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## **Secondary Education Reform in Lesotho and Zimbabwe and the Needs of Rural Girls: Pronouncements, Policy and Practice**

### **Summary**

*Analysis of the educational needs of rural girls in Lesotho and Zimbabwe suggests a number of shortcomings in the current form of secondary education, and ways in which it might be modified so as to serve this sizeable group of students better. Several of the shortcomings, notably in relation to curricular irrelevance and excessive focus on examinations, have long been recognised, including by politicians. Yet political pronouncements are seldom translated into policy, and even where policy is formulated, reforms are seldom implemented in schools. This paper makes use of interviews with educational decision-makers in the two southern African countries and a range of documentary sources to explore why, despite the considerable differences between the two contexts, much needed educational reforms have been implemented in neither.*

Since Lesotho and Zimbabwe gained independence from colonial rule, secondary education has expanded dramatically in scale, but changed little in character. While expansion might be welcomed, the continued use of colonial-style curricula and focus on public examinations do little to fulfil the needs of rural girls in either country. This paper begins by introducing the secondary education systems in Lesotho and Zimbabwe and outlining why existing curricula and examination-focus are of limited value to rural girls. The second section examines in some detail the pronouncements of post-independence politicians and scholars on these issues, and efforts that have been made at reform. The third section of the paper offers an analysis of why most pronouncements on the subjects of curricula and examinations have failed to translate into policy, and why such policies as have been adopted have seldom been fully implemented. Absence of reform is attributed to factors both internal and external to the two countries. The conclusion briefly explores prospects for change.

### **1. Southern Africa Education and Rural Women's Needs: the Case for Reform**

Formal European-style education arrived in Lesotho and Zimbabwe with missionaries in the nineteenth century. With independence from colonial rule, in 1966 in Lesotho and 1980 in Zimbabwe, enrolment, particularly in secondary schools, expanded rapidly. In Lesotho many new secondary schools opened in 1971 and by the early 1990s secondary Gross Enrolment Ratios reached 22% for boys and 32% for girls (Ministry of Education, 1993). In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) came to power in 1980 on a manifesto promising free and compulsory primary and secondary education (Dorsey, 1989). In 1981 alone, 463 new secondary schools opened. Under popular pressure, secondary enrolment growth exceeded the planned 20% a year (Chung, 1995a), rolls increasing from 66,215 in 1979 to 670,557 in 1989 (Bennell and Malaba, 1993). By 1989 the secondary Gross Enrolment Ratio of 46% was among the highest in Africa (Bennell and Malaba 1993). Although recent World Bank prescribed structural adjustment policies have brought increased user fees and steady or falling enrolment in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe, school attendance remains much higher than before Independence.



Despite the quantitative expansion, many aspects of education in both countries remain largely unchanged. Secondary teaching is still conducted in English, curricula have changed little and education remains closely geared to examinations. There are two stages of public examinations. Junior Certificate is taken after two (in Zimbabwe) or three (in Lesotho) years of secondary education. Two years later Zimbabwean students sit O Levels while Basotho students sit the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC), a group examination requiring specific combinations of subject grades.<sup>1</sup>

A pass at COSC or five passes at O Level provides young people with a reasonable chance of obtaining formal sector employment. In a context where employment makes a great material difference to people's lives, this is clearly empowering, irrespective of the curricular content. However, only a limited number of paid employment opportunities become available each year, and pass rates in public examinations are very low in both countries. In Zimbabwe over 300,000 young people leave school annually, but only 15-30,000 new jobs are created (Chavunduka, 1991). In 1996, only 30,148 Zimbabweans obtained five or more O Levels (ZIMSEC, 1996). Similarly, in Lesotho, where education is more selective, COSC pass rates between 1984 and 1994 varied from 26% to 38%. Most students gain little from sitting these examinations. Furthermore, the focus of schools upon examinations restricts other aspects of education that might be of more value to young people. Lessons tend to be geared towards memorisation of the 'facts' that are tested in examinations. There is little concern with the development of higher order cognitive skills, little encouragement to be creative or to challenge/critique received knowledge.

Particularly disadvantaged by the focus on examinations are rural young people. This is partly because rural pass rates are lower. In Lesotho, for instance, in the mountains, where teaching is unpopular and school facilities inferior (Gay *et al*, 1991), examination pass rates are lowest. While Zimbabwe gives greater emphasis to rural education (of 1,520 secondary schools operating in 1990, 1,044 were rural schools run by district councils, all having opened since independence (CSO 1993)), rural schools remain less well resourced. In addition, the lack of formal sector employment opportunities in rural areas reduces the value of examination certificates, even for those few able to obtain them.

Worse still is the situation for rural girls. In both countries male labour migration has left rural populations dominated by women. In Zimbabwe, girls' enrolment in secondary school is considerably lower than among boys, and examination pass rates are also lower. In 1993 girls comprised 46.6% of Form 1; 41.4% of Form 4 and 34.0% of Form 5 (Dorsey, 1996). The female proportion of secondary school students has changed little since independence (Gordon, 1994).

In Lesotho, by contrast, girls outnumber boys in schools: a situation almost unique in Africa, but one that has a long history (Ashton, 1967; Ntimo-Makara, 1985). Although at secondary level, more girls drop out than boys, boys remain a minority, even at university. Female:male ratios are about 1.5:1 in secondary and post-secondary institutions (KOL, 1994). Girls also gain more qualifications. Several factors account for girls'

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<sup>1</sup> In Zimbabwe a small number of schools offer A Levels after a further two years of education.



predominance in school, particularly boys' herding duties and the gendered labour market which facilitates employment of minimally educated men (Malahleha, 1984; Mueller, 1977; Thelejane, 1983).

Even for the few rural women who pass O Level/COSC, however, employment opportunities are few. Most rural women in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe must support themselves and their households in other ways. Rural women are said to perform a triple role, engaging in production, household reproduction and community management (Moser, 1989). Thus their educational needs relate not only to their roles as producers of material wealth for their households (whether through formal or informal employment, or subsistence agriculture), but also their reproductive and community management roles. These are needs which might be addressed through an appropriately designed curriculum.

Secondary curricula, however, remain, as in colonial times, largely irrelevant to rural girls. Few of the academic subjects studied are of direct use in the performance of rural women's triple roles. Today's core Zimbabwean secondary curriculum, for example, comprises English, an African language, mathematics and science, plus one social science and one practical subject (Chung, 1995b).

