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A socio-cultural case study of a primary school system in Venda, South Africa.

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Chapter 1

1. Research Context

1.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the context of schooling as a complex of past historical and socio-cultural processes that shape the present practices of schooling. Past practices of schooling and society continue to be reproduced, although not in a simple mechanistic way, in the “here and now” of classroom teaching and learning. This chapter provides an historical perspective of schooling and society in Venda, and in South Africa. These past societal and cultural practices are conceived of as an integral part of present schooling and as continuing to shape its historical transformation. Therefore, a clear perspective of the complex nature of the present practices of schooling and society is only possible when taken from their developmental origins in the past. The theoretical perspective derived from Vygotsky’s (1978) view of the historical nature of psychological phenomena takes this view one step further to suggest an historical-developmental perspective of human societal practices. The practices of today reside in their developmental past and shape, in complex non-deterministic ways, their future practices.

Since 1994, South Africa has been experiencing far reaching social and cultural changes that provide an interesting context for “Sociocultural” and “Activity Theory” research. Sociocultural and Activity Theory-based research in Developmental Psychology is generally associated with the work of a leading Russian Psychologist of the early twentieth century, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky and his associates (Cole, 1996; Wertsch, 1998; 1995; 1985; 1981; Engestrom, 1996; Ratner, 1997; 1991). The general approach in this research tradition integrates theory with methods, with one informing the other. For example, a theoretical proposition from Lev Vygotsky resulted in a ground breaking 1930s research expedition in Southern Asia led by Alexander Luria (Luria, 1976; Cole, Levitin, & Luria, 2006). The research expedition was premised on the theoretical proposition that changes in the organisation of society and culture, such as those introduced in Russia after the 1917 revolution, would produce associated

changes in people's thought processes. Formal schooling was considered to be a major contributing factor in such changes. There was therefore a clear focus in this research tradition on the relationship between the societal and cultural practices and their psychological developmental consequences. The observation of the patterns of societal and cultural transformation and their possible consequences on people's thought processes, coupled with the experimental investigation of such processes, formed the primary research tools for the Vygotsky-Luria study (Luria, 1976; Cole, Levitin, & Luria, 2006).

The present study also focuses on the nature of social and cultural transformation and its relationship to the practices of schooling, but, in contrast to the Vygotsky-Luria research, the changes in society and schooling that form the context for the present study, have come about following democratic processes and were not the result of a 'revolution'. Thus, the processes of conservatism, either in the culture of the people or in the practices of schooling, are expected to work in conjunction with the processes of transformation and change. However, the historical method in the design of the Vygotsky-Luria research (Luria, 1976) has specific relevance for the present study.

Vygotsky (1978) argued that the disclosure, through analysis, of the problem's origins and its causal dynamic basis is important for understanding the essence of the problem, beyond its outward appearance. Therefore, the description of the historical origin of the system of schooling in the present study is viewed as constituting an important aspect of the sociocultural methodology for understanding the problem beyond its current manifestations. This chapter explains the historical nature of the problem of schooling and classroom teaching and learning in Venda, South Africa, without suggesting a direct relationship between historical conditions and present societal and schooling practices. While the present practices of society and schooling are understood as deriving from their past societal processes, they are not reproduced in a deterministic manner. This insight allows an analysis of the present practices of schooling and classroom teaching and learning as instantiations of the past practices of schooling and society.

Formal schooling in Venda was predicated on missionary activities of the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries and, thereafter, on the South African government's apartheid ideology. The new democratic government, elected in 1994, ushered in far reaching changes in the organisation of both schooling and society. Before then, schooling in South Africa was segregated along racial lines. White schooling was allocated more resources and funding than the schooling subsystems for Black, Coloured and Indian populations[1]. Black schooling was further divided into ten subsystems that catered for nine ethnic homelands and the urban Black population. White education enjoyed full state support and funding, but the other subsystems suffered from problems such as inadequate funding, lack of basic resources and lack of qualified teachers. The schooling system for Black children was the worst affected by these problems (Hartshorne, 1992).

The problems of Black schooling in South Africa have a more complicated history that spans a longer period than the institutionalised segregation of the Afrikaner Nationalist government that assumed political power in 1948. The period of segregated schooling, organised within the apartheid political system, constituted an important phase in the development of Black schooling, but needs to be understood against the background of other, interrelated phases of the history of Black schooling that have equally shaped the form, and practices, of the present system. This allows for an understanding of the development of schooling, and its practices, as inextricably intertwined with the practices of a society within which schooling takes place.

The specific form of schooling and its practices of classroom teaching and learning can be related to the social activities and traditions that give rise to them. For this reason, the current study considers the societal practices and traditions of schooling in South Africa in general, and in Venda in particular, with respect to how these practices and traditions shape and influence the present practices of schooling and classroom teaching and learning and the consequent psychological development of the learners.

1. The apartheid government classified people according to these racial categories. The racial categories guaranteed privilege or deprivation within the political and schooling system.

The following account of the historical circumstances of the practices of schooling in South Africa sets the background against which the present practices of classroom teaching and learning, and their consequent cognitive development and functioning may be understood (Cole, 1996; Cole, Engestrom & Vasquez, 1997; Engestrom, 1996; 1993; 1987).

The practices of schooling in Venda are, as in other African contexts, related to the colonial and missionary activities of the past and, uniquely in South Africa, shaped within the neo-colonialist apartheid political system. This is the background against which the present processes of schooling and social transformation must be understood. For example, the present curriculum framework for South African schools responds to, and seeks to address, the problems of society and schooling that the previous political and schooling systems created (Chisholm, et al. 2000). The discussion below focuses on the historical context of schooling in South Africa in general and in Venda in particular. The discussion will consider, first, the historical conditions of the South African society and schooling broadly and of Venda in particular.

1.2. The historical circumstances of the South African schooling system

The arrival of the Dutch settlers at the Cape, in the 16th century, followed by the French Huguenots and, later on, by the British and German settlers marked an important period in the history of South Africa and contributed immensely to the present organisation of the South African society and schooling. Whereas the settlements were previously confined to the Cape colony, later developments—especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, led to rapid migration to the inland of the country. There are a number of factors that led to the migration to the interior of the country, by these settlers, which began around 1834. Chief among these factors was the dissatisfaction of the mainly Dutch settlers with the “equality laws” of the British colonial government and its Anglicising policies, the discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley district in 1867,

and the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand region (present day Johannesburg area) in 1886. The diamond and gold discoveries also resulted in the expansion of the British colonial government into these inland territories.

The 19th century discovery of diamonds and gold saw an increase in the pace of industrialisation in parts of the country that brought with it an increased need for universal schooling. However, there was little formal schooling in South Africa for Black children during this time, and for the entire second half of the 19th century. Any schooling that occurred during this period was almost exclusively provided for White children and was mainly characterised by lessons offered by an itinerant teacher, or by parents taking children to a far away school through transport schemes and boarding hostels (Behr, 1988).

With rapid industrialisation of the gold and diamond digging fields, a rural white community was transformed into a racially mixed urban society that included a sizeable number of Black mine workers. This rapid industrialisation put the state under increasing pressure to provide mass schooling for the growing urban population. Concomitant with this was the challenge involving the inclusion of Black children in the provision of schooling by the state, something that, hitherto, was not the responsibility of the state. Schooling for Black children was until this time provided, mainly, by the missionaries. Communities that were not served by missionary schooling, or were aggrieved by the system of missionary schooling, established their own schools (Hartshorne, 1992; Mathivha, 1992).

Segregated settlements and segregated schooling system for Black and White people became a major bone of contention in the country's political arena as the industrialisation of the mining centres gained momentum and the number of both Black and White workers migrating to the urban areas in search of work increased. The problem of segregated settlement that manifested itself in the industrial centres during the later half of the nineteenth century was, however, not a new phenomenon in the history of South African society. From the mid 17th century, this problem was

manifested in the state's settlement policies. For example, the governors of the Dutch East India Company, which ruled the Cape up to 1847, discouraged the mixing of White settlers with the Black populations in the interior and even prohibited interracial trade between the two groups. Heavy penalties, even the death sentence, were stipulated for those who violated these laws. These earliest forms of segregation were practised even after the British had taken over control of the Cape. The strict segregationist inclinations of the early settlers were, however, offset by the official policy of the British colonial authority after the British took over the control of the Cape. A policy of gradual integration of Whites and Blacks, based on the principle of equal rights for "every civilized person", irrespective of skin colour, was adopted after the arrival of Sir George Grey as Governor of the Cape in 1854 (Behr, 1988). This was the official principle that guided racial relations up until the formation of Union government[2] in 1903.

