

# **Christian National Education (CNE) and People's Education (PE): Historical perspectives and some broad common grounds**

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## ***Abstract***

A recognition of the legitimate origins of the idea of Christian-National Education in a people's struggle for freedom does not mean endorsing the idea as such. Especially in its later development, it seems that the Christian-National idea has taken on wholly unacceptable features...For those who identify with the people's education movement, the Christian-National idea will be a symbol of the system of oppression against which they now struggle so that it will be difficult for them to appreciate its origins in an earlier struggle against oppression that closely parallels their own...<sup>1</sup>

## ***Introduction***

At the turn of the century a new curriculum philosophy for South Africa – called the Outcomes Based - Curriculum 2005 project – intended to overturn the legacy of apartheid education that was shaped by narrow visions, concerns and identities.<sup>2</sup> Prof. Kader Asmal (as Minister of Education) endorsed the Chisholm Report in 2000 as he interpreted it as a “unanimous rejection of the apartheid education principles of Christian National Education”.<sup>3</sup> By the

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1 S. Fowler (Ed.), H.W. van Brummelen, & J. van Dyk, *Christian Schooling: Education for reform* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1990), 125-128.

2 Compare L Chisholm, 'A South African Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (Pretoria: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 31 May 2000), 7; D. Ray and D.H. Poonwassie, *Education and cultural differences. New perspectives* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 4-5, 8-9.

3 K Asmal (MP, Former Minister of Education), 'Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, a curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (Pretoria: 19 June 2000), 1.

time Ms. Naledi Pandor became the newly appointed Minister of Education, from 29 April 2004, the OBE-process was also questioned.<sup>4</sup>

Though the above-mentioned accusations cannot be condemned, neither just bluntly endorsed as a result of so many complexities, this paper aims at focusing on another very important outcome of history resulting from Christian National Education (CNE) since 1878 but especially from 1902, and the urge for People's Education (PE) from 1985 but specifically after 1994. That is namely a closer comparative look at CNE and PE from a historical perspective and within the broad education debate. Though these comparative dimensions are not new, an overview of how this debate has developed on both sides is of relevance. In this article some possible common grounds regarding both these models/forms of education are explored.

### ***Underlying historical and educational principles regarding CNE and PE***

J.L. Davies<sup>5</sup> regards educational policy-making in plural societies as essentially a political activity because it is usually designed to secure a particular type of socialisation of the young. Such political activity in plural societies seeks to protect and enhance group interests through education. Davies continues:

There is therefore a potential for tension to exist within the educational systems of such societies, due to the different interests and expectations of the groupings, be they ethnic, racial, socio-economic, religious or cultural. When one of these groupings aspires to dominate, claims to dominate, or more or less effectively does dominate, the politics of such a plural society, the strain on the educational system, may well be acute, since education is seen as an instrument of domination.

The measure to which CNE and PE adhere to this theory of Davies will become evident from the discussion of both models/forms of education.

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4 See as example A. de Vries, 'Leerlinge en onnies word 'al hoe dommer'', *Rapport*, 36(26), 26 June, 2005, 1. p.1; From 2004, Grades 1-4 in the original Curriculum 2005 was replaced by the National Curriculum Statement. R-9 also builds on the vision and values of the Constitution and the original Curriculum 2005. See Department of Education, *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades 4-6 (Schools) Intermediate Phase*, 2004.

5 J.L. Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa: a study in the influence of Calvinism and nationalism on educational policy', (PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978), 1.

## Christian National<sup>6</sup> Education

### *Conceptual understanding*

In the research of Davies, the conclusion was reached that the Afrikaner population, who implemented CNE, understood 'Christian' as the Calvinist doctrines of the three Afrikaans churches, and 'national' as a love of everything purely Afrikaans.<sup>7</sup> Cilliers understood CNE as that 'the concepts Christian-National imply philosophies of life' that is 'NOT the exclusive property of the Afrikaansspeaking community...', whereas 'National' represents a purely 'man-centred philosophy of life' and 'Education' in the CNE is 'a theoretical and practical matter'.<sup>8</sup>

In another conceptual explanation of CNE Coetzee<sup>9</sup> in 1987 wrote (freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

'CNE mainly obtained an Afrikaans accentuation under specific South African circumstances. Broadly...it indicated that education should be characterized by Protestant-Christian principles and, simultaneously, should be able to find tangent points with the nature, way of living and the specific own of the cultured community/nation for whose children it was meant to be.'<sup>10</sup>

In essence these conceptual explanations accentuated the CNE focus as for a specific language, for a specific religion in a specific cultural environment. Years earlier the 1948-accepted CNE principles by some major Afrikaans-related cultural organisations that were specifically prepared for Afrikaans speaking households, endorsed the following as some key principles to the CNE concept:

- The instruction and education of the children of European parents should be based on their parents' life view of the world.<sup>11</sup>

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6 'National' as concept has been extensively researched and will therefore not be debated in depth in this discussion. By 2005 this concept was still widely used, sometimes to refer to positive events and sometimes to attach a negative meaning to it. Compare W. Esterhuysen, 'Afrikaners moet wéér voortrekkers word', *Rapport Perspektief*, 10 Jul. 2005, 2.

7 Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 2.

8 J.L. le R. Cilliers, 'A phenomenological analysis of Christian-National Education (CNE)', *The South African Association for the Advancement of Education*, University of Durban-Westville, s.a, 1-8.

9 J.H. Coetzee, 'Christelik-Nasionale onderwys geweg in die lig van die ekumeniese roeping van die PU vir CHO en die probleme wat anderskleurige Christene daarmee het', *Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie*, F1, 235, Jul. 1987, 2.

10 Also compare Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 95.

11 Compare T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa. A modern history*, Fourth Edition (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1991), 32, 93, 212-213.

- In turn, the above-mentioned life view should have a Christian foundation based on the Holy Scripture.
- Under the ‘national’ principle it is understood that everything is loved that belongs to the own, such as ‘our country, our language, our history, our culture’. Educational instruction should be conducted through the mechanisms of religious instruction, mother tongue instruction, civil educational instruction, Geography and History.
- Discipline in school is a God-given authority and therefore imposes great responsibility on the Christian teacher.
- No double medium schools – all groupings in South Africa should be separately accommodated.
- Schools should carry out their function independently from the home, the church or the state. The undertaking should rather be a joint effort of all three together.
- Educational instruction for adults, especially Europeans and Afrikaans-speaking citizens, should be given on a principle of cultural apartheid and on the basis of a Christian National attitude to life.
- Education to Coloured and Black people is regarded as subdivisions of the vocation task of the Afrikaans speaking Afrikaner to Christianise non-Europeans of the country. Education of Blacks are seen to be based on the European’s attitude to life and to the world. However, mother tongue as basis for instruction, was accepted and it was recommended that the two official languages of the country (Afrikaans and English) also be instructed.<sup>12</sup>

### *CNE origins*

CNE-roots abroad originated in 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe where religious (Christian) moves played an important role in the establishment of the first schools in especially the Netherlands, Germany, France and Scotland. Because of the Dutch, German and French Protestant descent of the majority of colonialists in South Africa, the ideas of Reformist Martin Luther had a large influence on the educational philosophy of the Afrikaners. Luther accentuated two reasons for sending children to school. Firstly, the spiritual benefits as preparation for the Christian ministry and secondly, the advantage of “well-educated boys and young men” for the state management.<sup>13</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> FAK, Instituut vir Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys, *C.N.O.-beleid* (Johannesburg: s.a., 1948), 7-29.

<sup>13</sup> E.J. Powers, *Main currents in the history of education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), 386-388).

essence it was another Reformist, John Calvin, who was appreciated more by some intellectuals abroad (like H. Dooyeweerd and A. Kuyper) and, in South Africa, for his thinking on the restoration of society that should take place on firm foundations of the Christian faith.<sup>14</sup>

Calvinism as religion, as determined by the Synod of Dort (1618),<sup>15</sup> enjoyed the protection of V.O.C. as exercised in the former Cape of Good Hope.<sup>16</sup> It is said that the Huguenot refugees shortly afterwards helped to give Cape Calvinism its intensity and theological awareness.<sup>17</sup> In South Africa CNE, as conceptually outlined above, was rekindled from the period after the South African War (1899-1902) at private schools<sup>18</sup> when White Afrikaners rejected the secular state-controlled schools of State Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner. Milner was labelled an instigator wanting to Anglicize and denationalize the former White Boer Republics. Afrikaners simply rejected public schools by starting their own schools<sup>19</sup> under the movement 'Vrye Christelike Nasionale Onderwys' (VCNO/FCNE – Free Christian National Education).<sup>20</sup>

It is broadly accepted that the origins of CNE, after the aforementioned War, started with the opening of CNE schools in the former Transvaal and Orange Free State provinces with the purpose to act as a defensive mechanism against the abovementioned Milner policy of anglicising South African education. The additional financial burden it caused to White South Africans in the northern provinces that participated in the War was the main reason for asking the newly elected government in 1907 to continue the management of these schools. Since then, Afrikaans as an official language was accepted in 1925<sup>21</sup> so that the original purpose of CNE became more of an ideology than a philosophy more widely applied in all spheres of life – especially

14 S. Schoeman, '“The school with the Bible”: From meaningless to meaningful citizenship education in South Africa, *Koers*, 67, 4, 2002, 446-449.

