

## Learning from south–south comparison: the education systems of South Africa and Madagascar

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The purpose of this investigation was to compare two education systems in the southern hemisphere and particularly from the SADEC countries, namely, Madagascar and South Africa. Research was done by means of field observation as well as through discussions and interviews with role players at regional education offices and schools. Both education systems are not sufficiently adapted to their real educational needs, and learners are not really provided the relevant opportunities to equip themselves with the required competences to function effectively according to their real educational needs. It is concluded that one of the most basic problems of developing education systems in the southern hemisphere could be the tendency of developing education systems to borrow from developed education systems without the localisation thereof.

### Introduction

One of the aims of comparative educational investigation is to improve the own (home) education system (Steyn, 2002:47) by learning from foreign countries with similar educational situations and problems. The comparison with and learning from other countries are not done in a haphazard manner, but according to the instruments provided by Comparative Education.

In a world in which the research infrastructure is overwhelmingly concentrated in the North (see Altbach, 1982), the vast majority of comparative studies of education systems are either between developing countries and developed countries or between developed countries. The ameliorative potential of comparative studies between developing countries is a neglected field (see Wolhuter, 2002:31). Compounding the case of South Africa, in particular, South African comparative educationists have for some three decades (*c.* 1960-1990), due to the academic boycott against the country, been cut off from their peers outside the borders of South Africa. As this was exactly the time during the spate of the advent of independence for most South African countries, when most African education systems took shape, South African comparative educationists are grossly ignorant of trans-border educational developments, and their potential value as subjects of comparative research. In this article attention is drawn to the potential value of south–south comparison and co-operation, using the examples of South Africa and Madagascar. The article further provides much needed knowledge about education provision in the less known countries of the SADEC (Southern African Development Community) region.

The aims in this article were therefore twofold:

- to bring southern Africa and the SADEC region, and in particular Madagascar, into the operating field and cognisance of South African Comparative Education, and
- to identify scope per south–south comparative educational research between South Africa and Madagascar.

### Research methodology

A research team of three members collected data by means of:

- field observation including visits to, for example, selected education offices and education institutions in the respective education systems;
- experience in the particular education systems by working in the different systems as researchers;
- document analysis, namely, the analysis of relevant documents obtained at education offices and schools;
- individual interviews with key functionaries in the particular education systems and school inspectors, principals, educators, administration staff; and

- literature study, although it was very difficult to obtain secondary sources about education in Madagascar.

The research methodology was qualitative, as a qualitative approach was more appropriate for the aim of generalisation depending on context, rather than quantitative research, which is for discovering universal, context-free laws (Neuman, 1997:389). The research methodology used was the comparative method. This method was judged to be best suited for the purposes of this research as specified. According to Neuman (1997:383) comparative research is a powerful method for addressing the following questions: What fundamental features are common to societies? and Why did current social arrangements take on a certain form in some societies but not in others? It is a method appropriate for comparing entire social systems to see what is common across societies and what is unique (Neuman, 1997).

Comparative research is based on documents (Neuman, 1997:390) and can also, as in this study, be supplemented by surveying methods (Neuman, 1997:407). The survey method used in this study was the semistructured interview (see Gall *et al.*, 1996:310). The semistructured interview involves asking a series of structured questions and then probing them more deeply using open-form questions to obtain additional information. The questions directed to the above functionaries revolved around two themes: what they wanted/expected from the education system, and what problems they were experiencing in the present education system in meeting these expectations.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part provides the background for an understanding of the particular education systems, namely, the relevant needs of the target groups and the determinants of the particular education systems. In the second part, some of the typical characteristics of the two education systems are described and compared. Thirdly, the article concludes by identifying areas where comparative studies between South African and Malagasy education systems, as an example of south–south comparison, could be a fruitful exercise.

### Educational needs of the communities in Madagascar and South Africa

As the primary aim of education systems is to serve the needs of a target population (learners of society) (see Steyn, 2002:56), a logical starting point in studying the education systems of the respective countries would be the identification of the educational needs of the learners. A comparison of the educational needs of different communities in particular countries will explain similarities and differences of education provision in the particular countries and provide a basis for learning from each other.

The educational needs of the learners in Madagascar and South Africa were identified through the analysis of relevant documents,

through interviews with role players in and functionaries of the two education systems and through focus group discussions with parents, learners and education-interested groups. In comparing the identified education needs in both countries, namely Madagascar and South Africa, it is clear that the needs of the respective communities are typical of those of other developing countries and can be summarised as follows:

- to provide the learners with the opportunity to obtain the required competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) in order to prepare themselves for the different facets of their future;
- to provide the learners with the opportunity to prepare themselves for a viable career path;
- to acquire the required competencies for progress in life (in particular regarding climbing the social ladder); and
- to participate in sports and the general enjoyment of life.

The implication of this finding is that the extent of similarity in educational needs of the communities of the two countries in question makes learning from each other a logical consequence. However, although the similarities are remarkable, real differences do exist, because of the nature of the local context of the respective communities. Therefore, it is of great importance to describe the particular context, namely, the determinants of each education system, in order to really understand the similarities and differences between the respective education systems. Such an understanding will then facilitate valuable and reliable learning from each other.

### Determinants of education provision in Madagascar and South Africa

It is a long-standing maxim in Comparative Education that education systems can only be comprehended from their external determinants, i.e. the societal contexts, in which they are embedded (see Wolhuter, 2002:19-23). Therefore, an overview of these societal shaping forces of education in Madagascar and South Africa will be given, before turning to the education systems *per se*.

#### Geography

Madagascar lies 390 km from the coast of the east African mainland, and is situated between the 12th and 25th south latitudes. South Africa, on the other hand, occupies the southern-most part of the African continent, which means that both countries lie in the southern hemisphere and therefore share, for example, the same calendar regarding holiday seasons.

Being 1500 km long and 600 km at its widest, Madagascar covers an area of 587 000 square kilometers, making it the fourth largest island in the world. It is roughly half the size of South Africa, which covers a surface area of 1 219 090 square kilometers. The topographical characteristics of Madagascar also pose definite similarities with the coastal provinces of South Africa, such as Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal. Therefore, education provisioning in South Africa is more influenced by distance, e.g. there is a longer distance between education offices and schools, for delivering school materials or visits of education officers, and a longer distance that learners travel to reach schools than those of Madagascar. Accessibility of schools for learners and teaching supplies also pose similar challenges for both countries.

#### Demography

Madagascar has undergone a demographic explosion in recent decades. The result is that the population of Madagascar in 1999 was calculated at 14.2 million. The aggregate population density is 20.6 people per square kilometer. The average number of children per woman is 6.1. The population growth rate is 2.8% per annum — a doubling every 25 years. The country has a youthful demographic profile: 44.1% of the population are under 15 years of age (*Institut National de la Statistique*). The average life expectation is 52 years (*Institut National de la Statistique*). Expanding at this rate, the Malagasy are fast exceeding the island's capacity to feed and employ its inhabitants. At the same time, Madagascar is facing an urban explo-

sion. In 1992 19% of the population was urbanised, whilst the 1992 projection for 2024 was 50% (Bradt, 1992). The 1993 census put Antananarivo's population at 1.05 million inhabitants (Whitaker, 1999: 93).

South Africa too has an excessively high population growth. The estimated population in 1997 was 37 859 000 (Republic of South Africa, 1998). According to the National Report on Population, South Africa's population will increase to at least 80 million in less than 30 years (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Africans constitute more than three-quarters of the South African population. Approximately half of the South African population lives in non-urban areas (and this varies markedly by province). The growth rate is 2.06% per year, the population density 33.8 people per square kilometer (in Northern Cape it is 2.0) and about 48.6% of the population are below the age of 19 years (Steyn, Steyn & De Waal, 2001:31-32).

South Africa has one of the most heterogeneous populations in the world. The population consists of a few remaining members of the San (or Bushmen); Nguni people; Sotho-Tswana people; Tsonga; Venda; coloureds; Indians; Afrikaners; English; and immigrants from many countries across the world. The country has 11 official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Siswati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa, and IsiZulu. IsiZulu is the most common home language in South Africa (22.4%), followed by IsiXhosa (17.5%) and Afrikaans (15.1%). Only 9.1% of South Africans speak English as their home language (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Madagascar also has a multicultural society, although not as heterogeneous as that of South Africa. Archaeologists believe that the first people arrived in Madagascar by boat from Indonesia/Malaysia about 2000 years ago. Later migrants from Africa created the Afro-Asiatic Malagasy race. There were Arab settlements from about the ninth century. The Malagasy people are officially divided into 18 main "tribes" or clans. Small minorities of other people, for example, Indians/Pakistanis, Chinese and Europeans are also permanent inhabitants. According to Bradt (1999:4) a degree of racial unease is noticeable between the Merina people of the highlands and the other clans. However, the Malagasy reserve their hatred for what they perceive to be a common enemy, namely the Indians and Pakistanis, who own most of the big businesses and are accused of exploiting the Malagasy and failing to integrate with the rest of the population. At times this has boiled over into open looting of the shops of wealthy Pakistanis and Indians.