However, in spite of these new policies, which inclined towards racial integration, there were contradictions in the manner in which they were implemented. As early as the 1850s, the colonial government in the Cape effectively enforced an inviolate frontier between the white settlers and the Xhosa people through the creation of buffer zones and the erection of a chain of fortresses along the Fish River to the sea and on the northeastern parts of the Cape colony. Meanwhile, the British policy of gradual racial integration of Black people into White society on the basis of a "level of civilization" created dissatisfaction among the Dutch settlers and served as a spur for mass migration into the interior. In the interior, Dutch settlers established two autonomous republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, which practised racial segregation as official state policy. Black people found in these hinterland territories worked mainly as mine labourers and farm workers. Unlike in the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, Blacks in the two Boer[3] Republics, of the Transvaal and Orange Free

2. In 1910, the two Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State—self-governing territories in the interior of the Cape colony, were brought into a unitary government with the British colonies of the Cape and Natal. The new unitary government was referred to as the *Union Government* and had its administrative capital in Pretoria, while the legislative capital remained in Cape Town. The Union government was the forerunner of the present-day republic of South Africa (Hartshorne, 1992; Behr, 1988).

3. The settler communities who have migrated from the Cape established themselves in the interior

State were officially denied equal political status with Whites and were not permitted to own land. According to the Boer ideology, any attempt to give the same status of equality to Blacks, as the Cape administration did, was tantamount to a violation of God's law that had predetermined the supremacy of White people over the other races (Behr, 1988; Houghton, 1967).

Segregated settlement policies and segregated policies on the ownership of land became the cornerstones of the emergent racially segregated South African society. The period following the 1910 promulgation of the Union government saw the consolidation of these racial segregation policies. This began with the 1913 legislation that made provision for the reservation of small pieces of land for exclusive occupation by Black people. According to this legislation, Black people could not acquire land outside specified reserves. When the area allocated for occupation by the Black populations through this act was found to be too small, further legislation was adopted in 1936 making provision for the Union government to purchase and allocate additional land to Black people to supplement that which was provided by the 1913 legislation (Behr, 1988; Houghton, 1967). The 1913 Land Act was the foundation for the ill-fated 1963 Group Areas Act, which provided only 13% of the total land in the country for use and settlement by Black people, while the remaining 87% was reserved for use by White people, who made up less than five percent of the total population of the country. This 13% of land reserved for occupation by Black people was later divided into ten tribal homelands, of which Venda became one.

The creation of the Black homeland states in 1963, as well as the segregationist provisions of the post 1910 political dispensation, marked an important shift towards segregated schooling in South Africa. The educational provision in the years around 1910-1948 largely focussed into the consolidation of White children's schooling. Very

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with farming as their main economic activity and, as a result, fondly referred to themselves as *Boere* – *A*frikaans for farmers.

little, if anything, was done by the state, during this period, with regard to the provision of schooling for Black children. Meanwhile, even after the 1910 unification, the provision of schooling for White children lacked coordination. Each of the four provinces that had combined into a Union government continued to control its own education according to the principles that were formulated before the establishment of the Union—an arrangement that continued to mark the provincially-based division of White education throughout the apartheid dispensation. The education of Black children during this period remained predominantly in the hands of the missionaries at the specific sites where the mission stations operated (Behr, 1988).

The question of the provision of schooling for Black children did not dominate policy efforts during the period of the union government. However, concerns about the education of Black children, especially in the reports submitted by the commissions of inquiry, began to take root but these were treated as a separate matter from the "mainstream" problems of White children's schooling. In the Transvaal province of the Union, for example, the Nicol Commission of 1939 suggested that Coloured teachers should, eventually, staff all Coloured schools. In Natal the Wilks Committee of 1946 proposed that a separate sub-department of Indian education be created. During the period 1910 up to the 1950s, therefore, much of the efforts regarding the provision of schooling focussed on the consolidation of White provincially controlled education into a coherent system. Several commissions were appointed to inquire on what appropriate form and structure the Union system of schooling should take (Behr, 1988).

While policy focus during this period remained predominantly on the schooling subsystem for White children, the provision of schooling to Black children remained poorly managed and virtually neglected. The Nationalist Party's take-over of government in 1948 saw the beginning of policy development on the provision of schooling to Black children by the state. The focus here was, however, on the formulation of racially based segregationist policies that became the foundation of the education system for Blacks in South Africa up until the recent—1994, democratic elections.

Three major periods in the development of the schooling system for Back children by the state are therefore identifiable. The first period extends from 1910, immediately after the formation of the Union government to the Nationalist Party take over in 1948, where little attention was paid to the education of Black children. The second period, from 1948 to the 1960s, entailed the apartheid government's consolidation of racial segregation policies and aligning the provision of education to Black children with its racially based policies. This period also saw the forced take over of the missionary and community subsystems of Black schooling by the state, which triggered mass resignation from teaching by most leading Black educators who disagreed with the apartheid system. Major Black political movements were also banned from operating within the country due to their opposition to government and schooling policies of the Nationalist Party government. The third period, from the 1970s to the mid 1990s, was characterised by intense resistance to the apartheid political system and schooling and political activism by students and workers. The later severely disrupted the schooling of Black children. During this period, schooling for Black children disintegrated to the point of total collapse and remained dysfunctional throughout, until the democratic take over of government by the African National Congress in 1994.

The Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education of 1935 (UG29/1936; in Behr, 1988) provides insight into the state of Black schooling after the formation of Union government in 1910. The majority of Black schools during this period were state-aided missionary schools and community or tribal schools. In all provinces, provincial councils controlled schools for Black children. Separate sub-departments were established within the provincial departments of education to look at the day-to-day administration of Black schools. In addition, each province had established an advisory body to maintain liaison between the schools and the provincial head of department (Behr, 1988).

State aided missionary schools were headed by missionary managers who, especially in the Cape Province, were mostly Black clergymen, although in the other three

provinces the managers were usually Whites. The school managers' roles involved, among others, the nomination of teachers for consideration by the provincial departments for appointment and supervision of moral and religious instruction of pupils. The cooption of missionaries into the state provision of Black schooling after 1948 was strategic and in most cases led to further dissatisfaction with the role of missionaries by the communities in which they served (Behr,1988). In Venda, for example, Mathivha (2001; personal communication) reports of the rivalry and antagonism that developed between the missionary run Vendaland Institute and the community controlled Mphaphuli School.

Community schools, predominantly found in the Transvaal province, had no connection with missionary organizations. After the take over of all schools by the apartheid state, in line with the prevailing policy, these schools were placed under the control of local inspectors of Black schools, who also acted as manager. This supervision and inspection was carried out by White inspectors of education, assisted by Black supervisors of schools. The supervisors acted as itinerant headmasters whose roles were essentially those of assistant to the inspectors responsible for improving the methods of teaching in the primary schools (Behr, 1988). This set-up was, however, received with misgivings and was resisted by the affected communities in Venda, who had established their own schools to counter the missionary system of schooling which they suspected of not willing to provide a comprehensive curriculum for their children and of not acting in the best interest of the communities (Mathivha, 2001—personal communication; Ralushai, 2001—personal communication).

Meanwhile, schooling for Black children in South Africa during this period was divided into three categories: primary school, secondary school, and teacher training. Primary schooling lasted for eight years and was made up of two sub-standards, Sub A and Sub B, and Standard One to Standard Six. The curriculum for the primary school comprised two official languages, English and Afrikaans, and an African indigenous language, usually the pupils' home language. In addition to the languages, there were: religious instruction, arithmetic, geography, nature study, history, hygiene, music, manual and

industrial training, as well as drill and games. A three-year secondary school course prepared students for a Junior Certificate examination. A small number of schools provided a further two years of secondary education towards matriculation examination (Behr, 1988). One of the vestiges of this curriculum model, that continues to manifest in the present schooling system, is the exclusion of science and mathematics in the educational provision for Black children by the apartheid system. Meanwhile, the socio-political conditions of schooling clearly discouraged Black children from acquiring advanced secondary education, beyond the primary and junior secondary school levels. This situation ensured a delayed progress in educational advancement of the Black section of the South African society.

