

THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORTS SINCE 1976
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Notes on terminology and abbreviations

When the category 'blacks' is used in this study, it refers to Africans, coloureds and Indians. In quotations from other authors, however, it is sometimes meant to refer only to Africans; in these cases, I have also specified my own usage to ensure clarity.

With regard to the use of inverted comma's, I have distinguished direct quotations from coined phrases by using double inverted comma's (" ") on the former and single inverted comma's on the latter (' '). References to a source are thus expected from any text embodied in double inverted comma's.

To conserve space and time, the references to Debates in the House of Assembly are abbreviated in the text to simply *HAD*, and the following abbreviations are used in the source references of tables:

DBE = Department of Bantu Education Annual Reports.

DET = Department of Education and Training Annual Reports.

DM = Department of Manpower Annual Reports.

NMC = National Manpower Commission Annual Reports.

Manpower Surveys = Department of Manpower Manpower Surveys (biennial)

n.a. = statistics not available.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

The central concern of this thesis is to research and analyse the provision of industrial training for Africans in South Africa, and to interpret the relationship which training has with the growth of an African middle class.

At the same time, the evidence has certain important implications for our understanding of the relationship between the state and capital in the process of social reproduction in South Africa. Industrial training is an important part of the reproduction of the labour force. In the past, the state has restricted capital from training or employing Africans in certain levels of skilled manual work, notably as artisans, in urban 'white areas'. This fact has been protested by capital, which has tended to argue that skill shortages and low productivity have resulted from these limitations. The 1970's saw the beginning of significant policy shifts by the state, leading firstly to the encouragement of training of Africans for semi-skilled positions and later the legalisation and promotion of artisan training for Africans outside of bantustans.

It has been suggested by liberal authors that these trends reflect the pressure toward desegregation which a growing capitalist economy exerts on discriminatory political policy. The tendency here is often to assume an antagonism of interests between capital and the state, with the latter's racial policies constituting a serious fetter on economic growth. Among marxist authors, it has been argued that the desegregating process has occurred as part of a strategy to privilege urban Africans while maintaining the main institutions of discrimination against most

workers. The tendency is often to assume an identity of interests between capital and the state, with the latter acting to preserve the stability and profitability of capitalist production. In both cases, the result which is predicted is that a growing proportion of Africans would experience mobility into middle class positions. Further, their status as middle class is considered to have a 'stabilising' or 'co-opting' influence (depending on which angle one takes), undermining their willingness to challenge the prevailing political and economic structures.

This study wishes to assert neither of the above arguments. Rather, it asserts that training (like all forms of social reproduction) is rooted in and defined by the prevailing balance of forces in the class struggle. As such, the state is not bound, *a priori*, to serve or contradict the needs of capital. Its role is defined by particular conditions of class struggle, when contending classes are able to enter and/or influence the state in its function of law-making. Shifts in state policy on industrial training in the 1980's need to be seen as resulting from pressure not only from capital, but from the growing strength of the black working class (especially in the 1970's) and the weakening of the white working class (especially the craft-based trade unions). The imperatives to which state policy responded were thus not simply those of capital accumulation.

Over the past half-century at least, the evolving division of labour within the work-place has been significantly affected by capital's strategies to implement changes to suit a constantly mechanising environment. Given the high degree of success of capital's struggles against skilled workers, the traditional shop-floor division of labour between artisans and unskilled workers has given way to one which relies more on an intermediate semi-skilled stratum equipped to operate production machinery. This means that artisans' jobs were fragmented on a large scale and increasingly performed by lower-paid, unorganised and

less-trained African workers. This deskilling and fragmentation process is common to most developing capitalist economies, but was facilitated in the South African case by the (real or perceived) shortage of artisan skills, especially since 1960. Faced with little prospect of producing required numbers of artisans from amongst the non-African population, and split over the question of admitting African members, weakening craft unions were less able to resist fragmentation agreements put forward by employers. For this reason, the role of semi-skilled workers has become more central to production, and capital's efforts in training African workers has aimed increasingly at this stratum.

So, while capital has successfully struggled for the large-scale deskilling in the work-place, it was not until the late 1970's that their influence in and on the state has led to changes allowing Africans to be trained and employed as skilled artisans in 'white areas'. Chapters 4 and 5, in detailing the above processes, show the unpredictable nature of the relationship between state and capital. In other words, the role of the state in reproducing capitalist relations of production is a contingency not to be assumed but to be explained in terms of prevailing class struggles. This relationship is shown to be even more uncertain when, in the 1980's (see Chapter 7), capital's response to the state's training reforms is remarkably cool. While there are a number of initial increases in African artisan numbers, there is no sustained effort to bolster significantly the ranks of artisans with the huge pool of African workers available. Indeed, it may be argued that the state's response to capital's need for skilled artisans came so late that capital's other profit-sustaining strategy - fragmentation - had severely depressed the need for that level of skill. It may also be argued that, in the light of capital's response, the skill shortages that were so loudly voiced may (as some have warned)¹ have been exaggerated.

¹ See discussion on skill shortage in Chapter 5).

In any event, this situation has had important consequences for training reforms' impact on the African middle class. These are:

1. that capital's success in deskilling (and the failure of the white trade unions to effectively resist this) has undermined the basis on which an African middle class or even 'labour aristocracy' (of artisans and other skilled workers) might have arisen;

2. that capital's struggle to elicit from the state more favourable terms on which to utilise African workers only bore fruit late (perhaps too late) in the day;

3. that capital's willingness to utilise recent state reforms to bolster a more ideologically acquiescent African middle class seems therefore less enthusiastic than certain commentators on liberal and marxist ground have anticipated.

This chapter will now detail the various relevant concerns discussed in this thesis.

1.2. The phenomenon to be investigated

Since the late 1960's, the concern among employers and certain government departments about the level of industrial productivity has grown.² Important among the causal factors singled out have been the

² The Minister of Finance told Parliament in his 1967 Budget Speech that: "The promotion of productivity is one of the most important weapons in the battle against inflation..." (*Budget Speeches, 1967-8*: p.7). In 1972, the Prime Minister addressed the Afrikaanse Sakekamer, with the concern that: "Up to 1967 the non-White labour force has risen to 70% of the total work force...notwithstanding the fact that there has been no corresponding increase in productivity" (cited in *HAD* Vol.39, 5 May 1972: columns 6601-2). The FCI's noted that unless restrictions on African employment were relaxed, "an inevitable economic consequence will be escalating non-Bantu wages

decreasing availability of white skilled labour, and the resultant inflated wage bill for this group of (usually unionised) workers.³ Employers were also critical of government- and trade union-enforced measures inhibiting the employment of cheaper African workers in what they called 'more productive' jobs (ie. that usually skilled level of work reserved for white union members). Apart from generally slowing economic expansion, it was charged, these factors were also partly to blame for South Africa's growing balance of payments deficit through their upward pressure on the price of the country's exports.⁴

The Durban strikes in 1973 heightened these concerns, for now African workers too were demanding higher wages (not to mention effective bargaining structures to pursue further such demands in the future). Pressure from employers on white trade unions to increase production had focused on the fragmentation of skilled work into the semi-skilled tasks in which Africans could be 'better utilised'; wage victories won by the collective action of African workers strengthened employers' case for the necessity of upgrading these workers into positions which would merit the payment of higher wages.

with an overall decline in labour productivity" (*Programme for Sustained Industrial Expansion in SA*: pt.15).

³ The leader of the opposition said in 1970 that: "The efficient use and training of labour must be priority number one and is absolutely basic to the lowering of the cost structure in SA" (*HAD* Vol.29, 19 August 1970: column 2059). The 1972 Reynders Commission into the Export Trade reported witnesses evidence that "shortages of skilled and higher semi-skilled labour...gave [white skilled workers] an 'undue leverage' in wage negotiations..." (R.P. 69/1972: p.392).

⁴ The president of the FCI in 1973 stressed that higher productivity from production plants must be forthcoming: "Industrial growth must in the future occur as a result of this...; only then will we be able to continue to export..." (*FCI Viewpoint*, April 1973: p.14). The leader of the opposition blamed government restrictions on training and employing African workers for the fact that "we are not as efficient as we should be and that our exports are not competitive on world markets" (*HAD* Vol.1, 31 January 1972: columns 29-30).

The success of employers' efforts to reduce their dependence on relatively expensive white labour was evidenced in a number of developments, of which three are most relevant to this thesis:

- a) the continued fragmentation of skilled and artisan jobs into semi-skilled operative tasks;
- b) the relaxation of statutory job reservation; and
- c) the increased provision of industrial training to African workers in order to equip them to perform the jobs opened to them by the above two processes.

The latter development - African industrial training - was by the early 1970's a term on the lips of state and private sector agents dealing with productivity.⁵ To many, worker training was the single most important ingredient necessary to revitalise the country's economy. And more than just an economic panacea, training also held out a contribution to many moral, ideological and political uncertainties: it provided the mechanism for the personal self-improvement so long denied to African workers, through which (on the basis of their more substantial material rewards) they might develop a lasting faith in the universal accessibility of the free market system, and through which they might be less tempted into collective action aimed at the overthrow of the political regime or even the economic order. The Anglo-American Chairman's Fund, previously concerned with promoting white private schools, established a second branch in 1973 to support African education and training. This support, as the following commentary has pointed out, was directed not simply at a technical insufficiency of skills, but at the prospect of social upheaval arising from a widespread social discontent:

⁵ In 1970 the United Party called for "a crash programme to equip the the workforce drawn from [the whole population of] 20-million people.." (*HAD* Vol.29, 19 August 1970: column 2058). Said the Minister of Finance in 1973: "the raising of productivity is at present of cardinal importance in relation to our aim of faster growth.... Training and educational facilities...are of the utmost importance" (*Budget Speeches 1973-4*: p.5).

"The Fund's analysis of black deprivation was primarily concerned with its effect on stability. 'Shortcomings in education available to the black community strain South Africa's social fabric more than any other factor.' They retard economic growth and provide 'fertile ground for social and political unrest'... The task, therefore, was to improve the supply of trained and educated black people to meet the demand for a skilled and settled labour force".⁶

A National Party MP, lauding the establishment of the first of the Group Training Centres (see Chapter 3), told Parliament in 1974 that meeting the economy's demand for skills was "not the sole significance...of this training programme". There was also considerable value insofar as it would contribute to a "realistic adjustment of the salary of the Black man", and begin to address the question of "justice and human dignity". He explained:

"Training will imply that as the more highly-skilled worker progresses in a sound and orderly way towards higher categories of labour, his income and standard of living will improve accordingly.... [The training he receives, then] does not only result in higher standards of living, but is also the cause of a Black middle- and higher-class being developed. This is of great importance for stability and for peace and quiet in this country.... A Black middle- and higher-class is...one of the strongest bulwarks against communism..."⁷

Much of the impetus fostering these concerns within the private sector came from the Soweto school uprisings in 1976, less than two months after which the Transvaal Chamber of Commerce wrote the following in a memorandum to the Prime Minister:

"The thought most basic to our submission is the need to ensure a stable, contented urbanised Black community in our metropolitan and industrialised areas.... The emergence of a 'middle class' with Western-type materialistic needs and ambitions has already occurred in these areas. The mature family-oriented urban Black already places the stability of his household uppermost, and is more interested in his pay-pocket than in politics. Our prime point of departure should be that this 'middle class' is not weakened by frustration and indignity".⁸

⁶ Pallister, D., S. Stewart and I. Lepper. 1987. *South Africa Inc.: The Oppenheimer Empire*: pp.72-73.

⁷ SA, Republic. *HAD* Vol.51, 20 September 1974: columns 3397-3398.

⁸ Cited in J. Kane-Berman, 1980, "The search for the Black middle class", (no page numbers).

Using phrases spoken by prominent businessman Anton Rupert and the Urban Foundation's director, Justice Steyn, Davies therefore asserts that there is

"widespread agreement within the bourgeoisie that one crucial priority in the struggle for the 'maintenance of the free enterprise system' and 'the survival of everything [they] hold dear' must be some form of restructuring which would allow the emergence of a significant 'black middle class' committed to 'free enterprise values'. In this context, removing some of the more obvious at least of the various forms of discrimination and oppression affecting the black petty bourgeoisie (including job reservation and overtly racist barriers to 'upward social mobility') has become a major political imperative for the bourgeoisie".⁹

And the state's response, particularly through its acceptance of most of the recommendations of the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions, was widely perceived to have had these imperatives in mind. As one liberal commentator has written: "Central to both documents [Wiehahn and Riekert reports], is the desire to build up and stabilise a Black middle class and labour aristocracy in the main urban areas".¹⁰

1.3. The aim of the thesis

Given this widespread belief that a stronger middle class of Africans would serve the long-term stability of the *status quo*, this study attempts to assess the truth of the view (which also enjoys wide currency) according to which the new training initiatives referred to above have the primary effect of significantly augmenting this African middle class. Thus Chisholm and Christie, for example, suggest that:

"We could correlate the emergence of an industrial division of labour into technical/supervisory labour and semi-skilled operatives (replacing the unskilled/skilled division of labour) with the rise of technical education. We could relate the 'expansion' of educational facilities with restructuring of the racial division of labour. We could then speculate that the

⁹ Davies, R. 1979. "Capital Restructuring and the Modification of the Racial Division of Labour in South Africa": pp.190-191.

¹⁰ Kane-Berman, *op. cit.*

restructuring of education will play an active part in the building of a black petty bourgeoisie."¹¹

A reformist state publication makes the same argument, asserting more strongly the extent to which technical training had (by 1981) begun responding to the opportunities for African advancement. It is acknowledged that "technical education has suffered in the past through restrictive legislation applied to the metropolitan areas". However, with the reforms resulting from the Riekert and Wiehahn commissions, and the consequent "full acceptance of Black upward mobility [there] has come an explosion in all facets of technical education".¹² In the private sector itself, many felt that the fostering of an African middle class through increased training was not only possible but was on the cards. Respected African businessman Mr Sam Motsuenyane told the National African Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) Conference in 1980 of "hopeful signs" that white business was "talking about the creation of a Black middle class" alongside related priorities such as "equal pay for equal work" and "managerial and technical training".¹³

This thesis, arising as it does out of an interest in the changing class structure of South African society (especially among Africans), is concerned to gauge empirically the increase in the training of Africans which is so often mentioned in government, private sector and academic arenas. In particular, the recent entry in larger numbers than ever before of Africans into skilled manual occupations - such as the artisan trades - is identified as a phenomenon deserving the focus of analysis with respect to its impact on the South African class structure.¹⁴ For

¹¹ Chisholm, L. and P. Christie. 1983. "Restructuring Education": p.255.

¹² "Black education coming of age" in *Growth*, June 1981: p.29.

¹³ Cited in Kane-Berman, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ The biennial *Manpower Survey* officially records African artisans and apprentices in the Republic of South Africa for the first time in 1975, when there existed the numbers of 473 and 72 respectively. Over the ensuing decade, the numbers rose to 2,731 and 2,571, representing

it is argued by theorists of class that the position of social agents in the labour process (as defined, for example, by either their relationship to the means of production, their location in authority structures, or their level of skill) will bear an important relationship to their ideological and political commitments. It is therefore also the aim of this study to interpret the empirical findings in terms of their impact on class formation, and their possible implications for social and political behaviour.

This task is made more demanding by two main factors. Firstly, the field of industrial training in South Africa has in its own right received very little serious academic attention. It has tended to be a marginal issue for studies on education (which are normally more oriented towards schooling and ideology), as well as for studies on work-place dynamics (in industrial sociology). The other ingredient of the study - class - has tended to be primarily dealt with theoretically; where empirical research on the middle class has been done, this has been limited to the white-collar, professional or petty-entrepreneurial roles. As for the *relationship* between industrial training and class, this thesis has had to chart largely unknown territory.

The second factor has been the difficulty of compiling reliable and meaningful statistics which are comparable over the period 1970 to 1986. The numbers of workers trained in the private sector's numerous training schemes, for instance, are not recorded until the late 1970's; and even then, only those receiving state assistance submit their enrolment figures to the Department of Manpower (which processes and publishes them annually). Even the records of the state's own training institutions are

respective average annual increases of 48 per cent and 347 per cent (which occurred mainly in the 1980's). Another source has calculated that the percentage of all African workers in skilled categories of work increased from 2,86 in 1969 to 4,97 in 1977 (Simkins and Hindson, 1979, "The Division of Labour in South Africa").

occasionally irreconcilable from year to year. Here, there is also the complication introduced by most schemes in newly independent homelands being summarily excluded from the South African statistical universe. Further, the racial breakdown of workers trained within state schemes is not supplied after 1983.

