

Education in apartheid South Africa

Apartheid education is a policy of separation, division and deliberate inequality. This policy has resulted in the terrible impoverishment of all South Africa's youth. It is a system that inculcates a sense of superiority into some, whilst denying the vast majority what is their fundamental right — an education of decent quality. All South Africans are immeasurably damaged by it.

Both the history and implementation of apartheid education are well documented. This Paper looks briefly at the following:

The structure and expenditure of education in South Africa, the present situation in black education and the ideology of Christian National Education (CNE) on which white education policy is based.

However, the situation is so dynamic that any factor may trigger a new student/state confrontation and radically change the existing circumstances. Racially divided education is a time bomb ticking away in South African society.

The structure of apartheid education

There are currently 19 education departments in South Africa. Their composition is as follows:

A National Education Department

5 White — 1 National and 4 Provincial: Cape, Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal

1 'Coloured'

1 Indian

11 Black — 1 for 'South African blacks' and controlled by the Department of Education and Training (DET), 6 in the non-independent homelands and 4 in the 'independent' homelands.

Among PW Botha's reform promises was a single education policy. Nothing has come of this. Rather, the Minister of Education announced in his 1989 budget speech that this policy was being abandoned due to the economic crisis in South Africa.

School classrooms and 2 448 Secondary School classrooms in 1984. It estimated that it would cost R420 million to meet this shortfall. The shortfall could be eradicated by switching the equivalent sum paid to the SA Development Trust over the past four years, for purchasing land to consolidate black areas, to building classrooms; it could be met in one year by disengaging militarily from Namibia; it could be met in just over two years by charging 15% of the cost of their education to white pupils.

Similarly apartheid expenditures on maintaining spare capacity in 'white' educational institutions, which currently involve having over 1 035 spare places in eight 'white' schools in central Cape Town alone, and 2 683 empty places in white teacher training colleges could be abolished in one exceedingly limited step toward addressing the educational crisis upon us.'

The Cost of Apartheid by Michael Savage, 1986

It is patently absurd to claim, as the State does, that the phenomenon of 'separate but equal' can exist where different amounts are spent on children according to their race group. To expect the recipients of this discrimination to accept such a false premise is deeply offensive.

Repression

Repression in education was as severe as in all areas of South African life in 1988. Many students and teachers were detained. Schools were suspended or closed. Teachers and principals sympathetic to the grievances of pupils were transferred, meetings of PTSAs (Parent/Teacher/Student Associations) and students were banned as were any discussions around the issue of alternative education known as 'Peoples' Education'. Many individuals and organisations were banned. This particularly affected the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) which had continued to play a crucial role in diffusing tension and in addressing the issue of educational alternatives. Its top leadership was detained. Any local structure thought to be linked to the NECC was eliminated. Other organisations restricted were the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), a non-racial body which had been actively involved in working for teacher unity. Many student organisations were restricted. Further forms of repression were the use of right-wing state supported 'vigilantes' and the instruction by the DET to principals to provide names of student activists. Students released from detention were not permitted to reregister in the schools.

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Soweto

Pupils engaged in lengthy stayaways. Several schools were closed by the Department of Education and Training (DET). A breakdown in discipline occurred, teachers were demoralised and intimidated. A high level of fear, frustration, anger and despair was felt by pupils. Conditions conducive to teaching did not exist and the SAIRR estimated that no effective teaching took place in 54 Soweto high schools. There was a strong security presence around the schools. This caused tension and anger amongst students.

Western Cape

Disintegration of education became the norm. Schools were wracked by conflict because of the DET refusal to allow large numbers of pupils to register and because of DET's prohibition of Parent/Teacher/Student Association (PTSA) meetings. Several teachers were suspended by the DET causing further tensions and conflict. In July an official estimate gave that there was a 50% attendance at schools..

Eastern Cape

Although there were no major boycotts during the year, appalling conditions existed with severe shortages of facilities. Repression was harsh and many student leaders were detained.

Natal

Serious conflict existed between Inkatha and non-Inkatha forces and the conflict spilled into the area of education. For political reasons, many pupils were not able to register. Many left Inkatha-controlled areas to seek alternative schooling elsewhere.