15 Compare Davenport, *South Africa...*, 30, 32; W.A. de Klerk, *The puritans in Africa: A story of Afrikanerdom* (London: Collings, 1975), 128.

16 In 1878 D.F. du Toit (editor of the “Patriot”) demanded Christian-National education, strongly propagated by neo-Calvinists in the Netherlands. He believed that parents had the right to insist that their children receive confessional religious instruction and be taught national history of which they themselves approved. Compare H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a people* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2003), 42, 218-219; P.S. du Toit, *Onderwys in die Kaapland, 1652-1975, 'n Historiese oorsig* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1976), 9.

17 De Klerk, *The puritans in Africa...*, 9.

18 National Archive of South Africa, CNO-Kommissie, W23; CNO-Onderwys, W31; A 1426; A 1438; A 1628; CNO-Skole, W6; A1334; A1628; CNO-Vriendekring, W31.

19 Compare Headlam, 1931:514 in K. Hartshorne, *Crisis and challenge: Black Education, 1919-1990* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1987), 85.

20 Compare J.C. Coetzee, *Onderwys in Transvaal - 1838-1937* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1941), 97; H.J. Strauss, *Christelike wetenskap & Christelike onderwys* (Pretoria: Sacum Bpk, 1982).

21 FAK, *C.N.O.-beleid*, Voorwoord; Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 91; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners...*, 377.

since 1939, after the founding of the Ossewa-Brandwag and the centennial commemoration of the Great Trek. The acceptance of Neo-Calvinism as theology among many Reform church academics (of which many formed part of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education)<sup>22</sup> has led to a newly developed relationship regarding Afrikaner Nationalism.<sup>23</sup>

For approximately ten years, the Institute for Christian National Education laboured the CNE policy<sup>24</sup> that the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge has published in 1948 as principles. Apparently this policy was 'accepted by all major Afrikaner organisations that had an interest in education'.<sup>25</sup>

The National Party, after winning the 1948 election, apparently repeatedly denied that CNE was Party or Government policy. Academics, in their writing, felt otherwise.<sup>26</sup> Davies in his search endorsed the difficulty to pinpoint exact government relations to CNE.<sup>27</sup> Others after 1994 ignored this as a major stumbling block and simply accused the former government of being supportive of CNE. In examples by Soni-Amin (as obtained in the writing of Willis)<sup>28</sup> it was stated that by 1861 government schools had increasingly emphasised secular education while Coloured children continued mission schools that focussed on religious education. Since then apartheid education was said to have been architected by Langham Dale. His input later became official policymaker of the National Party as he apparently proposed that 'education could be used to maintain the social and political supremacy of whites' and that 'education should be in line with the education of their peers in Europe'. Soni-Amin regards the 'implementation'<sup>29</sup> of CNE after 1939 as 'an important step for the concept of white supremacy'.<sup>30</sup>

On the status of White supremacy then, renowned Afrikaners such as Prof. Joon van Rooy felt otherwise. In the introductory notes of the FAK's 1948 published principles of CNE, Van Rooy remarked that the following events

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22 Compare E.S. van Eeden (Ed.), *'In U Lig' Die PU vir CHO, van selfstandigwording tot samesmelting, 1951-2004* (Johannesburg: D.Com, 2005), Chapter 11.

23 Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 93-95.

24 Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 2.

25 FAK, *C.N.O.-beleid*, Voorwoord.

26 Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 3-4.

27 Davies, 'Christian National Education in South Africa...', 3-5.

28 A.R. Willis, 'A critical analysis of the development and administration of Coloured education with specific reference to the Coloured Education Commission, 1953-1956' (MA dissertation, s.a, 1994), 6.

29 CNE was a concept freely used after 1902.

30 M Soni-Amin, 'The politics of religious education in South Africa, past and present', <http://disa.nu.ac.za>, as retrieved on 1 Jun. 2005 on the Google search engine, 4-5. Also see Van Eeden (Ed.), *'In U Lig' Die PU vir CHO...*, Chapter 11.

enforced a renewed struggle in educational circles:

- The idea to implement double medium schools as a ‘worn-out idea’.
- The absence of the ‘real cultural stuff’.

Van Rooy added (freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

‘We do not aspire a mixing of language, culture, religion and race...’<sup>31</sup>

After the adoption of the CNE principles by the FAK it was spontaneously nurtured until the mid-seventies after which it became a leprous topic<sup>32</sup> that was, among the broader South African community, doomed for future educational purposes. By 1985 CNE still was actively and spontaneously promoted in all spheres of life and in education in South Africa. Political and educational frustrations of blacks continued as in the past decades but, at the time, also inspired debate among Reformed theologians. CNE was inevitably disputed when Progressive Education or People’s Education became prominent.<sup>33</sup>

Apparently the National Party government favoured Progressive Education for historically black schools to some extent. In 1990 Dr. Stoffel van der Merwe, Minister of Education and Development Assistance, regarded Progressive Education as an approach where the standards of these schools were lifted and made relevant to the immediate environs it served. With this way of thinking, the door to CNE in regions, as an option, was still regarded as highly possible.<sup>34</sup> However, since 1994, Outcomes-Based Education, as part of PE, dominated the South African educational scene.<sup>35</sup>

### *Some critique*

Though Christian principles, to a greater or lesser degree were always part and parcel of education since the settlement of the VOC in the Cape of Good Hope, the ‘national’ principle was mentioned for the first time in the focus

31 FAK, *C.N.O.-beleid*, Voorwoord; also compare with H.J.J. Bingle, *Aspekte van Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys* (Pretoria Onderwyskollege: NG-Kerk Boekhandel, 1962), 1-23.

32 See Anon., ‘Viljoen verwerp Verwoerd se woorde’, *Die Burger*, 3 Mei 1986, 1; Anon., ‘Bisdom steun sanksies, “People’s Education”’, *Die Burger*, 13 Okt. 1986, 3.

33 Coetzee, ‘Christelik-Nasionale onderwys ...’, 1-20.

34 Anon., ‘Só sal nuwe onderwysmodel werk’ *Beeld*, 11 Jul. 1990, 2.

35 Compare Anon., ‘Onmoontlike kinders?’, *Rapport*, 16 Nov. 2003; J. de Klerk & J. Rens, ‘The role of values in school discipline’ *Koers*, 68, 4, 2003, 368-371; S. Schoeman, ‘“The school with the Bible”: From meaningless to meaningful citizenship education in South Africa’, *Koers*, 67, 4, 2002, 450-457.

to education in the reign of Governor De Mist's 'School-Order' principles in 1863.<sup>36</sup> It referred to National Education, but never to National Christian Education (as from 1902) that implied a total different meaning.

Some regarded the development of CNE schools after 1902 as mainly to serve as a barrier against the programme of anglicizing schools. Somehow this 'struggle' against so-called acts of British imperialism was continued in the name of the Christian religion (and in the process abused) after 1948 when cultural organisations –promoting the White Afrikaans-speaking society – adopted CNE principles for education in general for all. The content of these principles, as published by the FAK, was definitely not shared by the majority of South Africans, whether informed or not informed, because it was believed to be more politically and racially inspired than purely based on religious principles that essentially endorsed an approach of equality of all in its view of human life.