But perhaps the most important problem results from the indices of government labour statistics. As will become clear in the study, the *level* of skill learnt and practiced by African workers is central to the discussion of both state policy and class. Unfortunately, this index is only vaguely specified (in terms of "semi-skilled" and "skilled"), if at all, in government reports and records, and it is difficult to be sure exactly how complex or responsible the jobs are for which Africans are trained.¹⁵ Nevertheless, a series of statistics have been compiled from a variety of sources. Again, due to the novelty of my specific concerns, there was little in the way of prepared data which were immediately available. Tables and figures therefore had to be constructed, with reference mainly to annual departmental reports, government commissions, private studies and the biennial Manpower Surveys

Given these factors, the study seeks to identify and understand the economic divisions which have emerged within the African population due to the recent measures to improve the skills, output and opportunities for African industrial workers; also, it shall examine the theoretical and political implications of these divisions. This will involve examining three areas of South African life: the changing demands of the economy on the labour force's skill content, employers' responses to these

¹⁵ The problem recurs, although less often, in the case of gender-differentiation; however, this study has not explored this area, although the impression is that far fewer women than men have access to higher-skilled jobs and the necessary training. An examination of this question would need to be detailed and lengthy.

changes, and government policy regarding the training and employment of African workers

The empirical research undertaken shows that government and private sector training initiatives have tended to direct energy toward the provision of manual skills to African workers, in the form of artisan and operative training; this study will therefore focus on these categories. It should of course be recognised that this has been complemented by educational institutions producing white-collar, technician and professional occupations. But as Table 1.1 shows, the increases since the late 1970's of numbers of Africans passing through different levels of manual-skill training outnumber those at technikons, universities and education (teacher training) colleges (at least until 1985, which saw a severe slump in the former categories).¹⁶ The comparatively high numbers in the area of manual skilled and semi-skilled training has led this study to focus here rather than on other forms of tertiary education. Also, there is normally a close link between the former kinds of training and the work-place, so that it can be assumed with a low degree of exception that the training in fact leads to employment in a specific position or level of work. That is to say, trends in this sort of training can therefore be said to have a fairly direct influence upon the trends in the job categories for which the training is performed.

¹⁶ Further, it is important to note that institutions in the latter categories only release into the labour market a proportion of their enrolments at the end of every year, due to the longer duration of courses. In the industrial sphere, most of the enrolments (ie. all non-apprentices) would be fed into the workplace during each year.

Table 1.1
Africans in semi-skilled training & apprenticeships
and in universities, technikons & education colleges: 1979-1985

	Semi-skilled & Apprentices	Universities, Technikons & Education Colleges
1978	60,201	13,197
1979	109,429	15,755
1980	99,363	33,349
1981	110,075	34,981
1982	119,734	37,612
1983	94,193	44,231
1984	107,654	54,161
1985	72,666	62,580

Note: For the first column, these aggregate figures are the sum of African apprentices (newly indentured), and African workers trained at State Industrial Schools, Group Training Centres and Private Training Schemes. The results should be regarded as approximate, due to my having had to make estimations of African numbers in the latter three institutions. In the last two, Africans are not delineated from the total after 1983, and the figures from State Industrial Schools are not available after 1983. The second column comprises total enrolment figures at African universities, technikons and education colleges. 1978 and 1979 exclude enrolments at education colleges.

Sources: For apprentices: DM, 1986: p.72, Table 4.6; NMG, 1984: p 301, Table 3.2.3. For State Industrial Schools and Group Training Centres, see Tables 5.14 and 5.17 in Chapter 5 respectively. For universities, technikons and education colleges: *South African Statistics*, 1986: p.5.46, p.5.67 and p.5.60 respectively.

1.4. The argument of the thesis

The central argument is that the changes in the policies of government - allowing more African workers to be trained for higher-skilled jobs - have had ambiguous implications for the on-going process of class formation among Africans. Thus the argument advanced in what follows attempts to impugn the view that recent government policy and initiatives in the field of industrial training should be primarily understood in terms of their effect on the formation of an African middle class.

It is acknowledged here that there have been, on the one hand, some changes in the class identity of African workers through the legal provision of apprenticeship training and artisan status. On the other

hand, however, it would appear that the generally low level of skill at which most training has been directed¹⁷ offers little opportunity to workers so trained to move to positions of such greater control, responsibility, or independence within the labour process as to warrant a redefinition of their class identity. Rather, these workers may more clearly be seen as a relatively privileged segment of the working class itself, as they perform generally less manually demanding jobs, enjoy better working conditions and more secure employment, and are better remunerated than other African workers.

In order to be practicable, the new opportunities for training and employment of African workers had to occur within broader reforms regarding, for instance, urban residence and housing. Moreover, beyond these benefits attaching to their occupational positions, they are also affected relatively favourably (vis-a-vis rural workers, for instance) by recent policy reforms restricting the movement of workers into urban areas, and relaxing the geographical movement of workers within those urban areas. For, as Posel notes, it was not one but a series of changes which were seen to be required in order to address the need for skills:

"It became clear [in the 1970's] to many politicians, businessmen and community leaders alike that the solution to the skills problem required a train of reforms, from the erosion of job reservation to labour, influx control and housing policies which would create 'stable' communities of skilled and semi-skilled black workers, by improving their conditions of employment and residence. For, quite simply, such workers are more difficult and expensive to replace".¹⁸

But while the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions sought to allow greater mobility and opportunity to urban-based workers, they excluded more

¹⁷ While the percentage increase in the number of African artisans has been a remarkable 477 points between 1975 and 1985, this representation is based on a very low initial figure; in 1985 there were only 2,731 African artisans in the Republic. The considerable increase in the number of semi-skilled workers between 1975 and 1985, however, represented an absolute increase of over 588,000 workers.

¹⁸ Posel, D. 1984. "Language, Legitimation and Control: the South African state after 1978"; p.5.

forcefully any access by migrants to these improved conditions. The differences (in occupation, remuneration, dispensability, etc.) within the workplace tend to be compounded by differences in the social-political sphere, for example, access to urban areas, urban accommodation and urban schooling. The latter differences will allow urban-based workers better access than migrants to basic education, contacts in the job market, and to a firmer accommodation basis from which to move to better jobs should the opportunity arise. The migrant is disadvantaged by inferior and less accessible basic education, and by influx control measures which discourage employers from investing any substantial amounts of time and money in their upgrading; migrants are thus compelled to accept the most menial of jobs with much less option of changing jobs for risk of being endorsed out of urban areas.¹⁹ New influx measures, while modified, only strengthen the severity of this urban-rural divide, to the extent that it contributes significantly to the lines of differentiation within the working class. Schneier supports this point when qualifying the focus of his study to structurally define South Africa's changing pattern of class membership:

"A distinction which the results of this study do not make, is that which exists between migrant Africans and those with permanent urban rights... This division in the African population is a division not only between the 'middle class' and the proletariat, but also within the working class, and may in fact prove to be as significant as any class criterion..."²⁰

In this context, then, training is part of a process of labour market segmentation, which has considerable implications for any understanding of the African working class. As a development which indicates substantial differences within the working class, such intra-class segmentation is worth as much attention as the analysis of the South

¹⁹ See E. Webster, 1985, *Cast in a Racial Mould*; chapter sub-section on "The Interconnection Between Control Inside and Outside the Foundry": pp.202-206.

²⁰ Schneier, S. 1983. "Occupational Mobility amongst Blacks in South Africa": p.22.

African class structure itself. It will therefore be argued that this particular area of training among African employees contributes to (1) a segmentation within the working class and a corresponding intra-class mobility, and (2) a less numerically significant inter-class mobility into the middle class.

Given that this degree of mobility does occur, it is asserted or implied by the view referred to (and contested) above that such mobility will have the effect of rendering workers less militant and more compliant with the prevailing political and economic structures. This is not necessarily so. The organisational environment in which African workers live and work is a potentially important countervailing tendency. For the relative indispensability and growth in numbers of semi-skilled workers place them in a (relatively) safe position from whence to risk joining trade unions and participating in their struggles. Friedman notes that although the government training centres for African workers established in 1973 "did not train workers for more skilled jobs - they merely taught them to do their existing jobs better - ...even this training made African workers less dispensable".²¹ In a recent study of the metal industry, it has been argued that a shift of African workers from unskilled into semi-skilled jobs "has enhanced the bargaining power of these workers, as they now perform more strategic functions in production, and as a result of this, they have acquired some control over the labour process".²²

So, far from exhibiting any signs of becoming an acquiescent work-force - for example, by improving its productivity levels in pursuit of further

²¹ Friedman, S. 1987. *Building Tomorrow Today*: p.52. This does not deny, but rather underlines, the resolve and militancy of unionised groups of migrant workers who do not enjoy such relative indispensability. See Webster, *op. cit*; chapter sub-section on "The Contradictory Nature of Migrant Labour": pp.206-212.

²² Kraak, A. 1988. "Uneven Capitalist Development": p.27.

occupational advancement and material advantage - the mobilisation of this (at least semi-skilled) segment of industrial workers by the independent trade union movement has in fact arguably improved the bargaining position of African workers in relation to employers.

1.5. The structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical basis for the study; this basis stresses the importance of class relationships in capitalist societies, and the way in which the state is a function of these relationships. An historical examination of the interaction of class forces is therefore argued to be the most useful context in which to understand the changing state policy on industrial training and its effects. The questions then asked could be divided into three parts: firstly, what could be said to constitute the boundaries of classes in capitalist society; secondly, what predictions could reasonably be made from the movement of social agents between or within these boundaries; and thirdly, how does this translate in the South African context? This is a highly contentious theoretical area, and no attempt is made to resolve the theoretical problems which characterise class analysis. Rather, aspects of class theory are utilised alongside a consideration of differentiation *within* the working class. The concern is to avoid a mechanistic conception of the relationship between class structure and the action of social agents, and to be aware of the impact of political and organisational forces alongside class divisions.

Chapter 3 provides a contextualisation of the issue of training within important theoretical paradigms of society and education in South Africa. Two schools of thought - liberalism and marxism - are discussed with reference to the concerns of this study. It is argued that the origins and effects of training policy need to be examined through an historical

analysis of class conflict and capitalist reproduction in South Africa. In particular, recent advances on the 'cheap labour-power thesis' within the marxist school have highlighted the *differentiation* occurring within the African working class and has led to a consideration of the changing role of official education and training policy for Africans. These arguments have been useful in conceptualising the findings of this study, insofar as state policy on the industrial training of African workers has altered so significantly that its impact can no longer be reduced to that of the reproduction of mainly unskilled labour.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter of empirical discussion, focusing on the period from after World War Two to the 1960's. Important themes run through this period which are necessary to contextualise the ensuing decades. The chapter discusses the process of mechanisation and its effect in undermining the traditional division of labour between skilled artisans and unskilled labourers. As part of this process, there emerged more and more semi-skilled or operative jobs, filled increasingly by lower-paid African labour. This deskilling trend contributed to the need for formalised training other than apprenticeship to be provided for Africans. The struggle of "craft" unions against the erosion of their trades (to allow for fragmentation of a job into simpler composite tasks) therefore also involved their attempts to maintain apprenticeship as a prerequisite for entering certain areas of skilled work. Economic growth in the 1960's heightened concerns about shortages of skills, which brought pressure on the government's policy of restricting the education, training and utilisation of African workers; and by the end of the 1960's a shifting policy in this regard is witnessed.

Chapter 5 focuses on the decade of the 1970's, a time of considerable ferment in the state's approach to both the labour and political dispensation. Of relevance to this thesis is the changing policy over this period toward the preparation and utilisation of African workers in

higher-skilled employment in 'white areas'. There occurred a growing acceptance of the need to train Africans for skilled jobs in areas previously restricted to white artisans. This was partly a response to the economic pressure of an international recession and a local "seller's market" among skilled (white) labour, pushing up costs and depressing profitability; but it was also partly linked to a more general concern with the political stability of the country (heightened by the 1973 strikes and the 1976 Soweto uprisings) and the changing strategy and ideology of the Nationalist Party.

The chapter looks first at the implications for the labour market of mechanising labour processes, and the growth of semi-skilled positions as against those of skilled artisans. For while Africans begin to enter these artisan roles in larger numbers at the end of the 1970's, the relative proportion of artisans to less-skilled, operative workers is constantly decreasing. The result of increased training opportunities for Africans, a process spurred on by official commissions' recommendations, needs therefore to be examined in terms of the level of skill generally imparted by the new institutions, if that process is to be usefully conceptualised in terms of its possible impact on differentiation. Government and party pronouncements on the question of African training and employment are examined, with the argument that the state was coming to take more seriously the labour needs of the private sector. It did this by supporting the performance of semi-skilled work by Africans in urban areas, and by encouraging the fragmentation of skilled jobs so that Africans could perform them. At the same time, it was becoming clear that changes of a more directly political nature (regarding permanent residence rights for Africans in 'white' urban areas) would be required - the pressure forcing changes in labour policy, for instance, were not to threaten the stability of the *status quo*.

It is against this background, then, that Chapter 6 examines the strategy of reform on which the government embarked in the latter part of the 1970's, and the Riekert, Wiehahn and de Lange Commissions of Inquiry which gave this strategy some definition and ideological context. The fields dealt with by these commissions - broadly labour organisation, influx control, and education - constitute important parts of the landscape on which training issues emerged and were addressed. It is argued, therefore, that the training of African workers is part of a broader strategy to differentiate and privilege certain sections of the African population, most significantly via differential access to urban rights, schooling, and technical skills. Further, it is suggested that the infusion of an acquiscent, free-enterprise ideology among African workers is as much a concern of the state and the private sector as the technical aspects of the training which they encourage.

Chapter 7 brings the study into the 1980's, to consider the implications of the direction of reform taken by the government. Important among these was the legalisation of independent trade unions, and the general opening of opportunities for Africans to register as apprentices and artisans in urban areas. The chapter serves to bring themes from previous chapters further up to date, such as the changing skill-profile of the labour market, the skill-level of training initiatives embarked upon, and the implications which might be drawn from this. There have also been recent moves by the state to encourage new methods of training which further undermine traditional apprenticeship patterns to bring training more into line with the needs of modernising labour processes.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, arguing that the evolution of class struggles over the cost, supply and control of artisan labour has led to a significant contradiction between the expressed need to foster an African middle class and the capability of industrial training to

contribute to such an aim. For while capital was calling for increased training of Africans to meet the shortage of skills, it was also rapidly deskilling craft work. The result has been the greater demand for a cheaper, semi-skilled stratum of worker, and the number of Africans who might have been drawn into the middle class by their training as artisans has been substantially undermined.

1.6. Conclusion

This study is an attempt to derive an explanation of how industrial training relates to the process of class formation among Africans in South Africa. In this endeavour, an historical approach is adopted wherein the struggle of classes is argued to be the primary determinant of state policy as well as of the outcome of that policy's implementation. The following chapter will argue that state training policy, as an important aspect of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production, needs to be understood in terms of the class nature of the state itself. Within this understanding, it should also be remembered that capital and labour are not monolithic categories, but themselves comprise differing specific, immediate interests. The state's role in social reproduction, then, is defined by the specific interests pursued by the dominant classes within the state. The on-going struggle between classes (and fractions of classes) implies that this position of dominance is perpetually contested, and that the state's reproductive role will differ over time.

This is shown to be evident in the South African case, where labour and training policies for Africans in the 1950's and 1960's become increasingly unacceptable to the growing force of manufacturing capital. Struggle within the state was to result in significant policy changes in the late 1970's, but historical struggles in the work-place had already been evolving a new division of labour based increasingly on semi-skilled work. By the time the state finally allowed African artisans to be

trained and employed in 'white areas', the importance of this skill-level was greatly undermined; and so too was the capacity of craft-work to provide a strong contribution to the growth of an African middle class.

CHAPTER 2

CLASS, REPRODUCTION AND OCCUPATIONAL MOVEMENT

2.1. Introduction

As an important basis to this thesis, it is necessary to clarify the conception of class and class struggle which will be employed in the ensuing discussion and analysis. For, it will be argued, the issue of industrial training and class formation needs to be understood within the broader theoretical context of the 'class nature' of the state. The Poulantzian notion of the state as an "condensation of class forces" will be broadly utilised, and so will be briefly outlined in theoretical terms below.

