; a preference for private ownership, contestable provision, and contracting-out of publicly funded services; the adoption of private-sector management practices in the public sector, such as short term contracts, performance-linked remuneration schemes ... (Bale and Dale 1998: 119)

Larbi (1999) mentions various forms of decentralisation of management within public services – such as increasing use of private sector markets, competition in the provision of public services and increasing emphasis on performance, outputs and customer orientation – as being among the key elements of the NPM. The TGRs are largely associated with improving coordination and integration, including strengthening those issues that deal with coordination and monitoring and evaluation. Lastly, 'traditional management' and 'managerialism' approaches are those associated with Confucius, Han Fei Tzu, Marx, Weber and Woodrow Wilson – earlier thinkers on public management. Perhaps to add: another important aspect of the governance arrangements that South Africa has put in place could be characterised as a combination of 'distributed institutional monopoly' and 'institutional pluralism' to borrow from Cohen and Peterson's (1999) administrative design framework; in effect, this implies a combination of various forms and types of decentralisation.

Gumede (2008a) suggests, in response to vast literature arguing otherwise, that in the case of South Africa the reforms were not as arbitrarily imported as they seem to have been in other African states. This is backed up by Adamokelun (2005), who classifies South Africa as an 'advanced reformer'. The other important issue regarding South Africa is that its reforms involved some 'home-grown' approaches. For instance, as Gumede (2011) posits, in a discussion on policy-making in South Africa between 1998 and 2009, the cluster system of governance appears to be mainly a South African innovation. Therefore, although there are still aspects of traditional management and managerialism in the South African public sector, it appears that there is more of an NPM approach and even more TGRs, such as in the integrated governance approach.

South Africa, since 1998, has been immersed in an 'integrated governance' or rather a 'joined-up' phase. This is evidenced by, among other things, the state's configuration

across the three spheres of government. The erstwhile Policy Coordination and Advisory Services that was located in the South African state's Presidency led the integrated governance approach until its disbandment in 2010. The Policy Coordination and Advisory Services unit not only dealt with policy-making and its various components, such as policy analysis, policy coordination and policy advice, but also led medium- to long-term planning and government-wide monitoring and evaluation. The functions of the Policy Coordination and Advisory Services unit were moved to the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation – the two new ministries that were set up 2009.

In relation to education, the reality is that, upon assuming state control, the democratic government inherited an education and training system fraught with imbalances due to apartheid policies. The vision of the new government with regard to education, as expressed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), became that of 'a future founded on recognition, democracy and peaceful coexistence and developmental opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief, and sex' (NDoE 1997b: 9). In this context, public sector reforms (PSRs) associated with education adopted various aspects of reform models that aimed at achieving the ideal committed to in the Constitution.

The task of government in realising such a vision, therefore, included action in the following four major areas: reorganising and rationalising the 19 departments of education into a unified system with a single national department of education and nine provincial departments responsible for the provision of schooling; phasing in of budgetary, human and infrastructure resources in line with the objective of enforcing the commitment of compulsory education for all South African children; collaborating with the national Department of Labour in developing an NQF that would, among other things, provide an instrument for an integrated approach to education and training and ensure quality assurance; and implementing additional developmental interventions around curriculum development, open learning, support services for learners with special educational needs, teacher education policy, adult basic education and training (ABET) and early childhood development (NDoE 1997b). There are further, more recent changes that have taken place in order to improve education in South Africa. Two separate national departments of education were established in 2009: the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). With regard to higher education, there is a Green Paper for Post-school Education and Training, released by the DHET for comments in 2012 (and still under discussion at the time of writing of this chapter). With regard to general education, various initiatives such as reviewing the curriculum and/or changing the outcomes-based education system are taking place (also at the time of writing this chapter).

### *South Africa's public policy-making approach – A brief perspective in the context of a developmental state*

This section reviews literature on developmental states and compares different descriptions of a developmental state from different scholars and publications with the South African case. In brief, this section attempts to address the question of whether South Africa's public policies and the manner in which they are pursued define the country as a developmental state. Similarly, this section addresses the question of whether the manner in which government is organised and capacitated could make South Africa a developmental state. The overall conclusion is that South Africa is an *emerging* developmental state – a developmental state in the making.

