

## A transitiological study of some South African educational issues

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*In this study enrolment numbers and levels, as well as language-in-education, were viewed from a linear, comparative perspective. In the era prior to 1994, black and white learners not only attended separate schools but the segregated schools had different policies regarding medium of instruction. Resistance to the language policy regarding black education culminated in the 1976 uprisings. This led to the scrapping of both Afrikaans and black home languages as language of instruction in black schools. After the uprisings, black schools followed a policy of decreasing bilingualism. After 1994, in the spirit of democracy, official and educational status were granted to eleven languages. Deep-seated distrust and fear, that home-language education would lead to impoverishment, social and political isolation, and disempowerment, caused the majority of South African learners to prefer English rather than their home language as language of instruction. From a linear comparison, it transpires that the language-in-education situation in the classroom has changed very little since 1994. Enrolment numbers and levels, particularly the disparities between white and black, were other points of criticism regarding the education system before 1994. Prior to 1994, compulsory education had only been fully implemented with regard to the white and, to a lesser extent, Indian and coloured sections of the population. The vision that the ANC had in 1955, that "the doors of learning shall be open", was only reflected in policy documents and laws. Both primary-school and secondary-school enrolment numbers showed an increase after the ANC government came to power. The net enrolment numbers (1995–2004) for primary education showed a decrease from 95.0% to 87.4%, but the enrolment numbers for secondary education showed an increase from 56.0% to 67.2%. Despite the latter positive statistics, it would appear that the objective of universal education has still not been realised in South Africa.*

**Keywords:** comparative education; enrolment numbers and levels; language as an educational issue; transformation; transitiology

### Introduction

The assumption of power by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 resulted in the political transformation of South Africa. This transformation encompassed all areas of society, including education. Transformation in education was then also singled out for specific attention. Education not only had to be transformed, it had also to play a key role in the transformation of the South African community (Duvenhage, 2006:125). The 1995 White Paper for Education and Training (DoE, 1995:4) stated this vision as follows:

It should be a goal of education and training policy to enable a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society to take root and prosper in our land, on the basis that all South Africans without exception share the same inalienable rights, equal citizenship, and common national destiny,

and that all forms of bias (especially racial, ethnic and gender) are dehumanising.

Six years later the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:2) repeated this vision by stating that education had to play a role “to overcome the devastation of apartheid, and provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice”.

In order to achieve this, education had to be transformed. Duvenhage (2006:133) summarises the focal points of educational transformation as follows:

- The creation of a single, non-racial education dispensation wherein there is space for all participants.
- The entire overhaul and democratisation of education management.
- The upgrading and improvement of the education infrastructure.
- The transformation of curricula in order to eradicate the legacy of apartheid in the system.

According to Duvenhage (2006:136), the ANC government worked hard right from the start to realise the transformation objective. They achieved many successes, although many plans miscarried and others had to be redesigned. Some of the successes and failures will be highlighted here.

At a two-day summit during which members of the Eastern Cape Department of Education reflected upon transformation in education in that province, various problems were identified: a shortfall in earners’ skills development, in particular literacy and numerical skills; an unequal distribution of resources and infrastructure; and a poor work ethic among educators. At this summit, the Chairperson of the Education Portfolio Committee, Mahlubandile Qwase, voiced his concern about the lack of support for African languages and culture in former Model C schools, as well as the violence in schools (Sitayata-Soga, 2006:3). With reference to this, Van Wyk (2006:24) reported that “schools in South Africa do not function satisfactorily”. According to the Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation [IJR], Villa-Vicencio (in Van Wyk, 2006:24), the blame must be laid at the door of principals who do not manage their schools effectively and poor discipline amongst learners. Moreover, Jansen (2005:10) made the accusation that governing bodies of former Model C schools thwarted the transformation process:

... far too many all-white schools ... have used language policy or enrolment policy or teacher appointment processes to retain the dominant culture and clientele of the school.

From the preceding three reports it appears that the transformation process in education has not succeeded. However, post-1994 education in South Africa has not been characterised by failures only. Duvenhage (2006:135) points out, amongst other things, the following transformation successes: increased access to schools; a considerable improvement in the qualifications of educators; an improvement in the ratio of educators to learners; and an increase in the per capita spending per learner.

A study of changes in education in a transforming society necessitates a knowledge of the literature regarding transformation.

