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THE CURRENT CRISIS IN EDUCATION
AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE IDEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL SITUATION
IN SOUTH AFRICA

KEN HARTSHORNE

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Education policies and systems in any country reflect its "political options, its traditions and values, and its conceptions of the future"(1), as also the realities and myths of its past.

Education is never neutral or aseptic, but exists in the context of a particular social, economic, political and (in the case of South Africa) constitutional order. Education systems are most effective and relevant when they have the acceptance and support of the "user" (learner, teacher, parents, community), when the user is involved and participates in the education decisions that are made, and when the user is in broad, general agreement with the view of man and society that informs the philosophy/ideology on which the education system is based. Where this is not so there will be dissatisfaction and protest. In a democratic society attempts will be made to change the situation through the exercise of the political power of the user. However, where the user has very limited political power to change the education system, as has been the experience of the Black South African, not only is the education system constantly challenged, but in the end the legitimacy of the authority that lies behind it is also challenged and ultimately rejected, as is now the case in South Africa.

partial democracy

It is therefore naive to expect that politics can be kept out of education: this is true both for the politician who put it there in the first place and who sees politics in education only when it is not his own politics, and for the educationist who tries to act as though education exists in some kind of vacuum, untouched by the realities of the world, that it can be dealt with

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purely "scientifically", and that politics should be left to the government. Education, because it has to do with our children and the basic values we believe in, is not only one of the most important of human endeavours but also one of the most political. I do not mean this in the narrow party sense but in the sense of the great issues of society and government - representation, democracy, equality, justice, freedoms, rights and responsibilities. One cannot hope to understand the current crisis in education except against this broad background and against the more immediate canvas of political ideologies and practice in South Africa.

PERSONAL PLATFORM *Can any education be completely anti-...*
No. -

In the light of the above, and because of the complex, tangled matrix of political, religious, economic and educational ideologies, attitudes and prejudices which make up the South African scene, any commentator seeking to describe and analyse the educational situation has a responsibility to declare his interests and clarify the standpoint from which he approaches this difficult task. This I shall now attempt to do.

What I have already said must in any case have given some indication of this standpoint, but it needs further clarification and extension. If one looks at education in South Africa in the social, economic and political context which determines the ecology in which it seeks to survive and develop, it is clear that education has both a conserving drive and a creative drive. In its conserving role it inevitably reflects the existing social, economic and political order : education systems are used as instruments of national policy and therefore have a strong tendency to maintain and protect the status quo. Because of this, when one is concerned with fundamental change and transformation in education, one must avoid the trap "of searching for a

purely educational answer to a problem that has social, economic and political as well as educational dimensions". (2) However, education is also a "futures" activity and has creative purposes and outcomes that may be very different from those intended by the political authority. At its best it is concerned with Kant's "better condition of Man in the future". That better condition is not only concerned with the individual, his liberation, hopes and aspirations, but also with the society in which he has to live out his life and which is the warp and weave of his existence.

While the quality of society will always depend upon the quality of the individuals making it up, and education will always be crucial to the individual in liberating the human mind and spirit in the service of others in society, the old classical view of a liberal education is now not sufficient. As it has been put very bluntly, "what is the use of a 'liberal education' if people are poor, starving and oppressed?" In Africa education cannot remain remote from the two major challenges to the very survival of this continent :

- the need to learn to live together in peace and understanding through the conquest of inhumanity, prejudice and selfishness ; and
- the need to cope with the economic imperatives of society through the conquest of poverty, food shortages and unemployment.

In South Africa, instead of contributing to the resolution of these major issues and instead of having a creative, common national purpose directed towards the future, education has been too concerned with the preservation of our past, and the maintenance and reproduction of the privileges of the present. It has been too concerned, in this reflecting the society in which it is encapsulated -

- with protecting group identities and interests;
- with differences and diversity instead of a common South Africanism and a common humanity;
- with obedience to authority, particularly that of the State, instead of encouraging creative thinking, independence and dissent;
- with preparing people for their place in society instead of liberating the potential of all our people so that all the resources of our country could be directed to the major challenges which lie ahead of us.

It has been used to discriminate against people on the grounds of colour alone and against the poor, the weak and the oppressed, and still does, instead of being used to throw open the doors of opportunity. It has been more concerned with protecting those with power, whether political or economic, than sharing the benefits of education in an open, democratic society. Above all, education has divided the children of our land, white and black, so that they are estranged from one another, creatures of two worlds in the same country. Whatever excuses we make, whatever reasons we find in history, in "cultural differences" or in "scientific" analyses, what has happened has been un-Christian, immoral, humanly sinful and self-destructive.

If this be "ideology", so be it. It has led me along a path of commitment to ~~political, social, educational, economic, and inevitable future liberation~~

a non-racial, democratic, unitary, just and equitable future society and political dispensation for South Africa. I know only too well that there are difficulties with most of these terms, that there is a wide range of interpretations and that a large part of the present debate is concerned with clarifying them. But I use them simply to indicate the platform from which I approach the subject that the organisers of the Conference gave me. To do justice to these concepts is impossible within the scope of this paper, so let me content myself with a few annotations.

