

In need of deliberative inter-school relations in the Northern Cape

Yusef Waghid

Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Stellenbosch, Private Bag X1, Matieland, 7602 South Africa
yw@sun.ac.za

The legislation of several policy documents in relation to schooling over the past few years — of which the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) appears to be the most significant — has brought into focus a renewed emphasis on improving schooling. The by now well-known outcomes-based model, which focuses on learner-centredness, team work, creative design of learning programmes, learner outcomes and flexible time frames to allow learners to work at their own pace, presents a major challenge to schools to co-operate and find common ground for effecting good education. In as much as policy urges schools to become better achievers by improving and developing teacher competences, organisational culture, learning programmes, leadership and community involvement in school governance, it seems that scant attention has been given to the question of inter-school relations *vis-à-vis* under-performing and high-performing schools. These schools, as I shall report and argue with reference to a case study in the Northern Cape province, continue to function mutually exclusively and independently of each other, thus posing a major threat to the notion of deliberative schooling. In this article, I argue that atomistic (independent) inter-school relations are pernicious and far too restrictive in cultivating genuine deliberative schooling, more specifically inter-school teacher interaction. I contend that deliberative inter-school relations must confirm the value of "interactionism", whereby under-performing and high-performing schools can learn about each another and from each other, thus improving possibilities for teacher engagement and the establishment of inter-school collaboration in some rural areas. I argue that interactionism invokes the idea of deliberation, whereby teachers do not have to function in isolation from one another but rather as deliberators within a set of inter-school relationships with others. The idea of deliberation brings into question mere acceptance of a lack of serious engagement among teachers at under-performing (historically disadvantaged schools) and high-performing schools (historically advantaged schools).

Introduction

Before I expound on the notion of deliberative schooling, I first need to elucidate some of the challenges which currently face education in South Africa. In this way I hope to map the context in terms of which deliberative schooling — more specifically inter-school relations — has to unfold. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), education faces challenges on the basis of relevance, quality and internationalisation/globalisation. First, relevance involves questions as to how education will contribute towards economic development, social upliftment, as well as securing a sustainable environment; second, the challenge of quality is related to competition and marketability of products; and third, internationalisation poses the challenge of technological advancement, networking and partnerships (Green & Hayward, 1997:56).

In South Africa too, after decades of apartheid, transformation of education has become synonymous with ensuring the achievement of quality (complemented by equality) and relevance. Issues of equality involve the level of educatedness of disadvantaged learners (due to the unjust, inequitable and discriminatory education policies of the past) being more transformed despite the existence of high levels of social inequalities. For instance, learners can no longer be denied equal access to schools of their choice on the basis of race, culture, ethnicity or class. But many learners, although not denied equal access to some schools, might not be able to do so because of financial constraints. In other words, equality poses a serious challenge to the notion of access, because unequal access impedes the transformation of schooling as disadvantaged learners are denied the opportunity to achieve a higher level of educatedness.

Similarly the achievement of quality education in schools also seems to be a major challenge for deliberative schooling in the sense that quality involves increasing the levels of educatedness of learners. It would be difficult to conceive of schools improving their quality, that is, transforming the levels of educatedness of their learners, if they are influenced by factors such as race, poor resources, incompetent teaching, dysfunctionality and inefficient governance procedures (Enslin & Pendlebury, 1998:261). These are some of the challenges which continue to face schooling in South Africa despite changes in policy and law. Questions about dysfunctionality in schools, particularly the so-called breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning, as well as issues concerning race, teacher education, poor resources and a fragile learning environment *vis-à-vis* the implementation of Outcomes-based

education (OBE) and transformation of schooling, have been addressed by Carrim (1998), Pendlebury (1998) and Jansen (1998), respectively. However, little if any attention has been given to the issue of inter-school relations and how they might enhance the transformation project. It is with reference to deliberative inter-school relations that this article hopes to contribute to the debate about transformation of schooling. But first a word about what deliberative schooling entails.