### Theoretical foundation

Social transformation can take different forms. Sometimes transformation is the result of political change; sometimes because of demographic and economic changes. According to Bray and Borevskaya (2001:345), the scope and importance of studies pertaining to transformation have increased to such an extent that it has developed into an independent field of study, known as 'transitology'.

The term *transitology* was initially used during the 1970s by political scientists in their analysis of the political, cultural and economic problems in southern Europe and Latin America. Since the 1990s, the term has also been used in the analysis of political transformation in eastern and central Europe (Cowen, 1996:163). In 1996, the term was borrowed by Cowen (1996:163) from political scientists (*cf.* Martyanov, 2005:175-191; Saxonberg & Linde, 2003:3-14; Carothers, 2002:5-21; Haynes & Husan, 2002: 105-129; Ma, 1998:339-348) "to illustrate some of the complexities of the transition of pre-modern to modern to late-modern education systems". By way of his publications Cowen (1996:163-165; 2000:338; 2002:422) established the term in Comparative Education literature (*cf.* Sweeting, 2007:159; Steiner-Khamasi, 2005:148-172; Sweeting, 2005:27-29; Alexander, 2001:507; Steiner-Khamasi & Stolpe, 2004:29-53; Kazamias, 2001:439-449; Usarralde, 2002:7; Bray & Borevskaya, 2001:345; Bray & Lee, 1997:149-156).

Cowen (2000:338) defines transitology as

... the more or less simultaneous collapse and reconstruction of (a) state apparatuses; (b) social and economic stratification systems; and (c) political visions of the future; in which (d) education is given a major symbolic and deconstructionist role in these social processes of destroying the past and redefining the future.

Cowen (2002:422) places a time limit upon the concept of transitology: the transformation should take place within the scope of ten years. Consequently, the Chinese revolution is not an example of transitology. It lasted from the demise of the Manchu Dynasty in 1912 up to and with the stabilisation of the Chinese State under Mao in 1949. On the contrary, Castro's revolution in Cuba; Turkey under the rule of Atatürk; Britain during the premiership of Thatcher; the end of Franco's and the Shah's regimes in Spain and Iran, respectively; or the Meiji Restoration in Japan are examples of transitologies (Cowen, 2002:422; 2000:338; 1996:164).

In all the preceding examples there were extensive attempts to reconstruct state structures (e.g. the reinstitution of the emperor in Japan). The end of feudalism in and the decreased emphasis on the equal division of income in Britain during the 1980s are examples of attempts to change the social and economic systems. New political visions found embodiment in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. New political structures were also established in Poland, Turkey and Russia (Cowen, 2002:423).

Cowen (2002:423) points out that education in all the above examples was redefined in order to play a decisive role in the establishment of the "new

future". Education was used purposefully and aggressively to direct and build the future. Atatürk's learning of the new Latin alphabet in the Dolmabahçe Palace is a practical embodiment of the redefinition of education in Turkey. In China the closing down of schools during the mid-1960s hinted at the notion that a new type of education would lead the Cultural Revolution towards its destiny. When schools were eventually reopened, teachers were replaced by members of the working class, peasants and soldiers. They had to transmit Mao's philosophies to the people of the country by means of education.

According to Cowen (2000:339), transitiologies are "pleasantly complex mixtures of the political, economic, ideological and sociological". Furthermore, he advocates a better understanding and knowledge of transitiologies amongst educationists, because a study of these turning points in history has illustrated the influence of political and economic powers upon education. A study of transitiologies suggests seemingly easy questions requiring complicated answers. What is, for example, the relationship between futuristic ideologies and prevailing education practices? How much of the existing education system has to be changed or destroyed to transform education in accordance with the new political ideology?

Bray and Borevskaya (2001:346) are of the opinion that although Cowen (1999:84; 2000:339) sometimes confuses the term "transition" with "transitiologies" (the study of transitions), and not all academics agree with his time limit of ten years, he has managed to focus upon the importance of the study of "major social turbulences" for comparative educationists. By means of his work, Cowen once again stressed the fact that comparative educationists should not concern themselves with "the business of comparing education across cultures, nations, regions and indeed academic disciplines" (Alexander, 2001:507), but rather with a moment-in-time in a single education system (Cowen, 2002:413). This approach, which is often associated with structuralism, offers comparative educators the opportunity to analyse events in depth (Sweeting, 2007:159-160).

