

EDUCATION IN A MULTI-RACIAL SOUTH AFRICA

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Almost up to the middle of the present century, 'education' was seen as a purely European exercise—the imparting of European culture, civilization, religion, literature, language, art and technology. It was the great contribution of the European world, to the Non-European—to the conquered races of Asia, Africa, America and the Australias. In South Africa, the word education continues to be used in the European/Christian context and official statistics compile the educational standards of the races entirely on the basis of school attainment in European institutions. Likewise, the compilation of literacy figures is generally based on literacy in English or Afrikaans.

The political liberation of Africa and Asia and the explosion of Black pride in the United States of America have extended the idea of education to include the imparting of other than European cultures and techniques, through formal institutions. This is the second revolution of the previously colonized and enslaved peoples, for it heralds the liberation of their cultures suppressed and nearly destroyed by European domination. The third revolution, liberation from economic domination is yet to come.

In its most general context, this second liberation movement challenges the tyranny of a dominant culture, through formal educational institutions, over subordinate cultures. Consequently, minority groups throughout the world are demanding that the formal educational structure, take into account their differential needs.

Whereas up to the mid-nineteen sixties education in the United States of America involved the processing of all immigrants into 'Americans', today educators are beginning to see 'education' in the context of imparting to Americans the cultures indigenous to their component groups. Thus the system whereby American Indian children are separated from their parents, into boarding schools, to Americanise them and in the process alienate them from their cultures and their parents is vehemently challenged. Likewise, Black Americans have insisted upon, and succeeded in rewriting 'American' history to include the Black point of view, and find eminent positions for Black heroes—

dismissed in the past as inconsequential agitators and quirks.

Asian and African concepts of education, as propounded among others, by Gandhi and Nyerere, are gaining international importance.

The main argument against an educational system that takes into account minority cultures is that it undermines national integration. India has found that her national integration is threatened above all by the repression of minority cultures, that national unity is dependant on the equal recognition and regard for the language and culture of each of her constituent groups, and the United States of America is beginning to learn the same lesson in her relationships with American Indians, Afro-Americans and Chicanos. The great integrator in a multi-racial, or multi-cultural society, is a common educational framework which incorporates all the cultural idioms prevailing in the society and stimulates proportionately equal interest in these. Tensions mount and explode when a particular culture insists on primacy over all others.

An educational framework of this type would increase the differences in the subjects and groups of subjects chosen by students: it would not affect the quality, or the prestige of these subjects or in any way undermine the freedom of the students to study where they choose and what they choose.

The positive aspirations of minority groups within a majority culture, must not be confused with the ethnocentric strivings of aspirant dominators. The Afrikaner agitation for Christian national education, prior to the coming into power of the Nationalists, is of a distinctly different order. It was hardly an agitation for cultural recognition. Christian national education, and the schools that the Afrikaner community set up in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, were political instruments for domination. It is questionable too that the Afrikaners saw themselves as a minority, and more than likely that they saw themselves as the majority White people, and therefore, **the** people—(since Blacks did not count), whose rightful role had been usurped.

Their concept of Christian nationalism ignores the ethnic aspirations of other South African groups, and defines a complementary 'nationalism' for Blacks designed to equip them for subordinate roles. This is explicit in the credal statement on Christian National Education put out by the I.C.N.O. in 1948, that the educational system should be rooted in the values of the Bible, and that it should inculcate the appropriate type of 'nationalism' in each group—Afrikaner nationalism, English nationalism (though these are being allowed, for political reasons, to converge into White nationalism), Coloured nationalism and Bantu nationalism. In 1948 the Afrikaner apparently had no concept of the Indian. Since then the credo has included Indian nationalism.

With regard to the Coloured, the credo states that he should be Christianized so that he will be protected from foreign ideologies and thereby not diverted from 'real happiness' to an illusionary one.¹

Whereas the purpose of this credo is to imbue the Afrikaner 'with the love of one's own, especially one's own language, history, and culture', to equip him for domination, its purpose for the non-Afrikaner, specifically the Black, is to undermine his personality, his history, his language, his culture, so that he will be equipped for the role of the dominated.

