DOES THE TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICA OR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA EMPHASISE SCHOOL GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN GLOBALISED LABOUR MARKETS?

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ABSTRACT
This paper is based on the premise that the ‘global competitiveness’ of a national education system is influenced by the quality of its teaching corps, which in turn is shaped by its teacher education institutions. Teachers and teacher education are becoming a central focus of strategic national attention because they are recognized as crucial contributors in the creation of a ‘globally competitive’ national workforce. The paper asks two questions: (1) How well has South Africa managed teacher education to maximize the teacher’s role in preparing school leavers to take up positions in the global labour market? (2) Have countries in South East Asia formulated similar policy and implementation plans to maximise the impact of teacher education in preparing school leavers to find work opportunities in globalised industries? The curriculum of the new South African democracy emphasised social harmony and forming new pedagogical relationships: neither school curriculum nor teacher education policy prioritized school leaver employability in the labour market. In Southeast Asian countries, domestic curriculum priorities such as social cohesion, cultural identities, modernization have played a very powerful role driving teacher education policy making in the same direction. The preparation of school leavers for global labour market participation is unlikely to become the sole overriding curriculum aim in any country but is historically contingent on domestic politics.

KEY-WORDS: globalisation, school leavers, teacher education, South Africa, Southeast Asia

1. INTRODUCTION
This paper is based on the premise that the ‘global competitiveness’ of a national education system is influenced by the quality of its teaching corps, which in turn is shaped by its teacher education institutions. In countries across the globe, teachers and teacher education are a central focus of strategic national attention because they are recognized as crucial contributors in the creation of a ‘globally competitive’ national workforce (eg: Sinlarat, 2002). Cohorts of school leavers who are well equipped to participate in the workforce or to study further for a professional career, can leverage local economic growth and attract inflows of foreign investment. Therefore, policy makers are looking further upstream in the education-skills value chain to teacher education to find ways of improving national education and training outcomes (eg: Cheng, Chow & Mok, 2004; Codd, 2005).

There are two key requirements that require attention: (i) a teacher education curriculum that gives emphasis to the skills most valued in globalised workplaces (e.g. that are technology rich, information rich, and require strong teamwork and communication competencies, language competencies, problem solving and critical thinking skills etc.) and that equips teachers with the capacity to transfer the appropriate skills and knowledge, and (ii) sufficient supply of trained teachers to ensure that as far as possible, no school or learner is denied access to appropriately qualified teachers. This paper will pay attention mainly to the initial professional education of teachers in higher education institutions but will take account of in-service training where appropriate.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The first section of this paper adopts a case study approach in addressing the question: Has South Africa managed initial teacher education policy, and the supply of newly trained teachers, to maximise the contribution of teachers toward preparing school leavers for a globally competitive labour market? The second section introduces a comparative dimension by posing the same question in respect to initial teacher education policy and supply of newly trained teachers in countries of Southeast Asia.
The South African case study was selected because that country has undergone major political and curriculum changes at the same time that global market oriented policies have threatened to impact more strongly on national policy. Southeast Asia was selected for this comparative analysis because the region has experienced consistent long term economic growth since the 1950s. Did a combination of globalisation and concomitant economic growth induce countries in the region to formulate education and teacher education policy to emphasise school leaver employability?

Though the main emphasis is on teacher education policy, related policy domains such as national education and curriculum policy, and national economic and development planning are referred to in this analysis.

3. TEACHER IMPACT ON QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

This paper acknowledges that the positive impact of teachers on school quality, and in turn on learner performance and graduate employability is conditional on many factors including the presence of textbooks (and other learning materials) and exposure over time of students to teaching (duration of ‘time on task’ in the class). Also, this paper will not claim that teacher education impacts on all school leaver’s employment in all workplaces. There are too many intervening influences and dependencies such as: the local economy may be poorly integrated into the global economy. In these scenarios, there will be low levels of opportunity for employment in globally distributed industries. In addition, there are large populations of people who are entirely marginalised from the global economy and who produce for local or household consumption.