Any policy attention to gender and education in either country has been narrowly focused and ignored wider consideration of the nature of education. In Zimbabwe research and policy has emphasised access, drop-out and the provision of role models (Gordon, 1995), and more recently girls' subject choices, as they commonly drop mathematics and sciences.<sup>2</sup> In Lesotho, where girls outnumber and outperform boys in school, gender is seldom considered important.<sup>3</sup> Interventions in the name of 'gender' remain geared to improving girls' performance within a patriarchal model of education. There is a glaring need for considerations of gender in education to go beyond concern for numbers and pass rates: success in these areas is insufficient to meet girls' educational needs, without attention to the type of education provided. Curricula and examinations, while not conventionally 'gender' issues, are two areas for reform that would both address girls' specific gender needs, and also benefit the majority of rural students.<sup>4</sup> Though a combination of interviews with officials and documentary evidence, the next section examines the attention that has been given to examinations and curricula by educationalists and policy makers.

## **2. Pronouncements, Policy and Practice: Progress towards Reform?**

### ***Examinations***

The problems associated with over-emphasis on examinations have long been recognised by education officials in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. In 1978 the Lesotho government organised a 'National Pitso' to investigate people's views on education. The ensuing report criticised: "the main products of the system are 'failures' (those who have been forced out of the system) and 'passes' (those who can regurgitate undigested facts on the examination day to the satisfaction of the examiner)" (KOL, 1978:104).

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<sup>2</sup> Interview, Dr Sibanda, 18/07/97.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, Mrs Maphosa, Director, NCDC, Maseru, 18/07/96.

<sup>4</sup> Other possibilities include changes in language of instruction, teaching methods, and the way in which knowledge is presented.



The Education Sector Survey which followed the Pitso in 1982, and whose report set the ground-rules for subsequent education policy, recognised:

Many of the problems with curriculum and instruction stem from the inordinate emphasis given to the preparation for terminal exams which undermines the attainment of certain education objectives that are critical for the country's economic development. These include problem solving; the practical application of concepts and skills; the spirit of co-operation and team-work; creativity and imagination; and the development of a moral, socially conscious character (Ministry of Education, 1982:94).

There is also a concern with the use of examinations for measuring the achievement of schools:

Assessment of school performance is often based on exam results only ... Very little reference is ever made to other aspects of school life; i.e. self-sufficiency through production, practical activities, sports and involvement in community development programmes and other extra-curricula activities ... (KOL, 1989/90:27).

Nonetheless, examination results are still used to assess schools, students, teachers, and even the overall performance of Lesotho's education system: "The higher the pass rate the lower the enrolment needed and therefore the greater efficiency of the education system" (Ministry of Education, 1982:87). The Education Sector Survey did not recommend replacement of COSC, because of the need to maintain credibility in education standards. Even the 1992 Education Sector Development Plan set as a goal "to improve the results obtained in the Junior Certificate and O-level examinations" (Ministry of Education, 1992:63).

The Survey's list of problems relating to education (Ministry of Education, 1983:2) was repeated word for word in the Education Sector Development Plan nine years later (reflective of the lack of change), excepting the specific exclusion of COSC from criticism in the later report:

The existing system of schooling suffers from critical problems including the decline of quality; lack of relevance to occupational and social realities; [...] and lack of effective quality owing to the nature of *final examinations below the level of the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate Examination* and the absence of other means of determining pupils' achievement *from the national level* (Ministry of Education, 1992:4, words italicised not appearing in the 1983 report).

Not only has no action been taken in Lesotho to diminish the significance of examinations, but COSC has emphatically been retained. Although Lesotho has begun to localise the examination, this is motivated by cost and inertia. International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) was viewed favourably when first introduced by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) as an alternative to COSC, but "It was not considered appropriate to implement IGCSE syllabuses in their present state ... Adaptation is preferable to adoption" (KOL, 1987). However, ten years later, the COSC format is being retained under localisation (Extract 1).

**Extract 1: interview**

*-Why has Lesotho chosen to retain COSC?*

-COSC has been with us just traditionally, because when we moved away from the Republic examinations, we went to O Level, like Botswana and Swaziland. It was the only option at the time. In 1989, one thing that precipitated the localisation was the introduction of IGCSE. We couldn't move to another imported exam. There were two considerations: cost and relevance. O Level was designed for the top 20%. We had a choice of IGCSE or localisation. We are localising what we have.

[Mrs Ralise, Registrar, Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL), 01/09/97].

In Zimbabwe the situation is not dissimilar. Although, at independence, Zimbabwe moved from group-entry COSC to single-subject O Levels, until recently these were set by UCLES, and there is great reluctance to relinquish this 'standard' (Extract 2). Although localisation of O Level is now almost complete, UCLES continued to accredit it until 2000.

**Extract 2: interview**

*-Why have you chosen to retain O Levels?*

-We have kept the principle. All countries who were under colonial rule don't throw it away. In '84 the decision was made to localise, not because the exam or system was bad, but because of the cost. - Economic reasons.

[Dr Sibanda, Director, ZIMSEC, 18/07/97].

The retention of O Levels and focus on examinations is not universally celebrated in Zimbabwe. Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) Education Officers consider preoccupation with examinations unhealthy. However, teachers' performance appraisal ties bonuses to examination results. Consequently few teachers want to teach non-examinable subjects, especially if they receive no training in these.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, subjects seek examination status, as parents do not want their children to study subjects which bring no reward.<sup>6</sup>

**Curricula**

Examinations, then, are associated with curricular stagnation. In Zimbabwe, despite rhetoric regarding the need to reform curricula to help bring about mental decolonisation (Patsanza, 1988), curricula continue to mimic those of the former colonial power (Baine and Mwamwenda, 1994). Lesotho, too, offers students a similar menu of subjects to that available in colonial times.

Minor changes have been made to the content of most syllabuses, which, until recently, were determined more in Cambridge than Harare or Maseru. Even with localisation, syllabuses are designed in collaboration with UCLES. Such subjects as science have been made somewhat more relevant to rural African students. In other subjects, textbooks now use more locally relevant examples and stories. Recently there have been efforts, especially in Zimbabwe, to eliminate gender bias. More substantial changes to syllabus content are rare.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Interview, Mrs Sibenge, Education Officer, Education For Living, CDU, 15/07/97.

<sup>6</sup> Interview, Mrs Heberden, Acting Deputy Chief Education Officer, Mathematics and Science, CDU, 15/07/97.

<sup>7</sup> The subject whose content has changed most is probably history, particularly in Zimbabwe. Even here, however, the radical 'Political Economy of Zimbabwe' (PEZ) syllabus was dropped under pressure from the churches who considered it Marxist (and therefore atheist) indoctrination (Jansen, 1991).