The difference between differential education for domination, and an educational system that accommodates the differential value and culture needs of its component racial and ethnic groups may be summarised as follows:

Education for Domination in a Multi-Racial Society

Education Incorporating the Different Cultural Needs of Minorities in a Multi-Racial Society

1. The system is inflicted from the top by the dominant group on the subordinate.

The demand for such an educational system comes from those who have had little or no control over the planning of their education.

2. Its primary, if not only function is to maintain the power of the dominator, and keep the subordinate groups perpetually servile through the myth of racial superiority.

Its primary function is to revitalise or resurrect the values and culture—religion, art, technology of the dominated, which were repressed or destroyed.

3. It is designed to infuse shame, helplessness and hopelessness in the dominated and prevent their unity.

It stimulates self-awareness and awareness of one's historical roots and replaces shame, helplessness and hopelessness with pride in one's self, one's community and culture. It consequently inspires unity.

4. It makes the dominated dependant and servile, so that he accepts the authority and leadership of his master and sees him as a redeemer, who lifts him out of his animal state of non-culture or non-civilization and who maintains him there by his grace.

It revolutionises the attitude and consequently the relationship of the dominated to the dominator so that he no longer sees him as all powerful and all wonderful, but as just another kind of human with another kind of culture, which albeit different, is not superior. He no longer sees his dominator's culture as all beautiful and his own as worthless.

5. It constricts the educational system, and blocks out a whole range of ideas and skills which are the cultural tradition of the dominated.

It widens and enriches the educational system through the addition of new concept and skills.

6. It suppresses the general economic development of the country, since in order to privilege the dominators, the skills and talents of the dominated are deliberately repressed.

It contributes to the general growth and vitality of a country, since it stimulates and trains the innate talents of all sections of the nation to contribute to the common weal.

7. It breeds hostility and suspicion among the subordinated minorities who, contemptuous of themselves, are contemptuous of each other. It provokes inter-group violence, and racial riots.

It stimulates inter-cultural and inter-group respect and promotes inter-group understanding and social peace.

8. It undermines national integration, thwarts the emergence of a common nation, and makes the country vulnerable to attacks from outside.

It integrates the multi-cultural units into a single nation and invokes loyalty in the face of foreign danger.

9. The Government is forced to maintain a large army and police force, both secret and obvious, to maintain its power, for no matter how apparently effective the inculcation of subordinate roles, the dominated are in a state of tension and await the first opportunity to break through their bonds. The main purpose of the army is to anticipate and suppress such outbreaks.

Social control is through consensus. Public censure complements the police in keeping law and order. The army exists for defence against foreign attacks.

¹ Article 14 of the I.C.N.O. issued in 1948. The I.C.N.O. was established in 1939 at a conference in Bloemfontein convened by the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organization, an offshoot of the Broederbond.

Racial schools have always been the rule in South Africa. There were some multi-racial schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but these were exceptions. The educational structure began with three distinct types of schools—slave schools, Hottentot schools and Government schools. The first two were taken over by missions and were overwhelmingly Black, the Government schools were predominantly White, those designed to anglicise Afrikaners, being closed to Blacks. The mission schools did not teach African languages and culture. There is no record of a trophy or a medal ever being awarded for a poem or a literary thought in Hottentot or slave language. The function of the mission schools was to christianise, civilise and industrialise the three concepts, having approximately the same meaning and function for the White administrators. The mission schools did not aim to make the Blacks Christlike—they were already too Christlike, with their implicit faith in the bounty of the good Lord, and their consequent relaxed lives, their repugnance for over-work in order to save or hoard, and their love of gambling on the beaches and whiling away their time in story telling and moralising. Their main aim was to ‘domesticate’ the Black and harness him to the white plough. Thus Dr Dale, Superintendent General of Education in 1891 described Native education as a ‘border pacification system’ and said:

‘... if for that reason only £12,000 a year is given to the schools in the Transkei, Tembuland and Griqualand, the amount is well spent, but that is not the only reason—to lift the Aborigines gradually, as circumstances permit, to the platform of civilized and industrial life is the great object of the educational vote’.¹

Since they were to be lifted to that platform to serve and not partner the White man, education rarely went beyond Standard I. In 1860 there were 14,265 pupils enrolled in 123 mission schools and just a little over 4,000 in 102 Government schools. Less than 6,000 of the total enrolment of 38,389 pupils in the Cape mission schools in 1883 were White.²

School curricula were formally separated towards the beginning of the present century in the Cape, Transvaal and the Orange Free State and towards the end of the last century in Natal.³ The African population suffered the most drastic separation; the Coloured the least. The Nationalist Government completed the process of separation by placing the education of each group under distinct and different administrative systems.

