

Part II: South Africa and the “Rainbow Nation”: Popular Education and the Utopian Dream

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The Freedom Charter

Congress of the People, Kliptown, Johannesburg – June 1955

The Doors of Learning and of Culture Shall Be Opened!

The government shall discover, develop, and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life; All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas, and contact with other lands; the aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty, and peace; Education shall be free, compulsory, universal, and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be open to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit; Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan; teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens; the colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

South African Constitution (1994)

The Aims of Education

Rights to education must be understood in light of the aim of education. Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The right to education as described above is based on the premise that education is a precondition for the exercise of other rights. If guaranteed, it has the ability to unlock the enjoyment of other human rights and ultimately empower individuals to contribute and participate meaningfully in a free society.

(Web: Helen Suzman Foundation: The Right to Basic Education)

Introduction

As Crain Soudien has noted

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 brought to an end one of the greatest struggles of the second part of the twentieth century. The coming of democracy meant the promise of an end to division, separation and inequality and the beginning of new order of social harmony, development and prosperity. The vision of an education to promote equity, to focus on the development of critical thinking, and to promote social ethics, was in keeping with the promise of the Constitution adopted in 1996. Yet thirty years into this bright new world, the portents are less than auspicious. . . all reviews show that the progress in strategic areas of social development (including education) has either been minimal or that stasis has occurred.¹

Should we see that as confirmation of Tony Morphet's observation in 1990 that "the freedom of blacks in South Africa from white rule was conflated with a classless Utopia"?²

The transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa took place at a time of fundamental global changes, from the optimistic welfarist social-democratic politics of the post— World War II era to the 'Sixties counter-culture' and the Third World revolt against colonialism. From the mid-seventies, these transformations were strongly influenced by a new global world order informed by neo-Liberal politics and the sanctity of the Market— what came to be known as the Washington Consensus. The central role of education in crafting that new, just society was framed in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and prosecuted vigorously by students and activists during the sixties.³ Yet, it became clear over time that

... open elections and oppositional rights in themselves provide a very limited basis for popular rule when a whole realm of decisions – those concerning ownership, investment, production and employment – were excluded from the democratic process. The control by capital in economic life not only restricts the scope of democracy, it also undermines popular rule in the narrowly political sphere – as decisions are forced to conform to the dictates of capital and as the ideological power of capital shapes the entire environment of decision making . . . with intra-elite conflict and the co-optation of radical opposition, leading democracy to be

¹ C Soudien, "The 'A' factor: Coming to terms with the question of legacy in South African education", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 2007, pp. 182-193.

² T Morphet, "Brushing history against the grain", *Theoria*, 76, October 1990, pp. 89-99.

³ G de Groot, *The Sixties unplugged: A kaleidoscope history of a disorderly decade* (London: Macmillan, 2008); T Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (London: Vintage, 2010).

*compartmentalized into separate realms – allowing us to have political democracy while we postpone economic democracy to another day.*⁴

In the aftermath of Cold War politics, anti-colonial liberation movements relied heavily on the appeal of education as an emblem in their struggle for political freedom. As in revolutionary France, formal debates about educational transformation seldom brought dramatic results.

Liberation movements often rejected the prevailing colonial Western school systems in the Southern African colonies and appealed to alternatives founded on explicit socialist and progressive ideologies. Examples include the models of revolutionary education associated with the USSR, Communist China or Cuba, or those derived from Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Latin America.⁵ At times, there were also appeals to romantic models of Indigenous African education or calls for a return to old missionary appeals for “Industrial Education” for rural life and work.⁶ Yet few of these radical experiments in educational policy bore substantial fruit.

In South Africa, the terms of transaction were very different from those in France two centuries earlier. Here ‘transformation’ was to take place in the context of a modern state structured by capitalist market relations that had been in place for over two centuries. Despite the eruption of widespread defiance of the apartheid government after the Soweto uprising of 1976, South Africa as a whole did not descend into a situation resembling the Terror in Paris of 1793/1794.⁷ What follows is a modest attempt to describe the complex nature of educational transition in South Africa and to provide some pointers relating to the successes and failures of the educational struggles in this context. What were the education policy goals for the new society that was envisaged, and how did they change over time? What role did the Utopian goals for education framed during the years of opposition (‘Peoples Education’ or education in exile) have in the framing of educational policies for

⁴ A McEwan, “Transitions for authoritarian rule”, *Latin American Perspectives* 15(3), 1988, pp. 115-130; also see S Aronowitz & HA Giroux, *Education under siege: The conservative, liberal and radical debate over schooling* (London: Routledge, 1985).

⁵ P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

⁶ M Prew, “People’s education for people’s power: The rise and fall of an idea in Southern Africa”, TG Griffiths, & Z Miller (eds.), *Logics of socialist education: Engaging with crisis, insecurity and uncertainty* (Springer, 2013), pp. 133-53; T Norton & B Ollman, *Studies in Socialist Pedagogy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978); JR Sheffield & VP Diejomaoh, *Non-formal education in African development* (New York: African - American Institute, 1972); J Nyerere, *Education for self-reliance* (OUP, 1967).

⁷ The educational aspect of the struggle in South Africa has often been neglected in literature on the transition and cannot be taken up here, despite its relevance to the issues raised in this paper. For the general background see J Seekings, *The UDF: A history of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000).

a future democratic South Africa after 1994? And, more tentatively, can these events be fruitfully compared with the changes outlined in relation to Revolutionary France?

Freedom Charter and background to Soweto 1976

One of the most cited documents relating to the educational struggle during the apartheid era is the statement from the Freedom Charter, signed at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, Johannesburg, in June 1955. The famous educational clause urged that “*The Doors of Learning and of Culture Shall Be Opened!*” (See above). This emphasised universal state provision of education without regard to race in keeping with the United Nations Organisation (UNO) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). It became the sheet-anchor of the future educational policy of the African National Congress (ANC), the major opponent of apartheid education. Reflecting the struggle against racial segregation and apartheid, the main emphasis was on the expansion of provision and on equality of provision. These issues had been central to calls for educational reform by Africans, missionaries, and liberals for over a century.⁸

In a context where the emergent policy of apartheid education or Bantu Education was being implemented in the 1950s with a focus on the promotion of ethnic identity and *own language education*, the tone of all educational proposals from opponents was essentially to support the pre-apartheid *status quo*. Blacks wanted *the same education as whites*—in terms of access, resources, provision, funding, and curriculum! Such was the situation all through the apartheid era and was to be a key element of the Soweto uprising in 1976.⁹ In such a context, there was very little public debate about what is today referred to as curriculum change.

