THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

3rd Ben Parker Memorial Lecture

Whither progressive education and training in South Africa?

An interrogation of the form and substance of the education process

Delivered by Professor Crain Soudien, 6 March 2012

SAQA
SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Disclaimer

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Acknowledgements

This booklet was compiled by SAQA's Research Directorate. Papers were provided by Professor Crain Soudien (University of Cape Town) and Advocate David Bensusan (University of the Witwatersrand). Conceptualisation, compilation and editing were done by Dr Heidi Bolton (Director: Research, SAQA) with inputs from Joe Samuels (Chief Executive Officer, SAQA); Dr Julie Reddy (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, SAQA), and Drs Loffie Naude and Mucha Togo (Deputy Directors: Research, SAQA). Production was managed by Ernst Vorster (Directorate: Strategic Support, SAQA).

Publication Date: March 2013
ISBN: 978-0-9869808-7-9

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Foreword

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) plays a meaningful role in the full development of individual life-long learners and the social and economic development of the South African nation by overseeing the development and implementation of a world class National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

SAQA instituted the Ben Parker Memorial (BPM) Lecture to honour the contribution that Ben Parker made to the organisation and his thinking about the further development and implementation of the NQF. Ben was the first director for research at the time of his untimely death in 2008. The BPM Lecture is part of the intellectual project of the NQF through which SAQA staff reflects critically with its partners and stakeholders on the state of education and training in the country. It opens discussion about how the field and the NQF could be strengthened. This critical reflection is an important aspect of SAQA's legal mandate which is to:

(a) advance the objectives of the NQF
(b) oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF; and
(c) co-ordinate the sub-frameworks

Leading thinkers and practitioners are invited to share their work and to participate in the critical reflection. Participants engage in a similar fashion with the content of the lecture. The previous leading thinkers invited to deliver the BPM Lecture include Professor Mary Metcalfe (2009) and Duncan Hindle (2010). In 2012 we invited the well-known activist and educationist, Professor Crain Soudien from the University of Cape Town, to deliver the lecture; and Advocate David Bensusan from the University of the Witwatersrand to pay tribute to his colleague and friend Ben Parker.

Professor Soudien paints a picture of South Africa reaching a decisive moment in the implementation of education and training. He argues very strongly for integration and finds the idea that the NQF itself could be seen as the mechanism an interesting one to contemplate further. He further argues that we should listen carefully to some of the alternative voices in education. Advocate Bensusan in his tribute, amongst others reflects his experience of Ben as a charitable person and explores the ethical principles that informed Ben's thinking.

SAQA has committed itself to making these ideas, debates and discussions available to the broader NQF community to allow further critical interaction and enrichment. I want to urge the NQF community to read this very stimulating and interesting booklet and provide us with your feedback and ideas on how we can further develop and implement the NQF. In the spirit of listening to alternative voices, I am looking forward to hearing from you on how we as South Africans should forge the way forward for education and training.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the smart work of our staff in the Research and Strategic Support directorates for making the BPM Lecture such a successful event and this publication possible. A special word of thanks for their contributions must go to Professor Soudien and Advocate Bensusan.

Joe Samuels
Chief Executive Officer, SAQA

Introductory note

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) instituted the Ben Parker Memorial (BPM) Lecture to commemorate the highly respected thinking and work of the late Professor Ben Parker, Research Director at SAQA from 2006 to 2008. Professor Ben Parker was a widely known teacher and researcher of philosophy, education development, and ethics. Before taking up his position at SAQA he lectured at the Universities of Rhodes, Witwatersrand, Natal (Pietermaritzburg), Durban Westville, and KwaZulu-Natal (Durban). While working at SAQA he was an Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand. His positions included Executive Dean of Education (University of Fort Hare), Professor of Ethics (University of KwaZulu-Natal), and Head of the School of Education (University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg). At other times in his life he worked for what was then the Department of Education, a developmental Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), a Further Education and Training College, and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD).

Ben Parker was committed to furthering the ends of social justice; much of his work addresses tensions relating to attempts to bring about a just society. The purpose of the Ben Parker Memorial lectures is to commemorate and build on Ben Parker's activism, his deep theoretical understanding, and his work on the development of education and training across the range of communities in South Africa. At least once every two years, the intention of SAQA is to create a space for a prominent progressive person to stand back and consider progress in the country, towards the education and training goals outlined in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008. The challenge SAQA puts to this individual is to reflect in particular on how the NQF can serve the learners within our education and training system better by raising and responding to the often difficult, but always important, questions for which Ben the activist and researcher was respected.

The presenter of the third BPM Lecture is Professor Crain Soudien, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT), previously Director of the School of Education at UCT, and widely published and deeply respected sociologist and educationalist. Crain Soudien has been President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and Chair of a Ministerial Committee on Transformation in Higher Education. He is currently a Fellow of the International Academy of Education, and is involved in a number of local, national and international

social and cultural organisations. A highly regarded activist in his own right, Professor Soudien speaks in the BPM Lecture about opening the doors of education and training to all. In the spirit of intellectual scrutiny and deep compassion for humanity for which Ben Parker was known, Professor Soudien presents his own deep engagement with current ideas and events.

The lecture and question-answer session that followed are presented in this booklet. The booklet closes with the tribute to Professor Ben Parker written and read before the lecture by Advocate David Bensusan, respected academic at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and long-standing colleague and friend of the late Professor Ben Parker. The tribute comprises a beautifully clear elaboration of ideas around creating the conditions of autonomy for teachers to be in conversation with learners towards building worthwhile lives. As such it is a strong complement to both the lecture and discussion that follows.

SAQA invites the reader to consider achievements since 1994, and seek new ideas to address existing gaps and challenges in the integrated and differentiated education and training system in the country through the lenses of speaker Professor Crain Soudien, tribute-writer Advocate David Bensusan, and the audience present at the event.

Heidi Bolton
Director: Research, SAQA

Whither progressive education and training?