The first language is Malagasy. Each of the 18 tribes speaks its own dialect of Malagasy. When Christian missionaries arrived in Madagascar, their first task was to translate the Bible. As they were located in the central highlands, they used that regional dialect. Consequently that dialect became the national, standard language. The ex-colonial language, French, is the language of business and also, with Malagasy, the language of government. Under the influence of modernisation and urbanisation, as well as the mass-media (portraying modern western culture) the youth, especially, are getting increasingly alienated from traditional culture (Mme Odette Rahaingoso).

From this it is clear that real similarities exist between the demographic characteristics of Madagascar and South Africa. Both countries are faced with high growth in population, a multi-cultural society and a large percentage of population of the traditional school-going age. On the other hand the South African community is far more heterogeneous than that of Madagascar and there is more variation in population density in South Africa than in Madagascar.

#### Economy

After 1975 major sectors of the economy in Madagascar were nationalised, in a socialist, anti-western policy drive. The worsening economic situation has, however, pressurised government since the early 1980s to enter into a series of agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for financial assistance in exchange for measures to liberalise the economy. The GDP increased,

in real terms, between 1990 and 1997 by an average of 0.9% per annum. The economy registered real GDP growth of 2.1% in 1996; 3.7% in 1998; and 3.9% in 1998 (Europa Publications, 2000:652). Nevertheless, in 1996 the per capita GNP of Madagascar was US\$ 250. On the basis of a per capita GNP, the World Bank ranks Madagascar as the twelfth poorest country in the world (World Bank, 1997:214). A result is that 72.3% of the population lives below the poverty line of US\$ 1 per day (World Bank, 1997).

In 1996 the governmental revenue amounted to 1,400,000 million Malagasy francs, whilst public expenditure totalled 2,198,000 million Malagasy francs. In 1995 the foreign debt was US\$ 4,200 million.

Of the economically active population, 80% are engaged in agriculture, 7% in industries and 10% in the service sector (*Institut National de la Statistique*). In the mid-1980s it was estimated that 65% of the population were in the subsistence sector (Europa Publications, 2000:652).

According to the United Nations Human Development Report of 1997, 53% of South Africa's population lives in poor households, and 75% of the poor live in rural areas. Street children constitute a large sector of the learner population that is currently not catered for in the formal education system. Public transport facilities are poor and roads are in general poorly maintained.

The potential labour force (people between 15 and 64) in South Africa was 24 million in 1996 (Statistics South Africa, 1998). In terms of global competitiveness, South Africa was ranked 42nd out of 46 countries in 1998 (IMD International, 1998:39). There is an oversupply of unskilled workers and a shortage of skilled workers in South Africa. According to the 1996-population census, 6.2% of the population of 20 years and older hold tertiary education qualifications. A further 16.4% have completed Grade 12 of formal schooling, while 34% of the population could be considered illiterate (Statistics South Africa, 1998). Within the economically active population (15 years and older), workers in the formal sector accounted for 59%, those in the informal sector for 12%, and the remaining 29% were unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 1998). Agriculture, mining, secondary industry, commerce and a broad structure of service establishments contribute to the wealth of the country. Nearly 31% of the gross domestic product (GDP) is derived from secondary industry.

From the preceding information it is clear that the economies of both South Africa and Madagascar have the typical characteristics that impede education provisioning in developing countries and determine the education needs of the communities, especially regarding the competences required to obtain a viable occupation. Each country has a relatively poor economy which struggles to support its community, with citizens poorly equipped to develop the economy, but with relatively good resources that can be developed to the advantage of the country and the world. The main difference between the two countries is that there are more pockets of excellence and development found in the South African economy than in the economy of Madagascar.

### Technological development

Given the incidence and levels of poverty, the levels of technological development in Madagascar are very rudimentary. In Antsohihy (population 101 463) only 576 people have access to running water at their places of residence, whilst a mere 1 171 have electricity (*Institut National de la Statistique*). In the entire Madagascar only 10% of households have electricity, 10% have running water, 35% have a radio, 6% a telephone, and 1% a refrigerator (Bradt, 1999:4).