The South African Teachers' Association (SATA) of the former Cape Province in 1949 referred to the CNE principles of the FAK as 'based on political and social attitudes, some of which are quite unacceptable to the Association'. However, from the Cape Province SATA's critique, it appears that the CNE founder's approach to distinguish between European and Non-European was quite acceptable to SATA (Cape Province). They rather complained about the emphasis of the CNE principles for 'Afrikaans children' as well as the inadequate definitions of 'National' and 'Christian' that should not be sacrosanct and above criticism.<sup>37</sup>

In South Africa the concept CNE, as 'volksaansluitende'[closely linked to a specific community] and as a natural and universal phenomenon to which religion is attached to distinguish itself from many other educational practices, should have been destined to be an ideal in a multi-ethnic, multicultural milieu. However White Afrikaners pirated the concept and process for themselves in example mother tongue education, the way in which the Bible should be understood, and its association with fatherland history. As a result the actually supposed religiously inspired focus was eventually distorted mainly into having 'national' features only. Also underlying in CNE is the principle of freedom, according to Coetzee.<sup>38</sup>

36 Compare D.H. Cilliers, 'Die geskiedenis van Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys in Kaapland tot 1900' (MA-dissertation, Unisa, 1940), 29.

37 South African Teacher's Association, Cape Province, *Christian National Education, a critical commentary* (s.n.: s.a., ca.1949), 6-18.

38 Coetzee, 'Christelik-Nasionale onderwys ...', 3-4.

Among layman who, through all the years, supported CNE a defensive attitude against CNE gradually developed. This was perhaps as a consequence of the dominance within the 'national' instead of the 'religious' principles within Christianity. In the sixties, the rector of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education complained about the incorrect thinking and doing around both the concepts on this institution (freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

We are becoming national-Christian; in fact we are becoming only national, but because our past can not release us we snatch, as an afterthought, the Christian like [principles] that once were the essence of our livelihood.<sup>39</sup>

Since this voice of concern, and for that matter many others in the years that followed, the white children of especially the fifties to the seventies were educated in the name of CNE. It is though highly doubtful if the majority of them were more exposed to the positive, accommodative and tolerant principles of Christianity than the politically and emotionally loaded patriotic principles in the name of White nationalism. Even the historically White Afrikaans churches struggled to differentiate between both concepts from a truly religious angle.<sup>40</sup>

From another angle of critique in 2003 the Department of Education (DoE) still nurtured the idea widely that CNE was designed to support apartheid after 1948:

Christian National Education condoned corporal punishment. Christian National Education was designed to support the apartheid system by schooling children to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestioningly. Teachers were encouraged to use the cane during this era as a way of keeping control and dealing with those who stepped out of line. Beating children to discipline or punish them was taken for granted in a society familiar with violence. During the 1970's (sic), however, when resistance to apartheid swelled, learner organizations began to demand an end to abuse in the classroom and in the 1980's (sic) learners, educators and parents formed 'Education Without Fear' to actively campaign against the whipping of children.<sup>41</sup>

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39 PJJ.S. Potgieter, 'Die PU vir CHO aElectronic data research on South African Acts – Butterworths packages Afrikaanse universiteit', Verkenning in oorgang. Gedagtes by die 125-jarige bestaansjaar van die PU vir CHO – 1994, *Koers*, Supplement 1, 1998, 126.

40 Compare Professor Bennie van der Walt's commentary in *IRS*, 25 Jaar, *Visie & Missie*, *Wetenskaplike bydraes van die PU vir CHO*, Reeks F (F3), 35, 1989, 22-23; 34-35; 37-38.

41 DoE, Facilitator's guide. Pretoria., "Co-operative discipline: An alternative to corporal punishment", Pretoria, 2003.

In the same fashion for example, an elderly White person in 2005 exchanged his memory of frustrations with regard to CNE, as a child in the sixties, in a newspaper (freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

'At school in the sixties they said that us white children must one day be an example for our country's dark nation. That is why we were not allowed to dance on the music of the Beatles but encouraged to do folk dancing. It was believed that dance lead to sex and sex to sin. If subjugating to sin we could not be a good example for the Coloured people. In standard six there was a teacher. I remember that his nickname was Kwartel. He constantly said that the Coloured People is catching up on us and that we must move our arses against the other nations. In order to do so, we were taught how to do sums. Halfway in doing a sum the first cane lash hit your short pants... Your slower dumber brothers were spanked until they had the hiccups... That was called Christian National Education... With orphans Kwartel was nastier... But they were also White children. With "special treatment" they could also be taught what it requires to be an example one day for our county's dark people...'<sup>42</sup>

As the DoE guideline text above, this very outspoken – and probably somewhat over exaggerated impression of a past experience within CNE – will most certainly to some extent be echoed by many other White South Africans who, at the time, were children. Frustrations of Afrikaans speaking Whites regarding the way educators and government secularly defined and practised CNE since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and so have – with 'good intentions' then – intoxicated young white learners with wrong or/and with very specific ideals, still requires extensive research.

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) also criticized the DoE prior to 1994 of being capitalistic and of promoting racism in education.<sup>43</sup> In 2003, Professor Kader Asmal, reported that government must educate children in such a way that they are well-adapted, productive and sentient South African citizens. He emphasised his doubts towards the ability of schools with a CNE tradition to do so<sup>44</sup> without any motivation.

From the so-called Kairos document in 1987 (a biblical inspired proposal of how to create a better community – called Kainos – through the key principles of the Kingdom of God namely freedom, righteousness and peace)

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42 Compare E. Britz, 'Example vir land se coloured nasies', *Beeld*, 1 Jul. 2005; Anon., 'Onmoontlike kinders?', *Rapport*, 16 Nov. 2003.

43 CJ de Lange, 'Die Progressive Education Movement (PEM) in die VSA en People's Education (PE) in die RSA: 'n fundamenteel-opvoedkundige vergelyking' (M.Ed. dissertation, PU vir CHO, 1990), 68, 96.

44 A Truter, 'Dié filosofie lei nie denkendes op', *Die Burger*, 16 Mei 2003. Also compare A.L. Mawasha, *Dis-empowerment through Language and Culture: Implications for Education* in TUATA: 86th Annual Conference, *Culture – its Nature and Significance for Education* (Braamfontein: Tuata, 1992), 10-15.

many opinions were recorded.<sup>45</sup> Reverend P.J. Buys added another angle to the debate by accentuating that ‘Calvinism does not teach apartheid’ and that ‘our racial background does not in any way make us more acceptable to God’<sup>46</sup> It is unfortunate for CNE that this ‘light’ concerning what CNE supposed to focus on in education, came only after 1985 when People’s Education became the talk of the town.

## People’s Education

### *Conceptual understanding*

People’s Education is fundamentally based on a historical materialist critique of the South African society inherited from the authors of the Freedom Charter and Communist Party intellectuals.<sup>47</sup>

It is believed that the notion of People’s Education (PE) was first defined at the National Education Crisis Conferences (NECC) in 1985. Several broad definitions of PE however already existed. Among these definitions were, according to Walter Sisulu, that PE is ‘education which serves the people as a whole’ and ‘which liberates’, as well as ‘which puts people in command of their lives’ and/or ‘which is determined by and accountable to the people’. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa defined PE as<sup>48</sup>:

Education which prepares people for total human liberation, and for full participation in social, political or cultural spheres of society, helps people to be creative, to develop a critical mind and to analyse.

The NECC delegates attached another definition of five characteristics to PE, namely that PE:

- i) enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system;
- ii) eliminates capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development and one that encourages collective input and active

45 Compare BJ van der Walt et al., ‘n Reformatoriese kommentaar op die Kairos-dokument’, *Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie*, F1, 231-232, Mar. 1987, 14-15.

46 Compare P.J. Buys, ‘Calvinism does not teach apartheid’, *Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie*, F1, 233, May. 1987, 1, 8-9.

47 Compare R. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa a modern history*, Fifth edition (Macmillan: Great Britain, 2000), 4-3-405; S. Dubow, “Christian-National ideology, apartheid, and the concept of ‘race’” in *Illicit Union. Scientific racism in modern South Africa* (Cambridge University Press: Great Britain, 1995), 249.

48 Sisulu and Mkhathshwa’s speeches as in RESA, ‘The struggle against apartheid education: towards People’s Education in South Africa’, Paper 3, Colchester, Essex, Oct. 1988, 20; M.C. Mehl, ‘From pariah to intellectual home: The UWC microcosm of People’s Education’, *University of the Western Cape*, Inaugural address, A(60), 1989, 11.

participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis; iii) eliminates illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of any person by another; iv) equips and trains 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; v) enables workers to resist exploitation and oppression at their work place.<sup>49</sup>

For Hartshorne (1992:345-346) People's Education, which in the very broadest terms is against apartheid, oppression, exploitation and capitalist values, and for a democratic, non-racial, unitary society free from oppression and exploitation, has tried to work out the educational consequences of the Freedom Charter of 1955.