It is to be argued that class struggle is indeed the motor of history, and that within capitalism the primary class division is that between a working class dispossessed of means of production and a capitalist class of owners of these means. The production of surplus value which bonds these classes is thus to be seen as a social relationship, and not simply as a technical process.²³

In this sense, class struggle is not limited to the arena of technical production but extends to all facets of the way in which life is structured and reproduced. The relationship of economic ownership which exists at the heart of capitalist class divisions also affects, and is in turn affected by, political and ideological relationships; depending on the balance of class forces at any particular time, the latter relations will play a more or less stabilising and legitimising function,

²³ Poulantzas puts the point as follows: "Production, in these societies [ie. capitalist societies] means at the same time, and one and the same process, class division, exploitation, and class struggle" (Poulantzas, 1979, *Classes in Contemporary Society*: p.20).

ie. either strengthening or undermining the reproduction of class relationships. Reproduction is therefore not automatic but is subject to the balance of class forces, and also capable of failing should dominant classes be unable to impose their interests effectively.

While broadly 'economic' relationships are embodied in the labour process, the political and ideological relations exist insofar as they are embodied in "state apparatuses".²⁴ These apparatuses, then, are also constituted by class struggle, and will reflect and support the prevailing power relations among classes. The state is therefore "not an entity [with] an intrinsic instrumental essence, but is itself a relation, more precisely the condensation of a class relation".²⁵

The purpose of clarifying this is to avoid what Poulantzas calls the "institutionalist-functionalist current" which argues in effect that apparatuses and institutions determine social classes. In these terms, the aim of this thesis might have been to measure the way in which the apparatuses of the state have - through a change in policy - 'formed' more middle class positions, swelled the ranks of its members, and precipitated certain political shifts within African classes. The angle which is in fact taken by this study is different. It will instead want to emphasise (1) how it was the struggle (and simultaneous formation) of classes which in the first place led to changes in state policy on industrial training, (2) that the state's role in directly bolstering a particular class is therefore a theoretically debatable one, and (3) that in practice the apparently limited success of the state's training policy (in boosting the African middle class) can best be explained in terms of the above framework.²⁶

²⁴ "The apparatuses are never anything other than the materialisation and condensation of class relations" (*ibid*: p.25).

²⁵ *Ibid*: p.26.

²⁶ This is not, of course, to deny that the state is an important site

For that reason, the training which is provided or fostered by state apparatuses should not be made the starting point for explaining the changing class structure. It should instead be seen as part of the struggles between classes, struggles which uncover the reasons why the decisions to provide certain forms of training were taken in the first place. At that point only can a clearer understanding emerge as to the nature and results of such training.

2.2. South African studies in class structure

Neo-marxist studies in South Africa over the last ten years have noticed the considerable movement of African workers from their traditional position in unskilled (and to an extent semi-skilled) jobs into more semi-skilled, skilled-manual and white-collar jobs.²⁷ In marxist terms, this movement out of generally manual, productive labour signals a possible shift in class membership from the working class into the petit-bourgeoisie or middle class (also referred to as the new middle class, when pointing to employees rather than independent entrepreneurs or professionals). The political implications, while not clear, are anticipated to reflect in some way this changing class structure. Theorists stressing a structural determination of class, and the primacy of class struggles, argue that these occupational changes tend to erode the basis for a durable and continued alliance between Africans of different classes. More importantly, they provide the foundation for

of and contributor to class victories and defeats; it is rather to stress the sense in which classes 'pre-exist' (and structure) the very apparatuses they struggle within.

²⁷ Wolpe, H. 1976. "The Changing Class Structure of South Africa: The African Petit Bourgeoisie"; Davies, 1979. "The Restructuring of the Racial Division of Labour in South Africa"; Simkins, C. and D. Hindson. 1979. "The Division of Labour in South Africa"; Schneier, S. 1983. "Occupational Mobility amongst Blacks in South Africa"; Crankshaw, O. 1985. "Marxist Theories of Class and the Emerging African 'Middle Class' in South Africa".

attempts by a reformist state to weaken popular opposition through accommodating or even encouraging the growth of such a class within the urban African population.²⁸

Alternative arguments privilege the status of political, as against class, relations within the South African social formation, emphasising the racial nature of the state and the consequent political oppression giving all blacks a common and primary interest in the overthrow of white rule.²⁹

Where this debate has relevance to this thesis is insofar as industrial training represents a potentially important strategy (by the state and capital) to encourage the occupational movement of African workers in 'white' areas into higher-skilled jobs to an extent unacceptable within the political and ideological constraints of orthodox *apartheid*. It needs to be asked, what has been the success of such a strategy, and what political results can be expected? Firstly, though, a number of theoretical problems need to be posed, such as the following: When is occupational movement an *inter*-class movement as such? Have there been any breaches of the class boundaries outlined by marxist theorists? On what basis do we draw these boundaries in the first place? Are there differential class implications within the broad movement being studied? One of the main theoretical questions to be considered here, then, is this: how are we to conceptualise the above-described occupational movement in class terms?

²⁸ Within the discourse of reform, it is not difficult to understand the ideological attractiveness of an urban based, African middle class. To employers, such a group would indicate the supposed colour-blindness of capitalism and foster blacks' faith in the accessibility of that system's rewards. For the government, it would be used as an indication of the sincerity and effectivity of their 'new deal' wherein greater material opportunities are opened to all races; further, provision is made to allow a level of urban permanency of Africans within the context of the 'constellation of states'.

²⁹ Nolutshungu, S. 1983. *Changing South Africa*.

2.3. Job mobility and class structure

Broadly speaking, changes in the class structure will tend to be important sources of social change. But it is crucial to remember Poulantzas' oft-cited advice that "classes exist only in the class struggle".³⁰ Class structure is itself an outcome of a process of struggle between classes, and should not be seen as a static picture depicting series of particular class memberships from which can be implied corresponding ideologies, political allegiances, or general social behaviour.

So, on what grounds can it be asserted that recent training reforms contribute not just to job mobility but to *class* mobility? This question requires some background on class structure and criteria for class membership, as have been suggested by certain marxist theorists. It has been pointed out that the traditional marxist concepts of class - defining the bourgeoisie, proletariat, peasantry, landowners, and petty bourgeoisie - are firmly rooted in forms of "property-holding". In these terms, it is argued, there is not much which can be said about *class* divisions among wage-earners (non-owners); anyone not owning means of production, and subsequently having to sell their labour-power for a wage, is a member of the working class.³¹

However, the extent of diversity between the roles of wage-earners in the labour process and their differing perceptions of their worlds, has led other theorists to search for the material basis of a 'new middle class'. Among the most important contributions to this project is that of Poulantzas, who sought to integrate a rigorous theorisation and

³⁰ Poulantzas, *op. cit.*: p.14.

³¹ Cottrell, A. 1984. *Social Classes in Marxist Theory*: p.91.

definition of a new middle class into the basic concepts of marxist political economy. He outlines economic, political and ideological criteria separating the "new petty bourgeoisie" from the working class. Respectively, these criteria exclude from the working class those wage-earners whose work is "unproductive" (ie. work which is not "directly involved in material production by producing use-values that increase material wealth"),³² who perform managerial or supervisory functions (ie. work which directly reproduces "the political relations [of control] between the capitalist class and the working class"),³³ and whose work involves knowledge and skills to which direct producers do not have access (and who therefore uphold the mental/manual labour division, "the monopolisation of knowledge, the capitalist form of appropriation of scientific discoveries and...the reproduction of ideological relations of domination/subordination").³⁴ His emphasis on the division between mental and manual labour is important for our purposes, and reflects a broader concern with the general reproduction of capitalist relations:

"The mental/manual labour division is reproduced as a tendency, in the sense that it does not provide typological 'classification' into rigid compartments for this or that particular agent, and that what matters for us here is its social functioning in the existence and reproduction of social classes".³⁵

This concern is also central to Carchedi's analysis,³⁶ where he identifies the respective "functions of capital" (control and surveillance of the labour process) and "functions of labour" (the generation of surplus value) in relation to the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production. For Carchedi, classes are determined by the correspondence or non-correspondence of these aspects;

³² Poulantzas, *op. cit.*: p.216.

³³ *Ibid.*: pp.227-228.

³⁴ *Ibid.*: p.237.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: p.256.

³⁶ Carchedi, G. 1977. *On the Economic Determination of Social Classes*: pp.88-95.

while the capitalist class owns the means of production *and* performs the function of capital, and while the working class do *neither* of these, there is a group of non-owning employees who perform management-supervisory (control) functions. He calls the latter group the new middle class.

Wright has also been concerned to find new and separate categorisations within the wide and varied spectrum of wage-earners. In a previous work,³⁷ he contrasts the basic cleavage between the capitalist and working class in terms of their respective relation to control over the physical means of production, control over labour-power, and control over investment and profit-utilisation. He then applies these criteria to various broad positions among wage-earners, concluding that a number of these employees can be said to occupy "contradictory class locations" within this matrix. Although he has since modified some of the theoretical terms of his analysis, he continues to conceptualise the middle class as occupying "contradictory class locations".³⁸

Another approach, referred to at the beginning of this section, takes its starting point from the traditional property-based definitions of class (categorising all non-owners as working class), and considers the differentiation between wage-earners in a more empirical light. "Better to admit," writes Cottrell,

"that the divisions within the working class, in the broad sense, are not such as to permit a conceptual segregation at the level of the 'capitalist mode of production', or even 'modern capitalism', but have to be investigated more specifically in the context of particular social formations".³⁹

This position is keen to stress that:

³⁷ Wright, E.O. 1983. *Class, Crisis and the State*.

³⁸ Wright, E.O. 1985. *Classes*.

³⁹ Cottrell, *op. cit.*: p.91.

"Knowledge of an agent's position with respect to property relations will not enable one to 'derive' that agent's political affiliations".⁴⁰

But this would not be disputed by the theorists discussed before. Poulantzas, for instance, makes the distinction between the structural determination of an agent's class *place* and the more subjective class *position* which that agent will conjuncturally take up.⁴¹ Carchedi, too, is cautious not to over-state any relationship of causation between class consciousness and place in the class structure: such a consciousness, he says, is determined by "the objective position agents have in the class structure and by the way the awareness of such a position is modified, distorted, crippled, etc. by the economic, political and ideological struggle".⁴²

Their qualifications, however, are central objects of the criticisms directed against them. As Cottrell writes:

"The 'struggle', it seems, can make mincemeat of the objective structures... It appears that the dominant traditions within Marxist class analysis offer us Hobson's choice: either a structural reductionism, simple or complex, or else a disjuncture between structure and political behaviour which produces a theoretical indeterminacy at the crucial point".⁴³

The basic criticism is as follows: the foundations of the demarcations to which are attributed a *class* nature by Poulantzas, Carchedi and Wright, are

"not at par with the definition of classes in 'classical' Marxism, since...[they are] not based on property relations..., yet neither...[are they] of direct relevance to the analysis of political forces, since there can be no presumption that all 'true' proletarians will support socialism...".⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibid*: p.335.

⁴¹ Poulantzas, *op. cit*: pp.14-15.

⁴² Carchedi, *op. cit*: p.30.

⁴³ Cottrell, *op. cit*: p.93.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*: pp.335-336.

It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt any rigorous theoretical discussion on the relative merits of different class boundaries and conceptualisations of the nature of class determination. The disagreements above focus, in any event, mainly on the particular *criteria* for drawing class lines; there is consensus that the class lines should be drawn, and that they have significant social implications. The point is that the "new middle class" (or "new petty bourgeoisie" or "contradictory class locations") "do have a real interest in socialism, yet simultaneously gain certain real privileges directly from capitalist relations of production".⁴⁵

It will be asserted here that the main theoretical pillar should remain the capitalist and working class's differential control over the means of production; it is this primary contradiction which provides the foundation for the reproduction of economic and social structures. This fundamental class relationship bears heavily on the relationship of all wage-earners to each other, to owners, to the state, and to the prevailing non-class cleavages. It provides, for instance, a common experience of the necessary sale of labour power, of working in a relationship of general subordination to an employer, of alienation from the products of labour, and, often, of reliance upon solidarity with fellow-employees for individual job security.

⁴⁵ Wright, *op. cit.*: pp.108-109. The issue of class interest cannot receive much attention here; however, a brief comment is necessary. Wright distinguishes between immediate and fundamental interests: the former interests (wages, working conditions, etc.) do not as such constitute a challenge to the (capitalist) mode of production, but rather constitute improved circumstances within a given structure. Fundamental interests are those which all workers have in the attainment of a classless society, i.e. in a socialist alternative to capitalism. The point is that "the working class is much more divided at the level of immediate interests than at the level of fundamental interests... Skilled workers, for example, are generally in much more favourable market conditions than unskilled workers and thus often have different immediate interests" (*ibid.*: pp.90-91).

On the other hand, the complex division of labour in modern industrial capitalism has provided for such diversity within wage-earning positions, and for such ambiguity in the relationships of control and subordination, that the nature of different occupations (and the preparation - in the form of long-term socialisation and short-term training - for such positions) facilitates diverse objective roles and subjective perceptions. Moreover, capitalism evolves in different circumstances in its various homes, and the constitution of its own division of labour is manifest in, and influenced by, other important historical lines of social cleavage. Class divisions may become more or less complex on account of this, as much as they may even assume less significant causal roles.

Within any conjunctural situation, then, there exist always a myriad of secondary contradictions which assume more or less significant roles from time to time *vis-a-vis* the fundamental class relations which form the starting point for the production and accumulation of surplus value. For instance, historical divisions within the production process produce, as Edwards argues, segmented labour markets.⁴⁶ Allen puts the point as follows:

"Contradictions from within the capitalist mode of production [not within the market] alter demarcation lines between jobs...through lowering, abolishing or raising their skill content or by changing materials. They impose divisions between groups of workers and create friction between them".⁴⁷

Cottrell, too, identifies various dimensions of differentiation within the "class" of wage-earners:

"level of remuneration; degree of control over the labour power of others; degree of access to information regarding enterprise performance; and plans; degree of participation in, and

⁴⁶ Edwards, R. *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (Chapter 9), cited in E. Webster, *Cast in a Racial Mould*: p.212. See also D.M. Gordon, R. Edwards, and M. Reich, *Segmented work, divided workers*, for an historical analysis of labour market segmentation in the U.S.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*: pp.68-69.

responsibility for, enterprise decision-making; degree of intellectual or 'skill' content of work".⁴⁸

Dual labour market theory draws on the notion of segmentation to help establish the causes and results of divisions in the labour market. Here, attention is drawn to the different conditions experienced by workers in an hypothesised primary sector and secondary sector. The primary sector is associated with better wages, working conditions, employment stability, and chances of advancement than those in the secondary sector. Also, the primary sector enjoys the protection of strong unions, which are normally absent from the secondary sector. Most importantly, the conditions guarding the "ports of entry" into the series of "internal markets" comprising the primary sector - union membership, skill-specificity, on-the-job training, etc. - impede mobility out of the secondary. Cassim states that:

"The purpose of distinguishing between the two is based upon the fact that a certain group of workers become trapped within the secondary sector... Thus, what distinguishes the DLM from all other approaches is the assumption that segmentation of the labour market eliminates mobility for workers in the secondary sector".⁴⁹

I shall therefore employ notions of control over elements of production to distinguish between class positions, as well as the concept of labour market segmentation (linked to the changing processes of production) to distinguish differentiations within the working class.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cottrell, *op. cit.*: p.90. But again it is emphasised that:

"Such variations depend on the particular history of the social formation, again it is not possible to deduce the form of differentiation or its political consequences from the bare existence of capitalist production relations" (*ibid.*).

⁴⁹ Cassim, F. 1982. "Labour Market Segmentation in South Africa": p.8.

⁵⁰ This approach can be clarified by comparing it to that of Giddens, who, in Wright's words, "explicitly defines 'middle' classes in terms of a market capacity rooted in the possession of educational skills. In all such treatments, classes are defined primarily in terms of immediate interests at the economic level" (Wright, *op. cit.*: p.90, footnote 75). It should also be noted (as Webster does in his study of metal workers) that there is a vital interconnection between

2.4. Skills, divisions among workers, and state reform

What, then, can be said about the class implications of African workers' acquisition of greater work-skills and their movement into more-skilled jobs. In itself, the possession of skills does not - in marxist terms - necessarily constitute a criterion for class membership or exclusion. Such skills may, however, provide their bearer with access to:

1. craft-type occupations allowing a high degree of control over work processes (and entry into a new middle class) or even leading possibly into self-employment (and a position in the traditional middle class);
2. occupations more likely to contain elements of control and supervision (the 'functions of capital' referred to above) than would manual tasks;
3. more privileged labour markets.

