

The State and the Challenges of
Transformative Pedagogy in Mozambique

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Conference Paper nº 12

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Introduction

The teacher-state dichotomy is a complex interrelationship which depends upon factors such as the state legitimacy, teachers' ability to think socially and politically, and congruence between the roles and expectations of teachers and the state. The highly centralized nature of the state in post-colonial Mozambique has set the state to be a very powerful force in educational decision-making. However, there seems to be a lack of congruence and legitimacy with the state's power and therefore causes many teachers to view the state as a separate, non-related entity that has little do with education (and teachers) in the context of the classroom.

In order for teachers to become effective partners with the state in the development process, teachers must begin to view the state as *legitimate*. Furthermore, teachers must develop a sense of political clarity that will allow them to view themselves as subject in the process of development and just not objects without a voice. Conversely the state will need to recognize teachers as strategic actors in the development process by increasing the value placed upon teacher and education, allowing teachers to have input in educational planning, and recognizing their importance educationally and socially.

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Methodology

This paper draws on, and continues the subject matter, of my dissertation research which focused on primary school teachers' beliefs toward bilingual education in Mozambique. Although this paper is not concentrating on bilingual education, a dearth of data indicated that there was a considerable disconnect between the role of teachers and the role of the state. Hence, this paper will further unpack ways in which teachers can increase their effectiveness as educators and as empowering agents in community and national development. The data will be drawn from approximately 25 teacher interviews and classroom observations from teachers in the Boane District.

Theoretical framework

This paper is grounded in theories related to critical theory and critical pedagogy. Critical theorists attempt to identify foundations of truth “in specific historical, economic, racial, and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization” (Lincoln & Guba 2001, p. 177). Knowers are not considered distinct from objective truths, but are members in a broader social and historical context in which they may be unaware or aware, but unable or unwilling to change historical forms of oppression. . Lincoln and Guba refer to this paradox as the “divided Consciousness. Thus, teachers in this study will represent knowers of not only the content they teach, but of the social and historical context in which they live and work.” It is in this position of knowers that the relationship between teachers and the state becomes crucial. The foundation for critical theory is the connectedness of social critique to raised consciousness and the possibility of emancipatory change.

Background

Education is one of the main tenets in the process of development of a country. In Mozambique, this concept is no exception as schools are arguably one of the most effective institutions to strengthen Mozambican society and development. Yet, for schools to assume this leadership role, teachers must develop socio-political clarity which allows them to view themselves as agents of change. Equally important, the state must establish legitimacy with educators at all levels create an environment in which socially conscience and active teachers have room to engage in social action via the classroom and school. Such interaction will enable teachers to take more responsibility for the outcomes of school as well as take ownership of their own classroom and school.

Training teachers without preparing them to think critically and reflectively about their own work invites attitudes of reductionism and hence regard the existing social order uncritically. To this end, this discussion will explore ways in which teachers in Mozambique can become social agents of change, develop effective partnership with the state, and be positive forces in community and national development. Particular focus will be given to teachers' perceptions of themselves as agents of change and their beliefs and attitudes of the role of the state in education.

Education and the Building of a Mozambican Identity

Education has played a major role in Mozambique's quest for independence. In fact, education has been at the center of the attempts to build a Mozambican identity and eagerly promoted by the founding of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in

1962. FRELIMO considered education the most fundamental of needs for the liberation of the people and the land; it was to play a vital role in the development of Mozambique. Therefore, the post-colonial government nationalized the educational system. In attempts to develop Mozambique economically and socially, as well as give Mozambicans the resources to create their own reality and voice, the Marxist, secular liberation movement adopted a model of school, which was based in the scientific rationale of modernity. Within this quest for modernity, traditional African education and culture were deemed anti-modern. Therefore, any institution associated with traditional African society was discarded.

FRELIMO's educational perspective, which was developed during the liberation struggle, tried to disassociate itself with the educational vision of colonial and traditional schools in terms of objectives, models, and practices. FRELIMO believed that schools should liberate the Mozambican from "fatalism and resignation instilled by traditional and colonial education" (Buendia, 2001, p. 68). School had the sole responsibility of developing a scientific mind that was open and critical. Therefore, much of the curriculum and education during the early stages of independence focused on the learning of science and the standardization of knowledge and popular experience. Although FRELIMO's main objective was to dispose of Portuguese rule in Mozambique, they opted to use Portuguese as the medium of education and other state run institutions as a way to consolidate and unify the Mozambican people.

