

7. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

The aims of the research were to:

- (a) examine the historical background leading to the appointment of various commissions of inquiry into the education of Blacks in the country;
- (b) analyse the terms of reference of the commissions;
- (c) review their findings and recommendations;
- (d) assess the effects of the commissions' recommendations on educational policy, and to
- (e) assess the effects of the implementation of the various commissions' recommendations in the education for Blacks (Chapter 1, p. 12 -13).

With these aims in mind this research examined various commissions of inquiry in the history of the education for Blacks in the country. Certain findings and conclusions were made, leading to recommendations for the future. These findings and conclusions inevitably led to scope for further research.

7.2 Findings

Looking closely at the historical background that led to the appointment of a commission of inquiry, it was found that most of them were chosen either in response to a crisis, or at a time when there was a need to review policy. For example, the Inter-

Departmental Committee on Native Education (1935-1936) was appointed at a time when there was a need for policy change after the Union of South Africa was formed (Chapter 2, p.57-58). The Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) and the Commission of Inquiry on the Separate Training Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953;1954) were appointed after the Nationalist takeover of Government in 1948. The Nationalists had criticised the Hertzog Government on how it handled the Native question, especially the education of the Natives (Chapter 4, p.74-75). After 1948, the Government had to start with the implementation of its policy of apartheid.

The commissions of inquiry that investigated and reported on events at Fort Hare (1955)(Chapter 5, p. 113-120), University of the North (1975) (Chapter 5, p. 122-127), University of Zululand (1983) (Chapter 5, p. 127-130), Soweto and other places in the Republic (1980) (Chapter 5, p. 146-151) and the Vaal Triangle (1984) (Chapter 5, p. 197-201) were Government responses to crises that took place in the history of the education for Blacks.

The Commission of Inquiry into Legislation Affecting the Utilisation of Manpower (excluding legislation administered by the Departments of Labour and Mines) (1979), (Chapter 6, p. 154-160); the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation (1979) (Chapter 6, p. 161-169) and the South African Human Sciences Research Council Investigation into Education (1981) (Chapter 6, p. 171-197), were appointed after an era of turbulence in the mid-70s which necessitated a return to the drawing board by the Government (Chapter 6, p. 144-145). The aim was to review policy so as to modernise it and restore peace and order in the country.

The critical analysis of the various commissions of inquiry revealed their merits and demerits. It was found that they all suffered from the serious problem of an unrepresentative membership. The majority of the commissions of inquiry never had Black people as members, although they were charged with the duty of investigating and making recommendations on the education for Blacks. It was also found that only two of the commissions involved in the education for Blacks had Blacks as members. These were: The Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation (1979) (Chapter 6, p. 161-162) and the South African Human Sciences Research Council Investigation into Education (1981) (Chapter 6, p. 171-173). Even in these commissions, Blacks were in the minority.

In the analysis of the terms of reference of the various commissions of inquiry, it was found that these constituted another problem area. The terms of reference are of crucial importance in that they delimit the area of research and give direction to the investigation. They can thus pre-empt the recommendations. For example, the terms of reference of some commissions of inquiry like the Inter-Departmental Committee on Native Education (1935-1936) (Chapter 3, p. 59-60), the Commission of Inquiry on Native Education (1949-1951) (Chapter 4, p. 81) and the Commission of Inquiry on Separate Training Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) (Chapter 4, p. 101), regarded the education for Blacks as something separate from the education of other racial groups. Hence in the terms of reference of, for example, the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) (Chapter 4, p. 81-87), there were phrases like "formulate principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race". The commissions of inquiry then treated the education for Blacks as pre-empted by the terms of reference. This led to the segregation of education along racial and ethnical

lines.

It was later discovered, through the recommendations of, for example: the Report of the Fort Hare Commission (1955) (Chapter 5, p. 113-120); the Commission of Inquiry into certain matters relating to the University of the North (1975) (Chapter 5, p. 122-127); the Commission of Inquiry into the violence that occurred on 29 October 1983 at the University of Zululand (1983-1985) (Chapter 5, p. 127-130); the Commission of Inquiry into the riots at Soweto and other places in the Republic during and after 1976 (1980) (Chapter 5, p. 146-151) and the Report on the Investigation into the Education for Blacks in the Vaal Triangle following occurrences of 3 September 1984 and thereafter (1984) (Chapter 5, p. 197-201), that racially segregated and ethnically divided universities and schools were unacceptable to Black people. This unacceptability of the system of education for Blacks led to a culture of resistance that caused the development of, for example, the Black Consciousness Movement and the general destabilisation of the education system of Blacks in the country (Chapter 6, p. 141-145).

