Vintage Kenton

A Kenton Education Association Commemoration

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Preface

This collection is not a 'best of' Kenton. The compilers had no intention of wielding any evaluative device to lift out the wheat from the chaff, even presuming that there was any chaff to winnow away. Our intention was rather to represent some of the main lines of debate as they bubbled to the surface during the fourteen published years of Kenton's history. The seven years before these, undocumented as they were, either lived on in the later 14, or expired gracefully on the banks of Kenton-on-Sea.

A history of intellectual fancies is not easily captured. Besides, how could we catch the exuberant flavour of impromptu performances from the floor that have characterised each Kenton, and upon which, some will claim, the Kenton legend mainly rests? Who can remember each 'Kenton theme' as it crystallised in each particular year? And how do we represent the elations, disappointments, angers, and heart-breaks that were always there, an inevitable by-product of the chumminess of Kenton as it re-invented itself from year to year in routines of inclusion and exclusion that were in themselves relentlessly interrogated?

The first published Kenton-at-Wilgerspruit outside Johannesburg in 1980 broke the rules of the good old days of Kenton-at-Kenton in more ways than one. Kenton now became more critical and confrontational. Was this due to a changing political temper? Or a new wind blowing from paradigmatic latitudes North and West? Or was it simply that a new cocky crop of teacher educators had made the scene, employed to deal with the escalating need for teacher training that was a feature of the eighties? In retrospect, undoubtedly all three, but our early Kenton reflections tended to bet on one or the other. Meanwhile, De Lange was casting his long shadow, questions of policy were posed as if for the first time, and we responded in an unhurried and leisurely critical fashion.

By the mid-eighties epistemic communities were beginning to establish their respective tribal rituals: hard- (really hard-) nosed political economy sat uncomfortably next to the soft new pedagogies seeping into academia. Meanwhile, the political temper was not only changing, but bearing in on academia in now

uncomfortable ways. We had our advocates and our sceptics, both. Neither escaped the susurrus of history. Righteous anger, irony and melancholia took on new hues; traditional scholars carried on regardless.

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) changed all of this somewhat, but the jungle drums of policy were certainly playing louder and more insistently by the late eighties. Were we on the verge of a new fissure, as we were in the early eighties? Partly, but it did depend on who you spoke to. But one thing was certainly evident by the turn of the decade: orthodoxy, whether promoted or contested, was well beyond rational or Kentonal recapitulation. New themes, new methods, exotic concerns bubbled out from every nook and crevice. At the point of our political transition in April 1994, there were some that firmly believed our little community had grown beyond all expectation of closure, and had gone postmodern to boot.

Still, what would Kenton be without its grandstanders, its superstars, its hucksters, its mountebanks, its grandees, its shamans, its used-to-be's and its wannabees? What keeps it all together, outside of the artifice of narratives such as this one? Probably nothing. Kenton was an annual staging, and here are 21 good reasons to have been there. Kenton has now become a formal association. This collection commemorates a very particular path, an idiosyncratic set of debates, a group of singular personalities, the unruly life of a debate than once, at Kenton's onset, seemed an extravagant dream.

THE COMPILERS
for Kenton Education Association

Nagmaals on the little English trek

Clive Millar
University of Cape Town

1984

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to give an account of the Kenton Education Conferences over a ten-year period. The title betrays the organising metaphor I found seductive – that of an extended family travelling different routes in different parties but coming together once a year for purposes of conversation, solidarity, strategy, alliances, confession, ritual, myth-making, commitment, etc. Certainly conversation – about the family, about the journey, about its meaning and about its futures. But all metaphors beg questions and this one needs interrogation on at least two counts. Is there really an English journey and what might it be about? And is there really any family to speak of? Ten years of annual conversation suggests 'yes' to the second question and may reveal something of the strange texture of the family. And possibly too a study of off-duty conversation year by year may give some insight into the nature of the English trek itself, if there is one.

The account of the conferences rests on sketchy records, limited discussion and selective recall. It is also highly compressed. It is to be seen as a reading to be compared with and contested by other readings. Its primary purpose is to gain some grip on our developing conversation. If we have been saying the same things in possibly the same ways for ten years then it is time to know it. Alternatively, if our conversation has some structure and some trajectory it would be good to know this too. Because it is through our capacity for conversation that we construct our possible futures.

Phase One: Let's find a place where we can talk – Kenton-on-Sea 1974 to 1976

The idea of the first Kenton Conference arose in discussion among three teacher educators from Wits, Rhodes and UCT towards the end of an international

Education for a national culture in South Africa: problems and solutions

M. Cross

1991

Introduction

> In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as fingers, yet as one hand in all things essential to mutual progress. (Booker T. Washington quoted in W. Eiselen 'Gedagtes oor Apartheid', *Tydskrif vir die Geestewetenskappe*, 2 Jaargang VI (April 1949): 5-6.

Many countries have had a long experience of trying to come to grips with the problem determined by the need to reconcile national unity with cultural diversity. This problem arises out of a multiplicity of situations: (1) continuing ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities; (2) marked regional claims to autonomy or cultural identity; (3) influx of migrants of heterogeneous cultural background; (4) socio-economic conflict arising out of unemployment, age-group, races and class differences or other socio-economic illnesses.[1] Another factor is what Hall describes as 'gigantism': 'Countries, like much modern architecture, suffer from "gigantism": psychologically, ordinary people feel unable to identify with large entities, supranational or national. "Small" is not only "beautiful", but comprehensible.'[2] In many cases, these situations can lead to social conflict or cultural clashes between the majority and minority groups, and the assertion by minorities of a will to preserve a separate cultural identity.