An interrogation of the form and substance of the education process

Professor Crain Soudien, 6th March 2012

Introduction

It is almost eighteen years since South Africa has become a democracy. Fascinatingly, the country remains gripped in debates about the kind of future it seeks to craft for itself. These debates take sharp form in relation to the nature of the state and particularly the role it should play in the provision of key social rights such as health, education and housing. How the question of 'right' is being approached is, however, not without its difficulties. Dominant approaches to the idea of a 'right', frame it as an undifferentiated and already defined commodity. It is either available or not. This conception has led to the debates about health, education and housing, for example, essentially being about availability and provision. Motivating these debates is the question, stimulated by perceptions that the state is not doing enough, as to *what* the state is doing. Illustrating this view, is the reality that the most important civil society structures emerging in recent years, including organisations such as the Treatment Action Committee, Equal Education, and the Electricity Campaign, have all essentially made quantity - how much - the foci of their campaigns. The question of what these rights should consist of, their substance, interestingly has not come under the same public scrutiny. Instead the responsibility for specifying the content of the rights to be provided has been devolved to and become the preserve of, experts and academics.

The problem with framing a human rights approach in quantified terms is that all of its other important dimensions - such as the definition of what a 'right' might be - are either postponed or assigned as the responsibility of those 'who know'. Of course it is important that people who have special knowledge are respected. They should expect to be taken seriously. But I take the position in this paper that experts cannot determine the answers to public interest questions by themselves. The division of responsibility such as it currently is practised with the residual question of quantities presenting themselves as the most legitimate arena for democratic participation

effectively *excludes* people in the determination of their futures. Lost is the opportunity for the creation of an engaged public.

It is this problematique - that of creating a 'commons' for education and training in which difference is engaged fully - that frames the discussion in this paper. Reflecting on approaches to developing inclusive publics elsewhere in the world, I ask several questions: what is meant by progressive education in South Africa? What might a progressive discursive educational move in South Africa consist of? What are the pragmatic limits and possibilities of a progressive move? I ask these questions as a way of paying homage to Ben Parker and to his unstinting commitment to social justice. The project to which he committed himself is incomplete.

In launching this discussion, the question might be asked as to why a focus on the meaning of the word 'progressive' is necessary in the first place. It could be argued, with justification given the uneven record of the state, that all that really matters is that education works. In response, the first point to make is that progressivism as a social orientation is inextricably bound up with social justice. A social justice approach to questions of the public good, by inversion, in its intention seeks to be progressive. It is never enough, however, simply to proclaim one's progressiveness. It has to be demonstrated and subjected to wide scrutiny.

Progressivism in the world

But what does it mean to be progressive? Modern understandings of what a progressive educational practice might be take their origin from debates in the United States that emerged in the decades before and after the turn of the 19th century. As America was going through rapid social and economic growth, the central question that confronted its policy-makers was that relating to the purpose of education and what schools should teach. An intense debate ensued out of which emerged a range of social and philosophical positions. Two were significant, namely *social efficiency* and *liberal humanism*.

Both positions continue to find expression in contemporary policy-making. Social efficiency is associated with the work of Charles Prosser and David Snedden who sought to 'direct social change according to scientific principles that promoted hierarchical authority and instrumental order' (Hyslop-Margison and Richardson, 2008:1). This approach, as Hyslop-Margison and Richardson explain, acknowledges traditional conservative education interests and stresses bureaucratic order,

scientism, accountability and standardised assessment. The teacher is the central figure in this trope. On him or her pivots the entire success of the educational project.

The other position - that of liberal humanism - was elaborated in the thinking of key 20th century philosophers of education: Dewey, Counts, Kilpatrick and Bode. For Kilpatrick (Van Til, 1962:3) education had to tap into the learner him or herself to nurture his or her capacity to develop a sense of self-direction and independent thought. In Counts' case, education was about responding to the social conditions in which subjects found themselves. He wrote a famous tract in 1932 called '*Dare the schools build a new social order*?' For Bode (1938) the objective of education was to deepen the practice of democracy through critical thinking. The cumulative significance of what these educators stood for came together in the work of Dewey (1987) who argued that the purpose of education was to improve the human condition. Education had to be centred on the individual learner. "I believe", Dewey (1987:77) said, "that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the (human) race…".

This North-American debate with its emphasis on the individual - both the teacher as the society's central interpreter of social order and the student as its future democratic agent - had its correlates in Europe and the rest of the world. Socialist and communist movements, many emerging several decades before the American discussion, generated out of the ferment created by the uprisings and revolutions in France, Germany and later Russia, their own philosophies. Thinkers like Pestalozzi and Montessori would emerge to open up lines of thought around how the individual came to be a fully sociable yet cognisant citizen.

How did thinking grow out of sociality? In contrast to most but not all of the American theorists of education - Dewey as well as the figures of Bowles and Gintis with their publication *Schooling in capitalist America* (Bowles and Gintis 1976) are important exceptions - the Europeans were less hostile to ideas of socialism. This openness in the rest of the world led to a vigorous questioning by the 1970s of the reproductive nature of the modern school and its functional role for the survival of capitalism. Scholars with a more European orientation, such as Illich (1983) called for the 'deschooling' of education. How this was to be done was left to Paulo Freire (1972) who in key texts such as the *Pedagogy of the oppressed* developed the idea and the practice of conscientisation. Teaching 'reading' he sought to show that the world was not a given reality to which human beings should adjust. It was, instead, a problem to be worked on and solved (Shaull, 1972:12). In the process, people as individuals

participated in their own transformation and as social beings in the transformation of the world.

This discussion, as it played itself out over the decades of the 20th century and across geographic space, had a deep impact on South Africa. Elements of both the social efficiency and liberal humanist American approaches to progressive education were taken up in the South African progressive discussion as was the more radical influence of people such as Freire.

The point in undertaking this overview is by no means to posit a complete statement of what progressive education is, but to foreground the kinds of concerns it raises and the issues and tensions embedded within it - and to suggest what might be taken from it.

There is, it is clear, not a single and coherent argument or position on what progressivism is. As Carlson and Dimitriadis (2003:3) say of the United States but which applies to the rest of the world too, progressivism is not a unitary discourse. It is marked by a range of individuals and organisations with a variety of accents and emphases and points of departure about what is in the public interest. These progressivisms exist as loose coalitions of interrelated and often contradictory discourses in both the public domain and in the academy. They are also shaped by their contexts.