#### *The emerging South African developmental state*

There are various definitions of a developmental state. One thing is clear, as Mkandawire (2001) argues: developmental states are 'social constructs' by numerous role-players in a particular society. This is similar to Onis' (1991) argument that the East Asian model of a developmental state is the product of unique historical circumstances. In fact, Castells (1997) identifies three areas that relate to culture in the case of East Asia: the Japanese communitarian approach, the Korean patrimonial logic and the Taiwanese patrilineal logic. Johnson (1982) saw the developmental state in Japan as exemplified by a 'plan rational state' where 'the politicians reign and the state bureaucrats rule' – the 'plan rational state' shaped economic development as it intervened in the development process and established 'substantive social and economic goals' (1982: 154). In addition, Onis (1991) indicates that the manner in which Amsden (1989) describes South Korea shows a case of a developmental state in action. For instance, Amsden's analysis suggests a South Korea that is a 'prototype case of guided market economy in which market rationality has been constrained by the priorities of industrialization' where 'government performed a strategic role in taming domestic and international forces and harnessing them to national economic interests' (Onis 1991: 112).

It is therefore not surprising that Evans (2007) argues that the 20<sup>th</sup> century developmental state (model) can no longer be used as a model for developing countries, for a number of reasons, especially given developments in new growth theory and institutional approaches to development. This is in line with Bagchi's (2000) review of various countries' experiences of developmental states, which leads to a conclusion that social capital and nationalism are critical factors for the successful construction of a developmental state.

Scholars in this field have proposed numerous ways of examining whether or not any state is developmental. Mhone (2004), for instance, suggests that one needs to look at whether or not the state is developmental in its thinking and action, as well as if it is organised in a way that makes 'developmentalism' feasible. Mhone defines developmentalism as a 'proactive role of the state in pursuing and defining a developmental vision to be attained in the long-term, in coordinating economic

activities and steering them toward desired outcomes, mobilizing and synergizing class and social forces in support of the developmental agenda' (2004: 1). In a sense, this is similar to Mkandawire's (2001) differentiation between two components of a developmental state: the ideological and the structural.

Another point about the characteristics of developmental states is that they are traditionally associated with economic development. Bagchi (2000), for instance, defines a developmental state as 'a state that puts economic development as the top priority of governmental policy and is able to design effective instruments to promote such a goal' (2000: 398). Economic development is largely associated with industrialisation and/or industrial policy. This perspective seems to feature prominently in definitions of developmental states by leading scholars in this field (see, for instance, Johnson 1982; Amsden 1989; and Evans 1995).

A different perspective, which emphasises broader development, is presented by other leading scholars. However, it appears that all scholars highlight similar characteristics of the developmental state. For instance, although Leftwich's (1995) definition of a developmental state seems to focus on broader development, his model contains characteristics similar to Evans' (1995) notion of 'embedded autonomy'. It could, therefore, be concluded that a developmental state is one that is 'active in pursuing its agenda, working with social partners, and has the capacity and is appropriately organized for its predetermined developmental objectives' (Gumede 2008a: 9). Advancing human development, arguably, should be one of the main 'predetermined developmental objectives'. Edigheji (2010) indicates that the East Asian Tigers have been an inspiration with regard to how state power can provide strategic leadership to overcome developmental crises, achieving phenomenal human development goals.

The starting point for a democratic South Africa, it would seem, was institutional reforms side by side with the necessary legislative foundations. This process is continuing, with an increased focus on building and entrenching effective governance and service delivery institutions to fulfil the promises of the Constitution. Effective governance and service delivery institutions would be manifest in the general enforcement of the rule of law, relatively healthy democratic institutions, a well-performing bureaucracy and strategic alliances between the state and civil society, notably the Tripartite Alliance partners of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party and, to a lesser degree, community-based organisations.