In South Africa technological levels vary from very good to very poor. According to a survey in 1995, 51.4% of the households/dwellings had running water, 58.3% of households had electricity as main source of energy for cooking, 3.5% had gas, and 13.3% paraffin. Only 59.7% of households had flush or chemical toilets. However, primarily because of the industries related to the production of minerals and because of the influence of globalisation, pockets of excellence are found regarding technological activities and development that compare to the best in the world.

Because of the poor economic and development levels in Madagascar, their technological development is well below that of South Africa. Therefore, Madagascar has much to learn from South Africa in this regard.

### Politics and culture

Madagascar became a French colony in 1896 and independent in 1960. The first president, Philibert Tsiranana, was pro-French, but in 1972 he stepped down in the face of increasing unrest and student demonstrations against French neo-colonialism. In 1975, after a period of turmoil, the military directorate handed power to a naval officer, Didier Ratsiraka. The years from 1975 to 1991 were a period of "Christian Marxism" under Ratsiraka. This was followed by the instatement of a parliamentary democracy. Albert Zafy succeeded Ratsiraka as president in 1991. The 1997 elections, however, saw the re-election of Ratsiraka. The 2002 elections saw Ratsiraka defeated by Marc Ravalomana. Ratsiraka and his followers have refused to accept the result, and at the time of writing (May 2002), Ratsiraka has retreated to his home province of Toàmas:nà. Both that province and the governor of the northern province of Toàmas:nà, a hardliner in the Ratsiraka camp, have declared their provinces independent from the rest of Madagascar.

Politically, Madagascar is divided into six provinces. On the French model, each of these provinces is divided into *prefectures*, which in turn are divided into *sous-prefectures*.

In South Africa, Parliament is the legislative authority and has responsibility for legislation in accordance with the Constitution. After the most recent elections (1999), the National Assembly in South Africa is constituted by the following political parties: the African National Congress (ANC 66.42%), the Democratic Party (DP 9.55%), the Inkhatha Freedom Party (IFP 8.57%), the New National Party (NNP 6.87%) and the United Democratic Party (UDP 3.42%). Each of the nine provinces has its own legislature. The provincial premier is assisted by members of the Executive Council (MEC). Provinces have legislative powers over various aspects, including education at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Provincial and local government are recognised as separate levels of government.

Both countries are governed by a democratic government system, although that of Madagascar is more fragile and questionable than that of South Africa. In both cases, education is, as in all countries, used to support government and to build a stable and safe society for all the citizens.

### Religion / Philosophy

Of the population of Madagascar, an estimated 10% are Christians (Fourie, 2000). Although Christianity is the dominant urban religion, Islam is widely practised, especially in the north. Traditional beliefs and customs have such a strong hold on the average Malagasy, that few escape the grip of their influence. On a secular (horizontal) plane of world and life view, it has been pointed out how forces of modernisation and westernisation erode the traditional value system. However, scientific proof, on the exact extent to which the western outlook on life and on the world has replaced the traditional way of life, does not exist.

In South Africa almost 80% of the total population professes the Christian faith, but millions of people still observe the traditional African or tribal religions. A minority professes not to be religious at all. The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship and the official policy is one of non-interference in religious practices. About 18% of the total population have indicated that they belong to a traditional African religion which is culturally based. They generally acknowledge a supreme being, and the ancestors are regarded as part of the community as links with the spiritual world and with the powers that control day-to-day affairs. Magic is important and the belief is that the use of supernatural powers can work to the benefit of the individual and the community. The Asians, mostly Indians, in South Africa have retained either their Hindu or Islamic religion, whilst 12% are Chris-

tians (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

The inhabitants of both countries are multi-religious. The dominant religions are Christianity, Islam and tribal religions. The levels to which these religions determine the life of the community differs between the two countries as well as support and recognition of the different types of religions.

### Findings regarding relevant determinants for education provision in Madagascar and South Africa

The following similarities and differences extracted from analyses of the relevant determinants support the value of comparison between education provision in the two countries:

#### Similarities

Both countries can be classified within the category of developing countries, characterised by fast-growing populations, of relatively young age, and experiencing rapid urbanisation. The economy of each country can, to a large extent, be classified as a subsistence economy, with focus on agriculture and production of raw materials (minerals), and with little competition for the global economy.