In the contemporary era, for example, the progressive discussion in the United States has largely been shaped by the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) initiative begun in the George Bush era. A wide range of responses, in defence of progressivism, has emerged to this initiative. On the outer left flank in the United States, scholar-activists such as Peter McLaren make the argument that the world is going through a new phase of predatory capitalism and that the future of humankind is threatened. On the right, as opposed to the conservative right-wing, are liberals who see themselves as carrying the mantle of the American dream and the founding ideals of the American Constitution. For them the progressive school, even that which has retreated into the fold of the private sphere, remains a living force in the American educational landscape. In the middle are a more analytic group of scholars such as Popkewitz, Denzin, Carlson and Dimitriadis. Unlike the left wing, on one hand, this group sees possibility within the modern school. On the other hand in contrast to the right wing of progressivism, the group remains grounded in a deep political assessment of how the modern school is situated. Popkewitz (2008:301), for example, recognises its

emancipatory potential but is at pains to draw attention to its schizophrenic character. Embedded within it, on the one hand, he says is a commitment to freedom and inclusion, but so too there is the theme of salvation. In the ideas of freedom and inclusion is invested hope for the children who are to become self-actualising agents. The theme of salvation on the other hand, responds to a dangerous sense of anxiety and fear. Core to this anxiety and fear is an implicit belief that people cannot be trusted and should not be left to themselves.

However, while these progressivisms are not all in agreement, there are definite constants in what progressives talk about. These include the following:

(i) A recognition of the rights and the roles of the individual in his or her own development;
(ii) A commitment to the idea of 'public good';
(iii) A commitment to the idea of public education and the belief that public education is the bedrock of a modern democracy;
(iv) The notion that within public education lies promise and possibility for both individual growth and social development; and
(v) That, critically, constituting a progressive project is an essentially pragmatic question.

These constants as indicated earlier take different form in the American, European and South African versions of progressivism but generally have within them, including in the north American social efficiency version, the idea that democratic societies are learning societies and that democratic communities are learning communities. As ideas of ontology, social values and political practice these constants are all anchored in the larger proposition that democracies produce deliberative cultures. Within these the qualities of self-reflection and self-criticism, as opposed to the uncritical celebration of the past, are nurtured and so the opportunity for reconstruction and the imagination of new possibilities is always present. Dewey said, for example that “democratic societies are intentionally progressive” (Carlson and Dimitriadis, 2003:5).

The South African progressive discussion

Against this background how might we begin to understand the progressive movement in South Africa? In response to the challenges bequeathed to it by *apartheid*, the new democratic African National Congress-led government introduced major changes in education after 1994. Using the 'constants' I have

developed above to characterise the progressive movement's concerns, it is clear that the changes introduced by the new state were progressive in their intentions. As I shall attempt to show below these changes were certainly framed around the recognition of individual rights, they invoked the idea of the 'public good', and, crucially, in their broad commitment they constituted a promise to the people of South Africa of a new order. But they also, however, as Popkewitz said of the progressive project in the United States, contained other ideas. What these, in whole, amount to is important to understand.

The very first move made by the new government in 1994 signalled its intentions of moving from the racist past it had inherited. It took the 17 racialised education departments that had come into being during *apartheid*, one for each of its supposedly distinct ethnic groups, and established a single national education department. The legislation mandating this development was the landmark South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Education [DoE], 1996) which outlawed discrimination and made education compulsory for all learners up to Grade 9. The effects of these changes were dramatic. The right of access was accorded to all and so within ten years of democracy the country was able to achieve full enrolment of its eligible learners at the compulsory stage (Republic of South Africa, 2003:11).

Emphasising its progressive intentions, the state placed substantial resources at the disposal of education and training. As Bloch (2005:9) explained, "(w)ithin the fiscal landscape… there has been a massive emphasis and priority on the education budget with some 6% of GDP and approximately 21% of the national budget at its height". A sum of approximately R65 billion (US$6 billion) was allocated to education in 2003. In 2012 this figure is close to R200 billion.

Critically too, the state set to work to reform the curriculum. A new curriculum, called Curriculum 2005 (C2005), was introduced in 1997, and revised (leading to the *Revised National Curriculum Statements* [RNCS]) in 2002. Based on an outcomes-based approach it sought to place emphasis on learner-centredness in contrast to the *apartheid* government's rote learning approach. The new curriculum was described as a strategy for moving away from a racist, *apartheid*, rote-learning model of learning and teaching to a liberating, nation-building and learner centred outcomes-based one. As with People's Education, the educational manifesto of the modern liberation movement, it committed the new education system to the values of democracy, non-racialism and non-sexism. Significantly it was developed through extensive

processes of participation, through a number of 'technical committees' and wide consultation, assisted by international leaders in curriculum design.

Perhaps the most far-reaching innovation introduced by the new state was its National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (RSA Department of Education, 1995). This framework, to be overseen by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), attempted to introduce into the educational system, at all levels, the principle of vertical and horizontal portability of qualifications and skills. The idea behind it was to open up and democratise learning pathways for the country's socially and educationally diverse population. It supplied the educational and training system with the language, concepts and regulatory frameworks necessary for its operation. At the core of all of these goals was the principle of integration.

The principle of integration was adopted, as Christie (1996), Young and Gamble (2006) and Carrim and Taylor (Forthcoming) explain, as a response to the severely fractured and discriminatory educational and training system the new government had inherited from the *apartheid* system. Several problems characterised the old system. It was, as Christie explains, (1996:407) a low progression/low participation system. The meaning of race in South Africa was effectively worked out through the experiences of access, participation and success in education. An extraordinarily privileged White middle-class emerged in the 1960s and 1970s that was second in the world in its standard of living only to its Californian counterparts. For people classified African it produced a life experience in which possibilities for social mobility were constantly subverted. One could be proto middle-class in one generation and deeply poor and economically subjected in the next. The *apartheid* approach to education and training, moreover, inhibited articulation. Education and training operated in two disconnected oversight systems. Education was managed under the aegis of an academically-orientated formal schooling system administered by a Department of Education while training was overseen by a range of technical colleges, training boards and training centres as part of the bureaucracy of the Department of Labour. The former was conceived with the principle of progression in mind: school-based learners could matriculate into university. Those based in the training system, by contrast, had little opportunity for progression into higher education.