The second major step was getting the economy right. In 1994, when the first democratic government was voted into office, the economy was in an appalling state in many respects: double-digit inflation, a negative growth rate, a huge budget deficit and so on. Starting from the premise that a growing economy would increase the pace of service delivery, the expansion of human capabilities and the cohesion of the people of South Africa, the government engaged in an intricate economic

restructuring project. This is still under way, as the legacies of apartheid colonialism remain.

The third major step for achieving a democratic South Africa was a direct and explicit social policy that focused on eradicating poverty and strengthening social cohesion. Alongside further restructuring of the economy, this will probably occupy government business and its partners for many years to come – South Africa still requires a robust social policy to transform social institutions, social relations and so on. Bagchi's (2000) points about social capital for a developmental state are pertinent in this regard. Similarly, Evans' (2007) recommendations for 21<sup>st</sup> century developmental states, in relation to the new kind of 'embedded autonomy', are critical. Finally, the various dimensions of state capacity that Cummings and Nørgaard (2004) describe would have to be in place to accomplish a fully fledged developmental state for South Africa.

The manner in which the democratic South African government sequenced the country's transformation agenda can arguably be characterised as a developmental state approach. Literature on developmental states highlights institutions, economic growth and broader development, involving various sectors in society. This is largely what South Africa has tried since 1994. The institutional set-up, as described above, is improving. However, the performance of the economy and speed with which South Africa is addressing social ills such as poverty and inequality leave a lot to be desired. Gumede (2008b) reviews relevant studies and concludes that 'the question of the extent, of both poverty and second economy challenges, remains unresolved. Different researchers give different estimates, although the trend seems to show a decline in poverty in South Africa which appears to have begun around year 2000 or so' (2008b: 21).

Onis (1991) argues in the case of East Asian developmental states that they were shaped by their historical circumstances. So too, the ANC – the ruling political party in government in South Africa at the time – aspires to 'build a developmental state that is shaped by the history and socio-economic dynamics of South African society' within the 'National Democratic Revolution' paradigm (ANC 2007: 5). The ANC's ideology (i.e. the national democratic revolution) is clear in many government documents and in political discourse. The gist of the 'National Democratic Revolution' (NDR) is the creation of a 'National Democratic Society'; a society where all citizens have equal rights, access and responsibilities – a society free of poverty and underdevelopment. The NDR ideology is arguably one aspect of a developmental state to which Mkandawire (2001) alludes. A second aspect, the structure, is clear in the detail of what the ANC deems a developmental state to be. The revised *Strategy and Tactics* (ANC 2007) states that the developmental state would have the capacity to intervene in the economy; implement social programmes that address unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment; and have the capacity to mobilise the people. With some exceptions, the ANC seems to be adopting Leftwich's (1995) model of developmental states and combining it with Evans' (1995) 'embedded

autonomy' recommendation, while trying to ensure the 'ideology–structure nexus' of Mkandawire (2001).

From Leftwich's model, the following components seem to feature in the South African case: a determined developmental elite; relative autonomy; the effective management of non-state economic interests; and legitimacy and performance. With regard to the ideology–structure nexus, the attributes that the ANC lists as the main attributes of the (envisaged) South African developmental state include issues such as the proposed strategic orientation (which emphasises people-centred and people-driven development) and the capacity to lead the establishment of an overarching developmental agenda and the mobilisation of people around it. The ANC appears to draw also from Cummings and Nørgaard's (2004) dimensions of state capacity, which highlights organisational capacity (i.e. organisation of the state) and technical capacity (i.e. implementation capacity). Further, the ANC seems also to have tried to apply the notions of 'state–structure nexus' and 'institutional coherence' that Robinson and White (1998) see as important institutional attributes of a democratic developmental state.