Deliberative schooling

My understanding of deliberative schooling emanates from Habermas' idea of deliberation. Deliberation, according to Habermas (1996: 147), can be considered as "unhindered communicative freedom ... (which involves) rational opinion and will formation" and always potentially leads to a transformation in people's preferences. My emphasis is on Habermas's notion of "unhindered communicative freedom" as a constitutive good of deliberation. "Unhindered communicative freedom" means that no individual or group of teachers (in this instance, teachers from advantaged schools) could legitimately exclude others from their own and disadvantaged schools from deliberating on school matters with the aim of supporting and educating learners. The rights of teachers to deliberate on school matters are justified without any individual teacher being excluded from matters relating to schooling and (in the context of this article) inter-school relations. Adapting the ideas of Habermas (1996:305) concerning deliberation in relation to schooling, an understanding of deliberative schooling (including deliberative inter-school relations) could involve the following constitutive goods:

- Processes of deliberation take place at schools in argumentative form, that is, through an enabling exchange of information and reasons among teachers, students, school managers, parents and circuit managers who introduce and critically test proposals. Schools are not just physical locations where anything happens without staff, parents and students relating to one another. Schools provide enabling conditions such as a clear school policy framework (vision, goals and plans of action), grievance and disciplinary procedures for students and teachers, minimum hours of duty for staff as well as minimum school hours per day, team building, conflict resolution, and basic roles and responsibilities for different role players. This can effect a systematic exchange of information and reasons (knowledge and its justifications)

Table 1 Previous type, learner backgrounds, fees, language of learning and teaching

School	Previous type	Learners	Fees	Language of instruction
Blinkklip (HDS)	Ex-House of Representatives	16% Informal Housing 15% Rural Areas 67% Formal Townships 2% Suburbs/Low Density Housing	Increased from R100/year (Day) in 1999 to R150 (R100 for learners on welfare grants)	Afrikaans
Ratang Thuto (HDS)	Ex-Department of Education and Training	30% Informal Housing 70% Rural Areas	R50/year (Day) in 2001 (Figures for 1999 N/A)	English
Postmasburg (HAS)	Ex-Model C	10% Informal Housing 80% Rural Areas 10% Formal Townships	R1 650/year (Day) and R4 000 (Boarders) in 2001 (Figures for 1999 N/A)	Afrikaans and English

(Adapted from JET, 2001:6)

vis-à-vis formalised teaching, learning, leadership, management (timetabling, meeting procedures, budgeting and record keeping) and governance (Christie, 1998:285).

- Deliberations are inclusive and public. All stakeholders at schools who are possibly affected by policy decisions have an equal chance to enter and take part. For instance, teachers are responsible for engaging students in formal curriculum activity (Christie, 1998:286).
- Deliberations at schools are bound by the presuppositions of communication and rules of argumentation. Each teacher, student or parent has an equal opportunity to be heard, to introduce topics, to make contributions, to suggest and criticise proposals. The taking of yes/no positions is motivated solely by the unforced force of the better argument.

Thus the idea of deliberative schooling, with its emphasis on deliberation, aims to deepen, institutionalise, facilitate, consolidate and develop co-operation and participation in all schools. One area where deliberation might be useful is that of inter-school relations. This is because teachers at both historically advantaged schools (HASs) and historically disadvantaged schools (HDSs) in the same areas can enable transformation through procedures of collaboration and participation among themselves. Before I address the issue as to what is wrong with schools in the same area functioning independently from one another, I first need to expound on the distinction between HASs and HDSs with reference to the two schools where this research has been conducted.

Historically advantaged schools vs. historically disadvantaged schools: rural schools in the Postmasburg area

Prior to the April 1994 democratic elections, historically disadvantaged schools (HDSs) mainly for coloureds, Indians and blacks, and historically advantaged schools (HASs) for whites used to be under control of racially divided departments (Sedibe, 1998:269). These schools gained their advantaged and disadvantaged status as a result of expenditure and resource provision which, on the one hand, favoured whites, and on the other hand, disfavoured coloured, Indians and Blacks. Sedibe (1998:270) claims that these public schools were characterised by "notable inequalities related to higher teacher salaries and per-pupil expenditure for whites and lower teacher salaries and expenditure per learner for the Indians, coloureds and, especially, the Africans, at the bottom of the scale". Moreover, she argued that different socio-economic backgrounds and varied population growth rates gave rise to gross differences in teacher supply, pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes (Sedibe, 1998:270). Most of the HASs (which in the early 1990s prior to the first democratic elections converted to semi-private Model C schools under the control of a school governing body) had the lowest pupil-teacher ratios and HDSs had high pupil-teacher ratios and large class sizes (Hofmeyer & Hall in Sedibe, 1998:270). In rural areas ratios were even higher (Sedibe, 1998:270).