I use "non-racial" (as against multiracial) to indicate that I believe the individual is more important than the group and that his colour is irrelevant to his place as a South African and a human being. Politically I am a strong believer in "democracy", which with all its faults and problems, is still the fairest and most moral political ideology that fallible Man has been able to devise. More specifically I believe in universal suffrage and proportional representation of conflicting interests. In stating my commitment to a "unitary" state I am guided by the reality that only a strong central government will be able to monitor South Africa's progress to greater equality of opportunity and a fair deal for everyone. While this does not negate the idea of decentralisation and the accommodation of local and regional interests, too great a devolution of authority in our situation will lead to the persistence of privilege and inequality. In using the concept of "justice" I am expressing my belief in the rule of Law (not laws), the need for a Bill of Rights and the basic freedoms of religion, speech, the press, association, assembly, dissent and protest, and man's right to a fair trial in the courts. When I consider a future economic dispensation for South Africa in terms of it being fair and "equitable", there is an imperative, if we are to achieve our other goals, both to increase the wealth of our country and to redistribute it more fairly. I do not see this being achieved by either free enterprise/capitalism or by communism in their present forms. Neither are democratic in their outcomes : both in the end favour the privileged few. What I do accept, however, is that socialism is a crucial factor in our future, and that out of the tension between it and capitalism must come an economic system that will do away with both the abject poverty and the flagrant affluence that exist side by side in South Africa.

Finally, the education system that I could support would have to be compatible with and reflect these kinds of values and ideals. The educational



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Modern
Fabian

Democracy
is the acid test

initiatives I would support now would be those that were conceived in these terms, that did not merely bolster up the status quo but were innovative and change-oriented, and did not just provide "more of the same". In practice this leaves many grey areas on the fringes of the existing systems, and even within them. The ultimate test is probably whether what we are doing is creative rather than conservative, future-oriented rather than directed towards maintaining or strengthening the present situation in education.

I realise that I have still left many unanswered questions. In the light of the subject, however, it was necessary to make the attempt to give some indication of my perceptions of the ideological-political situation in South Africa.

THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

Crises do not just "happen". While I do not want to worry you with a long historical introduction to the present educational crisis, it is nevertheless crucial that there should be an understanding of the historical process leading to it. The roots go deep into the past, a past which has been analysed by liberal historians in terms of racial and political discrimination and by Marxist/revisionist historians in terms of class and economic domination: both have been the ideological background of education over the years. Perhaps a few indicators will be of value. In 1868, Dr Dale, Superintendent General of Education in the Cape for 33 years, reported that "The spread of civilisation by school instruction and the encouragement of industrial habits among the Natives in the Border districts are of importance in the political security and social progress of the Colony." (3) At the end of his career in 1891 he was to write "It was not the intention to train the whole of the male Bantu youth to become expert tradesmen, but rather to instruct them to use efficaciously the spade and the hoe, the plane and the saw, the mason's trowel and the plumb-line." (4) By 1910 the Director of Education for the Transvaal was able to say that in "educating White children and Coloured (including Black) children... the principle of social segregation is carried out and it is a principle that no one has challenged." (5) Education policy and resources were to be used, or withheld, to ensure that economic power and political privilege remained in the hands of Whites. A "laissez faire", "festina lente" attitude of neglect continued through to the Second World War, and the basic patterns of segregation.

5 pages
starts before 1950
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DAZ 13

discrimination and inequality became firmly established, in spite of the efforts of some of the mission churches, particularly in their major institutions, to provide (with some success) education of good quality.

Educationist - Professor J. A. S. J. College *Notes MZITDT 4*
NOT in the original

Edgar Brookes, summing up the position in the first half of this century, commented about South Africa's attitude to black education that it had been "too humane to prohibit it....too human to encourage it" and that "not to educate, and at the same time to hold down by repressive barriers, is a possible and logical policy. To educate, and to give generous opportunities of advancement, is equally logical and more defensible. But to educate and then to repress is to invite disaster... Toleration of Native Education will not do as a policy." (6) 7/1930

The more immediate background to the present crisis, however, dates from 1948 with the coming to power of the National Party, with the disappearance of "toleration" and "laissez faire" attitudes and the placing of black education under strict, unequivocal central State control. It was now to be used as one of the major instruments of State policy in a doctrinaire, ideological style not previously experienced in South Africa. The ideological base for "Bantu Education" is to be found in the concepts of Christian National Education and "separate development". The first was expounded in the definitive document of 1948, issued by the Institute for CNE. At the time, one of its major authors, Professor J. C. Coetsee said that it was a blueprint for the education of Afrikaans-speaking children only and that "he knows that people with other views exist and hold the same rights as he does. Therefore he supports them in their wishes for an education of their children according to their philosophy of life." (7) Unfortunately, this is neither consistent with what was to happen in practice, nor with Article 15 of the CNE document :

"We believe that the calling and task of White South Africa with regard to the native is to Christianise him and help him on culturally, and that this calling and task has already found its nearer focusing in the principles of trusteeship, no equality, and segregation... we believe that the teaching and education of the native must be grounded in the life and world view of the Whites, most especially those of the Boer nation as the senior White trustee... [and that the native must accept] the Christian and national principles in our teaching.... It is the right and task of the State ... to give and control native education." (8)

