

Teaching Human Rights Education: A Foucauldian Discourse

Victor J. Pitsoe

College of Education, University of South Africa
E-mail: Pitsovj@unisa.ac.za

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ABSTRACT There is a growing interest in Human Rights Education in both developed and developing countries. In spite of the array of changes in the education policy, namely state infrastructure and legislation, there is a missing link between theory and practice in the South African education policies. This article sets out to investigate the discrepancy between theory and practice in the South African education policies. It seeks to make a modest contribution to the teaching of HRE theory and practice. Drawing from Gramsci's framework and Foucault's theory of discourse, this article: (1) conceptualises human rights education; (2) investigates the genesis of human rights education; (3) explores Foucault's theory of discourse and Human Rights Education; (4) argues teaching Human Rights Education as practice of hegemony; and (5) analyses the post-apartheid education policies in terms of the human rights included in the curriculum.

Over the past twelve years, Human Rights Education has slipped into the languages of Ministries of Education, educational and non-profit organizations, human rights groups and teachers ...not to mention inter-governmental agencies such as the United Nations ... (Tibbitts 2002:160).

INTRODUCTION

The above citation captures the basis of the adoption of human rights in education ministries in the developed and developing countries, and justifies the prominence of Human Rights Education (HRE) policies, more specifically in the case of South Africa. However, the concepts of "human rights" and "human rights education" seem to be broadly perceived, interpreted and confusing, even though we hear or read about it every day. Confusion may arise because of different levels of awareness and/or contradictory approaches to the subject (Okçabol 2002: 103). Some people ask for respect for human rights for purely humanistic reasons. Some people try to benefit from human rights for their specific causes, while they are insensitive to the same rights for others. There are some who emphasise human rights in theory, but may violate them in practice (Okçabol 2002: 103). South Africa's transition to democracy was hailed as a miracle across the globe. The adoption of a new Constitution reflected and reinforced the political shift to a non-racial democratic dispensation founded on the value of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms (Parlevliet 2004: 39). Nonetheless, the past imbalances and attitudes did not simply disappear with the proclamation of new legislation. Furthermore, improving the quality of life for South Africans of all races has turned out to be a major challenge,

as is the creation of a society reflective of democratic values, social justice and human rights.

Notwithstanding the array of changes in the education policy, namely state infrastructure and legislation, the unfortunate reality at present is that rights are still far from real for many learners in South Africa (Parlevliet 2004: 43). Ordinary learners, more specifically in the historically disadvantaged communities, have yet to feel the practical implementation of the education policies, laws, and rights. From a philosophical perspective, this article argues that there is an inadequate or little, if any, practice of and compliance with the flawed post-apartheid education policies (Curriculum 2005 [C2005], National Curriculum Statement [NCS] and Revised National Curriculum Statement [RNCS]) on the principles of *availability, accessibility, acceptability* and *adaptability* as a constitutional flaw, as required by the United Nations Charter (UNC), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and subsequent human rights documents. In addition, it is perceived as a brutal attack on the core values of democracy. These challenges the premise that educational reform can resolve social dilemmas merely based upon the nature of the economic, political and social system itself. In essence, curriculum change is no substitute for and no guarantee of social change. Curriculum change is more a reflector than a generator of social change or development (Jansen 1990: 330).

Fundamental to this article is the assumption that education policies (C2005, NCS and

RNCS) should be consistent with UDHR and other International Conventions. This article sets out to investigate the discrepancy between theory and practice in the South African education policies. Accordingly, this article seeks to make a modest contribution to the teaching of HRE theory and practice. While there is substantial literature on teaching HRE, relatively little has been done using Foucault's and Gramsci's frameworks as theoretical lenses. Drawing on Gramsci's framework and Foucault's theory of discourse, this desktop review (1) conceptualises Human Rights Education; (2) investigates the genesis of human rights education; (3) explores Foucault's theory of discourse and human rights education; (4) advocates the teaching of human rights education as practice of hegemony; and (5) analyses the post-apartheid education policies in terms of the human rights included in the curriculum.