The communities are multicultural in nature, both characterised by the fact that the home language of the majority is not the common language used in commerce and industry or the public sector. This indicates the influence of previous and present influences of western countries. A clear difference exists between the levels of development of the rural community and those in the urban areas. There are particular similarities between the situation of the rural communities in Madagascar and South Africa. The communities are also characterised by their multi-religious nature with an identifiable influence of traditional beliefs. Both countries are young democracies, with provision for central, regional and local government.

#### Differences

South Africa can be categorised as a developing country, with pockets of developed characteristics. Madagascar can on the other hand be categorised as an under-developed country with, on average, a higher poverty rate and lower development level than that of South Africa. The economy of South Africa is more diversified and focused on exports than that of Madagascar. In South Africa English is used as the *lingua franca* while French is used as a form of developed communication in Madagascar.

As a final conclusion, the hypothesis can be made that both countries can learn profitably from the successes and failures of each other. In some cases, e.g. when one wishes to identify the real characteristics of developing education systems, one can learn even more from a south-south comparison than from other countries with more differences in external determinants. The hypothesis is based on the theoretical principle that the characteristics of an education system are determined by the external determinants and by the extensive similarities between the external determinants of the education systems of South Africa and Madagascar.

### Elements of the education systems of Madagascar and South Africa

The validity of the preceding hypothesis will be tested in this section. The focus will be placed on some core elements of education provision in the two countries respectively, in order to identify typical characteristics of the education systems of developing countries and relevant guidelines for improvement of such systems; in this case the education systems of Madagascar and South Africa.

#### Elements of the education system in Madagascar

##### Vision, mission and goals of education

The government of the Second Republic (i.e. after 1974) pursued the following fundamental principles of education provision, which were embodied in the constitution: democratisation, Malagasation, and decentralisation. It should be noted that this democratisation and decen-

tralisation refer to the expansion of education to the entire country (from its concentration in the capital Antananarivo), rather than to educational control and administration.

The policy of the government of the Third Republic (i.e. after 1991) has been to place emphasis on six aspects (Rakotondrazaka, 1995:590):

- teaching quality improvement,
- management improvement,
- control of costs and finances,
- re-organisation of vocational training,
- establishment of an efficacious post-secondary training, and
- management of student flow.

#### Education system administration

At central level, the Ministry of Public Education (MIP) is responsible for primary and secondary education, and the Ministry of Universities is responsible for higher education. The MIP is responsible for the implementation of the government's education policy, and for the development of educational plans, strategies and programmes. The national department recruits and places teaching staff and is also responsible for the provisioning and maintenance of school premises and equipment for level II and III of schools.

Provincial departments are established in the major town of each of the six provinces and are the decentralised structures of central services. On the third tier the CISCOS (*Circonscription Scolaire*, i.e. school district authorities) are responsible for school financial and administrative control.

Despite an official policy of decentralisation, the *de facto* situation is that of centralisation of educational control, with a delegation of provision responsibilities, because decision-making regarding the totality of education provisioning is still centralised at ministry level. Denominational and non-denominational private education have their own central and regional administrations. The National Bureau for Private Education ensures contact with the MIP. In theory, these institutions must submit to ministry control, but in practice there are some institutions which are not affiliated to the Bureau and which have teaching programmes that differ from those of the state schools.

Some 95% of the MIP's budget is used to finance salaries and the remainder is used for administrative expenses. This leaves nothing for pedagogical purposes in schools. It is clear that the state's budget is insufficient to cover educational expenses. In private schools fees vary between US\$30 and US\$250 per student per year. This represents a considerable sum for a family's budget. Added to these costs are registration fees and examination fees in public schools, and expenses for school equipment (Rabearinanana, 2001).

#### School system

The school system of Madagascar can be illustrated as in Figure 1.

Communities are in charge of the construction and equipment of primary schools. Since 1986 many primary schools have closed down. In the Antsohihy CISCO, for example, only 87 of the 127 primary schools are functional; 42 have closed. The Directorate of Planning of the Ministry of Public Instruction recorded 19 reasons for schools closing down. The reasons varied from the bad state of buildings caused by bad weather or lack of maintenance to a state of insecurity in the countryside. The primary school curriculum includes Malagasy, arithmetics, reading, writing, singing, handcraft, physical training, and moral and civic education. To these are added French from the tenth class, and history, geography and natural science at the seventh class. In the *Collèges* (level I) English is added as subject.