The African education movement

There has been little scholarly attention given to the issue of education policy as an aspect of the politics of resistance to apartheid from the 1950s to the mid-1980s. Although

⁸ See B. Rose, & R. Tunmer (eds.) *Documents in South African education* (Johannesburg: AD Donker, 1975); P. Kallaway (ed.), *Apartheid and education: The education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1984); P. Kallaway, *History of education under apartheid: 1948-1994* (New York: 2002/Cape Town: Peter Lang, 2002/Cape Town: Pearson Education, 2002); C. Soudien, C. Fisher, M. Cross & P. Kallaway, *A new history of formal schooling in South Africa 1658-1910: An education of contradictions* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2024) and the following volume on the modern period (forthcoming).

⁹ B. Hirson, *Year of fire, year of ash: The Soweto revolt: Roots of a revolution* (London: Zed, 1979); J. Kane-Berman, *SOWETO: Black revolt white reaction* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1978); Jonathan Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1940-1990* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1999).

the opponents of the apartheid government were united in their condemnation of the apartheid education policies, few works on the history of the liberation movements pay attention to educational issues.¹⁰

Tom Lodge records that Zeke Mphahlele remembered approaching ANC activists in 1952 and attempting to discuss Bantu Education with them, but failing to elicit much interest. Only in the Cape, the All-African Convention (AAC), with its roots in the Cape radical traditions of the Unity Movement, did Lodge discover a focus on education and schooling.¹¹ Given the uncertainty and disagreement between different sections of the leadership and between leaders and rank and file, the default position of the ANC in the 1950s was simply to boycott school boards set up in response to the new apartheid policy.

The ANC national executive undertook to establish a National Educational Council which would make provision for alternative or informal education in the form of ‘cultural clubs’. An initiative to establish a more comprehensive alternative education took the form of the African Education Movement (AEM), established in Johannesburg in mid-1955 through a collaboration of some churches, the Congress of Democrats, and the ANC. All that can be said with confidence is that the ANC attempted to provide some kind of alternative to Bantu Education, which included aspects of progressive education. The AEM and the cultural clubs were a brave experiment, however, their existence became increasingly symbolic as numbers dwindled and children were re-absorbed into new government schools. The financial capacity of the state in relation to the delivery of education, together with the shortage of qualified teachers for community schools, pointed to the limits of these bold attempts at resistance, and the experiment faded out within a short period.¹² The only other markers of an alternative tradition in South African education are presented by the adult education tradition and night schools that I have outlined elsewhere.¹³

¹⁰ See for example F Meli, *The history of the ANC: South Africa belongs to us* (London: J Currey, 1989); E Maloka, *The South African Communist Party: Exile and after apartheid* (Jacana, 2013). South African Democracy Education Trust, *The road to democracy in South Africa* Vol I and 2 (Pretoria: UNISA Press.); T Simpson, *Umkhonto we Sizwe: the ANC's armed struggle* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2016).

¹¹ T Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983); C Soudien, *The Cape Radicals: Intellectual and political thought of the new era fellowship, 1930-1960s* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019); Of particular note in this literature is I B Tabata, *Education for Barbarism: Bantu (apartheid) education in South Africa* (London: Unity Movement, 1960).

¹² T Lodge, *The parent's school boycott: the Eastern Cape and East Rand townships, 1955* (AfricaBib, 1980); P Kallaway, *Apartheid and education: The education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984); T Karis, G Carter, & G Gerhart, From protest to challenge: *Challenge and violence, 1953-1964*, Vol. III (Stanford: Hoover, 1972); E Feit, *African opposition in South Africa: The failure of passive resistance* (Stanford: Hoover, 1967).

¹³ P Kallaway, “Knowledge for the people: Understanding the complex heritage of colonial education in South Africa”, *Yesterday & Today*, 28, December 2022, pp. 44-81.

The challenge of educational reform in South Africa

In the wake of the Soweto Schools Uprising in 1976, there was a revival of interest in education as an aspect of the anti-apartheid struggle. An optimistic outline for a new revolutionary socialist educational ethos in the Third World, which drew much attention from anti-apartheid campaigners in South Africa, was sketched out in the important publication in 1979 by Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wüstenberg, *The Education of the Future*.¹⁴ It promoted the call for a cultural revolution and various forms of 'polytechnic education' that had been developed in the USSR, China, Scandinavia, and Cuba. This provided a handbook to education for many of the socialist liberation movements in the region.

Joel Samoff has provided an excellent survey of the scope and limitations of alternative education programmes in the Third World in the last decade of the twentieth century.¹⁵ The demand for a progressive form of education was at the forefront of the demands of the liberation movements and "was intimately woven into the liberation rhetoric and programmes".¹⁶ Yet, Samoff notes that "there has been a failure to institutionalise democratic practice in the schools". Put crudely, "in transition societies, the reproductive charter of the schools has overwhelmed its role in establishing and nurturing democratic practice. The schools, the society and the transition have all suffered".¹⁷ It is within this context that the transition to education for democracy in South Africa must be understood.

The dream of emergent worker and peasant socialist states in Africa faded in the 1980s, as many new states that emerged embraced populist, neo-liberal political norms. Ultimately, for all the rhetoric about educational transformation as part of a wider social transform of society, "the alternative models were marginalized by the adaptation of the colonial (or apartheid) system to an education system based on neo-liberal orthodoxy, as part of a new world order".¹⁸ Despite the formal commitment of the new South African government to progressive and socialist ideologies, and the presentation of education as a key vehicle for social and economic transformation prior to 1994, there has been almost

¹⁴ S Castles & W Wüstenberg, *The education of the future: An introduction to the theory and practice of socialist education* (London: Pluto, 1979).

¹⁵ J Samoff, "Socialist education?" *Comparative Education Review*, 35(1), February 1991, pp. 1-22; also see his "The Intellectual/Financial Complex of Foreign Aid," *Review of African Political Economy*, 53 (1992): 60-75; JR Sheffield & VP Diejomaoh, *Non-formal education*....

¹⁶ M Prew, "Peoples education ...", T G Griffiths & Z Miller, *Logics of socialist education*..., p. 133.

¹⁷ J Samoff, "Socialist education," *Comparative Education Review*, 1991, p. 1.