Characteristics that reporters and commentators have attached to the general conceptual understanding of PE in South Africa since 1986 was that it is an alternative educational approach for applying:

- in a multicultural society to bring a certain level of literacy to the people;
- in a struggle against 'apartheid education' as perceived by the broader black communities;
- as alternative popular<sup>50</sup> education (especially applied in countries after liberation);
- in people's/community directed indigenous education<sup>51</sup>;
- to be equality focussed;
- relevant content acceptable to the community;
- people's power in education;
- accessible education for all;
- a democratic approach to education;
- education that appreciates the historical activities of a pure people's culture;
- education to contribute towards hegemony among cultures.<sup>52</sup>

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49 RESA, 'The struggle against apartheid education...', 21.

50 See Mc Kay & Romm, *People's Education*, Introductory notes on similarities regarding People's Education and Popular Education.

51 Compare L le Grange, 'Western science and indigenous knowledge: Competing perspectives or complementary frameworks?', *South African Journal for Higher Education*, 18, 3, 2004, pp. 82-91.

52 Apart from the sources used in the section on a historical comparison, compare Education Policy Unit, *Alternative, popular and people's education* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1989); D. Grove, 'n Fundamenteel-pedagogiese ondersoek na People's Education met spesifieke verwysing na die implikasies vir opvoeding, onderwys en kultuur binne die konteks van die RSA' (DEd thesis, UPE, 1992), 284-318; D. Ray & D.H. Poonwassie, *Education and cultural differences: new perspectives* (New York, Garland Publishers, 1992); V.I. Mc Kay & N.R.A. Romm, *People's Education in theoretical perspective: towards the development of a critical humanist approach* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller), 1992; Anon., 'The students' hand in today's SA', *City Press*, 12 Jun. 2005, 25; Anon., 'ANC sal sy stryd voortsit - Sisulu', *Die Burger*, 30 Okt. 1989, 2; W.H. Henry, *People's Education: contribution to a new hegemony or merely a romantic dream* (s.l: s.n., 1989); P. Zietsman, 'Struggle Afrikaans', *Die Burger*, 1 Nov. 2003, 13.

Finally all the above-mentioned loose characteristics of PE, as identified by the Educational Policy Unit (EPU), boils down to the following key issues: ‘Countries differ in applying the PE definition. In South Africa a specific meaning applies: ‘the term means that we should strive for the two together’[probably education endorsed by all within a democratic dispensation], and therefore, in the main, implies the development of education towards a ‘critical humanist approach’[sic].<sup>53</sup> This humanist approach, as interpreted from the above-provided conceptual thinking, implied an all-inclusive approach to meaningful quality inspired education with ideals of how the economic status quo should change.

### *PE origins*

From the conceptual outline it was outlined that PE in South Africa, as a possible alternative in the educational approach for South Africa, has become a popular topic of discussion since the mid-eighties.<sup>54</sup> The Freedom Charter, as adopted by the ANC in 1956, could also be associated as part of the original ideas encompassed within the development of PE.<sup>55</sup> The NECC’s formulating of PE in 1985-1986 laid the basis for the organisation of action among students and student organisations against the ‘undemocratic, racist structures’ as perceived at the time. For carrying the education struggle within the broad conceptional view, the NECC also relied on ‘close links between students, workers and community organisations’ and ‘political leaders’ and ‘on the co-ordinating of action in the different areas’.<sup>56</sup>

Tertiary intellectuals in South Africa started reporting and commenting on PE from 1987.<sup>57</sup> Others, in turn, compared PE with the Progressive Education Movement (PEM) in the USA and regarded both movements as progressive.<sup>58</sup>

53 Education Policy Unit, ‘Discussion notes...’, 3; Mc Kay & Romm, *People’s Education ...*, preface.

54 Compare Anon., ‘Onderwys kry nuwe forum’, *Die Burger Ekstra*, 14 Mei 1986, 4; J. Gerwel, ‘SA krisis nie in onderwys’, *Die Burger*, 17 Jul. 1986, 7; Anon., ‘Bisdóm steun sanksies, “People’s Education”’, *Die Burger*, 13 Okt. 1986, 3; P. van Zijl, ‘People’s Education: a collection of newspaper articles, 1986-1988’ *Institute for Contemporary Study*, Free State University, 1989.

55 JL van der Walt et al., ‘People’s Education, ‘n model vir onderwys in ‘n multikulturele samelewing’, *Human Sciences Research Council and PU vir CHO-Project*, 1987, 30.

56 RESA, ‘The struggle against apartheid education...’ 21-22.

57 Compare Van der Walt, ‘People’s Education...; Research on Education project, ‘The struggle against apartheid education – towards a people’s education in South Africa’, 3, 1988; M. Mehl, ‘From pariah to intellectual home...’ 1989.

58 De Lange, ‘Die Progressive Education Movement ...’, 54-56.

In the years of apartheid prior to 1994, the principal pedagogical alternative to the education system's fundamental pedagogic stand was 'progressive education' – a form of learner-centred education from the USA (based on the origin of alternative education in Canada), nurtured in local South African liberal universities and some English private schools. In the 1980s the progressive learner-centred approach was linked to an egalitarian transformative project for South African education that eventually resulted to PE as an alternative to 'apartheid education'.<sup>59</sup> Apartheid was experienced by the majority of South Africans before and after the ruling National Party constitutionally implemented acts that accentuated the separation of the various cultures in South Africa.<sup>60</sup> Educational dissatisfaction has resulted in several outbursts of reactions of which the founding and the doings of the NECC since 1985 under the slogan of 'Build the Organs of People's Power' was a milestone.<sup>61</sup> However – according to De Lange – this did not cause a major impact as a result of the violent nature of NECC inspired actions.<sup>62</sup> Others were of the opinion that the notion of 'people's education' was defined at NECC gatherings.<sup>63</sup>

The inferior socio-political status of especially black people in South Africa undoubtedly contributed to the development of PE as an alternative to an educational system perceived to be politically driven and subject to abolition.<sup>64</sup> Main features of PE were absorbed into Curriculum 2005.<sup>65</sup>

### *Some critique*

Though supporters of PE also at times referred to this educational model as alternative education, the concept 'alternative education' was regarded by

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59 Chisholm, 'A South African Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', 31; J.D. Jansen & P. Christie (Eds.), *Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-based Education in SA* (Kenwyn: Juta, 1999).

60 Compare Research on Education in South Africa (RESA), 'Strategies on education and training in South Africa, 1960-1987. The role of corporate capital', Paper 1, Colchester, Essex, Oct. 1988, 7-8; RESA, 'Bantu education as a reformist strategy of the South African state', Paper 2, Colchester, Essex, Oct 1988, 9-11, 21-22; RESA, 'The struggle against apartheid education...', 1-13.

61 RESA, 'The struggle against apartheid education: towards People's Education...', 15-16.

62 De Lange, 'Die Progressive Education Movement, 56-64. Compare E.S. van Eeden, *Didactical guidelines for teaching history in a changing South Africa* (Potchefstroom: Keurkopie Publishers, 1999).

63 RESA, 'The struggle against apartheid education ...', 20.

64 De Lange, 'Die Progressive Education Movement ...', 68, 96.

65 Compare notes further on in discussion and A. Kraak, *Competing Education & Training Policy Discourses: A 'Systemic' versus 'Unit Standards' Framework in J. Jansen, & P. Christie, (Eds.), Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-based Education in South Africa* (Cape Town: Creda Communications, 1999), 21-58; L. Chisholm, *A South African curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 2000), 31.

some critics to have a much wider meaning than PE. Alternative education, it was said, ‘means that you work within the system, whereas people’s education strives to change the system.’<sup>66</sup> In 1987 some academics reported that the (freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

‘PE-educational philosophy’ thus far consist mainly out of programmatic announcements, plenty of rhetoric and a large number ad hoc declinatory points of view oppose to the status quo. No thinker/philosopher exists as the ultimate exponent of the PE-educational philosophy to fundamentally express PE.<sup>67</sup>

Others felt that PE contained negative and positive characteristics,<sup>68</sup> and some even referred to it as “volksonderwys”/<sup>69</sup>public education (as it was in the case of CNE). Some judged PE as typically informal-like<sup>70</sup> and socialistic of nature with a lack in firmness regarding fundamental educational principles such as the need for discipline.<sup>71</sup> Grové referred to PE as ‘interspersed by political ideology’ (freely translated from Afrikaans into English)... and the field of education mainly politically inspired.<sup>72</sup> Davies summarized the PE project earlier as ‘ill defined and lacking in content’ and its view of the ‘people’ as ‘crudely populist’.<sup>73</sup> Regarding the positive elements, PE was seen as calling for the elimination of gross inequalities in the apartheid system as the latter had negative impacts on the liberation of Blacks from a complex of inferiority and dependence on Whites. The provision of adequate and equal education for all was requested.<sup>74</sup> A serious revisiting of especially History and Afrikaans textbooks was called for.<sup>75</sup>

During the late eighties, some newspapers reports raised concerns about the ‘reign of terror’-like approach of bodies, experienced in some schools for Blacks schools where the aim appeared to be to drastically changing the

66 Anon., ‘Unie gaan self leerplanne beskikbaar stel’, *Die Burger*, 18 Jun. 1987, 15; Education Policy Unit, ‘Discussion notes prepared for the ICY’ (Dunwell House: Braamfontein, 1989), 3.