With this distinction between HASs and HDSs in mind, this article classifies transformative educator development initiatives in

rural schools in the Northern Cape province of South Africa as work in progress (this province achieved the lowest matriculation pass rate in the country in 2000). At present it is rather difficult to make a definitive statement about the direction in which the development is moving. However, sufficient work has been done to identify crucial weaknesses to which attention needs to be given for the improvement of inter-school relations in the same rural areas. Our primary concern was to engender conditions and possibilities for school communities (parents, teachers, students and education managers/administrators) to consolidate and deepen their attempts to transform schooling according to the demands of the South African Schools Act of 1996. We were advised by the Northern Cape Education Department to work with HDSs in the Postmasburg region. Some of the schools are ex-DET (Department of Education and Training) schools consisting mainly of Black learners and teachers, whereas the ex-HoR (House of Representatives) schools we worked with consist predominantly of coloured learners and teachers (with a few white staff members). These schools are fairly isolated from the nearest towns. In the main, learners come from the surrounding rural areas; their parents are mostly farm workers, with some of them working at the nearest military base in Lowatla (approximately 100 km from Postmasburg). The resources of the schools we worked with were minimal and the chances of the resource gap narrowing in comparison with HASs in the Postmasburg area appear to be slim. The nearest higher education institutions are in Upington and Kimberley, approximately 200 km from Postmasburg. Tables 1 and 2 provide an indication of the differences between the schools in the Postmasburg area.

Table 2 Matric pass rates at the schools in 1999 and 2000

School	1999 (%)	2000 (%)
Blinkklip	76.60	53.85
Ratang Thuto	26.51	26.47
Postmasburg	90.01	94.55

(Adapted from JET, 2001:7)

When we started with the project at the beginning of the last year, our main task was to facilitate the improvement of school governance, which we believed would engender a climate of interaction among the various stakeholders that could lead to better teaching and learning in Mathematics and Science subjects. Table 3 shows comparative data on Mathematics and Science matric results at the two HDSs over the last three years.

Over the past year we conducted six three-hour workshops with HDSs, six focus group interviews with four SGBs (the two HDSs in the Postmasburg and two HDSs in the Langberg areas), selected staff members and six learner groups. Our inquiry takes seriously the idea that the individual and the community are interdependent and that neither has meaning independently of the other. By focusing our attention on deliberative inter-school relations, our inquiry (research

Table 3 Comparative data on the Maths and Science matric results 1998–2000

School	1998		1999		2000	
	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed
Blinkklip						
Maths HG						
Physics HG						
Maths SG	17	9	19	6	9	6
Physics SG						
Ratang Thuto						
Maths HG						
Physics HG			1	0	7	0
Maths SG	30	11	21	6	49	17
Physics SG	13	1	12	3	24	6

(Adapted from JET, 2001:32)

and practice) investigates the way that the functioning of individuals and their schools simultaneously enhances and constrains the individual and the schools.

On the one hand, in under-performing HDSs, the lack of discipline among teachers remains endemic. Agreed-upon strategies of the school governing bodies (SGBs) are not consistently implemented. Members deify the SGBs, turning them into structures that have power rather than representing "ongoing processes in which power is expressed and enacted" (Fay, 1996:70). What these SGBs neglect to take into account is that their members are individuals whose socialisation is an ongoing process of "appropriation" (Fay, 1996:66). That is, they should understand their action plans, know how to implement them, alter them as circumstances change, and make them their own. This is rarely the case. The problem is that teachers overstate the power of action plans and decisions taken by SGBs and understate the power of individuals who need to enact such initiatives. As a corollary of this, a lack of teacher motivation and teamwork, conflicting staff relations, time wasting, uncoordinated planning on the part of teachers, vandalism, unruly learner behaviour, daily interruptions and racial tensions impede the implementation of vision and mission statements as well as action plans. In an interview with researchers from the Joint Education Trust, members of the senior management team at Ratang Thuto claimed "[e]ducators are sometimes 'inconsistent in the applications of decisions taken' and the school management team 'does not always stick to dates that have been agreed upon'" (JET, 2001:40-41). In another interview with members of the school management team at Blinkklip they claimed "[t]hey needed assistance with creating the necessary infrastructure for them to deliver the Department's objectives such as implementing the timetable from day one" (JET, 2001:42)

On the other hand, educators at HASs in the same rural areas are held captive, in a Wittgensteinian sense, by the view that learners perform adequately and that there is no need to co-operate with teachers from HDSs from whom, presumably, better qualified teachers at HASs can learn very little. Teachers at HASs in the same rural area are not seriously making an effort to support their HDS fellow-teachers, except for lending them laboratory equipment or perhaps a few chairs whenever the local HDS has a meeting with parents or offering them a lift to the next departmental workshop. What this amounts to is that individual teachers at both HDSs and HASs overlook serious possibilities for interaction.

This brings me to the issue of what is wrong with a lack of interaction between HDSs and HASs. Lack of interaction — in this instance between HDSs (Ratang Thuto and Blinkklip) and HASs (Postmasburg) in the Postmasburg area — gives rise to the notion of atomism, whereby schools in a Taylorian sense are primarily concerned with the right to develop "their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value ... [for them]"

(Taylor, 1991:14). Schools that are concerned with developing "their own form of life" aim to achieve a kind of "self-fulfilment" that is disengaged from matters of public importance, whether religious, political or historical. Such an atomistic view of schooling is one whereby teachers do as they choose and do not have to take decisions and act together. Each teacher has the right to pursue his or her own interest.

Put differently, atomism sees the individual teacher as ontologically "prior" to the social, that is, maintaining that the individual's thoughts and actions are free and independent of the society in which they are embedded (Sandel, 1998:19). Certainly the transformation of the schooling process in South Africa cannot accommodate such an atomistic understanding which is loath to acknowledge the claims of collective religious, political and historical identities for the reason that deliberative transformation in the first place requires "collective intervention" (Hudson, 2000:97). Transformation of schools directly or indirectly affects all South Africans. Each person's individual concern is a matter of common concern since transformation has implications for all South Africa's citizens. Transformation depends on the conditions of society as a whole, a notion that stands in stark contrast with atomism which reifies the individual over society. In this regard I agree with Taylor (1991:15) when he states that the "relativism widely espoused today is a profound mistake, even in some respects self-stultifying. It seems true that the culture of self-fulfilment has led many people to lose sight of concerns that transcend them". Such atomism, to use Sandel's expression (1998:19), defines the self as "prior to its ends" and accords supreme value to individual autonomy and agency and stands opposed to a sense of community. For Miller (in Simhony & Weinstein, 2001:2) atomists defend their political position by "invoking an individualistic view of the self". In other words, atomists consider individuals as solitary and abstract who find fulfilment in separation from each other (Simhony & Weinstein, 2001:2). Kymlicka (2002:212) posits that for many communitarians "the problem with liberalism is not its emphasis on justice, nor its universalism, but rather its individualism". According to this criticism, he argues, atomists base their theories on notions of individual rights and personal freedom, but neglect the extent to which individual freedom and well-being are only possible in community (Kymlicka, 2002:212).

Community does not merely imply an aggregation of individuals. People constituting a community have common public ends, and not merely congruent private ends. In other words, people constitute a community with the intention of sharing goals and values with others, with individuals conceiving of themselves as "members of the group, and of their values as the values of the group" (Buchanan, 1989:856). In contrast, an aggregation comprises individuals who conceive of their interests as private, independent and potentially opposed (Buchanan, 1989:857). A brief reference to current theories of community within the mainstream of contemporary philosophical liberalism reveals that the concept is the consequence and not the cause of social arrangements (Freeden, 2001:27). Community as the consequence of social arrangements is best explained by Sandel, Walzer and Hobhouse (in Freeden, 2001:29-35) who respectively consider community "as constitutive of the shared self-understandings of the participants", "the expression of social networks", and "a system of parts maintaining themselves by their interactions". It is this view of community, which constitutes my argument against atomism which I shall now assess in more detail.