A few more points should be noted at this point on the definition of skill. Up to now, this study has viewed skill acquisition in a more or less "technical" sense, ie. the learning of mainly physical and mental competencies related to the application of tools and machinery to certain tasks. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind other elements which are crucial to the way in which broader job competencies are established. Kraak, for instance, describes an industrial skill as "a complex construction of three components - a technical, ideological and a socially constructed component".⁵¹ Let us consider the second and third of these categories and their application to this study.

control relations *outside* of the workplace and workers' occupational positions within it.

⁵¹ Kraak, A. 1987. "Uneven Capitalist Development": p.14.

The "ideological" component, he writes, refers to the value system and behavioural traits necessary to be internalised by a work-force before stable production, control and profits can be maintained:

"These include a belief in the value of the free enterprise system; a recognition of management's legitimacy at the top of the hierarchy; an acceptance as 'natural', by each level of labour in the hierarchy, of their unequal status; an acceptance of the superiority of higher levels of labour; an acceptance, as an equivalent exchange, of the wage which each worker receives for the labour services rendered; behavioural traits such as obedience, diligence, punctuality, respect for authority, and so forth".⁵²

It is important for this study to consider the way in which this component of skill has been part of recent training initiatives. For much of the private sector has realised that African workers perceive a strong collusion between capitalism and discriminatory state policies; and there has therefore been growing attention paid to presenting these workers with a picture of capitalism as a system which fairly allocates rewards and privilege.⁵³ Educating workers in "business principles" would, according to one National Institute of Personnel Research (NIPR) course, "alleviate the ignorance of illiterate and semi-literate Black employees concerning the functioning of a Western industrial organisation and the role of the individual employee in such an organisation".⁵⁴ Central to the private sector's efforts in this regard has been "Project Free Enterprise", a research and think-tank process initiated through the School of Business Leadership at the University of South Africa (UNISA). One of the main threats (to a healthy capitalist economy in South Africa) which they

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ It is in this sense that Chisholm argues, with regard to the imperatives of the de Lange commission, that:

"Reform in education is a crucial means of winning the 'hearts and minds' of blacks. Through it, limited upward mobility, facilitated by the restructuring of the racial division of labour, comes to be seen as a possibility, if not a reality. Through the same process, belief in the apparent benefits of 'free enterprise' is fostered" (Chisholm, 1984, "Redefining Skills: Black Education in South Africa in the 1980's": p.405).

⁵⁴ National Institute of Personnel Research. 1985. *Newsletter* No.158 "6M: teaches workers business principles".

identified was that "management's perception of what they were doing differs substantially from the workers' perception of their actions". It was clear that "the work-force would not commit itself to enhancing quality and productivity whilst the current perceptions prevail".⁵⁵ This area and its relationship to government reform is discussed further in Chapter 6 (see 6.5.1. on ideology and skills).

The third component - the "social construction" of skill categories - recognises the ways in which worker resistance to mechanisation and deskilling may be able "to colonise, to mould or indeed to invent forms of expertise, real or apparent".⁵⁶ In this sense, skill is a

"social artefact, which comes into being through the artificial delimitation of certain work as skilled, the purpose of his delimitation being the reservation of certain kinds of work for those who have acquired the label 'skilled'".⁵⁷

The defining of skills is thus affected by the ability of workers' to resist employers' attempts to undermine their level of control in the labour process. The struggle of white workers in South Africa to defend their own categories of skilled work, and the effect this had upon sustaining skill levels in the face of mechanisation, are described in some depth by, *inter alia* Lewis⁵⁸ and Webster.⁵⁹ This area is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

To return to the three points made at the beginning of this section, let us consider these with regard to the types of industrial training predominant in the reform period (ie. artisanal and operative training).

⁵⁵ *The Star*, 9 June 1986: p.9.

⁵⁶ Baron, cited in Kraak, *op. cit.*: p.15.

⁵⁷ More, cited in *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Lewis, J. 1984. *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation*

⁵⁹ Webster, E. 1985. *Cast in a Racial Mould*

2.4.1. Artisans

Loots asserts that, due to the artisan's possession of specific knowledge and skills,

"No other production worker in a capitalist system of production has even remotely the same degree of control over the labour process as does the artisan".⁶⁰

This control gives artisans "a considerable degree of autonomy over the way in which the physical means of production are used", and differentiates them significantly from other workers, whose lack of control over means of production "necessarily curtails [their] capacity...to engage in struggle".⁶¹

As important as this is the trend within modern industrial production in South Africa for artisans to be promoted to supervisory and management positions. Kraak points to the pressure which black worker resistance over the last decade has placed upon the demand for managerial and industrial relations skills. As a result, more artisans ("as senior workers strategically placed on the factory floor and easily co-optable") have needed to be equipped with these skills.⁶² Loots sees the trend as being fuelled by high rates of skill fragmentation, demanding a restructuring of the (skill and racial) division of labour to that of more mechanised, semi-skilled work overseen by non-manual workers.⁶³ This changing role of the artisans reflects their increased control over the

⁶⁰ Loots, L. 1984. "Deskilling, Class Structure and Reform in South Africa": p.8.

⁶¹ *Ibid*: p.8. Control over means of production is justified as a 'class indicator' on the basis of its forming part of a broader control function crucial to capital's extraction of surplus value in the production process (Wright, *op. cit*: pp.72-73). The control function is also seen as the analytical complement to the possession by capital of the means of production (Poulantzas, *op. cit*: pp.18-19).

⁶² Kraak, *op. cit*: p.25. He notes that there is a significant shortage both of the high-level manpower (HLM) with these skills, and of training facilities in this regard.

⁶³ Loots, *op. cit*: p.12.

labour-power of others, and thus their increased role in performing the function of capital. Hence, writes Kraak:

"even if the technical contribution of artisans is in the process of being diluted and deskilled, their ideological skill contribution is nevertheless in the process of being upgraded. This is an important aspect of reskilling".⁶⁴

There is another aspect of the class location of artisans, linked to the fact that their

"life trajectories...contain the distinct possibility of becoming petit-bourgeois producers or even establish[ing] small business[es]. Good examples of these are cabinet-makers, bricklayers, electricians and motor mechanics".⁶⁵

In this light, the opening of the artisan market to Africans has meant definite possibilities for movement into new middle class or even traditional middle class positions.⁶⁶ As we shall see later, though, the numbers involved in such training have so far not been overwhelming.

2.4.2. Semi-skilled workers

The class location of semi-skilled African workers - in terms of property ownership and control over the labour process - would seem to be unambiguously proletarian. If we were to place the changes in the skill level of jobs occupied by African workers under the interpretation of modern marxist class conceptualisations, for instance, what would be the outcome? In Poulantzas's terms, the workers concerned continue to do primarily manual ("productive") work, and their broader knowledge of the production process is not substantially different from unskilled workers. Neither have these workers moved significantly towards Wright's

⁶⁴ Kraak, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Loots, *op. cit.*: p.13.

⁶⁶ Possibilities for self-employment have in fact improved, with the government and private sector's support for small business development. For the context and role of NAFCOC in this area, see M. Sarakinsky, 1986, "The state, white capital and the urban African bourgeoisie in South Africa".

"objectively contradictory locations within class relations", by gaining more control over labour power, nor towards the performance of capital's global function as outlined by Carchedi, through increased control roles. They have at most become somewhat less dispensable in the context of industrial disputes, as a result of time and money invested in their training. In this sense, it may be argued that these workers have more control over the immediate means of production - a condition for movement out of the work class in both theorists' terms - but this would be stretching a point. A marginal (and questionable) gain of this nature would be a basis on which to justify class mobility; this study asserts that the division is best described as a form of stratification within the working class.

As Allen has pointed out, sellers of labour-power "belong to different but related labour markets...[which] stand in different relationships to each other, to employers and, therefore, to the capitalist system".⁶⁷ This "different relationship", I would assert, should be understood in the context of Wright's notions of "structural capacities" and "organisational capacities" of the working class; these he considers to be the general categories constitutive of "the diverse social relations which objectively link together the agents within a common class".⁶⁸ These capacities allow a class to understand its fundamental interests and to act with the aim of realising them.

Structural capacities are those which are manifest in the structure of production relations and broader social relations. Wright emphasises the importance of the "collective worker": the result of concentrated numbers of workers (in factory situations) and complex divisions of labour creating considerable interdependence - and hence objective links - among

⁶⁷ Allen, *op. cit.*: p.68.

⁶⁸ Wright, *op. cit.*: p.99.

workers. Within the production process, however, there exist also "incapacities" which undermine the potential strength of the collective worker; these could be, for example, hierarchies of privilege and authority between jobs. To apply this to our concerns, the possession of skills is an important criterion on which employers allocate these rewards and privileges; training is in this sense a potential element of division among workers. This possibility needs to be considered, though, in the light of structural capacities outside of the workplace, as well as the development of organisational capacities.

For, Wright argues, "local capacities" exist in the production process which can be transferred into the community sphere. Here again, however, there are enabling and disabling possibilities. Ethnic, social, economic and other factors could divide workers; these factors could also provide a basis for solidarity. In the US, for instance,

"Suburbanisation, increasing homeownership, geographical mobility, and other factors have contributed to a loosening of ties among workers..."⁶⁹

Organisational capacities are those linkages among workers created by organisations consciously directed toward the attainment of immediate interests. Trade unions are probably the most important here, at least insofar as immediate *economic* interests are concerned. The relevance of this (and the above) to the situation of growing ranks of skilled and semi-skilled workers lies in the extent to which skill-training gives these workers immediate interests divergent to unskilled (the majority of) workers. It is suggested here that skills may allow workers to move into labour markets with better pay and better conditions; in Edwards' terms, they may move from the secondary to the subordinate primary market. And as Wright has pointed out:

⁶⁹ *Ibid*: p.101.

"Skilled workers are generally in much more favourable market conditions than unskilled workers and thus often have different immediate interests from other workers".⁷⁰

But the above discussion was intended to make the point that the different relationship which skilled workers may have to employers and other employees in the workplace due to their skills is mediated by the position of those workers (1) outside of production and (2) within collectivities. Regarding point (1), the racial division of labour in South Africa reflects deep cleavages between white and African workers, and the political relations of dominance and subordination complement these. The latter at the same time constitute a significant commonality of immediate interests for Africans, to the extent that even certain marxist analyses regard *apartheid* as the primary rallying-point for African workers. Moreover (with reference to (2)), the evolution of independent African trade unions has been a powerful force in realising the immediate interests of African workers while at the same time articulating such interests in the context of broader political and economic goals. This has militated against the possibility that differentiation between workers could become a simply divisive development or strategy.⁷¹

However, a crucial objective of the government's reform policies is to divide and forestall political opposition by making certain concessions to certain elements of the disenfranchised population. A brief sketch of these policies and their relevance to this study follows; they will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*: pp.90-91.

⁷¹ For an example of the ambiguous subjective positions of African supervisors in a production line, see M. Sarakinsky and P. Crankshaw, 1985, "Supervisors: Workers or Management?"

2.4.3. State reforms

The Riekert Commission employed their own version of dual labour market theory (wherein the primary/internal and secondary/external labour markets were broadly constituted by Section 101(a)&(b)- and by Section 101(d)-rights respectively) to underlie its attempts to strengthen the barriers to rural African "outsiders" entering 'white' cities while allowing greater mobility (geographic and occupational) of urban 'insiders'. The Viehahn Commission recommended changes which it saw would foster African worker advancement, through an elimination of structural constraints upon movement within the universal labour market. It stressed the need to train Africans for "the growing needs of the South African economy for skilled and semi-skilled manpower of various types", alongside the re-training of "many White and Non-White workers...to enable them to compete effectively in the free labour market and to meet the challenge emanating from technological change, the reclassification of work and the abolition of statutory job reservation".⁷²

These two policy contributions toward the shape of reform aimed, as Hindson argues,

"to increase the occupational mobility of qualified workers, and at the same time increase control over the movement and entry into employment of dis-qualified workers. This has a direct economic significance for Black [African] workers. It helps provide qualified workers with better access to jobs and thus higher incomes, and it tends to worsen the chances of dis-qualified workers".⁷³

As mentioned above, labour market segmentation provides a framework in which to view the economic-political divisions in the African working class which the government is aiming to foster in its new labour

⁷² SA, Republic. 1980. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation, Part 2: Training*.

⁷³ Hindson, D. 1980. "The New Black Labour Regulation: limited reform, intensified control".

dispensation. Webster illustrates the case of the labour market in metal foundries.⁷⁴ Following Edwards, he discerns two categories - a subordinate and an independent - within the primary market. The independent primary market comprises mainly the upper rungs of skilled workers, ie. artisans, as well as technical, supervisory and professional groups. Workers with relatively less job security and wages, mainly industrial machine operators and semi-skilled workers, are seen within the subordinate primary market. Importantly, workers in both categories are normally unionised. The secondary market, in these terms, is left with those repetitive and usually heavy manual jobs for which limited skill is required; Webster states that "the work almost never requires previous training and many of the tasks do not require any formal education at all".⁷⁵

Applying the concerns of Wiehahn and Riekert to this framework, the following hypotheses are plausible:

- 1) within the African work-force, an increasing number have been and are being trained (through facilities recommended by both commissions) to perform semi-skilled and skilled work;
- 2) this number is drawn mainly from urban workers, due to their higher basic level of schooling, and their greater residential stability and geographic mobility, on the basis of which employers are prepared to expend training costs;
- 3) leading from the above, urban African workers would be at least capable of (if not actually achieving) a level of occupational mobility (ie. into the subordinate primary market) and consequent material benefit withheld from their rural/migrant counterparts.

Hindson outlines the intentions here of state reform succinctly:

⁷⁴ Webster, 1985; Chapter 9 ("Workers Divided: Labour Market Segmentation in the Foundry"): pp.195-215.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*: p.196.

"These economic divisions are intended to provide the material basis for the maintenance of political divisions between strata of the Black [African] workforce. A concession is given to qualified workers, at the expense of dis-qualified workers, and the former are expected to see it as in their interests to have the controls maintained".⁷⁶

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a conception of class and reproduction with which to understand the way in which class struggle is central to the state's role in social reproduction. Different theories of class categorisation are then examined in order to suggest the most useful ways of defining occupational movement in *inter-* or *intra-*class terms. It is argued here that (1) there is good reason to anticipate an amount of movement into a new or traditional middle class by Africans as a result of their training as artisans, and (2) training of Africans into semi-skilled positions can be expected to foster differentiation or stratification *within* the working class.

The possession of skills does not in itself, however, constitute the class nature of a category; it is the role these skills play in reproducing or challenging the relationship between capital and labour that make them part of class struggle. So it is crucial that the organisational capacities of workers are considered alongside their skill-level. It is therefore argued that, while training could foster co-optation (eg. promotion of artisans into supervisory-control functions, or paying higher salaries for higher-skilled work), their relative indispensability to the labour process as higher-skilled workers could strengthen their collective power in trade unions. The reforming of training policies by the South African state, while attempting a greater alignment with the needs of industrial capital, has therefore to come up against various contradictions such as the one just mentioned;

⁷⁶ Hindson, 1980: p.50.

these tend to complicate the successful implementation of co-optive strategies.

The provision of industrial training, then, is not primarily a benevolent opportunity afforded to African workers to enter better-paying jobs and more comfortable standards of living; nor is it a simple response to perceived skill shortages. Rather, it should be seen in the context of a (contradictory) reformulation of the processes and discourse reproducing the social basis of capital accumulation in South Africa. The following chapter will examine briefly how training has been conceptualised within certain theories of South African society. Particular attention is paid to the application of the concepts of reproduction and class by marxist theory within the South African environment, and the contribution this can make to the concerns of this study.