In the research, an analysis was made to assess the possibility of a relationship existing between the recommendations of a commission of inquiry and:

- (a) the racial integration segregation dichotomy (Chapter 2, p. 21-28).
- (b) the aims of education for Blacks (Chapter 2, p. 28-36);
- (c) the era of the Commission of Inquiry (Chapter 2, p. 37-40), and
- (d) the socio-economico-political needs of the country (Chapter 2, p. 40-44).

With regard to the relationship between commissions of inquiry and the racial

integration/segregation debate, it was found that this debate on divergent views corresponded to the political division that prevailed between the United Party and the Nationalist Party in the years prior to 1948 (Chapter 2, p. 23). This division also led to the universities being classified as "open" (i.e. admitting all races and thus liberal) and "closed" (i.e. not admitting all races and thus conservative) (Chapter 2, p. 25-26). Adherents to an integrated system of education, mainly English speaking, believed that the country should have a unitary system of education (Chapter 2, p. 24). Supporters of a segregated view believed that the education of White children should not be placed on the same footing as the education of Black children (Chapter 2, p. 25). It was therefore found that there could be a link between the recommendations of a commission of inquiry and their inclination to the integrationist or segregationist approach to education.

It was also found that there could be three ways of looking at the aims of education for Blacks in South Africa (Chapter 2, p. 29-36). The assumption made here is that there could be a relationship or link between the types of recommendations that a commission of inquiry makes, and its belief in what the aims of the education for Blacks should be. Firstly, the education of Blacks could be looked at as serving the preservation of White hegemony and privilege. It could also be that there was a need to serve the capitalist need for labour production. Lastly, the education for Blacks could be said to be a system of mass education prevalent in once-colonised countries (Chapter 2, p. 32).

When the National Party took over the Government of the country in 1948, the aims of education were highly politicised, as the Government of the day believed in segregation

(Chapter 2, p. 36): Commissions of Inquiry were therefore asked to look for ways of implementing this segregationist policy at school and at university level. This aim is clearly stated in the terms of reference of the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) (Chapter 4, p. 80) and the Commission of Inquiry into Separate Training Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) (Chapter 4, p. 101).

In the early 1980s, there was a slight shift in the policy of the Government. It stated trying to accommodate Black aspirations to a limited extent (Chapter 2, p. 33-34). It was therefore found that there seemed to be a link between views held by commissions of inquiry at this time and the types of recommendations they made. During that era, the Government adopted a reformist attitude and the commissions of inquiry, like for example, the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation and the Commission of Inquiry into the Utilisation of Manpower recommended slight changes to the policy of apartheid (Chapter 6, p. 154-160). They were thus also reformist in their recommendations.

Another relationship uncovered was that the historical era of a commission of inquiry had links with the types of recommendations it made (Chapter 2, p. 37-40). The era of a commission of inquiry is of historical and pedagogic value in that commissions that came before 1948, like the Inter-departmental Committee on Native Education (1935-1936) displayed an integrationist approach to education (Chapter 3, p. 66-68). On the other hand, commissions that were appointed between 1948 and 1975; i.e. during the era where the apartheid laws were enforced by the Nationalist Government, showed a segregationist approach to education. The Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) (Chapter 4, 91-92) and the Commission of Inquiry on Separate Training Facilities

for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) (Chapter 4, p.103-105) supported the apartheid policy of the Government.

There were also those commissions of inquiry that came after 1976; i.e. the era after the apparent collapse of the apartheid policy in education. These commissions demonstrated a reformist approach to education and were in favour of some form of accommodation of Blacks in certain decision-making structures to appease them (Chapter 6, p. 144-145).

It was found from the research that there could be a link between the recommendations made by a commission of inquiry and what the commissioners regarded to be of importance in terms of the hierarchy of needs of the country. A distinction could therefore be made between those commissions of inquiry whose recommendations did not deviate from the broad socio-economico-political policy of the Government of the day. For example, the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) (Chapter 4, p.91-92), and the Commission of Inquiry on Separate Training Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) (Chapter 4, p. 103-105) aligned themselves with the policy of apartheid of the National Party that was in power then. On the other hand, there were some commissions of inquiry like the HSRC/De Lange Report (1981) which challenged the political status quo (Chapter 6, p. 184-190).

