



Time Travel, Curriculum transformation, focused on History, 1995

Goal

Reflect on curriculum transformation in the subject of history, including different perspectives on historical events, the use of history in today's society and innovative educational methods, in order to improve teaching and learning.

Understand the Time Travel method

Facts

One of the most important responsibilities of the democratic government after the 1994 elections was to transform the education system. It should be noted that the task was extremely difficult. The Apartheid regime had created physical, structural, class and economic barriers amongst the people of South Africa. Each "homeland" had its own educational system equipped with its own budget and human resource structure. The tricameral parliamentary system had worsened the system and consolidated a racially structured education system.

On the other hand, the struggle movement had dismantled all those boundaries and had a vision of a united South Africa. When Prof Sibusiso Bhengu became the first Minister of Education for a democratic South Africa, the ministry had a vision of what was called Curriculum 2005. With regard to higher education transformation he stated that "The principles which underpinned our transformation agenda were the following: equity and redress, democratisation, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and public accountability"¹. Faced with a daunting task of uniting the divided and differentiated "education systems" there was a need to develop a transitional curriculum while a long curriculum development process was taking place. That transitional process resulted in what later known as NATED 550. NATED 550 did not realise the transformational agenda but the process brought to the fore significant components necessary for the transformation vehicle to move forward. Both at the policy development level and classroom level there was a need to review content, teaching methodology and assessment. However, that process meant a process of reviewing educational outcomes themselves. Educational outcomes were thus of great value in South Africa. For the first time all South Africans could engage in a process of curriculum transformation. Vigour, energy, patriotism, progressiveness, contradictions, and even contestations were in one process. Consequently, curriculum specialists previously called "inspectors" were therefore involved in a process of engaging educational stakeholders in developing the new education system. Noting contestations which characterise history as a subject, the process had a high number of interested stakeholders. Noting the significance of the past in understanding interpretations of the present, the subject gained significance. The period between 1994 and 2000 was thus characterised by meetings in which parents, teachers, education specialists, civil society organisations were engaged aimed at addressing issues of historical perspectives, history education methodology, content areas to be taught and included in the curriculum, assessment methodology, etc. In addition to that, the education situation faced issues such as "mixed" classrooms and staff rooms and multi-cultural environments which forced teachers to dig deep and address challenges which characterised that environment.

¹ This is an edited version of an interview conducted by Peter Maassen in the course of research for the book TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION Global Pressures and Local Realities in South Africa

Scenario, A seminar on curriculum transformation, focused on History, 1995

Today the future of history education in the schools will be discussed and decided. It's an important day. National curriculum advisers have invited people from all over the country, history teachers, experts from colleges of education, civic organizations and some parents to discuss the transformation of education. Focus is on the subject of history. The content of the subject will be discussed. What are the stories that has never been told and how do we bring in several perspectives to existing and new stories? The most important is to agree on how history and heritage can contribute to social cohesion and community building in today's society. New innovative methods are needed to use the multiple intelligence of the learners and make them engaged and creative citizens.

Some of the best experts in the field from South Africa are invited but also ordinary community members. International guests from Finland and Sweden will make their contributions in the seminar. The Finnish people will inform about their experiences of the transformation of education at independence in 1917. Sweden made an essential change in the 1960s and mixed all schools, wealthy and less wealthy learners, gifted and less gifted. What are the benefits of mixing the schools in South Africa?

There are always people who say it was better before, probably also in this seminar.

The invited experts have gathered. The expectations are high that this seminar will contribute to a better educational system in the country.

Roles

National Department of Education

History teachers, experts from colleges of education, civic organizations and parents from all over the country

Educational experts from Finland and Sweden.

Key Questions

- What stories do we need to tell in today's society and for the learners to study in the school? Choose one story that you feel is important. Why? How do we use it in building of the future? What are the different perspectives of the story? The key questions?
- Give practical examples of new innovative ways of teaching and learning the story you have chosen.
- How do we achieve mixed schools all over the country?

Activities

The participants are divided in groups based on region. Also a group that is a little bit more conservative and one Swedish/ Finnish group.

Task for each group:

1. Decide on a (forgotten) story that is important for education in school (5 min)
2. Agree on why this story is important today and for building the future (5 min)
3. Choose several perspectives on the story; Will mixed schools contribute to the diversity (5 min)
4. Create an innovative and engaging method of teaching and learning the story: the different perspectives, understanding the importance of today and how it contributes to community building. Prepare a creative presentation (30 min)

Time Plan

- 13.15 Gathering, set the scene
- 13.35 Initiation, Senzeni Na?
- 13.45 Activities start, discussions
- 14.35 Presentations
- 15.05 Conclusions
- 15.15 Ending ceremony
- 15.25 Reflections
- 16.00 End

26 February 2017

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Bridging Ages