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## VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN A CONSTITUTION OF A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

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### Introduction

The early history of Africa

The early history of African education in South Africa is interwoven with the early history of missionary work in South Africa. Reformation in Europe gave rise to Protestant Churches which focussed, among other things, on the education of the 'lower classes.' The objectives included enabling members of these lower classes in society to read the bible and help in the spreading of the christian doctrine. Philanthropism also arose in Europe, at about the same time, under the conditions of the industrial revolution as well illustrated in the case of England. The Philanthropists joined the Christian missions in a crusade to educate the lower classes. Colonised communities abroad were seen in the crusade as lower class. Thus education came into South African black communities as an education for the lower class communities of society. The objectives of the education included converting African into Christianity and training missionary assistants to the white clergy, teachers for mission schools and interpreter clerks for the colonial administration. Shepherd (1940:427) gave one purpose of missionary effort in providing industrial (vocational) training to Africans as "to train a pastoral and warlike people...to the disciplined routine of regular work", as a method of civilising them. The perception of vocational training for Africans as "education preparatory to industry and intended for those likely to earn their living by manual work was also expressed by the Committee on Industrial Education 1916+ and the Cape Provincial Education Commission of 1912. Thus, concepts of Vocational Education being for liberation or equality were hardly thought of in the early days before the founding of the United Nations in the twentieth century.

The paper develops from the foregoing background history making brief references to the development of Vocational Training among the African people in South Africa. The image of a vocational education which developed among the Africans and some of the factors which influenced the formation of this image are highlighted. The current Vocational Training program of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC - S.A.) is then briefly outlined. Reference is then also made to the future needs of vocational training constitutional guarantees. The foregoing is presented to provide the justification for a set of vocational training expectations of necessary guarantees in the constitution of a non-racial democratic South Africa. The paper concludes that apartheid worsened the gap between black and white recognition, accord of prestige and rewarding of vocational skills' holders. Consequently, in the paper's view, a constitution which fails to guarantee equality of opportunity, recognition, status and so on in vocational training for all South Africans irrespective of race, sex and creed, might well be not yet final.



### Colonial Image of Vocational Education

Shepherd (1940:66-77) noted that the early missionaries' schools for Africans seemed to have been judged more as being good or bad on the basis of the manual training they offered. The Genendendal school established in the Cape by the Moravian Missionaries in 1737 is one example so widely praised in reports for involving learners in significant manual work. Hunt Davis (1974:4) writing on African Education in the Cape in the nineteenth century, commented that the "concept of industrial education" first became popular in Britain in the 1830s in connection with the education of the 'lower classes'. Hunt Davis thought that this fact influenced the promotion of elementary industrial (vocational) education for Africans in the mid-nineteenth century Cape. In 1855 Sir George Grey, the then Governor of the Cape Colony, introduced full time vocational training courses in African institutions which included Lovedale, Healdtown and others. The whites already had their own exclusive technical institutions.

The discovery of diamonds and gold in the second half of the nineteenth century raised the level of demand for advanced technical skill training in South Africa. This kind of training was exclusively opened to whites only. All Africans were excluded. The image of white training in vocational and technical skills was exclusively raised at the expense of the image of the lower skill vocational training opened to Africans, through accorded official recognition, prestige and rewards. A tradition had thus begun in which industry reserved training and meaningful job opportunities for white vocational and technical skills while barring Africans from all meaningful vocational and technical skills training and job opportunities. The present tradition of employing Africans mainly as unskilled labour in South African industry had thus become established. Thus the white vocational training had been established as meaningful, prestigious and rewarding. On the other hand vocational training for Africans had acquired an image of being meaningless, menial and exploitable by the unscrupulous section of industry. The training was elementary and poor, devalued in status and pay for the African skill holders low.

The foregoing difference in the image of vocational training for Africans and for the minority whites was more consolidated under Apartheid. Opportunity for training Africans in vocational skills was drastically reduced. Whites in the skill trades were given the monopoly of meaningful jobs by draconian legislation such as the Job Reservation Acts. Africans, more clearly than before, could only provide the cheap labour for industry. In the circumstances Africans developed, in general, a negative attitude towards vocational training skills. The training became seen erroneously as training for the less 'intelligent' to be trained to be able to do some manual skilled job for a living. Whites on the other hand continued to enjoy the highest levels of skill training, prestige and earning capacity through vocational training skills. An attractive image of vocational skills had thus been established for whites whilst a very negative attitude towards vocational training and jobs had become deeply implanted among the African majority of South Africans. This is part of the injustice a constitution for a future democratic South Africa needs to redress.