CHAPTER 3

STATE, REPRODUCTION AND TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1. The theorisation of South African society

The issue of African industrial and technical training in South Africa over the past half-century or so is perhaps most closely linked to the broader process of African workers moving steadily into occupational places in particular industries and skill levels which were previously filled by whites. The struggles waged by workers (white and black), government and employers to influence the racial employment structure are thus important to this thesis. What is required at the outset, then, is a grasp of the main theoretical issues around South Africa's changing political and economic structures over most of the century so that the question of education and training of Africans can be addressed and a basis laid for the chapters tracing the empirical changes in training policy and practice.

Probably the most significant terrain upon which different interpretations of South African history and society have been debated since the early 1970's has been that of the relative explanatory power of the concepts of race and class; and it is the two important frameworks within which these concepts have been deployed - liberalism and marxism - which will be the main focus of this theoretical introduction. The two perspectives imply and assert very different answers to the questions which this thesis raises, such as, what are the real motivating forces for the trend (if indeed it is a trend) toward class mobility among certain groups of Africans, will the increase in the training of Africans for higher skilled jobs contribute significantly to any national redistribution of resources, and are such trends an indication of South Africa's movement toward a more democratic society generally?

For our purposes, the central thread running through theories within the liberal school is the necessary existence of a capitalist economic system for the survival of a non-racial, democratic society in South Africa:⁷⁷

"One of the main presuppositions of current liberal ideology, certainly in the South African context, is that modern capitalism is basically an economic and social system which results in the peaceful interaction of, mutual co-operation between, and equivalent benefit to all its participants: that it is 'rational' and 'race-blind'.⁷⁸

It is the role of decisions and actions based upon racial prejudice and domination by one race over another which are considered to be of primary importance in tracing the contours of South African social life.

At this level of abstraction, liberal theorists tend to view the issue of training in terms of a 'human capital' model of worker remuneration and advancement.⁷⁹ Training is thus basically a means of investing in the labour power of a worker. On that basis, it is argued, the worker is able to demand generally higher wages and better conditions on the grounds of a more productive contribution to the production process. *Apartheid*, insofar as it allows non-market factors to inhibit the full development and rational utilisation of labour, creates stresses and imbalances in

⁷⁷ The degree to which the development of the former is seen as a dynamic force in favour of the latter differs between theorists. For instance, Horwitz (expressing a position shared by M. O'Dowd and the late D. Hobart Houghton) asserts that: "Economic rationality urges the polity forward beyond its ideology" (Horwitz, R. 1957, *The Political Economy of South Africa*). Blumer, on the other hand, points to industries' tolerance of a nonetheless economically irrational racist government policy: "Industry can and does tolerate a wide latitude of inefficient operation", being only "an incitant to change, without providing the definition of how change is to be met" (Blumer, H. 1965, G. Hunter (ed.), *Industrialisation and Race Relations*). Bromberger, arguing that even if white prosperity was in the short term dependent upon exclusive white privilege, they would in the longer term prove incompatible (Bromberger, N. 1974, in A. Leftwich (ed.) *Economic Growth and Political Change*).

⁷⁸ Atmore, A. and N. Westlake. 1972. "The Liberal Dilemma: A Critique of the Oxford History of South Africa": p.6.

⁷⁹ See, for example: Education Panel, 1961, *Second Report: Education and the South African economy*; Holmes, 1980, "Training for Growth", Jacobs, 1980, "Is education in South Africa geared for growth?".

the economy which are reflected in indicators such as inflated wages and low productivity. Liberal South African economist D. Hobart Houghton wrote that:

"...white voters have used their monopoly of political power to entrench their economic position by restrictions on the movement and advancement of African workers, by maintaining differentials in educational opportunities and by legislative methods to give the whites a monopoly of certain kinds of jobs. These contrived scarcities and imperfections in the labour market have a corrosive effect upon economic growth, and prevent optimum resource allocation".⁸⁰

Since the late 1960's, however, a critical stream of literature from neo-marxist theorists developed an alternative interpretation of the relationship between racial domination and economic modernisation / growth. In re-examining South Africa's history, the main point emerging was that, "quite contrary to the prevailing (liberal) thesis, white supremacy is continually being reinforced by economic development".⁸¹ The implication of this was that South Africa's

"...racial system may be most adequately explained as a class system...generated, and determined in its specific nature and functions, by the specific system of production and class structure of which it formed a part".⁸²

It is this "specific system of production" which is central to understanding the processes of class formation and the role of the state, and which thus requires discussion with relevance to industrial training.

An important step made by the 'revisionist' writers of the 1970's was the identification of a particular conceptual link between the racial nature of the South African state (in particular the institution of migrant labour) and the growth of South African capitalism, namely migrant labour's subsidisation of the reproduction costs of African labour-power.

⁸⁰ Houghton, D.H. 1967. *The South African Economy*: p.236.

⁸¹ Johnstone, F. 1970. "White Prosperity and White Supremacy in South Africa Today": p.68.

⁸² Johnstone, F. 1976. *Glass, Race and Gold*: p.4.

Capital, as Wolpe argues, was able to "pay for labour-power below its cost of reproduction [due to]...the availability of a supply of labour-power which is produced and reproduced outside the capitalist mode of production".¹³ The sites of this non-capitalist (or pre-capitalist) mode of production - the reserves - were identified not only as constructs of political or ideological significance, but as important and functional economic structures.¹⁴ However, the question of the nature of their functionality is important, and this brings us to consider the class nature of the state referred to in earlier chapters.

Early revisionists tended to assert a functionalist role for the state, insofar as their arguments about the state's reproduction of a pre-capitalist mode of production led them to conclude that the state always assumed a functional role for capital (by its nature as a state in capitalist society). This tended to overlook two areas. One was the extent to which there were divergent interests even within capital (between different 'fractions'), and the other was the way in which these class fractions struggled within the state to assert their interests. In these terms, it should be clarified that the state's role in reproducing, for instance, migrant labour is functional not in a necessary or general sense, but with regard to those classes or fractions which have successfully asserted their interests through the state apparatuses. As outlined in Chapter 1, the state is conceived of here as a condensate of class forces, which struggle amongst themselves to realise their particular interests. In the case of migrant labour, it was the class fraction of mining capital which was best served by the policy and which

¹³ Wolpe, H. "The theory of internal colonialism": p.247.

¹⁴ See Wolpe, H. 1972. "Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid"; Legassick, M. 1974. "South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence"; Wolpe, H. and M. Legassick. 1976. "The Bantustans and Capital Accumulation in South Africa"; Kaplan, D. 1979. "Class Conflict, Capital Accumulation and the State". See also Bundy, C. 1972. "The Emergence and Decline of the South African Peasantry".

was able to influence the state to maintain it. This hegemony which mining capital had established within the state, however, was the outcome of constant struggle. Reproduction of the migrant relationship was, like all aspects of social reproduction, dependent on the balance of class forces. That is to say, the struggles of other classes and fractions all have a potential impact on social reproduction, which may change from time to time.

As the economy evolved, therefore, the relative strength of capitalist fractions did change. Of particular relevance was the growth of industrial and commercial capital, and the different labour processes and labour-power which was required. This growth, argues Hindson, was "dependent not only on a growing supply of temporary migrant labour, but increasingly on [the] expansion of a permanent urban African workforce".⁸⁵ This will be empirically examined in the following chapter. For the moment, the point to be made is that within the above framework, the South African state embodies the conflict of class forces and has through this fact plays a central role in facilitating and *reproducing* the conditions for the production of surplus value. This concept of reproduction which has been an important tool employed by recent marxist theories of education in South Africa; these will now be discussed and their relevance to this thesis critically examined.

3.2. Educational studies in South Africa

The field of educational theory in South Africa has been slow to respond to the developments in marxist historiography discussed briefly above. However, according to Cross, the schools crisis between 1976 and 1980 led to "a new generation of educationists and historians of education with a viewpoint startlingly opposed to the 'liberal'...tradition", who

⁸⁵ Hindson, D. 1987. *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat*: p.10.

argued that "any objective analysis of an educational system must be accomplished with the use of the tools of political economy".⁸⁶

Significantly,

"[t]heir theoretical emphasis was...profoundly conditioned by...the neo-Marxist political economy tradition in Southern African studies and the repercussions of the influence of 'reproduction theory' in the sociology of education".⁸⁷

An important theoretical contribution to the theory of reproduction was made in the late 1960's by Louis Althusser, in his work on 'ideological state apparatuses'.⁸⁸ Bowles and Gintis then applied and developed this framework in a much-cited study of American schooling.⁸⁹ These works emphasised the extent to which the schooling systems in capitalist societies (as well as other institutions disseminating ideology, such as the church, the family, etc.) serve to reproduce ideological relations of domination, and thereby to reproduce also the central (economic) relation between labour and capital. There has been considerable criticism directed against this approach, based mainly upon a perceived functionalism (institutions in a capitalist society being seen to reproduce the basic relationships within that society by virtue of their existence within an integrated and functioning 'social whole') and reductionism (the structure of schooling in a capitalist society being seen merely to reflect the structure of the society's central contradiction as manifest in the work-place) which they are said to imply.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Cross, M. 1986. "A Historical Review of Education in South Africa: Towards an Assessment": p.1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*: p.17.

⁸⁸ See L. Althusser, 1984, *Essays on Ideology*.

⁸⁹ Bowles, S. and H. Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

⁹⁰ In South Africa, Chisholm (1981) and Levin (1980) challenged the failure of Althusser's concept of reproduction to cope with resistance and conflict within the schooling process. Fluxman (1981) criticises Bowles and Gintis for reducing the essential structure of the education system to that of production, and for reducing struggles in education to the contradiction between capital and labour. See

In the South African context Molteno, for instance, argues that despite their insistence upon the importance of class struggle, the South African proponents of reproduction theory as a tool in educational analysis still rest their arguments upon the functionalist assumption that "the reproductive needs of capital in general can be said to be met by the schooling system".⁹¹ Speaking strictly, he concludes, "such a view renders any notion of *failure* [of the education system] inconceivable".⁹²

These criticisms need not detain us here, however, for they are only valid insofar as reproduction theory is applied outside of the framework of class struggle; and historical materialism theoretically precludes such an analysis. The perspective of "reproduction theory" can be retained and does not entail a slide into functionalism as long as the processes of reproduction are identified as (themselves) aspects of class struggle and reproduction itself an effect of class struggle.⁹³ Hyslop insists that reproduction is only a functionalist concept "when it is conceived of as occurring automatically". If the relationship between the economy and education is not conceptualised in a fixed, mechanistic

Giroux (1983: pp.262 - 266), Hyslop (1985: pp.3 - 5) and Crooks (1987: pp.17 - 21) for discussion on this. On a broader level, Althusser's theory of ideology and ideological state apparatuses was often the starting point for the more fundamental critiques of 'structural Marxism'; for a review of these issues, see T. Benton (1984) *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism*.

⁹¹ Molteno, F. 1983. "Reflections on Resistance: Aspects of the 1980 Students Boycott": p.56, citing Collins and Christie, 1982: p.64.

⁹² Molteno, *op. cit.*: p.56. After contrasting the excesses of reproduction theory with those of an oversimplified "resistance" paradigm - which "celebrates, and ... uncritically identifies with, an oppositional or working class spirit" (p.56, citing P. Willis, 1983: p.107) - he suggests the concept of "cultural production" to trace and explain the dialectical relationship between agent and structure in the education process, specifically the conflict recently characterising the institution of Bantu Education.

⁹³ Kallaway puts the point bluntly: "Educational policies are an aspect of the struggle between different classes in society" (Kallaway, P. 1984. "An Introduction to the Study of Education for Blacks in South Africa": p.3).

way, then the situation could be theoretically accommodated where "a particular educational order can lose its reproductive capacities by becoming increasingly less articulated to the needs of capital".⁹⁴

As Hyslop has also pointed out, analyses of reproduction in South Africa have been strongly influenced by the cheap labour-power thesis. The result, he argues, has been a conceptualisation of Bantu Education as:

"an attempt to provide appropriate structures for the educational reproduction of a largely *unskilled* black labour force, within the context of an economy whose characteristic feature was labour *migrancy*" [my emphasis].⁹⁵

Hyslop contends that this approach has been subject to important criticisms which need to be considered by analyses of Bantu Education. Central among these critiques has been Hindson's work on influx control,⁹⁶ in which he develops the assertion that state strategies controlling access to urban areas since the 1950's have also reproduced a non-migrant, urban working class. This 'differentiated labour power thesis' has led Hyslop to challenge the way that revisionist educationists have conceptualised the reproduction of African labour power, and hence African education, in South Africa. He asserts, with reference to the schooling administered by the Department of Bantu Education, that this system was not "a monolithic entity, solely reproducing unskilled migrant labour-power". Rather, he argues that:

"the system prepared students for employment at a differentiated range of skill levels within the economy, and that the role of the education system in reproducing labour-power changed significantly across time".⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Hyslop, J. 1985. "The Concepts of Reproduction and Resistance in the Sociology of Education": p.18.

⁹⁵ Hyslop, J. 1986. "State Education Policy and the Social Reproduction of the Urban African Working Class: 1955 - 1976": p.3.

⁹⁶ Hindson, D. 1983. "The Pass System and the Formation of an Urban African Proletariat in South Africa".

⁹⁷ Hyslop, 1986, *op. cit.*: p.1.

This thesis, focusing as it does on reproduction within the work-place, is supportive of this observation. The more stable position of urban workers, I argue, differentiates them from migrants not only geographically, but with regard to access to urban employment, training, and a higher place in the occupational structure.⁹⁸

3.3. Conclusion

The state, comprising various conflicting class forces, plays a changing role in reproducing labour-power, depending on the balance of those forces. As the size and strength of industrial capital in South Africa grew, this fraction was more in a position to influence state policy in a way as to encourage the reproduction of a more skilled African work-force. One of the policy directions in point regards influx control, where the state has since the 1950's reproduced a growing permanent urban African population⁹⁹ This geographical differentiation has fostered a differentiation in the labour market. The latter has occurred through urban Africans having relatively better access to, for instance, basic education, higher-paid employment, and most importantly for this study, industrial training. It is argued here that such training has the potential to play a role in fostering mobility not only within but between classes. It needs to be remembered, though, that the source of the changes in policy allowing a significant role for training, needs to be explained. It is not sufficient to assume (in a functionalist way) that the state will always act in the interests of capital. Rather, the state's role in reproducing particular forms of labour-power is a process of constant struggle, subject to changing class forces.

⁹⁸ This training is normally 'in-service', ie. provided to *employed* workers. Hence the accessibility to the urban job market is a precondition for access to most industrial training institutions.

⁹⁹ Hindson, 1987, *op. cit.*

The evidence in Chapters 4 and 5 characterises state policy as neither automatically reproducing labour to suit capital nor as antithetical to capital's needs. Rather, while policy in the 1950's was formulated in line with concerns for protecting and upgrading white workers in the face of African 'infiltration', the 1960's began to see new imperatives being reflected in government discourse. It was not yet suggested that the white working class should not have a primary claim upon the state's allocation of privileges, but certain ministers were beginning to warn of the growing economy's skilled labour (and other related) demands. Indeed, the government was apparently even willing to slow down the pace of economic growth to avert the implications of predicted skill shortages. Monetary control, programmes to boost worker productivity, and fragmentation of jobs were among the measures recommended at this stage to address the new economic needs.

The 1970's brought "the combined pressures of recession, agitation from Anglophone business, and the rising strength of powerful Afrikaner industrial and financial capital".¹⁰⁰ The changing class nature of the Nationalist Party, the weakening of the organised white working class, and the growing mobilisation (and industrial action) of African workers in the 1970's began a major shift in state policy to align it more closely with capital's needs. In particular, the need to train urban Africans for an upgraded - ie. semi-skilled - role in 'white industrial areas' was acknowledged and acted upon. However, this still lagged considerably behind manufacturing capital's demands to make available skilled jobs, appropriate training and permanent accommodation rights for urban Africans. It was only with the major re-shuffle of the class forces within the state and the evolution of a 'reformed' political direction at the end of the 1970's that capital was finally able to have its main concerns materialise into policy.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*: p.42.

CHAPTER 4

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BETWEEN WORLD WAR II AND THE 1960's

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will examine the way in which the provision of training in South African industry changed in the period into the 1960's, in terms of the agents responsible for training, the methods employed, and the constituency. While the political imperative of that training was the privileging of whites, at the same time the traditional apprenticeship training methods were undercut by changing technology and labour processes. Also, pressure was growing for the greater utilisation of cheaper African labour in unskilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs; this pressure was further motivated by concerns about skill shortages.

These important economic imperatives are most closely linked to the process of mechanisation, which warrants some prior discussion on its conceptual aspects. Mechanisation - essentially the replacement of human labour power with machines - has as its basic motivation an increased productivity per worker. Marx¹⁰¹ conceptualised this as the result of the inevitable limit of the absolute surplus value that could be derived from a worker's physical strength and endurance. Machines, on the other hand, could make workers' performance progressively more efficient, as long as technological advance made increasingly fast, powerful and complex machinery available to producers.

Different arguments have been advanced regarding the implications of this process, especially with regard to the level of skill and control which workers experience in a mechanising production environment. The

¹⁰¹ Marx, K. 1976. *Capital: Volume One*: Parts 3, 4, and 5; pp.283-672.

"labour-process" approach (of writers such as Braverman)¹⁰² has emphasised the importance of the social relations of production (the antagonistic relationship between worker and capitalist) in determining the organisation and division of labour. The element of *control* is of central importance here, leading capitalists to find better means of controlling the labour process and the work-force in the interests of higher production and increased profits. This in turn involves weakening the ability of labour to demand a greater share of profits or to challenge the organisation of production. One strategy of doing this, it is argued, is through technologies which reduce the necessary skill of workers to perform the required tasks. Hence work is "deskilled" and taken over by machinery. The nature of workers' input to production becomes - in terms of skill - increasingly undermined and homogenised, and the possession of skills by workers becomes less and less of a bargaining factor. This argument tends to lean closest to the early marxist prediction of the polarisation of classes and the heightening of class struggle.

It has also been argued - to the contrary - that the main impact of technological progress in production heralds the "upgrading" of average skill-levels.¹⁰³ This, it was predicted, would lead to an increasingly high level of necessary skill among workers, and their consequent movement into more middle class jobs and lifestyles. In this scenario, the implication is that economic growth would demand more workers in more skilled categories, and that employees would gradually tend to move upward out of the working class; the divisions between classes would thus be progressively blurred rather than sharpened.

While the need for training African labour - in the light of economic growth and the relatively diminishing availability of white workers for

¹⁰² Braverman, H. 1974. *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*.

¹⁰³ See for instance D. Bell, 1974, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.

certain jobs - has been validly pointed out,¹⁰⁴ this observation does not take fully into consideration the changing nature of the jobs which Africans are entering and the struggles around their being employed there. As such, it does not suggest a clear enough picture of the different levels of skill into which African workers have moved (or will move) to be very useful to this study.

However, both the above arguments deserve to be borne in mind; for the latter provides the beginning of an empirical critique of Braverman's work, insofar as Braverman did not consider the "skill'ng" and consequent privileging of certain segments of workers as a divisive process (or even strategy) fostering capitalists' control over the organisation of production. Cullinan, for instance, interprets the state's training initiatives (for semi-skilled positions) in the early 1970's as part of

"a strategy by the state to foster differentiation within the black working class. The extension of a hierarchical division of labour to blacks can be viewed as part of the 'incorporationist strategy', although admittedly it is manifested more clearly at the level of professional, managerial and administrative roles where the nurturing of a black middle class is more obvious".¹⁰⁵

As a result, deskilling as well as "skill upgrading" (and the subsequent possibilities for the segmentation of the working class) need to be considered as parallel processes in the following chapters. In a recent study of the metal industry, for instance, Kraak is concerned to emphasise "the unevenness of capitalist development" and "the very real

¹⁰⁴ Heribert Adam, for instance, asserts that: "The mounting importance of manufacturing...requires more job dilution and the admission of more and better trained Africans into semi-skilled and skilled positions" (1971, *Modernising Racial Domination*: p.182). And also: "Given the white manpower shortage, economic growth makes it imperative that skilled positions be filled by non-whites. This requires giving adequate training to the formerly untrained" (*Ibid*: p.153).

¹⁰⁵ Cullinan, M.A. 1980. "Deskilling, Technical and Industrial Training, and White Craft Unions": p.32.

possibilities of reskilling tendencies occurring in capitalist production".¹⁰⁶ He asserts:

"Significant skills upgrading processes have occurred amongst the hundreds of thousands of semi-skilled African operative labour[ers] in the metal industry, who were previously unskilled".¹⁰⁷

4.2. Apprenticeship training and skill dilution.

Apprenticeship training was formerly under the control and responsibility of the artisan; as craft became part of the modern industrial process, so the craft union used apprenticeship as a condition for - and hence a mechanism to control - the entry of workers into skilled jobs. By the second decade of the century, this control was being strongly contested both by employers and the state, who were concerned to achieve both the dilution of certain crafts and a freer supply of skilled workers.¹⁰⁸ The issue of training, then, was to focus initially on the apprenticeship system, but was also to later extend into the sphere of less-skilled work.

The first Apprenticeship Act had been passed in 1922, against a background of, most importantly: 1. emerging struggles between craft unions on one hand, and employers and the state on the other, over the efficacy of the apprenticeship system;¹⁰⁹ and 2. conflict between craft

¹⁰⁶ Kraak, A. 1987. "Uneven Capitalist Development": p.14.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*: pp.26-27. See also A. Sitas, 1983, "African worker responses on the East Rand to changes in the metal industry".

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, J. 1984. *Industrialisation and Trade Union Organisation in South Africa, 1924-1955*: p.29.

¹⁰⁹ As early as 1918, the Minister of Mines and Industry was reported as telling Parliament that: "This system of apprenticeship was losing to a large extent its force on account of the importation of machinery into a large number of highly-organised industries. The system of apprenticeship was being abandoned" (*Cape Times*, 1 May 1918, in *HAD* Vol.3).

unions and the state over access to skills training for more white youths.¹¹⁰ Regarding the former point, there was growing concern in certain of the faster mechanising industries that training by journeymen was inadequate, as the jobs in workshops were becoming more specialised. The latter point revolved around the state's concerns about the prevailing large-scale white unemployment (and its implications for social control through white privilege) and the need to supply facilities to train white unskilled workers onto a level of skill where they would not have to compete for jobs with low-paid, unskilled black workers.

Lewis makes the point that the 1922 Apprenticeship Act (and its main amendment in 1944) was by no means - as it has been argued¹¹¹ - designed simply to protect white unions on the basis of their colour. For, while unions "gained institutional recognition for their established right to exercise some control over apprenticeship, and were afforded equal representation with the employers on apprenticeship committees", the Act did nothing to change the situations where "unions were weak or apprenticeship was already collapsing in the face of mechanisation and deskilling...".¹¹² Also, most employers examined by the Select Committee on Apprenticeship opposed the Act;¹¹³ those expressing support did so mainly on grounds that it should erode the quota system (fixed ratio's of artisans to apprentices). This was, moreover, an attitude echoed by the Minister of Labour.¹¹⁴ Lewis argues rather that apprenticeship

¹¹⁰ Lewis, *op. cit.*: pp.23-27.

¹¹¹ See, for instance, S. van der Horst, 1971, *Native Labour in South Africa*.

¹¹² Lewis, *op. cit.*: p.24.

¹¹³ SA, Union. 1921. *Reports of the Select Committee on the subject of the apprenticeship bill*: paragraphs 232 and 239.

¹¹⁴ The Minister stated: "These restrictions placed by trade unions on the numbers of apprenticeships can best be relaxed by a system of Apprenticeship Committees...in order to gain the trust of the trade unions" (*South African Journal of Industries*, September, 1921; cited in Lewis, *op. cit.*: p.27).

legislation was "part of wider government industrial and training policy", and not simply a response to what were perceived as white worker interests. That is to say, the legislation was not totally in conflict with processes of mechanisation and job fragmentation,¹¹⁵ and craft unions who had the power to do so, continued to resist efforts to undermine the quota system and the composition of trade skills.

The relevance of these issues to the question of current and future training is this: the provision of training by white craft unions was not by its nature - initially in any event - designed for *racial* protection. Neither was the state concerned to protect white unions as such, especially not the more politically independent craft unions. Rather, craft unions sought to protect their monopoly of skills, and the state sought to address the issue of social control through fostering a racial division of labour. The 1922 Apprenticeship Act had in fact given employers a new institutional role in the process of determining the supply of artisans. Unions were ambiguously affected, as Webster notes:

"The passing of the Apprenticeship Act in 1922 was to end the period of union autonomy over recruitment and training of apprentices and usher in a period of joint union-management regulation. While the union had lost exclusive control over the intake of apprentices, it had gained better enforcement of the rules".¹¹⁶

4.3. The war years and mechanisation

A marked growth in secondary industry between 1930 and 1950, especially in the heavy industrial sector, led to a number of important trends on the economic level: among these was a concerted move towards mass production - which implied greater mechanisation - causing the

¹¹⁵ Indeed, as this study will later show (see Chapter 5), official policy on African training came often to be paralleled by more explicit support for fragmentation or "restructuring" of jobs.

¹¹⁶ Webster, 1985. *Cast in a Racial Mould*: p.30.

traditional division of labour between artisans and unskilled workers to become "replaced by that of semi-skilled operatives working machines".¹¹⁷ The need to bring the division of labour into line with the needs of mass production was a constant concern of employers and government around the time of the war. The Board of Trade and Industries 1945 report on manufacturing stated that the traditional division of labour - where the artisan supplied the crucial skills - was "quite unsuited to manufacturing industry where mechanisation had been developed very largely on the basis of employment of the semi-skilled machine minder".¹¹⁸

In this context, the continued production of skilled labour (which was, Lewis notes, "still required for the construction, upkeep and repair of machinery")¹¹⁹ and the supply of semi-skilled workers for operative positions were considered as economic priorities.

The amending of the Apprenticeship Act in 1944 had no significant results in terms of meeting employers' demands for artisans, as was reflected by the continuation of the shortfall of artisans in industry.¹²⁰ The 1948 de Villiers commission into technical and vocational education proposed a number of measures to improve the quality and quantity of the traditional apprentice-training method. One recommendation was the shortening of the apprenticeship period, on the grounds that mechanisation had simplified craft skills.

¹¹⁷ In the 1930's and (especially) during the war years, the value of capital to labour ratio of private manufacturing rose from 794 pounds per worker in 1932 to 981 pounds per worker in 1939 and 1,156 pounds per worker in 1946 (O'Meara, D. 1983. *Volkskapitalisme*: pp.78-79).

¹¹⁸ SA, Union. 1945. *Investigation into manufacturing industries in the Union of SA*: paragraph 130.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, *op. cit.*: pp.128-129.

¹²⁰ This was pointed out by both the 1948 de Villiers Commission and the 1950 Ministerial Committee on Apprenticeship Revision (see below).

When the Ministerial Committee on Apprenticeship Revision reported in 1950, the shortage of artisans was considered serious. The committee was established in 1949 to assess the proposals of the de Villiers Commission; the emphasis was on faster returns from training, which was an even more urgent task after a drop-off in immigration of foreign skilled workers after 1948.¹²¹ Amended again in 1951, the Apprenticeship Act made provision for apprentices to shorten their training time by passing a trade test administered by the COIT, despite opposition by the Iron Moulders Society secretary Crompton. Crompton, who had sat on the (de Villiers) commission which had recommended the testing, saw the development as "the end of apprenticeship: 'the thin end of the wedge'".¹²²

4.4. Skill training and the racial division of labour

As mentioned in the introduction, the processes of mechanisation and skill dilution were crucial factors upon which training priorities were developed. It was bemoaned by the van Eck Report in 1941 that:

"the existing classification of skilled workers in the Union is a ten artificial and does not take cognisance of the fact that the greater mechanisation of industry in the Union has provided increased opportunity for the employment of semi-skilled workers in numerous occupations and has reduced the period of training required".¹²³

Mechanisation, the report asserted, would facilitate the greater use of African workers which "would reduce manufacturing costs". This would be paralleled by the advancement, through training, of unskilled whites, which would prevent "undesirable contact between Europeans and

¹²¹ See Gibson, J.L. 1979. "A Study of Education in Industry in South Africa and its Relationship to Industrial Growth": p.244.

¹²² Webster, *op. cit.* p.62; from an interview with Crompton in 1980.

¹²³ SA, Union. 1941. *Third interim report of the industrial and agricultural requirements commission*: paragraph 168.

non-Europeans" and thus safeguard "the racial interests of the community".¹²⁴

For it was crucial that the goal of mechanising production was achieved alongside the maintenance of a racial hierarchy within the production process. Lewis argues that a racial division of labour was central to "the Nationalist strategy...to cement class alliances in the face of the growing political challenge of the black masses... Nationalist policy reinforced the racial division of labour, so retaining the political support of white wage earners".¹²⁵ Significant over the 1930-1950 period was the growth of the African industrial workforce, so rapid that the relative percentage of whites in industry, while trebling in absolute terms, dropped from 35,9 per cent to 24,4 per cent between 1933 and 1950.¹²⁶ The Board of Industries and Trade's report in 1945 had stated that:

"As the artisan is losing his position of central importance in the modern manufacturing industry to the operative, the training of this class [operative] becomes of relatively greater importance".¹²⁷

The Board went on to qualify that the consequences for artisans were in fact positive. Skilled workers, it reported, would need to take on organising and supervisory roles, and to "provide the mechanism which allows the worker to produce. The actual production is performed by the operative who is required to execute only standardised operations".¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *Ibid*: paragraph 176.

¹²⁵ Lewis, *op. cit*: p.131. For alongside the fragmentation, deskilling and increasing socialisation of work came the need for more control and supervision of mass-production workers. These supervisors tended to be drawn from among artisans (*ibid*: p.94).

¹²⁶ O'Meara, *op. cit*.

¹²⁷ Board of Trade and Industries. 1945. *Investigation into manufacturing industries in the Union of South Africa*; cited in Cullinan, M. 1980. "Deskilling, Technical and Industrial Training, and White Craft Unions".

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

Although the promise of advancement to supervisory levels was held out to skilled workers, their power to control entry into the industry through Industrial Councils and Apprenticeship Committees was being steadily undermined. With the recognition of the fact that control over the labour process was being lost by artisans, the incorporation of white semi-skilled workers was deemed imperative by the previously-craft unions. This, then, often changed the unions' basis from solely skill-protection to racial exclusion. While artisans "reserved their work from operative encroachment...both skilled and semi-skilled white workers prevented the entry of unskilled (blacks) into the 'skilled' grades".¹²⁹

So despite the increasing numbers of Africans in operative positions, formal training for African operatives was considered unnecessary.¹³⁰ In line with the political/control function, states Lewis, "the state and industry sought to use industrial training to divide workers along lines of race" by limiting such training (which was hoped to lead to skilled status) to unskilled and semi-skilled whites.¹³¹

In the face of expanded African employment, employers' efforts to foster the racial division of labour and decrease African wages, state threats to segregate mixed unions, and some members' fears of African competition in the workplace, most industrial unions rallied to the racially exclusive policies of the South African Confederation of Labour

¹²⁹ Cullinan, *op. cit.*: p.19.

¹³⁰ The 1948 de Villiers Commission (into Technical and Vocational Education) considered only basic training for African workers in preparing them for semi-skilled work (SA, Union. 1948. *Report of the Commission on Technical and Vocational Education*: paragraphs 1867-1871). The 1950 Ministerial Committee on Apprenticeship Revision rejected the need for formal training, on the basis that "training within industry [on-the-job] is the most suitable method of training operatives" (SA, Union. 1950. *Report of the ministerial committee on apprenticeship system revision*: part 1, paragraph 89A.)

¹³¹ Lewis, *op. cit.*: p.122.

(SACOL). Their solution was statutory job reservation, first introduced in the late 1950's, reflecting a growing inability of white unions to secure their interests without government intervention. Webster writes that: "The very necessity of formalising their protection by resort to colour was a measure of their defeat".¹³²

Within this situation, training for whites within industry had also largely discarded its traditional content and role to assume new ones. Whereas training had at one stage been a means whereby artisan unions could control the inflow of qualified workers into their trade, and thereby protect their wages and positions from the competitive potential of the rest of the labour market, training was now becoming more of a means of privileging *white* - rather than simply *skilled* - workers. The increasing role of the state in the control over provision of that training was a pre-condition of this trend, and reflected the pre-occupation of the state and employers with maintaining the racial hierarchy in the work-place. For the need for skilled labour was not ignored by the Nationalists' training legislation; rather, it was addressed in overtly racial terms (and by implication, ethnic terms, as it was the Afrikaner who in large measure constituted the unskilled/semi-skilled ranks). This was in keeping with, on the one hand, the ideological commitment to the "volk" and to whites generally, and on the other, the economic imperative of dividing and controlling workers in the work-place through the racial division of labour.