Changing the basic nature of the education and training system was thus a priority for the new government. Giving substance to this commitment it introduced the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act 58 of 1995 and White Paper 3, *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* in 1997 (Republic of South

Africa [RSA] Department of Education [DBE], 1997) which mandated the Council on Higher Education to establish a Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF). The objective of these policies was the creation of a single integrated qualifications framework to reconfigure the whole architecture of education and training, to make articulation within the system possible, to endow institutions with greater flexibility with respect to admission and progression, to enable mobility between different kinds of learning contexts, and critically, to introduce into education and training a conceptual framework for calibrating standards of learning attainment across learning contexts. The policies were effectively about creating a society in which, as Christie (1996:408) says, lifelong learning would become a feature of life. Emphasised too were commitments to open access as well as to the development of an approach to human resource development. For the new state the policy was central in its reconstruction agenda. To *apartheid's leitmotif* of separation, integration was a powerful metaphor for the new state. Ideologically it offered the new state a language of renewal if not revolution. Dramatically distancing the new state from South Africa's *apartheid* past it provided a moral and intellectual basis for moving beyond all the discriminatory polarities the country had inherited: white versus black, academic versus applied, theory versus practice, knowledge versus skills, and head versus hand (Republic of South Africa Department of Education, 1995: 7). The policy offered for the new government, moreover, the opportunity to position itself as a modern and progressive state.

The central elements of the policy are important to understand. Descriptively they approximate a taxonomy made up of qualifications, standards, and other related elements. One of the most important concepts in this taxonomy is that of *level descriptors*. This concept was, and still is intended to provide "the outer and most generic layer in terms of the knowledge and skills that learners are required to acquire, integrate and demonstrate (applied competence) at each level of cognitive complexity on the HEQF….The level descriptors provide generic standards for qualifications…in terms of predictable levels of complexity of knowledge and skills at each NQF level" (RSA Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2011). The HEQF specifies three broad qualification routes towards conceptual and contextual knowledge, the professional, the vocational and the general. In the taxonomy the purpose of the level descriptor is used to position specific qualification types: certificates, diplomas, degrees and other offerings are pegged to specific NQF levels. In the Higher Education sector six NQF levels are specified. Nested within level descriptors are two further levels, those specifying the designation of a qualification,

and the specialisation of the qualification. The rationale for this system, the DHET (2011:56) emphasises, is the provision of:

> a basis for integrating all higher education qualifications…it provides a basis for standards development and quality assurance. It provides a mechanism for improving the coherence of the higher education system and indicates the articulation routes between qualifications thereby enhancing the flexibility of the system and enabling students to move efficiently over time from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers.

Significant changes have been suggested in the latest proposals which have emerged from the state, particularly the Revised Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) (RSA DHET, 2011) and the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (RSA DHET, 2012). Key changes in the Revised HEQF and the Green Paper relate to criticisms made about the original approach and its misunderstanding of knowledge and how knowledge works. Strikingly, the Revised HEQF (RSA DHET 2011:60) indicates a sensitivity to the criticism that policy-makers failed to understand the specificity of the knowledge forms the NQF sought to integrate and blurred the boundaries between them. In response to this failing, the new policy says that "(i)t is also important to emphasise that… credits are not necessarily directly exchangeable within a particular level, as they are also related to the purpose of a particular qualification" (Ibid.). The new Green Paper (RSA DHET 2012:74) also opens up the possibility for removing NQF levels and level descriptors, and abandoning the project of specifying unit standards - 'a waste of time and resources' - acknowledging the criticisms about the system operating as a Foucauldian panopticon, and the need for simplifying the system. Integration as a principle and the commitment to what it stands for remains, however, undiminished for the new state. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande (RSA DHET 2012:3), said at the launch of the Green Paper that it "sets out a path for overcoming the [key challenges facing the higher education and training system]. It…provides a vision for a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school system."

Views of integration

Integration, against the background sketched above, presents itself as an undoubtedly progressive idea. It is almost historically necessary. The question arises, however, of how well it is conceived and how comprehensively it speaks to this past. Is it inclusive? Is the public good intention it gestures towards, capacious and respectful

of the diversity of the country? What unintended outcomes does it have? What kind of social analysis does it make as it begins the process of imagining the future?

Two categories of concerns have arisen in discussions about the principle of integration. The first is about the implementability of integration and the second about the principles underpinning it. It is the second that is relevant for this discussion.

In setting up the discussion about principles it is necessary to acknowledge that an extensive critique has developed about the economic focus of the policy as a whole. Young (2007) has drawn attention to this as a problem, as has Christie (1996: 412) who says that the state's new vision appears to "bear the hallmarks of human capital theory, which asserts that education brings returns for both individuals and society… and that education is linked to productivity" (ibid). Integration in this perspective is effectively a social ordering mechanism for employment.

But more significant for this discussion are those features that bear on integration from a learning point of view. I want to suggest that the kind of learning that integration promotes is premised on a particular conception of modernity and a particular conception of the South African subject. To demonstrate these difficulties I need to summarise the debate that is currently underway around integration. In this debate there are three key schools of thought:

1. The first is represented by Christie (1996:412) who focuses her analysis of the policy on its terms of reference. Where does the policy take its point of departure from? In short, how is the problem defined? In arguing that explanations of how integration would work were insufficient, she points out that the focus of the policy - of what should happen - is located within formal schooling. Its agenda or its problematique, however, comes from the field of training which has been unable to provide young people access to higher education. Apart from providing a vision for training, the policy does not make clear 'how far training could spearhead the necessary changes' in the wider system (Ibid).