The Nationalists knew all too well that this separation was not prompted by any inherent differences in the responses

of the different races to a standard educational system. Thus the Government Commission set up under Dr Eiselen⁴ to investigate the need for Bantu education, prior to the passing of the Act, stated categorically that:

‘The Bantu child comes to school with a basic physical and psychological endowment which differs so far as your commissioners have been able to determine from the evidence, so slightly, if at all, from that of the European child that no special provision has to be made in educational theory or basic aims.’

Bantu education had to be created in order to fit the African child into his appointed position in the racial hierarchy, and this was made explicit by Dr Verwoerd, who said in 1953:

‘Racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to Natives. They cannot improve if the result of Native education is the creation of a frustrated people who, as a result of the education they received, have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled immediately, when it creates people who are trained for professions not open to them, when there are people who have received a form of cultural training which strengthens their desire for white-collar occupations to such an extent that there are more such people than openings available. Therefore, good race relations are spoilt when the correct education is not given. Above all, good racial relations cannot exist when the education is given under the control of people who create wrong expectations on the part of the Native himself, if such people believe in a policy of equality, if, let me say, for example, a communist gives this training to the Natives. Such a person will, by the very nature of the education he gives, both as regards the content of that education and as regards its spirit, create expectations in the minds of the Bantu which clash with the possibilities of this country. It is therefore necessary that Native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the state’⁵

and

‘I just want to remind Honourable members that if the Native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake’⁶

and

‘There is no place for him (the Bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... for that reason it is of no avail

¹ P.A.W. Cook in Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa, edited by Ellen Hellmann and L. Abrahams, Oxford University Press, p.351.

² Ibid.

³ A special curriculum for Africans was introduced in the Cape in 1922, and for Coloureds and Indians in 1923. A separate scheme for teaching Coloureds and ‘Natives’ reading and writing of English, arithmetic and other subjects in 1903. The Government also issued a special code of instruction for elementary Native schools, and appointed a special inspector and a superintendent of Native education. An organizing inspector of Native education was set up in the O.F.S. in 1924. Coloureds were incorporated into Native education in the O.F.S., and Indians into Coloured education in the Cape, because of the smallness of their numbers respectively in these Provinces (pp.353–54).

⁴ Government Commission appointed in 1949 under Dr W. M. Eiselen to report on education for Africans as an ‘independent race’.

⁵ Hansard, 17 September 1953, Col. 3576.

⁶ Ibid., Col. 3586.

for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community. . . . Until now he has been subject to a school system which drew him away from his own country and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze'.¹

In keeping with the motive of Christian National Education of Afrikaner cum White domination, Africans, Indians and Coloureds have been removed from the main educational stream of the country. Through a vastly disproportionate expenditure on the education of the four 'races', and the deliberate repression of Black talents, the Government succeeds in keeping Whites relatively highly educated, and Blacks under-educated. Thus in 1970 almost 23% of Whites had matric and post matric education, as against 3,3% of Indians, and 0,9% of Coloureds. No figures were reported for Africans, but it may be assessed that the proportion so qualified among them, would be lower than for Coloureds. 90 890 Whites had degrees: 2 400 Indians, 1 130 Coloureds.²

Bantu education is of course the most blatant design for under-education. The Government does not envisage the overwhelming majority of Africans proceeding beyond the lower primary school, that is having more than four years of schooling. The Eiselen report consequently advised that the primary course be rounded-off and made complete in itself.³ Since the bulk of these schools work double shift, schooling is reduced to an average of two and a half hours a day. In upper primary classes two hours a week are spent on such tasks as planting reeds and grasses,⁴ and making useless articles of waste wire, old boxes and beads, etc. This is designed no doubt, to arrest competitiveness and aggressiveness, and thereby prepare temperaments capable of complementing the White man's command and mastery over everything.