The first period, discussed above, in the development of Black schooling, covering the period 1910 to 1950s, produced few matriculated students. One of the effects of this situation to current schooling is that the first generation of teachers produced within the Black schooling system had no matriculation. These teachers, who by the last two decades, comprised the most senior and longest serving teachers in the system, mostly had a standard six certificate offered after completion of a senior primary school, or junior secondary certificate, offered after a further three years after a senior primary education and two years of teacher training. However, due to the acute shortage of qualified teachers within Black schools, especially after the 1960s through to the 1970s, most of these teachers were inevitably forced to take up promotional positions at secondary schools to act as school principals (Hartshorne, 1992).

Up until the late 1970s and the early 1980s, students could enter a two-year or a three-year teacher-training programme after primary school education to qualify to teach at junior primary school level. For teaching at senior primary school level, a two-year teacher-training course was offered after Standard 8, while a two-year course after matriculation prepared teachers for secondary school teaching qualification. Very few teachers were actually trained for teaching at secondary school level at the time (Hartshorne, 1992; Behr, 1988). Meanwhile, the level of training for teachers was rudimentary and, as a result, inadequately prepared them for the task of teaching. While

primary school teachers entered teacher-training colleges with very low levels of education, secondary school teachers did only two years of teacher training, which could only address the very basic skills involved in teaching at this level. This situation continued for a very long period of time and accounted for the pervasive problem of under-qualified teachers that continue to manifest itself in the present schooling system.

Coupled with the problem of inadequately qualified teachers in schools was the related problem of poorly trained teachers. Poor training did not equip teachers well to tackle the complex problems of teaching and learning in the specific contexts of their practice. Teachers trained within the system were found to lack the confidence to work effectively and efficiently in the classroom, and hence the widespread over-dependence on the textbooks and other learning support materials provided by the authorities for referencing purposes (Nemudzivhadi, 1991; 1987; Hartshorne, 1992). The apartheid system ensured, through its curriculum practices and teacher support processes such as the inspection process, that classroom practice becomes overly dependant on learning materials produced under strict state control in line with its prevailing political ideology.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Black schooling was characterised by disparities in standards compared to its White counterpart. The government's financial contribution per pupil for the education of White children was ten times as large as that of the education of Black children. According to the report submitted by the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education of 1935 (UG29/1936; in Behr, 1988), about 30 percent of teachers working in Black schools, by 1935, had no teaching qualifications, while over 70 percent of Black children of school-going age were not at school during that period. The average school life of a Black child was generally less than three years. Black schools were characterised by overcrowded classrooms and inadequate infrastructure and resources. Missionary schools, though poorly resourced and characterised by denominational rivalry, still provided the dominant means by which Black children could access formal education. Because of the poor provision of education, a large proportion of Black youth could not go to school, or dropped out of

school at primary level, while in the urban areas they were mostly lured into juvenile delinquency (Behr, 1988). This situation, although improving slightly, had not been addressed by 1994 when the new political dispensation took over from the apartheid government. Although this situation was largely addressed, in the present, post-apartheid dispensation, mainly by the implementation of the new educational policies that aim at encouraging universal school attendance by all children of school-going age, the number children still not able to complete secondary education and who are consequently lured into delinquency due to poverty and unemployment is still significant and needs to be investigated.

The 1950s saw the intensification of the implementation of the apartheid ideology within the schooling system. The state took over all schools and sought to align them to the social and institutional organisation of the apartheid system. The Eiselen Commission (of 1948-1953) paved the way for the institutionalisation of racially segregated schooling system in South Africa. The terms of reference of the Eiselen Commission, which the Nationalist Party government appointed immediately after coming to power in 1948, were informed by the party's policies on race relations. This commission found, among other things, that there was no active participation by Black people in the running of their schools. The school life of Black learners was too short while school curriculum was not relevant to Black culture (Behr, 1988).

While most of the findings of the Eiselen Commission were consistent with the conditions of Black schooling in most parts of the country, its recommendations were framed, and were interpreted by the state, in line with the racial segregationist policies of the Nationalist Party government. Following the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission, the government adopted a uniform policy for Black schools. According to the new policy, all schools formerly controlled by the missionaries, and those that were under tribal communities, were placed under state control. The recommendations of the Eiselen Commission led to the adoption of the infamous Bantu Education Act of 1953, according to which government assumed unhindered control of Black schooling. This law resulted in widespread dissatisfaction among Black people. The situation became

so tense that the period 1954-1970 was characterised by intense political resistance to which government responded by systematic banning of Black liberation movements and the incarceration of Black leaders from all walks of life (Hartshorne, 1992; Behr, 1988).

During this period, most of the resistance to the apartheid model of schooling for Black children was carried out by organised structures of the Black political movements and did not, therefore, involve participation by the student population. The banning of Black political organisations in the early 1960s left a political vacuum in Black politics and made it possible for government to implement its repressive laws with relative ease. By the 1970s, there was already a heightened tension within the Black schooling system, arising from the general dissatisfaction with the poor quality of education provided by the state. The situation of general dissatisfaction with Bantu education, and the high handedness of the state against those who were critical of the system, created conditions conducive for an uprising of the sort experienced in 1976.

The national student uprising, initiated by students in Soweto's Morris Isaacson High School, did not only involve students in Soweto[4], but spread like wild fire to all parts of the country. This event set off what effectively became a series of interconnected unrests and disruptions in Black schools throughout the 1980s, so that the period 1976 to the mid 1990s came to be referred to as a period of unparalleled crisis in Black schooling (Hartshorne, 1992; Behr, 1988). A closer consideration of the nature of the crisis, and the consequent disruptions of classroom teaching and learning, provides an insight into the complexity of the problems that affected Black schooling immediately prior to the present situation.

The 1976 student uprising had far-reaching consequences on the future viability of Black schooling. The event triggered off what became a series of protests against school and political authorities, stay-away from school and work, go-slow, chalk-down, burnings of school buildings and many forms of protest action by students to undermine

4. Soweto is the largest urban Black residential area in South Africa outside Johannesburg. The sprawling township was created after the apartheid legislations on segregated settlement and has grown into a political and cultural centre for urban Blacks in South Africa.

the apartheid schooling and political system. This uprising started from a march, on 16 June 1976, organised by students in Soweto schools to protest against a new policy that sought to introduce Afrikaans, in addition to English, as a medium of instruction in Black schools. Afrikaans was by this time associated with the repressive apartheid regime. On the pedagogical side, the introduction of Afrikaans would mean that Black children would be required to learn through the medium of two languages, English and Afrikaans, neither of which was their home language. The government's attempt to force this policy through triggered the anger of students and Black communities.

The protest by the students from primary and secondary schools in Soweto led to open confrontations with police. These confrontations sparked off riots, violence and unrests, which, within one week, had spread to all parts of the country. The uprising continued for a period of no less than eight months, during which about 600 people, mostly students, were killed and approximately 4000 more people were injured (Hartshorne, 1992). Prominent among those who were killed were a teenage student, Hector Peterson, known to be the first person to die in the hands of police during this uprising, and Steven Biko, a Black Consciousness Movement leader who died in police custody. Huge damage to state, private, and business property occurred during the period of the uprising while schooling, for the majority of Black children all over the country, came to a virtual stand still. A large number of Black school children were imprisoned, with more dying in police custody, while a large majority of learners fled the country to neighbouring countries to join the then banned liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC). (Hartshorne, 1992; Behr, 1988).

In response to this national uprising by students, the government appointed Mr P.M. Cillie, a judicial officer, to investigate the causes of the uprising. The Cillie Report was tabled in 1980. The commission found, among other things, that there was widespread dissatisfaction among Black people with the standard of their education as well as with the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction for some subjects in secondary schools. The commission also found that many Blacks saw Bantu Education as a

system of schooling that deliberately aimed at educating Black learners in such a way that they would be submissive to Whites and “remain the slaves of the oppressor” (Behr, 1988:p.37). After the Cillie report, the government appointed another commission in 1980, the de Lange Commission. The de Lange Commission was tasked to conduct an in-depth investigation into the state of the entire education system in the country. The findings of the de Lange Commission provided a fairly comprehensive overview of the country’s education in the 1970s through to the 1980s.

The de Lange Commission found that there were differing growth rates among the population groups, with a steady growth in the proportion of Blacks. In 1980, 71.27% were Blacks; 16.46% were Whites; 9.27% were Coloureds, and 2.98% were Asians. In total, the country’s population was close to 27,500,000 (Behr, 1988). The Commission found that this population growth pattern, coupled with the increasing migration from the rural areas to the urban areas, affected the provision of education and therefore needed to be taken into consideration in future education planning. The commission found that Black and Coloured learners were concentrated in the lower classes, with more than half of the total enrolment of Black learners still below Std 2, or fourth grade, in 1978. Only 15 percent of these learners were attending secondary school. Of the Black children who started school in 1963, only 1.96 percent completed the entire 12 years of schooling. This figure contrasts with 58.40 percent of White children. Among Asian children, 22.30 percent who started school in the same year completed the 12 years of schooling while only 4.40 percent of Coloured children completed the 12 years of general schooling (Behr, 1988).