King (1974) cogently articulates a concept of community which does not merely constitute an aggregation of individuals. For King (1974:30) when an individual joins a community, she does not simply assume the subjective views of other individuals but rather adopts points of view, which transcend both her and others' points of view. This makes sense for the reason that a community "has its own distinct identity, a more inclusive identity" which transcends individual subjectivities (King, 1974:30). This view of community accentuates a need for "a shared identity" which considers the ideas and wants of the

group as more important than those of the individual. In this regard, King (1974:31) who draws on an early 20th century American philosopher Josiah Royce, posits that a community with "a shared identity" is one that

"... represents a distinctly different 'level' of human life from the individual. It is not simply an aggregate of individuals. It includes individuals but also transcends them by incorporating them into a more inclusive whole. The individual who participates in a community finds his identity enhanced; without ceasing to be an individual, he (she) becomes more than an individual; he (she) enters a life 'incomparably vaster' than anything he (she) has previously known."

For the reason that a community is characterised by "a life 'incomparably vaster' than anything" the individual has known, one can justifiably claim that such a notion of community binds individuals together on the basis of some shared, common good referred to by King (1974:32) as "social transcendence". In other words, the subjectivities of individuals are not abandoned, but are only considered in relation to others' subjectivities, establishing "their allegiance to a common cause ... and to work together for a common good" (King, 1974:31). Moreover, Fielding's account of community also supports the idea of working towards achieving "a common good" in relation with others. In his words, "for community to become real the mode of relation characterized by freedom to be and become ourselves in and through relations of personal equality must take place within the context of certain dispositions and intentions towards other persons (in search of 'a common good')" (Fielding, 2000:400). Thus, it emerges that community is not fundamentally about location, time, memory, or even a sense of belonging together in a group. Rather, community is a process in which people regard each other in a certain way (i.e. love, care and concern for the other) and in which they relate to each other and act together in mutuality as persons in search of "a common good". Fielding (2000:401) articulates such an understanding of community as "the shared, mutuality of experience". This working towards "a common good" on the part of people in their relation with others challenges an atomistic understanding of schooling which seems to dominate the minds of teachers at HASs and HDSs in the Postmasburg area. Although the Northern Cape Education Department (NCED) acknowledged that there were "problems" at Ratang Thuto and Blinkklip and that sustainable intervention programmes are needed to remedy the situation (JET, 2001:44), very few attempts have been made to foster inter-schools relations in the area. Even the findings of the Final Evaluation of the Northern Cape GEMS (Governance, English, Mathematics and Science) Project conducted by the Joint Education Trust in May 2001 suggest that the NCED prioritise assisting schools with achieving sustainable levels in terms of:

- 'Plans for maintenance', that is the routine 'day-to-day functions of the school', for example, staffing, timetables, budgeting;
- Formal staff appraisal (including non-teaching staff);
- Discipline practices (for example, learner punctuality, alternatives to corporal punishment, etc.);
- School development plans (in particular in relation to financial planning and management and fund raising, training of SGBs, improving community relationships, e.g. organisation of community-building school events such as athletics, etc.) (JET, 2001: 52-53).

However, what these findings surprisingly seem to ignore is the issue of deliberative inter-school relations. In a climate of transformative educational change educators need to perform two crucial tasks: understanding the constitutive meanings of deliberative inter-school relations, which in the context of this article include teachers from both HDSs and HASs consulting and cooperating with one another on issues of planning and management of day-to-day functions of the school, timetables, budgets, discipline practices, fundraising and community-building projects. I contend that the notion of deliberative inter-school relations opens up possibilities for HDSs and HASs to

share resources (textbooks and classroom material), improve learner performance and classroom practices, develop the capacities of under-performing teachers, nurture school management teams and build SGBs. It is with such an understanding of deliberative inter-school relations in mind that I shall now investigate how educators at HASs and HDSs can cultivate new forms of interaction to solve educational problems and to react collectively to challenges in their areas.