### **A moment-in-time in South African history: influence upon some education matters**

#### **Introduction**

For comparative educationists, transitiologies are like "lightning storms ... on a dark day" (Cowen, 2000:339). According to Sweeting (2005:29), Cowen focuses "on the moments of time (and thus, on temporal units, metaphorically in freeze-frame)". Such moments-in-time in the history of South Africa, which had and still have far-reaching consequences for South African education, were the unbanning of the ANC, the release of Nelson Mandela and the ensuing coming into power of the ANC. For a former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal (DoE, 2001:1), April 1994 was a turning point in the history of South Africa:

In April 1994 ... fear was replaced by hope, repression by democratic free-

dom, exclusion and division by the possibilities of inclusiveness and unity. A massive national project [*Tirisano*] to take down the scaffolding of apartheid and replace it with a system that promised well-being, respect, and expression for all South Africans began.

**Macro-societal context:** The ideology of the national democratic revolution

The current transformation of education in South Africa plays itself out within the societal framework of the ruling party's (ANC) ideology of the national democratic revolution (*cf.* Duvenhage, 2007). This ideology guides the ANC's entire societal reconstruction project. According to Duvenhage (2007:384-385) the following could be regarded as the core (central philosophy) of this ideology of the national democratic revolution:

- The establishment of democratic institutions, which could claim to be representative;
- the accomplishment of a non-racial democratic dispensation;
- initiating progressive, sustainable and development-orientedness with regard to the South African and Pan-African (NEPAD and African Union) societies; and
- the employment of extensive social engineering "to meet the mass revolutionary challenge".

As is the case with any ideology, the ideology of the national democratic revolution consists of a stable, unchanging hard core or a set of fundamental beliefs, and a surrounding social-political programme, which strives to execute or realise the ideology. Frequently this programme founders on demographic, economic, political and other realities — so much so that ideologies often fall short of their mark. This could hardly be better illustrated than in educational transformation in South Africa. The following three examples will suffice:

The mergers of universities, which were driven by ideological motives, did not succeed (Jansen, 2002), as the Minister of Education has recently admitted (*cf.* Gower & Pretorius, 2009:1).

The institution of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), another centrepiece of government's educational transformation plan, bogged down in the everyday realities of South African classrooms, such as under-qualified teachers, lack of adequate resources, and absence of a proper culture of teaching and learning in many schools (*cf.* Warnich & Wolhuter, 2009), to the extent that even the founder and most voluble exponent of OBE, William Spady (2008), counsels government to abandon the OBE project.

While government focuses on grandiose projects such as the merger of universities and OBE, basic aspects such as input, throughput and output quality are neglected. Of the 25,415 public schools in South Africa, 4,046 have no electricity, 2,891 no source of water, and 17,081 no computers (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2008:368-370). A mere 46% of Grade 1 learners eventually reach Grade 12 (Rademeyer, 2008:7). Since 2003 the matriculation pass rate has been falling each year (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2008:376).

### Implications for education

After the emergence of the new political dispensation in 1994, the new education authorities had therefore to address the legacies of the past. According to Pretorius (2007:31), a sophisticated education system for whites was in place, but millions of adult South Africans (mainly black persons) were functionally illiterate. Moreover, millions of South African children “endured school conditions resembling those of the most impoverished states of Africa” (Pretorius 2007:31). Since 1994, far-reaching reforms have taken place with the aim of breaking down the structures of apartheid and addressing educational inequalities and handicaps, as well as providing equal opportunities and rights for all learners (Duvenhage, 2006:133; DoE, 2001:1-49).

In this study, enrolment numbers and levels, as well as language and educational matters, will be viewed from a linear, comparative perspective. The focus is firstly upon the *why*, the *how*, and the *successes, failures* and *consequences* of language and compulsory-education policies and practices during the apartheid period.

Secondly, it will be established *why* and *how* the said aspects have changed since 1994. *Successes* and *failures*, as well as *consequences* of policies will be subjected to scrutiny. In the discussion, the political, economic and ideological points of departure underlying the changes will be investigated. Lastly, the challenges offered by education will be examined (*cf.* Cowen’s, 2000:339, view that transitiology informs us about the “spirit of the battles still to come”).