¹⁸ M Prew, "Peoples education...", T G Griffiths & Z Miller, *Logics of socialist education*..., p. 133; S Aronowitz & HA Giroux, *Education under siege*....

universal agreement that education has failed to play that role and that three decades after independence, Southern African states (including South Africa) still have academically-orientated, iniquitous, bifurcated systems which have changed little since the colonial period. Schools continued “to identify, segregate and socialise the elite of the next generation with few exceptions they have not created the new person, the visionaries and architects and carpenters and masons of social transformation ... nor have they become the foundation of a new order”.¹⁹ The promised educational Utopia has not arrived.

Little attention was given to this wider process by those who attempted to frame new policies for education in South Africa in the early 1990s. None of this history was drawn upon in the new world of educational policy debate that emerged in the 1980s when the National Party (NP) government, in response to the devastating events surrounding the Soweto Uprising in 1976, began to consider education as part of a wider mandate of limited political and labour reform and “the modernization of apartheid”.²⁰ The De Lange Committee report of 1981, *Provision of Education in the RSA* (HSRC),²¹ set the tone for those changes and provided a platform for the reforms that were to follow the transfer of power in 1994. However, those proposals did not look back to history, nor to the field of comparative education, for solutions to educational policy dilemmas. Neither, for that matter, did the People’s Education movement of the 1980s nor the ANC in exile.

In the context of the South African “transition to democracy” from the Freedom Charter (1955) to the era of the United Democratic Front (UDF)²² and the People’s Education movement of the 1980s, there were many challenges to the apartheid educational system. However, the new policies adopted after the formal transition of power in 1994, firstly to a Government of National Unity (GNU) and then to the ANC government, did little to transform either the quality of the education offered by the state to the majority of the population or the form of that education.

The vague notion of ‘People’s Education’, which was a prominent aspect of the internal political struggle of the UDF during the 1980s, played a small part in the establishment of a new policy regime after 1994.

¹⁹ M Prew, “Peoples education...”, TG Griffiths & Z Miller, *Logics of socialist education...*, citing (1991:21).

²⁰ H.Adam, *The modernization of racial domination* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1971).

²¹ Human Sciences Research Council, (HSRC) *Provision of education in the RSA* (the De Lange Report) (HSRC, Pretoria, 1981).

²² J Seekings, *The UDF: A history...*.

People's Education

After the SOWETO uprising of 1976, and as part of the general defiance of the government in communities, workplaces, and schools, the UDF played a key role in the field of educational struggle. People's Education, as conceived in the documents put before the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) conference at the University of the Witwatersrand in December 1985, rejected apartheid education and proposed a set of recommendations for the future. People's Education had a utopian ring. It was "to be a true force for liberation, democracy and equality" in the struggle for national liberation in a democratic South Africa.²³

As defined in the resolutions of the National Consultative Conference on Education in 1986, the goals of People's Education were framed in terms of a rejection of apartheid and capitalism. It held that People's Education:

1. *Enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the Apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial democratic system*
2. *Eliminates capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development, encourages collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis*
3. *Eliminates, illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of one person by another*
4. *Equips and trains all sectors of our people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain People's Power in order to establish a non-racial democratic South Africa.*²⁴

Echoing Condorcet's work, Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa, a leader of the People's Education movement, summed up these goals in his keynote address to the conference:

*... when we speak of alternative education or People's Education, we mean one which prepares people for total human liberation; one which helps people to be creative, to develop a critical mind, to help people to analyse; one that prepares people for full participation in all social, political and cultural spheres of society. Education based on values of consumerism or affluence, of military adventurism and aggression and on racism is certainly not our ideal type of education.*²⁵

²³ P Kallaway, G Kruss, A Fataar & G Donn, *Education after apartheid: South African education in transition* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1997), pp. 74, 80-81; G Kruss, in P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid...*, p. 88.

²⁴ Report on National Consultative Conference on Crisis in Education, organised by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee at University of the WWR, Johannesburg; Resolutions of the NCC, December 1985 (SPCC, 1985).

²⁵ Report on National Consultative Conference on Crisis in Education, organised by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee at University of the WWR, pp. 11/13. Fr. Mkatshwa held a number of prominent positions in government as well as in the ANC between 1994 and 2000. In 1994, he was elected to the

Significantly, this address represents one of the very few policy statements of the time which make any reference to the history of Black education in South Africa. In contrast to the previous reviews of “native education” policy in the Welsh report of 1936 and the Eiselen report of 1953,²⁶ which included comprehensive accounts of that history, none of the documents or policy proposals from the 1980s to 1990s from the NP, the UDF/NECC or the ANC makes any attempt to refer to that history. In this regard, they reflect the mode of ahistorical policy research and reporting that had come to dominate international agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and even UNESCO, from the 1970s.²⁷

By the mid-1990s, Greenstein recognised the shift away from key issues highlighted in the People’s Education movement—culture and multiculturalism, race relations, the promoting of critical thinking, adult education, literacy training, women’s education and early childhood development (ECD) – towards a new emphasis related to the relationship between education and economic growth, shadowing the agendas of the De Lange Report.²⁸

As Palmer pointed out in relation to the French Revolutionary era,

*... one key element of the Revolution was the drive towards democracy in the sense of equality, which was blocked and superseded by other concerns of the Enlightenment, notably the belief in progress and a desire for efficiency, for the training of qualified experts, and for the process of modernization. All these trends were present throughout and remained so in later times; they simply varied in strength at any given moment.*²⁹

The parallels to the South African situation seem obvious. The challenge of the new government was to balance these dual priorities.

National Assembly and in 1996 became the Deputy Minister of Education, a post he held until 1999.

²⁶ See footnote 8.

²⁷ See my review of Jeanne Moulton et al (eds) “*Educational reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: Paradigm lost?*” (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002) in *Africa Today* 52(4), 2006, pp. 141-144.

²⁸ R Greenstein, “Education, identity and curriculum policies in the New South Africa”, P. Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid...*, p. 128.

²⁹ RR Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity: Education and the French Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 331.