In spite of FRELIMO's best intentions, the modernization philosophy they adopted weakened their legitimacy as representatives of the Mozambican people. By

discarding African, culture, language, and rationale from the educational system, schools became a foreign institution to many Mozambicans. Consequently, the state did not function as the voice of the people and schools did not represent the modernizing and unifying force that was intended from its inception because it lacked relevancy for a large majority of the Mozambican people. In fact, schools and the state were perceived as institutions that did not belong to the people largely signaling that the people were not accountable to the state and the state was not accountable to the people. Hence, schools, as state-created institutions, often were perceived as distant and unrelated to community. This perceived lack of legitimacy manifests itself in various ways including lack of professional initiative, poor-quality, and general lack of concern and responsibility for educational outcomes among teachers. Arguably, it will be difficult to utilize teachers as partners with the state in development if the state does not find ways to increase their legitimacy at the school and classroom level.

Challenges to Education and the State

After independence Mozambique embarked on a socialistic modernization project that was aimed at changing the conditions of “backwardness” of the majority of its population. The education sector played a central role in these efforts toward modernization and the country registered some success in reaching most of the illiterate population in the first few years after independence. This success, however, suffered a setback due to the effects of the civil war that ravaged the country between 1977 and 1992 (Abrahamsson & Nilsson, 1995; Azevedo, 2003). According to Abrahamsson & Nilsson, between 1980 and the early 1990s, at the end of the civil war, 68% of the

primary school network was destroyed or closed due to the war, “giving 50 per cent of the school-age population access to education” (p. 129).

The end of the war offered an opportunity to expand the education services to vast parts of the interior previously not accessible to the state’s system. Most importantly, however, the end of the war and the subsequent liberalization of the political context presented an opportunity to address some of the issues ignored by the immediate postcolonial modernizing socialistic project.

Despite FRELIMO’s efforts, the education system in Mozambique faces considerable challenges, particularly in the area of teacher preparation and service. There continues to be an absence of national teacher training policy that provides codified knowledge and teaching skills based on appropriate teaching methodologies. At present, teachers earn general education degrees and, there is lack of content area experts or skilled specialists who could assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system. Additionally, there is a poor institutional framework to create specialized training programs by levels, grades, and content subjects. This lack of professional framework causes a low value to be placed on educators and as a result tends to attract less competent individuals (UNDP, 2000).

In addition to poor teacher training and a professional framework, the curricular development process, which is done in a top-down system, leaves little room for teacher input. As a result teachers are less empowered and only repeat knowledge as opposed to be producers and caretakers of knowledge.

Teachers as Ideologues

Teachers work from ideological assumptions and beliefs that they may not overtly recognize or acknowledge and may view their work as neutral (Auerbach, 1995). Yet, all educational activities are based in ideological beliefs. Therefore, teachers and the state either serve to perpetuate unequal social relations or challenge them. As a result of unreflective and uncritical pedagogy, teachers may subscribe to a deficit view of students, particularly those from rural, low economic and social status, and non native Portuguese speakers. Consequently, the classroom becomes a place where the existing unbalanced, unequal social order is reproduced instead of challenged and traversed. Additionally, the state has created conditions for teachers to be uncritical and passive workers as teachers are not provided with much opportunity to influence decision-making even though they have the potential to have the most impact in communities and the lives of numerous youths.

Given this lack of voice and autonomy among teachers, teachers must be prepared in a more socio-political method if they are ever to make a credible actor in the development process. Thus, subscribing to the latest teaching methodologies and learning theories, although important, alone is not enough to improve the teaching and learning process or create greater community and individual capacity. Teachers in Mozambique must recognize that teaching inherently is political and that they have a valuable socializing role in the lives of their students. Teachers must be taught to be reflective about their work as educators and agents of social change. Educators must evaluate what are the implications of pedagogical choices for their students' lives. Exploring the

connection between teaching and social/cultural realities raises such questions as: How do curricula, materials, and classroom practices display the accepted, unspoken assumptions about power in and outside of the classroom? What are the social roles of the teacher and the students? Who and what determine these roles? Do teachers see themselves as agents of change? If so, what are teachers' expectations of the state and how do they view their relationship to it?

Why Focus on Teachers?