4. METHODOLOGY

The first part of this paper constitutes an analysis of policy and research literature on curriculum and teacher education in South Africa since the 1970s. In the second part which considers comparative dimensions between South Africa and Southeast Asia, this paper draws on a set of international comparative studies that provide country by country analysis of teacher education in the region from the 1970s to 2007 (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 1990; SEAMEO-RHED, 2002; UNESCO, 2008) These sources are published by UNESCO, a non-partisan authority which upholds high research and data standards.

5. BACKGROUND TO SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

In South Africa, race prejudice is as old as the history of colonialism and racial discrimination which informed unequal distribution of education opportunities on the basis of race. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 provided for increased state control over schooling, and education policy was informed by the notion that a person's social role and responsibilities are defined by their ethnic identity, which justified white paternalistic control over segregated and unequal school systems for different race groups. The then Minister of Native Affairs infamously argued that Africans “should be educated for their opportunities in life,” with no place for them “above the level of certain forms of labour” (Kallaway, 2002:14). Much more was spent on white than on black education. Though the number of schools for blacks increased during the 1960s, per-capita government spending on black education plummeted to less than ten per cent of spending on whites in the 1970s.

Popular resistance that took hold in the 1970s burned fiercely in the 1980s, with school students playing an important role in the mass democratic struggle that brought the apartheid regime to the negotiation table. Between 1990 and 1994, the dire needs of the education system were largely sidelined by negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the last white government. In 1994 South Africa became a constitutional democracy, and the first democratic South African government was formed by the ANC which has remained the majority party in Parliament over the last four electoral periods. The new ANC government was faced with the daunting task of reengineering the entire governance system and redressing socio-economic inequalities. Despite the best efforts of government, the after effects of apartheid and colonialism are still embedded in racialised distributions of poverty that remain painfully evident.

South Africa’s more recent liberation from racial discrimination distinguishes her from Southeast Asian countries that were colonised, and acquired independence from occupying powers at a much earlier stage between 1945
(Indonesia) and 1963 (Singapore). Malaysia as a plural society with ethnic cleavages focused education policy on nation-building after 1957. South Africa’s contemporary need to foster social cohesion in a population divided by race seems to present a far greater challenge to national harmony and economic prosperity.

6. CURRICULUM REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

In the immediate aftermath of apartheid, the ‘old’ curriculum and teaching materials had to be cleared of offensive racial and discriminatory reference and rid of obvious bias. In the meantime a new curriculum ‘Curriculum 2005’ (C2005) reflecting the values of the new South African Constitution was designed to replace the predominant conservative pedagogical mode of apartheid education which had emphasised the student as a *tabula rasa*, rote learning, and authoritarian teaching styles. Grounded on outcomes-based education (OBE) principles, and informed by progressivist education theory, C2005 privileged a constructivist vision of learner centred education supported by continuous assessment (OECD, 2008:79-80).

Statements about the new curriculum reflect government’s understanding of the nature of knowledge, its intention to close the dichotomy between theory and practise, and its recognition of the need for reconciliation and nation building in South Africa, e.g. “The curriculum will begin to integrate education and training – incorporating a view of learning which rejects rigid divisions between academic and applied knowledge, theory and practice, and knowledge and skills. It will foster learning which encompasses a culture of human rights, multilingualism and multi-culturalism and a sensitivity to the values of reconciliation and nation building” (Department of Education, 1997). The statement strongly demonstrates that creating a shared epistemology and building reconciliation were the central preoccupations of curriculum reform in South Africa – rather than the skills demands of globalisation. In this instance, the national curriculum policy would strongly dictate the direction of teacher education policy.

However, the majority of teachers in the country were not familiar with the conception, or practices implied in the C2005 policy. An unintended outcome of the innovation was that teachers in disadvantaged schools struggled to master and implement the curriculum while those at historically advantaged schools had greater success, thus widening the performance gaps between schools. Teachers found themselves under severe time pressure from rising workloads involving preparation and continuous assessment. Furthermore, many felt disempowered by the new emphasis on the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than as sole leader in the classroom.

