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education and the future of south africa

a policy statement by the english academy of south africa — may 1976

The basic premise of the English-speaking tradition in education is expressed by Boyce:

> "We believe in orderliness and discipline, especially self-discipline which persists in the absence of the teacher or of the controlling authority. We dislike authoritarianism or regimentation; we are sceptical of ideologies . . . Pupils and students have to be led to realise that restrictions on individual freedom are necessary in order that they may appreciate and enjoy freedom, but unless young people are entrusted with freedom they cannot be educated to be responsible adults — this is freedom to be responsible . . . We abhor all forms of indoctrination or mind-moulding."

(Address: "A Tribute to English Education in the Transvaal" on the occasion of the Centenary of Education in the Transvaal, 6th April, 1976.)

Education in South Africa; A Developing Country

It is urgently necessary to promote the view that South Africa and its welfare is more important than the welfare of any one group within it. Almost every demand and shortage in a developing community can be related to education and the provision of training at all levels.

Acceptable wages and living standards for all members of the whole community should be achieved through increased commercial and industrial productivity by providing, through the co-ordination of training facilities, for an adequate supply of skilled manpower and leadership material.This will result in the creation of balanced development of urban and rural communities and the provision and use of resources in the creation of a viable economy which leads to industrial and commercial stability and the development of harmonious cultural relations within our society through an educational policy geared to the development and dignity of the whole Man.

In South Africa in relation to the groups which make up the total community, the problem is aggravated by the duplication of educational services in developed and developing communities, by population growth rates which are among the highest in the world, and by the developing ecological crisis which demands increasingly that more and more of its population should be involved in urban industrial and commercial employment rather than in rural agriculture. This problem in turn is complicated by the wide spectrum of standards of living, sophistication and cultural variations.

The Education Gap and the Future

An examination of statistics reveals that enormous strides have been taken in the provision of education for all races in South Africa in the past two decades. The numbers of Black pupils in school have, for example, increased from 1,5 million in 1960 to 3,5 million in 1974, or an increase of 133 per cent over 15 years. During the same time the Black population increased at a rate of 3,5 per cent per annum resulting in an overall population growth of 67,5 per cent. Considering that approximately 50 per cent of the Black population is of school-going age, the overall increase in the school enrolments is not as impressive as it at first appears.

The second feature of the educational gap is the length of educational provision for each of the groups in our total community. Table one on the next page shows the situation in the early years of the present decade.

The question must be asked whether a modern national state in which only some 11 per cent of the population reaches the fourth phase of schooling can possibly be producing sufficient school leavers with the necessary background of general education to satisfy the demand for high-level manpower.

The more serious immediate question, however, is whether any modern state can justify differential educational provision upon

TABLE I

School Enrolments of the main Population Group at four levels of schooling expressed as percentage of pupils at the lowest level of schooling.

Group/ Level	White			Asian			Coloured			Black			Total		
	1970	1971	1972	1970	1971	1972	1970	1971	1972	1970	1971	1972	1970	1971	1972
J.P.	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
S.P.	95,49	95,43	95,30	97,40	84,99	79,00	63,97	63,44	64,22	49,48	50,68	51,95	57,73	58,07	58,77
J.S.	90,63	91,64	93,45	76,64	76,18	75,17	29,73	30,95	32,22	23,62	24,69	26,38	33,39	34,19	35,52
S.S.	61,40	63,90	66,43	29,28	29,67	30,60	6,15	6,62	7,07	2,29	2,54	2,75	10,22	10,48	10,79

J.P.: Junior Primary — S.P.: Senior Primary — J.S.: Junior Secondary — S.S.: Senior Secondary.

the criterion of ethnicity, despite the enormous numbers involved and the fact that the majority contribute only very modestly in terms of state finance.

TABLE II

Provision of education for Black pupils at primary and secondary school in the Republic of South Africa in 1975

Level	Actual enrolment	Percentage of lowest level of schooling
J.P.	1 946 612	100
S.P.	1 065 580	54,74
J.S.	607 197	31,19
S.S.	78 052	4,01

In the promotion of the trend revealed by these figures it is necessary to promote the view that the best interests of South Africa can only be served in the future by recognising total educational priorities and planning to close existing gaps within the educational systems of the country as a matter of the greatest urgency.