Having broadly discussed the above-mentioned apparent relationships and links, it was found that apart from these extrinsic factors that influenced the recommendations of commissions of inquiry, there were also some intrinsic factors at play that coloured the perceptions of the Commissioners themselves (Chapter 2, p.19-20). These intrinsic

factors were linked to the ideological inclination of the members of the commission. These influenced their analyses of problems and their suggestions as to how they could be solved.

It was also discovered in the research that although the education for Blacks was said to be of a Christian nature, it was in fact never truly based on Christian principles as outlined by, among others, Griessel, Fourie, Söngé and Stone (1983), Fowler (1987), Oppewal, De Boer and Hendricks (1980) and Samuelson and Markowitz (1987) (Chapter 2, p. 20-45). These authors contend that Christianity should encourage, rather than discourage sound and healthy human relationships between races. It should encourage the total development of the child to a stage where he can exercise his freedom of choice and participation. It should encourage the protection of individual rights and freedom (Chapter 2, p. 20-45). It was found that this was not the case with Bantu education that was a spinoff of the policy of apartheid.

An assessment of the effects of the commissions' recommendations on educational policy revealed that some commissions of inquiry were more influential than others in the determination of policy. For example, the Commission of Inquiry on Native Education (1949-1951) was very influential as it led to the passing of the Bantu Education Act (471/1953) (Chapter 4, p. 96-98). This Act was a mere implementation of the recommendations of the above-mentioned commission. Also, the Commission of Inquiry on Separate Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) was influential in determining policy in that, despite certain reservations it raised regarding finance, its suggestions led to the passing of the Extension of University Education Act (45/1959) (Chapter 4, p. 105-107). The Act led to the establishment of two other

universities for Blacks, at Empangeni and Pietersburg. These universities were racially and ethnically segregated.

Other commissions of inquiry that challenged the status quo were either completely ignored by the government, or had their recommendations partly implemented at the discretion of the Government of the day. For example, the Government was accused of responding with intransigence to the HSRC/De Lange Report (1981) (Chapter 6, p. 190-196).

In assessing the results of the implementation of the recommendations of commissions of inquiry on the education system for Blacks, it was revealed in the research that the system shifted from a racially integrated one (Chapter 1, p. 3-4) to a racially segregated one. It also changed from being predominantly missionary-controlled to being predominantly state-controlled (Chapter 1, p. 5-6). The system of education further moved from being controlled by the provinces, to being centrally controlled but fragmented into ethnically based homeland systems (Chapter 1, p. 6-7).

It was also found that the move towards segregating the education system for Blacks brought about the collapse of the policy of apartheid, as it encouraged the conscientisation of Blacks who later challenged the status quo (Chapter 5, p. 137-138).

It was revealed in the research that the resistance of Blacks against the country's racially and ethnically segregated education system reached its climax in 1976. The 1976 unrest necessitated a policy shift by the Government (Chapter 6, p. 144-145). The 'total strategy' adopted by the Government was meant to "address" the grievances

of Blacks in the country.

7.3 **Conclusions**

Since it was found that most commissions of inquiry in the education for Blacks were Government responses to crises (Chapter 7, p. 206-207), it can be concluded that the governments in power were reactive and not pro-active in their management style. Mncwabe (1993:ix) believes that there is a difference between change and innovation where the latter implies planning, and the former is an ad hoc process. This crisis management style has been characteristic of the government in the period 1934-1984.

It has also become apparent that the question of the education of the Natives has been a bone of contention between political parties. Thus the education system for Blacks had to be changed with a change of Government in the country. It can consequently be concluded that the management system of the country failed to protect the education for Blacks from the vicissitudes of party politics. This failure led to a situation where the education for Blacks became the battleground for the attainment of political freedom.

It can be inferred from the unrepresentative membership nature of the commissions of inquiry, that this membership has been manipulated by the government in order to yield certain results that would be acceptable to it. It can further be argued that even in the two commissions of inquiry where there were Blacks appointed, the Blacks seem to have been hand-picked because of their non-threatening attitude towards the government (Chapter 6, p. 162-173).

It was found that the terms of reference of some commissions were prejudiced in favour of segregating the education system in the country (Chapter 7, p. 209-212). It can therefore be concluded that these terms of reference were drawn up in such a way that they confirmed the policy of the political party in power, and did not challenge it. In the same way that the desirability of apartheid was never investigated, so the desirability of having racially and ethnically segregated educational facilities was assumed in terms of reference and never investigated.

