

FRUITS OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION IN A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY IN 1998: PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF CAPETOWN

PHILIP J. TAYLOR McGill University

ABSTRACT. This article is based on a doctoral study of educational change in the School of Education (SOE) of the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. It is an exploration of “a moment in time” that bore witness to institutional and human transformation in South African higher education. This transformation involved a development from the late nineteenth century colonization by Britain, through the Apartheid era, and finally to the time of the historic democratic election in 1994. The research examines how the post-apartheid era changed the university context and culture, as well as ways in which social relationships and student experience were transformed. This text, the first of three, analyses change from the viewpoint of the student group respondents of the study. Other articles will focus on the teachers and administrators’ perspectives.

**LES FRUITS DE LA TRANSFORMATION DÉMOCRATIQUE DE L'ÉDUCATION DANS
UNE UNIVERSITÉ SUD-AFRICAINE EN 1998 : PERSPECTIVES DES ÉTUDIANTS DE LA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article se fonde sur une étude de la réforme de l'éducation à la School of Education (SOE) de l'University of Cape Town (UCT), en Afrique du Sud. Il explore un « moment précis » qui témoigne de la transformation institutionnelle et humaine dans le monde de l'éducation supérieure de l'Afrique du Sud. La transformation s'est amorcée à la colonisation britannique de la fin du dix-neuvième siècle, a passé par l'ère de l'apartheid pour finir à l'époque de l'historique élection démocratique de 1994. La recherche examine comment l'ère postapartheid a changé le contexte et la culture universitaires ainsi que la manière dont les relations sociales et l'expérience des étudiants ont été transformées. Ce texte, le premier de trois, analyse le changement du point de vue des étudiants qui ont répondu à l'étude. D'autres articles se concentreront sur les points de vue des enseignants et des administrateurs.

Introduction

Noluthando Nokwando, a 66-year-old woman from the Cape Town township of Khayelitsha, voiced the sentiments of the millions who cast their ballots for democracy as she lined up to vote on April 14, 2004. Wrapped in the

governing colours of the African National Congress (ANC), she said, “The ANC held our hand and brought us through hell. . . . We can give them a chance – and our respect – for the next five years” (Zavis, 2004, p. A18).

Even as South Africa now undergoes the joys and pains of democratization, the world well knows South Africa was once a society wracked by the cruelty and violence of apartheid or racial discrimination. I lived in South Africa during the years 1947-1970. When I lived there I never wanted to become an educator. I wanted to be educated, but because of the colour of my skin I wasn’t granted my wish to become a chemical engineer. So I pursued other avenues. My thesis and my life stem from my parents’ knowledge that education was the only way to survive. Thus, I have dedicated the past thirty years of my life to the pursuit of education and done my research because of the need to support the idea that all the children in my country of birth, and all the children of the world, have the right to education that makes a better life for themselves and their families and their countries.

This article gives an overview of my doctoral study and then looks briefly at the views of six African women students. In subsequent papers I will look at two female and one male faculty members and two administrators’ unique account of how education was transformed at the University of Cape Town’s School of Education (SOE) after the fall of apartheid. Their voices speak of their hopes, dreams, and frustrations in dealing with change.

My voice is subjectively inflected to facilitate the telling of their stories. I stand poised between their narratives and the data I gathered whilst conducting fieldwork at UCT in 1998. I also stand poised between past injustices as someone who was reared under the apartheid regime and, in the present, South Africa’s bold efforts to alter the past forever. I was able to inject my history into their shared reflections in recognising and giving voice to their achievements and concerns whilst living the transformational journey.

It was not always easy for me to tell this story, given apartheid’s manifestly inhuman effects. At one point I felt that I could not continue reliving the pain. On a warm summer’s morning of 1999, I got up and started writing out in long hand what I had perceived was blocking my willingness to carry on telling the story of life under apartheid. Through this writing exercise I removed this roadblock from my chest. Yet the past could simply not be denied and put away in a tidy bottom drawer. It was hard to reconcile when the beast was still boring into my mind’s eye. Once I was able to banish from my mind some of these damaging images I saw that it was possible to reflect on the personal and the objective realities in my work. In this way I fashioned a middle path to persevere.

In my doctoral dissertation (Taylor, 2002), the four levels the dissertation assumed were my first encounters living under apartheid, telling my story, renewed encounters with the new South Africa in 1994-1995, and the con-

tributions of administrators', teachers' and students' voices. To write in the personal means making a transition, emerging from behind the curtain and showing the audience who you are and what your message is, with welts, wounds, scars and all. There appears to be a slow unwinding spiral starting to work its way through this murky trail of personal revelation so strongly personified in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and subsequent writings about it (Tutu, 1999; Krog, 1998).