The dual focus of this study was chosen purposely because these areas enjoy the attention of comparative educationalists and policy specialists. For example, various researchers stress the importance of the home language as medium of instruction (Heugh, 2006:63-73; Pretorius & Naudé, 2002:439-449), as well as the political economic and socio-cultural dimensions of language in education (De Klerk, 2002:2-13; Desai, 2001:323-338; Mda, 2001:162-166; Beukes, 1995:70-114; Chick, 1992:271-292). The spotlight regularly falls on enrolment numbers and levels by education specialists (*cf.* Coombs, 1985; Uribe & Murname, 2006:241-277; Kent, Alvarez & Ramirez, 2000:151-206; Wolhuter, 2007).

### Language as educational matter

South Africa is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. The Bill of Human Rights, as contained in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a: Section 30) guarantees equal status for all eleven official languages. The languages are Pedi, Sesotho, Tswana, Swazi, Venda, Tsonga, Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Xhosa, and Zulu. Zulu is the home language of 23.8% of South Africans, followed by Xhosa with 17.6%, Afrikaans with 13.3%, Pedi with 9.4%, and both English and Tswana with 8.2% (Pretorius, 2006:32). Although English is regarded as the language of commerce, technology, education and training, it is the home language of only 8.2% of South Africans. In order to understand this state of affairs, it is necessary to provide a

brief overview of the South African language-in-education (*cf.* Truter, 2004: 1-166 for a full discussion of this policy during the years 1910–1961).

Section 37 of the Constitution of the Union of South Africa gives recognition to the principle of Dutch (and later Afrikaans) and English as medium of instruction for white learners. Home-language instruction had been — with the exception of Natal, where the choice regarding the language of instruction lay with the parents — compulsory for all white learners up to and including Standard 4. After South Africa had become a republic (1961), the arrangements with regard to the medium of instruction were upheld in white schools (Chick, 1992:275-276). Act 39 of 1969 brought about uniformity in all four provinces. Home-language instruction, whether in Afrikaans or English, became the norm (Beukes, 1995:42).

The Bantu Education Act, Act 47 of 1953, brought about two totally separate education systems, one for white and one for black learners. According to Truter (2004:164), this resulted in a dichotomy of two separate cultures that functioned separately from kindergarten up to university level. This was also the case with the language policy, because there was a separate system in the language policy for white and black learners.<sup>1</sup> The Bantu Education Act determined that the use of the home language as medium of instruction was compulsory up to and including Standard 6. Both Afrikaans and English were compulsory school subjects from the first year of school. From Standard 7, English and Afrikaans were used as medium of instruction on a 50:50 basis (Chick, 1992:275). Regardless of the educational advantage of home language instruction, there was much resistance to the implementation of this policy:

In the minds of the black community, such advantage was overshadowed by the realisation that educational motives were secondary to political ones. Consistent with apartheid ideology, mother-tongue instruction prepared the different language groups for separate existence ... the policy served to divide and rule black people (Chick, 1992:275).

Those who opposed the language policy of the National Party (NP) government shared the view that the policy not only had negative consequences, but would also lead to the economic and educational disempowerment of black people. Desai (2001:330) stated that “the use of African languages ... was often perceived as an attempt to ghettoize African learners and deny them access to the mainstream of South African life”. Furthermore, the policy placed a ceiling on opportunities for development, because it was expected of black people to acquire academic skills in two “foreign” languages (Chick, 1992:275).

The ideological resistance to Afrikaans, which was seen as the language of the oppressor, culminated in the 1976 uprisings. This led to the scrapping of Afrikaans, as well as black home languages as medium of instruction in black schools (Truter, 2004:164). After the uprisings, black schools, in accordance with Act 90 of 1979, followed a policy of decreasing bilingualism. Consequently, a start was made with instruction through the medium of the black home language, but gradually this was replaced with English as medium of instruction (Truter, 2004:163; Beukes, 1995:53; Chick, 1992:276).

Official 1978 statistics (cited in Beukes, 1995:53) indicated that during that year, more than 96% of all black learners were taught through the medium of English from Standard 5 onwards.

During freedom movement gatherings, the 1985 National Forum and the 1990 Harare Language Workshop, amongst others, consultations with regard to language in education took place. During these gatherings the resistance to Afrikaans, the importance of English and the necessity of the development of the indigenous African languages dominated discussions (Chick, 1992:276-279). Already as early as 1955, the ANC (s.a.:1), as expressed in the *Freedom Charter*, held the view that “all people shall have equal right to use their own languages”. Education legislation, as well as policy documents that were accepted after the 1994 elections, would not only make provision for this principle, but would also strive to accommodate the language preferences of learners.