As secondary education has expanded well beyond the labour market's capacity to offer school leavers white collar employment, a general need has been recognised for students, particularly in rural areas, to learn vocational skills. Approaches have differed between the two national contexts. In Lesotho, the 1982 Education Sector Survey recognised:

The slow growth of employment opportunities in the modern sector of the economy in relation to the very rapid growth of enrolments in secondary schools is resulting in large numbers of young people whose academic training does not provide the skills needed for rural self-employment. There is a very strong case for slowing the expansion of secondary schools and diverting resources to providing alternative training (Ministry of Education, 1982:8).

A year later the Ministry promised to expand practical studies in school (Ministry of Education, 1983). However, in the late 1980s there remained 1520 teachers of language and religion but only 163 teachers of practical subjects (Setoi, 1989). Before Lesotho's 1993 General Election, the winning party criticised the "lack of development of practical and productive skills" and promised education based on "complementarity of cognitive knowledge and practical skills" (BCP, 1993:10-11). Nothing has changed. Recent statements suggest increasing government awareness that, not only does secondary education not equip students for self-employment, but it is excessively geared to public sector employment (GOL *et al*, 1996).

Today, the views of Lesotho's Anglican Education Secretary are typical (Extract 3). Most officials believe vocational skills can be delivered through the practical subjects already taught in schools (e.g. Extract 4), and hesitate to propose more radical change. Woodwork and metalwork, as mentioned by Mr Mahloko, are, however, taught in few rural schools, and very seldom to girls. In both Lesotho and Zimbabwe, although education ministries claim to encourage students' participation in non-traditional practical subjects, policy is left to school heads. In Lesotho many schools continue to differentiate strictly by sex.<sup>8</sup> Providing students with conventional practical subjects, without tackling gender divisions within these, will not offer girls assistance with their productive role in rural communities. Mrs Maphosa, Director of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)<sup>9</sup> advocated adding marketing and entrepreneurship to the compulsory core secondary curriculum. No progress has yet been made on this potentially positive contribution to rural girls' needs.

**Extract 3: interview**

*-What role should schools be preparing rural girls for?*

-At this point in time we can no longer assume that all girls are going to marry. And even if they marry, it makes no difference. They should be equipped with all the necessary skills for sustaining themselves. All children should. In the past our education was more academic: it's a white collar job thing. They learn to think they can't use their hands. Especially in rural areas where there are less chances of employment: they should be equipped with the skills which enable them to survive out there.

[Mr Kheekhe, Anglican Education Secretary, Maseru, 30/08/96].

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Mr Mahloko, Acting Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, Lesotho, 15/07/96.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, 18/07/96.



#### Extract 4: interview

-What will the students do when they leave? Where will they go?

-We anticipate that they will stay in the rural areas. Those that do agriculture can continue with this in their homes. Others have other practical subjects like woodwork and metalwork. It is hoped that they could open workshops. We try to provide them with skills to fall back on, but if the employment is there, they could take it.

[...]

-You mentioned giving students practical skills: are there any plans to vocationalise the curriculum?

-We are trying to have as wide a curriculum as possible. This is the policy of the Ministry of Education. We feel that for a long time it didn't provide children with enough of the necessary skills for employment or self employment, or even for feeling like doing something like repairing a broken door. They felt that this was inferior for someone who's been to school.

[Mr Mahloka, Acting Chief Inspector, Secondary, Ministry of Education, Lesotho, 15/07/96].

Given the predominance of boys studying woodwork, metalwork and agriculture in school, it might be postulated that girls are meanwhile being prepared for their reproductive roles. In fact, since independence, home economics teaching in rural schools has declined. This relates both to costs, and to the increasing focus on subjects seen as necessary for employment. The gender impacts of this are ambiguous: while girls are not being condemned to preparation for an economically unrewarded role, education is arguably failing to address the needs of women, or to accord status to a role generally cast as female. Provision of training in reproductive work to both girls and boys might serve to raise the status of the work and transform conventional divisions of labour. Where there have been calls for a greater focus on reproductive skills, however, this is almost always in relation to the perceived needs of girls. Dr Sibanda, for instance, suggested 'fashion and fabrics' and cookery are useful because they help girls "running their lives as mothers".<sup>10</sup> This does little to challenge gender divisions of labour. Similarly:

Assuming that most girls upon leaving primary schools or early secondary education are potential mothers and housewives, there would seem to be a strong case for the upper primary and junior secondary (Form A, B and C) curriculum to provide an element that seeks to prepare girls for efficient and effective motherhood (KOL, 1978:36).

In Zimbabwe, like Lesotho, there have been calls for more practical emphasis in education from academics (Mackenzie, 1988; Zvobgo, 1986), the press (Anon., 1997; Kadye, 1992) and politicians (Chung and Ngara, 1985). A Ministry of Education seminar a year after Zimbabwe's independence noted the need for education for self-employment:

At present most people are living in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, and this situation is certain to persist for some decades yet. In these circumstances it would be economic folly and social deception to educate children as if they were going to end in industrial or office work (Stoneman and Zvobgo, 1981:55).

Unlike Lesotho, Zimbabwe already had a model for vocational education: 'F2' schools, established by the Rhodesian Front government under the controversial 'New Education Plan' of 1966. While urban-based

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<sup>10</sup> Interview, Dr Sibanda, Director, Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), 18/07/97.



academic F1 secondary schools would cater for the most able 12.5% of African children completing primary education each year, F2 schools were to provide a further 37.5% with basic vocational skills (Zvobgo 1986). These met resistance, partly because they would apply only to black students, and only 21 of the 300 planned were operating by 1971 (Zvobgo 1986).

F2 schools being politically unacceptable, at independence the new Zimbabwean government sought an alternative way to provide vocational skills. 'Education with Production' (EWP) was intended to combine the academic and practical in line with Marx's concept of 'polytechnic education' and Paulo Freire's (1972; 1985) ideas concerning the dialectic of knowledge and practice. Labour and theory should be integrated in all subjects, both academic and practical, to instil in students respect for the dignity of manual labour (destroyed by the colonial approach), and encourage analytic understanding. A science class, for instance, might respond to a local shortage of soap by studying soap production, then making and marketing soap (McLaughlin, 1981). According to Chung and Ngara: "This system of education is designed to produce totally developed individuals who understand the world they live in and are capable of transforming that world" (1985:89). EWP, then, is an innovation which could benefit rural girls/women, encouraging them to value forms of work in which they could be successful, and providing them with skills to engage in such work.