As Badat noted, what the Freedom Charter and the People's Education advanced

*...were essentially principles and objectives of educational provision along with some policies of an extremely general nature. ... (with) the emphasis on principles and objectives, without a concentration on the development of policies.... While perhaps appropriate during a period of protest and oppositional politics, this clearly became inadequate for any project of transformation.*³⁰

As indicated above, it is important to emphasise that a variety of initiatives to engage with change came from the apartheid government—from the De Lange committee report (1981) to the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) (1991-2)—and from civic organisations ranging from the churches (South African Council of Churches (SACC)) to big business.³¹

Both Badat and Kallaway (1997) pointed to the centrality of the period 1990-1994 for an understanding of the educational developments in the post-election period. Badat pointed to the tensions between the utopian rhetoric of the politics of popular education associated with People's Education during the 1980s and the reforms of the late apartheid government, the educational legacies of the GNU, and the hopes and aspirations of the ANC from the time it came to power. By the mid-1990s, it became clear that the earlier hopes and aspirations of People's Education would be severely constrained. The political climate was increasingly incompatible with the promise of radical educational transformation. In the end, systemically the old order was left intact—with superficial adjustments to curriculum and access—a far cry from the radical transformative vision of the People's Education movement or the visions of radical socialist reformers.

The shifting sands of engagement here are just as significant for the eventual outcomes as the battles between the Jacobins and the Girondins in the National Assembly. Here, the battle lines were drawn between those who supported a socialist/social democratic/welfarist approach to the state which took the form of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and those who favoured a market-orientated political and economic orientation of the Growth, Employment, and Redistributions (GEAR) strategy characterised by neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus.

³⁰ S Badat, "Educational politics in the transition period", in P Kallaway et al. (eds.) *Education after apartheid*, pp. 21-22.

³¹ The 1961 Education Panel, *Education for South Africa: The 1961 Education Panel first report; Education and the South African economy: Second report* (Johannesburg, Univ. of the Witwatersrand Press, 1961); SPRO-CAS Education Commission, *Education beyond apartheid* (Johannesburg: Christian Institute, 1971); P Kallaway, "Privatization as an aspect of educational politics of the New Right: Critical signposts for understanding shifts in educational policy during the 'eighties," *British Journal of Educational Studies* XXXVII (3), August 1989 pp. 268-275.

The expansive calls by the liberation movement not only for freedom in terms of social and political rights, but in terms of welfare and educational provision, that had first surfaced in the Freedom Charter, were taken up in this new context in the drawn-out negotiations process that began in Dakar and ended in the final negotiations at NASREC. Once an agreement had been reached between the NP and the ANC, once Mandela and other political prisoners were released and the negotiations for the end of apartheid were under way and the exiled had returned, there was a period of reflection and negotiation to prepare for the new form of government to be established after the election in 1994. However, educational policy was to form a minor aspect of those deliberations. The major books on the transition by John Saul, Hein Marais, Patrick Bond, and Martin Murray, hardly mention the issue.³² Suffice to say that those deliberations took place in the context of the policy frameworks mapped out within the context of the broad Washington Consensus that was a marker of these events. The policy discourse that emerged, and the policy platform that came to be shared by the NP and the ANC during the negotiations, laid the groundwork for public policy to be articulated, at first in the form of the RDP, and subsequently modified to accommodate the new GEAR frameworks, and captured so graphically in the title of Patrick Bond's account of these events in his book *Talk Left, Walk Right*.³³

Despite this neglect of educational policy at this time, as Linda Chisholm has pointed out, South Africa's first democratic election was a watershed in the country's educational history:

*In the first instance, it signalled a move away from the determination of policy by a white minority state for a black majority; in the second, official state education policy, historically geared towards building a united white nation, was now reoriented to redressing inequalities and 'nation-building' between white and black; and third, instead of being predicated upon exclusion and denial of rights, social, and educational policy became based on the principles of inclusion, social justice and equity.*³⁴

³² H Marais, *South African limits to change: The political economy of transformation* (London: Zed, 1998); P Bond, *Elite transition: From apartheid to neoliberalism in South Africa* (London: Pluto, 2000); MJ Murray, *Revolution deferred: The painful birth of post-apartheid South Africa* (London: Verso, 1994). For the broader context also see Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The past and the present* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002); J Saul, *The Crisis in South Africa* (London: Zed, 1986).

³³ P Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right* (Scottsville: UKZN Press, 2006), pp. 201-252.

³⁴ L Chisholm, & B Fuller, "Remember people's education? Shifting alliances, state-building and South Africa's narrowing policy agenda", *Journal of Education Policy*, 11(6), 1996, pp. 693-716.

State responsibility for basic “education for all”, which had been a fundamental element of UNESCO policy from the 1960s, and had underwritten earlier struggles against apartheid education, was, from the 1980s, to change in keeping with a new set of priorities for UNESCO and the World Bank framed by IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes. Instead of universal access and state-led universal education,

*across the world, in both developed and developing countries, the goals of educational policy were being redefined and restructured to accommodate new traditions which focussed on the need for educational development to support economic growth (human capital theory), decentralization, privatization, choice, community responsibility, flexibility, relevance, cost-recovery, unit standards and cost sharing.*³⁵

In addition, there was a strong drive towards vocational working-class education, in order, it was assumed, to promote economic growth. As Andre Kraak argued, “the ‘narrow and technicist’ learning methodology entailed in Unit Standards and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) had little in common with the earlier People’s Education discourses developed in the 1980s and the early 1990s”.³⁶ This development further fractured hopes for a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum for all. The new policies promoted a shift in financial responsibility from public to private sources. In South Africa, as both Chisholm and Fataar term it, “a narrowing of the educational policy agenda” took place.³⁷

Both in relation to the governance of schooling, and in terms of the curriculum content, it is possible to therefore discern parallels between the developments reported above in relation to the French Revolutionary period and the South African case.

³⁵ D Simon, *Structurally adjusted Africa: Poverty, debt and basic needs* (Boulder, Col.: Pluto, 1995); B Soobrayan, “Banking on education: A critical assessment of the World Bank’s involvement in education in the South”, *Perspectives in Education*, 16(1), 1995, pp. 5-31.

³⁶ Cited by L Chisholm & T Petersen, “Education policy and practice on the eve of the 1999 election”, in L Chisholm, S. Motala & S. Vally (eds) *South African Education Policy Review* (Heinemann, 2003), 541-542.

³⁷ P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid...*, p. 50; L Chisholm & B Fuller, “Remember people’s education...”, *Journal of Education Policy*, 11(6); P Kallaway, “Privatization...” (1989); A Fataar, *Education policy development in South Africa’s democratic transition, 1994-1997* (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2010).