Much of the research indicates that teachers are the most critical elements in improving education. "Education change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that" (Sarason, cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 117). To understand what teachers do and think, it is necessary to acknowledge that education is not politically or ideologically neutral. The importance of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and ideology towards the state in Mozambique needs to be conceptualized in a way in which teachers are agents of empowerment. Bartolome (2000) introduces the concept of "political clarity" which includes the capacity of teachers to think critically about their stereotypical beliefs. Bartolome argues that "uncritical" teachers use rote, teacher-centered techniques that can lead to unexamined beliefs and attitudes that can further multiply difficulties for students.

Research indicates that teachers commonly deferred responsibility for educational outcomes to the government. This in part can be attributed to the fact that the educational system is centralized and schools and individual teachers have little, if any input into the curriculum and standards in their own school. Therefore, many teachers' views of the

role of the school and the educational process were entangled with their view of the state. Teachers often commented that they did not take more initiative in the dealing of the school or their own classroom because such actions were responsibilities of the state. Accordingly, teachers believed that they were generally undervalued and therefore did not see the need to exert “extra” effort.

In general, teaching is not a noble profession in Mozambique. Training colleges often receive students who have difficulty securing other jobs, have less academic success, or students who are waiting for better opportunities. Teachers are often perceived as individuals “who only give classes, not people who actually teach or inform.” Because teachers have little control over the curriculum, they are forced to use what Auerbach (1995) describes as “curricula that are artificial constructs whose primary requirements are to satisfy external requirements [and ignore the learners’ needs and experiences] and inevitably shape classroom interactions” (p.15). As a result, teachers did not see themselves as agents of change, but rather drones in a system that had very little to do with their reality in the classroom.

Additionally, when questioned about what was needed to improve instruction, most teachers reported that they needed more resources. However, it appeared that teachers did not consider themselves as resources and therefore often lacked initiative in improving instruction or their own professional development. Subsequently, teachers did not place a sufficiently high priority on professional development and teacher preparation. Interview data indicated that most of the teachers were not accustomed to self- reflection about their various roles as instructors. To some extent, this may be

cultural. Teachers generally in Mozambique are a part of a top-down structure that does not prioritize teacher input in educational decisions. As a result, data suggested that teachers did not consider themselves responsible for their own career development.

Teachers generally believed that only the state could make such decisions.

Congruence

The successful use of teachers as partners with state in national development will largely depend on the match or congruence between the state's political will, financial and social support, and teachers' perceptions of the state and instructional attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Incongruence can be a result of prohibitive or contradictory administrative policies. Therefore, there must be cooperation from all levels of the education system beginning with the state. Given the nature of collaboration needed by various factions, effectiveness is lost as teachers negotiate social ideologies within the classroom.

Although it is important to adopt an educational model that is consistent with teachers' beliefs, the level of congruency must be bidirectional. Teachers' own ideological principles and socio-political attitudes are crucial to the efficacy of the program and therefore must have more than a periphery role in curricular and educational policy decisions. To this end, policies and educational decisions mandated by the state's Ministry of Education must also be congruent with regional and local schools' culture and teachers' beliefs about education and the state's role and its relationship to education and social advancement. This implies an increased level of decentralization. Moreover,

regional and local school authorities must have a voice to make curricular and instructional practices that are congruent with the realities of the schools and its teachers. Without this congruency between education's higher authorities of the state and local schools, it will be difficult to improve education and use teachers and community schools as tools for development effectively.

In order for the schools and the state to work in a partnership, both will likely need the support of the community support. Historically in post-colonial Mozambique, the schools have represented values and cultures that were too far removed from the communities in which they were located. Curricula were designed to respond to an idealized socialist order focused on modernization rather than incorporation of the largely traditional Mozambican society. In this process, the state became the main focus at the expense of communal identities, essentially disempowering them (Francisco, 2006). Therefore, increasing the attention given to teachers and their input may be one way to bridge the gap between schools, communities, communities, and the state in Mozambique. This would help to make the school a place of effective social interface that could ease the current popular view of the school as an alien institution to the community. This reconnection has also the potential to raise the value of education in society hence allowing schools to be effective institutions of personal, academic, and national development.

This concept of congruency is particularly important in a developing country like Mozambique where education is highly centralized. The role of teachers in the educational system is critical. Teachers are transmitters of knowledge and culture. They

are also representatives of the state and mediators between their students and official institutions of the state. Yet, they must often adhere to policies that are not congruent with their own beliefs or the social, linguistic, and cultural realities of their school. This lack of voice and autonomy in the educational system make it difficult to remain committed to school (which is an extension of the state) and the system's policies. Moreover, teachers assume less responsibility for the quality of their work as their context and professional boundaries have already been externally defined. The lack of congruency between teachers' and schools ideological assumptions and beliefs results in the disempowerment of teachers and schools. Consequently, teachers unconsciously become agents of marginalization and power imbalance instead of empowering agents of change. In short, teachers are often perceived as another arm of the state in the eyes of the community having little real value or relationship with Mozambican life.