Governments have responded to the challenge imposed by the above situations in various ways. These have been categorised by social theorists in several typologies of policies and approaches.[3]

For example, Wirt distinguishes four main policy approaches: (1) assimilation (e.g. the case of the Scots and Welsh in Great Britain); (2) socialised isolation (e.g. the case of the Lapps in Sweden); (3) cultural pluralism (e.g. the case of the Catholics and Protestants in the Netherlands); (4) colonialism (e.g. the case of the Africans, Asians and West Indians in the United Kingdom).[4]

In his first attempt to define a typology, Watson suggested five discernible policy

approaches towards the educational of minorities within national borders: (1) the *recognition approach* in those countries that recognise minority languages, culture and education in the national constitution (e.g. USSR, India); (2) the *unification approach* in those countries that seek to create a unified sense of nationhood through the school system (e.g. Sudan, Ghana, Chad, Dahomey, Tanzania, Malaysia, Indonesia); (3) the *separation approach*, a modification of (2), in those countries that try to develop a common nationality while at the same time preserving the different languages and cultures of the minority groups (e.g. Singapore and Nigeria); (4) the *integration approach* in those countries that attempt through the school system, language and external pressures to integrate immigrants into the mainstream of a homogeneous society (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia, France); and (5) the *non-recognition or laissez-faire approach*, where the official policy is one of *laissez-faire* and decisions are left to individual local authorities (e.g. UK, Germany).[5]

More recently Watson developed a modified version of his typology by classifying countries with multiracial educational policies into three major categories: (1) those that have a deep-rooted racial/cultural mix (e.g. USSR, China, India); (2) those whose cultural mix is a direct or partial result of colonialism (e.g. many of the Asian and African countries); (3) those that have become multiracial largely as a result of voluntary immigration (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia and more recently much of Western Europe).[6] In the first category, regardless of political makeup (socialist or bourgeois), national unity is preserved and recognition that extends to educational provision for different ethnic groups is largely guaranteed. In the second category, the educational policies pursued by different governments not only vary over time but range from assimilation, through integration to cultural pluralism. In the last category, a clear policy towards education in a multiracial, multicultural society had to be formulated and a *laissez faire* approach abandoned as the racial problem began to emerge and be exploited for political gain. As Watson himself recognises, a major weakness of this typology is the fact that it overlooks the impact of colonialism on already multicultural societies such as Nigeria, Ceylon or Mauritius and the fact that there were already settlers in Australia, Canada and the USA before the arrival of the white man.[7]

There are strengths and weaknesses in the three typologies. This study will consider four main policy models which are more a synthesis of their strengths than an alternative to the above typologies. These are: (1) cultural assimilation and integration; (2) cultural amalgamation; (3) insular cultural pluralism; and (4) modified cultural amalgamation. These models will be discussed with particular reference to the South African context. My concern is to develop a meaningful theoretical frame for the definition of educational policy strategies for reconciling the diversity and the need for developing a national culture for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

1. Model 1: cultural assimilation and integration

Assimilation and integration is common in those countries that have become multiracial or multicultural largely as a result of immigration (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia and recently much of Western Europe) and have sought, through the

school system, language and cultural institutions to integrate immigrants into the mainstream of a homogeneous society.[8] The dominant value system is transmitted at the expense of all other value systems or cultures.

Assimilation is very often justified as a means to achieving social equality. One of the assumptions in this case is the belief that assimilation would compensate for the cultural deficit of immigrants and minimise socio-economic disadvantage, thus, equalise society. Britain represents an excellent example of this model. The dominant conception since the early 1960s interpreted immigrant-host society relations in terms of a traditional/modern dichotomy. It was assumed that immigrant groups displayed the characteristics of the 'traditional' societies from which they came and their main problem was primarily that of adapting to the 'modern' environment of Britain.[9] Grant put it this way:

> It is not long since almost everyone in the educational system assumed that having a first language other than English was a handicap, and that the main task with anyone in this position was to teach them English – not as well, but instead. This assumption is still widespread, and is held by many members of the minority communities themselves.[10]

In the USA, the policy of assimilation based on the 'melting pot concept' resulted in a high degree of homogenisation. However, as culture became homogenised, an instinctive need was felt to preserve ethnic particularisms; language, beliefs, customs and a host of other phenomena were felt to be under threat.[11] The bilingual Act of 1968 and the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program Act of 1972 introduced multi-cultural education as a recognition of cultural rights for Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Black Americans and other minority groups.

The educational consequences of this model are obvious. Teachers are very often selected from the dominant group. The curriculum and syllabuses are based on the values and ideas of the dominant group or culture. The dominant group enjoys 'cultural advantage'. This is very much the reality of most 'open schools' in South Africa. it can be translated through the formula A + B + C + D = A,[12] where the letters represent the different micro-cultures in the country and A represents the dominant culture.

2. Model II: cultural amalgamation

It is a *strategy of unification*, whereby developing countries seek to create a unified sense of nationhood through the school system, using a national language of instruction and centrally prescribed textbooks and curricula (e.g. Sudan, Ghana, Chad, Dahomey, Tanzania, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mozambique).[13] It focuses on global rather than local concerns. It is a rejection of both segregation and assimilation. The whole generation has to be converted to a new philosophy.

This is the strategy of cultural revolution for the creation of the 'New Man' adopted by Cuba, Angola and Mozambique. It included an educational stage designed to alter the mentality of the people in order to eradicate negative traditional cultural practices (e.g. superstition, fetishism, obscurantism, magic, etc.) and colonial cultural practices (e.g. racism, tribalism, regionalism, individualism, elitism, etc.).[14] What is unique in these experiences is the challenge to the negative forms of

traditional culture. It is argued that in traditional societies, given the low level of knowledge which characterises them, superstition and similar practices take the place of science and block any scientific analyses of the material and social milieu in favour of the supernatural.[15] Through one of its mechanisms for survival, traditional education creates passivity and respect towards inherited ideas very often taken for granted. It encourages the belief in the infallibility of the older generations personified in the elders. It also tries to justify historically women's submission to men and sexist values. The new culture is based on positive traditional forms however with new content dictated by the ideal of socialism.