The de Lange Commission further found that Black teachers were grossly under-qualified and that the majority of Black teachers did not have a minimum of a Standard 10, or grade twelve, certificate. Inadequate quality of teaching in Black schools was found to be exacerbated both by a lack of suitably qualified teachers and a large teacher pupil ratio of 1:48 in 1978.The commission also found that there was a serious shortage of qualified teachers of the natural sciences and mathematics in Black schools. The de Lange Commission found that government spending on Black

education was disproportionately lower than spending on White education. There were huge differences, as well, in the salary scales and qualifications of teachers between the two population groups. While the demand for school buildings for White education had largely been met, there was a huge backlog in respect of Black schools. Calculated on the basis of a ratio of 1:30, the Commission found that classrooms in excess of one and half million would be needed for primary school learners while almost 300 000 would be needed for secondary school learners (Behr, 1988).

The commission further reported that the demand for pre-primary education was far from being satisfied. Primary education was found not to be successful in providing basic education involving the skills of literacy and numeracy, crucial for further learning of abstract learning material during further schooling. Secondary education was found to be geared at preparing learners for university, thus assuming a strong academic bias at the expense of vocationally oriented training. This situation, the Commission argued, encouraged the attribution of far greater importance to "the abstract world of ideas" than to the practical world of technical skills (HSRC, 1981a: p.31 in Behr, 1988: p.45). The commission also found that curriculum development in schools was deficient due to lack of appropriate knowledge and expertise concerning curriculum design and evaluation; inadequate distribution of curriculum services and the lack of reliable research on curriculum development. The non-involvement of teachers in curriculum development was also found to be an impediment to successful implementation. Most teachers, especially the under-qualified ones, were found to adhere rigorously to the prescribed syllabus and to follow too closely the content of the prescribed textbooks (Behr, 1988). It is of interest to note that the commission's findings on the acute shortage of basic resources, curriculum knowledge and pedagogic competence for this period sounds like a catalogue of the persistent problems of today's schooling and classroom teaching and learning within many Black schools in South Africa.

These conditions continued to characterise Black schooling up until the end of the last century and have defined the circumstances of schooling that the current study investigates. The late 1970s and 1980s were characterised by a sudden increase in

pupil numbers at secondary school level. The state was not adequately prepared to deal with this development successfully. Most of the teachers in Black secondary schools only had primary school teaching qualifications. There was acute shortage of qualified secondary school teachers, in addition to the scarce resources for this level of schooling. The government's response to these problems ranged from changing higher primary schools into junior secondary schools, to moving primary school teachers into teaching at secondary school level. These however only addressed the problems superficially as most of the teachers who ended up teaching at secondary school levels did not have the necessary skills and expertise. In addition, the problem of overcrowding—seldom less than 50 learners in class, continued (Hartshorne, 1992).

The sudden growth in secondary school population, representing the scale of the problem that caught the apartheid government unprepared, is reflected by the comparative secondary schools' enrolment figures in the 1970s and the 1980s. These enrolment figures, at Black secondary schools, were 86 109 in 1967, but by 1970 the figure had increased by 14.5% to 122 489 pupils. In 1975 there were 318 568 pupils, an increase of 52% from the 1967 figure. This figure increased to 773 910 learners by 1980. By 1989 the enrolment figure had more than doubled to 1 820 807 (Hartshorne, 1992). It is to be noted, however, that although these figures included the enrolment in the homelands schools, the fragmentation of the system into different departments for the different semi-autonomous states during the mid 1970s does make it difficult to establish the overall statistics accurately.

Although the rapidly growing pupil population in the 1970s and 1980s was countered by the increased provision of teacher training, the focus was mostly in the training of junior secondary school teachers. The lack of qualified science and mathematics teachers at all levels of Black schooling remained acute as few teachers were trained to teach in these fields. In addition, the number of teachers with no teaching qualification, and those with no matriculation, remained high. The majority of qualified teachers during this period were young and lacked the necessary experience. However, because there was not enough qualified and experienced teachers in the system, especially at secondary

school level, newly graduated teachers were hurriedly promoted into senior positions (Hartshorne, 1992). As a result, the education of Black children in the mid- 1970s and the 1980s was generally viewed as lacking in credibility due to poor standards.

The 1980s, up until the 1990s, marked a period of intense political tension that manifested itself more crucially within the Black schooling system. Classroom teaching and learning in Black schools was adversely disrupted by the increased political activism by students, who burned down school buildings, chased teachers away from school, and undermined all forms of authority in protest against the repressive political system and poor educational provision. There was, as well, an increased momentum in organised political activities by teachers through their newly established labour unions. Meanwhile, the state responded to the heightened political activism by ushering in an unprecedented political repression involving, among others, police incarceration, torture, death penalty, and death in police custody. At the same time, the state engaged in processes aimed at legitimising the political system through granting semi-autonomous status to the homeland territories. Venda became one of the four homeland territories when, in 1979, it was granted such status. This, in effect, further denied the people who resided in these areas political and civil rights within the South African society. Because the homelands had scarce resources to provide for the schooling needs of their children and to provide employment opportunities for them on completion of their educational career, the homeland system contributed to further decline of learning motivation on the part of the homelands youth.

The 1980s, leading up to the new democratic elections in 1994, was, therefore, a period of widespread disruptions of classroom teaching and learning within Black schooling system. The general mood of the time is captured by Hartshorne's (1992) observation that:

> Pupils came to schools at different times, left when they felt like it, did not bring their books to school, refused to do homework or tests and generally, increasingly began to reject any kind of authority (p.80).

Learners however were not the only ones who engaged in these actions that, while aimed at subverting the repressive system, simultaneously disrupted and had a negative effect on schooling and classroom teaching and learning. The majority of teachers, especially among the politically active and unionised younger teachers, participated in class boycotts and other forms of teacher organised protest actions. Hartshorne further observes that:

> In the first quarter [of 1990] alone there were boycotts at 47 per cent of DET[5] secondary schools, while in March [of the following year], 20 per cent of DET teachers were involved in a month-long "chalk-down"[6], during which pupils generally continued to attend school without receiving any tuition (Hartshorne, 1992, p. 80—clarifications inserted by author).

Pupil dropout rate increased dramatically during the same period. In the 1989 school year, around 174 564 learners out of a total number of 1 820 807 Black secondary school learners dropped out of school. In the ten-year period between 1980 and 1989, only 50.1 per cent of the more than one million Black full-time matriculation candidates passed. In each year, the matriculation examination recorded more failures. For example, during 1989, a total number of 42 568 Black learners entered for the DET matriculation examinations, only 40.6 percent managed to pass the examination. Of those that passed, only 10.1 per cent obtained matriculation exemption, a symbol that qualifies for university admission. Close to 80 percent of these learners passed at the lowest possible level, with average marks between 33-39%. Only one-third of the total candidates in this examination took Mathematics as a subject, while just over one-fifth took Physical Science (Hartshorne, 1992).

This was the state of schooling, especially Black schooling, in South Africa, prior to the election of a new democratic government and the subsequent changes in the provision

5. DET here stands for Department of Education and Training. It and was previously called the Department of Bantu Education, before its name was changed in 1979. This was the national department of education responsible for the provision of schooling to Black children.

6. The word "chalk-down" was popularised, during the 1980s, by teachers who stopped working to protest against the state, in support of the political movements that sought to pressurise government to accede to their calls for freedom and democracy.

and practice of schooling. While schooling and society in Venda is located within these broader historical conditions, there are however specific features of the sociocultural conditions of the schooling subsystems in Venda that are unique to its peculiar setting. This makes an understanding of the unique conditions of the history and culture of Venda society and schooling crucial for a deeper appreciation of the sociocultural embeddedness of the practices of schooling and classroom teaching and learning.

1.3. The practices of schooling and society in Venda.

The territory of Venda lays in the mountainous, subtropical, northernmost part of South Africa bordering Zimbabwe to the south. While present-day Venda constitutes one of the smallest tribal groups, it is one of the thriving cultural communities in South Africa, with TshiVenda as one of the eleven official languages. In spite of the rapid social and political changes in South Africa, especially in the post-1994 political transformation, Venda culture seem to continue to thrive and define anew the peculiarities of their evolving society. Young Venda girls and boys continue to attend traditional initiation schools during school holidays. In school, learners are still encouraged to participate in traditional musical activities and to come fully adorned in traditional attire for such occasions.