Education in Exile

African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP)

After the Soweto uprising in protest against Bantu Education in June 1976, issues of educational change were relocated to the context of exile for the thousands of students who had crossed the border to join the liberation movement. However, the contest over the nature of the education to be provided by the liberation movement in exile remains largely unexamined by scholars.

The experience of education derived from the “education in exile” in the camps of Angola at Novo Catengue, and at Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) and Dakawa in Tanzania, was largely neglected by the ANC and the SACP on their return to power after 1994.³⁸ The history of the ANC Department of Education in exile remains to be written.³⁹ The initiative relating to Education with Production (EWP) pioneered by Patrick van Rensburg and Swedish Aid (SIDA) in Botswana and Zimbabwe, while often seen to provide a blueprint for new policy perspectives, was ignored by South African policymakers after 1994.⁴⁰

³⁸ See M Sparg, J Schreiner & G Ansell (eds.), *Comrade Jack: The political lecture and diaries of Jack Simons* (Johannesburg: ANC, 2001), p. 116; S Morrow, B Maaba & L Pulumani, *Education in exile: SOMAFCO, The African National Congress school in Tanzania 1978 to 1992* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2004); R Govender, “The contestation, ambiguities and dilemmas of curriculum development at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, 1978-1992” (PhD dissertation, University of the Western Cape, 2011). It is notable that Friedman omits referencing these works when considering the educational career of Harold Wolpe who was to play a key role in education policymaking after 1994. (S Friedman, *Race, class and power: Harold Wolpe and the radical critique of apartheid* (Scottsville: UKZN Press, 2015). Surprisingly Njobe, the headmaster of SOMAFCO from 1978-1981, does not refer to these issues (MW Njobe, *Education for liberation* (Braamfontein: Skotaville, 1990).

³⁹ Extensive archival papers relevant to these issues are to be found in the Jack and Ray Simons Collection at the University of Cape Town, but these have not yet been explored in detail in relation to educational issues. See D Simons, *Structurally adjusted Africa...*, p. 18 and sections 5.8 13.3, 5, 13.1. and elsewhere. Although Harold Wolpe was the chair of the ANC’s London Education Committee (LEC), Sam Govender notes that “curiously enough the Wolpe Papers have no material on SOMAFCO or on the LEC”. See R Govender, “The contestation, ambiguities...”, p. 302. Seretse Choabe, who had studied at Fort Hare and Oxford, and been head of the Luthuli Foundation, and subsequently the ANC Department of Education in Lusaka, defined the general goals for the educational programmes of the ANC in a paper dated 19/9/1981 on “The Role of Education in the Liberation Struggle”. H Macmillan, *The Lusaka years: The ANC in exile in Zambia 1963-1994* (Jacana, 2013), pays no attention to educational issues.

⁴⁰ M Prew, “Peoples education...”, TG Griffiths & Z Miller, *Logics of socialist education...*; P van Rensburg, *Report from Swaneng Hill: Education and employment in and African Country* (Uppsala, Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation, 1974); K Shillington, *Patrick van Rensburg: Rebel, visionary and radical educationalist* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2020).

Govender provides an outline to these policy issues raised in the context of the SOMAFCO/Dakawa educational experience—based on the limited archival material available relating to the London Education Committee (LEC), the Dar es Salaam Education Committee (DESEC), the Lusaka Education Committee (LEC), and the debates conducted in *The African Communist* between 1969 and 1992.⁴¹

Reflecting wider debates of the time on the nature of education in independent African states referred to above, these initiatives centred around the conflict between various interpretations of academic education, political education, vocational education or skill training (or polytechnic education in terms of SACP), or specialised skill training related to the needs of the armed struggle. In broad terms it would seem that the ANC leadership in general, and in particular, Oliver Tambo and Winshi Njobe, the founder principal of SOMAFCO, favoured academic education, as it reflected their shared background in missionary education in the era prior to apartheid education. There was also a strong case for this form of education for the students of SOMAFCO if they were to be prepared for opportunities for further studies at international higher education institutions. Such preparation was seen by many as essential to the future need for ‘high level manpower’ (the term current at the time) to train future leadership for the return to South Africa when the ANC would face the challenge of replacing the existing (white) professional elite.

Within this broad framework there was also much debate, as there had been in the Revolutionary period in France, about the need for the political education of these students. Were they to follow a curriculum that reflected the norms of western education as exemplified by the London University O Level examination that was still widely used in post-colonial Africa,⁴² or was that education to follow the Freirean model of constructivist education, or polytechnic education on a socialist model? As Govender points out, “in promoting the case for political education there seemed to be a Utopian belief in ‘political education’ as if it existed in a knowledge vacuum. That was the same issue that had been levelled at Freireans over the years”.⁴³ In the long run, these issues remained unresolved during the years of exile.

⁴¹ Eric Stilton, “The function of education in the struggle for liberation”, *African Communist*, 92, 1983, pp. 54-63; Kwanele, “We will formulate our own education policies”, (reply to Stilton) *African Communist*, 93, 1983, pp. 104-106; Boy Moremi, “The role of education in the struggle for national liberation”, *African Communist*, 96, 1984, pp. 108-110.

⁴² Also see the view of A Gramsci on the topic – R Govender, “The contestation, ambiguities...”, p. 109 citing AS Sasoon, *Gramsci's politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

⁴³ R Govender, “The contestation, ambiguities...”, pp. 197-205.

At the University of Essex, Harold Wolpe, a major figure in the revival of Marxist studies on South Africa from the 1970s,⁴⁴ established a unit for Research on Education in South Africa (RESA) which attempted to frame a debate about the future of education in a "new" South Africa and to provide a platform for "providing a political education for exiles".⁴⁵ Wolpe was also a member of ANC's LEC which played a key role in shaping the policies of ANC educational institutions at SOMAFCO and Dakawa in Tanzania.⁴⁶ In due course Wolpe returned to South Africa to head the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and chaired the committee which coordinated the work of all the Education Policy Units (EPUs) established to research the field of educational policy. He participated in the work of the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) and ANC's Implementation Plan for Education and Training (IPET) (1994). Yet what remains unexplained is why, despite his influential position in the SACP, he was never offered any formal official role in the reconstruction of education in the new South Africa.⁴⁷

Even the impressive policy review of NEPI, sponsored by the NECC and funded by Swedish SIDA, which drew a large number of participants to policy conferences during the transition, had little long-term impact on the framing of policy by the new government.⁴⁸ As Badat noted, these exercises were too utopian in character, echoing Margaret Archer's remarks cited above, (Part 1 pp. 3-8) as they demonstrated "limited sensitivity to the difficult choices and trade-offs implied by any restructuring of education which was to simultaneously address questions of equality/redress/ development and economic growth".⁴⁹

⁴⁴ For more detail of the career of Wolpe see S Friedman, *Race, class and power...* His most important paper was H Wolpe, "Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa", *Economy & Society*, 1(4), 1972, pp. 425-456. Despite his longstanding membership of the South African Communist Party and his prominent role in the revival of Marxist studies on Southern Africa, Wolpe is curiously hardly mentioned in the broader literature of the ANC and the SACP by Meli, Johnson, Maloka, Shubin, Ellis, Sapire, and Saunders.

