

Apartheid education – the past

The ANC attributes everything that has gone wrong in education, including their inability to realise the expectations they have created, to the unbearable heritage of apartheid.

It has become necessary to test this against reality. What follows is a number of relevant facts:

Up to the time when the National Party took over the government, previous governments had in actual fact not taken any responsibility for educating Black people.

The National Party had therefore not inherited anything, but had to develop a system from nothing at all.

Dr Verwoerd's maligned Bantu Education Policy was an experiment that formed part of the Greater Apartheid Policy. NP leaders like Dr Gerrit Viljoen already distanced themselves from it in public many years ago.

The present government has not inherited a system of Bantu Education from the previous

government.

When the previous government accepted responsibility for the education of Black people in 1953, approximately 800 000 Black pupils were at school. During the 40 years that followed, the number of pupils increased at a compounded rate of just above 6% per year to about 10 million in 1994. In secondary schools, the growth rate was as high as 12% per year.

Three centuries of neglect of education for Black people unavoidably led to enormous backlogs compared to education for other children, particularly for whites. Imagine the physical facilities that had to be created and teachers who had to be trained while the growth rate of pupil numbers generally exceeded that of the national economy.

The National government took up this virtually inhuman task systematically and effectively.

Once the system had been

established, an attempt was made to eradicate backlogs, a process that gained momentum in the early eighties, in particular.

At the start of the eighties R1.00 was spent on the education of a Black child, against the R10.00 spent on a White child. By 1993 the gap had narrowed to R1.00 to R2.50. If the National Party had remained in power, the gap could have been eradicated by now. Between 1990 and 1993, the National Party government had taken more than R1.1 milliard above the normal budget for education, from safety portfolios, in particular, to spend on education in previously disadvantaged areas. This money was used to build 14 000 classrooms, to repair numbers of neglected and burnt-out classrooms, to create permanent facilities for 8 technical and teaching colleges and to establish a 100% subsidy scheme for the building of schools on private property in rural areas.

In 1990 the government transferred an amount of R2 milliard to the Independent Development Trust. Of this amount, R300 million was spent on building schools in disadvantaged areas.

The ANC does not have a monopoly on the concept of one non-racial educational system. Through its spokespeople for education, the previous government had, since the end of the eighties, repeatedly and publicly declared that race was

irrelevant as far as the provision of education was concerned, and that a single, non-racial educational system had to be established along with the new constitutional dispensation.

To facilitate the process, an Education Coordination Service was called into being in March 1993, to plan the transition to a non-racial educational system. The ANC refused to cooperate throughout.

In spite of this, a complete set of blueprints was set up by foremost South African educational experts. If the new government had implemented these plans, the transition would have gone smoothly, confusion would have been eliminated, and the system would already have been functioning properly.

The government, however, preferred to ignore what had already been done and to leave the planning for the transition in the hands of uninformed ideologues. The country is now paying the price for that foolishness.

All being taken into consideration, the National Party has no reason for embarrassment regarding its record relating to education, especially since 1990.

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