The industrialisation of the country clearly requires people trained in the sciences and mathematics. The decline in the proportion of matriculants of all population groups offering mathematics or physical science as a matriculation subject is alarming.

The Nature of Education to be offered

It is clear that, while an urgent priority is the provision of education for substantially increased numbers of the South African population, careful consideration must be given to the nature and the quality of educational offerings. Many different types of schooling and courses are necessary and must be fitted into a co-ordinated pattern. These range from enhanced offerings at school level, differentiated to meet the needs of individuals and groups, through increased opportunities for adult education ranging from literacy courses to vocational training and community development training, to advanced courses at tertiary level.

The words of Dr K B Hartshorne should constantly be in the minds of the educational policy makers: "we have to be concerned with the whole man, not just economic man, with preparing children for life, not just earning a living; our concern must be with the individual, spiritual and social needs of the children placed in our care; and to emphasise training at the expense of education would be short-term and short-sighted".[1]

All educational offerings must have within them the objectives of the development of the dignity of the individual and the fostering of communication and understanding between all the groups which make up the South African community.

Specifically curricula offered in schools should take into account community wishes in respect of language media, and should not be so overweighted with language teaching as to result in cultural confusion or the feeling of alienation on the part of the learner.

The whole question of the manner of approving, recommending and prescribing text books requires review.

Co-ordination of Educational Planning and Development.

In a nation in which separation of groups is the basis of government policy, these

groups should have the right of decision regarding, amongst others, the nature of the education to be offered to their youth. In order that maximum effective use may be made of national resources of manpower and finance, it is essenial that co-ordination of educational planning and development should take place at national level.

To this end there should be formulated as a matter of urgency a national plan for the development of education in the Republic of South Africa. This would involve the establishment of:

- a cabinet committee consisting of all members concerned with education, and including the Prime Minister and the Ministers of National Education, Bantu Education, Indian Affairs, Coloured Affairs, Community Development and Finance;
- a liaison council on education comprising the Ministers of Education of all groups within the Republic;
- a professional advisory council consisting of representatives of all groups to advise on matters referred to it by the two bodies above, and to advise these bodies on such matters as it deems necessary for the promotion of education in South Africa;
- and which will involve the admission to the Committee of University Principals of the rectors, principals or vice-chancellors of all universities in the Republic as well as their representation on the University Advisory Council.

Fundamental issues in the co-ordination of education in South Africa include:

- acceptance of the fact that expenditure on education at the rate of 2,5 per cent of GNP is totally inadequate in a developing community. Ways and means must be found to increase this substantially if stagnation of national development is not to result;
- the more advanced the level of educational offering the more expensive both in terms of finance and manpower does it become. Tertiary educational institutions should be utilised according to a rational plan in which the essential criterion is seen to be the national need of the whole Republic rather than the sectional needs of individual community and ethnic groups. This is particularly urgent and pressing in the area of university education. Satisfactory post-graduate co-operation on a very limited scale has been initiated but the time is appropriate "to end the artificial separation of intellectuals which can only engender hatred".[2]

It is not being suggested that investment in education should prejudice national security and defence. Funds must be found for both. It must be stressed, however, that "investment in education is the best long-term investment . . . and the best guarantee of the future of our country" (Hartshorne).

Simply to extend educational offerings more teachers are required; but, for quality of education, no education system is better than its teachers.

Re-appraisal of Education

In order to meet the needs outlined above, the present provisions for education need to be re-appraised. In particular there is a need, not only to improve existing institutions and practices, but also to consider alternatives, e.g. adult education, more extensive use of correspondence courses, the use of teacher aides, and varieties of voluntary and governmental organisations.

"In South Africa this is a time of sowing a seed and future history looks back on such periods with a particular admiration for those who were the seed. . . .For changes to come peaceably in South Africa is something all must long and work for. This will only happen if there is constructive thinking by men and women with a deep sense of personal responsibility for the whole of their society." — Birley: University of the Witwatersrand, 3rd April 1974.

1. Brommert, J W: from the citation to K B Hartshorne on the occasion of the degree of LI.D. (honoris causa), University of the Witwatersrand 1975.
2. Bozzoli, G R: Graduation address, University of the Witwatersrand, 3rd April 1976.