Overviewing the situation at the end of the 1950's, Lewis writes that:

"Struggles over employers' attempts to reorganise work processes and the labour structure were accompanied by an ideological conflict as management adopted new strategies and techniques. The triumph of scientific management methods and their general acceptance marked the final demise of the craft union tradition and signified the incorporation of a registered trade union movement which had now internalised arguments in favour of piece-work and greater productivity. At the same time personnel management

¹³² Webster, *op. cit.*: p.117.

techniques and government labour training policies together helped to re-create and maintain racial hierarchy in the work-place".¹³³

4.5. State training policy in the 1950's

The 1950's saw increased state interest and involvement in the training of whites, as the new (Nationalist) government sought to firmly establish protective measures in the market place for its white worker constituency. The Minister of Labour bemoaned the "infiltration" of Africans into more-skilled jobs, and the need to stem this trend by supplying qualified whites:

"...Natives who now do work which was previously done by whites will be allowed to fill those posts only as long as we cannot put Whites into those posts".¹³⁴

The Minister of Labour warned that although whites enjoyed virtually full employment in the prevailing economic expansion, worse times could bring with them competition with Africans for the same - particularly semi-skilled - jobs.¹³⁵ His department's training schemes aimed to address skill needs in such a way as to privilege whites - through skill superiority - to avoid such an eventuality; in 1955 he told Parliament: "We hope to have very few semi-skilled Whites within five years".¹³⁶

For this purpose, the Training of Artisans Act (No.36 of 1951) had been passed to allow the training of people over 21 (without involving the long period of apprenticeship), so that workers could be upgraded to artisan

¹³³ Lewis, *op. cit.*: p.180.

¹³⁴ SA, Union. *House of Assembly Debates (HAD)*; Vol.89, 7 June 1955: col.7156.

¹³⁵ See *SAIRR Survey, 1954-55*: p.161.

¹³⁶ SA, Union. *HAD; op. cit.* Of the semi-skilled positions in industries and trades covered by Wage Board determinations between 1937 and 1952, 32,5 per cent were filled by whites; they filled 84,2 per cent of skilled and 1,5 per cent of unskilled places (*ibid*: p.153).

status and the generation of skills (amongst the white labour force) generally speeded up.¹³⁷ Said the Minister of Labour:

"We want to give them [white workers without previous vocational training] the opportunity of becoming trained artisans without serving the ordinary period".¹³⁸

Once again, restrictive provisions on the union membership of Africans and the power of white unions through the apprenticeship committees limited the benefits of the Act to whites only.¹³⁹

Parallel to these initiatives in white training, the important Eiselen Commission on Native Education had delivered some guidelines as to the fate of Africans in this regard; its essential recommendation was

"...that technical and industrial schools should be planned in accordance with a general plan of economic development for the Bantu, and should be controlled and financed by the same administrative machinery as controls the development plan".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Dowie, F. 1979. "The training of Black industrial workers in South Africa": p.120. In the same year, a scheme to train 100 "male South African citizens of European descent...who had an educational qualification of at least standard six" was jointly established by the Departments of Labour and of Education, Arts and Science (*Department of Labour Annual Report, 1951* (UG. No.45/1953): p.18). By 1955, three schools had been established to give one year's intensive training (free of charge, from October 1955) in specific trade skills to white adults, who were then placed in employment at prescribed rates of pay (*SAIRR Survey, 1954-5*: p.162). The scheme was initially limited to training in the building trades only, in which 922 trainees had been admitted by 1955; in 1956 courses in fitting, electrical work and motor mechanics were added, these being trades in which the Department's 1956 manpower survey showed there to be a shortage of artisans (*Department of Labour Annual Report, 1956*: p.3). Dowie notes that 2571 workers had attained artisan status in terms of this Act by 1976.

¹³⁸ SA, Union. *HAD*; *op. cit.*: column 7150.

¹³⁹ The Wiehahn Commission into Labour Legislation, when reporting on training legislation in 1980, made this pointed remark in recommending a changed role for the Training of Artisans Act: "Legislation of this nature should not be regarded as a 'welfare service' aimed at the protection of a small section of the community" (*Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation, Part 2: Training*: p.35, paragraph 3.31).

¹⁴⁰ Eiselen Commission, 1951: p.124, paragraph 705.

Training for Africans was to be organised on the basis of their subordinate and strictly controlled places in the job market.¹⁴¹ The exact implications of this policy were later to be bluntly outlined by H.F.

Verwoerd in his notorious words:

"There is no place for him [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour...for that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed".¹⁴²

The blueprint for white protection in a growing economy would, in Verwoerdian terms, involve the decentralisation of labour-intensive industries to the border areas (where Africans could be allowed to perform more-skilled work) while more mechanised industry in 'white' urban areas would be controlled and staffed by whites.¹⁴³ African workers would be required to perform unskilled work only.

The reality of the situation, however, was more complicated. Importantly for our purposes, for instance, the "certain forms of labour" referred to were by no means static categories in reality. There were in fact themselves the subject of continued contestation in the struggle between employers, white unions, and the state. Already, there was legislated provision for the training of skilled African builders by the government's Central Organisation for Trade Testing (COTT). And although the Nationalist Minister of Labour had temporarily suspended the scheme, the passing of the 1951 Native Building Workers Act (which prohibited the

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*: p.151, paragraph 952. The Commission suggested that a body be established

"...which can co-ordinate training with employment possibilities, to function as a part of the machinery of the Union Board for Bantu Education [later dissolved in favour of the Department of Bantu Education]..".

¹⁴² Verwoerd, H.F. 1954. *Bantu Education: Policy for the Immediate Future*: p.24.

¹⁴³ Lipton, M. 1986. *Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986*: pp.30-31.

performance of skilled building work in 'white' areas by Africans, but allowed the Minister to grant exemptions to this rule) put the scheme back in operation. Generally, though, the provision of government training to produce skilled African workers was limited to the bantustans.¹⁴⁴

In 1959, an interdepartmental commission (comprising the departments of Bantu Education; Bantu Administration and Development; Education, Arts and Science; and Labour) had been appointed by the Minister of Native Affairs to determine the need for African artisans in bantustans and townships, to plan future training facilities, and to "report on measures that might be necessary to prevent friction between White and Bantu artisans".¹⁴⁵ The result was a decision by the Department to build more trade schools (in bantustans only) and more technical schools (in bantustans and townships) to feed these skills into bantustan areas. Statistics of pupils in classes in trade, technical and vocational schools indicate a substantial increase in enrolment during the latter part of the 1960's, as Table 4.1 shows. The absolute numbers, however, remain small.

¹⁴⁴ Christie and Collins also note that: "During the 1950's, technical and vocational education for blacks was virtually non-existent. It was only in the period of economic growth in the 1960's that this sector of education was expanded" ("Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction": p.180).

¹⁴⁵ De Vaal, J.B. (Chief Planner, Department of Bantu Education), *Bantu Education Journal*, December 1965: p.6.

Table 4.1.
African pupils in trade, technical and vocational schools

1960 1,734	1961 1,775	1962 2,196	1963 2,035	1964 1,831	1965 2,730	1966 2,222	1967 2,366	1968 2,880
1969 3,390	1970 3,652	1971 4,070	1972 4,349	1973 4,823	1974 4,597	1975 4,607	1976 4,261	1977 4,185

Note: Statistics for 1976 and 1977 exclude Transkei (in 1975, there were 4,128 pupils excluding Transkei).
Source: Department of Education and Training. 1977. *Annual Report* (RP 14/1978); Table 1.4.1, p.126.)

Moreover, the facilities supporting these numbers seem to have grown only marginally over this period. Table 4.2 shows the number of schools or sections of schools used for the different categories of training.

Table 4.2.
Schools for African trade, technical and vocational training

	Technical Secondary	Advanced Technical	Trade & Vocational
1962	n.a.	0	31
1963	5	0	28
1964	4	0	29
1965	5	0	31
1966	5	0	28
1967	7	0	31
1968	4	3	30
1969	4	2	30
1970	4	2	29
1971	5	2	33
1972	5	2	
1973	5	2	42
1974	5	2	42
1975	5	2	42
1975*	5	2	34
1976*	6	3	34
1977*	5	3	37

* Excluding Transkei.

Sources: DBE, 1972, *Annual Report* (RP 93/1973); and DET, 1977, *Annual Report*, (RP 14/1978), Table 1.2.2; p.120.

As far as 'white areas' were concerned, there were two laws in which the government had included steps to stimulate industrial training: the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 had made provision for any training scheme established to be made binding on the whole industry, and for a levy to be placed on other employers in the industry; and the Income Tax Act

of 1962 made some provision for the training costs to be deducted from taxable income. Little attention was focused on training of Africans for skilled jobs in cities, as they could normally not be employed in that capacity. Only the Black Building Workers Act of 1951 allowed for special permission to be given by the Minister of Labour for Africans to perform skilled building tasks in urban areas. The limitations as to geographic siting reflects the prevailing working consensus between employers and government that skilled work should remain limited to whites; hence the exclusion of any African training with an implicit high level of skill (artisan) from white areas. As de Vaal states:

"The commission adopted the standpoint that there would be every possible professional opportunity for the Bantu in their homelands... In the Bantu residential areas, however, the Bantu will have to be restricted to certain limiting measures in order to prevent competition between the White and Bantu artisans".¹⁴⁶

4.6. Skill shortage arguments and new scope for training: the 1960's

In 1960, the Prime Minister had selected an economic Advisory Council to represent the main private economic sectors as well as government departments dealing with economic matters. The Council was to work in conjunction with the Prime Minister's Economic Adviser to improve "co-ordination and exchange of information about expectations and investment programmes between various government departments and the private sectors of the economy".¹⁴⁷ The Council's first task was to investigate decentralisation policy, but its concerns extended to broader issues, not least among them being labour utilisation, skill requirements, and training.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*: pp.6-7.

¹⁴⁷ Houghton, D.H. 1967. *The South African Economy*: p.211.

In 1963, the Minister of Finance warned in his Budget Speech of the possible implications of skilled labour shortages in a fast-growing economy; the main concern was the inflationary pressures of cost-push factors such as skill bottlenecks and more general wage increases:

"It is possible that some bottlenecks will develop as economic activity increases, particularly with respect to skilled labour, and that this may lead to rising costs in some industries... The danger of cost-inflation cannot...be ignored, and we shall have to see whether something cannot be done to reduce the cost-structure..."¹⁴⁸

The following year, the expected rise in costs within certain skill-short industries was noticed; but the rest of the economy was reported as stable. Immigration, having dropped off after 1948,¹⁴⁹ had been re-stimulated at the beginning of the 1960's by a well-funded Immigration Council, leading to a net gain of 250,000 white immigrants between 1960 and 1970.¹⁵⁰ The growth of the economy was clearly still reliant on skilled immigrants, as the Minister of Finance noted in 1964:

"South African industry is doubtless still capable of further expansion, especially as new capacity now being installed comes into use and as immigration continues to supplement the local supply of labour".¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ SA, Republic. *Budget Speeches 1963-'64*; 20 March 1963: p.3.

¹⁴⁹ In 1947, the government introduced a scheme of sponsored immigration to meet the demand for skilled labour (Union, SA. 1949. *Report of the Secretary for Labour, 1947*: p.5). This had been cut back severely by the National Party on its entry into government in 1948, and there had in fact been a net loss through emigration by the end of 1949. As the opposition, they had criticised the immigration of foreign skilled workers while so many local white (mainly Afrikaans) youth remained untrained and often unemployed. A parliamentary critic of craft unions' attitudes in this regard had earlier exemplified the sentiment that would prevail in the immediate aftermath of 1948, when he said that "some of those trade unions lend themselves to import people from outside rather than give work to our Afrikaner youngsters" (*HAD* Vol.48, 14 April 1944: column 5095). Gibson suggests the drop in immigration was partly as a result of economic recovery in Britain, from where most skilled immigrants traditionally came (Gibson, J.L. 1976. "A Study of Education in Industry in South Africa and its Relationship to Economic Growth": p. 243).

¹⁵⁰ Lipton, *op. cit.*: p.34.

¹⁵¹ SA, Republic. *Budget Speeches 1964-'65*, 16 March 1964: p.3.

The office of the Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister had just produced its first Economic Development Programme, forecasting economic and labour trends and requirements for the five-year period until 1969. Prominent among its concerns was a projected skill shortage of some 30,000 white workers by the end of the decade which would, the report asserted, constitute a major impediment to sustained growth.¹⁵² 1964 also saw the establishment by the Department of Bantu Education of its first "ad hoc border industrial school" in Mdantsane, linked directly to the need for operative workers for industry in the area; in this case, the school was to serve textile factories in the Ciskei, teaching weaving, spinning, winding, as well as "the official languages and hygiene".¹⁵³ Industrialists would supply the buildings and training equipment necessary, and the Department of Bantu Education would provide classroom equipment and the salaries of instructors; the Department would also test the workers after training.

In 1965, the Minister acknowledged that neither the balance of payments nor the available level of skilled labour would support a growth rate of 6 per cent per annum for a full five-year cycle, and that a "temporary retardment" of growth was necessary to avert "the disaster of prolonged recession".¹⁵⁴ This was recommended alongside measures - which continued into subsequent years - to "halt the excessive growth of monetary demand in respect of both investment and consumption...".¹⁵⁵ The Minister of Finance in 1966 introduced the question of productivity - as a measure to combat inflation - into his Budget Speech. The Department of Labour in that year also established a Productivity Advisory Committee. Productivity, combined with the monetary/fiscal measures, was the main

¹⁵² Houghton, *op. cit.*: p.213.

¹⁵³ Horrell, M. 1968. *Bantu Education to 1968*: p.103.

¹⁵⁴ SA, Republic. *Budget Speeches, 1965-'66*; 24 March 1965: p.4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*: pp.4-5.

focus of the 1967 campaign sloganed "Work and Save".¹⁵⁶ It would appear that government saw its main contribution to productivity at that stage as the financing of technical education; the Minister of Finance made it clear that government considered the basic responsibility for productivity as lying with the private sector. But by the end of the 1960's, the shortage of skilled labour was as gravely perceived as ever.¹⁵⁷

Predictions of shortfalls in the supply of skilled labour in various sectors of the South African economy have emerged periodically, especially since World War Two.¹⁵⁸ The prosperous years of the 1900's, however, exerted unprecedented demand on the white labour market; the period is generally recognised as one in which the white population became no longer able to supply the required complement of skilled labour.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, strategies to employ more effectively the less skilled labour-power of African workers were urged more than ever by employers and liberal politicians.

The labour process in South African industry had long since been changing with the imperatives of mechanisation toward a modified division of labour. The traditional skilled-unskilled division of labour was less and less applicable to modernising production methods, being constantly replaced by a more complex division requiring more work at intermediary skill levels to be performed. The growing demand among industrial

¹⁵⁶ SA, Republic. *Budget Speeches 1967-8* 22 March 1967: p.7.

¹⁵⁷ Government remained concerned in 1968 that "although the demand for labour in general has eased somewhat, most classes of skilled labour remain in short supply" (*Budget Speeches, 1968-'69*; 27 March 1968: p.4). This, it was considered - combined with the "excessive liquidity in the private sector" - signalled the growing threat of inflation (*Budget Speeches, 1969-'70*: p.2).

¹⁵⁸ For discussion on the issue of skill shortages, see Chapter 6.

¹⁵⁹ Davies, 1979, "The Restructuring of the Racial Division of Labour in in South Africa"; Saul and Gelb, 1981, "The Crisis in South Africa".

employers was thus for semi-skilled labour - usually machine operators - who functioned within narrowly prescribed job demands. Against the background of the growing clamour about skill-shortages, Africans were the largest and cheapest group from which this labour could be drawn.