⁴⁵ Also see J Muller cited in S Friedman, *Race, class and power...*, p. 63. See also E Unterhalter, H Wolpe & T Botha, *Apartheid education and popular struggles* (papers of RESA conference of 1989 sponsored by the Swedish Agency for Research in cooperation with Developing Countries) (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1991); E Unterhalter, H Wolpe & T Botha, *Education in a future South Africa: Policy issues for transformation* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1991).

⁴⁶ R Govender, "Contestation, ambiguities..."

⁴⁷ For debate on this issue see S Friedman, *Race, class and power...*, pp. 60-67.

⁴⁸ The National Education Policy Investigation, *The framework report* (Cape Town: OUP & NECC, 1993). See also P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid...* It is a sad reflection on the process that there is only very limited reference to these proceedings in the indexes to the major works on the field by Linda Chisholm and Pam Christie. See L Chisholm (ed.), *Changing class: Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004); P Christie, *Opening the doors of learning: Changing schools in South Africa* (Sandton: Heinemann, 2008).

⁴⁹ S Badat, "Educational politics...", P Kallaway et al., *Education after apartheid...*, p. 24.

During the negotiations that led to the political transition, the ANC was late in coming to the table on educational policy. It produced a preliminary *Discussion Paper for the ANC on Education Policy* (March 1991) to be followed by the famous Yellow Book, the ANC Education Department's, *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (APET) (1994). The Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) played a significant role in educational policy development by making strategic interventions into the policy and legislative process.⁵⁰ The CEPD worked closely with the political structures of the ANC to build consensus within the ANC educational alliance regarding policy objectives. It built channels of communication with the Ministry and Department of Education to ensure coherence in education policy development.⁵¹ These forums were also used to eliminate critical voices during these crucial debates.

The work of the CEPD

The CEPD, based in Johannesburg, was established in 1993 on the initiative of the mass democratic movement, its aim being to develop education policy for a democratic South Africa. It was promoted by the Parent/Teacher Associations, the NECC, the UDF, and the ANC. The Centre assisted in developing the framework on which many of the new South Africa's education and training policies were to be based and played an influential role in the development of the new South African education system.

In addition, it is important to recognise, as pointed out above, that the apartheid government, like the pre-revolutionary government in France, had made considerable effort to change the terms of educational policy in keeping with reforms in the economic and social system after the chaotic revolutionary events of Soweto 1976. Throughout the 1980s, in the wake of the pathbreaking HSRC report, chaired by the head of the Broederbond, Professor De Lange, there were a variety of attempts to accommodate critiques of apartheid education and propose alternative policies which would bring them in line with global policy trends—with particular attention to the cost-recovery model for public schooling and the vocational bias for mass education referred to above.

⁵⁰ Trevor Coombe, who had been on the staff of the University of Zambia and the Institute of Education, London University, was to play a major, but largely hidden role in crafting the new policy regime. His background during the 1980s in educational policy development in Africa, linked to the ODA and UNESCO, meant that he was well suited to the new roles he assumed in South Africa after 1996. Coombe was associated with the ANC Education Department in exile and became director of the CEPD in 1986. From 1993 he was Chief Director of the National Department of Education and oversaw much of the hard work of establishing new structures and processes, and crafting the finances of education. Coombe has not left a record of his work.

⁵¹ B Nzimande & S Mathieson, *Transforming South African education: The role of the ANC education study group, 1994 to 1999*, (CEPD, Braamfontein, 2004), pp. 1-2.

It is, therefore, important to recognise that, as a result of these reforms, the NP was able to retain considerable control of the terms of policy debate relating to educational reform at the time of the transition. The educational planners of the incumbent government could link their objectives to those of the World Bank and the IMF in a much more coherent manner than the amateur educational planners of NEPI, the NECC, and the ANC. The broadly progressive and socialist vision for education associated with the socialist left of the 1960s, and even the World Bank's visions confronting the “World Crisis in Education” and visions of mass rural education in Africa during the 1970s,⁵² were not entertained. The ANC simply did not have a plan, and the dynamics of international policy development left the major initiative for educational planning substantially in the hands of the incumbent government!

The narrowing of the educational policy agenda

That rendering down of the agenda took place primarily on two fronts, both related to the relationship between education and the marketplace. In broad terms these can be characterised under the headings of *Privatisation* and *Vocationalisation*.

In relation to *privatisation*, there was a shift in responsibility for the provision of education (funding to education) from the public to the private realm from the state to the community/parents and students, and the privatisation or semi-privatisation of state assets, with an increased reliance on the market in the provision of education and the promotion of a private school's sector. Under newly constituted School Governing Bodies (SGBs), the former white schools were placed under parental committees which were responsible for the management, maintenance, admissions, and financing of the schools. In this way the former white state schools were transformed into the new non-racial Model C Schools with strict selection criteria and high fees.