Conceptualising Human Rights Education

The concept of HRE is highly contested and broadly perceived. Historically, UNESCO and Amnesty International, among others, have been most influential in the discourses of HRE. However, efforts to define HRE in the 1950s and '60s emphasised cognitive learning for young people in a formal school setting. By the 1970s, most educators had extended the concept to include critical thinking skills and concern or empathy for those who experienced violation of their rights. The focus remained on school-based education for youth, with little or no attention to personal responsibility or action to promote and defend rights or effect social change. For UNESCO, HRE is an integral part of the right to education and is increasingly gaining recognition as a human right in itself. Knowledge of rights and freedoms is considered a fundamental tool to guarantee respect for the rights of all. Amnesty International's conceptualisation perceives HRE as a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities through fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with internationally recognised human rights principles, and as an internationally recognised method for promoting human rights on a local, national and global level among many levels of stakeholders (Rashid 2005). It is concerned with changing attitudes and behaviour, learning new skills, and

promoting the exchange of knowledge and information. It helps prevent violations, strengthens actions and campaigns, creates a space for dialogue and change, and encourages respect and tolerance, integrating the principles of human rights into everyday life (Waldron et al. 2011).

HRE plays a vital role in building social structures that support participatory democracies and the resolution of conflict, and provides a common understanding of how to address political and social differences equitably and celebrate cultural diversity (Rashid 2005). The general goal of all HRE is to integrate international human rights standards and practices into peoples' daily lives. It is often linked conceptually and with civic education, conflict resolution programs, democracy education and the like. HRE is based on the premise that human rights will reduce violence within society, it is understood as a set of generally accepted principles and rules of society expressed in and adapted to a particular society and culture. In practice, however, HRE is rarely a prescribed remedy. The human rights principles that are incorporated into many international treaties were designed "to prevent recourse to violence and to be a foundation of freedom, peace and justice in the world". For this reason, HRE is also a vital element in the democratisation of education, enabling people to understand, advocate, and operationalise their rights and the rights of others in an educational context (Waldron et al. 2011). In addition, it is linked with democratic ways of working and with the empowerment of individuals and groups. In a school context, it relates to governance, relations, classroom climate, pedagogy and curriculum content, and has the capacity to transform educational relationships for children, parents and teachers.

A potentially more useful theory of HRE comes from the works of Paulo Freire (1994) and critical theorists, who have also strongly influenced academic discourse on HRE. They focus primarily on the underpinning values of HRE rather than on its outcomes, thereby placing HRE within an ethical frame (Flowers 2004). Flowers further argues that there is a danger that HRE can become indistinguishable from ethics within academic discourse. Where professional educators are concerned, Flowers argues that much of the debate centres on the location of HRE and its relationship with other

forms of education. Flowers views HRE as “the context that unites and subsumes” other types of education such as citizenship education, development education, peace education, and anti-racism education (Flowers 2004: 118). Education should encompass values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity.

In the light of these arguments, HRE cannot be reduced to the simple introduction of human rights content in already overburdened curricula. It calls for profound reform of education, which touches upon the curriculum of pre- and in-service training of teachers and others working in the education of children, textbooks, methodology, classroom management, and the organisation of the education system at all levels. HRE is also a vital element in the democratisation of education, enabling people to understand, advocate, and operationalise their rights and the rights of others in an educational context. Viewed as a process and embodied in the practice of education, HRE is linked with democratic ways of working and with the empowerment of individuals and groups.

Genesis of Human Rights Education

There is a strong bond between human rights and HRE. On the one hand, human rights are founded on the inherent dignity of the human person. According to the UDHR, as adopted in 1948, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Although human rights were principally defined and codified in the twentieth century, human rights values are rooted in the wisdom literature, traditional values, and religious teachings of almost every culture (Flowers 2004: 3; Nieuwenhuis 2007: 24). For example, the Hindu Vedas, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, the Bible, the Quran (Koran), and the Analects of Confucius all address questions of peoples’ duties, rights, and responsibilities. Native American sources include the Inca and Aztec codes of conduct and justice and the Iroquois Constitution (Flowers 2004: 3). In addition, the emphasis on HRE began in 1995 with the beginning of the UN Decade for HRE, though previously addressed in 1953 with the UNESCO Associated Schools Program, which served as an “initial attempt to teach human rights in formal school settings”. The first formal request for the need to educate students about human rights came about in UNESCO’s

1974 article, “Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding”. HRE became an official central concern internationally after the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 (Flowers 2004).