67 JL van der Walt et al., ‘People’s Education...’ 81.

68 Anon., ‘Nuwe leerplanne in SA nodig’, *Die Burger*, 4 Mrt. 1988, 15; Anon., ‘Onderwys-hervorming’, *Die Burger*, 7 Mrt. 1988, 8.

69 See Anon., ‘Van der Ross oor ‘volksonderwys’ Moenie baba met badwater uitgooi nie’, *Die Burger Ekstra*, 28 Jun. 1988, 8.

70 Anon., ‘Euro-sentrisme in perspektief’, *Die Burger*, 13 Jun. 1992, 10.

71 Compare Anon., ‘AP-houding verbaas’, *Die Burger*, 9 Jun. 1989, 16.

72 Compare D Grové, “n Fundamenteel-pedagogiese ondersoek na “People’s Education” met spesifieke verwysing na die implikasies vir opvoeding, onderwys en kultuur binne die konteks van die RSA’ (D.Ed-dissertation, UPE, 1992), 264.

73 J. Davies, ‘The university curriculum and the transition in South Africa’, *European Journal of Education*, 29(3), 1994, 261.

74 See Anon., ‘Education for Citizenship’, *Die Burger*, 28 Jun. 1988, 6.

75 Compare Anon., ‘Skep alternatiewe onderwys – KPO’, *Die Burger*, 23 Jun. 1989, 2.

existing educational system to PE.<sup>76</sup> The outbreak of violence as a result of the urge for PE was labelled by a newspaper reporter as a political monster,<sup>77</sup> as an outlet to frustrations among Black People because of apartheid in South Africa and sanctions applied against South Africa.<sup>78</sup> Others reported that Afrikaans as language was the co-carrier of the “struggle”<sup>79</sup> among Coloured South Africans which also reached a high mark among Blacks in 1976.<sup>80</sup> A learner’s impression was:

‘one could say that black students are very much part of the whole struggle to dismantle apartheid because no student, be it a primary school or high school pupil or a university student, is free from this corrupt system’.<sup>81</sup>

In 1992, a well-known expert on PE, Vio Grossi, argued that PE is not easy to define, and that in itself is actually one of the concept’s strengths.<sup>82</sup> Among other things, it deals with aims that are liberatory of nature, symbolic of character and with reflections of humanistic ontology.<sup>83</sup> As far as this remark by Grossi is concerned, educators in 1987 tested PE on their educational insights and methodology in terms of the Marxist philosophy. From a theological principle it was found that PE does not accommodate any Christian view of education in its educational approach. At the time, ontology as a principle was found to be absent in the PE approach. Some cosmological convictions of PE, embedded in the Marxist philosophy, were identified as being the following: material issues; what is empirically acceptable; the status quo issues such as apartheid and education; economic determinism issues such as economic exploitation and oppression of workers, low salaries, role of trade unions, etc.; regarding education as a political issue as it also pertains to a stronghold of intellectual power. As in Marxism, the anthropological perspective of PE regarding the individual is more related to his/her relation with others, than the fate of the individual him-/herself.<sup>84</sup>

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76 Compare Anon., ‘Azacco, Sosco word beperk’, *Die Burger*, 26 Okt. 1988, 18; Anon., ‘Twee organisasies se bedrywighede word aan bande gelê’, *Die Burger*, 26 Okt. 1988, 2.

77 See Anon., ‘Hoe ‘n skaakmat-parlement lyk’, *Die Burger*, 13 Jul. 1989, 13; Anon., Swart skole toe; ouers gedreig’, *Die Burger*, 28 Mrt. 1990, 19.

78 Compare Anon., ‘Skole-krisis gewyt aan apartheid en sanksies’, *Die Burger*, 4 Okt. 1990, 17.

79 It was always believed that the governing National Party forced schools into an educational system where Afrikaans as language was prioritized on an equal footing than that of English. Even more could the negativity against Afrikaans being found in the White NP leadership and broader community that was accused as the instigators of apartheid.

80 Zietsman, ‘Struggle Afrikaans’, 13.

81 Compare De Lange, ‘Die Progressive Education Movement...’, 64.

82 See Grossi as in Mc Kay & Romm, *People’s Education...*, 3.

83 Compare Mc Kay & Romm, *People’s Education*, 19-59.

84 J.L. van der Walt et al., ‘People’s Education...’ 231-241.

On the other hand Hartshorne warned that the ‘People’ in People’s Education (1992:345-346) could “be disastrous for South Africa if it should be interpreted in a similar way to that of *die volk* in Afrikaner Nationalism, as a new sectional, exclusive ideology. The broader and the more-embracing the concept of ‘the people’ can become, the more we can seek common ground, the better we shall serve the interests of all the children” in South Africa.

On the arrival of the new century, a concern was raised about the lack of discipline in educational institutions. An absence of a specific life and world view (example the life view in a correctly approached CNE or views as exposed in Citizenship Education) was accentuated as the reason for the degradation of moral principles and discipline at schools in which an urge for PE played a part.<sup>85</sup>

### ***CNE and PE – some common grounds***

Identifying common grounds within CNE and PE is not so new. In 1986, Prof. B.C. Schutte remarked<sup>86</sup>(freely translated from Afrikaans into English):

If we exclude antagonism, distrust and propaganda, we as Christian Afrikaners and the Black people speak the same language.

Among his few comparisons of PE and CNE, the following appeared:

[for PE] the new educational system must be focussed to present all subjects from a Black oppressed perspective – even language and scientific subjects. That is clearly what the CNE supported ...

By simply comparing the earlier conceptual discussion of both CNE and PE, it is obvious that in both the need for the provision of education that they regarded as trustworthy for ‘our people’ and/or ‘our nation’ was inspired and struggled for. For carrying the education struggle within the broad conceptional view of CNE and PE, a reliance on community organisations and political leaders, and among others things, the interventions of parents and external sympathy, were prominent, though it was recorded that in both CNE and PE the leading parties (respectively the National Party<sup>87</sup> and the

85 Compare Anon., ‘Onmoonlike kinders?’, *Rapport*, 16 Nov. 2003; J. de Klerk & J. Rens, ‘The role of values in school discipline’ *Koers*, 68, 4, 2003, 368-371; S. Schoeman, ‘“The school with the Bible”: From meaningless to meaningful citizenship education in South Africa’, *Koers*, 67, 4, 2002, 450-457.

86 See BC Schutte, ‘Swartes se eise en CNO’, *Die Vaderland*, 1 Mei 1986, 9 in P. van Zijl, ‘People’s Education, A collection of Newspaper articles, 1986-1988’ (Institute of Contemporary History UOFS, Nov. 1989), 47.

87 Compare J. Davies, ‘The university curriculum and the transition in South Africa’, *European Journal of Education*,

African National Congress) claimed that they had no specific association with these forms of alternative education.

Other issues that could be regarded as common ground matters between both CNE and PE are:

*White consciousness and Black consciousness*

The existence of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa from the seventies will always be associated with the struggle by Black people to break down the general distorted image underlying inferiority and the questioning of their abilities, as well as a deprivation of their rights, controlled by government acts of the day. PE was associated with the BCM as part of the first constructive initiatives to struggle for freedom and as an instrument for social and political change.<sup>88</sup>

Years earlier, CNE initiatives resulted from a White consciousness awareness among Dutch-Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners as a result of the outcome of the South African War (1899-1902). With a perceived inferiority to White English Afrikaners in all spheres of life, the enforced programme of anglicizing educational structures and a loss of a decent living in many scorched areas as a result of the war, a 'White consciousness struggle' was 'fought' during and after the war from all angles possible (example military leaders, poets and other professional writers, religious leaders and educators).<sup>89</sup> Some writing of the poet C. Louis Leipoldt,<sup>90</sup> for example, comes to mind that indeed stirred the consciousness of Whites at the time (but could just as easily have been the words uttered by any dissatisfied Black South African before, during and after the BCM in the seventies):

'Forgive and forget? Is it easy to forgive?  
The sorrow and the fear bothered so very much!  
The scorching iron burnt upon the nation a scar  
for the centuries, and this wound is to close.  
To close to our heart and to deep into our life –

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29(3), 1994, 262. Davies asserted that when constitutional negotiations began, the ANC quietly distanced itself from PE. From earlier discussions the NP's argument of no association with CNE, has been pointed out.

