

Democratization and Cultural Resistance in South African Teacher Education

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Abstract

The transformation of South African higher education has significantly altered the teacher education system resulting in an unintended decreased in the number of recruits into and graduates from teacher education programmes, as well as acute teacher shortages in subject areas like mathematics, African Languages, and the foundation phase. Shortages are also worse in geographic locations like rural areas. Universities have been working hard to adapt to be responsive to the demands and the needs of the democratic state and to increase their throughputs. Using quantitative and qualitative data collected from secondary sources, this paper examines how certain characteristics of apartheid teacher education have endured the democratic policy changes and continued to negatively impact the present. It is argued that distance teacher education has emerged as a viable option at producing more and relevant teachers.

Keywords: Teacher education, higher education, distance education, teacher supply and demand policies

1. Historical Background

The South African national system of teacher education has to be understood within the historical and political context of the country. Despite its democratic nature, it is rooted in the colonial past (Welch, 2002) and in the segregated apartheid policy (Sayed, 2002). According to Cross & Chisholm (1990), separation of teacher education for black and white students did not begin in 1948 when apartheid was institutionalized. It began during colonial times where there were racially divided streams of teacher training. During colonial times, only white teacher education was conceived as a professional practice and it was located in post-matriculation colleges or universities (Cross & Chisholm, 1990:52). Effects of this differentiated training influenced the apartheid system whose major aim of teacher education was purely to uphold the policy of separate development and segregation (Sayed, 2002). The apartheid teacher education policy determined where and how teachers were trained as well as the size and shape of teacher education. Government had control over almost all the aspects of the sector. Black students were mainly trained in colleges of education where the focus was training primary school teachers while white students mainly trained at universities where the concentration was on the production of secondary school teachers (Sayed, 2001; Welch, 2002). The apartheid teacher education system was big despite the segregation. There were 281 institutions offering in-service and pre-service teacher training to 481 000 students in universities, technikons, colleges of education, private colleges and non-governmental organizations.

In 1994, the democratic government deviated from the apartheid past and transformed teacher education to attain equality. Teacher education was provided by universities instead of institutions like colleges. The number of public institutions offering teacher education was drastically reduced from 150 to 23. This move came along with a huge loss in student enrolments (Welch, 2002). The drop in student numbers was made worse by the implementation of student choice. Since students were also no longer bound by policy to study at certain institutions, the government lost control over who trains where and how many teachers were produced. Students could enroll at institutions of their choice. Black students enrolling in formerly-white institutions were also not choosing teaching as their first option (Jansen, 2002; Jansen & Taylor, 2003). Those who were choosing teaching were choosing to train as senior, intermediate and further education and training phase teachers and not foundation phase teachers. The way students were making their choices was influenced by and was characteristic of the apartheid trend; i.e. black teacher education students who go to the formerly white universities choosing not to train to teach in the foundation phase but rather in the senior and the further education phases.

All of the above led to a huge drop in the number of teacher trainees with serious implications especially for the provision of foundation phase school teachers of African descent, mathematics teachers, and rural school teachers. Few people go to university and train for these areas. The teacher labour market has lost its ability to respond to the sector's supply demands in an adequate manner (Morrow, 2006).

2. Problem Statement

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHET), the national teacher demand and supply system is currently experiencing a strain expressed in subjects such as mathematics, science, technology, and African languages. In other instances, schools do not have teachers who are qualified to teach in the Foundation and Early Childhood Phases. In some provinces teachers do not want to teach in certain geographic locations, particularly the rural areas. Where there are enough teachers, they might be teaching out of field (Murtin, 2013). On average, the country needs about 20 000 teacher graduates per year to meet the national demand (DBE and DHET (2011). At the moment universities only manage to produce just about 1000 graduates per year. To meet the demand, the government wants the number of teacher graduates to be doubled by 2014 and tripled by 2019 (DBE & DHET, 2011).