On the other hand, HRE in fact is a fairly recent phenomenon that has only gained significance within the last three decades, even though the theme was first raised in 1974 by the UN (Georgi and Seberich 2004; Tomasevski 2004; Weston 1984). Some scholars (Nieuwenhuis 2007: 4; Keet 2006: 53) regard HRE as a new derivative of a number of educational programmes that have existed for centuries. Many of these traditional endeavors with their various forms and nomenclature are directly or indirectly related to what we today would classify under the broad umbrella of HRE. According to Flowers (2004: 115), HRE framework is intended as a social education based on principles and standards to cultivate the capacities to take moral choices and take principled positions on issues – in other words, to develop moral integrity.

Human rights are the basis of a just society and world (UNDP 2005). They are the rights to which all humans are entitled, and which safeguard the freedom of each individual within society. Teaching about human rights is not just a moral obligation, but also a responsibility that is formally supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by international law (UNDP 2005). Respect for human rights can be a good condition for integration in a global world and involves universal access to quality education. As observed by Hallak (1999: 18), the negation of human rights is an obstacle to the participation of a large percentage of the population in education and globalisation; it is in the interests of “globalisers” to participate in the “opening” of closed, authoritative societies and thus generate new markets.

Education, including the of HRE programmes, is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights. For education to be appreciated as a *universal* human right, governments’ obligations to this end must also be universal (Tomasevski 2004:8). The legal obligation of governments stemming from the right to education should be underpinned by, amongst others, the principles of: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. According to the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution of the Republic of

South Africa 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996), everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Human rights are founded on the rule of the law, and therefore human rights mainstreaming entails the need to understand and apply universal human rights norms. Human rights mainstreaming necessitates integrating human rights throughout education policy making and practice at all levels, from global to local, emphasising “the centrality of human rights in all activities” (Tomasevski 2004: 1). In addition, this necessitates establishing links between sectors of human rights, education and development, in working towards shared goals of education for all, poverty eradication and gender equality. Thus, education for all is not only an end in itself, but also a means for attaining all globally agreed commitments (Tomasevski 2004: 1).

To end this section, human rights and HRE are two sides of the same coin. The relation between human rights and HRE is evident here, and underpins Foucault’s notion of poststructural relations of agonism. As relations of agonism and reciprocal struggle, the aim of dominating power (serving interests of the hegemony) therefore is to fix relations by determining the field of possible actions available to the other. Interestingly, rights to education are closely tied both to the quality of HRE and to averting and preventing discriminatory or violent attitudes, opinions, and forms of behaviour that are fed by differences and presumed superiority and inferiority (such as racism, sexism, and prejudices based on other differences) (Rosemann 2004: 80). Human rights are a belief system that requires neither metaphysics, conversion, nor loss of individual identity, but yet appeals to the highest ideals and promises social transformation (Flowers 2004: 123). Thus, HRE must address the moral imagination, that skill that enables one human being to recognise and respect another as essentially like oneself.

Foucault’s Theory of Discourse and Teaching HRE

Foucault’s concept of *discourse* has been extensively received in social sciences, including

business studies and information systems. However, Foucauldian discourse has been received with varying degrees of enthusiasm within social sciences circles, more specifically in education. His ideas are said to offer both radical epistemological *decenterings* of knowledge and truth, while offering a *somewhat* structuralist account of the effects of discourse, knowledge, and power on society and the subject (Hobbs 2008). Etymologically, the concept “discourse” originated from Latin *discursus*, meaning “running to and from”, generally refers to “written or spoken communication”. In the simplest sense discourse is conversation, or information. It is frequently used by intellectual historians. Sociologists and philosophers tend to use the term “discourse” to describe the conversations and the meaning behind them by a group of people who hold certain ideas in common.