Despite the rigorous philosophical basis for EWP, curricular change has been no greater in Zimbabwe than in Lesotho. The Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) established pilot schools which, from the outset, were seen as diluting the curriculum. Parents, teachers, pupils, administrators and politicians viewed them negatively (Mudenge, 1984). Only two years after independence Foley (1982:16) commented: "The supposed site of educational transformation - the ZIMFEP schools - had a small number of students, were starved of funds and were isolated from the educational mainstream."

Ten years later, Chivore (1992) found the few ZIMFEP schools functioning were not fully committed to EWP, concentrating instead on O Levels. Although EWP was (in theory) extended to all schools (Parade, 1989), in practice it came to be regarded as extra-curricular (Zvobgo, 1994). A teacher remarked to me that it had "died a natural death". Nonetheless, the 'General Introduction' appearing in every Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) O Level syllabus, suggests a continuing rhetorical commitment to EWP, along with an acknowledgement that most students will not pursue their education beyond O Level. It does not, however, recognise that the majority of students will be unable to find jobs.

Given EWP's failure, there were calls for a return to F2 schools as early as the mid-1980s (Zvobgo, 1986). A Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training was established in 1998 (GOZ, 1997) with a mandate to consider vocational education (Extracts 5 and 6). Both officials quoted attributed Zimbabwe's lack of vocational education to popular resistance. This will be considered further in Section 3. In Extract 6, Mr Masango suggests a single vocational school per district; the government in fact proposes 20 such training centres (Mugabe, 1998), but many of them are to be located in urban areas. Given that Zimbabwe has over 1500 'academic' secondary schools, such a small-scale development is likely to have minimal impact on the vast majority of rural secondary school students. Furthermore, there has been little



consideration of vocational schools' gender impacts: a workshop held to discuss the Presidential Commission's work did not address the issue of gender (Courtenay, 1998).

**Extract 5: interview**

When I was Permanent Secretary, 20-25% of candidates got 5 or more O Levels. We wanted to do something for the other 75%. Politicians aren't educationists. They follow what people want. Now a commission has been announced by the President. Before independence there were F1 and F2 schools. These were destroyed because F2 applied only to Africans, and this was assumed to be sinister. To return to this system would now be a national change, not a sectional change.

[Dr Sibanda, Director ZIMSEC, 18/07/97].

**Extract 6: interview**

-[...] The cabinet didn't think that not giving all the opportunity of O Level was politically possible [at independence]. It would have been a rural-urban divide. - It looks like the old discrimination. [...] We hope for a new curriculum that's not just academic. Now, in the rural areas, they're beginning to see that O Levels aren't the investment they thought they were. They're questioning the quality of education, so they're likely to be more receptive now. We're likely to have two types of schools. Vocational education en masse will be very expensive. We can't have it in all schools from the start. Perhaps it will be one school per district. Pilot schools with projects to specifically equip those schools.

[Mr Masango, Chief Education Officer, CDU/AVS, 15/07/97].

Lastly, it is worth briefly considering a curriculum innovation that has taken place in Lesotho. Unusually, an entirely new subject has been introduced to the secondary curriculum, and has been taken up voluntarily by a large number of schools. This subject is Development Studies, based partly on the ideas of Patrick van Rensburg, proponent of EWP. Like EWP, the stress is on combining academic and practical work: "They should not only learn *about* development but also participate *in* development" (ECOL, 1996). The general aims are outlined in Extract 7. These are not underlain by socialist ideology, but are more related to students' individual needs. "The aims of such development practical work should be to foster a spirit of self-reliance, to make students more productive, to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills, and to illustrate social and economic concepts" (ibid.). Development Studies is, therefore, potentially relevant to girls, especially in the area of community organisation.

**Extract 7: syllabus**

Development Studies aims:

1. To increase the students' knowledge and understanding of the problems and processes of development (cultural, social, economic and political change);
2. To equip students with the intellectual and social skills required for responsible citizenship and participation in community and national development;
3. To develop attitudes and values conducive to social harmony, national unity and economic progress. (ECOL, 1996).

Superficially, Development Studies appears to have been more successful than the innovations attempted in Zimbabwe. This 'success' is probably a consequence of the subject's introduction as a fully-fledged academic subject, with full certification and trained teachers. However, the apparent success is somewhat illusory if measured against the syllabus aims. I observed the practical project, a compulsory part of Junior Certificate Development Studies, at a mountain school. The project, planned only days before the final examination, gave boys instruction and practice in making concrete bricks. The girls' role was to collect

water for the concrete. By fitting the subject to the conventional model and failing adequately to address gender, concern with problem-solving and integrating the academic and practical evaporates.

### **3. The Role of the State: Barrier to Reform?**

There has, then, been no large-scale implementation of policy to overcome problems associated with the academic nature of education and overemphasis on examinations, despite general acknowledgement among decision-makers that such problems exist. Not only are the problems acknowledged, but the failure to implement reforms, too, is widely recognised (see Horton, 1982; Seithleko *et al*, 1987).<sup>11</sup> This prompts questions of why pronouncements concerning education reform are seldom transformed into policy, and such policy as is formulated is seldom implemented in schools. These questions must be answered by reference to the role of the state, and its unwillingness or inability to implement change, in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

The African state has been the subject of widely differing theories. In the present analysis, the state is seen as a site of conflict between many interests (c.f. Migdal, 1994): these include ideology; the interests of the ruling class; the population (predominantly peasants and workers); and capital. This is not to suggest all interests are equally represented in the state. Rural people and women, in particular, are seldom able to express forcibly their perceived interests, let alone those interests which remain hidden from them. Nonetheless, while the state can obstruct women's interests, it can at times provide enabling conditions for empowerment (Kabeer, 1994; Parpart and Staudt, 1989).

The constraints on states must also be recognised. There are factors over which the Lesotho and Zimbabwean states have no direct control: namely their colonial legacies and external influences (global capitalism together with international aid). It is with these constraints that the analysis will begin.

#### **a. Colonial Legacies**

Colonial education was no more the expression of a unified voice than is present day education. It was largely an outcome of struggle between colonial rulers (who took instruction from London, or for a time in Lesotho, from Cape Town<sup>12</sup>); international capital (the demands of mine owners and farmers as employers of black); the white settler class (who from 1923 controlled the Rhodesian state); churches (who financed and ran most schools); and the black populations (who attended and paid fees, and resisted changes in education which they deemed unfavourable<sup>13</sup>). Each of the parties had different interests, including in relation to girls' education and urban-rural relations. The shape of colonial education reflected struggles between these interests, the relative influences of which differed between the two colonial contexts. For instance, Lesotho, unlike Zimbabwe, had no settler class, and employers of black labour were based beyond its borders in South Africa; there were stronger links in Zimbabwe between church and colonial rulers;

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<sup>11</sup> It has also been observed elsewhere in Africa (Assie-Lumumba, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Colonial Basutoland's education system was supervised by the Cape Education Department, which, until the introduction of 'Bantu Education' in 1953, provided syllabuses and examinations (Ntimo-Makara, 1985; Thelejane, 1990). There was no direct link between the colonial state and capitalist employers of Basotho labour as Basutoland's economy was closely tied to the Transvaal, not Cape Province.