### *Organisation and capacity of the emerging South African developmental state*

One of the most important aspects of developmental states is capacity or different kinds of institutional capacities. The *World Development Report* (World Bank 1997) describes state capacity as 'the ability to undertake and promote collective actions efficiently' (1997: 6). This is broader than administrative or technical capacities of civil servants. It entails, also, institutional mechanisms that provide politicians and civil servants with the necessary mix of flexibility, rules and constraints to enable them to act in the collective interest. This resonates with Cummings and Nørgaard's (2004) conceptualisation of state capacity along four dimensions: ideational, political, technical and implementational. Cummings and Nørgaard (2004) define ideational state capacity as the degree to which the state – its actors, role and policies – is legitimated and embedded in state institutions. 'Political state capacity' refers to effectiveness of state institutions in terms of governance structures and 'technical and implementational state capacities' refers to administrative capacities.

As indicated above, the organisation of the South African state remains cause for debate. Some scholars argue that government is too large. For instance, Luiz (2002) argues that it is problematic that the proportion of government expenditure going to salaries and wages keeps increasing. Others argue that there is a scarcity of technical capacity in government. For instance, Mhone (2004) sees a need for a 'nodal or pilot planning super-agency' as well as more capacity for policy formulation and implementation. The Ministry of Planning established in 2009 is, at least on paper, that 'nodal or pilot planning super-agency'.

To some extent there is merit in the argument that the emerging South African developmental state requires additional capacity. The organisational aspects require further consideration. The question is more one of whether the systems, such as

monitoring and evaluation and performance assessment, are effective in detecting inefficiency and deploying appropriate responses. Developments in the South African state's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, especially the setting up in 2009 of a new Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation, should assist. Similarly, the revised performance management systems should go a long way towards addressing inefficiencies in the public bureaucracy. However, whether the revised performance management systems will address these inefficiencies remains to be seen. Chibber (2002) argues that for any state to be effective, 'bureaucratic rationality must also be structured in an appropriate apportionment of *power* among state policy agencies' (2002: 952). Bureaucratic rationality, if the institutional setting is not supportive, can easily lead to processes that are not developmental or, rather, effective, as Chibber (2002) found in the case of India.

Overall, the analysis seems to suggest that South Africa, as a (weak) emerging developmental state, has approached social and economic development in a relatively sound manner. However, it could be argued that South Africa has not been a very effective state owing to its weak technical and implementational state capacity. South Africa could be described as a 'developmental state in the making', albeit a relatively weak one. The South African developmental state in the making – for it to be a fully fledged developmental state – has to have the capacities and systems that ensure that human development is further improved. One of the most important aspects of human development that needs further attention is education.

### *Transforming the South African education system*

Acknowledging the challenge of poverty and underdevelopment faced by the majority of South Africans, Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (NDoE 2001a) highlights that children raised in poor families are most at risk of infant death, low birth weight, stunted growth, poor adjustment to school, increased repetition of school grades and dropping out of school. This was cited as a strong enough case for the national education department to put in place an action plan to address the early learning opportunities of all learners, especially those living in poverty. The objective of government has been to increase access to and improve the quality of early learning and development programmes, particularly for poor children.

Government is implementing a number of other programmes such as ABET and a mass literacy campaign. These programmes are primarily geared at eradicating illiteracy and offer learning tools, knowledge and skills under nationally recognised qualifications. They have been made available to adults seeking to finish their basic education.

Further, acknowledging the dire impact of apartheid on special needs education, a policy to transform the education sector was effected in 2001 (in particular, through the publication of Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education – NDoE 2001b). During apartheid the segregation of learners on the basis of race

was extended to incorporate segregation on the basis of disability, so special schools were organised according to two segregating criteria: race and disability. Schools that accommodated white disabled learners were well resourced, while the few schools for black disabled learners were systematically under-resourced, resulting in only 20 per cent of learners with disabilities being accommodated in special schools (NDoE 2001b). For this reason, the national department continues to drive the policy on special needs education – outlining how the education and training system must transform to accommodate the full range of learning needs and the mechanisms that should be put in place to ensure this.

An additional notable education sub-sector is further education and training (FET), whose transformation was well articulated as the desire for a ‘coordinated, comprehensive, interlocking sector that provides meaningful experiences to learners at the post-compulsory phase’ (NDoE 1998: 10). A clear role was identified for the ‘new’ FET sector within the new economy and this was soon followed by the introduction of the FET Act (No. 98 of 1998).