The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b: Section 6) and the National Education Policy (RSA, 1996c: Section 3(4)(m)) have as a basis the right to education for all and the right to education in the language choice of the learner or the learner’s parents (where this education is fairly feasible), which is stipulated in the Constitution (RSA 1996a: Section 30). The former proves to Duvenhage (2006:136) that access to basic education for all, as well as the right to education in the language of the learner’s choice is very high on the list of transformation priorities of the ANC government.

The ANC government regards language as an instrument to advance education and political transformation and to establish democracy. For this reason, the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:29) is committed to the promotion of multilingualism: “Speaking the language of other people not only facilitates meaningful communication, but also builds openness and respect as barriers are broken down”. Where the NP government had, amongst other things, promoted Afrikaans as an objective, the ANC government was in favour of the promotion of African languages: “Given the historical onus on black learners to learn English and Afrikaans, it is reciprocally important now that non-African learners acquire at least one African language” (DoE, 2001: 29). However, this aim was little more than political rhetoric because:

Competence in an African language has, to a great extent, seemed irrelevant regarding access to higher education, appointments or promotions in the civil service and public debate in parliament. Multilingualism that has been implemented on a symbolic level in the new South Africa has not yet become viable on a material level (Plüddermann, 2006:78).

According to Heugh (2006:63), education changes after 1994 contained the promise of justice, the promotion and development of multilingualism and home-language instruction, parental choice and a cognitively enriched curriculum. After a thorough analysis of the policy implementation plan Heugh, however, reaches the conclusion that the education and language acquisition theory upon which the language of instruction policy has to be based, has been ignored or presented incorrectly. According to her, this may result in the current education practice promising failure and unjustness on a scale that



will allow apartheid education to appear good in comparison (Heugh, 2006: 73). On the contrary, De Klerk (2004:66) reaches the conclusion, after a fundamental analysis of the education-in-language policy of 1997, that the successful implementation of the policy can contribute to the establishment of an education system aimed at achieving

- a fair and equal education system;
- the correction of the legacy of the past;
- the attainment of quality education for all South African citizens; and
- the endeavour to maintain education in South Africa for the future.

In this study we looked at, amongst other aspects, how an attempt was made after 1994 to use language-in-education to effect political, social and economic transformation in South Africa. Political considerations, the social and economic power of English, the negative social ascriptions to the African languages and Afrikaans, ignorance about the advantages of home-language instruction, and the problems with the practical implementation of home language instruction in multilingual communities (Webb, 2006:45-46; De Klerk, 2002:5-7) resulted in the ANC's education language policy's failure to implement multilingualism and the promotion of African languages. On the other hand, English is still seen as the key to economic, political and social success (Painter & Baldwin, 2004:7).

After the coming to power of the NP under DF Malan in 1948, the development of Afrikaans was prioritised to establish and extend the power base of Afrikaans speakers on the political and economic terrain. This support for Afrikaans was withdrawn after 1994 (Nxumalo, 2000:123; Balfour, 1999:103). Nxumalo (2000:124) is of the opinion that the ANC government aims "to redress the past linguistic imbalances by means of reconciliation". On the other hand, Smit and Oosthuizen (2006:521-522) contend that the ANC government followed a policy of multilingualism at the cost of monolingualism. According to these authors, this has led to various court cases between governing bodies of the Afrikaans-medium schools and the provincial departments of education. Antjie Krog (1998:99) views Afrikaans as "the price Afrikaners will have to pay for Apartheid". The need for quality teaching creates great pressure on Afrikaans Section 21 schools to make access possible for all learners by also offering a stream of English-medium classes (Duvenhage, 2006:137). During the period 1993 to 2003, the number of exclusively Afrikaans schools in South Africa decreased from 1,396 to 844 (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 2006:119). The recent court ruling in the well publicised case of Ermelo High School (2009) is an example where ideology foundered on political-judicial realities; when the ruling upheld the power of school governing bodies (vested in them by the South African Schools Act) to decide on language policy.