In the *lycées* pupils must choose between three streams, namely Stream A: Literature, Stream C: Scientific or Stream D: Commercial. In the terminal year Philosophy is taught as a subject too.

The government of the Second Republic (from 1974) changed the medium of instruction to Malagasy. The government of the Third Republic reversed that decision, and returned to French. The problems brought by that decision are evident from, for example, the poor

Age	Class	Institutions	Level	Examinations
18	0 (terminal)	Universities and Technical Institutions of Higher Education	Level IV Higher education	Baccalauréat
	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lycées (upper-secondary schools)	Level III (secondary education cycle)	BPEC
14	3 <sup>rd</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup>	Collège d'enseignement général (junior secondary schools)	Level II (secondary education, first cycle) 4 years	CEPE
12	6 <sup>th</sup>			
10	7 <sup>th</sup>			
8	8 <sup>th</sup> 9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup>		Level I (primary basic education) 5 years	
6	11 <sup>th</sup>	primary schools		

Figure 1 School system of Madagascar (Source: Institut National de Formation Pédagogique)

results of learners reported in the schools. According to information received during the interviews with the named role players and functionaries in Malagasy education, French is appreciated as medium of instruction for its international and market place value.

The education provisioning is also characterised by either a total or severe lack of physical facilities such as teaching and learning materials, as well as school buildings and furniture. Support services such as psychological services, media services, and housing and transport services are almost non-existent. One secondary school visited by the research team in Mandritsara had one ruler for the entire school.

Teacher training for primary school teachers comprises a two-year training course at Level I teacher-training colleges, which may be entered after having completed Collège education. Training for level II teachers takes place at Level II colleges of education, by means of a three-year course for students who have completed the baccalauréat. Level III teacher training takes place by means of a five-year course, at Level III colleges of education within universities (Institut National de formation Pédagogique). Interviews with the relevant functionaries also proved that un(der)qualified teachers are abundant.

### The education system in South Africa

#### Vision mission and goals

According to the constitution, South African education is the joint responsibility of all South Africans who have an interest in the education and training system, to help build a just, equitable, and high quality education system for all citizens, with a common culture of disciplined commitment to learning and teaching.

In the National Education Policy (Republic of South Africa, 1996:6) emphasis is placed on the following:

- education and training are basic human rights;
- parents/guardians have primary responsibility for the education of their children, and state has responsibility to assist parents;
- access to lifelong education and training for all inhabitants;
- equal access to basic education and training;
- redressing of all historical inequalities;
- provision of quality education;
- democratic governance and consultation with relevant interest groups;
- restoring of culture of learning;
- establishment of a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society; and

- emphasis on the principles of attainability, sustainability, efficiency and productivity.

#### Education system administration

The Minister of Education has the highest authority regarding determination and implementation of educational policy in South Africa. The national department of education acts as secretariat to the Minister. With the exception of universities and technikons, the nine provincial governments have full responsibility for executing educational affairs subject to the national policy framework (South African Schools Act, Act 84/1996).

The provincial education departments, and their different sections on regional and district levels, have delegated powers to implement policy regarding the provision of education (Steyn, 2000:103-104).

#### School system

The school system of South Africa can be illustrated as in Figure 2.

The education system is currently in a phase of transition, where the current system of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary (higher) education, is being changed to a new structure following the first three levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (cf. Figure 2).

Age	Grades	Institutions	Level	Examinations
		Universities, Technikons, Tertiary Research / Private/ Professional Institutions, Colleges, workplaces	Higher Education Band Levels VI to VIII	Doctorates Higher Degrees Higher Degrees First Diplomas Higher Occupational Certificates
18	12 <sup>th</sup>	Public Secondary Schools Private Public Schools	Further Education and Training Band Levels II to IV	School/College/ Training Certificates
17	11 <sup>th</sup>	Technical/Community/Police/ Nursing/Private Colleges		
16	10 <sup>th</sup>	RDP/Labour market Training Institutions/Workplaces		
15	9 <sup>th</sup>	Private and Public Schools	General Education and Training Band Level I Senior Phase	General Education and Training Certificate
14	8 <sup>th</sup>	NGO's		
13	7 <sup>th</sup>	Training Centre's		
12	6 <sup>th</sup>		Intermediate Phase	Certificates
11	5 <sup>th</sup>		ABET	
10	4 <sup>th</sup>		Level 1 to IV	
9	3 <sup>rd</sup>		Foundation Phase	
8	2 <sup>nd</sup>			
7	1 <sup>st</sup>			

Figure 2 School system of South Africa (Isaacman, 1996:24)

The "existing/old" formal education sector consists of the following levels and categories: public ordinary school education, independent (private) school education, special school education, technical college education, teacher training, and technikon and university training. The different levels are pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education.