The educational expression of the second concept, "separate development", is to be found in the Eiselen Commission Report, in the subsequent statements of Dr

Verwoerd and in the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Even the terms of reference given to the Commission, which was entirely White in composition, and in the end was to ignore the weight of evidence from Black witnesses, indicate clearly the direction that was to be taken :

"The formulation of the principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration ... The extent to which the system ... should be modified ... in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims, and to prepare Natives more effectively for their future occupations."(9)

The basic point of departure for all the recommendations was that "Bantu Education" was justified and necessary because it was dealing with children "trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with a knowledge of a Bantu language and imbued with values, interests and behaviour patterns learned at the knee of a Bantu mother" and with children who have to find their place as adults in "Bantu society".(10) There is a strange mythology in the Eiselen report and in the debates leading up to the Bantu Education Act that suggests that "Bantu society", a "Bantu economy" and "Bantu socio-economic development" can all be isolated and separated out from the realities of the single South African society and economy. While the harsh doctrinaire corners of the Verwoerdian model have been smoothed off and arguments are now bland and technicist (e.g. in relation to manpower needs), this mythology has remained the ideological base of Black education up to this day. Equality is grudgingly and theoretically granted, but it must be separate.

Dealt with in previous paper

The grand design of the Verwoerdian social engineers has had disastrous consequences for South Africa, consequences that are only now being fully realised. The neglect of Black education, starving it of resources in the 25 years following on the 1953 Act has been comprehensively documented in many studies and I do not plan to argue it here. (11) The grand design has left us with an education system fragmented into 19 separate structures (the Department of National Education, 5 White departments, one "Coloured", one Indian and eleven Black), all tightly controlled within a segregation model in which a discriminatory hierarchy of financing, resources, facilities and outcomes developed, with Whites faring the best and Blacks by far the worst.

Why - you personally know it.

In the end, after a surprising period of quiescence in the sixties following on the tragedy of Sharpeville, the inevitable explosion of 16 June 1976 was sparked off by issues of language, issues on which the education authorities had been particularly dogmatic and unrelenting. (12) However, the underlying causes are rather to be found in the segregation and general inferiority of black education, the obvious discrimination in terms of finance and resources and its ideological direction, all in the context of the social, economic and political position of black South Africans, together with the more immediate issues of rents, housing, transport and citizenship. (Transkei "independence", for example, was to remove SA citizenship from millions of Xhosa who regarded South Africa, and not Transkei, as their home.)

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De Lange - leave out ND only long just 1082 1125 pch

The education revolt of 1976 was to grow in intensity throughout the years until 1980, spreading fiercely to "Coloured" educational institutions, particularly in the Western Cape. By 1980 a major breakdown in education was threatening, and under this pressure the government requested the Human Sciences Research Council to institute an investigation into the state of education in South Africa. This came into being what has come to be known as the de Lange Committee, after its Chairman, Professor P J de Lange, then Rector of the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit (RAU) and later to become the Chairman of the Broederbond. (13) The Committee commenced its work in August 1980 and reported at the end of July 1981. During this period there was something of a truce, a "wait and see" attitude in black communities, who with considerable scepticism and aloofness, stood back to await the recommendations, and more importantly government's response to them. By 1983, with the issue of the government White Paper on Education (14), it was clear that community scepticism was justified, government was not prepared to make any fundamental response to what was a moderate (some would say conservative) negotiated report, and segregated, discriminatory education systems were to continue. The basic spirit of the report was ignored, the new slogan became "equal but separate", more (but not nearly enough) money was channelled into Black education, and technical, "career" education was seized upon as though it were the only important recommendation of the de Lange report. But the fundamentals remained unchanged, the crisis continued, exacerbated by the 1983 elections based on a tri-cameral system which ignored Blacks, who were treated as though they were strangers in their own country. From the middle of 1984 onwards, against the background of tragedies such as those of Sebokeng and Langa, resistance in the schools escalated and by the end of 1986 the disruption of schooling and the breakdown of the learning environment were worse than at any time in the history of Black education.

? what is...

under social & political emergency
The crisis had come to stay, in a social and political environment marked by the declaration of a "state of emergency" that is in danger of coming to be accepted as part of our normal existence.

DA 213.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

Where do things stand at present?

NB read with passage on P13A

*Also in 1983-85??
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yes*

It is a highly risky endeavour even to try to analyse the position in which education is at present, because of the extreme complexity of the context and the rapidity with which situations change. Education is taking place within an untidy maze of interactions that themselves are volatile and often unpredictable, and which differ radically from place to place, from situation to situation, often at the whim of the local security apparatus, officials or youthful activists. The participants in these interactions are the State, its security apparatus, the education departments, black political forces, educational leaders, community groupings, trade unions, teachers' associations and local groupings of teachers, students and pupils in both organised and spontaneous action, young people outside of the schools, the street-children, parents, churches, the business community, international forces both political and economic - all of these, in one way or another, have concerns in the field of education and are exercising an influence, to a greater or lesser degree, on what is happening at present. In the face of these complexities a neat analysis of the position of education is not possible. What is perhaps possible is to identify some indicators of broad tendencies and of the stances of some of the main actors in the drama that is being played out.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR ORGANISATIONS TO CONTROL.