A question that developed towards the end of my dissertation was whether formerly colonized countries could democratize education, create framework of transformation and find it of practical use. Even though the research was completed in 1998, retrospective vision, I contend, might be of value too to those societies and persons seeking to transform. Unfortunately the problems of racial prejudice and discrimination issues are still with the world even though South Africa took bold steps to eradicate their practice and institutionalization from its polity. In the United States Philipsen (2003) ponders "the potential benefits of a non-racist society" (p. 193). In South Africa the prosecution of apartheid era criminals have begun. The words of Archbishop Tutu well personify the desire for justice:

Many, especially in the old South African Defence Force, thought they would risk being charged, or perhaps not. The arrest of former security policeman Mr. Gideon Niewoudt vindicates the TRC process as one not meant to encourage impunity. His arrest will make the victims of many atrocities who saw their torturers and others walking about freely without bothering to appear before the TRC feel a lot better. And it should give some who know themselves as perpetrators a few sleepless nights. They spurned a chance to get amnesty and may live to regret it. (Momborg, 2004, p. 1)

To address the issues of racialism in South Africa in 1998, I provided in my doctoral thesis a brief historical background of South African universities and a historical sketch of UCT and the general face and makeup of the SOE. Thereafter, I delved into post-apartheid policies as they have affected the process of education in a dynamic state of transformation. I looked at the process of change through the lens of the people involved in change. I examined the policy effects of post-apartheid changes on several areas of the respondents' lives in an academic setting.

For example, I analyzed the role played by the following factors in shaping educational change at UCT and the SOE: the overarching policy norms, enabling or disabling legislation, educational disadvantage, budgets, teaching, research, enrollments, curriculum, staffing, student services, student participation, financial assistance, and other challenges presented by the often turbulent nature of change. I used student and staff voices, as opposed to theoretical constructs, to interpret, analyze, and illustrate examples of change in the School of Education. Since societal transformation is both slow and

deep in South Africa and I wanted to specifically examine examples of how the postapartheid era was developing in South African universities, I chose to look at higher education as a sphere of democratic change.

Framing the transformation of South African higher education

The central issue in my doctorate was, then, a concern with the changes that have been brought about in the South African higher educational system since the legal elimination of the apartheid system. This study also (1) conducted an analysis of the legacy of the apartheid system, (2) looked at the policy direction set in the post-apartheid period, and (3) adopted a case study design to test the effectiveness of these policies on a single institution. My research specifically sought to find out if the culture and curriculum of the School of Education at the University of Cape Town (UCT) had delivered a more democratic education to its students. I was unable to find a single study that provided a systematic analysis of how a South African university department like the School of Education was organized and administered after the first democratic elections of 1994, when the apartheid past was ended and the promise of a democratic dispensation in South Africa started. Given the tumultuous changes that were occurring in universities, particularly after the educational reforms of the 1996 Green Paper on Higher Education, I set out to investigate a “moment in time” of what actual educational change took place in the fast-paced moments of transformation at UCT.

During July-August, 1998 I conducted field research at UCT in order to find out how educational transformation was actually taking place. Up to the time of the research I could find little empirical data on the question of transformation of a South African higher education institution, except for Mabokela's (1998) study. Mabokela examined the question of the desegregation of South African universities. Although this study was important, she did not deal with actual educational transformations even though the desegregation issue is seminal to transforming the educational system to a more egalitarian one. While I was on campus at UCT, I was also able to collect documents that spoke to the nature of the apartheid era educational system in the mid-1980s to 1998. My physical presence in Cape Town also made gauging the climate of change in South Africa and UCT a very real experience. I was able to communicate directly with teachers, students, administrators, support staff, and many other helpful individuals who provided insights into the nature of change in UCT and the SOE.

The context: Black exclusion from higher education under apartheid

The first Nationalist government's Prime Minister, D. F. Malan, first coined the term apartheid in 1948. It meant apartness or separateness. Malan and his lieutenants offered apartheid as an alternative to the creeping integration

they saw fostered by the soft white-domination policies of the United Party (the outgoing governing party at the time). They promised that apartheid would obliterate multiracialism. J. F. Strydom, who followed Malan as Prime Minister in 1954, went further. He saw white domination not as a policy, but rather having whites prevailing as “baas” or “boss,” with Africans as inferiors in every sense of the word. The colour line had therefore become another ugly fact of life ushered in by the new all-white government for the African majority.

Verwoerd, the minister of Bantu Affairs (1953-1959), stated in 1954:

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit of Bantu society. . . . the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all aspects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has as its aim absorption into European community where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to school systems which draw him away from his own community and misled by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze. (1954, p. 4)

It is clear from this statement that the forbidden European pastures were off limits completely to blacks. Cowan (1964) points out that, “. . . the maintenance of ‘European standards’ requires, in the eyes of a large section of the European community, the rigid exclusion of the African from any part in political decision-making” (p. 45). In this context, UCT was a bastion of thought for colonial domination and power over the African majority.

