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The paper is aimed at looking at black resistance to Bantu Education from when it was introduced (in 1953) up to the 1980s. In understanding resistance we, therefore need to look at the factors that contributed to opposition, also look at the aims of Bantu Education, and try to explain why there was such resistance from the 1950s up to the 80s. What is it that the government failed to address and is still continuing to do so.

BLACK RESISTANCE TO BANTU EDUCATION.

In 1949 soon after the newly elected Nationalist Government under Dr D.F.Malan took office, it set up a commission under the chairmanship of Dr W.W.Eiselen. The commission recommended that:
-Bantu Education has a separate existence because it exists and functions only in and for a particular social setting, which is the Bantu society.

(B.E. should be decentralised according to the regions to ensure that homogeneous population elements would be grouped together

-To ensure active participation of parents to the education of their children

:Bantu local authorities were to be created

Exodus to UK and elsewhere; Frit

The B.E. Act of 1953 followed the wake of the report of the Janxns of the Eiselen commission. The two acts were conceived as part of the overall plan to maintain their oppressive and exploitative regime, and Dr Verwoerd who replaced Dr Jansen as Minister of Native Affairs made this quite clear:

"When I have control of Native Education I will reform it so that the Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them...When my department controls Native education it will know for what class of higher education a Native is fitted, and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge...What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd."

Christie(1991,12-13) shows different statements and opinions that people have made about education in South Africa from the period when Bantu Education was introduced:

"We should not give the Natives any academic education.If we do, who is going to do the manual labour?" (J.N. le Roux,1945,National Party)

The above statements show how the white government aimed at destroying the black person. Their form of education is meant to keep the South African people apart from one another and also to keep them backward.

She also shows how the black people saw the Bantu Education system.

"We shall reject the whole system of Bantu Education whose aim is to reduce us, mentally and physically, into " hewers of wood and drawers of water."(SSRC,1976)

(The B.E received opposition from the ANC. There is no evidence of overt opposition from the students to the Eiselen Commission's ; proposal or the Bantu Education Bill. It was teacher's 1 organisations who reacted against B.E.Bill. The Cape African Teachers Association (CATA) and Teachers League of South Africa . (TLSA) both affiliated to the All African Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement announced that they were calling a inational conference to discuss Bantu Education Act. They were . warned that the government would not tolerate a discussion of ieducational policy by teachers, and they cancelled the f conference. The government responded by taking recognition away f from CATA. Instead they gave recognition to a newly established ' teacher's organisation the Cape African Teachers Union(CATU). Militant teachers were expelled from schools. However, black people in general were opposed to Bantu Education. Even before its implementation people conceived B.E. as part and parcel of the whole repressive system.

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Resistance to B.E was widespread even in remote areas g.g.) Sekhukhuniland and Zeerust. Parents were the ones who playea prominent role in opposing the system. They refused to send their children to B.E schools. Even teachers refused indoctrinating students with the ideology of rulers. The ANC organised parents not students in support of its campaign to resist Bantu Education. Their campaign was called the "Resist Apartheid Campaign." It was launched on the 8th of May 1954. They aimed at resisting B.E. Act, the Native Resettlement Act, The Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and Anti-Trade Union measures. The campaign was not successful. Resistance to Bantu Education continued after ithe collapse of the hANC campaign. Some of the strategies to oppose the system were:
-to stay in school but refused to collaborate with the systems method and objectives.

-teachers refused indoctrinating students with the ideology of the rulers, with the aim of undermining the possibility of schools operating according to the government's design.

-parents by boycotting Bantu School Boards and Committees, refused to collaborate voluntarily ' helping to run school system that was oppressive.(Molteno:i?g4,17)

Ntantala (Molteno,97-98) note that communities which had built and maintained schools and placed them at the hands of the churches, rejected such ministers who, without consulting them leased such schools to the government. Also in Peddie(Eastern Cape), community members locked up schools which they had built with their own money and labour, and told the minister in charge to build his own schools if he wished to hire them to the government. In Port Elizabeth, members of the congregation called upon their minister, who had accepted the chairmanship of the local Bantu School Board, to resign reminding him that he depended on them for his livelihood. In Mt.Ayliff, East Griqualand, people burned down the schools they had built rather than lease them to the government.

The boycott organised by the ANC stated on the 12th of April 1955. About seven thousand children have been expelled from school and more than one hundred teachers had lost their jobs.