GOVERNMENT

*Present Don't use same subsequent words
and some of one's initial fears of that public paper*
In the first place it is clear that the government shows few if any signs of giving way on the principle of segregated education systems. This is a basic tenet that has been reiterated again and again at the highest levels. Not unexpectedly it is found in the strongest form in the debates on education votes in the White House of Assembly. The air becomes thick with such words as "identity", "culture", "diversity", "self determination", all of which can only be preserved by "own affairs education". One gains the impression, on

reading Hansard, of a rather desperate rearguard action. Even if it is clear that apartheid in education is costing South Africa dearly in economic terms (for example, in the duplication of expensive services and "White facilities" lying unused - over 200 000 vacant places in primary and high schools and about 3 000 in teacher training) it must still be preserved on ideological grounds. The government would rather retain unused facilities in White hands, even for non-educational purposes, than make them over to Blacks. In White residential areas, facilities will remain idle rather than be made available to Blacks for the educational purposes for which they were intended.(15) However, limited possibilities have been left open for the establishment of private schools to meet the needs of those people for whom the State systems are unacceptable, and a partial subsidy procedure has been instituted. Not only do private schools offer a refuge to a small number of pupils but because of cost are inaccessible to the majority of parents, White or Black. Private schooling is being used by government both as an attempt at producing a "safety valve" and also as a means of evading responsibilities quite clearly those of the State.

In the area of financing it has to be acknowledged that there has been considerable improvement in the funds made available to Black education; for example, from 1981-2 to 1986-7 per capita expenditure for Black pupils (excluding capital expenditure) increased from R119-68 to R368-56. This, however, is still only 17% of per capita expenditure for White pupils. It is said that this funding is now in terms of a subsidy formula linked to the concept of "equal but separate" and in practice to the government's Ten Year Plan for education, which assumes a real increase in total education expenditure of at least 4.1% per annum, and an annual expenditure of R10 bn in 1996 (i.e. in 1986 rand terms). Repeated questions in the House of Assembly and elsewhere, however, have failed to elicit the basis on which the subsidy formula is being applied.(16) What is clear is that equality will not be reached in ten years, particularly when one looks more closely at what is actually happening under the plan. One White college of education is to cost R85m (at an average capital cost per student place of R38 636), while in the same three year period six Black colleges of education are to be built at a total cost of R42m (average capital cost per student place of R10 606).(17) Further, the Minister of National Education has resisted "the setting of specific target dates and rigorous norms to achieve" the objectives of the Ten Year Plan.(18)

It has to be noted, too, that the plan deals only with provision and finance, and assumes that the present segregated systems will continue. As a spokesman of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) has said, this continued ethnic separation of education planning ^{is} "indicative of insensitivity and arrogance. To expect our people to wait for ten years for an insignificant shift in apartheid education is to expect too much." (19)

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The other aspect of importance in government attitudes towards education is the continued use of the security apparatus to buttress education policy and to silence all opposition by detaining those voicing it. This is perhaps best illustrated by the all-out attack on the NECC leadership, most of whom have now been removed from the education debate. It needs to be remembered that in the first twelve months of the emergency more than 700 persons in the field of education were detained for varying periods. (20) Of these 147 were teachers in the service of the Department of Education and Training (79 from the Cape), including the secretary-general of the national teachers' organisation, ATASA. (21) Dissenting voices are not to be allowed to be heard, opposition is to be browbeaten, no fundamental changes in ideology or structure can be expected, and segregated, divisive education is to remain whether the users like it or not.

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brow
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out

THE SCHOOLS

If one turns to the schools themselves, in particular those in the urban areas under the DET, the picture is one of continuing deterioration in relationships between the department and the teachers and pupils, in spite of official claims of a "return to normality" in 1987. Over-all in Black schools there is a slow but steady improvement in the teacher:pupil ratio, the drop-out rate and the formal qualifications of teachers (especially those with senior certificate). These qualifications are often being obtained at the cost of pupils not being given full attention while the teacher is pursuing his own studies, under pressure, it has to be said, from the department which employs him. In contrast to the general pattern, the drop-out rate in DET secondary schools has worsened.

not a result of ...

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In 1985, of the 25 584 pupils enrolled in Std 10 at the beginning of the year, 24 231 registered for the senior certificate examination, but only 10 523 took the exam and 4 897 passed (19,1% of the original enrolment). DET enrolments at Std 10 level constituted less than 25% of the total in all Black schools, but DET accounted for 70% of the drop-outs during the year.(22) In 1986, of the 29 649 enrolled in Std 10 in DET schools at the beginning of the year, 16 539 wrote the whole examination, 2 087 wrote some papers, and 8 943 of those who had registered for the exam did not write at all. However, official results were recorded for only 11 295 candidates, on the grounds that the others were in schools that had been disrupted by protests and boycotts.(23) For ten years, over-all passes for all Black candidates have fluctuated in the 47-53% range, and passes at the matriculation exemption level at between 10-13%. (White candidates show a about 93-94% over-all pass rate, with about 45% gaining matriculation exemption.) Preliminary results for 1987, which experience has shown have to be treated with great caution, seem to indicate some improvement : an over-all pass rate of 56,3% and about 16% matric exemption. The Johannesburg region (Soweto and Alexandra), however, shows senior certificate 26,1%; matriculation exemption 7%; over-all passes 33,1% (24) The statistics over a number of years show that the greatest improvements have occurred in some "homeland" areas (such as Venda, Gazankulu and Bophuthatswana) and not in the urban areas, where for ten years now at least half of all Std 10 pupils have left secondary school without any certificate.