In 1994, Verwoerd's master race theories, with their notions of inferiority and superiority, still bedevilled the education system and society under apartheid (Verwoerd, 1954; Willemse, 2002). It was then and still today is a priority for the education system to rid itself of this racialistic stigma. As Bam & Visser (1996) point out:

It is easy to make the mistake of thinking that the transformation taking place in South Africa involves only political or economic change. In fact there is so much more involved: the development of more inclusive cultural life that recognizes and values the rich cultural diversity of the country; the adjustments people have to make in living in a democratic society; the need to overturn the consequences of longstanding racism and sexism – indeed all the things that go into nation-building and the creation of a truly *new* South Africa. These are the things that transformation involves, and all of them find their way into the classroom. This happens because young people are the ones having to grow up in this period of transition and transformation. (p. 1)

This all implies that there should be a whole new attitude adopted to changing past destructive relations in education before transformation can begin to take place.

Understanding how the system of apartheid operated to keep whites separated from blacks in the education system is essential. A morbid pattern of exclusion in virtually all areas of education was the norm for blacks. Unravelling the past to make the present a less muddled picture of old impinging on the new requires an evisceration of old webs of colour, family, religious, legal, racial, ethnic, and business connections. This is imperative for changing longstanding attitudes and methods in education.

Educational spending

The origins of the problems in South African higher education can be traced back to funding inequities between primary and secondary education. Whilst the black and white population ratio was 7:1, the per capita spending for black students was one-tenth of what it was for whites. As a result the teacher-student ratio for black students was 1:41, as compared to 1:19 for white schools. Black schools commonly had class sizes of up to 63 pupils for primary and 43 for high school (SAIRR, 1984, p. 650).

For other "groups" in society the government created a politically very divisive funding formula that allocated different rates according to race classifications established by it. Rantente (1984) reports that the unit cost (excluding capital expenditure) on black education in 1984/85 was as follows:

BLACK	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE
R156	R798	R711	R1211

R = Rands

Curricula

Not only was funding overtly discriminatory, but also different curricula were taught to different racial groups. Yet at the end of high school black students were required to write the same examinations as white students, examinations set by the Joint Matriculation Board, which were based on curricula in white schools. Requirements for the matriculation examination were standardized, despite the disparities in educational content. In 1984, of 74,000 black students who took the matriculation examination, only 50.1 percent passed, and only 11.5 percent passed with the all important university exemption (the gateway to a university education) (Rantente, 1984).

After the 1976 students' revolt against the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction, because its use was visualised as a continuation of the *volk's* (the people's) linguistic domination, instruction in the first four years of school was given in one of the African languages. After that, almost without exception, English was adopted. This was done at the behest of blacks themselves, who demanded to be judged by universal standards (Nkomo, 1981). To the students, an education in either Afrikaans or in their mother

tongues was an obstacle to the universal credibility expected from a “good” education.

Concepts of democratic education: Freire and Dewey

It is useful to this inquiry to briefly look at Paolo Freire and John Dewey's pertinent works because they anticipated a primary question of educational change. That is, the question of how teachers, by deliberate inclusion of students in the learning process, could possibly affect their participation in school and society. Furthermore, they examined how the transition from authoritarianism to oligarchic domination and possible movement towards democratic education could occur. Such transition is based on the principle that past and counterproductive cultural, economic, social, and pedagogical ways of transacting change in pedagogy, administration and organization of learning can be altered by such students' inclusion. In my view, they suggest that the treatment of people as people and not as objects of educational effects is the key to ensuring democratic inclusion. It can also be inferred from their works that they would also argue against the retention of non-productive past cultural reproduction. Jansen (1987) envisioned a post-apartheid context for such change by implying that the content of teaching would have to change democratically. It would have to facilitate a process through which teachers and learners would explore ways to democratize education that had not been tried in South Africa before the demise of apartheid was on the horizon. He asserted:

Curriculum change should take cognizance of currently embedded curricular reforms, meanings, and assumptions; 'shared meanings' between curricular developers and users should determine change, and [. . .] change should be ideologically and contextually responsive. A consensus approach in a postcolonial context will affirm the approaching postapartheid dispensation. (p. 1)

Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* characterized this oppressive pathology as an important area of exploration for dialogue occurring between teacher and student towards possibilities for liberatory practice. He provided a rationale for a pedagogy of the oppressed; introduced the highly influential notion of banking education; highlighted the contrasts between education forms that treat people as objects rather than subjects; and explored education as cultural action. Freire called teachers “educators of liberation.” By this he meant that teachers who aim to equalize learning between teachers and students by removing status barriers, were intent on democratizing learning and its environment for a more equitable society. In Freire's view this orientation requires a total redefinition of what it means to be an educator. He argued that this redefinition necessitates the surrender of the status distinctions between teacher and learner along with the authority invested traditionally in the role of the teacher. In his words, “the educator for liberation has to die as the unilateral educator of the educatees.”