Much has been said about the various education and training policies and relevant pieces of legislation since their introduction and during their years of implementation. Suffice it to say here that the argument that government has made progress in the expansion of the sub-sectors discussed above is persuasive. This has, according to Kraak (2008), been evident in increased access, headcount enrolment, investment by government and the private sector, and institutional rationalisation processes and regulation respectively.

Progress is also visible in the different sectors, as presented in the 2008 review of national policies for education in South Africa by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For instance, the OECD noted in that report that what government had been able to achieve in the space of 14 years was commendable and that it was understandable that some of the policy goals had not yet been realised.

Table 3.1 shows access to education – in support of reports such as that by the OECD referred to above – between 2001 and 2011. Although there are still large numbers of those without school attendance, the percentage of those with school attendance increased from 71.5 per cent in 2001 to 73.4 per cent in 2011, while the percentage of those without school attendance decreased to 26.6 in 2011 from 28.5 in 2001. Table 3.1 shows there were also increases in percentage shares, in terms of attendance, for all types of educational institutions except pre-school (and ABET, which stayed the same). For example, in the 10-year period (2001–11), there was an increase of about 100 000 for universities (StatsSA 2012). This confirms the point that the number of people seeking higher education increases over time, in any society and, given this, more – rather than fewer – universities are needed.

**Table 3.1** Access to education (2001 and 2011)

Education	2001		2011	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>School attendance</b>				
Yes	13 727 893	71.5	13 837 961	73.4
No	5 463 823	28.5	5 023 110	26.6
<b>Type of educational institution</b>				
Pre-school	575 936	4.2	128 719	0.9
School	12 584 818	91.7	12 862 961	92.9
FET college/college	191 234	1.4	359 228	2.6
University/technikon <sup>1</sup>	315 592	2.3	410 063	3.0
ABET	26 505	0.2	22 730	0.2
Other	33 809	0.2	57 883	0.4
<b>Public or private</b>				
Public	13 028 486	94.9	11 924 285	92.7
Private	699 407	5.1	934 480	7.3

Source: StatsSA (2012)

Note: 1 In the course of the decade what were 'technikons' were reconfigured and became universities of technology or were merged with universities to form comprehensive universities.

Other important areas are literacy and numeracy. Various datasets and publications show a steady increase in literacy rate in South Africa. The development indicators from Statistics South Africa (StatsSA 2012) show that, according to General Household Surveys, the literacy rate increased from 70.7% in 2002 to about 80% in 2009. Therefore, although there are improvements, there is still a long way to go in ensuring that the 20% that is classified as illiterate can become literate. Bloch (2009) shows that despite the fact that South Africa has higher levels of educational spending than most countries, the country is among the worst-performing internationally in literacy and numeracy.

### *Policy reforms in education: Brief review*

At the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, the ANC and its political allies began holding discussions about a new education system. According to Fiske and Ladd (2005), many of these discussions borrowed from the experience of other countries, such as Australia, America, England and New Zealand. Furthermore, the shape adopted by these discussions reflected the goal of the ANC to introduce into the education system those values that had been denied by apartheid – such as equality,

participation and democracy – rather than reflecting issues relating to the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, it was envisaged that the policy approaches to emanate from these discussions would adequately remedy these identified challenges. At the heart of the policy reforms was the creation of a single, integrated education system.

Perhaps in further explaining the form/content of the current school curriculum it is important to touch briefly on the intensive consultative processes undertaken to review Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and create the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) at different time intervals in the early 2000s. According to Chisholm (2003), the dominant players in these debates were the then minister of education (Kader Asmal), the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the national Department of Education (NDoE) and the Cabinet (representing the ANC) on the one hand and independent intellectuals and the religious fraternity on the other. Chisholm (2003) argues that although participants had ample space to voice their criticisms and concerns about the curriculum, the ANC and its allies emerged as the most powerful voices in these debates. Hence, the compromise reached in this regard reflects a modern, liberal humanist, pragmatic approach, based on an outcomes-based, rights-based and secular curriculum (Chisholm 2003: 12). We deal with these notions in more depth in the ensuing sections.