Deliberative inter-school relations as interactionism

In my view Fay's (1996:233) notion of interactionism offers a way out of the dichotomous situation whereby teachers at HASs see themselves as better performers (and better qualified), radically distinct from what they perceive to be "low"-performing and ill-equipped teachers at HDSs. Better performing teachers are not always aware of the way they could contribute towards the efficient functioning of the HDSs, neither do HDS teachers seem to be aware of what kind of behaviour (on the part of better performing teachers) their presence precipitates. As a result the lack of teacher interaction within the same rural area becomes further entrenched. I shall now examine the way that interactionism offers possibilities for deliberation whereby teachers at HASs can learn about and from other teachers at HDSs and vice versa.

Interactionism is both a view of human experience and an ethical value which recommends a certain attitude and response to human engagement. As a view of human experience, interactionism conceives of the relationship between the self and the other dialectically, that is, interactionism is

"... the basis for exchange ... (which) should not be understood as always a pleasant and willing sharing, (but also as) provocations, threats, and resistances ... which involve being forced to evaluate and sometimes to abandon or to alter old ways" (Fay, 1996:233).

Many teachers from HAS and HDS schools in the Postmasburg area continue to perceive their involvement with curriculum, teacher and community development as representing the interests of their opposing constituencies. When teachers from these schools show their willingness to work with one another, they are very concerned that their relations should not be marred by possible tension or conflict. The perception amongst many teachers at HASs is that teachers at HDSs in the Postmasburg have "low academic standards" and do not take too kindly at being "advised" how to improve, for example, their teaching methods. In turn, teachers at HDSs perceive teachers at HASs to be "arrogant" and "difficult" to co-operate with since they always consider better school results as a yardstick for academic excellence. It is here that Fay's idea of reasonable interactionist engagement could be extremely useful, that is, for teachers at both HASs and HDSs to "evaluate" and "abandon" negative and unproductive perceptions about one another but rather, to work towards improving their relations and learner performances. During our school visitations we suggested to school principals at HASs and HDSs to arrange monthly workshops with teachers from the respective schools with the aim to engage on the basis of coming to know one another which involves exchanging ideas on how to improve inter-school relations and teacher / learner performance. Because interactionism is linked to "exchange" — a constituent feature of deliberation, more specifically deliberative schooling — it offers possibilities for HDSs and HASs in the Postmasburg area to build and consolidate inter-school relations. This "exchange" can take the form of curriculum and human resources, for instance, better performing teachers in specific subject disciplines (especially Mathematics and Science) can meet regularly to share expertise and resource material which can effect better classroom practices. (Such meetings were made possible by our project but need to be sustained.)

Interactionism as an ethical value encourages people to engage their differences in ways that explore possibilities for productive and positive learning from each other. This involves situations whereby, in the words of Fay (1996:234),

"People can learn *about* others and *from* others, thereby not only learning about them and themselves but also opening up new

possibilities for themselves and other(s) in the processes of en-gagement.”

I shall now elaborate on this notion of interactionism whereby people not only encounter each other's differences, but also improve possibilities for deliberation through which they can enrich their own lives. Two significant features, namely recruitability and respect, constitute deliberation in an interactionist sense. How can inter-school relations within the Postmasburg area and other rural areas be improved? According to Fay (1996:237),

“*Recruitability* refers both to the capacity to elicit another's regard in you and your capacity to become invested in the lives of others ... [It is] an enhanced ability to listen and respond to others; a deepened appreciation of the ways others contribute to our own self-knowledge; and an enlargement of our moral imaginations.”

Enhancing our ability to "listen and respond to others" implies that teachers have to be willing to hear and be open to accepting what others have to say. They have to interact with others who are different (such as the teachers from HASs interacting with those from the HDSs), and they should mutually explore and share with others alternatives as a way to develop their own and others' understanding, in this instance, related to improving inter-school collaboration. To be able to "listen and respond to others" in the first place implies unconditional deliberation on the part of all teachers in rural schools. In fact deliberation commensurate with the notion of recruitability can have the effect that better-performing teachers from HASs can increase the possibility for under-performing teachers to become unconditionally engaged by them. Under-performing teachers from HDSs are not to be regarded as junior partners, but are required to deliberate on all educational matters without any conditionality attached to their interaction. In this way, suspicion and unnecessary antagonism among different teachers can be removed, thus improving the credibility and legitimacy of teacher interaction and their decisions by fostering greater co-operation and mutual respect among themselves.