The problem is not just a supply and demand problem. It is a human rights issue as well. According to the Human Rights Bill, education is a basic right. This means the government has an obligation to provide each and every citizen with basic education. This right is enshrined and protected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Teacher shortages or the discrepancy between teacher supply and demand threaten the government's ability to fulfill this mandate (DoE, 2007; DBE & DHET, 2011; NEEDU 2012). Already there have been multiple instances in the country's rural provinces, especially the Eastern Cape and the Limpopo provinces, where the government has been taken to court because of failure to provide adequate resources for teaching and learning. Learners are performing poorly in national and international assessments. It is against this background that in this paper I address the following question: How can teacher education providers meet the demand of providing education for all and alleviate the problem of teacher shortage?

3. Conceptual-and Theoretical Framework

In its interrogation of the complexities of supplying enough teachers for all, within the context of providing democratic education, this paper is influenced by the globalization theory. Globalization is a highly contested theoretical construct that is open to various meanings (Kellner, 2000). Some see it as homogenizing while some see it as leading to diversity (p: 300). Here it is used in so far as it affords access to groups that were excluded to education or to groups that were denied entry under apartheid (Kellner, 2000). Globalization is not an answer for all education problems. Tomlinson (2003) notes that changing education systems to fully include groups that were excluded poses a challenge because education systems are usually designed for the majority populations, in South Africa the minority is the population that used to be in control of education under apartheid and the group that benefited to the exclusion of the majority. Tomlinson (2003) goes on to say that the outcomes of democratizing education are often the opposite of inclusion. Instead of reducing inequalities and accommodating the needs of the disadvantaged certain patterns of discrimination, assimilation, inequality and co-option continue.

It goes without saying that the relevance of the issue of teacher shortage, while it seems as if it is localized, it goes beyond the South African case; it's nature is widespread (UNESCO, 2006; Mashile, 2008). The technological needs of the 21st century put teacher education institutions under pressure everywhere to be responsive to market related needs and to produce more teachers who are able to teach learners who perform well (OECD, 2008). This mandate is carried in the declaration of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goal 2. As a signatory to these declarations as well as to the Bill of Rights, contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) the South African government is committed to providing enough teachers who can provide quality education. It is in this context of striving to attain equality and responsiveness to human rights issues that the DBE and DHET spearheaded the production of the Technical Report titled 'The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025' (DBE & DHET, 2011), a report that acknowledges the problem of teacher shortages.

While globalization legitimizes the global flow of ideas and policies, as the international education policies indicate, it affirms difference and resistance against global domination and subordination (Kellner, 2000). This means, despite the global nature of the problem of teacher shortages and as widespread as it is, it still takes place within particular political, historical and cultural contexts and can take a life of its own. Against this background, it can be argued that despite the international origins of the democratic policy changes, its implementation takes on a local flavour. For example, the unequal production of mathematics teachers resulting in teachers who are teaching out of field as well teacher shortages in rural schools is not new in South Africa. It is also not new for university teacher education programmes to have more secondary school teacher trainees or white teacher trainees. It is also historical for black students, when they go to the formerly white institutions, to choose fields either than teaching. Under apartheid, indirectly, student choice was

government regulated. Political and cultural values are enduring even if societies undergo massive changes (Inglehart & Baker; 2000). I argue that while transformation in South African teacher education is responding to democratization and other pressures of globalization on the one hand, it is offering some resistance to change on the other due to political pressures.

Confirming the notion that cultural change does not necessarily happen because of political change, Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) observed that while mergers and restructuring in higher education accentuated quality and raised academic levelling, but still the process included resistance. The introduction and the implementation of democratic policies cannot lead to the complete eradication of inequality in education on their own. There has to be conscious and vigilant efforts on the government and the universities' part to change the status quo and foster an enabling environment. Teacher recruitment practices have to be inclusive and attractive to groups that would not normally consider choosing teaching. Institutions that used to attract mainly black secondary school teachers have to change to include recruitment practices that specifically target teachers for the lower phases as well. It does not follow suit that because it is now open for all students to go to universities of their choice that the thinking about subject choice will change too. There will be resistance that needs to be dealt with by means of policy even if that policy is a university level policy. Inglehart and Baker (2000) correctly argue that different societies follow different trajectories even when they are subjected to the same forces partly because their cultural heritage also shapes how they develop. The focus of this paper is on how universities have managed to transform and at the same time increase teacher education trainees