Professor Edgar Brookes has said of Bantu education:

'Bantu education is a unique system—the only education system in the world designed to restrict the productivity of its pupils in the national economy to lowly and subservient tasks, to render them non-competitive in the economy, to fix them mentally in a tribal world, and to teach them in Dr Verwoerd's phrase that "equality is not for them".⁵

South African Blacks, and liberal minded Whites with some commitment to integration should bear in mind the fundamental intentions of Bantu education, ere they allow themselves to be misled by the incidental and quite

inconsequential promotion of 'tribal' and 'group areas' cultures that the system appears to foster. The invigoration of tribalism pursued by the Nationalists, must not be confused with European respect for tribal cultures. They have used the anti-nationalism potential of tribalism to divide and weaken the African people. They have also abstracted some tribal ideas—like the subordinate status of women and communal land tenure and integrated these into their modern administrative codes for Africans, not out of respect for these, but because of their effectiveness in racial domination.

The sinister motives of the country's educational system are exemplified in the roles carried out by Blacks in the country's economy.

The huge profits accruing to local and international White investors in the two key sections of the economy, mining and agriculture, are mainly dependent on an abundant supply of docile cheap labour. Such labour must of necessity be uneducated, or under-educated. The undulating terrain of the Natal sugar lands is not conducive to mechanization, and there is understandable fear that if channels of sophistication are generally opened to the Africans, this labour will disappear, profits will fall, the White standard of living decline. Already approximately 35% of agricultural labour and three-quarters of African mine labour is imported from outside the country. Political changes in these territories may well affect this precious import. There is a real threat that Mocambique,⁶ the greatest single contributor to South African mine labour, may withdraw its manpower from the Republic. This could well result in further repressions in the Black educational systems, in order to step up the necessary supply of 'brawn'.

The education of Coloureds and Indians is geared to supply the middle range, largely semi-skilled needs of the economy. In their paranoic fear of their nemesis, African power, Indian and Coloured labour is used in preference to African, whenever possible, thereby exposing both these groups to potential African hostility. Economic planners, despite the fact that Africans have the highest natural growth rate, calculate lowered future employment rates for them than they do for other groups. In Metropolitan Durban, for instance, researchers projected an employment growth of 6.6% for Coloureds, 4.3% for Indians and 3.1% for Africans during 1960–1980.⁷ The use of African labour in cities is freely spoken of as a stop gap measure, until there is a sufficient supply of other kinds of labour. Thus the Chairman of the Cape Chamber of Industries requested permission to use 3 000–4 000 Africans as a 'bridging action', until Coloured workers were available to fill vacant jobs.⁸

¹ Statement to Senate, June 1954.

² M. Horrell, 1972, op. cit., p.359.

³ The Report of the Commission on Native Education 1945–51, presided over by Dr W. M. Eiselen, recommendation

⁴ Edgar H. Brookes, *Apartheid—A Documentary Study of Modern South Africa*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁶ Mocambique supplies 28,2% of South Africa's mine labour. South Africa supplies 24,2%. Other contributions come from Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and Malawi. Power, Privilege and Poverty, Report of the Spro-cas Economic Commission. Spro-cas Publication, No. 7, Johannesburg, 1972, p. 94.

⁷ L. Schlemmer, *The Spatial Distribution of the Present and Future Population of Metropolitan Durban*, Institute for Social Research, University of Natal, Durban, 1968, p.397.

⁸ *Star*, May 19, 1971.

The Government, and leading Nationalists have stated categorically that they will not tolerate industrial expansion at the expense of apartheid, more specifically at the expense of dividing and isolating the African people into tribal homelands, doomed to perpetual poverty. The Department of Bantu Administration has instructions to curb the issue of work permits to Africans seeking employment in White areas, and labour intensive industries, employing large numbers of African workers have been induced to move to the borders of the homelands so that industrialization will proceed without the risks of urbanization and consequent labour sophistication, demands for higher wages and labour unrest.