Dewey condemned the educational regimen that consists of authorities at the upper end handing down to the receivers at the lower end what they must accept. He saw it as indoctrination or propaganda (Sargis, 2002). "It is a type of education fit for the foundations of a totalitarian society and, for the same reasons, fit to subvert, pervert and destroy the foundations of a democratic society." (Dewey, 1954). Unless teachers stop teaching the biases of freedoms inspired by oligarchic interests, Dewey contends that domination of free peoples by authoritarianism will continue to plague democratic transformational efforts. The illusion of political freedom granted by the neoliberal nation is neither necessary nor sufficient in establishing democratic values and furthermore it ensures that people are kept apart. Tucker (1978) asserts:

The idea of freedom that the oligarchy aspires to is the freedom to do whatever one wants without doing harm to others. However, the bad faith of this freedom, meshed with the market economy, is perverse, since we face a multidimensional crisis. Also, the liberal oligarchic idea of freedom that treats everyone as a private individual is based on the separation of individuals. How can everyone be equally free in a hierarchy or liberal oligarchy? They are free and on an equal footing to manipulate, dominate, and exploit others, who are considered rivals with conflicting egocentric interests. People are brought together in competition rather than in cooperation in finding a living. Marx, commenting on the individual's private interest and limited freedom in *On the Jewish Question* writes, "The only bond between men is natural necessity, need and private interest, the preservation of their property and their egoistic persons." The illusion of political freedom granted by the neoliberal nation is neither necessary nor sufficient in establishing democratic values and furthermore it secures that people are kept apart. The ruling ideas are also given a spiritual connection that provides for the further justification for the current system of domination Karl Marx, *On The Jewish Question*. (p. 43)

This argument presents the idea that the ruling class's ideas give the imprimatur for justification of the current system of domination implicit in the neoliberal notion of political freedom (Tucker, 1978).

In South African universities today, often similar, yet novel questions are being raised about the nature of liberatory education. How such liberatory education could transform a once racialistic society is, consequently, also of relevance here. The impact of apartheid on education was so devastating that it laid waste the lives of generations of people by way of unfulfilled lives, denial of opportunities, and desecrated talents. The human, social, economic, and educational costs, to say the least, remain tremendous. Motala (1996) believed that there was the dawning of a new order for democratic education that promises a very real prospect for a more open South African society. The onerous weight left by racist policies and practices, legislation and doctrine, however, had left the new government with a gigantic task of dealing with such problems as poverty, the lack of housing, astronomically

high unemployment, disease, substance abuse, violent crime, high student failure rates, and the significant absence of skills.

Thirty years ago when I attended the University of the Western Cape (UWC), although that university was defined as an all black school, the student body was made up of minority "Coloured groups: Coloured, Malay, Chinese, and Indian," as defined by the heinous Race Classifications Act. There were few black majority students and certainly not a single white student on campus. The teachers were predominantly white; none were black. More than thirty years have passed; what changes have taken place in South African education? This is the question that motivated my research.

In the next section I focus on some key aspects of my fieldwork in 1998, which involved a qualitative inquiry into the phenomenon of democratic transformations brought about by government and university policies to alter the apartheid past in UCT and SOE.

Purpose and objectives of study

I chose for the central focus of my study the University of Cape Town (UCT), which is an example of a formerly "white university." By obtaining data from staff and students, I studied the momentous changes taking place in South Africa's educational system in terms of new expectations and social demands placed on them. Specifically, I examined the School of Education. I focused on the transformation occurring in the lives and education of administrators, teachers, and students. The Faculty of Education was chosen as a focal point, as education plays a critical role in transforming values and training and educating new human resources for the country's reconstruction and development goals.

Design

The field work for this study took place over a six-week period in July and August, 1998. The three main data sources for this study were: (1) transcripts of audio-taped interviews, (2) field notes, (3) data on UCT's SOE transformation policies from the Vice-Chancellor, the 1997-1998 Faculties Report (UCT, 1998d), Memorandum of the Deans of Faculties UCT, the Planning Framework for the Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Education Handbook (UCT, 1998c), and the Transformation of the University of Cape Town booklet (UCT, 1996).

Interview-protocol.

An interview-protocol formed the basis for conducting the interviews. The interview-protocol was the main instrument for collecting data. It was also designed to provide a wide range of information from the respondents. The interview-protocol was also designed to facilitate quick and concise responses. Questions asked during interviews were generally centred on academic and

interpersonal relationships between and amongst students, teachers, and administrators during and after the apartheid eras. I also probed political, economic, socio-cultural, linguistic, economic issues, the living and learning environment, teacher and student relationships, the curriculum, students' motivation, peer relationships amongst students, and structural changes in the university and the program.

Overview of the methodology

The study used a qualitative interpretive approach to address the under representation of black students in the South African university population and its post-apartheid transformation to a more equitable access policy. Qualitative research is by its very nature process-oriented. Great attention is given to details that otherwise are overlooked in a scientific positivistic approach. Aspects such as the context, time, individuality, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are addressed with great concern. The perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators on the process of educational transformation are essential to understanding how universities are changing to become more democratic institutes of higher learning.