2. The second criticism draws from discussions of the sociology of knowledge. Where Christie's (1996) analysis focuses on 'the problem', the second pivots on what could be understood as 'the solution to the problem'. Scholars such as Joe Muller, Michael Young and Stephanie Allais (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming) describe this solution as a misconceived epistemological

relativism. According to Muller, for example, the approach - the solution underpinning the NQF and its HEQF - is an 'accession to political modernity' (Ibid. 21). Supported by Allais, he takes issue with what he describes as 'radical forms of post-modern voluntarism' holding the HEQF aloft: “the idea that knowledge and truth are relative and that school knowledge has no basis for superiority over any other kind of knowledge” is for him profoundly problematic (Ibid.). This approach refuses to recognise, Muller (Ibid.) says, the boundaries between different forms of knowledge. It fails, more specifically, to recognise that different knowledge forms require particular conditions for their acquisition, transmission and production. As Carrim and Taylor (Forthcoming:25) explains: “For Muller the problem with…the NQF and 'integrating' the academic and vocational…is conceptually flawed and cannot be successful until such epistemological and educational conditions are taken into account seriously”. The social constructivists behind this mistake, Muller says, 'have had their day' (Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming:21).

3. The third critique takes its substance from an engagement with Muller: Carrim in driving this argument concurs with Muller that the NQF has failed to recognise the complexity of knowledge boundaries but takes his explanation of how the boundaries work towards the social rather than the epistemological (Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming). In Muller's (Ibid.) critique the NQF makes the presumptive mistake that a degree of commensurability exists between knowledge forms. Carrim's rejoinder is that this characterisation sets up a 'straw person'. It 'overly stat(es) the use of such “post-modern voluntarism”' (Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming:29). The boundaries, he argues, drawing on Bernstein, should not just be understood as 'voluntarist' social constructs about epistemology but should also be seen as 'the divisions of labour of educational knowledge': “'the knowledge that is considered 'to be public', the 'selection' of the type of curricula to be constructed and the 'organisation and distribution' thereof are about power and 'the principles of social control'” (Ibid.). The discussions, says Carrim (Forthcoming:30), are not just about the relativism framing the NQFs epistemological assumptions, they are about “the lack of acknowledgement of the material conditions that characterise South Africa's social formation and that due to this there is a lack of meeting the prerequisites of establishing an integrated type of curriculum” (Ibid.). In this argument it is the complexity of the country's social formation that is the issue.

There is an implicit and under-articulated statement in all these criticisms about what is at stake with respect to integration. At stake is the question about the *kind* of modern society South Africa should become. Christie (1996) sets the scene by introducing the *dramatis personae* in the discussion. Who in this cast, she poses as a question, is making the running and asks, implicitly, if the country is prepared to accept a state of affairs where the organised labour community is leading developments. Muller and Allais (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming), having come to accept the staging prepared by Christie, say that the country should deal with the reality that it is confronted in the two positions - human capital development and social justice? - or state and organised labour? - with their incommensurable knowledge regimes. The 'what' the protagonists are saying, they insist, matters. It is a mistake, they say, to see all knowledge forms as part of a single seamless continuum: one needs to understand ones terms of reference. Muller's observation (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming) that the social constructivists 'have had their day' most clearly signals the nature of the challenge for the discussion going forward. In this view there is no longera question about a future, either for the country or for education practice. That question has already been worked out in the unambiguous virtue of 'powerful knowledge'. The task for the country is to focus on the acquisition and retention of this 'powerful knowledge'. Carrim (Ibid.) is not in disagreement with Muller about the kind of knowledge that will best serve the future, but he makes clear that a social process - that of 'social formation' - is necessary for getting to Muller's point. He emphasises that what the country is going through is an accession to modernity itself: " ...the project of modernity within South Africa is by no means complete….Developing the skills base of the human resources…is not one of the things that can be 'leap-frogged'….The acquisition of knowledge in modernist boundaries remains necessary…for participation in an interdisciplinary 'networked' arena of the global order" (Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming:33).

Taking these framings of the debate I wish to suggest that the progressive project encounters its sternest test on exactly this ground and that the danger that the NQF portends as a modernist dream is that it struggles to get to grips with the actual sociology of the country. It is about the social make-up of the country - what Carrim (Op. Cit.) calls 'the social formation'. The progressive question mark around the NQF has to do with the key issues of what is to be integrated; who participates in the imagination of 'the what'; and just as crucially, the conditions for managing the discussion about the modalities for an integration discourse.

Drawing on Bernstein (1996),Carrim (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming:39) is helpful methodologically in thinking about how to work with the challenges thrown up in identifying what is to be integrated and on the basis of which stake-holding groups. Carrim (Ibid.) accomplishes this through recovering Bernstein's (1996) discussion of an integrated code and the difficulties that arise in managing processes of integration. These difficulties include specifying what is to be assessed, the form of assessment and the place of specified competencies in such assessment. Carrim (Op. Cit.) quotes Bernstein who says "without clear criteria of evaluation, neither teacher nor taught have any means to consider the significance of what is learned, nor any means to judge the pedagogy". The key issue, as Carrim (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming)correctly says, is the absence of a 'relational idea' within the NQF and the education and training system in South Africa. Interestingly, Christie had raised a similar point much earlier: in 1996 she suggested that an important next step for the SAQA process was a 'dialogue across the (education and training) divide as well as actual work at the chalk face and workplace' (Ibid.).

It is here, I wish to suggest, that the challenge to the country's claims to progressivism lie. While Muller's terms of address usefully lift out the reality that there are important learning acquisition and reproduction features in different forms of knowledge, his approach does not speak clearly enough to the challenge of what one does when one lives in a world of multiple authorities and how one manages relationships between discrete worthwhile forms of knowledge. It is these concerns that make Carrim's (Op. Cit.) summary of Bernstein (1996) critical. Carrim speaks directly to the different domains of authority that need to be integrated. He does not say how, though. An important recent contribution to this discussion is being made by Bolton and Keevy (2011) who present an entirely new reading of the NQF. They argue that the NQF *is* a relational device. The point that they are making, using Engestrom's (1989) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Bernstein's (1996) idea of 'pedagogic device', is that the NQF is a device which "shape(s) relationships between power, social groups, forms of consciousness (ways of thinking) and practice - (which)…influence(s) who is included in and who excluded from access to particular ways of thinking and doing" (Bolton and Keevy, 2011:8). Acknowledging how pedagogic devices such as these depend on distributive rules, which influence access to what is 'thinkable' and 'unthinkable', they attempt to locate the structure of the pedagogic device with its recontextualising, distributive and evaluation rules within the socio-materiality of an activity system. They suggest that the NQF is an organising arena in which new constitutive possibilities arise. It is possible for a new discussion to emerge within the linked universe of the NQF. This discussion, however, I

want to argue in conclusion is premised on a still exclusionary understanding of modernity. At issue, in the contributions, is a clear idea of who should be in the discussion, but, critically, not of who has been left out. It is in these terms that the 'who' of the integration process remains a problem.