The concept “discourse” is multidimensional, broadly perceived and has several definitions. As noted by Lawson and Garrod (1999: 72), discourse is a collection of related statements or events which define relationships between elements of the social world. Muller (2008: 325) conceives discourse as a socio-cognitive phenomenon; and as a concept that highlights “the people” and their communicative processes, with its focus on the construction of meaning. According to Foucault (2002a), it refers to a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance. For him, it is through discourse (through knowledge) that we are created. This discourse joins power and knowledge, and its power follows from our casual acceptance of the “reality with which we are presented”. Foucault (1991) sees discourse as set of ideas and practices which condition our ways of relating to, and acting upon, particular phenomena; and as (a) group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But, since all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect (Hobbs 2008).

Discourse unfolds throughout every society, constructing restraints and imperatives which manifest as rules, norms and maxims (Foucault 2002b). These rules determine who has the right

to speak and what can be legitimately said, and what are reasonable, sane and proper actions and what are not. For Foucault (1991), rights discourse arises independently of legal political discourses and works to engage modern subjects in enterprises that reflect the dominant episteme of their era. Rights, and presumably human rights, are properly construed as reflecting these new mechanisms of power. Flowing from this, discourse assumes that ideas structure social spaces, and therefore ideas can play a significant role in teaching HRE. Ideas can *produce* a culture of HRE, and not simply *reflect* them; discourse theory teaches students to be very attentive to small shifts in how ideas are expressed in language. Language, consequently, as well as other forms of symbolic exchange, is the primary object studied by discourse theory. Foucault's theory of discourse, on one hand, advocates that language can be broken into different bodies or corpuses of statements and utterances governed by rules and conventions of which the user is largely unconscious. On the other hand, it holds that discourse cannot be isolated to speech, but structures written language as well. These rules are so important to how we think that they can spill over into other aspects of our lives: the pictures we draw, the buildings we construct, the artwork we create and appreciate, and even the very social institutions that we live in.

Against this backdrop, discourse plays a critical role in the social construction of reality – it frames how one thinks and acts. There is a fundamental methodological premise in Foucault's (1980, 1991) work that discourses, as knowledge and truth claims, play a significant role in constructing what is "real" for each of us. The basic premise of Foucault's theory of discourse maintains that the ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject. Hence, an expanded understanding of discourse is important in that it sets certain parameters regarding the declarative and procedural knowledge to be conveyed in the language of HRE programmes. Discourse frames ways of thinking about certain topics, things and objects in teaching HRE. It generates knowledge and truth, and creates a world of human rights. Also, discourse forms subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them, and constitute the *nature* of the body, unconscious

and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.

Teaching HRE as practice of hegemony

It would seem appropriate to begin this section with a question, namely "What is hegemony?" In recent years, many scholars have turned to the works of Antonio Gramsci as a starting point for developing an answer to this question. Akita (2010) notes that hegemony, as a theory, has been used in virtually all spheres of human endeavour and in all kinds of relationships that suggest inequality. In addition, it is a constant struggle against a multitude of resistances to ideological domination, and any balance of forces that it achieves is always precarious, always in need of re-achievement. Gramsci's theory of hegemony has a totalistic quality in which everything is connected to everything else.

The concept of "hegemony" is very broad and fluid in nature. It is loose and elastic and attains precision only when brought into contact with a particular situation which it helps to explain – a contact which also develops the meaning of the concept (Cox 1996: 50). However, it turns out to be a difficult question to answer in relation to Gramsci (1971), because, at least within *The Prison Notebooks*, he never gives a precise definition of the term. Throughout *The Prison Notebooks*, the term "hegemony" recurs in a multitude of different contexts. This is probably the main reason why there is so much inconsistency in the literature on hegemony – people tend to develop their own definitions, based on their own reading of Gramsci and other sources. The problem with this is that if one's reading of Gramsci is partial, one's definition cannot be comprehensive.