The qualitative method I employed is an ethnographic approach. Ethnography shares neither naturalistic nor positivistic paradigms (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, pp. 2-3). Even though I also made some limited use of descriptive statistics to get an estimate of where students' learning is headed in terms of educational transformation, the phenomenon of change is a highly subjective experience that requires careful interpretation. For the narrative structure of ethnographic writing will compel the writer to do as Davis (1974) put it: "find some kind of story which will give you an opening, a stratagem with respect to the data" (p. 311). Thus, the narrative approach insists that the researcher uses much of what respondents actually said during the interviews and will allow the researcher, as well as the reader, to interpret the meaning and significance of their experiences. The participants' experiences were deeply rooted in the context of South Africa.

As a qualitative researcher I concerned myself with the ordinary, routine, mundane aspects of respondents' background information as well of their future plans. Often what one person takes for granted is what another considers an exception. With this in mind, and given the time and distance between Canada and South Africa, as well as the resources required to interact with the respondents, I designed a field interview-protocol which took into account students' background information (including academic, family, peer and teacher relationship) and perspectives on change in their educational experiences at UCT.

My own experience has a role in the narratives of this thesis: Not only was I born in South Africa, but I also lived there during the apartheid years of

1947-1970. My family still lives there. I visited there in December 1994, and conducted research at UCT in July-August, 1998. Afterwards, I kept in touch with professionals visiting Montreal from South Africa, and maintained critical appraisals of current media accounts of events and developments unfolding in the reconstruction of society.

In this research the study of respondents' first-hand accounts provides perspectives of what, in their view, a more democratic university environment has become and is or potentially will become in time. According to Reed-Danahay (2000) I could, however, subjectively interject, in an autobiographical mode, my personal narrative as testimony of what apartheid education meant to me. Furthermore, I brought to the context the cultural and educational baggage that the Canadian milieu has endowed me with, thus making it both an insider's and outsider's account. Inherent in this process is also the idea of "Coming home again" – to interact with a changing environment in school and society (Butler, 2000). The case study provides a rich narrative filled with respondents' perceptions of their achievements, academic and extracurricular activities, and daily life.

The research setting: The School of Education

At the time of the study there were 22 full-time faculty members and 419 full-time, part-time, and adult education students. The students in the SOE were mainly from South Africa, but some came from other countries like Uganda, Mauritius, Kenya, Ghana, European countries, Canada, and USA (UCT, 1998d).

Student participants

The narrative account of six dynamic, ambitious, and caring women speaks of engendered change pushing African and black, white, and international students to new heights. The students' pseudonyms are: Tara, Jill, Siba, Lauri, Aura, and Goren. Students were enrolled in the following programs: 2 in the Higher Education Diploma (HDE) of the SOE, 1 fifth-year in the Diploma of Education, 1 first-year Ph.D. in Education, 1 third-year B.Com. 1 second-year B.Proc. at UWC (UCT alumna). They were from the following racial backgrounds: coloured, white, coloured, Chinese, African, and African, respectively.

Interpretation and analysis

I agree with Hammersley & Atkinson's statement that ". . . Interview data, like any other, must be interpreted against the background of the context in which they were produced" (1990, p. 126). In this research the results will be interpreted within the context of the Faculty of Education and South African society. I extracted themes from the data and examined individual students' profiles and also looked at students as a whole. Qualitative

information was sought with a view to elaborating themes about students' university education. Some descriptive statistics were used to analyze and frame information provided by students, teachers, and administrators on new expectations and social demands being exerted upon the educational system by the program of reconstruction and development (1994).

SOE's students' memories of schooling, university, and learning under apartheid

I now present a brief selection of what students said about their schooling, learning, and university education at the SOE. Their statements provide important testimony about the transformation to a democratic ethos at UCT.

Jill: In Jill's home background there was staunch opposition to Afrikaner Nationalism. She studied in the 1970s for her undergraduate degree at the University of Stellenbosch, which was still then a place for Afrikaner ideologies, including apartheid, to thrive. She was reared in a small English-language town called Ladysmith in the Eastern Cape. She did graduate work at UCT in the Adult Education Department and she also worked there during the day and attended night classes. She regarded the 1980s in South Africa and in the University as "the dark eighties."

While in the employ of the Adult Education Department she had tried her utmost to help disadvantaged students find money to support themselves. With much regret she noted that: "administrators in the Department did not take much notice of her." They did not use to full advantage, she believed, the information at their disposal about students' financial needs given to them by parents. She therefore urged administrators to do more for students' in need of financial help.

Siba stated, "In the South African context there are children who are disadvantaged, because they come from poverty." She believed their learning difficulties stemmed from many causes, including physical, mental, and emotional challenges, "Not having enough resources – no books to read, problems with access that are based on certain inequalities inherited from the past. They also needed special education classes to help them get beyond their handicaps."

Tara believed that change in students' social and cultural awareness of each other would go far in improving understanding.

On linguistic and cultural affects, here is how Lauri put the issue:

A long time ago all you would hear at UCT is English, everywhere you go, whereas now there is more openness towards the African languages. You would hear African languages being spoken more openly by the students mainly, but also by the staff. If you have a staff who is Xhosa-speaking and the student is asking information and cannot express himself/herself properly they would speak in Xhosa.