4. Methodology

To obtain data, a desktop study was conducted and focus was placed on qualitative and quantitative teacher education data from the time of the teacher education audit up to the present. Data about participation and graduations in teacher education were obtained from the DHET's (2011) Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report and both 2009 and 2010 were examined to see the emerging patterns. The initial and the continuing teacher education programmes were studied in all the 23 universities. In South Africa one can become a teacher in one of the two ways; doing BEd which is a four year teaching programme or doing a first degree and then follow it with one year teacher postgraduate training in the PGCE programme.

The next step was to collect and examine all related South African teacher policies, contact and distance teacher education literature and available landmark national teacher supply and demand studies. This search was extended to include some international teacher education literature, especially policies that relate to teacher supply and demand. To understand how the apartheid past and the democratization of teacher education impacts teacher supply, the qualitative and the quantitative data were analyzed thematically. From the quantitative data information was collected about the number of recruits who joined teacher education as well as the graduates in 2009 and 2010. Data was disaggregated by contact and distance education. Lastly, the findings were reported on and the conclusion was made. Following hereon is a section on the findings.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 A smaller teacher education system

Compared to the size of teacher education under apartheid where there were over 150 institutions with more than 400 000 students, in the post-apartheid era we see a very small one. Training of teachers takes place in higher education institutions only. The number of institutions offering teacher education has been drastically reduced to 23. Teacher education is provided through contact and distance education. In this section we examine both forms of provision; contact and distance education. Specifically we look at participation and graduations in the BEd and PGCE programmes.

In 2009, out of the 23 institutions only 21 provided teacher education. Except for the University of Cape Town, which did not provide Bachelor of Education (BEd) programmes, and Durban University of Technology, which did not provide Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), all the universities provided both initial training, BEd, and continuous training, PGCE, programmes but with a very small numbers of students.

5.2 National participation in BEd and PGCE programmes

Below is a report on the universities that had the most and the least recruits. Figure 1 below shows teacher education enrolments nationwide. By 2009 the university that had the highest number of BEd and PGCE enrolments was UNISA.

This institution had a headcount of 6791 BEd students followed by the University of Zululand with 3277 and then the Cape Peninsula University of Technology with 2583 students. Rhodes University had the lowest BEd enrolments at 51 students. UNISA had the highest number of BEd trainees by far.

UNISA topped with the enrolments for the PGCE programme as well. In 2009, the university had 1871 enrolments in the programme followed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal with 225. The University of Cape Town had the least number of students with 75. As figure 1 below shows, nationally, there were more BEd students than PGCE students and except for Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town; all the universities had more BEd students than PGCE students.

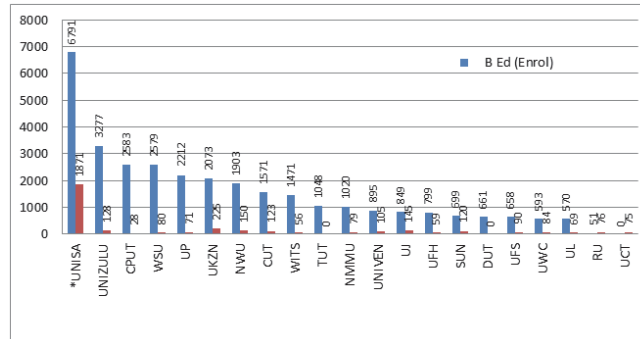


Figure 1: Total enrolments (FTES) in ITE Programmes by university in 2009. Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

In 2010, the national teacher education enrolment patterns changed for the better (figure 2). Improvements could be noted across all the tertiary institutions with UNISA leading the enrolments with more candidates enrolled than in any of the other institutions in both programmes. BEd had 7547 students enrolled while the PGCE had 2311 students (Figure 2).