Venda has a rich heritage, some of which is represented in the many local legends that continue to be narrated by elders and recited in the folklores by the youth. Pre-colonial Venda formed part of the ancient empires of sub-Saharan Africa, with a proud culture and civilisation. Recent discoveries of the sites of the ancient kingdoms of Mapungubwe and Thulamela attest to this. Mapungubwe, 11th century kingdom with its capital in the vicinity of the present copper and diamond-mining town of Musina, was recently declared a UNESCO world heritage site. In the past, the kingdom of Mapungubwe had a thriving economy based on mining and international trade with regions in China, India and Arabia. The ancient kingdom of Monomotapa (encompassing present-day Zimbabwe), to the north of Venda, was ruled by Venda clans (Hammond-Tooke, 1993; Wessman, 1908; Van Warmelo, 1940; Mathivha1992). There is evidence of the existence, in the pre-colonial period, of a highly complex culture and civilization in the

region. This challenges the notion, in classical Vygotskian sociocultural-historical tradition of “universal history” as the ultimate goal (or *teleos*) of socio-historical development (see Cole, 1996), For the current study, the present manifestation of the social development of the Venda is not considered in “socio-historical” terms, with the assumption that the present historical achievement of this society represents its highest level of historical development.

Venda was the last of Black dominated territories in South Africa to come under the influence of White colonial authority. The difficult terrain of the landscape is reported to have made foreign infiltration, especially during periods of conflicts, difficult (see Van Warmelo, 1940). As a result the area was able to retain a strong culture with little foreign influence until lately.

Christian missionaries of the Berlin Missionary Society first introduced formal western form of schooling in Venda during the second half of the nineteenth century. This was a period of intense conflict and resistance against foreign infiltration and influence in Venda. This was because the arrival of missionaries coincided with the arrival of Portuguese explorers from the east and Boer settlers from the south respectively. Meanwhile the entire subcontinent was going through unprecedented social upheaval, called the “Mfeqane”, triggered by the intra-tribal conflicts within the Nguni-Zulu clans of the southeastern part of South Africa (cf. Shillington, 1989). The Mfeqane, which begun around 1816, destabilised the entire Southern African subcontinent and led to an unprecedented social migration, collapse of older kingdoms and the creation of new ones. During this period, tribal communities were vulnerable to mutual attacks for the purpose of plunder of livestock and grain, and even for land take over. It was during this period of uncertainty and deep suspicion of foreigners that the missionaries arrived in Venda.

The early contacts between the Venda and White[7], Portuguese and Dutch (Voortrekkers), migrants, respectively, were characterised by deep mutual suspicion,

7. This term is used here with reference to people of European descent.

acrimony and conflicts. Portuguese settlers from the then Portuguese East African colony had already infiltrated Venda and were engaged in fierce conflicts with the Venda over land occupation when an even bigger group of Dutch migrants from the south arrived in the mid 1830s. These migrants, also called the V*oortrekkers*, settled in the south-western part of Venda. The establishment of this settlement was not well received by the Venda people and was, as a result, met with strong resistance that eventually led to open conflicts. During one such conflict, Makhado, a Venda ruler, destroyed the Boer settlement of Schoemansdal in 1867. As a consequence, relations between the Venda and the Boer Republic of the Transvaal worsened even further. Another source to the problem was Pretoria's insistence that its political authority incorporated Venda (Nemudzivhadi, 1987; 1969; nd.: a. & b.).

Relations became so strained during this period that the Boer Republic of the Transvaal ultimately resolved to force Mphephu, Venda's paramount ruler, into subordination so in 1898, the "Mphephu war" was declared. Mphephu was defeated and forced to retreat to the present day Zimbabwe, but was later recalled, in 1902, by the British colonial administration after they had defeated the Boers in the Anglo-Boer war. After the Anglo-Boer war, the Transvaal Republic sought to consolidate White rule in Venda and to bring the rest of Venda under the control of Pretoria. After that majority of the chiefs in Venda have refused to recognise a paramount chief appointed by Pretoria, Mphephu was recalled and settled along the Nzhelele river valley. Thereafter, Venda was divided into smaller territories that were placed under the chiefs and independent headmen. This ended the longstanding resistance to colonial control in Venda (Nemudzivhadi, 1987; 1969; nd.: a. & b.).

It was during, and subsequent, to these political developments that the missionary activities and the institution of schooling took root in Venda. According to oral tradition, early missionary schooling and religious practices involved high handed approach by the missionaries to get the Venda convert to the missionary religion and hence send their children to missionary schools. Although missionary activities began as early as 1872, intense missionary work was difficult to undertake during the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries due to the hostilities between the White settlers and the Venda communities. The 1902 truce between the Transvaal Republic and the Venda king, Mphephu, did not improve matters as the Venda suspicion of White settlers persisted. Missionaries were generally viewed as working in cohort with the Transvaal Republic and therefore as representing the same political institution that the Venda were being forced to accept.

The first school established by the Berlin Missionary Society was based at the mission's headquarters at Maungani, just outside the town of Sibasa[8]. This school[9] was, however, not fully functional until after the truce was signed with Pretoria in 1902 to restore stability in the region and to get the Venda people cooperate with the new political authority. Other mission stations that were opened by the Berlin Missionary Society around the same period comprised Tshakhuma, opened in 1874, Goergenholtz in Dzimauli, in 1877, and Khalavha and Gertrudesburg, 1899 (Nemudzivhadi, 1987). Tshakhuma became the centre of the educational activities of the Berlin Missionary Society in Venda, and a teacher training college was also opened in the area.

Missionary schooling, during this period, involved a very basic and rudimentary form of education, usually oriented towards the conversion of learners and generation of skills for reading the religious texts. It was only in the first half of the twentieth century, as missionary work expanded, that formal schooling began to spread and became a significant part of the social and cultural experience of the Venda. By the beginning of the twentieth century other missionaries also established smaller mission stations in Venda. Among these were the Presbyterian and the Salvation Army missions. There

8. The town of Sibasa was established in 1903, immediately after the Anglo-Boer war, as a policing and administrative centre of Venda, for the Transvaal Republic.

9. There were, probably, other Christian religious activities that preceded those of the Berlin Missionary Society. It is reported, for example, that Mr. Mutshaini, a Venda local who had visited the Cape Colony and returned a converted Christian, opened the first Christian congregation in Venda –which met in a cave. The Dutch Reformed Church had also opened a missionary centre for the creole population outside the present-day, Western Venda, town of Makhado around 1863 (Nemudzivhadi, 1997). However, the Berlin Missionary Society introduced the most widespread and influential system of religious and schooling system that formed an important basis for the later development of schooling among the Venda.

were no written texts for use in schools during the early 1900s, except for the catechism and certain extracts from the Bible produced mainly by the Berlin Missionary Society.

The early missionary schools were mostly indistinguishable from the missionaries' religious practices of converting people to their denominational faith. Missionaries themselves acted both as priests and teachers in these schools. When the learners were able to read the religious texts that formed the basis of missionary education, they would be baptised as a sign of them having fulfilled the requirements for confirmation into the faith. Learners in these schools were mostly adult members of the community who had renounced their cultural and "anti-Christian" practices. There were baptised and un-baptised learners in these schools. After learners have successfully completed the course of learning, which took a few months, they were issued with "baptismal certificates of education" (Nemudzivhadi, 1987).

Missionary schooling in the 1920s and 1930s was limited to primary education. In these schools, the formal curriculum comprised of Religious Education, Arithmetic, TshiVenda, English, Afrikaans, Geography, History, Health Education, Handwork, Gardening, manual work, drill, singing as well as the various sports codes. Meanwhile, Reverend Giesekke introduced compulsory schooling for all Venda youth. Well intended as this might have been, the idea was fiercely resisted and led to widespread opposition. The missionary practice of following after the youth in their homes and compelling them to attend school led to further protests and open conflicts. In Tshakhuma, some elders accused the missionaries of undermining traditional authority by forcing the youth to attend school[10]. Missionary schooling and religious activities were viewed with suspicion for trying to draw the youth away from their culture. Venda youth were expected to learn the values of their culture from their parents and elders in their communities.

