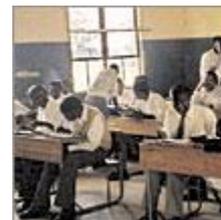




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A Research Programme Consortium on
Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries



Closing the Quality Gap in South African Education? An Analysis and Critique of the Education Roadmap

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**A Roadblock for
Social Justice? An
analysis and critique
of the South African
Education Roadmap
in
*Education Quality
for Social Justice*
Guest editors:
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Purpose

The paper provides an analysis and critique of contemporary debates concerning the quality of education in South Africa from a social justice perspective. In particular it will focus on the *Education Roadmap* which has gained support from a range of stakeholders in South Africa including key members of the government.

Background

- Influential in shaping the ANC election manifesto. Angie Motshekga, has stated that the Department's Strategic Plan draws on the Roadmap
- Concerns about the parlous state of the South African education system were forcefully expressed at the ANC conference in Polokwane in 2007
- The impetus for the *Roadmap* came from the Board of the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA). Prompted by the recognition of a severe skills shortage in South Africa.
- Instigated by three key people, Jay Naidoo, Naledi Pandor and Zweli Mkhize
- process of stakeholder consultation that whilst not fully representative, included 'ANC and non-ANC aligned institutions, unions, government officials, academics, NGOs and other commentators' (Bloch, 2009: 150).
- Of particular importance was the presence around the same table of both the government and the main teachers union, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU).

Background

- Intended to contribute to the debate about education
- DBSA as 'neutral broker'
- Contested process

Some theoretical considerations

- Education policy can be seen as the outcome of sometimes conflicting conceptions of the art and rationality of government, albeit within a global context of the dominance of a particularly virulent neo-liberal governmentality.
- This form of governmentality co-exists with more liberal and radical forms
- The struggle for hegemony between competing interests within the state and civil society becomes one of aligning these discursive elements in the context of alternative economic and political projects.
- Roadmap can be seen as a class strategy – protects interests of historically privileged and BMC
- The intention is to contribute towards a more radical re-working of the *Roadmap* idea in the interests of historically marginalised groups.

Areas that hold back education

Areas perceived to hold back education: -

- intergenerational social disadvantage;
- the role of teachers poor subject knowledge, teaching practices, lack of adequate numbers of teachers and of performance evaluation;
- Outcomes Based Education
- dysfunctional, badly managed and supported schools;
- a continuing lack of basic resources including libraries and computers;
- poverty effects including malnutrition and HIV/AIDS, gangs and drugs;
- and a lack of support for schools at provincial and district levels.

Priorities

- Getting teachers to be in class on time, teaching and to use textbooks;
- focus on the quality of early childhood development;
- ‘Back to basics’ curriculum – Foundations for Learning
- conduct external tests to year three learners annually and provide results to parents; ensure effective evaluation of teachers;

Priorities

- enhance the recruitment of quality teachers and strengthen teacher development;
- offer bursaries to attract quality students into teacher training, enhance pre-service and in-service teacher training;
- ensure that teacher unions have a formal and funded role in teacher development.
- strengthening of management capacity including bringing it in from the private sector; increase the use of ICT in education; improve national-provincial alignment and efficiency

Dominant approaches to conceptualising quality

- Two broad approaches towards understanding education quality
 - Human capital
 - Rights based approaches
- In reality there are overlaps between the two broad approaches and both often co-exist, e.g. Dakar Framework, UNESCO (2005) quality framework, DfID policy etc.

Human capital approaches

- Dominant discourse of the World Bank and other financial institutions
- Purpose of development is to achieve prosperity measured in terms of economic growth
- Human capital theory has evolved
 - Manpower planning
 - Human capital one
 - Human capital two

Human capital approaches

- Implications for understanding of education quality
 - Quality defined in terms of narrow range of outcomes, mainly cognitive, that contribute to economic growth e.g. Hurnushek and Wussmann (2007); Vegas and Petrow (2008)
 - It is argued that countries which have the highest levels of inequality in the education sector (of any kind) also have the slowest national growth rates (Wills, Carol and Barrow, 2007)

Human capital approaches

- Implications for policy
 - Based on economically reductionist view of human agency, e.g. rational choice theory
 - Leads directly to the advocacy – (often on limited evidence) – of the use of market led approaches, including greater decentralisation, ‘choice’, and the use of financial incentives to motivate teachers etc.