By 2000 a Ministerial committee appointed to review Curriculum 2005 asserted that its implementation had been: “…confounded by a skewed curriculum structure and design; lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy; inadequate orientation, training and development of educators; learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms; policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms; shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005; and inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments (OECD, 2008:80 citing Chisholm, et al., 2000a: pp. vi-vii). Based on recommendations made by the Ministerial review committee, a Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) with the following features was adopted: it “combines a learner-centred curriculum requiring critical thought and democratic practice with an appreciation of the importance of content and support for educators. It aims to develop the full potential of all learners as citizens of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled” (OECD, 2008:41). Notwithstanding this timely adaptation of C2005, a recent OECD report observed “ongoing concern that disparities in resources and educator preparedness make this modern, high knowledge, resource intense curriculum an inappropriate model in the South African context” (OECD, 2008:81).

This analysis has revealed two key features of South African national curriculum development between 1990 and 2010. First, that so soon after the demise of Apartheid, national social cohesion, and changes to pedagogical relations in the classroom were the overriding priority rather than school leaver quality and employment on the labour market, and second that implementation problems were central to the failure of the curriculum campaign. The South African experience reveals that: political exigencies (Jansen, 2001) have prevented the adoption of a curriculum to secure greater national labour market competitiveness; and that the appropriateness of the curriculum model and content, levels of educator preparedness, the presence of skilled teachers, and availability of classroom resources, can comprehensively thwart curriculum policy.
7. CONDITIONS AGGRAVATING DEMAND FOR AND CONSTRAINING SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS

The analysis will now turn to consider how increased teacher demand and constrained supply of newly trained teachers in the period after 1990 has aggravated shortages of teachers: especially in primary school, in subjects such as mathematics and science, and in rural schools.

7.1 Conditions contributing to increased demand for qualified teachers

After 1994, educators from eighteen different racially and ethnically divided education departments under apartheid had to be amalgamated to create a single teacher employment system. Thereafter, negotiation of new post provisioning with benchmarked learner-teacher ratios linked to curriculum objectives and Grade levels took place, followed by a ‘rightsizing’ process involving teacher rationalisation, redeployment and retrenchment. Many senior educators and school managers took early exits while schools serving remote and poor communities in most dire need of personnel hardly benefited because teachers shunned vacant posts in those localities (OECD, 2008:82-83). Schools serving more affluent communities which could bear higher school fee charges were able to employ additional educators in compensation for loss of posts and could select better qualified educators.

A relatively high proportion of the South African adult population are living with HIV, giving rise to concerns over teacher mortality. In a 2005 epidemiological study of the teaching profession, a methodologically sound study by a South African Human Sciences Research Council revealed that 12.7% of all educators were HIV positive with much higher rates among young (aged 25-34) African female teachers in rural areas (Shisana et al., 2005:53). The impact of sero-prevalence on teacher shortages and supply is hotly debated, but is felt more sharply in rural areas and in the earlier phases of schooling which require teaching in the mother tongue. (Department of Education, 2006,10 cited in OECD, 2008:85).

A third factor reducing the number of teachers available to South African schools was the migration of newly qualified South African teachers to take up posts in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere in former British Commonwealth countries as well as the Gulf States and more recently in Taiwan and Korea.

It should be stressed that the factors observed above added to the replacement demand arising from teachers leaving the profession at retirement age and those who voluntarily leave the profession to work outside the education sector. Anecdotally it has been reported that qualified teachers leave the profession because their salaries are low, though a recent study of over 17 000 educators revealed that they earn, on average, a higher income than most other employed persons (Shisana et al., 2005:46).