? Early in April, Dr Verwoerd warned that any children still

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boycotting schools on the 25th of the month would be permanently excluded from the schools. Several prominent leaders of the ANC called on parents to end the boycott, and sent their own children to school. This ended the campaign. Most of the children who had been expelled and who had not been in school in 1955 were catered for by Cultural Clubs. The clubs provided some sheltered occupation for children who otherwise would have roamed to township streets. The clubs could not legally provide any "education" and had to resort to story-telling, quizzes, play-acting and similar activities. The club leaders were unfortunately untrained in methods of informal training, they were mothers or teachers who had left or been expelled by Bantu Affairs Department. The children consequently were sent to clubs with slates, exercise books and readers, and these were invariably seized by the police and used as evidence in court when the leaders were prosecuted. There was coincidence in student disturbances and outside unrest when in 1960 there was a mass demonstration against pass laws leading to the police killings at Sharpville and Langa, the declaration of the state of emergency and the banning of ANC and PAC.

Cultural Clubs were established as a form of alternative education for the children who had been expelled. The clubs finally collapsed in 1960 when many of the leaders were placed in detention in the post Sharpville state of emergency. Prior to 1958 African languages had been used as a media of instruction up to STDII in most African schools. Students had to go to schools where they would be taught by their mother tongue, even if the school was far from their homes. By this, they aimed at promoting ethnic division among African groups. In 1968 only 26% of all the secondary schools were carrying out the departmental policy on medium of instruction in full. In 1972 Bantu Education Report stated that:

"The medium of instruction in all secondary classes from standard five to Form five will be English/or Afrikaans. For the schools situated in the homelands the decision as to which medium policy will be followed will in each case be taken by the homeland government concerned in consultation with the Minister of Bantu Education."

(Blignaut, 1981, 2)

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-In all. Secondary Sc 0015 and STD V classes the medium of instruction must be on the following:

(a) Exclusively Afrikaans

(b) Exclusively English

(c) English and Afrikaans on a 50-50 basis

The mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction for the religious education and non-examination subjects.

On August 29, 1974 the Southern Transvaal Regional Director, Mr W.C. Ackerman issued Regional Circular N02 of 1974 headed "Uniform Approach in Schools" which specified that in STD V, Form I and Form II, General Science and Practical subjects had to be taught through the medium of English and Mathematics/Arithmetic and Social Studies through the medium of Afrikaans. Religious instruction, Music and Physical Education would be taught in Vernacular languages. (Ibid, 273

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arln92_9ttl73 outlines the policy and policy as decided on by the Secretary of

By imposing that Mathematics be taught in Afrikaans they hoped to have few numbers of Africans who study Mathematics. They were being threatened by the Africans knowledge of mathematics and, therefore decided to withhold it from them. Their aim was to develop a negative attitude from the African students towards mathematics. This also shows the aims perused by Verwoerd when in 1954 made his intentions quite clear that: "What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd." (Hirson:1981,45) They wanted to preserve the technical jobs for themselves. Although they succeeded to some extent their aims were not fully achieved. This created problems among students as those who understood the subject felt clever than those doing other subjects. Even though there are few blacks qualified in technical subjects we are bridging the gap.

The policy contained in these circulars which stated that Afrikaans be the medium provoked a strong reaction from the African community. Memoranda from individual school boards and the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA) were presented to the Department of Bantu Education. The Federated School Boards petitioned the Bantu Education Advisory Board in April 1975 showing the problems arising out of the pupils having to write STD V Higher Primary examination at the end of the first year in which they would have been taught on a 50-50 basis. Examination results at the end of 1975 showed a marked increase in the failure rate of pupils writing their final primary school examination, 39% in STD V and 21% in STD VI as compared with 8% the previous year. (Ibid,27-28) In December 1974, after the examination results, parents were informed that hundreds of STD VI pupils who passed their final examination in 1974 were requested to repeat the standard in 1975 because of shortage of schools.

During 1976 the use of Afrikaans for the teaching of mathematics and social studies was extended to Form I. In May 1976 pupils in Soweto, faced with the prospects of writing examination in Afrikaans started actively to express their opposition to the system. By early 1976 there were demonstrations in some schools against the introduction of lessons in Afrikaans. As protest increased schools joined forces and eventually marched together in the demonstration of 16 June to Orlando Stadium. In attempts to stop the demonstration the government responded by sending police who without any warning opened fire on the children and thus sparked off riots that spread across the entire country. There were reasons for opposing Afrikaans and also for preferring English. It was also perceived that education conducted in Afrikaans would lead to a definite deterioration in standards. African teachers had received instructions almost exclusively in English, and many were barely able to converse in Afrikaans. They would not possibly have conducted a course of instruction in that language, and it was inconceivable that they could ever master the technical language required for the classroom in a language they did not speak more especially for arithmetic or mathematics. Their contention was that:

"English was the main language of industry and commerce, and was essential for any youth who wanted to find a place

inside the economy of South Africa; it was an international language and the medium through which contact could be maintained. with. the rest of Africa; it. was one lingua franca which bound blacks, at least in the urban areas together. (Hirson;1981,174)

According to Hirson, the first vocal protest seem to have come from the School Boards in Soweto. The first recorded opposition came from the Meadowlands Tswana Schooeroard early in 1976, and the issued a circular under the names of Abner Letlape and Joseph Peele, countermanding the instruction that Afrikaans be used as a medium of instruction in the schools.(Ibid,177) The two men were expelled.

In calling the demonstration for June 16, the South African Student Movement(SASM) took the struggle on the streets, publicly challenged the government to revoke its language regulations. The number of youth gathered for demonstration at 7.00 a.m on the morning of the 16th was an indication of the intensity of the feeling in schools, centred emotionally on the issue of Afrikaans. Fifteen to twenty thousand youth, ranging in age from 10-20 years were ready to march off bearing slogans written the following:

"Down with Afrikaans

Afrikaans is oppressors language

Abolish Afrikaans

Blacks are not dustbins-Afrikaans stinks" (181)

The police responded on the march by shooting, they never gave any warning. The first victim was a thirteen year old boy, Hector Pertersen. They shot at random and shot to kill. Any person suspected of being a "leader" was perused and was a target.

Journalists were warned to keep away from piles of bodies on the ground as it none of their business. Baragwanath hospital was closed to the public. Deaths at the hands of the police had become commonplace in the country.

The government replied immediately. Prime Minister Vorster told Parliament that he had instructed the police to maintain law and order at all costs. (Christie,1991,20)

The police used teargas, hippos and helicopters. They prohibited gatherings and detained without trial.

On June 16 the school students stayed firm and threw stones. It was an unequal battle, stones against bullet. Some fled, others fell, but those behind stepped in and closed the ranks. By 10.00 a.m youth were surging through Soweto, taking what revenge they could for the massacre of their fellows. They stoned passing cars,set up barricades and stopped delivery vans and buses, burnt down major administrative buildings, attacked beerhalls and some shops.

The widespread reaction had obviously not been anticipated by the government. On June 17 Putco suspended its bus service and large number of residents were forced to stay in townships. They joined the youth who were barricading the streets. In the no go areas controlled by residents police patrols faced the possibility of ambushes from the stone throwing youngsters. The destruction which took place in Soweto and other townships on 16 June and in the ensuing months was generally not discriminate. There was

logic in the selection of targets, symbols of apartheid apparatus, collaborators with it. There were also reports on disturbances in schools in the Orange Free State, Cape Town, the police were on the alert and were patrolling the townships. The students also organised workers to stay away from work. They wanted parents and workers to march with them to John Vorster Square in Johannesburg. It seems that at least 60% of Soweto workers responded to the call.

Some of the achievements of the 1976 uprising were the following:

- Afrikaans medium was withdrawn

- The Department of Bantu Education was renamed Department of Education and Training

- More attention was paid to schooling conditions and more money was put into schooling ,

Although there were some achievements, 1976 was not able to bring an immediate end to Bantu Education. Schools remained segregated and unequal. It was in 1978 that the uprising finally settled.

In 1979 a new student organisation, the Congress of South African Students was formed, and it concentrated on organising students nationwide, and it linked the education struggle to broader struggle and community involvement.

April 1980 marked the beginning of the famous school boycott that started in Cape Town and rapidly spread throughout the country. tens of thousands of black students left their desks to protest against the education system. The boycott was soon supported by 140000 students in the Cape, Transvaal and also Natal. Even teachers pledged their solidarity with students.

The state responded with warning and police action. the student leaders were intimidated, threatened.with expulsion and.political meetings were banned. Some were injured and killed. The complaint of the students were:

- 3%Schools were poorly equipped and not repaired

- 1kCorporal punishment

- rpoorly qualified teachers and expulsion of politically active teachers

- a presence off security police at schools

- a the wider economic problems in society

The 1980 students boycotts was the students attempt to set up alternative education programmes. School buildings were used as assembly places, as well as centres from where educational programs could be run. Mass meetings were a regular feature of the boycotts.Some attempts were made to link students protests with worker action. During these boycotts student leaders organised alternative education programs which raised people's awareness on many topics such as history of Black people in South Africa, June 16 uprisings, the nature of the education system, etc. These alternative education programs were successful to a certain extend , in the sense that students participated in these programs. Molteno (in Christie,249) describes the programs as follows :

"at certain schools, students were for most of their part of the boycott in the classrooms, earnestly participating in awareness programs. They remained interested and

responded enthusiastically to the opportunity of being able to contribute to a process of collective learning and of being able to criticize openly teachers who in the normal way were figures of unchallengeable authority".