<sup>13</sup> School was never compulsory for black people in either country, so attendance could not be guaranteed if people saw no value to education.

Zimbabwe's populace was more resistant to education than that of Lesotho, and strikes in were commonplace (Mumbengegwi, 1989). Education was not, however, a simple expression of these influences, but wrought with contradictions (Mandaza, 1980).

Despite the contradictions and differences, colonial education in both countries was aimed at increasing the coloniser's power over the colonised, not empowering students. In part this was achieved by creating an unmet demand for education (Mandaza, 1980): a situation which helps to explain the growth of schooling after independence. Colonial curricula and use of examinations also served to assist in the production and control of a docile workforce for urban/industrial employment. The colonial states were equally keen to control women, on whom they relied for labour reproduction and maintenance of social relations (Lovett, 1989). Girls were retained in rural areas and prepared for domestic roles conforming to the colonisers' gender expectations (Murray, 1929; Ntимо-Makara, 1985; Zvobgo, 1991).

At independence, both countries, but especially Zimbabwe, sought to move away from the colonial model:

To preserve and expand the colonial education system and to expect it to form a suitable foundation for the establishment of socialism is both unwise and unrealistic because there is no way in which the colonial curriculum can perform functions alien to its nature and objectives (Chung and Ngara, 1985:96).

There were, however, constraints to reform. Existing curricula were supported by textbooks and materials. Teachers and teachers' college lecturers were trained within existing subject boundaries. Rural areas faced particular obstacles: problems of communication, lack of qualified teachers, and underresourced schools which could not afford to replace materials. These constraints persist in both countries, financial cutbacks having slowed the introduction of new textbooks (Seidman and Seidman, 1994).

Technical constraints are more readily overcome, however, than resistance from individuals involved in implementing changes or affected by them. The Zimbabwe government, for instance, finds it difficult to make innovations acceptable to civil servants or teachers brought up in a colonial environment (Zindi, 1987), especially where colonial education placed urban males in positions of power. Even in the 1970s refugee camps, education borrowed heavily from teachers' experiences of Rhodesian schools (Nare, 1995). Nor are reforms always popular with parents, who grew up with particular (colonial) expectations of education.

Some of the most lasting impacts of colonial education relate to the neglect of vocational education. Zimbabwean contempt for vocational education reflects several factors. First, it was considered inferior by colonialists themselves, and only provided to those deemed insufficiently able intellectually to benefit from academic education. Second, blacks always received more vocational education in school than white children, lending it further stigma. Third, academic education generally led to better paid employment than vocational training. Last, even with vocational training, blacks were unable to obtain apprenticeships or skilled jobs as legislation reserved these for whites. Lesotho, where minework absorbed black male labour with no requirement for school-based training, had minimal vocational education in colonial times. Here,

vocational education is also resisted, as it does not equip students for more lucrative white-collar employment, towards which colonial education was geared.

Both governments attribute lack of change, at least in part, to resistance to abandoning colonial models of education. Fay Chung, Minister of Education in Zimbabwe's early years, four years after writing the passage cited above, pleaded: "The school system is very constraining because we can't move away very far from the models we inherited. If we did we would have a political uproar" (Chung, 1989:41). It would be wrong, however, to attribute lack of reform purely to colonial history.

### **b. External Pressures**

The governments of Lesotho and Zimbabwe have not only historical legacies to contend with. Both are subject to contemporary international economic and political pressures. There are two aspects to this. First, both countries operate within a global capitalist system in which they must seek to be competitive and therefore invest in economically productive areas. Related to this, both countries are relatively impoverished and hence seek external funding for education. External investment is often motivated by a desire to bind a country more closely to the global economy, through, for example, structural adjustment programmes. While the economic case for a certain level of investment in raising enrolment levels in secondary education has often been made (e.g. Psacharopoulos, 1991),<sup>14</sup> the economic case for other aspects of education reform is less frequently argued and more subject to debate.

In Lesotho almost all capital expenditure on education is externally funded (Ministry of Education, 1992). USAID money has motivated much government policy in Lesotho: a situation criticised by teachers' unions and churches (Work for Justice, 1993). Not only do foreign donors finance education, they also provide research and ideas: most initiatives for change come from overseas.<sup>15</sup> Even the 1997 Education Sector Development Plan was designed to reflect policy formulated in connection with aid contracted under the pre-1993 administration.<sup>16</sup>

The World Bank, wielding the threat of international financial disapproval, strongly influences education policy in both countries. Alongside other international donors it has inspired greater attention to gender. Gordon (1996), however, attributes this concern with girls' education partly to foreign capital's needs for docile semi- and unskilled workers, and the 'modern' urban nuclear family. Education is believed to instil in girls appropriate 'modern' attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. Such acculturation does not diminish women's subordination, but makes them more amenable to exploitation by capital (Gordon, 1996; Stromquist, 1995).

More than half the World Bank projects focusing on girls in school world-wide in 1991 emphasised access (Swainson, 1995): far fewer initiatives support curricular change and examination reforms that might benefit rural girls. Conversely, the World Bank report on education in Zimbabwe (which heavily influenced the

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<sup>14</sup> Even here, the Zimbabwe government could not access resources to provide the free secondary education it promised at independence (Mumbengegwi, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Interview, Mr Mahloka, Acting Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools Lesotho, 15/07/96.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, Education Planning Officers, 1996.

controversial 1991 Education Act<sup>17</sup>) recommended “a renewed commitment to academic standards principally by strengthening examination systems” (1989:10). Technical education is seen by the World Bank as “costly and ineffective”,<sup>18</sup> hence technical and commercial subjects were dropped from the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate under ESAP, an action Gordon (1994) considers consistent with the state’s ‘male-protecting role’, women having much less access than men to technical training outside school.