Improved Teacher Preparation and Development Programs

Teachers are a key element in the educational system. An education that is relevant to society and human and national development depends largely on the quality of teachers. For this purpose, a teacher must be effectively prepared and empowered. This preparation must extend beyond academic courses in teacher preparation programs. There must be an entire professionalization of the field, which includes better teacher preparation programs as well as creating a space in which teachers can be autonomous and have a voice in the larger educational system.

Presently, requirements to enter the field of education in Mozambique are extremely low. The lack of rigor and low social status associated with teaching in

Mozambique in large part can be blamed for the low number of highly qualified candidates entering education programs. In this context, improving teachers also consists of improving their status and role in society. Arguably, the most effective method to increase teachers' status is to better prepare them to improve their efficacy and increase their salaries. The state has an incredible opportunity to aid in this effort, but it is questionable if there is sufficient political will. Moreover, improving teacher quality depends heavily on improving the existing teacher preparation programs in Mozambique. Presently there is an absence of a national strategy and model that can serve as a reference for teacher preparation programs. As a result of the lack of policy and strategy, there is no codified body of knowledge in the field. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to assess performance of in-service and pre-service teachers or establish guidelines.

Empowering Teachers to Become Agents of Change

Years of colonialism, civil war, and the deterioration of civil society have left Mozambique with high levels of educational, political, and social inequality. The schools are arguably one of the most effective institutions to strengthen Mozambican society and development. Yet, for schools in this study to assume this leadership role, teachers will need to develop socio-political clarity in order to educate their students in all aspects (Bartolome, 2002). Freire (1998) argues that teachers, in addition to technical skills, should be equipped with the ability to recognize and confront inequalities that harm students.

Preparing teachers to teach across language differences without preparing teachers to think critically and reflectively about their own work invites attitudes of

reductionism. Research suggests that teachers tend to regard the existing social order uncritically (Sleeter, 1994). Teachers work from ideological assumptions and beliefs that they may not overtly recognize or acknowledge and may view their work as neutral. Yet, Freire (1985) concluded that all educational activities are based in ideological beliefs:

The critical analyst will discover, in the methods and texts used by educators and students, practical value options that betray a philosophy of man, well or poorly outlined, coherent or incoherent . . . technique itself as an instrument of men in their orientation in the world is not neutral. (p. 43)

Therefore, teachers either serve to perpetuate unequal social relations or challenge them (Tollefson, 1995). Teachers need to reflect on their ideological assumptions and determine how they affect their instruction. As a result of unreflective and uncritical pedagogy, teachers may subscribe to a deficit view of students (particularly those from rural, low economic and social status, and non native Portuguese speakers) believing that academic and social development will occur once they are assimilated, namely becoming speakers of Portuguese. Consequently, the classroom becomes a place where the existing unbalanced, unequal social order is reproduced instead of challenged (Auerbach, 1995; Fairclough, 1989; Tollefson, 1995).

Subscribing to the latest teaching methodologies and learning theories, although important, alone is not enough to improve the teaching and learning process within the broader context of national development. Teachers in Mozambique must be aware that teaching inherently is political and that they have a valuable socializing role in the lives of their students. Hence, teacher preparation curricula and in-service professional

development must include training on linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, teachers must be taught to be reflective about their work as educators and agents of social change.

Not acknowledging the life experiences or value of teachers ideologically functions to legitimize the state's function and educational policies over others, thus creating and perpetuating the dominance of those in power. This privileging of the state's power without any means to question reinforces the idea that teachers have very little importance in the educational agenda and allows the state to ignore almost all other actors in the development process, particularly those related to traditional structures. (Auerbach, 1995; Tollefson, 1995).

Because there is unbalance between the state's legitimacy and teachers' perception of the state, the battlegrounds for knowledge, experiences, power, and language become even higher stakes. Giroux (1983) argues that when the dominant class determines the curriculum and instructional practices, the objective is to reproduce the existing social relationships. Freire (1970, 1981, 1985) argues that only by educating subordinated groups about power relations and the learners' role in the social order can education begin to benefit the subordinated. He continues to argue that the content and the process of education cannot be separated and is paramount in challenging certain groups' marginalization. Accordingly, the content must always be connected to the learners' social reality.

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