

THE EFFECT OF LABOUR IN THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION FOR BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA (1948-1986)

1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Communities in various countries of the world experience labour problems emanating from their education policies. South Africa is no exception. Such education policies differ from country to country according to the education system of the particular country. Behr and Macmillan (1971:1) state that every nation has its own distinctive educational system, the emergence of which has many determinants, and that the various educational patterns have divergent objectives. Discontent with some educational objectives, and critiques of educational policies in various countries of the world by educational research institutions, education theorists, academics, teachers and the private sector seem to have been echoed from time to time. The emphasis in such criticisms of education policies generally revolves around the relevancy of school curricula and the end result envisioned for education as a practice.

Bowles (1976:32), for example, criticises education policies in capitalist countries such as America. He states that educational systems in capitalist societies have been highly unequal for various groups. This is generally admitted and widely condemned. Inequalities in education seem to create obstacles that have fragmented the much needed relationship between the education system and the environment. Engelbrecht (1989:1), the Executive Director of the Institute of Educational Research of the Human Sciences Research Council, in his address at the ^{APO Rural Schools} TUATA Educational Conference held in ^{Makwas, 7 & 8 Dec 2004} Potgietersrus on 26 August 1989, mentioned the following problem areas, among others, as barriers to educational growth:

- inequalities;
- the imbalance between academically oriented and career oriented education;
- * the high drop-out rate during the first few years of primary education;

- ✱ the lack of contact between the educational authorities on the one hand and the department of manpower and industries on the other hand, and
- emphasis on rote learning.

Moulder (1990:10(a)), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Natal, mentions in his article "Putting education to work" the following about the success of the University of Technology in Sydney (Australia): It thrives as a result of its ability to relate academic study to the world of work. In this article Moulder explains the need for a sound relationship between labour and education without which education seems to be irrelevant.

The problem of curriculum relevancy is not only pertinent to the South African situation but it is also manifested universally. Chester (1990:98) puts forward a critique of the American education's output, viz. that students know too little, and their command of essential skills is too slight. In order to make education relevant, the developing and developed countries are to produce the necessary skills along with efficient man-power for economic growth. It is for this reason that Mdluli (1988:3) asserts that the production of man-power with insufficient skills for the needs of the economy cannot help promote economic growth, and that the problem of the match between skills acquired through education and those actually required in the world of work was never anticipated and fully addressed. Rural School
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1.2 Context and background of the research problem

The education system for Blacks in South Africa had its origins in the legacy of colonial rule in the sense that education was imposed on them as a conquered race. Mphahlele (1982:2) argued that with their being a colonised people, things were formulated for the Blacks, never with them or by them. The colonial governments as well as the missionary institutions applied a policy of racial segregation in the schooling system virtually since 1658 when Blacks were in practice relegated to the lowest levels of the social economic and political hierarchy by deciding for them on the type of curriculum which was to be followed in their schools. Degenhardt (1982:2) states that deciding what will be useful for children to learn is doubly difficult, for in judging what will be useful for someone we are also making judgements about how he or she ought to live.

It does, therefore, appear that throughout the history of Blacks in South Africa, education was used by the state as a strategy to dominate the indigenous people of South Africa in the social, political, economic and religious spheres. Christie and

Collins (1984:161) state that a white man's view of himself was that of a pure race which needed to maintain its purity by racial segregation. The concept of colour among the Dutch (Afrikaners) who earlier colonised South Africa stemmed from the belief that a white or European was more civilized in terms of the Western norms and values than a Black/African. To some Europeans who had settled in South Africa since 1652, the colour white meant 'purity' and black meant 'slavery' and 'sin'. Fredrickson (1981:7) indicated with special reference to the Renaissance and Reformation period that the human race was/had been divided into superior and inferior categories. Along with the notion of colour, racism between Whites and Blacks began. This racism was projected in various spheres by way of marginalising Blacks especially in health and educational fields. Loram (1917:38) alleged that Whites claimed that the dirty and ignorant native was a danger to the health of the European in South Africa. With this fear in their minds, some white South Africans distanced themselves from the Blacks in spheres such as the socio-economic and the political aspects of the country. Elphick and Giliomee (1980:361) indicated that some scholars of comparative race relations have concluded that racism was more intense in colonies of the English and Dutch than in those of the French.

Automatically, through the influence of colour discrimination, the white population group in South Africa became masters and rulers over the indigenous people, probably because of the alleged superiority in skills they (the Whites) possessed. Dube (1985:86) states that Whites had the notion that some races were inherently superior to others. It was therefore the white man in South Africa's belief that Blacks played a subservient role through the performance of manual labour. Loram (1917:148) describes a black man's servile obligation in the country of his birth with the following words:

To the Native in South Africa falls the heavy work of the community, the digging and carrying, the pushing and lifting while the white ganger merely superintends and directs.