While donors seldom share national priorities for education (Zvobgo, 1994), not all are motivated by demands of the world economy to the same extent as the World Bank. Agencies such as UNICEF (a major donor to education in both Zimbabwe and Lesotho), and smaller, more specialised NGOs, such as the Cambridge Female Education Trust (CAMFED), an organisation set up to promote girls’ education in Zimbabwe, are seldom simply servants of international capital. CAMFED, like the World Bank, is primarily concerned with increasing girls’ access to school, but is also involved in counselling girls in an effort to combat sexual exploitation by teachers. Along with UNICEF and SIDA, it supports efforts to provide role models to girls, through female heads and teachers, and teaching materials. All these NGOs, nonetheless, seek to fit girls into an education system geared primarily to the needs of (a minority of) boys. None suggests fundamental changes in curriculum or structure. However, while these organisations do not set out to undermine the capitalist economy in which they operate, those who work in them do not necessarily embrace capitalist ideology, but have a variety of motivations, some philanthropic, and some explicitly feminist.

### **c. State Ideology**

Although both Lesotho and Zimbabwe are subject to the same international pressures, as both need external funds, ideological differences between the two countries would suggest differences in response to the demands of international capitalism.

Education was a central issue in Zimbabwe’s independence struggle. The liberation movement, led by people educated in mission schools, fought for greater access to education<sup>19</sup> (Mungazi, 1982; Zvobgo, 1994). The new state was to be based on Marxist ideology and viewed education as a basic need and human right (GOZ 1982). Such ideology is argued to underlie the dramatic post-independence expansion of education (Jansen, 1991), investment far exceeding what liberal academics (e.g. Rogers, 1979) claimed realistic. Furthermore, secondary education expanded most dramatically in the rural areas that were the locus of support for the independence struggle.

A Marxist critique of colonialism also underlay criticisms of Rhodesian curricula as irrelevant to African students and academically elitist (Dube, 1980; Mandaza, 1980). The post-independence government’s declared curricular goals were to develop in students a socialist consciousness; eliminate the distinction between manual and mental labour; ensure relevance to the Zimbabwean cultural context; promote co-

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, Dr Tsvakirai, Education Officer, History, CDU, 15/07/97.

<sup>18</sup> World Bank research usually takes the form of crude quantitative analysis, with little attention to subtleties of teaching method or curricular content.

<sup>19</sup> Education was associated by some poor people, however, with the enemy, as the only educated blacks they knew worked for the government (Kriger, 1991).

operative learning; and increase opportunities for productive employment (Jansen, 1991). As has been demonstrated, little change has taken place in this direction.

An analysis of the failure to reform education in line with Marxist ideology casts doubt on the extent to which Zimbabwe's rulers were ever seriously committed to Marxism (see Moyo, 1992).

There was no attempt to transform the material and ideological basis for education. In this respect the new government failed from the outset to recognise the need to develop an alternative pedagogical practice as an integral part of a political programme (Johnson, 1990:100).

Educational policies are often defended, not in terms of ideology, but on the basis that something similar takes place in another avowedly Marxist state. In an interview, Fay Chung explained "Britain has a capitalist system, but there is free education, but in China there is no free education" (in Chavunduka, 1991). Therefore, school fees are compatible with socialism. Zindi (1987) argues on a similar basis that examinations are an appropriate part of socialist education. Zimbabwe's failure to reform education has been attributed to a wider failure to reform the capitalist economy and society in which it is embedded (Chung, 1988; Raftopoulos, 1987; Zvobgo, 1994). Increasingly the rhetoric of efficiency and standards has replaced calls for socialist education (Jansen, 1991). This may reflect international pressures, or lack of interest among the ruling class (see below).

Even had Zimbabwe introduced proposed Marxist-inspired innovations, these would not necessarily have empowered rural girls. Political Economy of Zimbabwe, for example, although ideologically inspired, would have been another academic subject, tested through examinations. Although girls' education was a stated priority at independence (Mhene, 1982) nowhere in Zimbabwe's socialist ideology is there a critique of women's subordination within the home (Jacobs, 1989). Furthermore, despite significant legislative changes benefiting women in the early 1980s, gender has receded from the forefront of public debate.

Lesotho, in contrast to Zimbabwe, has never adopted a strongly left (or right) wing ideology, despite the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP: ruling party 1993-1997 and forerunner of the current government) being labelled 'communist' by the Catholic Church (among others) and both of the major post-independence parties receiving substantial funding from Russia and China. Neighbouring Apartheid South Africa constrained Lesotho's capacity to adopt a more radical agenda. Although the main parties are broadly Africanist in outlook, politics is arguably characterised more by allegiances and rivalries based upon church and family loyalty than an agenda for the future: a situation that has been labelled 'politics without policies'.<sup>20</sup>

Education policy in Lesotho has tended to be shaped by populism. The 1978 National Pitso, ostensibly an exercise in 'grass-roots' opinion gathering, was inevitably influenced by people's expectations of education, derived from the colonial era, and the Ministry's interpretations of the views expressed. The Education Sector Survey that followed generated five policy guidelines which, despite changes in government, have

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<sup>20</sup> John Gay, personal communication.



informed all subsequent education policy<sup>21</sup> (Extract 8). Notably, these guidelines fail to mention curriculum (except skills for employment, and cultural values), teaching methods or examinations. There is no concern with gender implications of education (other than the mention of cultural values).

**Extract 8: report**

- Everyone should be provided the opportunity to develop competencies necessary for personal growth and social life through the provision of Universal Primary Education.
  - Sufficient numbers of individuals should be provided with appropriate occupational, technical and managerial skills to ensure the country's socio-economic development.
  - Opportunities for continuing education should be provided through non-formal programmes in literacy, numeracy and basic skills; agriculture, community development and vocational training programmes; and inservice education in industry, government and organisations.
  - Education programmes should incorporate cultural values and activities that enhance individual and social development; in particular the role of the family and communities in school activities should be expanded.
  - There should be an active, co-operative partnership in education administration and the provision of education services between and among the churches, the government and the community.
- (Ministry of Education, 1983:3).

In terms of gender the BCP, although posturing as the more radical of the two main political parties, has tended to be the more patriarchal. Its populist Africanism inspired an appeal to 'tradition' at independence, to win support from male migrant labourers, eager to retain control of their wives (Epprecht, 1995). "The BCP-dominated teachers' union even criticised the colonial government for abandoning a narrow emphasis on girls' education for domesticity: 'We need girls who know better methods of cooking, who are able to wash and iron our clothes, who can do efficient mothercraft'" (Epprecht, 1995:46).

Despite apparent ideological differences between Lesotho and Zimbabwe, practical distinctions are slight. Beyond superficial differences in syllabus content, a student from Lesotho would notice little change were they to attend school in Zimbabwe, and vice versa.