It is also important to note that, in the wake of the major civil unrest and political changes being discussed here, in both France (as indicated above) and South Africa, private education flourished. Only those with the financial resources managed to secure quality education for their children in these times of disorder. This occurred either via access to private educational institutions for those who could afford the high fees, or for the

⁵² PH Coombs, *The world education crisis: A systems analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); E Faure, F Herrera, A Kaddoura, H Lopes, A Petrovsky, M Rahnema & F War, *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972); P Coombs & M Ahmed, *Attacking rural poverty: How nonformal education can help* (Washington: World Bank, 1974); World Bank, *Education sector policy paper* (Washington, 1980); P Coombs, *The world crisis in education: The view from the eighties* (UNESCO, 1985).

limited numbers of, usually middle-class black children, who now managed to gain access to formerly whites-only state schools. This implies a major drift towards the advantages bestowed to middle-class children in these circumstances—a pull in the opposite direction to the equalitarian popular rhetoric of People's Education.⁵³

The other key aspect of the reform agenda from the 1980s was the *vocationalisation* of basic education. The rhetorical claims of a constructivist view of knowledge, and the Freirian emphasis on the expression of the grievances of the dispossessed, which were featured prominently in the oppositional discourse of the People's Education movement and the powerful FOSATU/COSATU trade union movement, came to be translated into skill development programmes and a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These placed an emphasis on training programmes that were modelled on New Right programmes originating in the United Kingdom and Australia.⁵⁴ The training programmes were to be regulated by a South African Qualifications Framework (SAQA) and to be financed through Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs), which provided a levy on the private sector to promote skills development, explicitly aimed at promoting global economic competitiveness. These reforms, which were directed at the training of the workforce, were then translated into the language of school curriculum reform through Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005, or subsequently, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (2002).⁵⁵

The change of emphasis from the calls for mass popular education on the model of the previous apartheid era curriculum was translated into a shift towards a vocational education approach in keeping with international trends at the time. Or, to express differently, to align education and training policy to bring it in line with the perceived goals of the new Growth plans as set out in the pro-market GEAR programme of the ANC government during the Mbeki era.

⁵³ N Spaull, "Equity: A price too high to pay", N Spaull & J Jansen (eds.), *South African schooling: The enigma of inequality: A study of the present situation and future possibilities* (Springer, 2019); S van der Berg, "Apartheid's enduring legacy; Inequality in education", *Journal of African Economics*, 16(5), 2007, 849-880; EB Fiske & HF Ladd, *Elusive equity: Education reform in post-apartheid South Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2005); M Hunter, *Race for education: Gender, white tone and schooling in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁵⁴ S McGrath, "Reading the NQF: Towards an analytic framework", P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid ...*, pp. 169-182; S Allais, *Selling out education: National qualifications frameworks and the neglect of knowledge* (Rotterdam: Sense, 2014); H Lauder & D Hughes, *Trading in futures: Why markets in education don't work* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999).

⁵⁵ See P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid ...*; L Chisholm (ed.) *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004).

Fataar summarises these developments with respect to educational policy. He argues that 'a pragmatic equity-based development discourse' occupied centre stage in ANC circles prior to the 1994 election. These proposals had been based on a somewhat insubstantial tradition of educational reform that reached back to the Freedom Charter. An increasing ambivalence subsequently crept into the policy positions of the GNU after the election. At this time, government policy manifested an uneasy balance between a focus on equality or growth.

The narrowing of the policy agenda was achieved through GEAR's preference for growth as the conceptual pivot of state policy. The educational policy development trajectory has to be evaluated in relation to this constricting framework. While the transition enabled South Africa to move toward political democracy it also entrenched a political and ideological framework which limited the extent to which educational transformations could be achieved. ... policy – making was affected by the constricting parameters of the global economic environment, which South Africa, like all other LDCs, had to face.⁵⁶

These choices, in line with World Bank guidelines, were to be made within the restricted political and economic framework often referred to as *voluntary structural adjustment*.⁵⁷

The adoption of GEAR in 1996 represented a victory for the growth-led macro-economic policy and the sidelining of equality as the focus of reconstruction. In real terms the RDP was replaced by the business-friendly GEAR policies very soon after the transition, a development which ensured that a broadly neo-liberal agenda replaced the social/democratic/welfarist tone of the RDP.⁵⁸ This, in Fataar's terms, is what occasioned the narrowing of the policy agenda in education. These moves related to issues of 'flexibility and integration', fiscal discipline, public sector restructuring, pointed to above. The key issues highlighted above were cost-efficiency/cost-effectiveness/cost recovery and cost-sharing, privatisation, and decentralisation and they promote a radically different vision of society to that which informed the liberation struggle.

The old terms of social justice inherited from the French Revolutionary tradition (liberty, equality, and fraternity) had been redefined within the terms of the conservative restoration of the 1990s to "the guaranteeing of individual choice under the conditions of the free market".⁵⁹ Despite much fanfare about the end of apartheid education, education reforms moved very slowly under the new Minister of Education, Bengu, despite significant exercises to promote policy debate within circumscribed boundaries.

⁵⁶ A Fataar, *Education policy* ..., p. 110.

⁵⁷ J Moulton, *Educational reform in Sub-Saharan Africa*

⁵⁸ A Fataar, *Education policy* ..., Ch. 6.

⁵⁹ A Fataar, *Education policy* ..., p. 58 citing M. W. Apple, "How equality has been redefined in the Conservative restoration", WG Secada (ed.), *Equity in education* (London: Falmer, 1989), p. 9.

The National Development Plan (NDP) (2012), which was an attempt to keep the dream of the RDP alive and retain “development” as a key aspect of economic growth, was recently judged to have “been marginalized”, as it had not been provided with the policy muscle to deliver on its mandate.⁶⁰ The NDP set out optimistic social and economic goals to be achieved by 2030. Yet by 2023, the Public Economy Project (PEP) at the University of the Witwatersrand reported that “a chronic deterioration in the capacity of the state, the quality of the social services, and the outcomes they are intended to achieve” meant that “in the decade after 2012 there were significant reductions in real spending on basic education and criminal justice, while healthcare budgets have been increasingly under pressure”⁶¹ The Gini coefficient measure of poverty demonstrated that South Africa had remained at 0.69% between 2012 and 2022, meaning that it remained one of the most unequal societies on earth.

ANC policy on education

The constraints of the GNU were only too soon to become obvious to observers. As a government that had come to power through the ballot box, as part of a coalition between the old (National Party) and the new (Alliance) there was not a great deal of space for manoeuvre on major political principles....there was a broad assumption that New Right agendas would be taken for granted and the nature of international power relations at the end of the twentieth century ensured that the choices of the GNU, and even its successor Alliance government, were extremely limitedthe rule of law, the entrenchment of property rights, and the commitment to a free market order (with all that it entailed in terms of fiscal stringency, a limited state, the immanent privatization of key areas of the public sector constraint, (including education), ensured that there would be no radical changes that would disrupt the entrenched class structure of South African society.⁶²

Just as Thermidor had opened the way for a measure of social reform in revolutionary France, the early 1990s also opened the way for such reforms in South Africa, however, just as the Napoleonic era had arrested radical social reform in the interests of modernisation,

⁶⁰ City Press, *Business* (17 September 2023), p. 1.