With reference to the preceding, Smit and Oosthuizen (2006:521) write that the provincial education authorities' policy of encouraging and even enforcing single-medium, primarily Afrikaans, schools to change their language policy to double-medium or parallel-medium Afrikaans/English, does not contribute to the extension of language diversity, but to the promotion of Eng-

lish at the expense of minority languages. According to Miller (2003:35), the fact that the majority of parents and learners choose English and not their home language as medium of instruction, sends a message to black learners that the indigenous African languages and cultures are inferior. This message is reinforced by some former Model C schools where even the use of indigenous African languages is prohibited during informal discussions (Painter & Baldwin, 2004:7).

Up to and with the acceptance of the 1996 Constitution, South Africa had only two official languages. Even so, up to and with the acceptance of Act 90 of 1979, some of the African languages were developed as academic languages by virtue of the fact that they were used as languages of instruction in black schools. Although there have been eleven, and not only two, official languages since 1996, government efforts to promote multilingualism are not effected in practice (Balfour, 1999:108). Balfour (1999:110) rightly remarks that “while Afrikaans schools are being forced to become dual-medium establishments, no similar move has been made to make English schools dual-medium establishments, where Zulu and English, for example, are used”. Besides the challenges that the development of an African language would pose, the negative legacy of the 1953 Bantu Education Act has resulted in the chances being slim that there will be a (great) demand for the use of African languages as languages of instruction in the future or even in the distant future.

Besides the deep-seated fear that the use of (several) African languages could lead to division, the perception that African languages are inferior, the lack of infrastructure and the high cost of the development of languages (Mda, 2000:162-167; Chick, 1992:283), Desai (2001:326) mentions that as long as African languages are not used in the legislative, executive and juridical government structures, “they are not going to be regarded with pride by those who use them and will continue to have a low status”. Desai (2001:326) warns that it could lead to the marginalisation of those with these home languages.

As a result of the antagonism of the majority of South African learners towards Afrikaans, which they viewed as the language of the oppressor, English was the language of choice for these learners after the 1976 uprising. English maintained this privileged position after 1994, because “English ... is so indelibly inscribed within new constellations of power in South Africa” (Balfour, 1999:105).

Prior to 1994 the education policies and practices in South Africa were a reflection of the political dispensation in the country. Black and white learners not only had separate schools, but also separate policies regarding the medium of instruction. Political and economic considerations played a key role in this regard with resistance to the language policy leading to far-reaching changes. Only after 1997, the language preferences of learners in South Africa received any recognition for the first time. After 1994, in the spirit of democracy, official, as well as education, status was given to eleven languages. Deep-seated distrust and fear, that home-language instruction would lead to impoverishment, social and political isolation and disempowerment, resulted in the majority of South African learners preferring English as language of

instruction and not their home languages. The education-in-language situation in the classroom has therefore changed very little since 1994.

Learners are still instructed through the medium of either English or Afrikaans. There is very little evidence of multilingualism. On the contrary, the position of English has been strengthened at the expense of Afrikaans and other indigenous languages. Antjie Krog's (1998:99) previously quoted comment that Afrikaners will have to sacrifice Afrikaans as part of their burden for apartheid, and Heugh's (2006:73) warning that the current language practices promise failure and injustice on a scale that will let apartheid education look good by comparison, point to "battles still to come" (Cowen, 2000:339).

### Enrolment numbers and levels

Enrolment numbers and levels, in particular the inequalities between white and black, were some of the main points of criticism by the ANC inner circle with regard to the education system prior to 1994 (Steyn *et al.* 2003:24; Nkabinde 1997:52; Christie 1991:114-132). Before 1994, compulsory education was implemented fully only with regard to white and to a certain degree to the Indian and coloured population groups (Claassen, 1995:472). Although there was legislation making school attendance compulsory for black children in areas where school committees requested it, compulsory education existed only for a small section of this population group (Claassen, 1995:472). A limiting factor was the lack of funds to implement universal compulsory education. The state expenditure per learner was as follows in 1993: R1,659 for black, R2,902 for coloured, R3,702 for Indian and R4,372 for white learners (Nkabinde, 1997:44).