There were different initiation schools for boys and girls at various stages of their development. These schools had strict codes of conduct and were meant to inculcate

10. Rammbofheni (2000—personal communication) reports that his father, one of the princes of Tshakhuma tribal territory, chose to relocate from the area to another village, in protest against the practices of the missionaries that undermined Venda tradition.

values and knowledge of roles that the boys and girls were expected to play as future members of Venda society. Girls' initiation progression culminated in their subscription into the elaborate and highly regarded *Domba* initiation school where they would eventually graduate into womanhood, ready for matrimony. Missionary schooling was particularly viewed as a serious threat to the social well-being of Venda girls as it would discourage them from adhering to the strict norms and roles of womanhood expected by their culture. As a result of the conflicting consequences of missionary practice on Venda society, missionary converts had to relocate from their communities and settle in the "mission stations" or land allocated to missionaries by the chief. Here, they would be able to practice their new religion and send their children to school without at the same time being forced to adhere to the obligations and responsibilities demanded of then by tradition. (Rammbofheni, 2000: personal communication; Nemudzivhadi, 1987).

The mid twentieth century was characterised by rapid transformation of the Venda society, as a result of the changing socio-political conditions in South Africa as a whole. In 1963, as a result of the apartheid government's segregationist policies, Venda was declared together with the other Black reserves, a semi-autonomous homeland state. This restricted the Venda peoples' right of movement and the right to live in other parts of South Africa outside Venda. Meanwhile, Venda, together with the other Black homeland states, became a major source of cheap labour for the growing mining and farming industries in South Africa—outside of the homelands. Loss of fertile land to White farmers due to government's racial land policies resulted in the decline of subsistence farming and in the growth of dependence on industrial economy. These developments led to an increase in demands for formal schooling, as a way of adapting to the changing socio-economic conditions. However, there was still widespread dissatisfaction with missionary schooling in Venda, a situation that saw communities establishing their own schools.

1.3.1. Community schools in Venda

The first community school was built at Sibasa in 1920. The school was built by *Domba* initiates, clearly representing an important development in the evolution of schooling in Venda, with the youth at the forefront of the initiative. The school, at first, had only one qualified teacher. More teachers were appointed at a later stage. These teachers were paid in kind by the chief for their services to the community. The new school, nonetheless, attracted many learners from all over Venda. The chiefs and their traditional leadership structures encouraged the community to send their children to school. Schooling, as a result, came to be accepted as an integral part of Venda culture. It also came to be viewed as a separate institution from church and as a secular, rather than religious institution. Learners did not have to be converted to Christian faith to be admitted to community schools and they were not compelled to attend church service and to participate in religious ceremonies (Mathivha, 1992; 2001: personal communication).

However, the legacy of missionary schooling continued within the new community school system. Almost all the teachers who taught in these schools were children of missionary converts and were therefore themselves trained at missionary institutions. The religious nature of schooling continued, although not in the strict sense in which it occurred at missionary institutions. For example, Religious Education was offered as one of the core subjects while the school day began with religious ceremony, and was concluded with prayer. Learners were required to have a “Christian” or European name, in addition to their indigenous name, which was used by teachers to identify the pupils. Teachers, for example, ridiculed the learners who misbehaved, and did not come from church-going families, as “heathens” (Ralushai, 2001: personal communication).

From 1953, several post-primary classes began to be offered at the community school at Mphaphuli. The royal field [11] outside Sibasa was made available for the construction of a bigger system of schools comprising senior primary and secondary school levels. Here the community would, in the words of chief Mphaphuli, “plough the new fields of

11. The subjects plough the royal fields, called dzunde, in Venda language, as homage to the royalty.

knowledge". (Mathivha, 2001: personal communication). Mphaphuli High School had the highest rate of successful students completing junior secondary certificate course in the early 1950s. It was also the only school in Venda during this period offering a science-based curriculum up to matriculation level. As a result, many students sought admission to further their studies for junior certificate and matriculation at the school (Mathivha, 1992).

Community school establishment constitutes a crucial development in history of formal schooling in Venda and was probably the highest epoch that marked the greatest success of schooling in Venda that requires further investigation. Community participation was high and motivation both by community, teachers and youth was at its highest. This probably explains the successes of the evolving institution of schooling in its short period of existence before it was taken over by the apartheid government in 1955. The great sense of ownership of schooling by the community and their ability to determine its curriculum, which they could relate to their specific goals, seems to have made schooling such a success during this period, in spite of the hardships and lack of government support that community school system experienced.

In spite of the successes, the prevailing political circumstances exacerbated by the apartheid government's post-1953 educational policies made conditions extremely difficult for the community school system. The community schools at Mphaphuli area of Sibasa operated with insufficient classrooms for the rapidly growing population of learners seeking admission every year. As a result, most classes, especially prior to 1959, were conducted under trees. There was also an acute lack of qualified teachers for the subjects that the school had introduced, especially teachers for science and maths subjects. Teachers were usually appointed on the basis of their perceived capabilities to teach particular subjects, not necessarily on the basis of their academic qualifications. That is, a teacher could be appointed to teach Mathematics on the basis of the interest the teacher shows in the subject and the effort he or she puts in furthering her study towards that subject. In addition, teachers were not adequately qualified, with some teachers enrolling for the junior certificate and matriculation examinations together with the learners they taught. To make matters even worse, the

South African government declined to subsidize Mphaphuli community school on the ground that the institution did not have the capacity to offer secondary education (Mathivha, 1992; 2001: personal communication).

While the apartheid government supported the missionary schools at Tshakhuma , it did not support the community schools. In 1954 the government issued a letter ordering the withdrawal of all secondary school classes at Mphaphuli. The government's intention was to have only one school; the missionary controlled Vendaland Institute of Higher Education at Tshakhuma, to provide matriculation education for the rest of Venda. The community resisted the government's order and the chief decreed that the order be ignored while representations are made to government. Faced with the resistance, Pretoria withdrew the order. In the following year, in 1955, another unfortunate incident of government interference occurred, with negative consequences to the school's morale. Authorities, acting on behalf of Pretoria, issued another order declaring the oral examinations that had been conducted by Black officers invalid and ordering that this be re-done by White officers (Mathivha, 1992; 2001: personal communication).

This was the period during which government was consolidating its control of all Black schools and the communities were gradually losing control of their children's schooling. Although missionary schools were also brought under government control, they were treated differently from the community schools, especially if they collaborated with government on the implementation of its policies. In most missionary schools the majority of the White missionary teachers were retained and promoted into positions of authority within the apartheid system of schooling, and this created the perception that government treated missionary schools more favourably than the community schools (Hartshorne, 1992).

By 1955, when the apartheid government took over control of Black schools, the number of schools in Venda had risen significantly to over sixty primary and secondary schools. Most of these schools were established by the communities and were concentrated in the eastern part of Venda. The number of teachers during this period had also risen to over three hundred, the majority of whom did not, however, have any

teaching qualification. Seven White inspectors worked among these schools, assisted by Black district supervisors. In 1957, the administrative centre for schools was moved to Makhado in Venda (Nemudzivhadi, 1991; 1987). There was only one teacher training college, the missionary established Vendaland Institute. This college was forced to readjust its curriculum in line with the new requirements of the apartheid government's "Bantu Education[12]" policies.

Although state funds became available for the training of teachers and the provision of schooling, the quality of schooling suffered enormously during this period. There was a rapid increase of pupil enrolment in schools but educational planning lagged behind. Teacher training remained grossly inadequate. The number of teachers produced was far below the demand. As a result, substandard levels of teacher training reproduced the common trend of the under-qualified Black teacher who lacked the knowledge and confidence to perform their teaching role. Teachers were only trained to master the basic knowledge and skills required for classroom practice. The focus of training focused only on the content and methods of teaching for a specific level of schooling. There remained an acute lack of teaching and learning resources such as textbooks and readers, while classrooms remained overcrowded and were not adequate to accommodate the growing pupil numbers, hence the common trend of 'under tree' classrooms (Behr, 1988).