### *South Africa's schooling system and the higher education sector*

Since 1994, the vision for a transformed education system reflecting the values and practices of a democratic South Africa has been articulated in a myriad of policy documents. According to the Education White Paper on the organisation, governance and funding of schools (NDoE 1996), for instance, the new structure of school organisation should create the conditions for developing a coherent and flexible national system that redresses past inequity, eliminates inequalities in the use of public resources, and ensures an improvement in the quality of education across the system.

Interpreting the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), it can be argued that the main goal of the NDoE was to deracialise education and create race-blind policies throughout the system. Such a position is consistent with the principles and values underpinning the broad PSRs that have been undertaken in South Africa since 1994. In addition, the Act sought to unify the fragmented education departments into one department and to make education compulsory for all learners irrespective of race. Furthermore, to facilitate access to schooling, and in accordance with the Act, the minister of education has declared deserving schools 'no-fees schools'.

Years on, the extent to which all of these efforts have generated the desired results varies according to factors such as: efforts by the national department and provinces to enforce the policies; prevailing governance and management dynamics within different schools in different communities; the nature of schools (public or independent); resources and capacity; and prevailing culture and ethos. Bloch (2006), among others, is of the view that although many challenges still remain,

there were significant achievements in turning around apartheid education in the first decade of democracy.

Data from the report, *Towards a Fifteen Year Review* (Policy Coordination and Advisory Services in the Presidency 2008), indicated that education participation had increased since 1994, especially in the case of primary schooling. This is attributed to those interventions geared towards increased access. In terms of the growth in enrolments for the age cohort 7 to 15 between 2002 and 2007, enrolments of 5-year-olds improved from 40% to 60%, for 6-year-olds the improvement was from 70% to 88%, and for 15-year-olds the improvement was from 96% to 98%. Data for 2010 from the DBE's education statistics in South Africa report, as Table 3.2 shows, indicate relatively high gross enrolment rates: 94% for the primary phase (Grades 1–7), 86% for the secondary phase (Grades 8–12) and 91% for Grades 1–12 (DBE 2012: 6).

**Table 3.2** *Gross enrolment ratios by gender and level of education (2010)*

Gender	Primary phase (Grades 1–7)	Secondary phase (Grades 8–12 )	Total (Grades 1–12)
Female	92%	89%	91%
Male	96%	83%	91%
Total	94%	86%	91%

Source: DBE (2012: 6)

Further corroborating this point, according to the 2008 OECD report already mentioned, South Africa can be said to be close to achieving universal basic education, with 96.6 per cent enrolment of 7- to 15-year-olds, with almost all children of school-going age entering school and the majority reaching the end of Grade 9.

Turning to curriculum reforms, C2005 outcomes-based education (OBE) was implemented in school curricula until 2010 as a competency-based learning and teaching methodology aimed at facilitating strategic and technical skills of learners. Some of the identified outcomes of such a system included ensuring that learners could identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community; organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information; and communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

The rationale for such a curriculum within a new democracy makes not only political but also economic sense, given the country's aspirations of establishing itself as a strong, globally competitive knowledge economy. Where it has worked, OBE has worked relatively well; but generally there have been many challenges with the curriculum owing to insufficient teacher training, unsatisfactory teacher: learner

ratios, lack of availability of learning materials and other resources, and language barriers.

According to the OECD report (2008), it is recommended that such challenges be addressed through a range of options such as placing more curriculum emphasis on the provision of learning materials; the professional development of teachers; the development of appropriate assessment tools and early diagnosis and remediation of learning problems in making decisions about additional testing; ensuring that learners have enough time and opportunity to learn what is required; and providing additional chances for learners to obtain essential qualifications.

Finally, it is broadly agreed that the Dinaledi schools project (aimed at increasing access to maths and science in underprivileged schools) has contributed to a steady increase in the pass rate in those subjects.