Against the background of the preceding, it is therefore understandable that the *Freedom Charter* already declared in 1955 that "The doors of learning shall be opened to all" (ANC s.a.:1). Two of the cornerstones of the education dispensation after 1994 were democratisation and equalisation (Wolhuter, 1999). Two policy documents that addressed this matter after 1994 were the 1995 White Paper for Education and Training and the 1996 Schools Act. Chapter 13 of the 1995 White Paper declares that, in the light of the fact that the right to basic education is recognised for everyone, the government is committed to ensure access to education up to Grade 9 for all learners (DoE, 1995:73). Section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, stipulates that every child becomes schoolable from the first school day of the year in which he/she reaches the age of seven up to the last day of the year in which he/she reaches the age of 15 or has passed Grade 9.

Progress after 1994, with enrolment numbers at the primary and secondary levels of education, is indicated in Table 1.

During the six-year period from 1998 to 2004 primary and secondary enrolment numbers increased by 10.5% and 31.8%, respectively. Especially at secondary level there was a large increase.

The racial break-down of the growth in enrolment numbers is indicated in Table 2 (primary level) and Table 3 (secondary level).

**Table 1** Growth in education enrolment numbers in South Africa, 1994–2004

	Primary education	Secondary education
1998	6 640 216	3 211 604
2001	7 103 224	3 829 094
2004	7 337 335	4 232 073
% Growth 1998–2004	+ 10.5 %	+31.8%

Sources: Calculated according to statistics provided by the DoE (2005; 2007). Data pertaining to 1998 and 2004 are provided, because they were, respectively, the earliest and (at the time of writing, 19 March 2007) most recent statistics from the DoE (2005; 2007).

**Table 2** Growth in education: Primary-school enrolment numbers in South Africa per section of population. Enrolment numbers 1994-2004

Year	Section of the population					
	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other	White	Total
1998	5 447 255	547 172	127 848	122 317	395 624	6 640 216
2001	5 993 243	577 101	116 331	63 277	353 272	7 103 224
2004	6 232 226	598 455	117 220	27 721	361 713	7 337 335
% growth:						
1998-2004	+14.4%	+9.4%	-8.3%	-77.3%	-8.6%	+10.5%

Sources: Calculated according to statistics provided by the DoE (2005; 2007). Data pertaining to 1998 and 2004 are provided, because they were, respectively, the earliest and (at 19 March 2007) most recent statistics from the DoE (2005; 2007).

**Table 3** Growth in education: Secondary-school enrolment numbers in South Africa per section of population. Enrolment numbers 1994-2004

Year	Section of the population					
	Black	Coloured	Indian	Other	White	Total
1998	261 1916	173 829	85 590	77 607	252 662	3 211 604
2001	313 9498	255 671	101 118	83 166	249 641	3 829 094
2004	355 0423	305 605	80 032	32 215	263 798	4 232 073
% growth:						
1998-2004	+35.9%	+75.8%	-6.5%	-58.5%	+4.4%	+31.8%

Sources: Calculated according to statistics provided by the DoE (2005; 2007). Data pertaining to 1998 and 2004 are provided, because they were, respectively, the earliest and (at 19 March 2007) most recent statistics from the DoE (2005; 2007).

Among the black and coloured sections of the population there was a positive increase in primary-school learner numbers between 1998 and 2004, whilst among the white and Indian sections of the population there was a moderate decrease. At secondary level, there was a phenomenal increase in learner numbers in the black and coloured sections of the population, and a moderate increase in the white section of the population, whilst the numbers of Indian learners decreased moderately.

The growth in numbers at secondary-education level, but in particular at primary-education level, must be seen together with the following three factors, namely, migration patterns, learners over the official age in schools, and natural population increase of the relevant age groups. With regard to migration patterns, it must be borne in mind that since 1994, a steady stream of people from the white section of the population has emigrated while, with regard to the black component of the population, there was a strong influx of immigrants from other African countries. No official statistics exist (or, at the very least, they represent a gross under-estimation of both as a result of many non-official emigrants or illegal immigrants), but it is often stated that since 1994, nearly one million white South Africans have left the country, whilst at the same time between eight and nine million foreigners (mainly from other African countries) have flocked into the country (Steyn, 2007:16). With regard to natural growth, it should be noted that birth figures regarding the black, coloured and Indian sections of the population reached a climax in 1990 and have since decreased by approximately 25,000, 2,000 and 500, respectively, each year (Wolhuter, 2000:155). In the case of the white population, birth figures had already peaked before 1990 and have decreased annually by approximately 2,500 (Wolhuter, 2000:155). Lastly, it should be taken into account that in many South African schools learners are older than the official age for the specific grade level. According to the World Bank, 6% and 4%, respectively, male and female enrolments in primary schools in South Africa are repeating their grades (World Bank, 2006:94).