The pursuit of a rational economic policy, one which takes into account the welfare of the general public and not simply the maintenance of the present high standard of living of Whites, must according to South African economists, plan a higher economic growth rate. But this in turn is dependant on a sufficient supply of managerial and technical skills to complement the unskilled and semi-skilled labour it would absorb. The Government continues to block Blacks from attaining these skills, for fear that this will undermine White domination, shrink the racial gap and reduce White affluence. Thus one Government Commission decides that there is no need for a faculty of engineering for Africans, (1957) and another, in 1966 reports 1 000 vacancies for engineers in South African firms.¹

Blacks continue to be concentrated in primary school classes and only fractional percents in each of the three groups write and pass matric. Facilities for technical and commercial training continue to be feeble. The number of African children in such institutions barely exceeds 3 000 the number of Whites is 44 000. When economists warn that the Government must train Blacks to man managerial and skilled posts or face recession, the inevitable reply is, not at the expense of apartheid. 'We expect people to respect the social pattern of the country. We do not want this shoulder to shoulder business and mixed working conditions'² and 'No White worker will be replaced by a Non-White and no White will be allowed to work under a Non-White'.³ 'In the political sphere, the Government will have to continue taking steps which will keep the position of White workers in South Africa entrenched in law—and in saying this I believe I am speaking on behalf of every White worker in South Africa'.⁴

Job reservation takes care of those Blacks who escape the educational network and qualify for 'White' jobs. They are pushed back into the 'Black' fold, and will be drawn out of it, only in a crisis until the right colour of labour is found to replace them. Such concessions, though mount-

ing to one or more thousands in a single year, do not challenge apartheid, but on the contrary, bolster it.

Other Blacks seeking achievement beyond their circumscribed field, are mercilessly cut back by passport restrictions. Many Blacks, Indians, Africans and Coloureds have been prevented from pursuing academic careers overseas, because of non-existent facilities in the country or because of the repressive conditions have been refused passports. Others have been forced to give up their birth rights. Mr Boleu, a brilliant student from the University College of the North, was given a scholarship to study atomic physics in Sweden, but the Government, petty and vindictive, refused him a passport so that he was forced to take an exit permit.⁵

So the Nationalist Government looks elsewhere for labour—to White immigration, to the greater use of White women, and when these are not forthcoming in the required ratio, it viciously curbs the economic growth of the country and plans for mass unemployment of Africans rather than sharpen Black skills and raise the living standard of all South African citizens. Accordingly it has planned an economic growth of 5,5% for 1970–75, although economists have warned that this can only absorb 2,75% of the expected 3,5% increase in the African working population.⁶ A vast unemployed African population is in the interest of apartheid. It guarantees a constant supply of labour in the reserves, cum homelands, to counteract labour unrest in White industry in the White towns.⁷

The racial educational system effectively complements the policy of job reservation, the suppression of African Trade Unions and the consolidation of the tribally based reserves, the so-called homelands. It is the sort of system which makes possible the sort of political institutions the Government designs for Blacks, institutions in which the aspirants are doomed to be the agents and administrators of apartheid, acting against themselves, against their people, against their historical roots, and against their God given destinies. The sort of platforms that these institutions provide and the dialogue that they may make possible, no matter how impressive, or how exhilarating, cannot compensate one iota for the deprivations, national, economic and spiritual that they inflict.

The operative system of multi-racial education is pernicious, evil, and inhuman. It must be destroyed and replaced by a new system which will take into account in proportionately equal measures the economic, cultural and spiritual needs of South Africa's peoples, and constitute them into a single nation.□

¹ The Rand Daily Mail, 21, 22 June, 1966.

² Ibid., 11 September, 1971.

³ Marais Viljoen as Minister of Labour, Star, 9 September, 1971.

⁴ Nationalist M.P., Star, 19, 22 March, 1971.

⁵ Star, 26 March, 1966.

⁶ Muriel Horrell, op. cit., p.198, 1971.

⁷ Ibid., p.280.