7.2 Conditions restricting teacher supply

From the 1950s a proliferation of teacher training colleges – or Colleges of Education - took place under the ‘independent authority’ of different racial and ethnic education departments in the South African ‘homelands’ and ‘bantustans’ to the extent that by 1994, 150 colleges were operating in the country hosting about 250 000 students. Newly trained teachers were produced more or less without regard to demand requirements of the country. Successive moves to reduce the number of colleges involved phases of college closures, amalgamation of colleges with other colleges and finally, incorporation of all remaining colleges with university education faculties. The dissolution of the colleges was promoted as an initiative to improve the efficiency and quality of the teacher education system.

Concurrently, universities were also rationalised. By the end of apartheid there were 36 higher education institutions. To cut down on costly duplication and improve quality, government restructured higher education through mergers and incorporations. The overall outcome was a system of 22 universities some of which incorporated the remaining former teacher training colleges. Consequently 18 out of 22 universities offer teacher professional education whereas in the 1990s more than 150 colleges and universities fulfilled this role. Closure of colleges and amalgamation with universities contributed to steady decline in graduate production of teachers that continued until after the millennium. The physical consolidation of teacher education facilities across the country.
impacted on the operations of almost all institutions. The dynamics of institutional change as well as the pressure to adapt to the new national school curriculum limited energy and resources available to engage with teacher education policy and its link with economic development.

At the same time, since before the millennium the number of African women aged thirty younger and entering teacher-training programmes was in decline. Given that African women constitute the majority of South Africa’s teachers, this decline is matter of serious concern. Paterson and Arends (2009) argue that young middle-class African women who might have enrolled for teacher training are electing to pursue careers other than teaching and to that end are enrolling for professional qualifications in other fields of study. At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, young African women from urban unemployed, urban working-class or rural poor households cannot afford higher education costs or are forced to terminate their studies prematurely.

Increased teacher demand concurrent with constrained supply of newly trained teachers in the period after 1990 aggravated shortages of teachers: in primary school Foundation Phase Grades, and in African language mother tongue, in subjects such as Mathematics and Science across middle and high school grades, and generally in rural schools. In particular there were very low numbers of students with mother-tongue competence in African official languages enrolling in for training in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of the junior school. In 1994, 36% (122 459) of educators were considered unqualified or under qualified, this percentage had declined to 8.3% by 2004. The declining numbers of applicants for places in university teacher education programmes was cause for alarm for the Department of Education which moved to establish a national teaching bursary scheme, called Fundza Lushaka (“Educating the Nation”) (OECD, 2008:84).

7.3 Teacher quality and accreditation

The success with which a new school curriculum can be implemented depends on the availability of properly qualified teachers. In 1994, at least one third of educators was considered unqualified or under qualified, and government moved promptly to reduce the number of unqualified and under qualified educators in the system through in service upgrading programmes provided by government and through students registering for qualifications at higher education institutions. By 2004, the percentage of educators considered unqualified or under qualified in 1994 (36% or 122 459) had declined to 8.3% by 2004. Through this period unqualified and under qualified teachers were more concentrated in rural schools and in junior schools. (Department of Education, 2005:26 cited in OECD, 2008:85)

Nevertheless, a range of internationally benchmarked studies (PIRLS, TIMMSS, SACQMEC) and national systemic assessments indicated declining – or at best static - school quality. A 2008 OECD report recently observed that “the majority of (South African) educators are not yet sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of a 21st century environment and their poor conceptual and content knowledge is a direct contributor to low levels of learner achievement (Department of Education, 2006i, p. 6 cited in OECD, 2008:85). Perhaps this is because a very large proportion of currently serving teachers were themselves schooled, received their professional education and began teaching when education was still part of the Apartheid project. (OECD, 2008:82 citing Department of Education, 2006:6).

In conclusion, an imbalance between demand and supply of teachers and difficulties in sustaining teacher quality impacted on the ability of the national teacher workforce to deliver on policy as envisaged in policy.