HC and Roadmap

- Narrow, instrumentalist view of education quality
- Reductionist view of human nature, *homo economicus*, e.g. performance related pay and use of incentives
- Greater ‘accountability’
- Homogenising and simplistic view of disadvantage
- Silences:
 - Failure to critique existing effects of the existing education market in South Africa
 - Silence over issues of language and gender

Rights based approaches

- Dominant discourse amongst UN agencies and a range of multilateral and national NGOs
- Purpose of development is to realise fundamental human rights
- Interested in
 - rights to education, rights in education and rights through education (Subrahmanian, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007)
 - Recognition of positive and negative rights

Rights based approaches

- Implications for understanding education quality
 - Primarily defined in relation to the needs of individual learners
 - E.g. GCE/ UNICEF and Pigozzi frameworks

Rights based approaches

- Implications for policy
 - State led and top down view of rights
 - Mainly realised through legislation that emphasises negative rights, e.g. corporal punishment
 - UNICEF's model of child friendly and girl friendly schooling is an example of positive rights

HR and the Roadmap

- Calls for a stakeholder forum but this is a top down approach
- Exemplified by the way that ‘blame’ for the crisis is apportioned.
- Critique of learner centred OBE
- Role of civil society conceptualised mainly in terms of holding schools to account and in philanthropic terms
- ‘Silences’
 - Smothering fledgling grass roots movements around rights and social justice, e.g. The Public Participation in Education Network
 - Failure to engage with the language of rights, positive or negative – a ‘value free zone’



Nancy Fraser

Three dimensions of social justice

- *Redistribution* of resources to support the development of capabilities and the benefits that accrue from these in terms of functionings;
- *Recognition* of the rights of disadvantaged learners, the cultural barriers facing some groups and strategies to overcome these;
- *Participation* of disadvantaged groups in public debate and decision-making about education quality at the local, national and global level

Amartya Sen and Capability Approach



Education Quality and Human Capabilities

- Freedom as the goal of development (underpins rights and provides rationale for prosperity)
- Purpose of education is to develop range of capabilities (freedoms) and functionings that contribute to overall wellbeing and that individuals, communities and nations have reason to value
- Education quality can be defined in terms of the opportunities available to develop capabilities and functionings relevant for individuals and groups

Principles of a good quality education

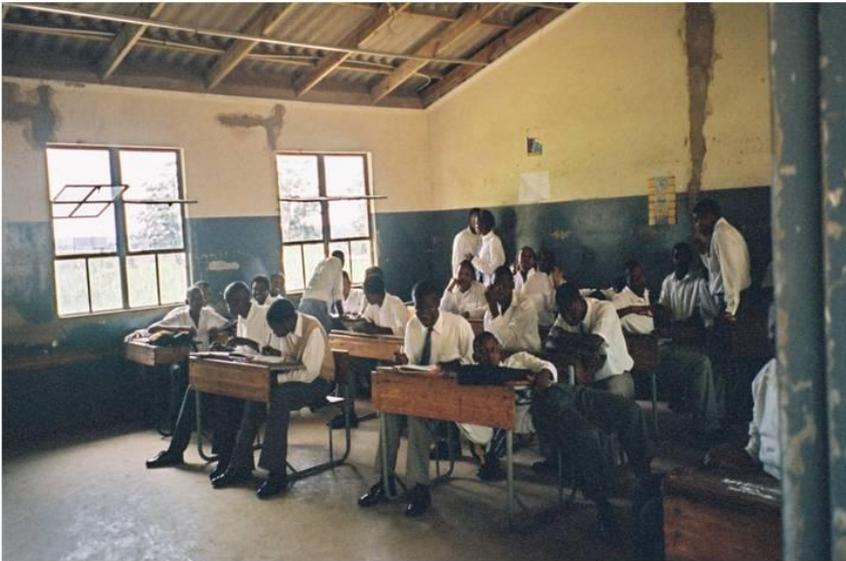
- **Inclusive:** All children achieve the specified learning outcomes.
- **Relevant:** Learning outcomes are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context.
- **Democratic:** Learning outcomes are determined through public debate and ensured through processes of accountability.

Inclusion and the Roadmap

- Some points are right, e.g. school feeding, ECD, ICTs;
- Target resources ('capability inputs') more effectively at different groups of disadvantaged learners;
- Focus on professional status of teachers, overall levels of pay, job satisfaction, conditions of service including housing and intrinsic rewards from teaching;
- Devise strategies to overcome the cultural barriers to developing capabilities
 - Language
 - Gender
 - Disability
 - Sexuality etc.

Quality gap

Township school



Urban multi-racial school



Inclusion



Cultural and linguistic diversity



Relevance

- Focus on a range of capabilities that individuals, communities and governments 'have reason to value'
- Need a more thorough-going review of curriculum based on analysis of 'what works'.

Democratic

- Debates about national, provincial and local quality frameworks
- Developing capabilities of SGBs
- Develop capabilities of political leaders and bureaucrats
- Efficiency of the state depends on
 - Efficiency, transparency, accountability but also on 'moral purpose'
- Support initiatives in civil society – after all education quality is fundamentally a political issue.

Participation





Primary school principal Ethekwini