On the other hand, Fredrickson (1981:206) mentioned that the normative social division of labour that grew up during the slave era consigned virtually all manual labour, however skilled, to Non-whites.

During the periods of colonial government rule at the Cape, such as those of the Dutch and the British, education was introduced to the indigenous people to facilitate communication between the indigenous people and the white colonists. Coetzee (1960:410) for example describes Schmidt's (a missionary's) task regarding the Hottentots' education:

Hy moes die Hottentotte nie alleen Gods Woord en die Hollandse taal leer nie maar hy moes ook vir hulle elementêre instruksies in landbou gee.

Elphick and Giliomee (1980:361) aver that Dutchmen in South Africa, like all colonising peoples of the period, were convinced of the superiority of their culture and religion.

It does seem, therefore, that education for Blacks in South Africa was somehow based on three fundamental aspects, firstly, to teach religious instruction; secondly, the Dutch language and basic instruction in agricultural science which was simply referred to as gardening; thirdly, economic development through skills in specific jobs was not the main objective of educating Blacks. However, according to Johnson (1976:46), states that education assisted economic growth throughout. If we accept Johnson's notion of the influence of education on economic growth, it becomes imperative to equate education with influential factors leading to literacy projects and numerative skills.

The South African white government prior to 1994 seems to have paid lip service to developing the vital universal skills such as literacy projects in black education. Instead, education for Blacks was used as a means of social control, among others, by repeating the mistakes of the 1890's. Johnson (1982:216) supports this view when he says that strenuous opposition to the education of Blacks emerged because an uneducated man can be exploited as an economic asset and can in part be used to protect the status of poor Whites. It does seem that provision of equal education for both Whites and Blacks was a threat to Whites because they feared economic competition and threats to their socio-political status.

Various colonial governments in South Africa accepted, defended and legitimised their ideologies by means of schools for the maintenance of the status quo. This transpired clearly in 1948 in the National Party's policy of separate development or apartheid. Johnson (1991:25) asserts that in May 1948, having just come to power, the National Party set about constructing one of the most complicated social systems the world has ever seen. As a result of this, a new word ('apartheid') entered the international political vocabulary.

In order to stabilize and achieve the objectives of separate development, the National Party Government instituted a commission of inquiry into the education of Black South Africans in 1949. Behr and MacMillan (1971:396) state that in January 1949, the newly elected Government appointed a Commission to examine the Native (Black) Education under the chairmanship of Dr W W M Eiselen. This Commission submitted its report in

1951, and it gave rise to the Bantu Education Act (No 47 of 1953). With the introduction of the Bantu Education System, Afrikaner ideology and white supremacy spread in black schools through an inferior type of education imposed by the Government. This type of education seems to have affected labour in South Africa greatly.

Bantu education seems to have deeply affected the level of manpower skills of South Africans in the long term. Limited skills were imparted to Blacks through instruction in subjects such as gardening and needlework, thus preparing them (the Blacks) for manual labour and to play a subordinate role in South African society. According to SABRA (1955:8) education was intended for the minority. In this instance, the minority meant the Whites who were privileged, as opposed to the black South African majority. Views on "labour education" for Blacks were clearly outlined in the House of Assembly on 7 June 1954 by the then Minister of Native Affairs to the effect that the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. It was said that there was no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (Hansard, 1954, cols. 2610-2620).

Dube (1985:93) comments on the weakness of Bantu Education: the curriculum for Native Education was designed to retard the intellectual development of Africans. In support of the view that an inferior type of education was imposed on Blacks, Christie and Collins (1984:176) summarise the well-known Verwoerdian point of view in the following words: "We should so conduct our schools that the Native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country". Verwoerd's point of view was a sequel to the long-standing practice by means of which Whites in South Africa ultimately became a privileged race. Their so-called superiority over the indigenous people was propagated through labour theories embodied in the Bantu Education Act (47 of 1953). SABRA (1955:36) quotes the criticism of this Bantu Education Act by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, viz. that the government had embarked on a scheme of education which seemed to place emphasis on preparing pupils for a subordinate role in the country's life rather than on giving them the common culture of the Christian West. This criticism reveals the extent to which Act 47/1953 propagated a certain labour theory. A certain percentage of the South African population, mainly Blacks, were, through the system of Bantu Education, forced to perform manual labour in the workplace. Bantu Education negated African intellectual development and left the black person without the relevant and appropriate skills to perform his/her tasks in the labour market or the world of work.

Manual labour in most modern countries may, according to De Kiewiet (1966:95), be compared to a ladder with skilled workers at the top and unskilled workers at the bottom. This problem of labour power, as in other developing and developed countries of the world, seems to be the mode of production characteristic of capitalism. Capitalism also promotes labour reproduction. This view is supported by Bowles (1976:35) in his argument that the social class inequalities in the (i.e. South African) school system and the role they play in the reproduction of the social division of labour are too evident to be denied.