**d. Ruling Class Interests**

Marxist theories place the state in capitalist society at the service of a ruling (bourgeois) class, motivated by the need to accumulate capital, and to retain the legitimacy of their rule. This is problematic in the Southern African context, where the interests of the (local) ruling class and (largely external/white) capital do not coincide; and even more so given the Marxist ideology espoused (at least rhetorically) by Zimbabwe's rulers. Nonetheless, many analyses of the state in Africa see state activity and inactivity, including failure to reform education, as exercises of power by an increasingly bourgeois ruling class (e.g. Astrow, 1983; Fatton, 1989).

While southern Africa's rulers might not directly represent capital and, as Boone (1994:109) suggests, commonly act "in ways that compromise, rather than promote, economic growth", they arguably still defend their class interests. Foley (1982) argues that although expansion of Zimbabwean education served the interests of peasants and workers, satisfying this popular demand entrenched the power of the new ruling class, rather than promoting the power of the masses. As education expanded, the ruling class acted to preserve elements which protect its own members:

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<sup>21</sup> The first two guidelines are cited in most subsequent policy documents, including the Education Sector

the continued privileged position of exclusive private and 'A' schools; the expansion and then the cutting off of secondary education for the masses, the continued material and intellectual underdevelopment of the schooling received by the bulk of the people, the continued domination of authoritarian 'telling' pedagogies and hierarchical forms of administration in all spheres of education, the failure to either construct a meaningful alternate system or to mount mass education campaigns - all these developments reflect and serve the interests of the ruling class (Foley, 1982:16).

Nor are the interests or actions of Lesotho's ruling class significantly different. As in Zimbabwe, the ruling class may not own substantial capital. Nonetheless, Schorn and Blair (1982:57) argue: "Education in Lesotho ... continues to establish the elite classes by its persistence mainly in academic curricula." The ruling class want white collar employment for their own children, whatever ideology or academia might dictate concerning the type of education of greatest value nationally (Extract 9).

**Extract 9: interview**

At the moment we are struggling to move thinking from the white collar jobs that everyone expects from secondary school. Parents still want university for their children. It's true among those who are involved in planning education. They say 'mind the standards' rather than 'mind the people'. They talk about Education with Production, but they still want these practical subjects to be electives. We are still biased towards the academic.

[Mrs Maphosa, Director, NCDC, Maseru, 18/07/96].

Adults often resist changes to the education system they experienced as children, and believe the knowledge they acquired is the standard by which all should be measured. This is particularly true of politicians and civil servants, who are generally success stories of the existing system. It would be perverse were they to undermine the system which accredits their place in the hierarchy. The drive by the ruling class to preserve the status quo in education is expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o:

During the neo-colonial stage of imperialism education and culture play an even more important role as instruments of domination and oppression ... Since the petit-bourgeoisie grew up accepting the world view of the imperialist bourgeoisie, it will drive the youth even more vigorously into educational factories producing the same world view ... This class wants to prove to its Western mentors that it is civilised, that it is cultured, that it will not bring chaos to the country (Thiong'o, 1981:12-13).

It is also significant that rulers (politicians, senior civil servants, church leaders etc.) in Lesotho and Zimbabwe are predominantly male. 'Ruling class interests', therefore, often correspond to male gender interests. Where the ruling class and capitalism both benefit from women's subordination, the state will likely act in defence of patriarchy (Stromquist, 1995).

**e. Institutional Responsibility for Education**

Responsibility for education in Lesotho is portrayed symbolically as a 'three-legged pot', in which control is shared by government, churches and communities (see Extract 8). In practice, communities exercise

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Development Plan (Ministry of Education, 1992:4). The second relates to secondary education.



relatively little influence (the impact of popular pressure will be addressed later), but education is characterised by a struggle for control between churches and government, a situation which makes reform problematic (Gill, 1994). Currently churches own nearly 90% of schools in Lesotho and their subsidy of buildings and management gives them considerable leverage. For instance, in January 1993 Catholic and Anglican schools<sup>22</sup> remained closed until the suspension of a government order limiting church control. Much education policy in Lesotho is geared to increasing state control. Whereas the Second Five Year Development Plan (KOL, 1975) made this intention explicit, recent policy and legislation is more guarded. Nonetheless, the 1995 Education Act (GOL, 1995) clearly wrests power from the churches. Opposition to this Act underlay conspiracy theories in the Catholic press linking it to the King's death in a road accident, shortly after signing (or, allegedly, refusing to sign) the bill.

Although the churches may resist state attempts to reduce their powers, they are not purely forces of conservatism. Views expressed by the church Education Secretaries on the subject of gender were generally more radical and enthusiastic than those of Ministry officials. Nonetheless, the churches have not pressured for major changes in significant areas of education, such as examinations. Examination performance is a key area of competition between the churches. The Catholic Education Secretary spent some time listing for me on this basis schools which were 'good' and those which had 'gone up' or 'gone down'.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, "The tripartite organisation of schools allows for the exporting of blame" (Setoi, 1989:17).

Not only is responsibility for education divided between church and state, but within the Lesotho state apparatus responsibility is split between a Ministry and several parastatals. Curricular change instigated by NCDC, (a parastatal), can only be implemented with the (sometimes unwilling) collaboration of the Inspectorate.<sup>24</sup> There are also clashes between ECOL and NCDC over the process of curriculum design.<sup>25</sup> Such divisions provide channels through which it is possible to stall change, or to manipulate policy.

In Zimbabwe, the churches lost most of their direct power over education in colonial times, when their views were too radical for the government (Mungazi, 1990). Under pressure, they relinquished 2,308 schools, retaining only 635 (Zimbabwe, 1982). Zimbabwe's churches are not wholly without influence today, having a high degree of legitimacy among the population. They also run many boarding schools: prestigious institutions, without whose co-operation implementation of education policy is difficult. The introduction of Political Economy to secondary school curricula was stalled by the Catholic Church (Jansen, 1991).

The main institutions responsible for education in Zimbabwe are the Ministry<sup>26</sup> and parastatals. The government set up ZIMSEC as a parastatal, but retained control of CDU, presumably to control curricula. However, the examination curricula developed by ZIMSEC are narrower than those prepared by CDU, and

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<sup>22</sup> The Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) is less enthusiastic about its role in education provision, and did not resist the order [Interview, Mr Tiheli, LEC Education Secretary, 08/10/96].