Within the NQF, a learner in the formal school will receive a General Education and Training certificate after successful completion of Grade 9. Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) will be issued at the end of formal schooling, Grade 12. Learners who reach this equivalent outside of formal schooling will also receive the FETC certificate. Within the Higher Education and Training band (HET) learners will be able to obtain certificates and diplomas offered mainly by colleges, and degrees offered by technikons and universities (Department of Education, 1997a:14-15; Department of Education, 1997b).

A shortage of school buildings and facilities is still a problem in South Africa, especially in the rural areas. Many schools in the rural

areas are poorly resourced, have no electricity, no running water, and buildings with poor facilities.

Because of the high percentage of the education budget being allocated to salaries, funds are needed to rectify this situation. The majority of the South African community prefers not to receive education in their home language, but through the medium of English as global language. This also contributes to unsatisfactory achievement in schools.

According to research done, the majority of South Africans prefer English as medium of instruction, i.e. for its market place and international value, although it is not their mother-tongue (see De Wet, 2000). Because of the high percentage of the education budget being allocated to salaries, funds are needed to rectify this situation.

A new curriculum, Curriculum 2005, introduced drastic changes to syllabus content and teaching methods. However, it is doubtful whether the South African education system can overcome its social and educational problems simply by introducing a new Qualifications Framework and new curriculum (Jansen, 1998). In April 1997 the Draft Policy for Adult Basic Education and Training was published with the vision of a literate South Africa where all the inhabitants have acquired the level of basic education and training. According to the 1996 census at least 7.5 million adults in South Africa are considered illiterate. To provide training to 2.5 million adults by 2001 would have had a total cost of R5.8 billion (SAIRR, 1998:173).

A comparison of education provision in two countries comprises identification and interpretation of similarities and differences of the respective education systems (Jones, 1971:88). However, in Comparative Education such a study should not stop at this step but include the identification of relevant guidelines for education development in the respective education systems (Steyn, 2002:47). In the case of a south-south comparison, between South Africa and Madagascar, such an exercise can refer to the following aspects.

### **Comparison and typical characteristics of certain elements of the education systems of Madagascar and South Africa**

The typical phrases of the vision for education provision in developing countries are found in those of the two respective countries, for example, democratisation, liberalisation, non-discrimination, career orientation, equal provisioning and a high academic quality. However, although these ideals are relevant for both countries, the general complaint from the educational clientele (as revealed in interviews with learners, parents and teachers in both countries) is that these ideals are not achieved to a satisfactory level.

The education administrations in both countries are characterised by centralised control with delegation of implementation responsibilities to regional and local level. This is mainly the result of a lack of qualified, competent and experienced officials in the education departments and of the characteristics of centralisation of government in developing countries and the developmental nature of political objectives, which require central control for similar implementation at all levels and in all parts of the community. The tendency to centralisation lowers the level to which the real education needs of the multi-cultural and multi-religious communities of both countries can be served (see Steyn & Wolhuter, 2000:43). However, the experience with and possibility of private schools in Madagascar with their own administrative organisations and the existing practice of independent schools in South Africa can provide a solution. The education authorities should not see these privatised education opportunities as a threat, and therefore regulate them to conformity, but within general boundaries, as complementary instruments to provide for adequate educational opportunities to a multi-cultural and multi-religious community. In both countries the education programmes (curricula and syllabi) are typified by their 'global' characteristics. The situation with regard to teaching and learning materials and school buildings, for example, is typical of that found in the education systems of developed countries. In Madagascar the majority of text books are imported from abroad and in both countries the majority of school buildings are typical of

those found in the western world. The result is that, for example, communities in rural areas cannot maintain these buildings from locally available resources such as thatch-grass or wooden poles, but need money, which is usually not available, to buy components such as corrugated iron or steel doors. The absence of a subject such as gardening in both systems, as basis for the maintenance and improvement of the subsistence economy of particularly the rural areas, and the insistence on subjects like computer literacy, is another feature of these two education systems. The balance between inclusion into the global economy and development of the own economy with its own typical goals is not sufficiently met.