Figure 1 shows that in 2009 the University of Zululand was ranked second after UNISA but in 2010 this changed and the North West University was second after UNISA in both the BEd and the PGCE programmes. In 2010, the North West University moved up in both programmes pushing UNIZULU down. Enrolments at the North West University changed drastically from 2009 to 2010 with more than 100% increase as the BEd enrolments rose to 4031 and the PGCE enrolments to 259.

In terms of distance higher education both UNISA and the North West University have the highest number of distance education students. Four of the five universities offering distance education were among the top seven in terms of participation rates in 2009 and 2010.

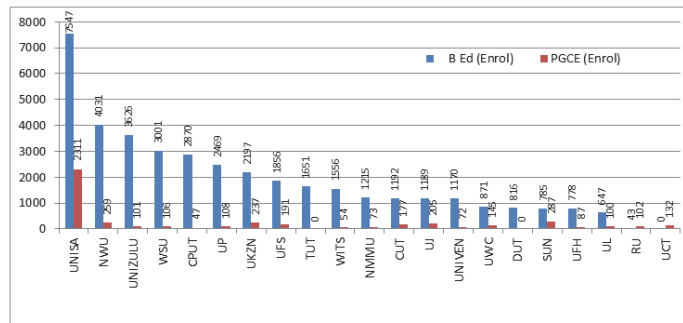


Figure 2: Total enrolments (FTES) in ITE Programmes by university in 2010

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

5.3 Graduation by university

In 2009, across the 21 institutions, (Figure 4), the North West University had the highest number of BEd graduates (509). This was followed by UNISA with 416 and the University of Pretoria with 411 graduates. The university with the highest graduations had a mixture of contact and distance teacher education students.

Data provided for the PGCE graduates were different, however. As evidenced below, UNISA had the most (1089) PGCE graduates in 2009 followed by UKZN with 177 graduates and the North West University with 149. It is also important to note that the number of PGCE graduates was twice as many as the BEd graduates and 37% of them (PGCE students) were already employed as teachers.

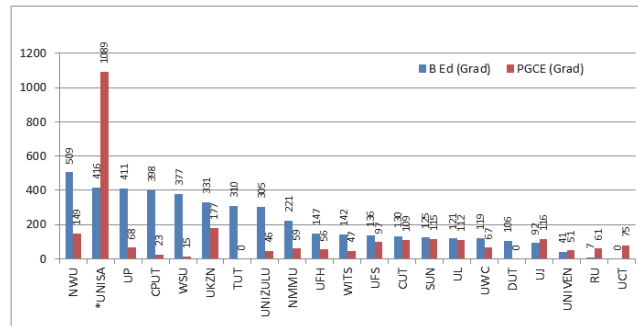


Figure 3: Total graduates in ITE Programmes by university in 2009

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

Figure 4 below shows a complete shift in 2010 with the institution producing the most graduates being UNISA for both BEd (744) and PGCE with 1336 graduates. This was followed by North West University with 651 BEd graduates and 296 PGCE graduates. From 2009 to 2010 an improvement was seen across all the institutions.

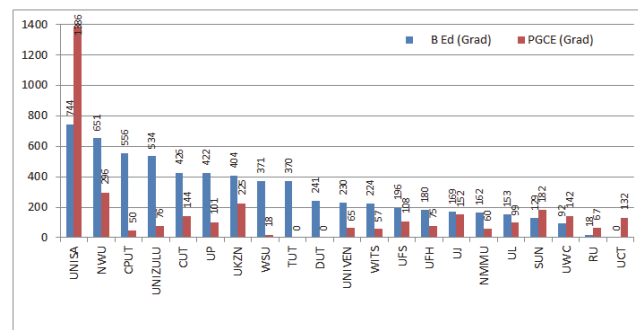


Figure 4: Total graduates in ITE Programmes by university in 2010

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

5.4 Graduation by phase specializations

Meeting national teacher education demand challenges depends on how many graduates are produced per annum. According to figure 3, in total, 4444 BEd students graduated from all the universities in 2009. Of the 4444 graduates, only 24% specialized in the foundation phase area (Figure 5). The remaining 76% of the BEd graduates specialized in the Intermediate (IP), Senior (SP) or the further education and training (FET) phase. The national pattern in the PGCE programmes is very similar to that of the BEd programmes with regards to specialization areas.