Regarding the relationship between labour and education, two insights surface. Firstly, the relevancy of education to the world of work seems to be of primary importance. Secondly, skills are crucial to the man-power needs of a country, which in turn facilitates economic development as well as stability in education as a social discipline.

Against the backdrop of this brief discussion of the context and background of this research paper, the problem itself may be formulated as follows.

1.3 Statement of the problem

This research revolved around the following question:

What were the effects of views on labour in the history of education for Blacks in South Africa in the period 1948-1986?

1.4 Topicality of the research

Instability in the education system of Blacks in South Africa has its roots mainly in historical factors. This perception is substantiated by Niven (1981:19) with his view that the problems currently facing education of Blacks in South Africa also derive from ideological sources. The reason for the instability mentioned can also be sought in the impact of labour theories with which the Government seems to have hoped to control and stabilize racial stratification. It would appear that what exacerbated instability in the education for Blacks in South Africa was that education theories of the country were not so much based on the ideal of the economic development of the peoples of South Africa but rather on apartheid as a socialising policy of the Government after 1948. In his research on the relationship between education and work, Mdluli (1988:4) critically examines how the education system of a developing country can be developed to respond more effectively to workplace needs. As a result of the ideal that the education system should correspond to the needs of the workplace, developing countries experience a skilled manpower shortage. This is evidenced by huge sums of money spent by employers to train employees who hardly possess the essential skills needed in

a workplace. What the employers should be doing instead of "on the job training" is simple orientation which is generally not as costly as training personnel.

Resistance to education and labour policies by Blacks in South Africa through perennial class boycotts, especially during and after the 1976 Soweto Riots and the 1980/1985 class boycotts, is conclusive proof that there is need for an investigation into the effect of labour theories in the history of education for Blacks in the RSA. Degenhardt (1982:2) sees the problem as emanating from the different curricula for different social classes. Hence he stated that there were protests when schools taught different useful things to children of different sexes or social groups, thereby preparing them for different social roles and opportunities.

The class boycotts since 1976 which destabilized proper education in black schools, seem to have resulted in wasted years of learning and academic development. These boycotts have also weakened the country's economy through lack of skilled manpower, in particular from the side of the Blacks in South Africa. Johan van Zijl (1990:12), an educationist, warned in Durban that South Africa would have a deficit of more than 500 000 skilled workers by the year 2000. In order to solve this problem of skilled manpower needs, the suitability of labour theories to education should be looked into with reference to their effect on the education for Blacks in the period 1948 to 1986, among other things to be done.

1.5 Aims of the research

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effects of views on labour in the history of education for Blacks in South Africa in the period 1948-1986. The extent to which education for Blacks has progressed and has contributed to the country's economic development through their labour has to be determined. The detailed aims to be achieved in this study were:

- (a) to explore the views on labour-oriented education for black South Africans in the period 1948-1986;
- (b) to look into the suitability, feasibility and applicability of various labour theories in the education of black South Africans (1948-1986), and
- (c) to weigh the extent to which these theories influenced the educational circumstances and the labour prospects of the Blacks in South Africa in the period 1948-1986.

1.6 Research methods applied

According to Kaplan (in Cohen & Manion, 1980:26) the aim of a discussion of methodology is to describe and analyse methods, throwing light on their limitations and resources, clarifying their presuppositions and consequences, relating their potentialities to the twilight zone at the frontiers of knowledge.

The method of data collection in this research was basically **historical** and **descriptive** in nature. Turney (1971:62) says that historical methods can tell us much about what existed in the past, and descriptive methods can tell us about what currently exists. The need for the application of historical methods arises out of the valid conception that the past guides the present in terms of human destination. Without the investigation into the historical factors, the future becomes insignificant. Nash (1970:4) states that ignorance of the past, moreover, makes us more subservient to present fashions. According to Gay (1976:117) the purpose of a historical research study should be to explain or predict, not to rehash.

Primary and **secondary** sources for first and second hand information were used in this study. For instance Commission Reports such as those of Eiselen (1949) and De Lange (1981), including education policy Acts since 1954, were analysed. Historical data and information collected were evaluated. Cohen and Manion (1980:40) insist that the **authenticity** of sources should be appraised and the **accuracy** or worth of the data should be evaluated. Great care was also taken to avoid ambiguity and lies in the selection of relevant historical data. Cohen and Manion (1980:40) state that historical evidence has been described as that body of validated factors and information which can be accepted as trustworthy, as a valid basis for the testing and interpretation of hypotheses.

In order to evaluate and weigh certain labour theories and their effects on education, a theory on the **fundamentally** correct relationship between education and the world of work was developed along Biblical anthropological lines. Methods for theoretical aspects included a study of literature.