Reclaiming the progressive high ground: towards a conclusion

In taking the discussion forward it is necessary now to begin making clear what remains to be done for the development of the progressive project in education and training. The debate is at an extremely poignant juncture. Into it has been introduced what Carrim (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming) and Bolton and Keevy (2011) describe as 'a relational idea'. But this idea must be expanded significantly. It is not just about the division between the work-place and formal institutions of learning. It is also about all the extant forms of knowledge that are in current circulation. The divides of the formal versus the non-formal or the vocational versus the academic or professional, or high-status knowledge versus everyday knowledge do not exhaust what is at issue. Also important, are marginalised knowledges, including indigenous knowledges. In taking the discussion in this direction three difficulties must be confronted.

The first difficulty must be that of recognising who has citizenship in the current discussion. The discussion, I wish to suggest, engages the issues of integration on the basis of a particular understanding of the social nature of South Africa. The society it has in mind and the groupings within it are essentially constituted on the basis of that which the policy wishes them to be. They are future subjects, the people who *should be.* They are not the people who actually are making lives for themselves in the contradictory pushes and pulls of the country's complexity. The policy addresses them, even in Carrim's otherwise useful attempt to characterise them, as a homogeneous mass committed to a particular vision of modernity. It is here that the policy stumbles as a progressive initiative. Constituting the 'public' in this single-minded way and so assuming that it is in agreement about the future as the NQF and its interlocutors imagine it, is a democratic oversight.

While it may indeed be the case that the version of the future that the discussion is projecting is one that enjoys national support, the reality is that this view has not been democratically tested. Consultations on and about the policy, such as they have been, have effectively been with social groupings, such as workers, learners, teachers and experts who enjoy a level of inclusion and are discursively articulated into the world of

the NQF. Their integration, from their multiple points of advantage and disadvantage, particularly those of class, colour and educational status, is premised on acquiring that which would help them to succeed. Excluded from this discussion are those, whatever their size and social significance, who have a different view of the future, an alternative view. In drawing attention to this I am not making any kind of claim about value. Whether these other forms of knowledge are valuable or not are questions that must be addressed without sentimentality. The fact of the matter, nonetheless, is that alternative approaches to and alternative understandings of the world continue *actually to exist* within the everyday world. This is an important social reality - both ontologically and epistemologically - around which South Africans need to be thinking. Failure to do so undermines the claims to progressivism of the policy because implicit in it is a fundamental form of 'othering'. The first point to be made in conclusion, therefore, is that those who have an alternative view of the future have been excluded. Integration is predicated on a particular characterisation of the public as being those who are enfranchised within the modern.

The second and third difficulties flow from the first. The second pivots on the substance of the integration discussion - what it is about. As the discussion is evolving it is essentially about understanding what 'good' knowledge is. The terms of the discussion are not unproblematic in the way they have come to characterise some forms of thinking as 'good' and, on occasion, even, as 'powerful'. While it is true and correct that certain forms of thinking, procedurally, have an integrity which must be respected, implicit in the discussion is a sense about the precedence of some over others. The point is not to deny the integrity of these different knowledge forms. Indeed scholars such as Muller call for them to be used for what they were intended and for them not to be confused, but one is still left with the question of how one brings them into a relation. How, furthermore, does the discussion bring into view that which it has completely excised, the alternative view of the future? One is confronted with a crucial weakness in the policy here. It is this absence that makes Bolton and Keevy's (2011) contribution deeply important.

The third difficulty, flowing then directly from the second is the procedural one. How does one activate the dialogue that Bolton and Keevy (2011) talk about, or the relational idea to which Carrim (in Carrim and Taylor, forthcoming) refers, to achieve a democratic outcome? The question is that of how one develops rules of engagement between all the players in the game, including those who have been excluded. The rules as they are currently constituted focus on outcomes and standards. What this

does is only indicate what the outcome of the dialogue should be, not how it should be prosecuted. It is that which is now urgent.

In recovering the progressive high ground it seems that the central difficulty confronting a progressive project is how it might constitute itself as a project of expansion instead of as one of exclusion. How might it avoid, as Carlson and Dimitriadis (2003:7) say of the United States a language and practice of democracy "that neither excludes whole sub-populations of people from the full rights and freedoms of citizenship nor brings them under a governmentality of regulation, surveillance and normalisation"? Is it possible to evolve a progressive practice that is not defined by exclusionary practices? Can modern historical subjects be constituted on a basis that is not premised on *othering?* It is this challenge that now lies before the country.

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Audience responses

Question 1:
Professor Shirley Walters (Director: Division for Lifelong Learning [DLL] at the University of the Western Cape [UWC], and past Chairperson of the SAQA Board)

What I am wondering about is how we as people involved in education in the broader sense, ourselves enter into conversations with one another. I come from a world of adult education and social group learning, where many influences come into play that are outside the main-frame of schooling and formal tertiary education. When we think about schools we are actually thinking of schools as places of (broad) community engagement. We ourselves have not found a way of talking to one another. There is an "in group" and an "out group". So a lot of people who are kept outside the main conversations - some of whom are highly educated and professional - contemplate conversations with one another. Our Faculties of Education (in Higher Education Institutions) cannot deal with those of us who do not belong to the (narrow) 'school of education' or who are 'school oriented'. This reality speaks volumes to how we have the conversations. When the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) came into being, my response from an adult education point of view was: what about everybody that does not have a qualification? So you have an NQF, which in reality stands in relation to another 'nqf', the 'non qualifications framework'. And that kind of conversation is one we have not really had: we grappled instead with the engines of the NQF. How will we go about continuing education, or informal learning? Even amongst ourselves we have not addressed this work in a systematic way. We belong to discursive communities with strong brick walls around them; we have found it impossible to climb over these walls.