88 Compare J.L. van der Walt (Red.), 'People's Education: 'n model vir onderwys in 'n multikulturele samelewing', *PU vir CHO-RGN Projek*, VOO18/K, 1987, 26-27, 92.

89 Compare Davenport, *South Africa...*, 212-213.

90 CL Leipoldt, *Vyftig gedigte gekies uit sy bundels Oom Gert vertel, Dingaansdag, Uitgesoekte gedigte vir jong Suid-Afrika, Uit drie wêrelddele, Skoonheidstroos, uitgegee ter geleentheid van sy 66e verjaarsdag* (Amsterdam:Balkema, 1946).

Patience oh Patience that can carry so much!  
(freely translated from Afrikaans into English)

### *Political struggle*

Both the supporters of CNE and PE experienced a sense of victimization and menace. Badenhorst for example said that the CNE intended to lead the 'earlier oppressed White Afrikaner to become the ruling party' (freely translated from Afrikaans into English), and in many respects PE contributed towards leading the 'oppressed Black people to be the ruling party in government'.<sup>91</sup>

In 1989 Prof. Mehl of the University of the Western Cape, remarked in his inaugural speech that no educational provision can ever be politically neutral, as education is a way in which a particular ideology feeds itself. He continued by remarking that apartheid education (in essence CNE according to critics) was perhaps 'one of the more blatant examples of a state imposing its ideology... People's Education is no different...'.<sup>92</sup>

Also in 1989 Davies wrote that the Education Policy Unit (EPU), unambiguously referred to this possible comparison between CNE and PE by stating that both models relied on 'alternative education' that 'is simply different to that provided by the state. It is not necessarily progressive or conservative'. The EPU, however, then continued their debate on both models by stating that the CNE is a very good example of a conservative model 'because they did not like the liberal English education provided by the colonial government of Lord Milner... by 1902'. Davies, on the other hand, remarked that the 'English-language curriculum was ... far less resistant to racist penetration that is generally assumed'.<sup>93</sup>

Apparently the EPU regarded the founding of the Cultural Clubs of the African National Congress from the fifties as much more progressive, with no serious intellectually-related (content etc.) reason for this observation, except for an action step that was taken, namely 'boycotting state schools'. A step such as this was regarded as part of the 'progressive' endeavour to change the system.<sup>94</sup> In essence CNE also followed the same path as agent for change within an educational system not favouring mother tongue education and

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91 Compare R.G. Badenhorst, 'Leserskommentaar', *Die Burger*, 24 Apr. 1987, 14.

92 Mehl, 'From pariah to intellectual home...', 10-11.

93 Davies, 'The university curriculum...' 256.

94 Compare Education Policy Unit, 'Discussion notes...', 2-3.

national history.

Both Fowler et al. and Hartshorne said that colonization and imperialism led to the introduction of CNE. Out of the experience of educational oppression on religious and cultural grounds, CNE became a major plank in Afrikaner social aspirations<sup>95</sup> and identity.<sup>96</sup> For N.Q. Mkabela and P.C. Luthuli (and others) the key purpose within these parameters of freedom was to indicate a philosophy of life that was in opposition to secularism and in opposition to the misuse of colonial schools for British imperialistic ideals of colonialism.<sup>97</sup>

On the other hand the introduction of PE during the eighties occurred as a result of especially the political and educational oppression experienced by Black South Africans under White minority governments and tertiary institutions (thus D. Coetzee and A. le Roux)<sup>98</sup> in that they were denied the freedom to participate actively in shaping South Africa in many fields of life. Among others, there was the deprivation of shaping the schooling of their children in accordance with their own life values and aspirations.<sup>99</sup> In this regard Cronjé<sup>100</sup> said about the supporters of PE:

‘In accordance with their own disposition and potential [these people] would develop their own system of values, culture, morality, world-view and spiritual aristocracy. This, too, would be ‘Christian-nationalist’ by nature’.

### *Language struggle*

Initially the quest for alternative education aroused debate in especially the subjects, History, Afrikaans and English (in essence these subjects were also key motivators to change to CNE after 1902 and strongly supported in the FAK principles of 1948) which were egotistically and emotionally approached<sup>101</sup> at the time of proposing alternative education. In example the CNE scenario the struggle for Afrikaans (and even, in turn, Milner’s struggle

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95 Fowler (Ed.), Van Brummelen & Van Dyk, *Christian Schooling*, 125.

96 K Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* (Cape Town: Oxford University press, 1992), 236.

97 Compare N.Q. Mkabela & P.C. Luthuli, *Towards an African Philosophy of Education* (Pretoria: Kagiso Tertiary, 1997), 48; Davenport, *South Africa...*, 212-213, 288; W.H. Vatcher, *White Laager: The rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (s.a:1965).

98 Compare D. Coetzee & A. le Roux, ‘Democratic practises and education in South Africa’ *Journal for Christian Scholarship*, Vol 1 & 2, 1998, 3.

99 Fowler (Ed.), Van Brummelen & Van Dyk, *Christian Schooling*, 127.

100 De Klerk, *The puritans in Africa...*, 216.

101 Compare De Lange, ‘Die Progressive Education Movement...’, 121-132.

to oppress other languages in favour of English) favoured the Whites without even realizing the emotional, socio-cultural and economical harm of doing so to others. Therefore the decade long hatred against Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor was spontaneously feed into the thoughts of PE. As far as the authors of this article are concerned PE never proposed explicit ideas on language. Even though English turned out to be the second or even third language of example Black people, some apparently preferred communication through this medium rather than in Afrikaans or even their mother tongue because of the 'political baggage' they perceived regarding Afrikaans.

### *Cultural identity struggle*

From the onset of its development and implementation, PE was associated with 'a category of people' as defined by the 1956 ANC Freedom Charter, as it:

... 'recognizes the distinctions of class within the people. It also recognizes the working class as the main leading force within the people's camp. It is non-racial, and democratic, and unites all of these forces on the basis of their common interest in the struggle for a united South Africa'.<sup>102</sup>

It is accepted that, prior to the sixties the Black middle class struggled against the forces of apartheid and discrimination. They eventually succeeded in the struggle in the seventies once the Black workers realised that their oppression and exploitation were one and the same goal. On the other hand the CNE aim was also inspired by the gentry and their acceptance thereof by the worker masses who apparently followed blindly and spontaneously without much questioning. However, both CNE and PE developed as a result of a search for a cultural identity within the national structures of South Africa. Both experienced a lack thereof and so answered by participating in a socio-political struggle in order to act, among others, against economical class-related oppression.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Education Policy Unit, 'Discussion notes...', 4.

<sup>103</sup> Compare Van der Walt (Red.), 'People's Education...', 25; S. Fowler (Ed.), H.W. van Brummelen, & J van Dyk, *Christian Schooling: Education for reform...*, 1990, p. 127; Mawasha , 1992, pp. 10-13.

### *Educational independence struggle*

Though CNE and PE originated and developed around certain specific struggles in many spheres of life, a key focus was to 'set things right' within the approach to the education of 'their children'. Educators criticised PE for not being equipped with a solid educational philosophy and because the word 'education' in PE can be misleading, as it does not actually focus on education but on school teaching.<sup>104</sup> For supporters of PE this model – among others – enabled the oppressed to 'understand the evils' of the apartheid system; opposed 'Bantu Education'; eliminated illiteracy; 'ignorance and the exploitation of one person by another'; equipped and trained 'all sectors of our people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain people's power'; allowed 'students, parents, teachers and others to be mobilized into appropriate organizational structures'.<sup>105</sup>

Main features of PE that were absorbed into Curriculum 2005 were<sup>106</sup>:

- An egalitarian political mission
- An anti-rote learning, critical thrust
- A learner-centered approach to teaching
- Teachers as curriculum developers
- Group work rather than directive teaching
- Community participation
- A move from competency-based to outcomes-based education and training.