The call by employers to improve levels of productivity and skill-supply focused primarily on two connected strategies: the need to reschedule skilled categories of work and thereby open them to lower skill-grades; and the need to imbue more workers with skills (through training) for these positions. In 1968, the President of the Federated Chamber of Industries (FCI), wrote that:

"Efforts at raising the productivity of non-European workers must include further conscious steps to fit them into more productive aspects of the manufacturing process. Much has been done to achieve this by means of regrading categories of employment in order that non-European workers can be more productively employed but there is still much scope for this practice".¹⁶⁰

GJ Nel of the Cape Chamber of Industries (CCI), in an article entitled "Productivity, race relations and inflation", stated that:

"One of the most urgent needs of industry today is adequate training facilities. It is becoming more widely realised that if the requirements of industry are to be met, new [ie. primarily African] entrants must be trained more effectively than they are at present".¹⁶¹

In 1969, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI) made its first appeal to the Economic Advisory Council to "redivide" white work as a means of allowing more African workers into industrial jobs in 'white areas'.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Smith, F.L.J. 1968. "Some of the problems currently facing industry in South Africa": p.8.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*: p.23.

¹⁶² In an address to SABRA in 1974, the immediate past-president of the AHI, P.K. Hoogendyk, said that:

"As far back as 1969, the AHI appealed to the Economic Advisory Council for goal-directed adjustments within the broad framework of government policy, to enable Bantu workers, through a process of job fragmentation, to make an increasing contribution to the economic development of South Africa" ("The training of Bantu in industry, trade and the services, especially in white areas" p.5.)

There was also emerging within industry a concern to intensify the method of training apprentices, by moving away from the traditional, informal, and lengthy mentor relationship between artisan-'trainer' and apprentice, and drawing training into a more structured environment established and overseen by employers or employer bodies. Gibson writes that:

"Organisations [of employers] with established in-service training schemes were embarking on costly expansion programmes. Some industries which had formerly relied on individual concerns within their organisations to provide training facilities, were now planning to increase and improve the supply of labour by means of central training centres organised by the industries themselves".¹⁶³

Within the state, there were stirrings indicating that a more pro-active approach was on the cards. The Minister of Finance had warned in his 1968 Budget Speech that "although the demand for labour in general has eased somewhat, most classes of skilled labour remain in short supply".¹⁶⁴

The Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council subsequently established a Working Committee on Manpower Training, "to report on training programmes in various sectors of the economy and to stimulate further training by publishing information in connection with approaches to manpower training".¹⁶⁵ But despite these murmurs of support for upgrading through training, government response soon began to show an awareness that the training option could not, in isolation, begin to

Also see: *SAIRR Survey*, 1971: p.192.

¹⁶³ Gibson, *op. cit.*: p.423.

¹⁶⁴ SA, Republic. *Budget Speeches, 1968-'69*; 27 March 1968: p.4. The Manpower Survey the following year confirmed this, at least in relation to artisans; as the Department of Labour stated: "The survey revealed that there was a shortage of 14,094 (8,28%) White artisans...[and] 1,158 (3,9%) Coloured artisans... (SA, Republic. 1970. *Annual Report of the Department of Labour, 1969* (RP 93/1970): p.4).

¹⁶⁵ SA, Republic. 1985. *SA Yearbook*: p.483.

constitute a serious solution to the perceived skill shortage. The simple provision of skills to workers or work-seekers was only a part - and a less fraught part at that - of the problem. More crucial to the strategies of response would be the issues around the *employment* of the worker once trained; for recipients of training would be primarily African, and bound by the various job determinations and statutory constraints to the lower skill-levels of work.

The brief of the Committee for the Better Utilisation of Labour (also known as the Geyser Committee after its chair, the Secretary for Labour) established the following year, therefore encompassed a broader focus than just training. It was instead "to give attention to the improved utilisation of manpower, within government policy...[through, *inter alia*] the upgrading and greater utilisation of Non-White labour".¹⁶⁶ The real meaning of 'greater utilisation' of African labour was becoming clearer: in the light of no immediate government concessions allowing urban African workers to occupy jobs classified as skilled, the only option was a change in the nature or classification of 'white' occupations, allowing openings at lower skill levels. The recommendations were only seriously considered, however, when they were incorporated into the 1971 Riekert Committee's report on decentralisation. In the meantime, the Minister of Labour rejected vehemently any of the parliamentary opposition's proposals regarding labour utilisation by both underplaying the seriousness of the skill shortage and by casting suspicion upon the political motives behind such proposals as were made. This is taken up in the following chapter.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

4.7. Conclusion

In the light of the mechanisation of industry, especially since World War II, capital was pursuing the fragmentation of skill to allow the employment of cheaper semi-skilled Africans to operate production machinery. In a few industries, craft unions resisted these processes with some success. Other craft unions began to admit workers of lower skill-levels, and many of these chose racial exclusion as a protective mechanism. This option was encouraged by the state, as the racial division among workers was crucial to controlling the labour-force. State training policies further fostered this through their training policy. Artisan training for Africans was confined to bantustans and school-level technical training was limited; alongside which, mature whites were given the opportunity to qualify as artisans without undergoing full apprenticeships.

During the 1960's, employers emphasised the growing shortage of skills as an argument for reclassifying trades and opening them for performance by cheaper African labour. The state, however, was on the one hand trying to come to terms with serious obstacles in the supply of skilled labour, while on the other being cautious not to be seen as reneging on its political commitment to keep skilled occupations white.¹⁶⁷ As the economy boomed, however, the state was pushed further towards confronting the issue of reproducing a more skilled section of the urban African labour force for the burgeoning industrial sector. The state responded later with a number of initiatives to improve the provision of industrial training to Africans; these were still, however, limited to semi-skilled levels, serving the principle of no African artisans in 'white areas'.

¹⁶⁷ It would appear that different actors within the state had very different allegiances in this regard, contributing toward the political lack of direction (during Prime Minister Vorster's last days in office) which preceded the 'reform period' and which receives attention in the following chapter.

And the 1970's brought not just continued growth and consequent demand for higher-skilled labour, but new outburst of popular resistance from among the African working class. This will be the area of discussion in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

LABOUR AND TRAINING IN THE 1970's

5.1. Introduction

Until the early 1970's, the floating of the colour bar was still considered by employers as a viable option - in the face of white worker and government resistance - to the proper training and employment of Africans in skilled jobs. Under the prosperous conditions of the previous two decades (facilitated by large foreign investments, a growing white consumer market and the effective suppression by the state of black popular and trade union opposition) it was, Davies writes, "scarcely worth the risk of engaging in class struggle to bring about a comprehensive solution" to the white monopoly of skills. Indeed,

"...even the most liberal tendencies within the bourgeoisie sought little more during the boom of the sixties and early seventies than a more favourable adjustment within the framework of the racist hierarchical division of labour".¹⁶⁸

With the decline in profitability since mid-1974 (linked to the international economic downturn, and earlier, due to inflation, skilled labour shortages and balance of payments deficits)¹⁶⁹ the costs of maintaining a compliant but exclusive white skilled stratum became increasingly unacceptable. The demand was that skilled positions had to be filled directly by blacks, and necessary training - it would follow - would have to be provided.

This was not, however, an unexpected situation, even from the point of view of the government. Much had been said in Parliament since the

¹⁶⁸ Davies, R. 1979. "Capital restructuring and the modification of the racial division of labour": p.187.

¹⁶⁹ Saul, J. and Gelb, S. 1981. "The Crisis in South Africa": p.23.

late 1960's about inflation and productivity, and the 1972 Reynders Commission¹⁷⁰ had addressed precisely the question of the health of South Africa's export trade and the implications for the balance of payments. All this attention had led to the suggestion, if not the concrete recommendation, of higher levels of employment and training for Africans in urban areas. Before examining the attitudes and actions of the actors in the training field during the 1970's, it is be useful to look briefly at some of the processes at work in the industrial division of labour, which affected the extent and kind of training provided for African workers.

5.2. Skill fragmentation and training

Most importantly, the fragmentation of artisan tasks was proceeding apace, especially in those industries where mechanisation was most advanced and where the shortage of artisan skills gave employers leverage against white trade unions at Industrial Council negotiations. (See Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 for the increase in the number of Africans in semi-skilled jobs in South African industry since 1969.)

¹⁷⁰ SA, Republic. 1972. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Export Trade in the Republic of South Africa.*

Table 5.1
Semi-skilled employees in industry,
by race: 1969-1985

	white	coloured	Indian	African
1969	131679	149921	76735	310194
1971	131281	174979	64891	426251
1973	132722	181128	64871	450286
1975	138608	188148	65569	528855
1977	128047	172686	62701	655157
1979	130455	197225	68634	609771
1981	135133	235223	73031	694239
1983	139195	215877	67339	734734
1985	122390	237287	64988	898425

Source: calculated from data in Manpower Surveys, 1969-1985.

Indeed, the reality and extent of skill shortages in different industries at different times is a moot point, made especially so (according to some) by the weight which employers have tended to attach to such shortages as a justification for forcing fragmentation agreements. For although the country's 'skills crisis' had become almost conventional wisdom by the 1970's,¹⁷¹ the particular manifestations of the problem have been challenged by certain observers. Meth, for instance, argues that "the extent of skill shortages is very difficult to determine and consequently published estimates need to be treated with the greatest circumspection".¹⁷² Assessing the private sector's concern over insufficient trainees, he asserts that the "alleged shortage of apprentices is shown to be at variance with the 'facts'...".¹⁷³ Due to the cheapness of African labour compared to white apprentices, explains Meth, South African employers have always tried to cut down on the amount of apprentices they indenture. This has been made possible by

¹⁷¹ In 1973, for instance, Schlemmer wrote of the the South African economy that "a serious shortage of skilled manpower exists. At least 50 references to statements by businessmen and officials in this regard could be given..." (*Employment Opportunity and Race in South Africa*:).

¹⁷² Meth, C. 1979. "Trade Unions, Skill Shortages and Private Enterprise": p.87.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

mechanisation and skill fragmentation, strategies for which employers use the skill shortage argument as a justification.¹⁷⁴ Webster's study of the metal industry also supports the argument that employers generally did not encourage apprenticeship (due to the relative cheapness of semi-skilled Africans compared to apprentice whites) but still argued for fragmentation on the basis of a skill shortage.¹⁷⁵

If we consider Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2, which compare the number of African and white workers in the categories of semi-skilled and artisan occupations, a steady increase in the number of semi-skilled Africans relative to the stagnation of the other groups is clear.

Table 5.2
Artisans and semi-skilled workers,
white and African: 1969-1985

	whites semi-skilled	Africans semi-skilled	white artisans	African artisans	Ratio of A-w art's
1969	131679	310194	156498	1404	1:112
1971	131281	426251	182015	6438	1:28
1973	132722	450286	183888	0	-
1975	138608	528855	176299	4866	1:36
1977	128047	655157	173650	4846	1:36
1979	130455	609771	171577	4066	1:42
1981	135133	694239	175354	13223	1:13
1983	139195	734734	175404	9740	1:18
1985	122390	898425	165049	12719	1:13

Source: calculated from data in Manpower Surveys, 1969-1985.

This table reflects the extent to which changing production processes have demanded increasing amounts of non-artisan labour, and the extent to which that labour has been African (and thus invariably lower-paid). Before this could be said to support the argument that employers *avoided*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*: p.72. As a qualification, he suggests that a side-effect of rising African wages in the 1970's "almost appear to have made white apprentice employment into a paying proposition". If this is true, it may be one of the factors contributing to the increase in the number of apprentices indentured since 1979 (see Figure 8).

¹⁷⁵ Webster, E. 1985. *Cast in a Racial Mould*: pp.162-163.

indenturing apprentices in favour of cheaper African workers, however, it would be necessary to consider the response of employers to the increased opportunities to train artisans which were opened up by post-Wichahn legislation at the end of the decade. In other words, it needs to be asked whether employers seriously take advantage of the lifting of legal restrictions on the indent^{en}uring of African apprentices in the 1980's. Or does the legalisation of African artisans in 'white areas' really only 'call the bluff' of employers and expose their more fundamental interest in cheaper, de-skilled labour (as Meth would suggest). A cursory look at the biennial figures in Table 5.3 indicate considerable relative growth of African apprentices between 1979 and 1983; the figures drop, though, until 1985 (while white apprentices continue to increase). At the same time, there was still much criticism voiced by both the Department of Manpower and the private sector that employers' apprentice training efforts were inadequate. This will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 7.

Table 5.3 (and Figure 5.3) show details of the number of apprentices in the different population groups being registered between 1969 and 1985. White apprentice numbers show an unsteady growth from 37,551 to 43,098 over the period, while African apprentices leap from below 1,000 to over 11,000 between 1979 and 1983, to slump back to 7,214 in 1985. What is to be made of these figures? They certainly represent a marked initial change. However, by the end of 1985, they still represented only about one sixth of the number of white apprentices. Furthermore, the biggest absolute increase in African apprentices (7,849 between 1981 and 1983) is paralleled by a similarly large increase (4,410) in coloured apprentices (increments in this category had previously been closer to 1,000 or 2,000 between Manpower Surveys). This would suggest that increases in the number of African apprentices were in part linked to a general demand for apprentices rather than only to the abolition of legal restrictions.

Table 5.3
Apprentices registered, by race: 1969-1985

	white	coloured	Indian	African
1969	37551	4906	481	11
1971	40656	6937	1500	2013
1973	38648	7880	1415	0
1975	36107	6098	1194	1616
1977	37911	7811	1898	857
1979	34486	6597	1636	829
1981	40864	7691	2453	4130
1983	42189	12101	2810	11979
1985	43098	8983	2321	7214

Source: calculated from data in Manpower Surveys, 1969-1985.

At the end of the 1960's, federations representing a couple of the largest industries training and consuming artisan labour - the Building Industry Federation of SA (BIFSA) and the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of SA (SEIFSA) - were trying to rationalise their production in the light of the (perceived or real) scarcity and the high cost of their artisans.¹⁷⁶ These two industries provide useful case studies in the process of fragmentation of artisan skills. And because it is not possible to generalise very accurately about the history of fragmentation in the economy, a brief overview of the process in the building and metal/engineering industries up to the 1970's will now follow.

5.2.1. The building industry

Employers in the building industry had only in the previous decade and a half begun to erode significantly the control which white artisans held over the composition of and access to skilled work. Due to the specific

¹⁷⁶ The Department of Labour had noted in its 1969 Annual Report that:

"As far as White artisans were concerned, the biggest shortage, viz. 6,224, appeared to be in the Metal and Engineering trades (including the Electrical trades), followed by the Building industry (4,623)..." SA, Republic. 1970. *Department of Labour: Annual Report, 1969* (RP 93/1970): p.4.

nature of the labour process, the relatively limited mechanisation that had occurred in the building industry had affected mainly the level of unskilled work.¹⁷⁷ From 1953, employers set a more assertive process in motion wherein unions accepted a series of job fragmentations at Industrial Council negotiations (see Table 5.4 below).

¹⁷⁷ Crankshaw, O. 1987. "Trade Union Strategy and the Labour Labour Process: TUCSA Trade Unions in the Transport and Building Industries, 1955-1977": pp.47-49.

Table 5.4
Fragmentation Agreements in the
Building Industry, until 1976

Year	Industrial Council	Nature of fragmentation agreed
Prior to 1953		Only 15 tasks (all unskilled) allowed to be performed by non-artisan labour.
1953	Durban	Semi-skilled workers allowed to operate hoists, sand-papering machines, cement-mixers, and certain other machines.
1959	Transvaal	1) Extended use of unskilled labour from 22 to 76 tasks. 2) 9 previously skilled tasks redefined as semi-skilled.
1962	Transvaal	Jib-hoist operator redefined semi-skilled.
1964	Transvaal	Machine-screeding of cement floors removed from skilled schedule.
1966	Transvaal	Artisans' work generally redefined to exclude routine tasks, leaving to negotiation whether such tasks were unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled.
1967-8	W.Province	54 artisan tasks redefined as semi-skilled.
1968	Durban	1) 49 artisan tasks redefined as semi-skilled. 2) Extended use of unskilled labour from 76 to 84 tasks.
1969	Transvaal	Semi-skilled work extended to include 49 tasks (mainly in bricklaying, plastering and painting trades).
1972-3	W.Province	15 more tasks redefined as semi-skilled (woodworking, plumbing and stonemasonry).
1975	Transvaal	Semi-skilled operatives permitted to do: 1) most bricklaying of walls; 2) most plastering tasks; 3) more carpentry and joinery tasks; 4) a number of other previously skilled tasks such as welding, pipe-laying, assembling of shuttering.
1975	Durban	1) Semi-skilled tasks up from 49 to 81. 2) Unskilled tasks up from 84 to 93.
1976	W.Province	Operatives allowed to do most painting tasks in sub-economic housing schemes.

Source: from information in O. Crankshaw, 1987: pp.50-57.

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