He, however also points out that some of the programs had virtually no activities. The 1980 boycott had some gains on the part of the students. More textbooks were provided, school buildings were repaired but remained segregated and unequal, the de lange commission was set up in response to some of the school unrest. The government accepted certain de lange recommendations but it rejected the major recommendation that there should be a single education department for all in South Africa. by the beginning of 1981 most schools were back to normal and the boycott was over. 3

Again in 1984 another period of boycott and protest began and students complaints were similar to the 1980 demands.

t COSAS and AZASO pointed to segregation and unequal education

t lack of schools and facilities, poorly qualified teachers

t lack of schools and facilities

t shortage of textbooks, which shows that the books provided in 1980 were not enough

8 increase in rents and transport prices worsened people's problems, as student politics began to be linked to with broader political campaigns. Students complained about of high rental whereas their parents were not paid enough salaries, and could not meet the family needs. Exclusion of Africans from the Tricameral Parliament which led to the boycotting of elections in August 1984, involved students, youth groups, United Democratic Front (UDF), trade unions and were very important in mobilising the resistance of this period.

These boycotts started in Cradock and Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, and in Saulsville and Atteridgeville near Pretoria and spread throughout the country. The state in all acts of protests retaliated by sending the army into the townships. For most of 1985 there were boycotts and protests in different areas across the country. The Eastern Cape and Vaal were the most active regions. Students wanted change not only in school but also broader social change. Students organised some rallies and pickets, barricaded streets and waged street battles with police an army. They took part in necklace killings and were part of lpeoples courts'. They burnt property and attacked people they saw as collaborators. Their slogan was lLiberation now, education later'.

By the end of 1985 black schooling across South Africa was in crisis. The Soweto Civic Association called a meeting of parents to discuss the crisis in schools. At this meeting the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee(SPCC) was formed. SPCC sent a delegation to Harare to meet the ANC, and they returned with the message that students should be urged to go back to school. Learning should not be postponed as their slogan says. As a result of this their slogan was changed to "People's Education For People's Power". Students were urged to try and change from within.

Delegates from different organisations across the country attended the first NECC conference in Johannesburg. The theme was

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people's education for people's power. The conference agreed that the students would return to school provided that the DET met their demands which were:

- the unbanning of COSAS
- the release of students and teachers in detention
- the end of the State of Emergency
- the recognition of democratically elected SRCs
- the withdrawal of troops from the townships
- the repair of damaged school buildings
- free supplies of books and stationery

The conference succeeded in convincing the students to go back to classes. '

Mkatshwa in (Levin 1991,118) states that People's education stresses the importance of political as well as general education while emphasising the link between education, politics and social transformation.

He further argues that people's education means to prepare people for total human liberation, helps people to be creative, analytical and also prepares people for full participation in all social, political or cultural sphere of society.

In a document by NECC entitled "WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT II? they state that:

"Our struggle has always been about destruction of Apartheid Education and through this the national liberation of the oppressed majority. It has always been a struggle for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic education system that will address our people's political, social and economic needs."

An interview held with the Secretary General of the NECC in Port Elizabeth shows their interpretation of the People's Education. Their aim is to do away with Bantu Education and the so-called White education. Education should not promote individualism as it does. It should involve the whole community. They aim at combining the socialist and capitalist models, also promote self-reliance, the Tanzanian model. Everybody should be able to read and write.

In conclusion, education must be acceptable to those for which it is designed. It must be beneficial to them. That has been absent with B.E. Not a single section of the African population to whom B.E is acceptable. It has been rejected right from its inception.

For S.A, to change for a democratic future, education should play a major part. We had seen how education struggles have played a major part for the better development of our society, how they responded to the education crisis. There were establishment of Clubs in the 50s, alternative education programmes in the early 80s and people's education in the mid 80s. In all these cases they were trying to make education more relevant and also to give it a different political purpose. These students protests show their link to the society. It is therefore of importance to state that, education question and education struggle in S.A cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader democratic struggle. It is impossible to address the question of democratic change and

social transformation without coming to terms with education question.

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