The social and cultural setting of schooling in Venda was, therefore, multifaceted in the sense that it simultaneously manifests, in its present conditions, instances of the indigenous practices of the specific cultural traditions, the religious traditions of the nineteenth and twentieth century missionary practices, and the traditions of the apartheid societal and schooling practices. These socio-cultural and historical traditions and practices are instantiated in the here and now of individuals' and schooling practices and the consequent psychological processes. Missionary activities in Venda, for instance, contributed to the translation of the language into its current written form and the production of religious texts and primary school readers, both of which

12. Bantu Education became a derogative code name for the apartheid system of schooling that was provided to Black children. The word "Bantu" is of Nguni derivation meaning people, referring to Black people. The usage of this word in official circles was later discontinued.

continued to be used in schools up until the recent, post-1994, changes in the school curriculum. Almost all the teachers, trained prior to the late 1960s, were trained at the missionary centres. The community schools that emerged as a result of the communities' discontent with the scope and form of missionary education contributed a more comprehensive curriculum that included Mathematics and Science. The subjects would, otherwise, not have been introduced to the schooling system in Venda until the end of the twentieth century. Community schools also contributed to the system by way of popularising schooling and providing a sense of ownership of this institution by the communities.

Community participation and control of their children's schooling was curtailed by the apartheid government taking control of the schools after 1955 and the alignment of schooling to the apartheid ideology resulted in alienation of the communities. The apartheid state controlled everything that occurred in the schools through draconian measures and authoritarian policies. The curriculum was imposed by the state and the content of textbooks was consistent with the state's curriculum policy. The curriculum content was prescribed and rigidly presented to reinforce state policies. A strict inspectorate ensured teachers' adherence to the curriculum. Deviation from the prescribed curriculum was considered unprofessional and subject to disciplinary measures. A critical approach to knowledge was discouraged, as this would open the system up to criticism and eventual rejection (Jansen, 1997a & b).

Educationalists who trained in the tertiary institutions that subscribed to the apartheid ideology dominated the country's educational and curriculum planning process (cf. Beard, et.al.1981). The entire schooling system for Black children suffered poor funding and inadequate teacher training programmes. Teachers at both primary and secondary school level had only mastered knowledge of the subject content equivalent to the level of schooling that they taught (Beard, Enslin, & Marrow, 1981;Behr, 1988; Hartshorne, 1992). The transmission and rote memorisation of content from prescribed texts constituted a dominant approach to classroom teaching and learning under the apartheid schooling system and comprises the antithesis to the general approach propagated by the new, post-apartheid, schooling and curriculum dispensation.

1.4. Post-apartheid schooling

In 1996, two years after the democratic government took office; a new law that aimed to transform the provision of schooling in South Africa was passed. The South African Schools Act aimed to align the values and practices of the education system with the Constitution of a democratic society. The main values of the South African Constitution are:

- Human dignity, equality and human rights and freedoms
- Non-racialism and non-sexism
- Rule of law, constitutional democracy and the independence of the judiciary
- Universal adult suffrage and multiparty democracy and
- The right to basic education and the transformation of the education system (Chisholm, et al. 2000; Understanding the SA schools Act, 1997).

The Constitution enshrined the right of all citizens to receive basic education and invests the state with the responsibility to make this available to all by ensuring that schools were built, teachers were trained and resources provided to the schools. Apart from the provision of basic education, the Constitution required the state to ensure that further education was increasingly made available and accessible to all. The Constitution required that the state transform the school system in accordance with the constitutional values. The democratisation of schooling involved the ownership of schools, and active participation in the activities of schooling, by the communities in which the schools were located, so parents, teachers, pupils, and members of the community were involved in the running of schools. Representative structures in the form of School Governing Bodies were established to take on the responsibility of school governance (Department of Education, 1997a, 1997c, & 1997d).

The South Africa Schools Act recognized the history of apartheid and other forms of unfair discrimination that were endemic to South African society and sought to change these and redress the legacy of discriminatory practices. In more concrete terms, it intended to create a new system of schooling that provided equal access to education and opportunities for skills development for all South Africans. This was to be achieved

by ensuring that the state improved the quality of education for all learners through provision of the necessary resources, well trained teachers, better methods of teaching and learning and better conditions for pupils' learning and motivation (Chisholm, et al. 2000; Understanding the SA schools Act, 1997; Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa, 1994).

Adoption of the South African Schools Act in 1997 was followed by the development of a new curriculum framework, Outcomes Based Education (OBE), alternatively referred to as Curriculum 2005(Chisholm, et. al., 2000). Outcomes Based Education was a broad approach to education and applied in all schools, colleges and universities in South Africa (Department of Education: National Curriculum Statement, Grade R – 9, Parents' Guide, n.d. a., & b.). The South African Outcomes Based Education model had its roots in the pre-1994 "left wing" educational debates of the pre-1994 period. These leftist organisations, such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), Non-governmental organisations, liberal educational institutions, and a range of other progressive community and political movements and organisations challenged the prevailing apartheid educational models and debated alternative educational and training models that would replace the apartheid educational system.

The Outcomes Based Education framework for South Africa was conceived in terms of its possible contribution to the redress of the poor educational achievements of the majority of South African learners and the development of skills for the majority of workers who were denied opportunities for skills training. Hence, the egalitarian goal of the curriculum and its emphasis on an educational model that integrates education and skills training for economic growth. Initial discussions about the appropriate educational models for a transformed, post apartheid, society derived from such diverse and politically charged educational environments as mastery learning, competency based education, life-long learning, education for life, peoples' education, etc. (Jansen, 1997; Chisholm, et al. 2000). Therefore, the new curriculum framework for the post-apartheid South African schools included political goals, as well as social, economic, and transformational goals.

The political goals of transformation and redress manifest in the nature of the new curriculum which was derived from different, and often conflicting, educational models and theoretical approaches. The South African Outcomes Based Education framework was modelled on similar systems in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland and derived its conceptual framework from William Spady's Outcomes Based Education model, as well as progressive educational models that propagated learner centeredness, group-based cooperative learning models, competency-based learning, and experiential learning models (Chisholm, et. al. 2000; Department of Education, 1996; 1994; Spady and Marshall, 1991; Jansen, 1997a, & 1997 b).

The South African Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum focused on outcomes, which were defined as the results of learning or what learners know and can do at the end of their learning experience. The design process within Outcomes Based Education curriculum starts with the intended results of learning in terms of knowledge, skills and values rather than a prescription of content to be learnt. These outcomes are explicitly stated and these explicit statements guide the process of teaching and learning. Evaluation of learning is based on the assessment criteria that are related to the specific outcomes. The criteria indicate the observable processes and products of learning, simultaneously serving as culminating demonstrations of learning achievements (Department of Education, 1996; 1994; Spady & Marshall, 1991).

The focus on outcomes is believed to encourage the development of flexible and relevant learning programmes. A distinction between two kinds of outcomes, namely, critical cross-field outcomes and specific outcomes, differing in the breadth of the contexts to which they apply, should avoid an emphasis on narrow, quantitatively measurable outcomes rather than the qualitative ones. Critical outcomes expressed the intended results of the education and training system in a broad sense while the specific outcomes expressed the more immediate and context-specific results of the learning process (Department of Education, 1996; Chisholm, et al, 2000). Through specification of broad nationally-based outcomes, the South African Outcomes Based Education curriculum framework aimed, to align the new curriculum goals with the social project of the transformation of society and overturn the legacy of the apartheid political

and schooling system (Muller, 2000). As the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 observed:

> There is an understanding of C2005 [or OBE] as a planned process and strategy of curriculum change underpinned by elements of redress, access, equity and development. To achieve this, C2005 employs methodologies used in progressive pedagogies such as learner-centredness, teacher as facilitators, relevance contextualised knowledge and cooperative learning (Chisholm, et. al. 2000, clarification in brackets inserted by the author).

While the social goal of transformation was served by demonstration of the achievement of the critical outcomes that defined the skills, knowledge and values that pertained to pupils' future roles in their community and society, the specific outcomes, that were linked to the critical outcomes, were derived from the learning areas and specified what learners were able to do at the end of a learning experience, with regard to the skills, knowledge and values.

Learning Areas were defined as a collection of the subject disciplines that have been combined through the principle of knowledge integration. Two or three independent subjects from the previous schooling curriculum were combined into a single learning area. For example, Geography and History were combined into Human and Social Sciences, Economics, Business Economics and Accounting into Economic and Management Sciences while Physical Science, which comprised physics and chemistry was combined with Biology to become the Natural Sciences learning area. Mathematics was expanded into Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences, while Languages (which used to be offered in the curriculum as separate subjects) became Language, Literacy and Communication. New learning areas such as Arts and Culture, Life Orientation (covering the religious studies, career guidance, heath education, sex education, etc.), as well as Technology, were introduced (Chisholm, et al. 2000).