The relationship between recommendations of commissions of inquiry and:

- (i) the racial integration/segregation debate;
- (ii) the aims of education for Blacks;
- (iii) the era of the commission of inquiry, and
- (iv) the socio-economico-political needs of the country.

has been investigated and links have been established (Chapter 7, p. 209-212). It can be concluded that commissions of inquiry seemed to be victims of structures borne out of a conflict political situation. They were subjected to the political needs of the country. Until the political conflict could be conclusively resolved, there would be problems with commissions, since the Government seemed to be using them either to gain legitimacy, or to obfuscate the truth, or even as a delaying tactic. There is therefore a need to link educational problem-solving strategies to the overall socio-economico-political problem-solving strategies.

This linking of strategies became apparent from the reports of, for example, the

Commission of Inquiry into the riots at Soweto and elsewhere in 1976 and thereafter (1980) and the Report on the Investigation into Education for Blacks in the Vaal Triangle following the occurrences of 3 September 1984 and thereafter, that the solutions inherent in the education system for Blacks lay beyond the schools themselves.

From the finding that Blacks resisted the racial segregation of educational facilities and struggled to change the policy of the Government, it can be concluded that all these commissions of inquiry into the education system for Blacks failed to achieve stability and development in education.

The finding that there are both extrinsic and intrinsic factors that influence commissioners' perception of reality (Chapter 7, p. 212) is linked to the conclusion that the membership of the commissions of inquiry was deliberately manipulated by the Government (Chapter 7, p. 208).

From the finding that while the education system of the country was termed Christian-national in nature, it was never truly based on Christian principles (Chapter 7, p. 213), it can be concluded that the Government lacked sincerity and honesty. It used the Christian foundation laid by the missionaries, that was more acceptable to Blacks than the apartheid education authorities, to gain legitimacy and acceptability. Therefore, the tag "Christian National Education" was misleading and untrue.

The research revealed that there were commissions of inquiry that were more influential than others in determining policy (Chapter 7, p. 213-214). It can be concluded from this

that the more the recommendations of a commission of inquiry challenged the basic tenets of the Government's policy, the less influential they became. On the other hand, the less challenging to the status quo the recommendations were, the more influential that particular commission of inquiry became.

The evolution of the education for Blacks from an integrated, decentralised and missionary controlled system to a segregated, centralised and state controlled system was strategic. It can be concluded that the Government sought firstly to align the education system of the country to the general policy on Blacks (Chapter 4, p. 96-98). This led to education being segregated according to race, in line with the apartheid policy. Secondly, the Government systematically reduced the influence of missionaries who were accused of providing Blacks with a "base of confidence... for (making) political demands" (Chapter 2, p. 29). Therefore, missionaries were guilty of challenging the status quo. Thirdly, the argument put forward by the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) that the education for Blacks was not uniform from province to province and therefore needed to be centralised seemed to make sense (Chapter 4, p. 90). Education is a national concern. But when the Nationalist Government started to segregate education not only into different races but also according to ethnical groupings, the idea of centralisation started to lose its meaning. The Government's ploy was to subject education to the homeland system. Hence South Africa ended up with 19 different education departments (Chapter 1, p. 1).

From the findings, it becomes apparent that there is a constant link between education and party politics (Chapter 7, p. 214). It can thus be concluded that any commission of inquiry that fails to break the above-mentioned link, will inevitably fail to address

problems inherent in the education system for Blacks. The reason for this failure is that it has become clear that the problems experienced by Blacks with their education system are part of a broader socio-political problem experienced in the country. This conclusion is linked to the above-mentioned statement (Chapter 7, p. 215) that the solutions to the problems in the system of education for Blacks lay beyond the schools.

7.4 Recommendations

The first recommendation concerning commissions of inquiry is that the Government should adopt a pro-active management style when addressing education problems. A planned, scientifically-researched and party politically-independent education system is desirable. This management style will enable the Government to categorise solutions into short-, medium- and long-term and thus take appropriate action in terms of policy, rather than providing ad hoc 'solutions' that could in the long term be detrimental to the country.

Subsequent commissions of inquiry have to seriously address the problem of the representativeness of the membership of a commission. Perhaps a mixture of insiders and outsiders to the problem in question would be ideal for objectivity. At the same time, there should be consensus from as many stakeholders as possible on who should be included in the membership of a commission of inquiry. Depending also on the nature of the problem, the membership should reflect the demographic composition obtaining in the country. A 'bottom-up approach' would work better than a 'top-down approach' in terms of the solution of members of a commission of inquiry. This would obviate the problem of legitimacy and credibility of a commission of inquiry.