He will say and benefit...

What I believe this indicates is that particularly (but not solely) in the urban areas South Africa is faced with a creeping deterioration and disintegration of the learning environment, consequent upon ten years of dissatisfaction, unrest, protest, security action, government obduracy, loss of departmental control and the steady erosion of the morale of the teachers. Attendance at school is no guarantee that learning is taking place : how else does one explain the Soweto matric results against the claims of the "return to normalcy" in 1987 ? Pupils are restless and disturbed by what is going on around them, regular learning habits are breaking down, they do not bring books to school, are negligent about homework and distrust tests and examinations, even the external senior certificate/matriculation examination. Since 1976 pupils have experienced the heady feeling of power over their teachers and, as with all power that is not accountable, this sometimes leads to youthful arrogance in speech and action. All authority is questioned and it is the exceptional high

what do you mean?

school teacher who has the stature and respect sufficient to restore the discipline of learning in his classroom in such areas as the PWV, Eastern and Western Cape. This was position 84/85 at the

Added to this are the young people who are not in school, who have dropped out, failed in one way or another, been rejected by the education system, and who have a continual negative effect on those who are at school, ranging from the pressures of brothers and friends ("what's the use? where's it going to get you? it's not going to help you get a job?") to, on occasions, blatant intimidation. Altogether, this growing breakdown in the urban areas bodes ill for the future: there can be no guarantee that even a radical change in the political dispensation would restore a positive learning environment in which post-apartheid education could develop. This concern is expressed by Lebamang Sebidi when he says: "However instant political coups d'etat may be, they cannot bring about instant radical educational changes ... there are no educational coups d'etat."(25)

Over the last ten years, about 250 000 youngsters have completed a secondary school education without gaining a senior certificate. If one takes this in conjunction with a recent market survey that indicated that less than 20% of Black youths between the ages of 16 and 24 were in full-time employment, then the magnitude of the educational and social implications must be apparent. In the urban townships (for example at present, in the Durban/Maritzburg area) there is a new and different generation of "street children" led by young adults rejected by the education system, disillusioned by failure and lack of work opportunities, whom the recognised political and community organisations, such as the UDF and its affiliates, are not able to control when direct political confrontations arise.(26) One questions whether these schools can succeed under any dispensation, unless something is done to help these young people find their way, through "second chance", alternative forms of adult education and training.

Who's your friend!

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THE TEACHERS

In the middle of the ground contested by, on the one hand, the State and on the other by pupils, parents and community, stand the teachers, at one and

the same time employees of the State and members of the community. The generally negative image of the teacher, to be found even among teachers themselves, is no small contributor to the breakdown of the learning environment, discussed above. Pressured and criticised from all sides, often for inadequacies for which they are not to blame, treated often by departments not as professionals but as instruments of policy (as in recent instructions on security in the schools), it is not surprising that in many areas the morale, confidence and self-image of teachers is at a low ebb. They are in an unenviable position, and that so many, in spite of all the personal and external constraints, still care about their pupils and do their best for them, speaks well of many teachers and the profession to which they belong.

The professional associations, such as ATASA and the Cape Teachers Professional Association (CTPA), are under pressure, particularly from their younger members, to take up a more militant stance of the kind adopted by the newer, officially unrecognised associations, such as the non-racial National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA). Involvement in the NECC movement has brought about a review of relationships with State departments, and during 1986 both ATASA and CTPA withdrew their representatives from the SA Council of Education (SACE) and from all departmental committees. The associations have exercised moderation, patience and courtesy over a period of at least 50 years, but are now clearly moving away from the employing departments and much closer to the communities they serve, in the process taking a much firmer stand on the social and political issues that are bedevilling education. As Franklin Sonn, President of the CTPA, has said: "We cannot leave politics alone, because politics will not leave us alone ... Teachers must retain the respect of their children as a priority and this will only occur if they are seen to be part of the struggle for liberation." (27) The hardening of attitudes is likely to continue in nearly all teachers' associations (with the exception of the powerful Transvaalse Onderwysersvereniging and a few others) as they strive for greater unity through acceptance of the Teachers' Charter, which specifically rejects apartheid and segregated education systems.

What does it say?
P.C. ...