Its educational consequences are much more complex. Teachers promote a new culture and, for this purpose, they have to undergo a process of re-education and socialisation into the desired ideal society and values. The educational, ideological and political frame precedes the creation and development of the respective socio-economic base. The curriculum, syllabi and methods are integrated and based on old but mainly on new value systems. A core curriculum and a core language are adopted. It can be represented as A + B + C + D = E, where E represents the national culture of the 'New Man' or 'New Society'.

3. Model III: insular cultural pluralism

It is common in those countries that have a deep-rooted racial/cultural mix (e.g. USSR, China, India, Belgium and the Netherlands). It is a policy whereby the rights of minority languages, culture and education are recognised in the National Constitution. Each group maintains its own identity. It emphasises group rights over the rights of the individual.

In 1971, the principle of cultural autonomy for the two main linguistic communities was introduced in Belgium, which made it a 'community' far from being a unitary state. There are two ministries of education, one for French speakers, the other for Dutch speakers. There are also are three Cultural Councils for the three main linguistic groups. Each has its own cultural budget. The divergences that arise from here are minimised by the existence of a national diploma system. An extreme example of insular cultural pluralism is Switzerland, but because of its complexity it cannot be dealt with here.[16]

Pluralism and cultural regionalism taken to the extreme can certainly be divisive and patronising. While it seems to have functioned smoothly in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands it has resulted in serious friction in India and recently in movements towards Balkanisation in the Soviet Union.

Economically the model requires a considerably heavy and expensive bureaucratic apparatus of the education system. Each school system has its own teachers, methods, students, curriculum and medium. It is illustrated in the formula A + B + C + D = A + B + C + D.

4 . Model IV: modified cultural amalgamation

Schools have everywhere been instruments for the promotion of national sentiment, one unifying force for which has been a national language. Where a political entity

possesses more than one mother tongue, educational regionalism may be one way of overcoming difficulties. Regionalism here means the granting of a modicum of cultural autonomy, where nevertheless the unifying factor of a second, more widely-spoken language is also promoted in the schools (e.g. French, Cactilian and Russian) (Halls; 1983).

It is common in those countries whose cultural layout is a direct or partial result of colonialism (e.g. many of the Asian and African countries). The unification approach is pursued by developing countries such as Nigeria, which try to develop a common nationality while preserving the different minority languages and cultures. Ethnic identity is modified. The interaction between groups is free. Although the existence of minority languages and cultures is recognised, the focus is placed on global rather than local concerns. Curricula, school syllabi and methods reflect the diversity of cultural practices and identities. Schooling is provided through different language media. The rightness and desirability of teaching children primarily in their own language is recognised. This can be formulated as $A + B + C + D = A' + B' + C' + D'$, where ' represents the unifying variable.

5. The South African case

Two important theoretical prerequisites are central for nation-building policy formulation in a Third World context. I borrow the first one from Banks who stresses realisation that the quest 'for ethnic identity and entitlement has very different meanings in a nation that has a well-developed national identity and in one that is in the process of formulating a national ethos and identity'.[17] Mechanical transplantation of educational policies from those countries that, though pursuing cultural pluralist models have reached a considerable level of cultural homogeneity, can be disastrous. The implication of this is that movements towards ethnic particularism that have resulted in adoption of regionalist or multi-culturalist education policies in Western settings cannot unproblematically as a starting point. The second prerequisite is that any educational policy concerned with national unity should reflect the specificity of the particular historical cultural circumstances of the country in which it is to be implemented. However, the concept culture is an elusive concept, which always requires clarification.

6. The concept of culture: beyond the myths

In his appeal 'Let's be proud of our ethnicity in the reformed SA', Dhlomo regrets the way apartheid illegitimised and discredited 'natural and positive concepts, such as regionalism, culture and ethnicity'.[18] Under apartheid, he argues, a black person's ethnic origin would decree a deportation from the urban area to a remote so-called independent homeland, unilaterally set aside for people of each ethnic group. Dhlomo emphasises that this policy evoked an instant counter-reaction from many people who began to either deny or underplay their ethnic origins.[19] Let me add that this reaction also included the so-called 'chameleons', who, for different reasons, found it necessary to opt for racial re-classification and were very often ashamed of

their condition as blacks. Ironically this attitude led to Africans becoming 'Coloureds', 'Coloureds' becoming Indians, 'Coloureds' and Indians becoming Whites and so fourth, in a chain of humiliation due to skin pigmentation. Against this background, Dhlomo warns us: 'Now we face yet another danger in post-apartheid South Africa whereby we might be forced to take another extreme position by totally denying the existence of these otherwise innocuous concepts.'[20] He calls for healthy regionalism [and presumably ethnicism], free from prejudice, chauvinism or political opportunism: 'A strong and united South African nation of the future can only rise from the foundations and not the ruins of our rich and diverse cultural and ethnic heritage.' At this point, Dhlomo's idea begins to make sense in spite of his controversial political background. Implicit in his argument is the danger of the two extremes in educational policies for pluralist societies: the *melting pot* concept with emphasis on mono-culturalism and the *salad bowl* concept with emphasis on ethnic, regional and cultural particularism. The first extreme is a celebration of a national mono-culture at the expense of the various micro-cultures or, at worst, without a healthy appreciation of the richness of the diverse cultural heritage and cultural roots. Positive manifestations of regionalism, culture and ethnicity can be consciously or unconsciously muffled. This rests on a narrow view of education for national culture which sees the role of public schools as that of socialising children into the universalistic values and culture of the nation-state. It holds that schools that promote allegiances to ethnic groups or cultures would create a degree of ethnic and social polarisation that would be inimical to the universalistic culture of the nation-state.