I have no doubt that if the notion of recruitability is absorbed and internalised by under-performing and better-performing educators, improved inter-school relations in the Postmasburg area would become a reality. Such a form of recruitable interaction could inclusively enhance all constituent teachers' desire and ability to extend and augment their mutual inter-school relations, eager to share with others.

This brings me to another feature of interactionism, namely respect. Unconditional interaction of all teachers in educational matters would not by itself ensure reasonable interactionist deliberation. Sit-hole (1998:111) emphasised the need for mutual respect to occur among teachers. But does respect, like recruitable interaction, mean unconditional mutual acceptance? In other words, does respect mean merely accepting everything people say or propose? My response is an emphatic No. Better-performing teachers do not show respect for under-performing teachers by simply accepting everything they say; under-performing teachers do not show respect for better-performing teachers merely by imitating them. Fay (1996:239) makes the following point about respect as constitutive of interactionist deliberation:

“Respect demands that we hold others to the intellectual and moral standards we apply to ourselves and our friends. Excusing others from demands of intellectual rigor and honesty or moral sensitivity and wisdom on the grounds that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion no matter how ill-informed or ungrounded, or — worse — on the grounds that others need not or cannot live up to these demands, is to treat them with contempt. We honor others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully taking their [justifiable] criticisms of us. To do so is to take them seriously; to do any less is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect.”

If better-performing teachers, for example, lack effective interpersonal communication and negotiation skills, and thus are unable to motivate

under-performing teachers; or if under-performing teachers are unable to handle conflict in schools or are even guilty of not implementing the deliberative principles of the school's policy, their actions should not be "beyond the pale of critical judgement" (Fay, 1996:239). Respect does also not mean that everything teachers do is "fine", such as when they fail to implement formulated and adopted school policies. Respect means that teachers (including principals, learners and parents) ought to be held accountable to support and implement justifiable decisions taken by the schools, whether HASs or HDSs. In this way, respect does not simply mean acceptance of everything better-performing teachers do. Respect conceived as mere acceptance of everything people do or say negates interactionist deliberation. According to Fay (1996:240), this defective understanding of respect "enjoins us to appreciate others but not to engage them in mutual critical reflection".

Finally, a culture of interactionist deliberation can only occur if all schools in the same rural area (in this case Postmasburg) are unconditionally included and information and resources are exchanged between HDSs and HASs. Teachers from HASs and HDSs need to consider establishing sustainable structures and processes which can improve classroom practices, nurture school management teams and build SGBs.

Conclusion

I have found that HDSs in many rural school areas are in considerable need of the implementation of capacity-enhancement programmes that the South African Schools Act of 1996 requires provincial education departments to provide. It seems as if interactionist deliberation grounded in the notions of recruitability and respect *vis-à-vis* the implementation of capacity-enhancement programmes does not form any part whatsoever of the teacher development initiatives of these schools. Teachers at these schools still require a wide range of knowledge and skills such as the way the education system functions, the role of SGBs (including their functions and rights according to the Act), conflict resolution, how to conduct and record meetings, how to keep financial records, and how to control the admission of learners to school, how to motivate their learners and how to initiate engagement among themselves — all educational matters where better-performing educators at neighbouring HASs can assist. Yet the educational divide between HASs and HDSs in the same rural areas remains firmly entrenched.

As far as initiatives to enable teachers from both HASs and HDSs in the same rural areas to foster inter-institutional collaboration are concerned, an educator development programme on the part of members of the Department of Education Policy Studies of the University of Stellenbosch is now underway. We hope that our transformative initiative could provide advice and support to many diverse teachers, thereby creating conditions for interactionist deliberation based on the principles of recruitability and respect. The irony is that, although the transformation of schooling has given stakeholders a powerful voice in the schools' affairs, it is in the rural areas that these voices are being muted as a consequence of the danger of better-performing teachers at HASs becoming disengaged from under-performing educators at HDSs. We want to change this increasing and damaging form of social and racial polarisation, and create conditions for all teachers to "engage, question and learn" (Fay, 1996:241).

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