Both systems are characterised by a high growth in learner numbers and an under-supply of education places and qualified educators, especially in the rural areas. This is particularly the result of high growth rates in the population, the lack of economic growth and limited financial resources in both countries. Both countries experience a low morale and productivity of teachers. Unlike the situation in Madagascar, a situation of absence of a culture of learning amongst learners is also reported in South Africa.

One of the typical characteristics of the education systems of developing countries in Africa is the use of a western language as medium of instruction. It is accepted in the educational arena that this practice impedes the academic achievement of learners, but both countries continue with this practice. As indicated, the reason is primarily that the educational users prefer the usage of the foreign language, because they do not have faith in the own language as a language of education. Secondly members of developing communities believe that if learners learn through the foreign language the learners will be in a better position to function effectively in the global situation. They also believe that the learners will function more effectively in the economy of the particular country where that language, French in the case of Madagascar and English in the case of South Africa, is primarily used. It is important that these education users realise that usage of the home language supports the academic achievement of learners as experienced in many developing education systems and even by learners in the two respective education systems of Madagascar and South Africa. In South Africa, the Afrikaans-speaking community have managed to develop the terminology of their home language so that it can be used as a language of instruction on all education levels whilst the large majority of the Indian community in South Africa change their home language to English and ensure the educational achievement of their learners.

The overarching conclusions from a comparison of the particular elements of the two education systems are that neither of the education systems is sufficiently adapted to the real education needs and real situation in the respective countries. In both countries the tendency is to simulate, to some extent, the education systems and education practices of the previous colonial governments, namely, France in the case of Madagascar and Britain in the case of South Africa. The conclusion is that learners of the two countries are not really provided with the opportunities to equip themselves with the required competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to function effectively according to their real educational needs. They are rather prepared to live in a developed global world separated from their daily existence. It is as if the community expected that education should take the learners out of the unsatisfactory situation in a particular under-developed or developing country rather than prepare them to be involved in the development of their present situation.

### **Conclusion**

The following were found:

- The educational ideals of Madagascar and South Africa are typical of those of developing countries, namely, democratisation, equal-education opportunities, career orientation and high quality,
- The experience of the educational clientele (learners, parents and educators) is that these ideals are not met,

- Impediments to realisation of the stated ideals are over-centralisation of educational control, lack of a drive for indigenisation of education, and high population growth rate.

The article is a report on a section of ongoing research to identify the typical characteristics of developing countries and to find answers for typical existing problems in developing countries. To identify these characteristics and find possible solutions, the south–south (countries in the southern hemisphere) comparison of education in developing countries is of value, because of the comparability of their education systems. It is clear that the hypothesis, that South Africa and Madagascar can learn profitably from each others successes and failures, is valid. The second hypothesis, namely, that this would also be the case in other developing countries in the southern hemisphere, needs further investigation. Therefore the conclusion is, at least from this south–south comparison, that the tendency of developing education systems to borrow from developed education systems constitutes a major and basic problem. Comparative education should contribute towards acceptance of the reality that developing education systems in the southern hemisphere have much to learn from their respective education systems.

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## Semi-structured interviews:

- with pupils, teachers and parents of FJKM Collège cum Lycée, Port-Berge, 9 May 2000.
- with pupils, teachers, administrative staff and parents FJKM Collège cum Lycée, Mandritsara, 11 May 2000.
- with Pastor C Fourie, 6-13 May 2000.
- with three primary school teachers in Port-Berge, Antsohihy and Mandritsara districts, 9-11 May 2000.
- with CISCO directors and staff: Port-Berge CISCO, 9 May 2000; Antsohihy CISCO, 10 May 2000, and Mandritsara CISCO, 11 May 2000.
- with Mme Odette Rahaingosa (member of Parliament and chairperson of the parliamentary portfolio committee of education), 6-12 May 2000.
- with M Rajaofera (former governor of Mahajongje Province), 6-12 May 2000.
- with M Francis (former chief of secondary education in Madagascar), 6-12 May 2000.
- with Mme Esther Razanampinoana (principal FJKM College, Port Berge), 9 May 2000.
- with Ankohorana et Mirada Finantra Famille Harmonieuse et Heureuse (group of concerned church leaders), 6 May 2000.
- with Prof Gabriel Rabearinana (dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Antananarivo), 8 May 2000.