The second extreme is an opportunistic manipulation of regionalism, tribalism and ethnicity for selfish political purposes, which in some cases resulted in attempts to Balkanise the nation-state or culture. In Africa it has assumed the form of tribalism. Sometimes, this perspective emanates as a consequence of the failure to account for the diversity in nation-building, the abuse of the *melting pot* concept without the necessary appreciation of African cultural roots. Those countries that have engaged in a socialist enterprise constitute an excellent example. While a major flaw in developed socialist systems has been the inability to reconcile the ideas of socialism and democracy, the problem with socialist-orientated African countries, which have engaged in the building of a 'New Society', has been the inability to reconcile their new concept of national culture with the cultural diversity of their societies.

It seems that a pragmatic middle-of-the-road choice, between the two extreme poles, is most desirable. Most difficult is however the definition and choice of appropriate developmental strategies and policies. Dhlomo's suggestion that what we need is a future constitutional mechanism that would totally depoliticise these concepts [regionalism, culture and ethnicity] is an oversimplification of the matter. This approach represents a particular discourse popular within the ruling ranks that concepts such as culture, education, ethnicity, etc., can be compartmentalised and isolated from the world of politics, though they have been used in South Africa to pursue political purposes such as ethnic differentiation in the policy of separate development. I shall differ from this empiricist view. I shall illustrate this point with a brief discussion of the concept culture.

There are many different definitions of culture. However, no single unproblematic definition of 'culture' can be found. As Williams and Hogart have indicated, the concept of culture remains a complex one, a site of convergent interests, rather than a logically or conceptually clarified idea. For our purposes, I would like to concentrate on two major perspectives in the conceptualisation of culture: (1) the one that sees culture as devoid of political role and (2) the one that sees culture as having political content.

The first perspective is based on what Sole calls 'an organic vision of society', i.e. the one which sees the growth of any particular social entity as analogous to that of an organically growing body, with all its parts in harmony and free of all disturbances from the outside.[21] It underplays divisions, conflict and exploitation and stresses harmony and stasis, denying elements of power and struggle within social groupings. As Sole points out, cultures are not seen as emerging through a process of contestation between classes and groups within the defined social context, but through a simple and unproblematic accretion of values and traditions by a type of 'group mind'.[22] The way individuals respond to their social reality is also defined as a non-problem. The individual and society are seen as existing in an organic, reciprocal relationship. A typical example in South Africa is the belief in the existence of monolithic 'black' and 'white' cultures as a reflection of an allegedly white and black nation.

Within this framework, culture is placed within the domain of ideas as the sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their experiences. For those whose emphasis is more anthropological, culture concerns the network of social practices. For them 'culture' refers to 'a whole way of life', the active and indissoluble relationships between the elements or social practices. In this context the 'theory of culture' is defined as 'the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life'.[23] Culture is not a practice as it is claimed to be in certain kinds of anthropology. It is threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationships. It is what Sole has labelled 'organic culture'.[24] Obviously, an overemphasis on the organic, collaborative nature of culture can lead towards the uncritical idealisation of the past that must be preserved and promoted as claimed by Dhlomo.

I do not deny the fact that the economic and social changes brought about by colonialism and apartheid have resulted in considerable cultural commonality. I want however to emphasise that because of the divisive nature of the political and ideological system, this commonality remains still embryonic. It is inherited in its form and constructed or reconstructed in its content. It has to be struggled for and consolidated. This will certainly require an awareness of the 'contradictions and discontinuities in South African society' and the diversity caused by race, class, ethnicity, geography and other factors.

The second perspective is more sociologically orientated. It remained for a while within a strictly structuralist framework, according to which culture merely reflected the configuration of the material basis and the social relations of production. However, culture was no longer seen as separable from politics nor as neutral. A significant development came with those theorists like Gramsci who argue that intellectual culture was inextricably bound up with the question of leadership.[25]

Specifically Gramsci rejects conceptions of class domination in favour of a sophisticated interplay of force and consent in asserting the hegemony of the ruling class. Culture forms the integral part of this process. Complex and interwoven chains of cultural, political and ideological practices work to 'cement' a society into a relative though never complete unit. For Gramsci, culture is organisation, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality, an attainment of high awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations. It does not emerge through spontaneous evolution. It is forged out of struggles for survival with nature and between people.

Of significant importance to my argument is Gramsci's contention that in society the dominant culture represents itself as *the* culture and tries to define and contain other cultures within its inclusive range. Other cultural configurations will not only be subordinate to this dominant order, they will enter into struggle with it, seek to modify, negotiate, resist and even overthrow its reign, in Gramsci's terms, its hegemony 'ideology'.[26] When one culture gains ascendancy over the other and when the subordinate culture experiences itself in terms prescribed by the dominant culture, then the dominant culture also becomes the basis of a dominant ideology.

The study of cultural organisations, which keep the ideological world in movement within a given country is important for understanding how culture is integrated in society.[27] For Gramsci, cultural institutions and organisations which help in the dissemination of culture include schools and churches, newspapers, magazines, book trade and private educational institutions which are either complementary to the state system, or cultural institutions like popular universities. These operate in conjunction with professions with cultural activity like medicine, military, the law and teaching.