<sup>23</sup> Interview, Mr Mohlapiso, Roman Catholic Education Secretary, 16/08/96.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Mrs Maphosa, Director, NCDC, Maseru, 18/07/96.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, Mrs Ralise, Registrar, ECOL, 01/09/97.

<sup>26</sup> Zimbabwe has a separate Ministry of Higher Education and Technology.



teachers teach only that required for examinations.<sup>27</sup> Thus government control of CDU does not necessarily imply control over what is taught.

#### **f. Popular Pressure**

Although until recently Zimbabwe's government arguably stifled most political opposition, and democracy in Lesotho, non-existent from 1970-1993, remains fragile, many education officials and policy makers attribute lack of educational change to popular resistance. It is important, here, to be aware of the differential power held by different segments of the population, particularly the relative inability of rural women to make their voices heard through the media or otherwise exert pressure on the state.

Popular demand for educational expansion has been mentioned. Popular opinion is, however, generally conservative in terms of the type of education it demands. Parents and children have clear expectations of what school and education should be (Harber, 1989). These expectations relate to teaching styles, curricula, use of examinations, and to distinctions based upon gender. "Deeply rooted public preference for the Oxbridge type of education made reform of the practices of educational institutions and system difficult and unpopular" (Zvobgo, 1994:94-95).

In Lesotho, the report on the National Pitso suggested a less conservative populace:

Contrary to expectation the parents appeared to have learnt that all was not well with copying imported educational systems in their raw form, no matter how glamorous such systems might have appeared in the past. The parents wanted the educational system to build a Basotho Nation which has its own identity and a specific destiny in life (KOL, 1978).

Nonetheless, the distinctiveness desired amounted to little more than a greater role for religion and Sesotho culture.

While Lesotho's National Pitso was amenable to government interpretations, people in both countries have, at times, expressed their opinion of education reforms very forcefully. Popular attitudes to vocational education have already been discussed. In Zimbabwe:

There is undoubtedly a great amount of support for the "O" Levels for All' policy.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the Ministry of Education's hint that it might screen secondary school entrants for the Form I intake had to be hastily withdrawn in the face of outright public hostility (Mackenzie, 1988:350).

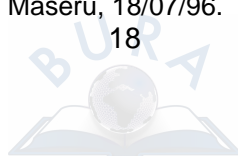
A similar problem is education's irrelevance to rural students. It is acknowledged that: "The rural parts of [Lesotho] don't benefit much from secondary education."<sup>29</sup> However, neither Zimbabwe nor Lesotho has felt able to differentiate between urban and rural schools, as this would be associated with repressive colonial attempts to deprive rural communities of an education which would enable them to rise socially.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview, Dr Sibanda, Director, ZIMSEC, 18/07/97.

<sup>28</sup> Since 1987 all students entering secondary school have been entitled to sit O Levels.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Mrs Maphosa, Director, NCDC, Maseru, 18/07/96.



It may be considered that responsiveness to popular demands is a sign of an 'empowering' education system. However, it is more a reflection of the current social structure and parental ambitions for their children within this. Students and their families are primarily concerned with individual betterment within the existing socio-economic order and not with social empowerment. Students opt for subjects society tells them are appropriate. This is reflected in sex stereotyping of subject choices. Parents resist any attempt to deprive their children of opportunities for white collar employment. Meeting such demands does not undermine class or gender subordination in any way: "if a few compete and succeed then the system can be portrayed as fair, open and based on ability" (Harber, 1989:99). Parallels may be drawn with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) analysis of social reproduction in French universities. The apparently neutral and independent university, in its seemingly technical function of educating and awarding qualifications, perpetuates the myth that it is the fault of lower class students that they are less successful, and thereby legitimates hereditary transfer of privilege within the ruling class. The Southern African school persuades rural girls that they are worthy of nothing better than a series of failed O Levels.

## **Conclusions**

It is not possible to identify a single explanation for the absence of reform to curricula and examinations, which is common to both Lesotho and Zimbabwe, despite their differing colonial histories and current ideological and economic systems. Rather there are a variety of 'forces of conservatism' that come together to support the status quo. "Given the continuation of academic, exam-oriented curricula and teaching styles, revolutionary and liberating forms of education were not going to emerge in the mainstream school system" (Foley, 1982:16). Yet academic examinations have the support of the ruling classes (whose positions were often secured by passing such examinations); the populace (who associate them with employment, wealth and entry to the middle class); and capital (which uses them as a basis for selecting employees, and as an objective measure of the quality of education). These different interests interact ways which are highly complex. Migdal (1988), for example, suggests that most African states lack hegemonic power in society, and instead of pursuing policy objectives consistent with ideological or class interests, engage in obstructing measures (such as education reform) that would increase the power of other social institutions and weaken their control. There need to be changes in most, if not all, of the actors and their motivations if reform is to materialise. It seems unlikely, therefore, that current curricula or examinations will be abandoned, or radically changed, in the near future.

Is there, then, any cause for optimism? Hope might lie in the expansion of secondary education, which has progressed relatively unimpeded in the years since independence. There are contradictions arising from this expansion, which could be exploited by those wishing to see a more empowering education for rural girls.

The most obvious outcome of expansion in both Lesotho and Zimbabwe are the large numbers of young people leaving secondary education without the certificates required for formal sector employment, and with few other obvious benefits. This situation has no clear advantage for any of the interests outlined in Section 3. It is difficult to see, for instance, the shape of an education system of which capitalism declares 90% of the product useless, can reflect the demands of a capitalist economy, either local or international. It seems equally unlikely that a petit bourgeois political leadership should wish to see mass school leaver



unemployment. In Zimbabwe “the spectre of thousands of highly educated unemployable young people is haunting authorities and governments” (Zvobgo, 1986:64). Even to parents, it is becoming increasingly apparent that secondary education equips only a minority with certificates, and that many children demonstrate early in their school careers that they will not join this minority. Parents are aware they could be wasting money paying fees.

Educational expansion, having escaped the censure of conservative interests within Zimbabwe and Lesotho, might now become an engine for wider change. There is an increasingly perceived need to cater for the majority of young people who leave school with no qualifications, and remain economically inactive.<sup>30</sup> This potential must be acted upon in the interests of rural girls, however, otherwise the response to these contradictions might simply be a contraction of secondary education. This is an answer that structural adjustment has proffered and that experience shows will hit rural girls first and hardest.

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<sup>30</sup> Commenting on O Level results, Zimbabwe’s Minister of Education asked: “Can we stand up as educationists today and say that we have fulfilled our mandate, if we do not know what happens to those pupils who have been educated up to four years of secondary education, and at great expense for that matter?” (The Herald 1997).



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