Question 2:
Dr Nick Taylor (Head: National Education Evaluation and Development Unit [NEEDU], Department of Basic Education, and founding member and past Chief Executive Officer of the Joint Education Trust [JET])

I agree with (Professor) Shirley (Walters): it is an eloquent set of discourses you (Professor Crain Soudien) have given us. Thank you for the summary of our journey of 22 years towards the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). You said that you are sticking your neck out. I am going to do the same. The question is: what if the eloquent stimulating and evocative discourses do not remain in abstract terms? I need clarity

around what you said about the voiceless requiring something in addition to schooling. Do we need top-class literacy? Where there is little or no schooling, literacy and numeracy skills go a long way towards giving people a voice.

Question 3:
Dr James Keevy (Cluster Director: International Liaison, SAQA)

You position the idea of integration as being central to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and to progressive education. What does the idea of integration mean outside the NQF or does it lie solely within the NQF? Where do we find integration as a central theme beyond the NQF, if anywhere?

Question 4:
[Speaker's name inaudible]

(Professor Soudien) you are talking about voice and discourse. These are language issues; many have no access to the languages used in the labour market…. There is not one language but a number of them.

Professor Crain Soudien's responses to the first set of questions:

To start with (Professor) Shirley (Walters') question: I have no answer, except how one manages this incredible thing of becoming educators. I am particularly thinking of the Higher Education Institutions. I am going back to Carl Newman (1823): he wrote about the idea of a university. He says: a university is a space that does not belong to anybody in particular. It is a place to which people come from all quarters, with all kinds of knowledge. So, I think we have to divorce ourselves from the ideas which have become our bread and butter, and from which we have built all kinds of (self-serving) projects. In this (university) space ideas are different to those in other contexts such as places of worship or canteens. Here in this space, how do I enter into a relationship with learning 'other' which is absolutely opposite to my preconceptions? Maybe I have if you like, the capacity to engage with that person on his or her own terms? I am responding to you: in many kinds of ways it is about accepting that learning can happen anywhere under any circumstances. It does not need a formula. So how do we open ourselves to possibilities in a space in which there is moral socialisation and conditions to such a high degree, around particular perceptions of the 'normal'? I do not know. So this is where we are: learning opens possibilities to transcend the boundaries in unexpected ways; we all need to be thinking about how these

possibilities could operate in general terms. We cannot get away from that challenge. A danger is that generalities can become such politicised and ideologised orthodoxies, that I think we can be slightly in the wrong. (Dr Nick Taylor) we do need top class literacy. I am very anxious about how much of that would be my stuff; how much we avoid and duck the challenges. We are currently constituted on the basis of a 'pedagogy of fear'; we are scared of one another.

There are wonderful students at the University of Cape Town with seven or more 'A's' - but they bomb after the first semester. I cannot understand why that happens. I have to find ways of 'authorising' the 'relating voice', but not in a relativistic way. There needs to be a process to surface how this exchange is actually managed.

The NQF is happening in a quiet way, every day. People are doing it. Integration happens to me by a process of wonderful reinforcement. I am a demonstration of what it is all about. Sociology can fail in a space such as that with which we are confronted (in South Africa). We have to come to terms with the anthropology of the situation. We can focus the anthropology on the different kinds of identities of people inside and outside our institutions of learning. People are making choices all the time, that can open up democratic spaces.

Question 5:

Mr Samuel Isaacs (Anglican Church Minister and Education and Social Development Activist; and founding member, past Chairperson of the SAQA Board and past Chief Executive Officer of SAQA)

Thank you (Professor Crain Soudien) for a wonderful address. What touched me in a particular way was the reference to Newman's breaking of the divide between clergy and laity. You also mentioned Habermas who talks about the legitimacy crisis of dialogue. You are correct: we need a deep sociology to actually understand each other when we enter into dialogue around integration, and the extent to which we allow and empower others to participate. We ask people to be rational but forget the issue of power dynamics. It is complex and certainly not linear. The question is how to take the project further?

Question 6:
Professor David Matthee (Independent)

Integration is an important issue in addressing the education crisis. If we cannot talk to each other - how can we educate each other? Teachers need to be competent and efficient; and children at school need to be able to approach teachers. If teachers are not able to take up their educating and mentoring roles, who will teach them to do so?

Professor Crain Soudien's responses to the second set of questions:

I come back to Sociology. Sociologists do not take the *Sociology of Education* seriously enough. Sociologists in this country never refer to the work of the Sociologists of Education. It is here in the space of learning; in the transmission of ideas; in engagement in the process of negotiating meaning in the classroom, that the best opportunities to understand what this country is all about are provided. Sociologists cannot see it. We (Sociologists of Education) are the most close to that space where we can begin to recruit ideas from different schools and bring them into dialogue in a discursive space. Sociology of Education has that capacity. This deepening of Sociology - I would like to suggest - will take place if we focus on what is happening in the classroom, as young people will step out from this incredible social gathering they have. How do we get to terms with the incredible reality out there? At UCT we have the example of a student coming from a shack in Khayelitsha, who eventually emerges as a top student. His story is an incredible journey of what a young man had to go through. This kind of thing is what it is all about. We need to understand how that outcome is possible: the lack of resources; social clashes; intervening things. We need to get to terms with those questions in all their fullness.

What we need to do is to put our students to work beyond the subjects that they choose for their dissertations. The work that they are doing is by and large so weak in the sense of the urgent understandings needed - sorry to say it -but they do not even really begin to engage.

A tribute to Professor Ben Parker

David Bensusan, 6th March 2012

Good afternoon; welcome; and thank you all for coming.

I want in the next few minutes to say a few things about a friend, a philosopher, an educator and especially someone of distinctive ethical standing - Ben Parker. And because he is no longer here in the flesh, I want to create a situation in which I imagine him to be here and to be responding to the ethical problem I shall pose. Through this I hope at least to bring out something of the depth of his beliefs and their relevance for contemporary society.