One can also view culture as the level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and express form in their social and material life experience. It is the way social relations of a group are structured and shaped, but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted. Groups that exist within the same society and share the same historical conditions do share the same culture.[28] In this sense, Hall and Jefferson define culture as: 'the peculiar and distinctive "way of life" of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in *mores* and customs, in the uses of objects and material life'. To put it differently, culture is the distinctive shapes in which the material and social organisation of life expresses itself. Moulder's metaphor simplifies some of these aspects:

> According to the dictionaries, we call a crop of artificially and experimentally grown bacteria a culture. This fact is worth noting for at least two reasons. Firstly, it reminds us that the word 'culture' is derived from the Latin word *culture*, a word for farming, for a complex process in which we deliberately and intentionally interfere with nature and try to improve its performance. Secondly, it points to the fact that, *whatever one's culture is, it is something that is given to us in the way in which the number and the colour of our eyes are given to us.* What this all boils down to is that when one is talking about one's culture, one is talking about the product of a complex process of socialisation.[29]

6. A framework for a dynamic concept of culture

Given the apartheid heritage, it seems that any new conceptualisation of culture in South Africa would have to consider the following theoretical bases:

A. Though culture can be conceived of as a *uniting force* binding social groups or classes together, it is also a *divisive element*, which reflects the complexity of societies generally constituted by various subgroups and subcultures in a struggle for legitimacy of their behaviour, values, ideals and lifestyles against the dominant culture of the dominant society, i.e. the hegemonic culture. The main forms of these cultures are class cultures, which implies that within ethnicity, different and conflicting cultures can develop.[30] In other words, having a culture means belonging to a group whose members give the same or similar answers to the problems arising out of their own nature, their orientation in time, their relationship to nature, their primary purpose in life, their primary relationship to each other.[31] This group can be an ethnic or religious group. However, within ethnic and religious groups, upper-, middle- and lower-class groups, cultural constellations can also be formed, depending on the existing forms of socialisation.

However, South Africa is clearly a *limit case* where the salience of racial and ethnic features cannot for a moment be denied.[32] Sehoole analysing the ideology of nationhood in Bophuthatswana illustrates how culture and its ideological components were systematically used to ensure that the new ruling class and social structures were maintained in a way that is understandable to all members of the Tswana society so as to gain legitimacy and consolidate itself. The past history and traditions of Batswana were reinterpreted and directed towards the political needs of the Bop state. Various mobilising and solidifying agents, amongst them the land question, the so called back-to-the-roots campaign, religion, Tswana language (nomenclature), music, postage stamps and objects with symbolic meaning in the life of Batswana such as the mace, national flag and code of arms have been used to inculcate the so-called Tswana culture. This does not constitute an exception. It has been almost a common policy in the so-called homelands for long time.

B. The process of race polarisation and its concomitant cultural implications must not be ignored in analysing culture in SA. Brake puts it nicely: 'for black people their primary identity, the way in which they are reacted to, and the way in which they act upon the world is mediated by their colour, and the oppression that brings, structurally, politically, psychologically and economically.'[33] This is well represented in the TV series 'People Like Us'. Without romanticising it, it is race which defines them, which acts against them, and which unites them. Their class position subscribes their economic position, but race is the *subjectivity* in which their class position is lived, and which shapes their relation to the world.

C. Culture is not a *neutral concept*. It is historical, specific and ideological. The dominant class uses culture to legitimise hegemony or control of subordinate classes. The dominant culture represents itself as *the* culture, and tries to define and contain all other cultures within its inclusive range. Hegemonic cultures, however, are never free to reproduce and amend themselves without contradiction and resistance. A crisis in the dominant culture opens room for opposition, resistance and cultural

upheavals which can take different forms and lead to a new hegemonic order.[34] The subordinate classes use culture to attain their cultural emancipation and re-assert a new hegemonic social order.

D. Culture is not a *timeless and motionless* body of value systems or life-styles that remain unaltered by social change as put forward by our common-sense. Rather, it is a *dialectical process*, which incorporates new forms and meanings while changing or reshaping traditional ones.[35] The new cultural forms emerge as a response to and mediation of social experiences.[36] It is not an unchangeable text, but a complex, contradictory and uneven process. It is an expression of people's experience and of their action upon their own experience. In this sense, people can intervene and create the necessary conditions for the preservation of the positive manifestations of their culture; but they can also intervene and act upon or transform the negative manifestations of their culture.

E. Culture is a historically constituted concept. Whatever one's culture is, it is something that is not given but has been artificially created.[37] Thus when one talks of culture one is talking about the product of a complex process of socialisation. As Thornton puts it, it is a sharing of a complex intellectual history with the ideas of 'society' organism and nation.[38] The apparent similarities that exist between ideas of 'cultures', 'organisms', 'nations' and 'societies' in South Africa are the result of the historical development of these ideas in a common intellectual and political context and not the expression of genuine insight into the human condition.[39] The apparent gulf that separates the different 'cultures' in South Africa is an historical product. The cultural differences are themselves created by cultural processes which span and encompass these very differences. If they were artificially created by man against humanity, they can also be transformed to serve humanity. The implication of all this is that culture is acquired through human experience; culture changes as the environment in which people live change, and their perceptions of the world around them change; and nobody's culture is completely unique.[40] Hoijer puts it nicely:

> No culture is wholly isolated, self-contained and unique. There are important resemblances between all known cultures – resemblances that stem in part from diffusion . . . and in part from the fact that all cultures are built around biological, psychological, and social characteristics common to all mankind.[41]

Finally I would like to conclude by stressing the five important characteristics of culture identified by Moulder:

> Firstly, everyone's culture has been created for them, and largely by people who are older than they are and who began to shape their behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and values from the moment they were born. Secondly, everyone's culture is always changing, because they are always adapting to new groups of people and to new social, political and economic situations. Thirdly, none of the members of a cultural group are totally homogeneous; that is why groups are always coming into existence and going out of existence. Fourthly, no cultural group is totally unique; this is why some individuals from extremely different backgrounds with extremely different life experiences manage to form alliances and to co-operate with each other. Finally, nobody finds it easy to change the

> culture that they inherit because it has taught them to behave, as well as what to believe, to feel and to value; and most people, once they have learned these things, want to keep them that way.[42]

It is thus absurd to conceive culture as something that should be institutionally protected or preserved. Similarly, it is absurd to deny its political content. What seems urgent is a re-conceptualisation of culture with a new ideological and political content based on esteem and appreciation of humanity. In South Africa this cannot for moment ignore the ideal of non-racialism, democracy and national unity. To put it differently, the educational and cultural struggle should incorporate the struggle for reconciliation, reconstruction and national unity, in which cultural and ethnic diversity is not an obstacle but a fundamental and necessary ingredient.