### *Higher education*

The higher education sector has also experienced (and continues to experience) transformation. Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (NDoE 1997a) outlines a framework for transforming the higher education system to serve a new social order, meet pressing national needs, and respond to new realities and opportunities.

In line with the vision in the *National Plan on Higher Education* (NDoE 2001c), achieving equity and diversity in the South African higher education system; producing graduates needed for the social and economic development of South Africa; promoting research; and restructuring the institutional landscape are important objectives. Again, this mirrors the objectives of government's broader PSRs described above. The most recent thinking on further transforming the higher education sector (and perhaps correcting errors committed earlier) is contained in a Green Paper for Post-school Education and Training released by the DHET for comments in 2012 (at the time of writing of this chapter).

Similar to other education sub-sectors, the higher education system inherited from the apartheid era was one characterised by inequity, fragmentation and inefficiency, with 36 public higher education institutions (21 universities and 15 'technikons'), separated along racial lines (Breier and Mabizela 2008). For some reason, after 1994, the new government opted for restructuring the higher education landscape through merging institutions. Two phases of restructuring occurred between 2004 and 2005, which saw the emergence of new terms of reference and institutional arrangements for the institutions. For instance, universities not required to merge with any other institution remained 'universities' (like those that merged with or rather incorporated other universities); some technikons were transformed into 'universities of technology'; some universities were merged with technikons and became 'comprehensive institutions'; and two national institutes for higher education were established, in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape respectively. The Green Paper

for Post-school Education and Training (DHET 2012) recommends, among other things, that these two national institutes be converted into two new universities.

In terms of enrolments it is noted that the extent to which the higher education system can actually produce highly skilled graduates is predicated on three important factors: the number of school 'graduates' that qualify for entry into higher education institutions, the number that choose to enter higher education institutions, and the number that complete their qualifications (Breier and Mabizela 2008). However, as discussed in the schooling section above, the quality of Grade 12 school-leaving passes is questionable. Bloch (2009) elaborates the issues bedevilling the education system in South Africa in detail.

Although the enrolment of Africans (black South Africans) in higher education institutions has increased, detailed analysis of data reveals historical disparity in participation rates among population groups. From the latest data available (compiled from Kraak 2008 and from Steyn 2009), Table 3.3 shows participation rates in the years 2002, 2004 and 2007. The total gross participation rate remained more or less the same in early to mid-2000, at about 15.7, and increased marginally to 16.18 in 2007. The numbers of those enrolled in higher education has been increasing – as Table 3.1 showed. However, participation rates for the black student population do not seem to be increasing at any significant rate – it was 11.4 in 2002, 11.5 in 2004 and 12.29 in 2007. These improvements, however pedestrian, suggest that government plans – though seemingly farfetched – are yielding some results.

**Table 3.3** *Gross participation rates in higher education (2002, 2004, 2007)*

Year	Population group	Enrolment in higher education	Gross participation rate (%)
2002	African	405 914	11.40
	Coloured	38 965	11.00
	Indian	48 717	47.70
	White	181 999	61.90
	<b>Total</b>	<b>675 595</b>	<b>15.70</b>
2004	African	453 639	11.50
	Coloured	46 090	12.10
	Indian	54 315	50.20
	White	188 957	59.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>743 001</b>	<b>15.70</b>
2007	African	478 146	12.29
	Coloured	49 211	12.99
	Indian	52 748	45.38
	White	180 985	56.77
	<b>Total</b>	<b>761 090</b>	<b>16.18</b>

Sources: Compiled from Kraak (2008: 283) and Steyn (2009: 67)

On the other hand, Breier and Mabizela (2008) note that graduation rates have recently been declining. Although strides in encouraging access are yielding some positive results, graduation numbers and rates show a continual decline. This is starkly reflected in graduation ratios by field of study in relation to national targets. Breier and Mabizela (2008) estimated that if 2004 graduation targets were to be consistent with enrolment targets, the percentage ratio of graduates for human sciences, commerce and science, and engineering and technology should have been 40:30:30. However, the ratio was 48:25:27.