With regards to the interplay between linguistic, social, and cultural barriers, Lauri continued:

Obviously the different races have different cultures so that's the main thing. . . it could be an asset to themselves. For, if you had not been willing to accept and tolerate another person and their culture and respect it then it creates a barrier. Everyone speaks English; for most of the African majority population it's their second language; some of the foreign students struggle with it, but some of them adapt.

The learning of other languages like Xhosa or Zulu does occur in the Social Science department (Xhosa, English, Afrikaans, and German). When questioned if students had been required to take an optional third language, she replied, "We don't have to take a third language; it is not in our curriculum; if you wanted you could take a third language; in Medicine they do that."

Goren came to UCT from Makerere University in Uganda during the post-apartheid era. She was an interesting "outsider" who offered a perspective that few of the South African students could give because of their "insider" status. She was quite outspoken in her feelings about the continuity of inequality. She observed, "UCT is still dominated by one culture; it's still a white university in power terms."

The following vignettes provide a scenario of the participants' perspectives on educational transformation that I found helpful.

When Siba reflected on her past experiences in the apartheid school system (DET schools), she suggested that the place to initiate change in teacher education, is the recognition of the fact that the community a child lives in, shapes her/his consequent learning affects. She specified:

We no longer have that system. Now it's called ex-DET and ex-Model "C" schools. So the DET schools were the disadvantaged schools in the townships (ghettoes). Other schools seemingly have a higher pass rate than others. So we want to find out the problems that affect their performance in school and the things that make them do well in school. So we don't only focus on school. We focus on the way in which the child perceives education and we also look at the home background and how the parents perceive education. And we also look at the community – and what kind of problems there are in the community that have an affect on the child in school.

Aura was a bright young person who had studied Commerce before entering the SOE. She was considered by the University to be a "foreign" student by virtue of her birth in Mauritius. She came from a family background in which both of her parents had been teachers. She was a hard worker with high achievement insights. She was pursuing an honour's bachelor's degree in teaching. She said she came to UCT because "I heard that there were some Mauritian students here so I wouldn't feel that lonely. . . and when you get out of university your chance to get a job is greater, because of the prestige

attached to UCT.” She did not live under apartheid, but knew it once she moved to South Africa in 1993. She was a self-sufficient individual who felt that UCT had played an important part in her intellectual, personal, and academic development. Aura appeared to be the kind of student, who might in future become a leader in her community. She was quite aware of transformation issues, despite her rearing outside South Africa.

Aura informed me:

I arrived here in 1993. I don't know much about politics, but I can tell you how Rondebosch (the suburb of Cape Town that UCT is located in) was known to be a white area. So if you went to Rondebosch shopping centre you would see mainly white people. On university campus there were some African and Coloured students, but it wasn't a lot as it is today. Everything was new to me. I think when I first arrived here things were much more demarcated. You know white students sticking to white students even in residence – like together. I believe it's more open now. You don't feel strange if you talk to an African student or a white student. It's much more open.

Tara offered a comparative aspect on what was happening in UCT other than in the SOE, as she was enrolled in a Business Education degree. As a “coloured” student she was very preoccupied with her role as a formerly marginalized person. In describing her educational experiences with apartheid education she pointed out that in high school she was able to see racial rifts amongst students. She had attended a Model “C” or independent school that was in theory an open school. She said:

You could see the rifts- the coloureds on the one side and the whites on the other. They didn't really mix. If you were coloured and you mixed with the whites, the coloureds would basically disassociate themselves from you. I wasn't into the scene of most of the coloureds, because most of my friends were white. You could say that most of the coloureds disassociated themselves from me. At first it was very difficult. I was called names and accused of wanting to be white. I was really unhappy at school. Now my classes at university are more balanced in terms of the proportion of blacks, whites, coloureds, Indians, males, and females. At the staff level white and coloured persons still largely populate the University. We had one black lecturer last year.

She vented her feelings of complete dismay with the continued racial tensions on campus and shared these with me in an open manner.

Goren was in a similar position to me as researcher in that as a foreign student her vantage point of seeing educational transformation in progress sharpened her understanding of the promises and problems that beset the University's educational and institutional mission. She observed that if you joined a class of coloureds, blacks, and whites you would conclude that they were not at the same level. They had been exposed to completely different types of education and yet they were expected to produce the same quality

of work. She strongly advocated for the provision of compensatory education to close the gap amongst them. Another problem, she added, was that:

Most of them cannot cope; most of them complain that they are being discriminated against, because most of the lecturers still are white. In the SOE there is no black lecturer; there is only one coloured lecturer. The courses I take are enjoyable, but as a foreigner I believe the South African students are still too inward looking. The majority of them are not yet open-minded, because they still suffer the effects of the apartheid education system.

This student helped me clarify the issue with her frankness. She was also a self-assured individual, whose integrity shone through like bright sunshine. Having two students who came from outside the department provided a different perspective to the study even though they were limited in not knowing the daily transactions of the SOE. They brought a comparative aspect to the question of how transformation was unfolding in other departments of the University, and in other universities.