⁶¹ S Smit, “Austerity, the NDP’s grim reaper”, *Mail & Guardian*, 29 September 2023; Imraan Valodia – on line; In 2019 the World Economic Forum on Global Competitiveness Report noted that South Africa ranked 137 out of 141 countries in the quality of its primary education. Despite spending 6% of GDP on education, it was noted that significant features of the system were inadequate infrastructure, low teacher morale and lack of access to quality resources (*Daily Maverick*, 1/10/23).

⁶² P Kallaway et al. (eds.), *Education after apartheid...*, p. 38.

economic efficiency and bureaucratic centralisation, so there were severe constraints on radical reform in the South African context. The Utopian vision of a new education which would construct a new, equal, and just society was superseded by the kinds of trade-off’s that Archer refers to above.

Apartheid education had demonstrated the potentially negative effects of a modern education system, and the response to that in the post-Soweto era was often associated with Freirean pedagogy of liberation and the fashionable constructivist views of knowledge, with the vision of a potential new chapter in educational history. Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, supplemented these trends with his support for the notion of an *African Renaissance*, which represented a weak link between modernisation and identity politics.⁶³

The Freirean emphasis on pedagogy as a mechanism for the expression of the grievances of the dispossessed featured prominently in the oppositional discourse of the People’s Education movement and the educational projects of the powerful FOSATU/COSATU trade union movement. Yet, as Chisholm pointed out in her review of policy in 2002, the problematic nature of the commitment to a “people-driven education and policy development” that was a key feature of the IPET process and the RDP programmes, would inevitably lead to potential conflict between constituencies in the future.⁶⁴

There was no Condorcet to provide guidance in the field of education. The nearest equivalent was Rick Turner who had studied at the Sorbonne, and his work, reflecting the ethos of the ‘Sixties’, highlights the need for critical learning and independent critical education. This view often put Turner at odds with the workerist world of industrial workers’ organisations in Durban. Turner was assassinated by the apartheid police.⁶⁵

A significant commentary on the above developments is that none of the key actors were experienced educators or planners in the field of education. However, nowhere in the documents is there any sign of attention to the need to engage with broader issues of educational philosophy or policy practice. It was only with the emergence of RESA, under

⁶³ As Tom Lodge commented at the time, the idea of an African Renaissance “all too easily could become debased into a series of self-congratulatory maxims in which the recollections of African identity of ancient civilizations...become the foundation myths of a new imagined community in which racial sentiment rather than political principle is the animating idea”, Tom Lodge, *South African Politics since 1994* (Cape Town: David Philips, 1999), pp. 108-109.

⁶⁴ L Chisholm, (2002), p. 85.

⁶⁵ R Turner, *The eye of the needle: Towards participatory democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1973); B Keniston, *Choosing to be free: A life story of Rick Turner* (Jacana Media, 2013); P Ensor, D Glaser, C Hobden, B Keniston, A Omar, JS Sanni ... & C Soudien, *Rick Turner’s politics as the art of the impossible* (Johannesburg: Wits Press, 2024).

the guiding hand of Harold Wolpe, that some attention came to be given to these issues. The general lack of expertise among educational planners was to come at a high cost in the future.

Conclusion

In the absence of a policy framework in education, inherited from the years in exile, the ANC was unable to provide a significant counterpoint to the educational reforms already under way in South Africa by 1990. The point of reference for both the ANC and the NP initiatives during the period of transition was often the expertise of international agencies, such as the World Bank, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), and the IMF. The critical perspectives which were consolidated in the important NEPI exercise (1991-1993) were largely ignored in the policy development exercise of the new generation of planners that was assembled by Trevor Coombe and John Samuel at the CEPD from 1993. On the other hand, the worker education, adult education, and the training discourses of the labour movement context, remained an abiding influence on the new educational proposals. Their powerful influence due to the support of COSATU can be recognised in the White Paper on Education and Training (WPET) (1995), the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) (1995) and the NQF proposals which came to have a dominating influence on policy.

The conclusions of Fataar and Govender seem convincing with relation to the development of educational policy in the 1990s. The NEPI exercise was bypassed as being far too abstract for the concrete policy realities that had to be faced in the final negotiations in 1994. "The ANC favoured a traditional curriculum approach that, while consistent with an academic approach it had favoured historically and while in exile, resonated with the reformist politics that came to be dominated by the expertise of the free market ideologues, business interests, the National Party and World Bank expertise."⁶⁶ They argue that RESA and the NEPI recommendations advanced an amalgam of progressive interests (which) were simply too nebulous to inform the concrete requirements of the new democratic government. The ANC now had to contend with demands for specific policy proposals instead of the policy option scenarios presented by RESA or NEPI.

Roger Southall notes: "'The Revolution Betrayed' is almost as old as the idea of social revolution itself for human history offers a litany of examples of frustrated revolutionary

⁶⁶ R Govender & A Fataar, p. 7.

hopes.”⁶⁷ The South African reformers inherited the ideals and ideology/philosophy of previous experience, as did other revolutions and reformers during transitions, however, they did little to explicitly explore the traditions upon which they were building outside of vague references to Freire’s ‘pedagogy of hope’.

My tentative task has been to attempt to compare the radical atmosphere of change and expectation related to the reform of education that surfaced in France two centuries ago—with similar challenges which faced South Africa at the end of apartheid—where there was also a strong expectation that educational change would create a new society in which the social evils of the *ancient regime*/the apartheid regime would be vanquished and social justice would be secured for all.

Both in France and in South Africa, the utopian promise relating to social justice, reflected in the educational discourses of the revolutionary phase, was severely compromised after the old regime had been overturned. The ideals for education as a major lever of social change fell far short of expectations. The difficulty of reconciling individual freedom of thought and actions, as conceived of by Condorcet in terms of the Enlightenment ideas of human perfectibility, or the vision of political freedom associated with Rick Turner, presented significant challenges to educational reformers, then and now.

Barnard’s comments on educational policy during the French Revolution could apply to, the present time:

*The difficulty of reconciling individual freedom of thought and actions with nationalist requirements prescribed by the State is one which remains and which sometimes confronts even modern democracies.... A policy of education based exclusively on the idea of patriotism and utility (“or the ‘needs’ of the market pk”) was bound to destroy the very premise of liberal education – freedom to think without concern for immediate practical results.*⁶⁸

⁶⁷ R Southall, *Liberation movements in power: Party and state in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press, 2013), p. 10.

⁶⁸ HC Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1969): pp. 212-217.