In 2009, the number of graduates who specialized in Foundation phase was lowest at 9% with the remaining 91% having specialized in IP, SP or FET. The SP/FET specialization had more students than any of the other areas of specialization, followed by the FET specialization. It is clear that policies that encourage FP specialization are not successful in all the institutions as yet. More must be done to encourage recruits to join the FP training phase.

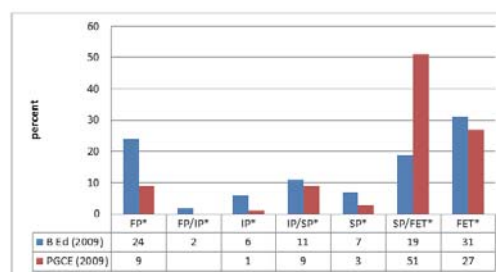


Figure 5: Graduates in ITE by phase specialisation in the BEd and PGCE Nationally (2009)

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

5.5 Enrolments at UNISA

Distance education, which is mainly offered at UNISA, is big in South African higher education. It keeps on growing every year and it boosts higher education enrolments in all the levels. In the past few years it has made a huge impact on South African teacher education enrolments too.

Figure 6 shows that from 2009 to 2010 enrollment numbers at UNISA increased in both the BEd and the PGCE programmes. In 2009, the BEd programmes had 6791 students. In 2010 they increased to 7547. The PGCE programmes had an increase from 1871 students in 2009 to 2311 students in 2010. It is clear that more students were enrolled in BEd programmes than in PGCE courses and the numbers in both programmes kept improving over the two year period.

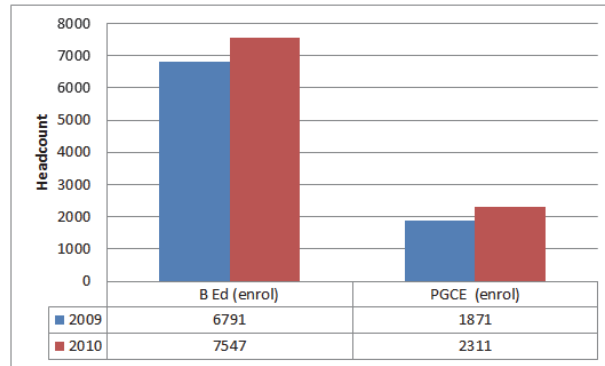


Figure 6: Enrollments in BEd and PGCE at UNISA (2009-2010)

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

5.6 Graduation rates at UNISA

The percentage of graduates in BEd and PGCE programmes at UNISA, as seen in Figure 7, improved from 2009 to 2010 in both BEd (from 6% to 10%) and PGCE (from 58% to 60%). It is not surprising that the graduation rates for the BEd programmes were low considering that distance education needs a certain kind of discipline and dedication that younger students may need time to develop, whereas the older students in the PGCE programme may have already developed such skills.

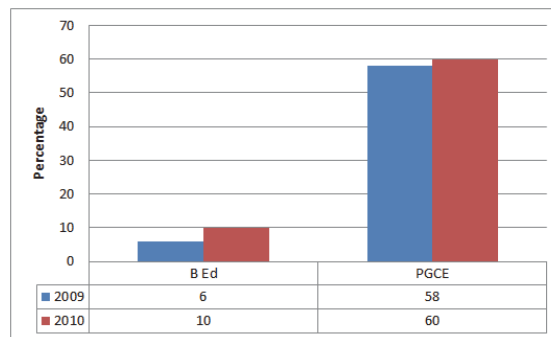


Figure 7: Graduation percentages in BEd and PGCE at UNISA (2009-2010)

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

5.7 UNISA graduations by area of specialization

61% of UNISA BEd graduates specialized in the Foundation Phase (Figure 8), an area of high demand. The number of UNISA students who graduated in the programme is high (61%) compared to the national figure of 24% (Figure 5). The remaining 39% of graduates specialized in IP, SP or FET phase.