Mehl accentuated the impression by PE supporters that curriculum development should emphasise issues such as relevance, accessibility and critical thinking, while eliminating the artificial barriers between academic and technical education.<sup>107</sup>

CNE on the other hand is and was regarded as an approach to education with a philosophical basis. That is the guidance of the learner through the physical, intellectual, mental, creative, social, moral and aesthetic growth to honour and obey God with his/her whole heart, head and hand.<sup>108</sup> In this process 'the school, the family and the church', as well as the 'parent community', were regarded as partners, working in close co-operation, as in the case of PE. In

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104 JL van der Walt et.al, 'People's Education...', 81-82.

105 Education Policy Unit, 'Discussion notes...', 5.

106 Chisholm, 'A South African Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', 31; J.D. Jansen & P. Christie (Eds.), *Changing Curriculum: Studies on Outcomes-based Education in SA* (Kenwyn: Juta, 1999).

107 Mehl, 'From pariah to intellectual home...', 12.

108 Cilliers, 'A phenomenological analysis ...', 10-15.

curricula the CNE emphasis was said to be, amongst others, on a variety of knowledge, skills, a study of nature and the activities of man with the ideal that every curriculum should accentuate the revelation by God's presence. In this sense Cilliers also added that a CNE school 'in its approach to different activities and areas of study should breathe an atmosphere of Christianity in the first place and nationalism in the second place – even though not a word of Christianity or nationalism need be spoken.'<sup>109</sup> This, however, was the idealistic part of CNE.

Therefore CNE, like PE, could be regarded as an educational approach without a solid educational philosophy. This statement is based on the argument – as outlined earlier – that 'National' was over-emphasised beyond the 'Christian' principles in CNE schools. It can be linked to any form of struggle with which the White Afrikaner associated with after the South African War and after 1948 when apartheid was constituted in South Africa.

To add another touch to this debate, Davies remarked that an Africanisation of education<sup>110</sup> is to develop curricula that are more applicable to Africa (example prevention programmes rather than high tech or perhaps an accent on processes and changes that apply in theory and in practice to the peoples of the continent) and that this focus should take a higher stand on the educational agenda.

Neither CNE nor PE could claim a representative all-inclusive educational approach at the turn of the century. By 2005 an expert from the Human Science and Research Council (HSRC) reported that example textbooks within OBE (with which PE supporters would appreciate to be associated with) much have changed since the days of CNE but a long road is still lying ahead to erase sexism, racism and stereotypes.<sup>111</sup> Based on what Davies said, it can also be added that the road to develop indigenous knowledge systems still needs to be paved.

### *Financial struggle*

On a day-to-day basis for both the CNE and PE, strenuous efforts were

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109 Cilliers, 'A phenomenological analysis ...', 14-15.

110 Davies, 'The university curriculum ...', 255-262.

111 A Rademeyer, 'Skrywer wys op leemtes in skoolhandboeke. Beeld nie diverse samelewing uit', *Volksblad*, 22 Okt. 2005.

experienced because of funds and/or a lack of educational status, and certificates were offered to the majority.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, a long term goal for both CNE and PE was empowerment of the 'nation' they represented to be educationally equipped to enable economically active adults to resist exploitation and oppression at their workplace and avoid feeling inferior to others.<sup>113</sup>

*Underlying religious motives/principles in the struggle*

Though it may sound far-fetched, both CNE and PE are rooted into the religious principle in education. The initial religious focus in CNE has already been accentuated earlier. Concerning PE the statement was that because of its linkage to the Marxist philosophy, no religious background was accommodated. But history should not be forgotten. For example: Black frustration regarding education especially after 1953 resulted from the state's abolition of the decades-long existence of the Black Christian educated school system which was apparently more acceptable. As an outcome the African Education Movement was founded in the mid-fifties in order to provide for alternative education.<sup>114</sup>

Another religious angle to the origin of PE can be traced back internationally. The inspired efforts of Bishops Paulo Freire (from Brazilia) and Ivan Illich (from Puerto Rico) come to mind. Freire specifically conveyed his philosophical ideas to Third World countries and together with Illich, they laid the foundation for programmes in a conscious awakening and deschooling techniques that were to lead into a situation where the existing authoritative powers had to be questioned. This approach with the purpose to create an authoritative vacuum for alternative structures to develop, inspired the upcoming of PE.<sup>115</sup> In essence the argument can be that these bishops, with their bold approach to injustice, accentuated a Christian principle in the true sense of the word.

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112 Compare Davenport, *South Africa...*, 212-213; Education Policy Unit, 'Discussion notes...', 3-4.

113 Compare FA van Jaarsveld, *Wie en wat is die Afrikaner* (Kaaipstad: Tafelberg, 1981); Education Policy Unit, 'Discussion notes...', 5.

114 Compare De Lange, 'Die Progressive Education Movement...', 56-57.

115 See De Lange's reference to P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); 1-156; I. Illich, *Deschooling society* (New York: Harper & Row), 1-116 as in I.D. de Vries, 'Alternatiewe onderwys', *Aambeeld-kwartaalblad*, 14,3, Sept. 1986, 24-26.

*Underlying Westernized principles*

From the discussion thus far it can also be ascertained that both CNE and PE originated from Western ideas and initiatives. Whereas CNE can be associated especially with some ideas of philosophers in the Netherlands at the 'Vrije Universiteit', PE was inspired by intellectuals from South America. Francis Nyamnjoh recently argued that education in Africa is the victim of a Western epistemological export that takes the form of science as ideology and hegemony. The argument continues that little effort has been put into a domestication of education to contribute towards a genuine, multifaceted liberation of the continent and its peoples:<sup>116</sup>

'...they ought to start not by joining the bandwagon as [having] been their history, but with a careful rethinking of African concerns and priorities, and coming up with educational policies sympathetic to the needs of ordinary Africans...There is a need for an insightful scrutiny of current curricula – their origin, form, content, assumptions and practicability; and then to decide whether to accept, reject or modify accordingly ...with the interests and concerns of ordinary Africans as guiding principle'.<sup>117</sup>

According to Manila Soni-Amin, the remark by reverend John Phillip of the London Missionary Society during the early years of South Africa's colonial history also applies very much<sup>118</sup>:

'Man in his individual and collective capacity, is also constituted, that no improvement can take place in any part of the one or the other without diffusing its influence over the whole man, and over the whole frame of society'.

*Values inspired by specifics or global trends*

In the past the 'religious part' of CNE as a specific value, has in many respects, been associated with the then Potchefstroom University ( from 2004 North-West University). Very explicit ideas and perceptions with regard to CNE for example existed among the tertiary activities of the Potchefstroom university

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116 FB Nyamnjoh, 'A relevant education for African development – some epistemological considerations', *Africa Development*, XXIX,1 (2004): 161-184.

117 Nyamnjoh, 'A relevant education for African development': 180.

118 M Soni-Amin, 'The politics of religious education in South Africa, past and present', <http://disa.nu.ac.za>, as retrieved on 1 Jun. 2005 on the Google search engine, 1.

employees.<sup>119</sup> After apartheid was constituted in the fifties, Professor Chris Coetzee as rector accentuated the association of religion with education (freely translated into English):

‘The Theological School of our church is die centre of all Christian Education in our country ... A Theological School of the Afrikaans Reformed Church can never strived towards anything else than to pure Afrikaans (national) reformed education... The entire history of the school struggle by Afrikaans [supporters] bear witness of this cordial connection.’<sup>120</sup>

According to a well known university professor at Potchefstroom, Professor HG Stoker, a religious approach to the science of education is that (freely translated into English):

‘God is in control of everything and the science, therefore science should be managed to God’s service and honour’.<sup>121</sup>

Van Niekerk is of the opinion moral paradigms founded on religion, as the one example provided above, have lost their support in a pluralistic, global society (which includes the current sphere of PE inspired education in South Africa), and have been replaced by a global, secular human rights ideology with its humanistic assumptions.<sup>122</sup> Professor Asmal’s appointment of a Working Group on Values in Education<sup>123</sup> and the acceptance of the Report on Moral Regenerating,<sup>124</sup> as well as the publication *Spirit of the nation. Reflections on South Africa’s Educational Ethos* by Kader Asmal and Wilmot James, is proof of a vacuum left by denouncing CNE. Asmal and James, for example, remarked the following on value systems:<sup>125</sup>

‘We also learn values because we are moved or inspired by something that is valuable to us. Thus we learn and develop values relating to creativity of all kinds, the search for meaning in our lives, the discovery of knowledge and

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119 Compare ME Botha, ‘Christelike universiteit en politiek in apartheids- en post-apartheidsbedeling’, *Koers*, 60(2), 1995, 124-125,133; A.A. Beijk & N.T. van der Merwe, ‘HG Stoker as student – die wysgerige denkklimaat en akademiese wisselwerking met Scheler en Buytendijk’, *Koers*, 59 (3&4), 1994, 50; T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa – A modern history*, 4th Edition, (Hong Kong, Macmillan, 1991), 212-213, 536; IACPHE, ‘Christian education in the African context’ (Circular by Potchefstroom & USA: PU for CHE & Grand Rapids, 1992).