DAZB

THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Dec '85 or March '86

Community responses to the continuing education crisis have, in the main, began to crystallise around the NECC movement and the idea of "People's Education", both of which I shall discuss later in this paper, and which also form the subject of several other papers at this conference. Although the NECC movement is of great significance, the NECC itself is not without its problems and constraints, apart from those imposed by government. To the extent that it has links with particular political groupings of a broadly United Democratic Front (UDF) nature, its authority and influence will be challenged in certain areas and among groupings of a different persuasion. It is not yet clear whether NECC leadership is fully accepted by certain student groupings who feel the initiative has been taken away from them, and who are often impatient for more radical action to be taken. Local situations vary very greatly and are influenced powerfully both by the immediacy of issues (such as the actions of the security forces) and the personalities of local leaders. The development of national strategies is no easy task. Nevertheless there is no question but that the NECC movement is easily the strongest initiative to emerge in the educational arena since the crisis came to a head in 1976. I use the word "movement" to indicate that it is wider and stronger than the NECC as an organisation, because it has a popular groundswell of support. There is also some evidence to show that since the end of 1986, particularly in the field of education, there has been the growth of an "education network" which includes groupings that have differing political agendas.

Mid '85 or so

In attempting to understand the education crisis of 1984-88 and the messages couched in terms such as people's education, community education, alternative education, liberation education, worker education, post-apartheid education, it is essential to realise - and this is the new emphasis of 1988 compared with 1976 - that many of these new messages, particularly in the voices of younger people, are rooted in perceptions of socialist principles. Scepticism as to the benefits of capitalism, evidence of exploitation by those holding economic power, disbelief in the inevitability of the rewards of economic growth "filtering down" to those economically as well as politically disenfranchised, have been well documented in various free enterprise surveys conducted in recent years.

All this is very understandable in the historical light of frequent collaboration between the State and capitalist interests in the past, and compromises in the present. So that the recent very much clearer pressures for change in education and society emerging in the statements of powerful private sector interests, are received at best with caution, scepticism or a wait-and-see attitude. The rise of the trade union movement, with its own special feeling for the crucial importance of education, has also led to a greater awareness of the economic as well as the political factors involved in societal change. Economic as well as political reconstruction is now on the agenda, and any serious consideration of the future of education in South Africa has to take this into account.

DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE CRISIS

*Different
perceptions*

I realise that many, probably most White people, even if they accepted much of what I have said of the past, would be likely to say "Yes, but hasn't all this changed with "the return to school" in 1987 ? Does this not signify an acceptance of the stated intentions of government to improve educational conditions and of the sincerity of the government's reform process ? Haven't things now returned to normal with disruption of the educational process something of the past ?" Certainly this is the official point of view, which is accompanied by rather complacent claims that this is due to departmental action and strong security steps to restore "normality" and "stability". Quite rightly "the return to school" has been welcomed in all quarters, nowhere more strongly than in the Black press, which gave expression to the Black community's longstanding commitment to education. But the press was also realistic in its understanding that the development of education was taking place in a hostile environment, within a school system that is rejected by the community from which the pupils come. This rejection was expressed by The Sowetan in the following terms : "Bantu Education cannot be improved. It has to be eliminated, and buried, with its origination. Liberation with education certainly bodes far better for all of us in this country. Let us go for it."(28) It is realised that "the return to school" is a fragile, vulnerable plant that will need careful, sensitive nurturing.

The "return" was achieved, not by the persuasion or pressures exerted by

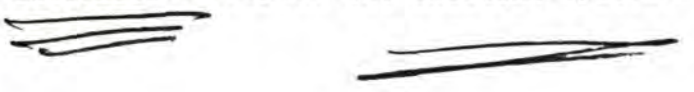
the State apparatus, but by negotiated decisions taken by the pupils and their parents in strenuous discussions with church bodies, community, educational and political organisations. It is therefore important to note that "going to school" is no longer a routine, accepted matter in many areas, but a matter to be decided on, to be reviewed, to be seen as part of wider strategies for the achievement of both educational and political objectives in the struggle for liberation. The return to school does not mark an acceptance either of the education system, of the society in which it is encapsulated, or of the government's reform process. It is absolutely imperative that this be clearly understood if there is to be any hope of effective approaches to the resolution of the crisis and conflicts in education.

Majority White perceptions are that there have been considerable improvements in Black education : much is made of the increased funding, better buildings and facilities, the supply of books and stationery, the growth in enrolments, the government's commitment to "equal but separate" education and the Ten Year Plan. The emphasis is on material improvements, finance, numbers and quantity. Black concerns on the other hand have to do with issues of quality, relevance, underlying philosophies, Black participation in decision making and control. Important as the financing of education is recognised to be, increased funding of the present system to produce "more of the same" is not seen as the fundamental issue. What is at stake is the basic transformation of the whole education system within a common, non-racial, democratic and just society. In these terms the return to school does not indicate the end of the crisis ; the crisis will remain with us until fundamental change has taken place.

The intransigence of the formal education systems in their lack of response over the past twelve years to what are seen as the fundamentals of change has had two major consequences :

the resolve of Black urban communities and their leaders to pursue opposition, protest and resistance;

it has also turned the minds and energies of many educators and others, both within the Black communities and outside of them, to the search for alternatives beyond the existing systems.



ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

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has this been [unclear]

The "Alternative Education" movement (29) has become the most powerful symbol of the rejection of apartheid education, and in the field of education is the parallel to the growth of extra-parliamentary movements in

the political arena. Moreover, the connection is not only one of theoretical analysis but is also close and practical because both are rooted in the same community aspirations, and in the determination to have a rightful say not only in the form of government and the nature of society, but also in the character of education, its quality and relevance, what is taught and how it is taught, and who decides. The resources, energies and enthusiasms that have been released into the field of alternative education, particularly in the last ten years, have been very considerable.

It has captured the minds and commitment of some of South Africa's best educators, and much of the most effective action research and innovation in education has taken place in this context, outside of or on the periphery of "the system". The strength and scope of the Alternative Education movement is the most telling and direct rebuttal of those who would claim that Black education, in its present ideological cocoon within the system, can be subject to fundamental reform. If there were general acceptance of the present system, and all that was needed was more money and material improvements, why would so much human energy and commitment be invested in the search for alternatives ?(30)

Alternative education is a world-wide phenomenon expressing dissatisfaction with formal school systems. As a response to the world education crisis it has taken on many forms, from Illich and the de-schoolers, through Paulo Freire and his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Marxist writers following Gramsci, to less radical education forums in the Western world, such as teachers' organisations. Among this diversity, however, it is possible to distinguish some common strands : education is far more than schooling ; education is for life and a lifelong experience ; individuals must be empowered to take charge of their own learning ; too much has been expected of formal schooling ; the needs of society are as important as the needs of the individual ; the important issues are equality, relevance and quality ; schools have to move from authoritarian teaching to democratic, participatory learning. Nearly always there is a strong political, ideological underpinning of the theory and practice of alternative education ; in many other cases it is religious.

Alternative education is not new in South Africa : the Witwatersrand Council of Education schools came into being in reaction against the policies of the Transvaal Republic; the CNO schools in response to Milner's Anglicisation policies. Since 1953, however, there has been a much more specific focus to AE : it has been a reaction against the Verwoerdian concept of "Bantu Education", a reaction that has ranged from moderate attempts to influence the system through to outright rejection of it.

The present range of "alternatives" is very considerable, from those that are ad hoc, transitory reactions against the existing system of education, to those that are forward-looking and more directly related to the process of social change and linked in some way to ideas of the nature of the longer-term education replacement system.

PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

In the latter category comes the most significant development in the field of alternative education, the People's Education movement, the broad objectives and principles of which were first stated at the conference of the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) at the University of the Witwatersrand in December 1985, and confirmed at the meeting of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in Durban in March 1986. That the government regards this as the strongest anti-apartheid education initiative to be taken in recent times is indicated by its attempt to emasculate the movement by removing its leadership through detention without trial. PE is the subject of a number of papers at the present conference. Because of this I shall not enter into a long exposition of it in this introductory paper. However, in order to make sense of the present subject some reference to it is inescapable. I shall attempt to keep it as short as possible, leaving fuller discussion to the later papers.

In its broad political objectives, in that it is against apartheid, oppression, exploitation and capitalist values, and for a unitary, non-racial, democratic society, PE is an attempt to work out the educational consequences of the Freedom Charter, and is therefore linked historically to the African Education Movement of the mid-1950's. In the political context it is inextricably bound up with the concept of "people's power,

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which is the collective strength of the community" and "an expression of the will of the people". One of its purposes in the field of education has been "to channel the militancy of unorganised youth into disciplined action, accountable to the whole community."(31)

The broad goals of PE are the setting up of a "free, compulsory, unitary, non-racial and democratic system of education" relevant to and consistent with the establishment of a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa. In its structures it is also to be unitary, non-racial and "for all sections of our people", and so organised that it allows students, parents, teachers and workers "to participate actively in the initiation and management of PE in all its forms". Student Representative Councils (SRC) and parent-teacher organisations would be key structures in this. The values to be promoted in PE would be "democracy, non-racialism, collective work and active participation". The educational objectives, to be achieved through the stimulation of critical and creative thinking, analysis and working methods, are

the elimination of illiteracy, ignorance, capitalist norms of competition, individualism, stunted intellectual development and exploitation

to enable "the oppressed to understand the evils of the apartheid system" and to prepare them "for participation in a non-racial, democratic system

to equip and train "all sectors of our people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain people's power in order to establish a non-racial, democratic South Africa".

These objectives are to be achieved through "collective input", the "formulation of programmes to promote PE at all levels" and to implement it "in our schools"; and by the mobilisation of "the necessary human and material resources in the first instance from within communities and regions, and then from other sources."(32)

From the point of view of this paper the importance of PE is that, inter alia -

it has re-opened the debate on fundamental educational issues, a debate that was strangled in 1983 by the government's rejection in the White Paper, of the essentials of the de Lange Report;

Justified negative criticism of the concept of "Bantu Education" has been replaced by a positive search by black political, community and educational leaders for a relevant and effective alternative.

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The strength of PE lies not in that it is a fully-worked out model and structure that could immediately take the place of the existing system if it were backed up by the necessary political power, but that it is a concept in process, a powerful idea whose time has come, an idea with tremendous emotional drive behind it, because as an idea it has gone beyond the confines of the organisation (NECC) that first tried to articulate it.