6.1 Alexander and McGurk revisited

At this point, I shall briefly review the important debate between McGurk and Alexander, which has serious implications for the argument pursued in this article. Their points of convergence, which I also share, are summarised by McGurk as follows:

> (1) We are to speak of culture as a single universe of discourse uniting all people within the single context determined by geographical proximity, social interaction, and economic relations, and not 'cultures' (the origin of the notion of 'cultures' as separate entities can be attributed to the nationalistic chauvinism of the 19th century); (2) culture becomes a process that is goal-orientated that in the final analysis is morally driven; (3) culture as tradition has dialectical or overdetermined structure which in terms of an operative continuity and a contemporary formation renders certain aspects of culture residual or archaic and other aspects emergent or prophetic; (4) the dialectic or the basic dynamism for cultural transformation becomes regulated by the goals, such as nation-building or national liberation.[43]

From a radical structuralist standpoint, Alexander holds that the emergence of a national culture implies the change of the existing relations of production and the establishment of a socialist mode through 'the overcoming of the cultural imperialism, cultural exclusivity, and partial cultural assimilation of the dominating groups in our post-colonial society'.[44] The historical role in this process is attributed to the black working class, which must be educated and united through such cultural and educational practices as the usage of a national language. Obviously, McGurk cannot entirely digest this reductionist view, which seems to place all the burden on the role of the 'structures'. He suggests the concept of *person* to stress the role of human agency as 'the effective agency of social transformation' within an implicitly Gramscian framework:

> While the class struggle might provide the material or dialectical basis for historical emergence, culture, as created by the *person* in its originating moment, is the formal resolution of this dialectic. The *person* is its effective agency.[45]

The implications of the two differing approaches is that while for Alexander only the black working class with its 'organic intellectuals' allies can play a major role in abolishing national oppression in South Africa, McGurk's thesis welcomes in the process every single individual, regardless of race, class or ethnicity, driven by his or her own 'spiritual dynamism as a person'.

I shall concentrate only on three aspects incorporated in their arguments: (1) their two conflicting paradigmatic points of departure; (2) McGurk's idealistic voluntarism on the role of the individual (person); (3) Alexander's obsession with the historical role of the black working class.

Alexander and McGurk hold the two extreme poles and tend to ignore the richness of the terrain that separates them. More meaningful analyses have however taken place within this terrain. Building on Althusser, Gramsci, Thompson and Bourdieu's cultural analyses, American theorists of cultural reproduction and resistance suggest a more balanced approach between structuralist and culturalist traditions.[46] They draw our attention to the danger of deterministic approaches based on a narrow structuralism or idealistic voluntarism that may arise out of 'personalist' analyses. Their main thrust is the reminder that 'unless the dialectic is taken into account, in any particular analysis, between both halves of the proposition that 'men make history . . . on the basis of conditions which are not of their making' the result will inevitably be a naive humanism with subsequent voluntarist and populist political practice.'[47]

Thus, McGurk is reacting against the tendency to seize the materialist, economic side of Marxism, the claim presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism that every fluctuation of politics, culture and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure or the economic base.[48] He is concerned with restoring the elements of praxis and experience to theories of social change by reintegrating the active or 'subjective' dimension of human actions, without which no meaningful change can occur. For him, the only theory capable of accomplishing this strategic goal should be the one that goes beyond the prevailing economic determinism in Alexander's thesis.

The problem with McGurk's analysis is that he overstates his case for the sake of challenging the limitations of narrow structuralist analyses. As such, he believes that what, for example, motivates 'the sympathetic intellectual or activist, who most often does not belong to the exploited classes', is not the fact that he is a victim of exploitation in the material organisation of work, but the meanings generated by his own spiritual dynamism as a *person*.[49] This ignores the fact that those meanings are constructed with reference to the very same material world. An adequate account of culture in South Africa needs a more balanced approach or a synthesis between Alexander and McGurk.

Second, what Marx defined as the *historical role* of the working class, i.e. the centrality of the working class as the fundamental social agent in bringing about a socialist revolution against the bourgeoisie, is restricted by Alexander to the black working class in South Africa:

> Because of the peculiarities of capitalist development in South Africa, the only way in which racial discrimination and racial inequality, i.e. national oppression, can be abolished is through the abolition of the capitalist structures themselves. The only class, however, which can bring into being such a (socialist) system is the black working class. On it, by virtue of its unique historical position, devolves

> the task of mobilising all the oppressed and exploited classes for the abolition of the system of racial capitalism.[50]

There seems to be no indication that the historical role attributed to the working class by Marx has historically been concretised. The political centrality of the working class requires that it comes out of itself, to transform its own identity by articulating to it a plurality of struggles and democratic demands. However, this articulatory role seems to have been assigned to it by the economic base.[51] Further, the direction of the workers' struggle is not uniformly progressive. It depends, just as with any other social struggle, upon its forms of articulation within a given hegemonic context. By articulation here I mean any practice establishing a relation between elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. From this point of view, the very orientation of the working class depends upon a political balance of forces and the radicalisation of plurality of democratic struggles, which are decided in good part outside the class itself. As Laclau and Mouffe have pointed out, the era of 'privileged subjects' – in the ontological not practical sense – of the anti-capitalist struggle has been definitively superseded.[52] No class or social movement can be *a priori* taken as progressive by virtue of its class nature. Its progressiveness depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles or demands. It is a question that requires further elaboration within the world socialist movement. In this light, Alexander's hypothesis, though attractive, has still to be tested by the history. I do not intend to get drawn into this debate. It is sufficient to say that it has serious implications in the designing of an educational model for a national culture in South Africa, particularly because of its integrationist pretensions. I shall return to this point later.