8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES ADDRESSED BY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The guiding question in the following discussion is whether teacher education responded to the globalised labour market coming out of Southeast Asia in the same period share similarities with the South African case?

8.1 Focus of teacher education policy in Southeast Asia

For Malaysia in particular, education policy and teacher education has been explicitly linked in one dimension to an overarching ‘national ideology’ and in the other dimension it is embedded in current economic policy (the New
Economic Policy) as well as the long-term ‘vision’ document, ‘Vision 2020’. Evidently, “formal education in Malaysia is viewed as an instrument for achieving national unity and equipping the country with appropriate education and training for economic development” (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002:128). Nevertheless, even in the case of Malaysia, serving economic development was not the sole function of education, a point that will be explored later.

The modernising role of the teaching profession was even more explicitly expressed in China from the 1980s when Deng Xiaoping, resurrected the ‘Open Door’ policy that committed China to adopting policies which embraced market forces, and promoted foreign trade and economic investment. Deng drove the ‘Four Modernizations’ which comprised three economic thrusts, namely the modernisation of agriculture, industry and science and technology (the fourth was national defence). These macro-initiatives demanded investment in schooling and by corollary, teacher education which was “...perceived as a 'machine-tool' of the educational cause and the fundamental base for cultivating a new generation...” (UNESCO, 1990:24).

In this case, we see teacher education policy supporting other policies (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002,64) underlying China’s modernisation and ambition to achieve epochal socio-economic reforms. Put differently, China recognised that “without effective teacher education, the successful realisation of the country’s aims to achieve modernisation (would) not be possible” (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002:50). The Chinese government therefore promoted teacher education in China to “re-establish the dignity of teaching as a profession”, to reemphasise the strategic role of teacher educators in the Four Modernizations drive and to expunge prejudice against the teaching profession and teacher education as a result of the Cultural Revolution. For instance, from 1985, Teachers’ Day was inaugurated for annual celebration every September 10th (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002:64).

Like Malaysia and China, Brunei-Darussalam has also explicitly linked teacher education with government’s high level national planning, and puts great emphasis on education including teacher education as part of its National Development Plan (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002:4-5). However, the close integration of educational and national development planning in the case of Brunei may be in part attributable to the relative ease with which small states can more easily manage an integrated approach to human resource development compared with large countries.

This paper began by making the argument that conditions of globalisation effectively pit national workforces and their underlying education/supply systems in competition with each other. Malaysia, China, and Brunei-Darussalam developed policy that signified preparation of school leavers in response to global labour market competition. However, in the case of China in the 1980s, we argue that the intention was to address internal labour needs and to accelerate transition to a modern economy rather than as a response to external global labour market pressures. So China appears to do the bidding of global markets but is actually behaving in terms of her own needs.

However the South African case study shows that in spite of global pressures for education policy and teacher education to focus on school leaver employability, this did not transpire. Instead, in the context of a political transition, the South African curriculum focused on social cohesion and learner centred pedagogy. This observation suggests that the supposed policy convergence effects of globalisation will not simply overwhelm national priorities. Indeed, exploration of the education policy environment in Southeast Asian countries reveals that teacher education policy has also been oriented to service many national needs other than school leaver employability.

The key source documents reporting successive teacher education surveys in Southeast Asia between 1980 and 2008 reveal that over time, a country might experience shifts in the official policy on education, and on teacher education. For example, the government of Malaysia has recently expressed the desire to raise education in Malaysia to world standards (UNESCO, 2008:77-82) which reflects an outward looking and competitive approach. Yet twenty years earlier Malaysia was seeking to consolidate its own cultural heritage through introducing new subjects, such as Citizenship Education and Islamic Civilization, “to promote greater awareness among student teachers regarding national norms and objectives, and to help reduce communal and geographical polarization.” (UNESCO, 1990:32). These motivations had much to do with the religious politics of the time.