Siba experienced a Bantu education. She struck me as a young, vibrant, and creative person. She was very concerned that teacher-training programs reflect her interest in the *Xhosa*-speaking community she lived and worked in. Her family had had her enrolled in a parochial boarding school in the Transkei where she had succeeded and wanted to prove to herself and the world that she could achieve as well as anyone else. She felt quite strongly that a certain traditionally Afrikaner university that she knew of still adhered to its role as an Afrikaans-language and culture institute, despite the fact that the majority of Africans know very little Afrikaans and some even no English. She adamantly railed against a continued intellectual arrogance on that university's part to maintain the apartheid image of intransigent authoritarianism. She argued eloquently for more resources to be placed into "problem schools." She illustrated her point by citing the example of a school in which she had done her practice teaching. The school, as an avowedly diverse school, had only 1 black teacher. She said that even the token black teacher eventually would be moved from the school by the government.

The only doctoral candidate in the study, Jill, firmly believed from her "white" perspective that there was still friction amongst the different races. She stated:

There are still some people who feel they are free and others who have that inferiority complex, especially amongst South African blacks. They would never want to speak with white students even in class discussion. They feel they can't compete with whites. There is no way they can change unless they accept change – I mean to compete.

In seeing the need to introduce competition as the road to equality, Jill's comment was very interesting. Engendered, historic, and a certain amount

of self-imposed limitations all led up to various kinds of inferiority complexes on all sides of the colour line. On this issue my field notes indicate my following comments: The rules of play have not been firmly established yet. The wounds of past discrimination still run too deep.

Jill was quick to reconcile her observation by offering that the problem of past inequalities had less to do with finances than with "attitude. "Liberals have difficulty dealing with students who are not academic. They have to work to bring students up to a state of intellectual maturity. It won't happen by itself. The University's approach has to change." She added, "I enjoy research and want to qualify myself as a researcher. It is a very important area in this country and that's why I choose it. Building a strong theoretical base and becoming a good researcher is what I want." Growing up in a bilingual home (English and Afrikaans) with career-oriented parents and a fervent interest in correcting social ills, she was well qualified to take on work inside and outside the academy.

REFLECTION ON THE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Since 1998 there have been many changes that are taking place in universities in South Africa. They constitute a part of the fundamental evolution of South African higher education. Since then, new challenges have appeared, some old problems are gone. Some persist; for example the issue of access has not gone away because of the depth and resistance of historic inequalities. As Mandela (1994) pointed out, transformation is not an overnight event, but might take time to unfold.

This study focused on one program in the School of Education at UCT, namely the SOE. It is, however, a representative study since students are recruited to the Education program from several area high schools and they display a wide range of intellectual, emotional, and ethno-cultural characteristics. They represented a fairly wide cross-section of population groups. Whilst the study is about a formerly white university, it is important to note that my study as a whole was an attempt to address some of the many questions that have been raised about the future of universities in the contemporary South African education environment, especially when issues of access and relevance of educational experiences are at stake.

The study raised questions about the phenomena of democratized education that came about after the elimination of apartheid in 1994. It offered an example of the possibilities of open education in formerly segregated South African universities for the first time, certainly in UCT's history. It marked the opening of the dam wall that previously blocked any thought of changing the authoritarian educational system. In addition to satisfying the latter objective, the study adds value to the research carried out in the field, particularly in South Africa since 1994, the development of interactive

Will South Africa continue to reform its universities through a top-down approach, given the advantages and disadvantages associated with student participation, and with faculty calling for even greater control over say, curriculum, administrative concerns with co-determinant governance, and so on? The changes envisaged by post-apartheid policies highlighted in this study will undoubtedly be pursued as much as resources in the educational system permit. If universities are to continue to bring policy and actual change closer together, they need to look more microscopically at the grey areas that lie between these two parameters, for instance, by fine-tuning internal policy with external policy demands and constraints, paying more attention to high student dropout rates, and preparing more students for graduation. Or they can in general respond to the poverty gap in their environments by recognising talents and potentialities and nurturing through teaching, research and support the untapped reserve that new constituents bring to the academy. In this way they would serve efficacy missions and contribute to the increased democratization of higher education. Is this then not the same notion of a freedom-based democracy of the ANC's Freedom Charter (1955), namely, "The aim of education shall be to teach youth to love their people and culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace" (Williams, 1988, p. 2)?

Since the transformations in higher education have happened in universities like UCT in 1998, several fronts opened up on the higher educational scene. I cite but a few examples. For instance, there are scholars who urge the teaching of more African languages and indigenous knowledge (Goduka, 1999; Nkhwehva, 1998 2002; and Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002).