Fact-finding **interviews** with academics such as serving and retired school principals and school inspectors were conducted. This included:

Name	Age-group	Highest qualifications	Employer/Organization
1 Gordon A (Dr)	45-55	Ph.D	Wits Community Project
2 Hamese I	25-35	Matric (student in 1976)	Community volunteer
3 Junod V	60 -	B.A.	Volunteer (Witkoppen Diepsloot Education Trust)
4 Kekana M	20-25	Matric	President of COSAS, Gauteng Province
5 Kgoroadira O	40-50	M.A.	School Principal, DET - Soweto
6 Masia P	40-50	Junior Certificate	REF, Johannesburg
7 Mataboge T.J.M.	55-65	M.Ed.	DET, PTA (N. Tvl. Region)
8 Matakanye M	45-55	HPTC	Soweto Teacher, Assistant General Secretary SADTU, Gauteng Province
9 Mathies Ger	60 -	Matric/Holland	Pastor/Johannesburg North
10 Mdluli J	60 -	Matric Business Management Diploma	Businessman - Soweto Farmer - Johannesburg North
11 Motloi S	60	Matric, B.A.	School Inspector N.Tvl Region
12 Modise T	25-35	Matric/Management Diploma	SABC/TV, Johannesburg
13 Nwaila C	40-50	M.A.	Principal DET/REF
14 Omar R	30-40	B.A.	COSATU (Head of Human Resources)
15 Tenza E	60 -	B.A. Hons	Retired Principal, DET serving in READ/TUATA
16 Wiehahn N Prof.	60	LLD	Chairman of Wiehahn Commission 1979

1.6(a) Sample for the interview selected by means of the method of historical weight

The research sample for the interview was selected by means of the method of **historical weight**, i.e. persons were selected who

- * presumably had a good judgement about the relationship between labour and education;
- * had first-hand experience of education for Blacks,
- * found themselves in the labour market, and in a position to judge the relevancy of their education to the work they had to do.

This group of interviewees was selected from the Witwatersrand and Gauteng Province area and is not representative of all people in South Africa. Their opinions were used as a way of corroborating the findings based on a literature study. No effort to generalize the findings to the whole black population of South Africa will be made.

1.7 Delimitation of research area by means of definitions of key words

Principal concepts used in this research project are defined in order that clear conceptualisation can render the research project more understandable. The concepts which are to be explained are relevant to the contextual clarity of this study.

Labour:

Denotes work or service. Watts (1979:3) states that work in a free and humane society is a contract between the individual and the society, under which the individual gives his labour in return for certain rewards and satisfactions. There are two types of labour, namely skilled and unskilled performance.

Skilled labour:

Refers to performance of a decent task resulting from one's experience and educational qualifications. "Skilled" according to Sykes (1987:991) means "highly trained or experienced".

Unskilled labour:

Refers to performance of an inferior type of a job without experience or specific training. It is also referred to as manual labour.

History:

Sykes (1987:472) defines history as the study of past events, especially of human affairs.

Education:

It is a discipline or subject studied at tertiary level. Adler (1977:104) also defines education as a process which aims at the improvement or betterment of men in themselves and in relation to society. Hirst and Peters (1970:22) refer to education as "the knowledge industry". Fundamentally, education is also viewed as important for man's existence and hence Van Vuuren (1983:127) sees education as an essential prerequisite for man's existence as a human being.

Blacks:

Refers to the indigenous people of South Africa of Bantu negroid origin. The historical synonyms are "Bantu" and "Native". (Coloureds and Indians, who are not included in this research, are also regarded by the oppressed as Blacks.)

1948-1986

Refers to the period of the National Party's rule in South Africa (38 years) up to the acceptance of a new constitution for the country (Constitutional Act 110/83) in 1983 and the repeal of the Influx Control Act in 1986.

1.8 Structure of this dissertation

Chapter one, which is an introduction to the research, introduces arguments pertaining to education for Blacks in South Africa in terms of historicity, and lays the foundations on which the research has been undertaken.

Chapter two focuses on the relationship between labour and education on the basis of a fundamental investigation along Scriptural lines.

Discussion and interpretation of labour theories will dominate chapter three.

Central features in chapter four will be the effect of labour theories on education for Blacks in South Africa's socio-economic stratagem between 1948-1986 (historical views).

Chapter five - Results of interviews/empirical study.

Chapter six will conclude the dissertation with the findings of the study. Conclusions and recommendations, also regarding the possibility of further research, conclude this research paper.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter the background to the research was sketched and certain other aspects of the prolegomena of the research outlined. Against this background or framework the fundamental-normative relationship between education and labour will be traced in order to establish a yardstick with which to evaluate the historical processes described in the chapters following thereafter.