As you know Ben studied philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) sometime in the 1970's - perhaps the late 1960's. Roughly 20 years later, Michael Pendlebury - then a professor in the same department and someone with whom Ben was acquainted - responded to a request from a committee entrusted with the drawing up of the Constitution of our country. Prior to beginning this drafting work, the committee involved Professor Pendlebury in the preliminary process of seeking due public consultation for proposals as to what rights should be included in the Constitution.

Professor Pendlebury then made a submission in which he argued with great conviction that amongst other rights, every person in South Africa should have a right to aspire to autonomy and that this right should therefore be constitutionally sanctioned. This right does not appear however, in the Constitution. We could conclude from this omission, that autonomy or its advocacy did not have the same urgency attached by virtue of their place in the Constitution, as other rights. The question I would like to ask Ben now, is: would he consider autonomy to be a worthy educational ideal and if so would he think that it deserves a place in our constitution today?

My aim in asking this question is to extrapolate some of the ethical principles that inform Ben's thinking and to show their relevance for education in our constitutional society. Ben, being a philosopher, would respond first by asking that the concept of 'autonomy' be clarified, and its context explained.

Autonomy, charity, and fallibility

This then is my attempt at some clarification of what I mean by 'autonomy'. One of the significant contexts informing appreciation (or otherwise) of autonomy, is its somewhat controversial history. In its initial liberal formulation, the term was remorselessly critiqued by Marxist theorists - especially in the 1980s - for its emphasis on individualism and implied support for a particular (high-level) class identity. This liberal conception was also critiqued by communitarian theorists for its lack of a sense of the collective. Given our current constitutional and socio-political environment - would there be reason to support Professor Pendelbury's proposal today?

At a gathering shortly after Ben passed away, my colleague Nick Taylor made the suggestion that Ben had a deep and ongoing commitment to the idea of charity; charity in this case referring to a particular philosophical approach to the evaluation of arguments. A charitable approach in this sense would involve proceeding from a position of generosity toward the other, inclining to accept the thrust of the other's argument even though it may not have been formulated in the best way.

Now this ethical principle is one I and others believe to be very close to Ben, who has many times in his life been referred to as a charitable person. My only concern here however is that being charitable does not help much in appraising autonomy. It tells us what kind of person Ben was but less so whether he would be charitably disposed to an ideal such as autonomy. We therefore need to look for an ethical principle (as opposed to a virtue) close to Ben that could do this work.

The principle I want to borrow is that of fallibility; a term developed and popularised by the eminent philosopher Sir Karl Popper. Let me say a few things about its main features.

The idea of fallibility entails - from a scientific perspective - setting out a theory or hypothesis, and then a community to do their best to find fault with it. Those theories that withstand criticism then become absorbed into the body of science; those that fail are dismissed. Now a crucial feature of this process involves scientists having to converse with others in order to obtain the feedback necessary for this kind of evaluation; feedback initially potentially hostile. It is this notion I want to borrow in order to explore how the idea of conversation may be exported to discussions around autonomy in education.

Conversation

There are two contexts in which I explore the idea of conversation briefly; both were of great importance to Ben. The first involves teacher appraisal of their knowledge domains. If we apply the idea of evaluation of our beliefs by our colleagues we obtain something of a paradigm shift in understanding of what is key for teaching in a teacher's relation to knowledge. For the idea of a conversation implies that teachers not only imagine themselves as conveyors of knowledge, but also as knowledge producers and knowledge justifiers. Of critical importance is that conversations involve teachers drawing on others in order to evaluate their beliefs rather than teachers simply passing beliefs on to learners. There is a sense in this endeavour, of teachers creating communities of trust - an idea always very close to Ben's heart; this conception of shared practices.

The second application of the term conversation requires that we now shift from the teacher-teacher, to the teacher-learner relationship. The latter relationship differs markedly from the former, in that it involves a relation of non-equals. Specifically the way this relation can be framed may give expression to a deeper sense of what it is to engage in conversation.

As Ben would have it, the teacher occupies two spaces - s/he sets in motion a conversation with the learner within parameters of trust and genuineness, almost as if s/he were a friend. S/he acts as though s/he is an equal. But s/he is also a teacher acting out a position of authority and her/his framing of the conversation revolves around the question: how can I help this learner become an ethical subject? Crucially the teacher through this conversation, places the learner in a position where s/he will eventually begin to make judgments of her/his own, specifically to help her/himself to acquire tools for making significant evaluations.

It may appear from this all too brief detour into conversations that we have left behind the theme of autonomy and the question of its desirability. But this is not the case. All the time that I have in fact been trying to enunciate an ethical position that Ben would have been able to identify with; I have been re-articulating what I (and possibly Ben) may mean by autonomy, namely, an ability to enter into and take conversations forward.

Autonomy, relevant conversations, and forging worthwhile lives

Let's for a moment then settle at least provisionally with one characteristic of autonomy, as the capacity for self improvement activated initially in and through conversation with a teacher, who later withdraws, allowing the learner to take control of her or his own life. My question now is: how does this idea of autonomy shape up with the constitutional question about including the right to autonomy, and would Ben construe this feature as having the importance of a 'right'?

To put it differently, we may ask of Ben: should learners have a right to demand that teachers enter into conversations with them?

My guess is that Ben's reply would be divided. That he would welcome an undertaking by the State to provide materials and policies that would assist making autonomy possible that would create the conditions for autonomy - money for infrastructure, better qualified teachers and so forth. But the actual achievement of autonomy cannot - I am sure, in Ben's thinking - be achieved or guaranteed 'from without', whether by legal prescription, or any other form of external persuasion. Rather than the learner having a right to autonomy - s/he should have a right to the conditions which will bring her/him in touch with significant others so that s/he can make of her/his life something worthwhile.

It is for this reason that for Ben all education and training is inherently ethical. Whether one uses the idiom of charity or that of conversation, all learning presupposes some sense of a good. The questions that remain today however are: have we spent enough time clarifying what the 'good aspects' of education and training are, and do our institutions of education and training provide our learners with opportunities to enter into relevant conversations with our educators?

List of acronyms used

ANC	African National Congress
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DLL	Division for Lifelong Learning
DoE	Department of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
JET	Joint Education Trust
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASA	South African Schools Act
UCT	University of Cape Town
UWC	University of the Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

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