The indicator net enrolment ratio (i.e. number of learners of the official age, divided by the population numbers for the age group, expressed as a percentage) intercepts three sets of problems. The growth in net entry levels from 1995 to 2004 is indicated in Table 4.

Since 1995, the net enrolment ratios at primary-school level have decreased from 95.0% to 87.4%. Seen in the light of the fact that basic education — internationally, as well as according to the Constitution in South Africa — is regarded as a basic human right, this phenomenon is cause for concern. Research with regard to the causes and handling thereof cannot be implemented soon enough. On the other hand, the net enrolment level at secondary-school level shows an increase: from 56.0% in 1995 to 67.2% in 2004.

The expansion of education participation was one of the strongest driving forces behind the education reforms after 1994. There was indeed an impressive growth in enrolment numbers in primary and, particularly, secondary education. With regard to the various sections of the population, the black

section, followed by the coloured section, showed the largest increase, with the increase at secondary level being phenomenal. White and Indian enrolment numbers showed a slight decrease, which can probably be explained from the demographic dynamics, natural (declining) birth numbers and migration. In spite of the impressive growth in enrolment numbers, the net enrolment level has decreased. Seen in the light of the worldwide campaign for basic education for all (*Education for All*), this is a distressing phenomenon. On the other hand, net enrolment ratios at secondary-school level have shown an encouraging growth since 1994.

**Table 4** Growth in net entry levels in South Africa, 1995–2004

Year	Level	
	Primary schools	Secondary schools
1995	95.0%	56.0%
1999	93.1%	60.0%
2004	87.4%	67.2%

Sources: Calculated according to statistics provided by the DoE (2005; 2007). Data pertaining to 1998 and 2004 are provided, because they were, respectively, the earliest and (at the time of writing, 19 March 2007) most recent statistics from the DoE (2005; 2007). Data for the respective sections of the population are not available.

## Conclusion

After 1994, the ANC government emphasised in various policy documents the role that education should play in the transformation of South African society. The establishment of a non-racial education dispensation in which all participants play a part and the promotion of multilingualism were some of the issues prioritised by the ANC government as a reaction against the NP government's education policy.

From this transitiology study of language as an education concern, it appears that the 1997 education language policy promotes multilingualism and recognises the democratic rights of the majority of South African learners. At grass-roots level the picture looks totally different. The majority (black) of learners still prefer English — and not their home language — as medium of instruction. Moreover, it seems that for many Afrikaans is still the scapegoat for apartheid. The Supreme Court's Ermelo High School ruling, referred to earlier, provides hope that a monolingual (English) education dispensation may be avoided in South Africa if role-players are prepared to engage in the struggle for the preservation of the other ten official languages as media of instruction. This study has therefore underlined the "battles still to come" (Cowen, 2000:339).

The vision that the ANC had in 1955, namely, that "the doors of learning shall be opened to all", is embodied in the 1995 White Paper for Education and Training and the 1996 Schools Act. Both primary and secondary school

enrolment numbers showed an increase of 10.5% and 31.8%, respectively, (Table 1) after the ANC government came to power. The net enrolment ratios (1995–2004) show a decrease from 95.0% to 87.4% for primary education; secondary education enrolment numbers, however, show an increase from 56.0% to 67.2% (Table 4). In spite of the latter positive statistics regarding secondary education, research is necessary regarding the concern-raising phenomenon of the net decrease in primary enrolment ratios. Although education played an important symbolic role in the dismantling of apartheid, education laws and statements will be nothing more than fine-sounding political rhetoric until such time as the universal aim of ‘education for all’ has become a practical reality in South Africa. Prevailing political, economic, social, and health realities predict an uphill battle for the establishment of a universal basic education for all South African children.

The lack of success of ideology-driven educational reform, regarding the issues of medium of instruction and enrolment growth, gives credence to the case of forsaking ideology in favour of piecemeal engineering, where civil society is granted full space to play its part, in an atmosphere of open society and democracy. This is, after all, the foundation stone of the new state.

## Note

1. In the discussion of language as an educational matter in this article, attention has only been paid to black and white education. Prior to 1994, members of the coloured and Indian populations also had separate education systems, as well as consequently their own education-in-language policies (cf. Beukes, 1995: 56-69).

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