The pattern of graduates for the BEd by phase specialization is different to that displayed at the national level. The

FP phase which has the least number of graduates nationally has more graduates at UNISA than in any of the programmes. However, for the PGCE programme the graduation pattern mirrored the national pattern. The majority (88%) of graduates specialized in IP, SP or FET; leaving only 12% specialized in the foundation phase.

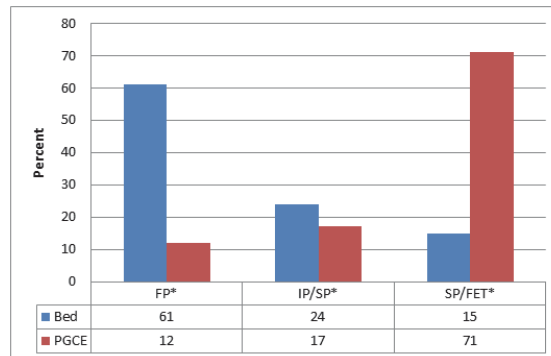


Figure 8: Graduation by phase at UNISA (2009-2010)

Source: Trends in Teacher Education from 2009 to 2010 report (DHET, 2011)

6. Conclusion

South Africa needs to increase its supply of teachers. To do this, the country needs to employ relevant strategies that are responsive to the demand structure of the democratic South Africa. Distance education with its technological and global edge, has a significant role to play in the provision of teacher education. UNISA, the major distance education provider in the country responded positively to policy changes. It democratized education by adopting a true global university culture instead of an apartheid culture and opening up access to include groups that would have perhaps been denied access. It had the most students enrolled in both the BEd and the PGCE programmes. A number of universities are mixing distance education with contact education and enrolments in such universities are rising steeply too. However, universities need to widen their recruit pools more and get out of their comfort zones to accommodate new groups and specialize in new skills areas.

Universities must pay attention to recruitment as well as graduation patterns. The fact that UNISA topped in the PGCE graduations indicates that teachers who are upgrading their qualifications prefer distance education and should be used more in universities and provinces where the aim is to attract recruits to upgrade or change areas of specialization.

Universities can change niche areas to accommodate responsiveness to supply and demand challenges. UNISA changed from being an institution that traditionally catered for adults and widened access to include younger students hence the increase in BEd enrolments. Traditionally, UNISA used to have more in-service trainees than initial teacher education trainees. Younger students used to choose contact as opposed to distance education. This has changed. In 2010 UNISA had more BEd students than the PGCE students. The enrolled BEd students were about eight times more than the number of PGCE students. This is a new and a positive development. In the time the new UNISA has been in existence, it has emerged as a significant player in teacher education in the country.

The response by UNISA programmes is indicative of better response to distance education by recruits. The NWU, which also offers distance education programmes, is not far behind too as it has large student numbers for teacher education. As it can be seen in the increases in the enrolment patterns of all the programmes at UNISA, there are more teacher trainees who are gradually choosing to train part time despite UNISA's reputation as an institution formerly catering to adult learners' needs. Distance education affords UNISA an opportunity to recruit old and young trainees from all walks of life and across borders. The ability to transcend the local model inherited by South African universities from the apartheid culture of segregation is a necessary ingredient for engendering a truly global and democratic culture (Meyer et al., 2003)

Another desirable feature of UNISA's programmes that can be duplicated is responsiveness to qualitative teacher shortages; training more foundation phase teachers than the national average. UNISA seems to be on the right track in terms of increasing the number of FP recruits and graduates. While other universities tend to have more senior phase and further education phase trainees, the UNISA BEd programme has more foundation phase trainees and BEd graduates. Even though the PGCE graduates were more for the PGCE programme in the period examined, over the years this trend will be reversed to indicate the increased BEd trends.

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