### ANC Vocational Training Program

A vocational training program of the African National Congress has already been started in exile. Vocational skills training of ANC members is already taking place in Angola, Lusaka, Mazimbu and Dakawa on a low scale. The trade training offered covers skills related to: auto-mechanics, agriculture, shoe-making, clothes manufacture and printing. The number of trainees involved is however still very small and only elementary levels of training are covered. However an ANC Vocational Training Centre (VTC) is due to commence training on a larger scale from January 1989. The initial courses to be offered are in construction, carpentry, plumbing, electricity and bricklaying. Workshops, offices and hostels have already been constructed. VTC instructors are expected back in Dakawa in August 1988 from pedagogical training in Finland. A nucleus of VTC staff is already at work on site speeding up preparations for the opening. A new image of Vocational Training for a non-racial democratic South Africa now needs to be developed among the oppressed South Africans. The emergence of a new non-racial model of Vocational Training for a democratic South Africa needs constitutional guarantees for its future development and protection. This workshop must think out those guarantees.

### Necessary Vocational Training Constitutional Guarantees

South Africa is relatively well industrialised by present day international standards. Mining, agriculture, manufacture, construction, auto-manufacture are some of the developed core components in the economy of the country. The black oppressed African majority presently provides a large untrained and consequently exploited labour force in the country. The black oppressed African majority presently provides a large untrained and consequently exploited labour force in the country. The constitution of a future South Africa will have to redress this injustice to ensure a peaceful evolution of a new non-racial democratic South Africa for which the present struggle is being fought.

Accordingly, guarantees for Vocational Training including the following will need to be entrenched in the future constitution of a non-racial democratic South Africa. The demands are in accordance with the Freedom Charter and the ANC Education Policy. They include:

- 1.0 Complete eradication of all forms of racial discrimination, practices related to vocational training, job opportunity, rewards and recognition. There must be equal training opportunity and equal work for equal pay in the job field.
- 2.0 Equal status for all vocational training through having a unitary National Vocational Training Program based on equality with respect to race, sex and creed
- 3.0 Equitable rewarding Vocational Skill-holders according to merit and value of the skill of the national economy.



- 4.0 Equal accessibility of vocational training for all South Africans through state provision of equal training opportunity irrespective of race, sex and creed.
- 5.0 The Constitution must recognise that: equal rights, equal justice, equal security and so on in society can only be fully realised with equal training opportunities providing the capacity for individuals and collectives to enjoy these rights.

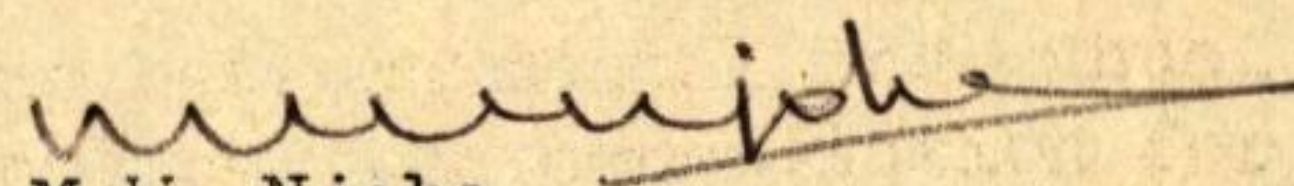
The constitution will therefore need to address the question of Vocational Training specially targeted at upgrading the large already existing unskilled labour provided by the oppressed African majority.

- 6.0 Towards the objective of bridging the gap between mental and manual work as provided in the ANC education policy, the constitution for a democratic South Africa will need to include provisions for an overhaul of the entire education system in South Africa for the purpose of interweaving the academic and the vocational components of the education system. The concept of polytechnical education might then also find space in the education system according to South African circumstances.
- 7.0 The constitution must encourage the use of modern scientific and technological insights to develop upon and enrich useful concepts and skills from traditional South African experience of all national groups in science and technology. The resulting hybrid should then be able to (i) wipe out any dichotomies such as between traditional healing and modern healing practices. (ii) Enable the development of science and technology with a clear incorporation of traditional know-how of all South African national groups.

#### Conclusion

Vocational training among the oppressed majority of South Africans has through the way it was introduced, recognised, accorded status and reward acquired a devlued image. Consequently the Black majority now tend to despise and shun vocational skills and training. Yet South Africa is well industrialised country. Its economy is heavily dependent on technical skills. The black majority must provide much of these skills. A constitution of a democratic South Africa which fails to correct this situation adequately might yet be, not the best for South Africa.

29, Feb., 1988  
Dakawa

  
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