These learning areas were presented in different combinations within the three phases into which the first ten years of schooling was divided. These combinations were called

the Learning Programmes. The content of the Learning Programmes or subject matter of the lessons was specified as little as possible. The content for teaching and learning was viewed, within the Outcomes Based Education framework, as the local responsibility of the community, teachers and learners, who contributed local peculiarities and priorities into the learning process (Department of Education, 1996)

The curriculum faced enormous criticisms in the first three years of its implementation. The criticisms ranged from the new curriculum's emphasis on outcomes, which suggests a form of behavioural conception of teaching and learning, to the curriculum's supposed instrumentalist view of schooling with regard to the direct relationship it presupposes between schooling and economic development, and its ostensible conflating of the principles and processes of educational activity with the principles of workplace training processes (Jansen, 1997b; Muller 2000). The curriculum was further criticised for its polarised emphasis of procedural forms of knowledge as opposed to content-based forms of knowledge. The excessive use of complex and often inaccessible terminology, and the lack of due consideration of the practical conditions underpinning curriculum implementation, as well as the lack, or gross under-specification, of content and its appropriate pedagogical methodologies (Jansen, 1997b; Chisholm, et al. 2000), have elicited strong criticisms of the curriculum.

On the ground, teachers have, indeed, been struggling to make sense of the often vague, highly complex, and overly academic system of curriculum terminologies and their relevance of application. While OBE - introduced a new way of thinking and going about educational practice, and enabled a break from the classroom modes of the past, apartheid, curriculum practices, it however, had a simultaneous effect of alienating teachers by introducing new terminologies that made little sense to teachers.

The implementation of OBE also encountered problems with regard to teacher training and support. The problems ranged from the reported lack of expertise on the curriculum by the trainers themselves, to the usage of inappropriate training models, lack of sufficient training time, and narrow focus of training programmes on defining new terminologies rather than on the substantial aspects of curriculum implementation.

Further to these challenges, learning support materials were not evenly available to all the schools and their quality was variable. Lack of basic resources and basic infrastructure in the majority of schools placed serious limitations on effective use of the learning materials while the majority of teachers lacked the skill, time, and the resources to develop their own materials. Education authorities at local level lacked the capacity to support curriculum development and implementation in schools (Chisholm, et al. 2000).

These and other more complex problems with regard to the implementation of the new, post-apartheid, curriculum framework led to the appointment, by government, of a committee to review the Outcomes Based Education curriculum. The Review Committee prepared, within a space of three months, its report, which proposed a revised and streamlined curriculum statement, within the broad outcomes-based curriculum framework.

1.4.1. Revised National Curriculum Statement

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was a modified version of the initial Outcomes Based Education (OBE) framework and not a new curriculum that replaced the Outcomes Based Education framework. The RNCS arose from the pre-2000 challenges and problems of implementation, critiques, and the need for further improvement of the curriculum framework that led to the appointment of a commission to review the new curriculum and make recommendations for its improvement (Chisholm et al. 2000).

The Outcomes Based Education Curriculum defined the quality of teaching and learning in terms of outputs. A system of related concepts described the assessment process. Each specific outcome had three or four “assessment criteria” against which a learner was assessed to have achieved an outcome. The assessment criteria were explained and detailed, in terms of what and how much learning constitutes an acceptable level of achievement of an outcome, through the “performance indicators”. The performance indicators described the quality of achievement of a learning outcome, in terms of

whether a learner had surpassed the achievement of an outcome, achieved the outcome, partially achieved the outcome, or not yet achieved the specified outcome (Chisholm et al. 2000).

The curriculum framework involved complex assessment concepts, often incomprehensible to most educators, which intended to describe the assessment process in further detail. The “range statements” described the assessment criteria, in terms of the scope, level, and depth parameters of achievement. The “expected levels of performance” were written for each programme area by Grade and were intended to inform parents, educators and learners about what was considered quality work and whether learners’ performance or products measured up to valid and credible national standards. “Phase organisers” and “Programme organisers” were described as tools by which outcomes were grouped for the planning of teaching and learning. Phase organisers for each phase and each learning area were prescribed by policy while programme organisers were themes chosen by teachers from everyday life to reflect local social priorities (Chisholm, et al. 2000; Department of Education: Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training, 1996b.).

However, the experiences, critiques, practical challenges and difficulties experienced over three years (1997-1999) of piloting and implementing the Outcomes Based Education curriculum led to the Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005. This report was adopted by government and became official government policy in May 2002, as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). The RNCS applied from Grade R (reception year) to Grade 9 (tenth year of schooling) and, according to government policy, was not a new curriculum, but a streamlined and strengthened version of Curriculum 2005. The Revised National Curriculum Statement, alternately referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), stated clearly what each learner should achieve in terms of the learning outcomes and the assessment standards at the end of each grade (Department of Education, National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 9, Parents’ Guide (n.d.) This was an improvement on the previous Curriculum 2005 or OBE, which did not have the same extent of an elaborate

assessment procedures and clearly specified requisite levels of learner performance at each specific level of schooling.

The proposals of the Review Committee, with regard to the structure and design of the curriculum, included:

- An infusion of human rights education and civic responsibility education in the curriculum
- Simplification of the curriculum documents by producing a National Curriculum Statement which expresses, in clear terms, what is to be learnt and at what level such learning needs to happen
- Streamlined curriculum written in clear and accessible language. That means formulating a curriculum statement that includes critical outcomes and learning area statements comprised of learning outcomes and assessment standards and dropping the 66 specific outcomes, assessment criteria, phase and programme organisers range statements, performance indicators and expected levels of performance.
- Reduction of the overload by rationalising the learning areas from eight to six (i.e. languages, mathematics, science and technology, social sciences, arts and culture, and life orientation) in the General Education and Training band (the first ten years of schooling) and specifying three learning programmes for Foundation Phase and six for Intermediate and Senior Phase.
- Promotion of conceptual coherence through the specification of the learning outcomes and the assessment standards by grade and making more time available (in the first ten years of schooling) for languages and mathematics. Integration across the learning areas to be promoted by using the critical outcomes and the assessment exemplars while integration within the learning areas is to be promoted by learning area statements and the learning programmes (Chisholm et al. 2000: pp. 22-23).

Other recommendations involved training of teachers and in-service teacher development. The training of teachers would continue to be located in higher education institutions while the short-term imperative of in-service teacher development would

have to be undertaken through collaboration among the different stakeholders, namely; government, higher education institutions and non-governmental organisations. The national education department would have to provide a clear statement to publishers on the basis of which textbooks will be evaluated. The production of textbooks is to be the responsibility of publishers and specialised units or institutes. Teachers would need to be trained in the use of learning support materials and textbooks. In essence, apart from the fundamental proposals with regard to the design and structure of the revised curriculum, the committee's other recommendations focussed on the technical aspects of educational provision.

The Outcomes Based Education curriculum and its revised version in the form of the Revised National Curriculum Statement spell out the context of the post-apartheid educational transformation in contemporary South African society. The concepts and principles of the post-apartheid, Outcomes Based Education curriculum provide teachers with new tools for transforming their past practices of classroom teaching and learning and enable them to create new opportunities for learning and development for their pupils.

1.5. Conclusion

A consideration of the socio-cultural and historical context of the institutional practices of schooling is crucial for understanding their psychological consequences, in the 'here and now' of schooling and classroom teaching and learning. This is consistent with Vygotsky's idea of an historically based approach to the study of psychological phenomena. The present study extended Vygotsky's idea of an historically based psychology to include issues of societal history and societal practices as constituting the context of human action in the course of its transformation. Vygotsky has argued that:

> The concept of a historically based psychology is misunderstood by most researchers who study child development. For them, to study something historically means, by definition, to study some past event. Hence, they naively imagine an insurmountable barrier between historic study and study of present-day behavioural forms. To study something historically means to study it in the

> process of change; that is the dialectical method's basic demand. To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its phases and changes from birth to death fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for it is only in movement that a body shows what it is. Thus, the historical study of behaviour is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical study, but rather forms its very base (Vygotsky, 1978: pp.64-65).

To understand the present practices of schooling and classroom teaching and learning and their consequent psychological processes demands that one understands how these practices have been shaped by the specific history of schooling and society. The history of a specific society creates a culture that is specific to that society. This culture in turn becomes the medium through which social practice and individual development occurs (Cole, 1996; Wertsch, 1998).

The present study considers the culture of South African society that has resulted from its specific and unique history and, specifically, the culture of schooling and its influence on curriculum and classroom teaching and learning and their psychological consequences. Understanding the present practices of schooling and classroom teaching and learning and their cognitive consequences would facilitate the design of a curriculum and pedagogical approach suitable for the rapidly changing South African context.