It is not my intention to dwell on the pendants of trying to define hegemony, given a useful plethora of literature on the subject already exists. It is my contention, though, that it is essential to have a shared understanding of what hegemony entails. Implicitly, hegemony is the dominance of the society's other classes in maintaining the sociopolitical status quo. Boothman (2008) notes that the concept of "hegemony" has been in general use in socialist circles since the early twentieth century. Its use suggests that if a group was described as "hegemonic", it occupied a leadership position

within a particular political sphere. As Clark (1977: 2) puts it, hegemony is how the ruling classes control the media and education. The term “hegemony” is frequently used to describe the way in which the capitalist classes infiltrate people’s minds and exert their domination. Gramsci, though, not only used the term “hegemony” to describe the activities of the ruling classes; he also used it to describe the influence exerted by progressive forces. Keeping this in mind, one can see that according to Gramsci, hegemony should be defined not only as something done by the ruling classes; it is in fact the process by which social groups – be they progressive, regressive, reformist, et cetera – gain the power to lead, how they expand their power and maintain it.

There is a strong connection between education and hegemony. For example, theories of pedagogy (which are concerned with the selection, organisation and evaluation of knowledge) in HRE can be viewed as prescriptions for action and rituals of social hegemony. As prescriptions, theories provide ways of considering the complexities and possibilities of classroom activities (Popkewits 1994). Schools, as institutions of social and cultural reproduction, perpetuate political hegemony through the teaching of HRE. In addition, states orchestrate political hegemony through their connections to schools. In the case of South Africa, schools prepare their students to be consistent with the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy’s fundamental values as stated in the Constitution. These are: democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), open society, accountability (responsibility), respect, the rule of law, reconciliation.

Although Gramsci’s prescriptions for curriculum and method are evidently conservative, he saw no contradiction in both accepting the school as hegemonic and favouring the kind of method and content (suitably modernised), which was largely indistinguishable from his own schooling (Evans 1998). No doubt, any educational reform merely designed to establish comprehensive primary and secondary schools looks “old hat”, just as any modification of the organisation of schooling which remains within the framework of a bureaucratically managed public system of schooling (as Gramsci’s proposals do) cuts little ice with radical critics of

schooling who see the democratisation of schooling as necessarily requiring the establishment of non-bureaucratic alternatives (Evans 1998). The role of the teacher in such a process is critical. Education is a field where theory and practice, culture and politics inevitably merge, and where intellectual research and achievement combine with social and political action. At classroom level, power belongs to the teachers. Learners are socialised to accept their subordination without question, giving way to what Gramsci describes as “coercion” and “consent”. Gramsci’s hegemony, among others, is based on consent – consent protected by the armour of coercion. The teacher coerces, and the students consent to the actions and inactions of the teacher. Foucault (1978) charges that the principles underpinning HRE, such as justice, beneficence and respect, are illusions or attempts of dominant cultures to impose their realities on the powerless. Undoubtedly, the theory and practice of teaching HRE are no different from those in previous periods of power. Within the tradition of international political realism that occupied the minds of academics and world leaders for much of the period since the Second World War, hegemony has implied the existence of single, dominant state possessing both the material capability and will to maintain world order in its own interests (Evans 1998: 5). In addition, social and political control is maintained with a system of formal and informal rules that serve the interests of the hegemony. The notion of hegemony enhances power and control based on might with those based on right. It is maintained through consensus and the legitimisation of intellectual and moral leadership (Gramsci 1971: 57). For Gramsci (1971), hegemony is achieved and maintained by developing a widely accepted order characterised by a “common social-moral language” that expresses a singular vision of reality, informing with its spirit all forms of thought and behaviour. Thus, teaching HRE as practice of hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure their consent to the dominant group’s agenda.

Analysis of the Post-Apartheid Education Policies in Terms of the Human Rights Included in the Curriculum

It is fashionable, especially in HRE circles, to refer to the C2005, NCS and RNCS policies

as human rights aligned education constructs (Keet and Carrim 2006). Human rights in education and HRE, though relatively new conceptions within post-apartheid educational discourse have their roots in the broader history of the struggle for a non-racial and democratic education system. Flowing from this, the question, "What are the human rights included in the C2005, NCS and RNCS policies?" becomes critical. From a policy theory and practice perspective, HRE, with reference to education policy, must be explicitly rooted in the human rights principles as expressed in the UN Charter, UDHR, and subsequent human rights documents (Flowers 2004: 121). In addition to this, the methods used to teach human rights should be consistent with human rights values, respecting individual and cultural differences while affirming universal principles. HRE must be more than knowledge about human rights documents; it must involve the whole person and address skills and attitudes as well. Flowers (2004: 121) contends that HRE must lead to action, both in individual lives and in the local and global communities.