This interpretation of teacher education policy responding to different national needs across time is validated by the following synthesis of how historically teacher education in Thailand was harnessed in pursuit of a series of different goals from early twentieth century:

“In general, teacher education in Thailand for over a century has contributed to the development of the country in many aspects: a) national unification and creation of unity, transforming nation states into a
8.2 Shared challenges for teacher education in Southeast Asia and South Africa:

In the case of South Africa, underestimation of the true magnitude of the task, low teacher quality/preparedness, and sluggish educator graduate production – amongst other factors contributed to low implementation impact of Curriculum 2005. Moreover, the circumstances giving rise to the failure of Curriculum 2005 were definitely not unique to South Africa, as the following observation about problems in teacher education in Indonesia reveals:

“The main issues include: (a) poor quality of school teaching, (b) changing expectations of teacher capabilities, (c) lack of accepted teacher performance standards, (d) need to improve teacher training curricula, (e) inadequate resources to support teacher training programmes, (f) inappropriate qualifications and or experiences of staff of teacher training programmes, (g) lack of research in teacher education and poor dissemination of findings on important classroom research, and (h) poor teacher supply system which resulted in oversupply and poor recruitment and distribution of teachers” (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2002,329).

When the authors of the 1990 UNESCO teacher education publication compared their findings with (the) previous 1972 UNESCO review of teacher education in Asia they observed soberly: “…apart from the expansion in teacher education systems referred to … several problems and issues continue to be stressed in 1988, as they were in 1972” (emphasis added)(UNESCO, 1990,45). What this tells us is that by and large teacher education policy and implementation initiatives in many national education systems face similar lasting challenges as described for Indonesia. Some additional challenges include: complex curriculum governance structures, administrative burdens of multiple service providers, ineffective enforcement of standards, uncompetitive teacher remuneration, teacher union resistance, gender imbalances in recruitment and resource intensive in-service training.

9. CONCLUSION

This study comprised a case study which considered if and how teacher education policy and supply of graduate teachers in South Africa from the 1990s has addressed worldwide demand for local school leavers with skills and traits valued in globalised labour markets? This was followed by comparison with the policy responses of countries in Southeast Asia to the same issue.

The curriculum of the new South African democracy emphasized shaping social harmony and new pedagogical relationships: neither school curriculum nor teacher education policy prioritized school leaver employability in the labour market. Even if a curriculum to achieve the latter had been introduced, this would probably have failed because evidence suggests that South African schools were not ready for curriculum innovation of any form (Figure 1).

<table>
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<th>Pressure for school curriculum to respond to global labour market demand</th>
<th>Countervailing factors</th>
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| Pressure to:  
* Produce a globally competitive labour force to provide employment and support economic growth  
* Design school curricula to conform to skills demands of global industries for relevant generic and specific skills  
* Design teacher education curriculum to support school leaver preparation | Support for alternative national economic and social policies:  
* Citizenship education  
* Manpower needs of local sectors eg: civil service  
* Social cohesion  
* Recognition of local identities | Factors mitigating impact of teacher education policy:  
* Poor quality teacher education  
* Mismatch of teacher demand and supply  
* High teacher-student ratios  
* Poor implementation planning  
* Complex policy |

FIGURE 1 - Factors impacting on implementation of teacher education and curriculum policy to prepare school leavers for participation in global labour force
There are persuasive arguments to the effect that pressurised by global economic forces, countries will give increasing curriculum attention to school leaver competitiveness in the global labour market. Under these circumstances, it seemed likely that teacher education would reflect such a preoccupation given the importance of global labour markets and value chains in determining national employment particularly in Southeast Asia which has sustained its economic growth while most other regions have stagnated or declined (Schuman, 2009). But, among Southeast Asian countries there has been no sign of an emerging wave of government sponsored curriculum and teacher education reform prioritising employability of school leavers on global labour markets. The analysis shows that that the focus of teacher education policy and curricula is largely contingent on perceived national needs such as social cohesion and cultural identity amongst others (Fig 1). So, it seems unlikely that global market pressures for skilled workers will become an overriding teacher education policy goal.

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