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Master Research Project- Abstract.

The Influence of Progressive Teachers' Unions in the Formation and Implementation of Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa.

Key Words: Curriculum 2005 (C2005), ***National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), Outcomes Based Education (OBE) ,Paulo Freire, Progressive Teachers' Unions, The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU).***

This Research Project explores whether the ideas of formulated by "progressive teachers' unions," in the 1980s, remained influential in post-apartheid South Africa and with the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). To answer these questions, this paper utilises significant post-apartheid education documents such as the "White Paper on Education and Training, 1995,[1] as well as documentation from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The ideas of the "Progressive Teachers' Unions" are explained through sources provided from the South African Historical Archives (SAHA). Original sources explain the perspective of a number of progressive unions such as the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), the Western Cape Teachers' Union (WECTU), the Progressive Teachers' League (PTL) and the Progressive Teachers' Union. The archival material at SAHA also played an invaluable role in demonstrating how these "independent unions" merged together in order to construct the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU).[2] Of course it was not only these "progressive unions" which lead to

[1] Department of Education (DoE). White Paper on Education and Training. Pretoria. 1995.
[2] South African Historical Archive (SAHA). Progressive Teachers League Collection (PTLC).

founding of SADTU. Established unions such as the African Teachers Association of South Africa (ATASA) and Transvaal United African Teachers' Association (TUATA) also played a significant role.[3]

After 1994 the focus on education and the type of education a democratic South Africa required came to the forefront of political discourse. However, by this time the idealistic ideas of proposed by the "progressive unions" shifted into more pragmatic territory. SADTU also appeared to shift its focus from education policy to a bonafide trade union.[4]

Then democratic South African government decided to adopt a controversial curriculum policy containing the principles of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). In order to explore whether or not the ideals of "progressive unions" remained relevant this research project offers a comparison between the Freirean principles[5] often cited by such unions and those offered by OBE. It is noted OBE held some of the beliefs Freirean educators may have agreed with such as the participation of learners in the classroom, the encouragement of activities such as more group work, providing content that was relevant to the children and the merging of both academic and practical skills. However, the OBE curriculum was saturated with business-like jargon which gave it a corporate character. Likewise, its focus appeared to be driven by the demands of the economy.[6] The Freirean approach rejected the concept of education as a tool for the economy. Furthermore, the issues of democratic participation in the classroom seemed to be much more about mutually constructed knowledge according to the Freirean educators. OBE still had a tendency to place the teacher as the arbiter of knowledge, despite the claims by proponents of the curriculum.

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[3] Hyslop, Jonathan. The Classroom Struggle ; Policy and Resistance in South Africa, 1940-1990. Pietermaritzburg : Johannesburg: University of Natal Press, 1999. 111.

[4] Chisholm, Linda, and Bruce Fuller. "Remember People's Education? Shifting Alliances, State-building and South Africa's Narrowing Policy Agenda." Journal of Education Policy 11, no. 6, 1996.

[5] Freire, Paulo, and Myra Bergman Ramos. Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition, 2014.

[6] Jansen, Jonathan. "Can Policy Learn? Reflections on why OBE Will Fail." Paper for Centre for Education Policy and Department of Education Management and Education Policy Unit, Seminar Series, Wittersbad University. 1997.