To pay more attention to the use of the histories of historically black and disadvantaged universities to get to the heart of their transformations, is another direction taken (Williams, 2001). In undoing segregation at the formerly disadvantaged and coloured university, the University of the Western Cape, Anderson (2002), examines educational equalization. South Africa's educational transformation has become an area that warrants scholarship from other regions in the world, because the desegregation issue is still with us today. UCT could also contribute its experiences with desegregating its campus and take new lessons from historically black universities' transformational record.

The Minister of Education has responded to "transformation fatigue" that occurred in South African universities in the late 1990s, by introducing a four to five- year initiative, the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (2002). It is the aim of the NPHE to "renew transformation." Further the NPHE targets the culture and process of teaching in universities and technikons. Kader Asmal, the Minister, (2002) observes:

pedagogies, the creation of collegiality, diversity and cosmopolitan education, knowledge and power, and classroom conduct and learning.

The article sheds light on the actualities of transformation in a South African university in 1998. Difficulties with mapping out the study were not only associated with challenges stemming from changes during 1998 and changes that are still taking place with transformation, but also my experience with exclusion from UCT in 1966. To locate myself in this study required that I shed any remaining biases about UCT's colour exclusionist past. Coming to terms with the past was an act of forgiveness in much the same way as the prevailing climate of reconciliation in South Africa today.

Much has changed since the data was collected in 1998. In the meantime many new challenges face transformation efforts. Challenges range from downsizing, mergers, financial constraints, increased incidence of HIV/AIDS and so on.

Fruits of democratic education transformation in a South African university in 1998: Conclusion and reflection

In 1998 universities like UCT tried to work with the resources at their disposal to effect change at whatever level possible. A corollary of this assertion is that institutions of higher learning needed to do a lot more to improve access to higher education. Those who might expect this article to end with a formula for democratization of South African universities might unfortunately be disappointed. I do, however, propose a framework for targeting certain administrative, pedagogical, and student issues and concerns that inform the reader of developments that transformed apartheid education to its more democratic face.

The main thrust for liberalizing education is to make the unfamiliar more familiar, to build new relationships that foster community and national development mainly in but also outside the classroom. The ends of such learning are to create more open spaces for all players to bring greater equalization to the school setting. While efforts are made to unleash long hidden or suppressed talents in teaching, study, and research, fresh initiatives are needed for handling learning challenges, such as developing key critical thinking skills for students to become capable of expressing themselves effectively in speech, listening, writing, and literacy skills and attributes. Respect for academic freedom and hearing of individual voices are key to establishing new spaces and for airing outstanding issues for discussion and eventual settlement. Trust building is vital for people of all races to live together as equal and literal neighbours for the first time in the country's history. The experience of the SOE shows that the University stands at the gateway of marking a place in the national reconstruction and development process in South Africa.

The task team proposed various changes to the education landscape, including dissolving historically black universities or merging them with traditionally white institutions. . . . We need to revitalise the teaching element of these institutions. . . and we need to look at the content and approach of the faculties of education. (p. 1)

In December 2002, Congress (2002), at an annual general conference resolved to further deracialize South Africa's higher education sector by supporting renewed transformation (NPHE 2002; Matshikiza, 2002). Congress (2002) also reaffirmed its determination to deal with issues of poverty, comprehensive social security, and human resource development as part of moving in the direction of greater socio-economic progress for all citizens.

The message travelling from the field is that continuation of the democratization of South African universities will have to break remaining barriers of language, race, gender, colour, and class in order for transformation to be accomplished more deeply in South Africa (Mabokela & King, 2002).

Aura articulated her appreciation of the teaching of critical thinking at UCT as follows:

Critical thinking abilities? They are definitely being developed in this program. In Mauritius, the country I am from, our education is very much spoon-feeding and you don't have lots of opportunities to develop critical thinking. Whereas at UCT, especially in the education faculty, I must say that we've had many opportunities where we question things, we analyze, we reflect and I think I have grown very much from all those opportunities.

Students were satisfied with the teaching of critical thinking skills in the program, on the whole.

Finally, Siba provided an appropriate vision for the future of education in South Africa. She replied, when asked how teachers at the SOE helped break or retain walls of prejudice: "Good teachers have abilities to draw humanity together and lead us to self-realization. They expect a humane environment of academic learning as a significant factor. Learning is a two-way process of guiding and wanting to be guided."

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PHILIP TAYLOR was born in Cape Town, South Africa. He was a law student there and lived under apartheid rule. In 1973 he completed a B.A. in political science with McGill University. He has been a certified teacher since 1975, having graduated with a B.Ed. in Elementary Education from Queen's University. In 2003 he attained a Ph.D. in Education from McGill University. Presently he is a teacher and educational consultant.

PHILIP TAYLOR est né au Cap, en Afrique du Sud. Il y a étudié le droit et a vécu sous le régime de l'apartheid. En 1973, il a obtenu un baccalauréat en sciences politiques de l'Université McGill. Il est enseignant certifié depuis 1975, année d'obtention de son baccalauréat en éducation au niveau primaire de l'Université Queen's. En 2003, il a obtenu un doctorat en éducation de l'Université McGill. Il est actuellement enseignant et conseiller pédagogique.