Conclusion: education and curriculum for national unity

National unity is a process whereby mutual acceptances, cohesion and harmony of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, economic and social differences concur to the project of nation-building, through the consciousness of common history, common values and common interests. It is a result of social interaction, social mobility and voluntary enculturation. As a historical process, it springs up and develops from below, as an inevitable response to social and political contradictions. As an ideal (or 'moral ideal' as McGurk puts it), national culture involves an active and conscious process, whereby, through human intervention and creativity and through convergence of customs, practices, beliefs, institutions, the boundaries between ethnically conceived cultures, or subcultures are opened to let the universal expression of humanity assert itself.

National culture implies a degree of intellectual and moral leadership committed to the ideal of a nation free of all oppression and exploitation.[53] As Alexander has pointed out, the building of a national culture means: 'allowing a core of common cultural practices, beliefs, customs, etc., to develop, a core that is derived from all the different social, regional and language groups.'[54] Further, the creation of a national culture is also a process of transformation, the processing of those cultural practices, beliefs and customs necessary for the construction of a new nation, including those that may hinder the development of a national sentiment. It is not

simply a reflection of a pre-given nation, but also transformation and construction.[55]

At this point, a fundamental question emerges: what are the implications of the above considerations for an educational policy aimed at bringing about national unity in South Africa? If one has to take into consideration, on the one hand, the complex diversity created by the apartheid system and, on the other, the potential unifying role of the working class, it appears that a more effective strategy lies neither on pluralist approaches suggested in model III (insular cultural pluralism) nor on narrow integrationist or assimilationist implied in Alexander's model as in model II (cultural amalgamation). A form of a multicultural education and curriculum with capacity and flexibility to cope with the existing layers of identity, cultural and linguistic, local, sub-national, national, and international, seems to be inescapable. It has to be a system in which it is possible to be a worker, a Zulu or Tswana, an Azanian and a member of the international community as well. An education that concentrates on any one of these to the exclusion of the others will ill serve the needs of the Azanian society or its individual members. From this standpoint, cultural and ethnic diversity should be seen as an enrichment for a national culture, as an asset rather than a handicap. It is not necessarily what each of these layers lacks that is essential but what it has to enrich a national culture, national sentiment and national unity, free of chauvinism.

However, a limited degree of assimilation and integration is desirable in the process of nation building given the divisive impact of apartheid and the levels of 'mental colonisation'. Thus, this points to a multicultural curricula with emphasis on global rather than local concerns, on national rather than ethnic or regional interests, presumably making use of the actual diversity that exists. This means that the education system will have to emphasise national unity, in many ways, at the expense of group or local diversity, at least until the imbalances created by the apartheid policy of 'divide and rule' are significantly redressed. Then the balance may be restored. This will enable those whites and also many blacks that for many years have been withdrawn from their African cultural roots to appreciate and value their cultural heritage.

Notes

1. See Edmund King 'Notes and Comments', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1983, p. 132.
2. W. D. Halls, 'Belgium: a Case Study in Educational Regionalism', *Comparative Education*, Volume 19, No. 2,198; 3, p. 169.
3. See for example F.M. Wirt 'Ethnic Minorities and School Policy in European Democracies: Theory and Case Studies', paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, September 1974; J.K. P. Watson 'Education for a Multiracial Britain: Some Problems and Possible Solutions', paper presented at the Third World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, London, June 27–July 1, 1977; K. Watson 'Educational Policies in Multi-Cultural Societies', *Comparative Education*, Volume 15, No. 1, March 1979.
4. See K. Watson 'Educational Policies in Multi-Cultural Societies', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 15, No. 1 March 1979, p. 19.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 19.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 19.