It is recommended that regarding the terms of reference of a commission of inquiry, no assumptions should be made on major policy issues. Everything should, as far as possible, be thoroughly and scientifically investigated before any conclusions can be made. The terms of reference should not reflect the policies of a particular (political) party or interest group. They should be based rather on what would benefit the individual and the country as a whole. There should also be broad consensus in civil society on the terms of reference.

The recommendations of a particular commission of inquiry should not be designed in such a way that they serve the needs of a political party. They should transcend the party political divisions obtaining in the country and be based on sound pedagogical principles. This should be done to ensure historical continuity and to obviate the problem of legitimacy. Recommendations should reflect the socio-economic realities in the country, and should be as free as possible from politics. This would enable subsequent commissions to operate in a socio-political milieu that is conflict-free. This would enable the commissioners to operate in a non-racial and non-sexist atmosphere. It would help a great deal towards depoliticising education and involving stakeholders in seeking a lasting solution to the education problem. The realisation that our country and its people are bigger than our individual differences, be they political or not, will go a long way towards achieving stability and equality in our education system.

Future commissions of inquiry need to accommodate the fact that South Africa is a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. The principle should therefore be that all languages and cultures are important and should be treated as such. The imposition of one culture as superior to others and the imposition of one type of religion on others

will serve only to polarise the society further. Commissions of inquiry should therefore not be encouraged to endorse the adoption of a particular culture, language or religion in their recommendations, unless it is pedagogically relevant to do so.

It is also recommended that the Commissioners Act (8/1947) as subsequently amended, should be revisited. It could be amended in such a way that it gives justiciable powers to the commissions of inquiry. In cases where the government elects to ignore the recommendations of a commission of inquiry because they are in conflict with its policies, and not because they would have an adverse effect on the country and its citizens, the commission should have the power to take the government to court. The interests of the country should supersede the political interests of different (political) parties. Perhaps it would not be out of line to establish a body consisting of stakeholders that would monitor government reaction to the recommendations of various commissions to ensure fairness and justice.

7.5 Recommendations for further research

Each one of the aims of the research can be further investigated in order to confirm or disprove the findings and conclusions of this research. Therefore, the same topic can be used to analyse the influence of commissions of inquiry in the education for other racial groups in South Africa. The findings could be compared to see if there are similarities and differences in the evolution of the system of education between races; and if so, why?

It would also be interesting to look at the membership and terms of reference of

commissions of inquiry that investigated the education system of other racial groups to see whether they suffered from the same flaws. The rationale is that if Whites investigating their own education system, made the same mistakes as the ones uncovered in this research, the problem of commissions of inquiry would probably be a general problem and not a racial problem.

It would also be interesting to compare and contrast commissions of inquiry that came before the 1990 political change and those that were appointed after the takeover of a democratic Government in 1994. Commissions of inquiry have been accused of serving the political needs of the Government in power. Will the same situation prevail after 1994?

7.6 **Conclusion**

The influence of commissions of inquiry in the evolution of education policy for Blacks from 1934-1984 has been analysed in this research. While some commissions have been found to have been very influential in the determination of policy, others have been found to have had very little impact on the evolution of policy. This distinction between the influential and the non-influential ones cast on them another role that they inadvertently played i.e. the role of bringing to the fore the fact that commissions of inquiry need to as far as possible be divorced from the political milieu from which they are operating. The reason is that although they may yield the government desired results in the short term, there will be long-term repercussions which will dispute their findings and recommendations and discredit the whole system.

Therefore highly politicised commissions, like the Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) and the Commission of Inquiry on Separate Training Facilities for non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1954) have been short term "successes" but long term failures. Less politicised commissions like the HSRC/De Lange (1981) have been short term "failures" but long term successes.

The failure of most commissions of inquiry points towards a need for the government to be pro-active in the planning of a viable system of education for the country. Mncwabe (1993:ix) concurs with this statement by observing that: "The essential difference between innovation and change lies in the fact that innovation is planned, the idea being that through planning one can increase the chances of bringing about any desired change ... If the innovation is some ad hoc process; if it is a pragmatic, haphazard affair ... not preceded by careful research, not based on adequate expertise, then it is a case of hit or miss."