In contrast, Parlevliet's (2004: 43) research on HRE in the South African context suggests that socio-economic conditions experienced, as access to development, opportunities and resources – though formally equal – are still highly unequal in practice, as people come from divergent points of departure. The education system constitutes a sad example – statutory deracialisation has had no impact on day-to-day racist practices at institutional and interpersonal levels, which continue to exist. It emphasises that the continued racial inequality in schools is structurally linked to wider social relations and the economic, political and social fabric of the society. A primary feature of the South African context is the large gap between the progressive and lofty provisions of the country's new laws and policies and the practical, concrete reality experienced by the majority of the population (Parlevliet 2004: 43).

The interpretation of curriculum policy and development in post-apartheid South Africa has been dominated by two main approaches: one focuses on curriculum as policy, and the other on curriculum as knowledge. Chisholm (2005) asserts that in the curriculum policy as lineage, scholars have focused on the "symbolic" aspect of the policy and its essentially political charac-

ter, on descriptions of the origins and unfolding of policy, conflicts between curriculum theory and practice, and the relationship between curriculum and identity. Curriculum as a symbolic form is a powerful indicator of who rules in a given society (Jansen 1990: 325).

Research on the implementation of policy suggests that the state bureaucrats and local policy makers often undermine or change the legislative intention of policy (Dyer, quoted in Molale 2007: 137). This kind of behaviour can cause a discrepancy between policy and practice, thus leading to policy slippage or non-implementation (Molale 2007: 137). In the flawed South African education policies (C2005, NCS and RNCS), there is a missing link between theory and practice – a "policy gap" exists between what is implemented and what is *practically* demonstrated in the school and quality education. The C2005, NCS and RNCS design and adoption are taking human rights principles into consideration, but access to schooling and to quality education appears to be determined by market considerations and by prevailing social, economical, cultural and geographical inequalities – it appears to be inconsistent with the UDHR and International Conventions. The education policies are largely invested in political symbolism rather than the substance of change (Chisholm 2005; Cross et al. 2002: 175; Jansen 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2002; Sayed 2001a, 2001b). Political symbolism is symbolism that is used to represent a political standpoint. The symbolism can occur in various media, including banners, acronyms, pictures, flags, mottos, and countless more. Given the pattern of policy symbolism, it can be said that education policy has turned out to be a mechanism used by the government to achieve compensatory legitimisation. Fataar (2008) contends that the government symbolically used policy to signal progress and a commitment to transformation (as opposed to effecting real change).

More precisely, the investiture in political symbolism in education policy has both practical and political consequences for the post-apartheid state (Jansen 2001b: 282). The continuation of this effectively means that one should expect little of the grand-scale changes within schools that defined struggles under apartheid or that were encapsulated in education policies after apartheid (Jansen 2001b: 182). According

to Jansen (2001c:13), the symbolic value of the curriculum is more important than its content. This political investment in the production of policy was especially important to politicians in selling their advantage to the broad democratic alliance. Sayed (2001a:189) claims that such policies signal and provide images of the desired educational outcomes and focus on “frameworks” rather than the specific contents of educational policies. From the human rights and policy (theory and practice) perspective, there seems to be scant policy coherence across the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international conventions.

CONCLUSION

In this article the researcher has argued that discourse assumes that ideas give structure to social spaces, and therefore ideas can play a significant role in teaching HRE. Ideas can produce a culture of HRE, and not simply *reflect* them, and discourse theory teaches students to be very attentive to small shifts in how ideas are expressed in language. In addition, discourse plays a critical role in the social construction of reality – it frames how one thinks and acts. Notably, schools as institutions of social/cultural reproduction can perpetuate political hegemony through teaching HRE. An analysis of the flawed post-apartheid education policies suggests that there is missing link between theory and practice – they are largely invested in political symbolism rather than the substance of change. Education policy makers seem to have been more likely to be interested in a borrowed policy and political symbolism than its details. Little attention has been paid to the historical and social context and this has far reaching implications for the successful implementation of the newly implemented Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

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