7. *Ibidem*, p. 19.
8. K. Watson, *op cit.*, p. 19.
9. Martin McLean 'Education and Cultural Diversity in Britain: Recent Immigrant Groups', *Comparative Education*, Volume 19, No. 2, 1983, p. 181.
10. Nigel Grant 'Multi-cultural Education in Scotland', *Comparative Education*, Volume 19, No. 2, 1983, p. 146.
11. W. D. Halls 'Belgium: a Case Study in Educational Regionalism', *Comparative Education*, Volume 19, No. 2, 1983, p. 170.
12. I borrowed these equations and symbols from a visiting scholar from the USA, Professor T. Reagan, in a lecture given to post-graduate students in the Department of Education, University of the Witwatersrand.
13. K. Watson, *op cit.*, p. 19.
14. See for example Agostinho Neto 'Our Culture and the New Man', an interview by Julia Herve with Dr. Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA, published in Algerie-Acttualite (Algiers), No. 337, 2-8 April, 1972.
15. FRELIMO 'Shaping the Political Line', in *Mozambique Revolution*, 25 June, 1972.
16. W. D. Halls 'Belgium: a Case Study in Educational Regionalism', *Comparative Education*, Volume 19, No. 2, 1983, p. 175.
17. James A. Banks and James Lynch (eds.) *Multi-cultural Education in Western Societies* (London, Sydney and Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986), 'Preface', p. xi.
18. Oscar Dhlomo 'Let's be proud of our ethnicity in the reformed SA', *Saturday Star*, October 13, 1990, p. 8.
19. *Ibidem.*
20. *Ibidem.*
21. Kelwyn Sole 'Culture, Politics and the Black Writer: A Critical Look at Prevailing Assumptions', in *English in Africa* 10, No. 1, May 1983, p. 46.
22. *Ibidem*, p. 46.
23. See S. Hall, 'Cultural studies: Two Paradigms', in Bennet, T. *et. al. Culture, Ideology and Social Process*, Open University Press, London, 1981, p. 21.
24. Sole, *op cit.*
25. A. Gramsci, 'Culture and Ideology', in *ibid.*, pp. 1992-195.
26. J. Clark *et al.*, *op cit.*, p. 54.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
28. John Clarke, *et al.* in *Sub-cultures, Cultures and Class*, in Tony Bennett *et al.*, *op cit.*, pp. 53-54.
28. James Moulder 'Moral Education in a Multi-Cultural Environment', in *Bulletin of Academic Staff*, University of Durban-Westville, 10(1) 1989, p. 13.
30. M. Brake, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, pp. 6-7.
31. James Moulder, *op cit.*; p. 13.
32. S. Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance', in Unesco *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, Poole: Sydenhams Printers, 1980, pp. 308-309.
33. Mike Brake, 1980, *op cit.*, p. 115.
34. *Ibidem*, pp. 38-40; Williams, 1980, pp. 31-49.
35. Helen Lunn, 'Antecedents of the Music and Popular Culture of the African Post-1976 Generation', University of the Witwatersrand, MA Thesis, 1986, p. 5.
36. D. Coplan, 'Popular Culture and Performance in Africa', *Critical Arts*, Vol. 3, no. 1, 1983, p. 2; D. Coplan, 'The Urbanisation of the Performing Arts in South Africa', Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1980, p. XV.
37. Moulder, *op cit.*, p. 13.

38. See R. Thornton, 'Culture: A Contemporary Definition', in Boonzaier, E. and Sharp, J. *South African Keywords*, David Philip, 1988, p. 19.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
40. See M.R. Singer *Intercultural Communication: A Perceptual Approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), p. 5.
41. H. Hoijer 'The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis', in H. Hoijer (ed.) *Language in Culture*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1954, p. 94.
42. James Moulder, *op cit.*, p. 14.
43. N.J. McGurk *I Speak as White – Education, Culture Nation*, Marshalltown: Heinemann southern Africa, 1990, p. 105.
44. *Ibidem*, p. 105.
45. *Ibidem*, p. 106.
46. M. Apple (ed.) *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); S. Aronowitz & H.A. Giroux *Education Under Siege* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); H.A. Giroux *Theory & Resistance in Education* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983); M. Cantor (ed.) *American Working Class Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); N. Garham & R. Williams 'Pierre Bioudieu and the Sociology of Culture' in R. Collins, J. Curran, N. Garham, P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger and C. Sparks (eds.) *Media, Culture and Society* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1986).
47. *Ibidem*, p. 30.
48. This opinion was also rejected by Antonio Gramsci in 'Problems of Marxism', *Prison Note Books*, p. 407.
49. McGurk, *op cit.*, p. 108.
50. Neville Alexander 'Approaches to the National Question in South Africa', *Transformation*, 1 (1986), p. 84.
51. See E. Laclau & C. Mouffe *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: The Thetford Press, 1985), p. 70.
52. *Ibidem*, p. 86.
53. See Neville Alexander 'African Culture in the Context of Namibia, Cultural Development or Assimilation?' Conference of Council of Churches in Namibia, 4-8 July 1988.
54. *Ibidem.*
55. See S. Gelb 'Some Sociological Perspectives on Race, Class and Democracy in South Africa', quoted by N. Alexander in 'Approaches to the National Question in South Africa', *Transformation*, 1 (1986), p. 85.

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Making the pedagogical more political, and the political more pedagogical:[1] Educational traditions and legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-1985

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The political culture of the Western Cape, so any writer or visitor to the city of Cape Town and beyond will attest, is distinctive from that characterising the rest of the country. Wherever one stands on the organised political spectrum, it is distinctive for its combativeness, its intellectual assertiveness, and its critical disposition. Of course not all Western Cape activists or trade unionists are combative, or display critically enquiring minds. Nor are these qualities always indisputably 'good'. Nonetheless, whatever the reservations and qualifications, it can be said that the political style of the Western Cape is distinctive. And it is remarkable. Sufficiently remarkable that it ought to be written about.

The reasons for this distinctive character are of course complex and varied. Amongst these the political style and traditions established by the Non-European Unity Movement which grew out of the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department campaign (anti-CAD) of the early forties must be included. It must be stressed that this is not the only, or even most significant political movement in the Western Cape; nor does it account for traditions that may have developed in the African townships. The re-emergence of Congress and CP politics on a mass scale within the last decade in all areas also testifies to the existence of strong traditions outside that of the Unity Movement. These do appear, however, to have a broadly national character, unlike that of the Unity Movement, which seems to be specific to the Western Cape. As such, it must go some way towards accounting for the particular character associated with Western Cape politics.

Why the Unity Movement emerged in the Western Cape in the form it did, and when, is clearly a moot point. Why intellectuals here and nowhere else in the country should have been receptive to Trotskyist approaches and ideas needs extensive research into the context and origins of the NEUM. It is not the subject of this paper. At the broadest level, the reasons must, however, include what Bill Nasson has called 'the particular ethnic, social and economic structure of the Western Cape', an area which 'has contained South Africa's largest concentration