Earlier in this paper I tried to throw light on the education crisis by analysing the conflicting perceptions of Black and White attitudes and opinions. The fundamental divide, however, is not Black / White - that is to put it into far too simplistic terms - but between those who :

on the one hand, wish to preserve the essence of apartheid (population registration, group areas and separate education systems) and place emphasis on group interests, the maintenance of capitalism in its present form and the ultimate preservation of White privilege and domination, and seek to accommodate crisis situations through "reform" and "improvement" of existing political, social and economic structures ;

and those, on the other hand, who, while recognising the diversity of South Africa's people, nevertheless see the future in terms of a non-racial, democratic, unitary, just and equitable society, who see no resolution of the present crisis, either politically or educationally, save through the fundamental change and transformation of the political structures on the basis of the democratic participation of all South Africans, and of the economic system through a more equitable division of wealth, land and property.

Analyses of and attitudes to PE tend to coalesce around one or other of these broad directions on each side of the divide. PE has in fact acted as a catalyst in clarifying the basic issues at stake -

whether we believe that the challenge of the education crisis can be met by improving the present system by the application of more money and greater resources, by better buildings and facilities, improved teacher qualifications and greater efficiency, important as all these may be in the short term ?

or whether the education crisis can be resolved only in the context of social, economic and political change in which the measures outlined in the first option would be combined with the search for post-apartheid alternatives for education, now and in the future, in a process which would

lead to an educational dispensation that would be compatible with a changed political and economic order ?

Even this is all too simple. Within each of the two broad directions that I have sketched there is a broad spectrum of attitudes, interests and perceptions that cause tension and conflict, sometimes of a fierce and unrelenting nature, directed both within the groupings and across the divide. As will become apparent from later papers there are those who accept the inevitability of violence and those who seek reconciliation; those who hope and those who despair; those who do not trust their fellow human-beings and seek doctrinaire, authoritarian measures as a solution; those who, albeit human and fallible, seek Christian answers to our dilemma; those who are ready to continue the debate and those who have closed their minds. There are clear divergences of opinion and philosophy over the meaning of important concepts such as democracy, capitalism, liberalism and socialism, over equality and justice, over the strategies to be used to achieve a better future and the means to be employed. The papers of Vincent Maphai and Mike Ashley will provide opportunities to look at these tensions and conflicts in greater detail.

The crucial and difficult question for education, as the country moves painfully but inevitably towards a post-apartheid society, is whether a new education dispensation can respond to broad social, economic and political goals without continuing to be heavily "politicised", in the sense of being committed to and controlled by a particular, narrow, party-political ideology not necessarily supported by all the members of the society served by the education system, which is our past and present experience. This particular issue is of major importance for the teaching profession. It will be important that teachers show a broad commitment to the idea of a non-racial, democratic future for South Africa based on a philosophy of freedom, justice and opportunity for all, and yet remain non-aligned to a particular party cause. At one and the same time they will have to be able to combine this broad commitment with a positive, professional, independent spirit and position. The difficulties of the teaching profession in occupying such highly contested ground should not be underestimated, but without the active involvement of the profession in the process towards

post-apartheid education the relevance, quality and even the feasibility of such education would be at serious risk.

CONCLUSION

Will South Africa learn from the lessons of the past ? Or is the past so painful that it can be exorcised only by repeating it under a different ideological banner ? This may have no problems for the politician in power, but for the educator, whose concern is the well-being of children and young people and the kind of learning environment in which they grow up, it is an issue of paramount importance.

In a country where education has been used so obviously as an instrument of control, where it has been used to protect power and privilege, to divide and segregate according to a hierarchy of provision, financing, resources and quality, from White down to Black, where it has been the servant of the ideology of apartheid, it will be no easy task to reach agreement on the nature and form of education in a future non-racial and democratic South Africa. It is relatively easy to break down the old in education - as I have pointed out in this paper, that process of disintegration is well on its way in Black urban schools - but to build up the new is another matter, demanding open debate and honest negotiation, a basis of agreement and common purpose, imagination, energy and commitment. There are real dangers that in the inter-regnum between the old and the new much of the education system could continue to deteriorate, while sectional interests go on dominating the scene, preventing a common purpose emerging as to the shape, nature and the goals of a transforming education for and in post-apartheid South Africa.

The hurts are deep, emotions run high and the obstacles to understanding and shared debate are massive. The process in which we are all involved, whether we like it or not, is loaded with complexities, uncertainties and risks, because it is all taking place in an unstable and unresolved context. However, in a sense we have been given another chance. The upsurge of "alternative education" in all its forms, has given us a new opportunity to debate and negotiate the realities, the relevance, the

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quality and style of education in South Africa.

Although this process is likely to be painful and laborious, there is hope and there is common ground.

The hope lies in that, in spite of the rejection of much of what at present is understood as schooling, there is nevertheless a common appreciation of the fundamental importance of education and what it could contribute to and in a regenerated society.

The common ground, now and in the future, must be a commitment to a non-racial, democratic, equitable and just society, in both the political and economic sense, of the parties to the debate and negotiation.

A White community, whether of educators or of citizens, that does not seek its place in this common ground, but stands outside in isolation, from fear, prejudice or sheer apathy, will become increasingly irrelevant in a process that cannot be halted and to the search for a better future for all the citizens of South Africa.

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