120 GCP van der Vyver (red.), *My erfenis is vir my mooi*, (Potchefstroom: PU vir CHO), 274.

121 Compare HG Stoker, ‘Dit is ons erns met ons P.U. vir C.H.O.!', *Koers*, ca. 1950, 149-155; H.F. van Rooy, ‘Die PU vir CHO as Christelike universiteit’, Verkenning in oorgang. Gedagtes by die 125-jarige bestaansjaar van die PU vir CHO-1994, *Koers*, Supplement 1, 1998, pp. 102-103; PUK-Argief, H.J.J. Bingle-versameling, Toesprake, ‘Die C.N.O. – Partikuliere Sinodes van Noord- en Suid-Transvaal, 1956’.

122 Van Niekerk (1996:315-320) as in Coetzee & Le Roux, *Democratic practises and education...*, 3.

123 Asmal, ‘Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005’, 1.

124 Department of Education (DoE), ‘Report on the Workshop for Moral Regeneration: Summary of the decisions of the meeting of Educational Ministers (CEM)’, (Pretoria: Sol Plaatjes House, 31 July 2000).

125 K Asmal & W James, *Spirit of the nation. Reflections on South Africa’s Educational Ethos* (Claremont: New Africa Education, 2002), xii-xiii.

truth, a love of reading, doing a good job, even patriotism, loyalty and trust  
 ...'

Ormell suggests that values are valued qualities and conditions that not only motivate us to act in certain ways, but motivate us to encourage others to act in these ways.<sup>126</sup> Fowler in turn refers to educational values as 'life values', as beliefs about what gives value to human life, and the latter gains its coherence from a religious commitment. Therefore a world view provides the interpretive framework for the human experiences of the world, determining for us the meaning of these global experiences. Schooling is not regarded by Fowler as a value-added activity, but as value-governed, because the most basic patterns in the design of schooling are governed by value judgements. In most contemporary democracies specific groups may perceive the educational policy of the state as educational oppression. In this regard Fowler refers to Plenel's mentioning of Australia and France<sup>127</sup> and Aron's reference to the United States.<sup>128</sup>

As far as global phenomena are concerned, Hegedus defined all social movements (like CNE and PE) as movements addressing:

'themselves to the basic question of people's empowerment to enter the political process directly and to control their history...thus social movements are...geared towards the permanent invention of new possibilities and the realisation of possible futures'.<sup>129</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

Based on the discussion, it appears that many common grounds can be traced between CNE and PE, especially from a historical perspective. Educationally, differences could be outlined, especially the renewed educational focus named as OBE that is probably regarded as an outcome of PE. However, there must be a bold blindness within some perspectives if the educational aims of the Department of Education prior to 1994 (and said to be associated with CNE) are downgraded as having been only educational ideals that nurtured a pure

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126 C Ormell, 'Values in Education' in R. Strachan & J. Wrigley, (Eds.), *Values and evaluations in Education* (London: Harper & Row, 1980), 52-53

127 E Plenel, 'L'Etat et l'école en France' (1985) in Fowler (Ed.), Van Brummelen & Van Dyk, *Christian Schooling*, 123.

128 S Aron, 'Compelling belief. Amherst' (1986) in Fowler (Ed.), Van Brummelen & Van Dyk, *Christian Schooling*, 123-124.

129 Compare the reference on Hegedus (1990,272) as in Mc Kay & Romm, *People's Education ...*, x.

one-sided content-focus in curricula. Very specific aims on the obtaining of intellectual and social skills were for example required. As mentioned earlier, not even OBE within Curriculum 2005 is currently perceived as the ultimate educational system yet in the presenting and teaching of history content.<sup>130</sup>

By introducing a new policy on Religion and Education in 2003, Professor Kader Asmal also accentuated that:

‘the different religious beliefs espoused by our people is an essential ingredient by our human rights programme. For too long religion was used as a mechanism of exclusion...The same was true of the old policy of Christian National Education. So now we have been developing an educational framework to suit our nation in all its glorious diversity’.<sup>131</sup>

Asmal was of the opinion that the newly developed policy accorded with international developments and standards and in the process, could also be regarded as an innovative South African solution.<sup>132</sup> According to Garson, Minister Kader Asmal has not made himself very popular with ‘the hacks out there who seem to shroud Curriculum 2005 in the same godly aura as the National Party did not so long ago with Christian National Education – simply because it was party policy’.<sup>133</sup>

For Chisholm, the educational principles of PE ‘find as much echo in it as do those of the alternative, independent schools movements that have emerged in South Africa from time to time’.<sup>134</sup> The general forming of the child as the ultimate objective of schools, has apparently been denounced by some policy-makers and educational experts. The result has been narrow vocational goals within the Curriculum 2005 educational structure, and in this regard Chisholm remarks:

‘For those who did not have access to an enabling curriculum, the curriculum continues as a narrow expression of social goals to enskill for work alone rather than also creating fully-rounded human beings’.<sup>135</sup>

Others fear that the new national policies do not have the best interests of

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130 Compare ZB du Toit, “ .?????” , *Rapport*, 5 March 2006, ??

131 K Asmal, ‘Speech at the launch of the policy on religion and education’, <http://education.pwv.gov.za> as retrieved on 16 Jun. 2005 on the Google search engine, 1-7.

132 K Asmal, ‘Speech at the launch of the policy on religion and education’, <http://education.pwv.gov.za> as retrieved on 16 Jun. 2005 on the Google search engine, 1-7.

133 P Garson, ‘Curriculum battle heats up’, *Mail & Guardian*, 7 July 2000, 38.

134 Compare, L Chisholm, *Policy and critique in South African Education research* (???, 1992), ??; S. Motala & S. Vally [L Chisholm Ed.], *South African education policy review*, (???, 2003); P. Kallaway (Ed.), *Apartheid and education: The education of black South Africans* (???, 1984), ??.

135 Chisholm, ‘A South African Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, 31 May 2000, 7.

the learner in mind, but rather the hidden objectives of politicians expressed by various observers,<sup>136</sup> whereas Professor Kader Asmal responded on the critique of ANC members that the Ministry of Education should do more to ensure that OBE (and PE) principles are accentuated:

‘There is ...the fear that if Christian National Education was a dogma, and C2005 was fast becoming a new dogma, how will we prevent anything new from becoming a dogma?’<sup>137</sup>

For Asmal the answer apparently lay in developing a National Curriculum Statement that would eliminate any possibility of cuddling yet another dogma. His successor recently introduced a statement of this nature.<sup>138</sup>

In essence, there should be tolerance regarding the educational perspectives that crossed the South African educational path in the past as they all contributed to laying the foundation for a democratic becoming South Africa. Instead of clinging to stereotyping these forms of education, as if they were and still are the possession of a certain group (which clearly, conceptually argued, was never meant to be),<sup>139</sup> the educational future of South Africa – to be based on a pure African inspired philosophy and principles (in the form of Indigenous Knowledge Systems)<sup>140</sup> – and approved by the various groupings in South Africa – is still awaited.

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136 Compare M Ramphela, ‘Conscientious and diligent, but could do much better: Government is missing the boat transforming schools’, *Sunday Times*, 25 November 1997, 9; A. de Vries, ‘Leerlinge en onnies word ‘al hoe dommer’’, *Rapport*, 36(26), 26 June. 2005, 1.

137 K Asmal, ‘Speech on the occasion of the launch of the process to streamline and strengthen Curriculum 2005’ (Centurion:Tshwane, 30 Jan. 2001), 2.

138 From 2004 (Grades 1-4) the original Curriculum 2005 was replaced by the National Curriculum Statement.

139 Compare this statement with the writing of BJ van der Walt, *The liberating message. A Christian worldview for Africa* (Potchefstroom:IRS, 1994).

140 Compare with the discussion of Davies, ‘The university curriculum...’, 255-262.