The declining trend with regard to graduation rates is largely attributed to the difficulty of subjects, depending on how well individual students were prepared by the schooling system. Importantly, however, it has been noted that higher education faces a serious challenge of student attrition. It is reported that 30% of the year 2000 first-time entrants into the system dropped out within the first year while 20% dropped out after two or three years of study. Of the group, 50% was out of the system before attaining their qualification (Breier and Mabizela 2008). This is obviously worrying in the light of the country's unemployment challenge. Also of concern is that even qualified graduates are struggling to find employment. For instance, Moleke (2006) found that the majority of the unemployed fall into the categories of Africans, females, those who studied humanities and art, and those who studied at historically black universities.

Overall, it remains to be seen whether the approach adopted to restructuring the higher education landscape was appropriate or not. One issue seems to come out loud and clear though – that the challenge facing our higher education sector is that of self-definition. This has resulted in associated complications such as imbalance between university numbers and those in universities of technology and FET colleges. It could be argued that FET will not flourish and benefit society until appropriate structural features have been put in place. In the same vein, the quality of leadership in the South African society and economy is going to need to be decisive if we are to build a society united in its diversity and an economy that can sail the tumultuous global seas to prosperity for all. Clearly, the quality of the leadership South Africa develops is dependent on the quality of the institutions developed and more particularly on the educators within all levels of the education system. To achieve the developmental state fully, the education system – especially the higher education sector, benefiting from an appropriate general education system – has to address a number of philosophical and practical questions.

The OECD report (2008) also alludes to this and asserts that more attention should be paid to the management of the change process in terms of detailed planning, budgeting and monitoring of change and dealing with change resistance, and that comprehensive universities should be revised to become perhaps 'specialised' by focusing on particular 'knowledge niches' (2008: 362). These are all issues that further studies would have to gauge and determine. The *Higher Education Monitor* of the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2007) reflects on a number of pertinent

issues pertaining to the challenges confronting the South African higher education landscape. Overall, the picture is not good, but there has been some progress.

### *Conclusion*

Reforms that have taken place in South Africa's education system since 1994, in the context of reforms in the public sector, were necessary for a newly democratic country that had inherited a racially segregated and dysfunctional education system. These reforms have happened at many levels such as early learning and development, general schooling, FET, basic education and training, and higher education. The focus here was on policy-making processes, with education as a case study.

It is therefore concluded that the changes pursued in the education sector in South Africa have resulted in great strides forward. However, the implications have in some instances been worrisome. This is evident to varying degrees in the performance of all sectors of education. Attention should be paid to improving not only access to education, but also to the quality of education. This is particularly important with regard to teacher training, the curriculum, access to information for parents and learners, and the national goal with regard to Grade 12 school-leaving figures. Also, it is important to consider the immense administrative/organisational, academic and funding challenges in the higher education sector, as well as matters relating to identity, so that South Africa can undertake a sober reflection on its stance as an actor within the global economic system.

It is about time to attend to the call made by Jansen and Taylor in 2003, for more 'systemic reform', entailing the consolidation of gains already made in South Africa's education system. Jansen and Taylor (2003) define 'systemic reform' as having both breadth and depth aspects – the breadth aspect implying reaching across the education system to connect key leverage points that affect the education reform goals, and the depth aspect implying reaching down the education system to ensure deep and sustainable change in education (Jansen and Taylor 2003: 43).

Although the reforms undertaken since 1994 have accomplished most of their intended objectives, they have not gone far enough. So even though the policy-making process and institutions for policy-making are relatively sound, the specific sectoral reforms warrant another look, if South Africa is to become a fully developmental state. It is in this context that the recent reforms that government is initiating are welcome. However, the starting point should be the determination and/or understanding of South Africa's future trajectory, which should influence the kind of education to be pursued. The National Development Plan 2030, which contains the contribution made by the CHE, is a step in the right direction. The Green Paper for Post-school Education and Training (DHET 2012) and the various ongoing initiatives by government and partners to improve education in South Africa should, ideally, be informed by a vision of society that would shape the education that South Africa needs for many years to come.

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