Matric Results

The start of 1989 saw thousands of matriculants seeking readmission to schools after disastrous results for 1988. Regulations introduced by the DET in November 1988 included a clause that refused matriculants permission to reregister. This situation caused chaos to erupt as many thousands of students were turned away. *The New Nation* (13-19 April 1989) estimated that 50 000 matrices would not be allowed to rewrite in 1989.

Summary

The situation in black schooling is near complete collapse. There is a critical



The spirit of resistance: Cape Town students demand an end to harassment.

Adil Bradlow, Afrapix

shortage of teachers, schools are seriously short of facilities, students and teachers continue to be detained or harassed and many thousands of children are receiving little or no education at all. The DET regulations, issued in November 1988 are a further measure to control black schooling and deny democratically elected PTSA's from participating in structures or formulating policy. They are a further cause of great anger and tension.

White Education

White children too are deprived and denied a fair and well grounded education, for they are indoctrinated with Nationalist Party ideology through the system of Christian National Education. This system entrenches the ideology of discrimination and the concept of racial superiority. it presents seriously distorted views. Very little resistance is offered by parents and educators, themselves recipients of this system which was introduced in the 1950s.

The policy of CNE makes no pretence towards an unbiased approach. Further, the State controls white schools in a vice-like grip and white education

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departments fiercely guard their terrain. For example, white school principals in the Transvaal have been ordered not to allow any materials produced by several human rights organisations from being circulated or discussed in their schools. Human rights organisations attempting to provide alternative points of view have been accused of trying to involve pupils in politics — a great irony, when the whole system of white education is based on a political ideology

White children are not in any way being prepared for a post apartheid South Africa. Instead the concept of a God-ordained superiority is reinforced, damaging the minds of all white South Africans.

Conclusion

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 1. 'Everyone has the right to education ... 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ...'

As in all aspects of South African life, the apartheid education system is a complete denial of this fundamental human right.

In accord with Article 26, the guidelines issued in 1988 by the African National Congress are emphatic about the need for full, equal and compulsory education for all in a post apartheid South Africa.

When a 17 year old youth says 'I feel hopeless and helpless' and another says 'Even though I try my utmost best to pass matric I can't make it. They are keeping us out of the schools. They are keeping us in the working force', then it is time to demand the end to apartheid education. For the emancipation of all South Africans, this is essential.

Much of this information was taken from an unpublished summary Trends in Black Education 1988 by V. Khanyile, Chairperson of the NECC.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights

Article 26: Everyone has the right to education ... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms ...

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'My name is John. I was born on 13.9.1969 in Cape Town and moved to Pietermaritzburg 6 years ago. I am at school at Maritzburg College and am starting Std. 10 in 1987. I am very interested in music and I play the organ and piano. I intend to study music when I have completed school.

I joined a local campaign about a year ago and have participated in their programmes. Realising the need for justice and peace in South Africa, I became involved, and this has made clearer the injustice in South Africa. I live a peaceful, comfortable life and I object to a policy which prevents others from enjoying a life similar to mine.'

'My name is Themba. I was born in 1969. At the beginning of 1986 I was in Std. 9, and I was vice president of the SRC. My home is in X Township but I am now in hiding. My ambition is to negotiate with other political organisations. My favourite things are music and the struggle. (sic)

I was born in Pietermaritzburg in Edendale Hospital. My father works in town. I started schooling when I was 5 years old. I failed only Form 3. I became involved in politics in 1984 when I joined a youth organisation. I left my home in April when Inkatha members attacked my home. I am in hiding from that day. Also I was held in detention for 16 weeks. I have not been able to complete school this year. I think the best solution among black students is to get a peoples education, and every problem will be solved like that.'

INFO '87 — HAP.

As for those students who did attend school, educationist Ken Hartshorne said recently: 'Pupils and teachers at black schools are often present in the flesh but not in spirit, because attitudes have not changed and the fundamental issues of separation, discrimination, isolation and white domination have not been addressed in an effective way'.

Others say pupils, many of whom have not known a year of uninterrupted secondary education, have been harmed psychologically by the on-going conflict. Former journalist and now university teacher, Phil Mtimkulu says: 'They are rootless and volatile. Any little thing that happens brings out their anger'. He says there is little point in pupils going to school while there is little motivation to learn.

Black Sash Magazine, September 1988

Black Education 1988/89

The situation in black education deteriorated sharply in 1988. In many urban areas there was an almost complete breakdown of the learning environment. In order to provide a picture of the situation, regional conditions are briefly described: