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1977
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https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27578
Jackson, S.P. (1976/1977). Better higher education for black students. Symposium: A Journal of Education for Southern Africa, pp. 26-30.

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In a contribution to a recent book on the role of the University in the late 20th Century (Stephens, M D, and Roderick G W, Ed., **Universities for a Changing World,** London, David and Charles, 1975), the writer expressed the opinion that in South Africa the next decade would see important changes in the facilities for higher education of the Black population and amongst these changes should be the removal of restrictions on the free circulation of competent students, closer relationships between the Black and White universities, and substantial improvement in school systems planned in such a way as to make for easy transition from school to vocational, technical and university education.

It has been claimed that the recent country-wide unrest was sparked off by dissatisfaction with school curricula which required both Afrikaans and English — foreign languages to Black children — to be used as media of instruction. Whether educational matters were the only causes of the unrest or not, the public statements of the Black leaders demanded, amongst other improvements in the quality of their lives, substantial changes in the system of education — the abandonment as they put it of "Bantu" education and the introduction of National education instead. In simple words this means similar school facilities for Black children to those for White, and the disappearance of differences in educational policies and practices for the different races in South Africa. Less vociferously, of course, but with no less conviction on the part of those who understand, comes the plea to abolish discrimination at university level and give access to universities to all who are academically qualified, without regard to race or colour.

The essential problems of developing the Black universities of South Africa to the same level as those for Whites or indeed of achieving parity between White and Black university education in terms of whatever structure is thought to be best, arise from the fact that there are, existing side by side, two very different components of the population. The literacy level of the White population is fairly high — though not as high as in Britain, Germany, France and the Netherlands; that of the Black group, which is far more numerous, is very low indeed. Education for all is still a long way off and it is difficult to see how it could be hurried along without making the teaching profession so attractive that it absorbs almost every Black man leaving school and college with the requisite level of education. At present the educated few from the non-white groups tend to take advantage of the most lucrative offers of employment that come along and the main burden of responsibility for providing advanced education in colleges and universities rests upon the educated White minority.

The university structure in South Africa has been built up to meet the needs of White students. It is important to note and acknowledge that the South African universities enjoy a large measure of freedom; they are free to decide what courses they will offer within the limits of the financial resources available; they select and appoint their own staff and until recently, their students were chosen from those who were academically qualified to enter a university.

The provision of separate university facilities for Black students is not a new idea in South Africa. The University College of Fort Hare was established in 1916 and until 1960 was the one institution which offered university education to non-white students only. Other universities in the country were making a contribution. Of the 22 000 university students in the country in 1960 about five per cent were non-white. Of these about 500 attended the Universities

of Cape Town and Witwatersrand where they were admitted on the basis of academic qualifications and received the same treatment as White students.

The passing of the Extension of Universities Act in 1959 imposed upon all South African universities a uniform policy in accordance with the doctrine of apartheid. Separate university institutions were established for the non-white groups — three for Africans, one for Asians, one for Coloured persons. The "open" universities, principally Cape Town and Witwatersrand thus became segregated institutions.

The growth and the future contributions of these relatively new Black or non-White universities to the whole educational system of the country should be a matter of great concern to us all for, if the present status is unchanged, the responsibility will rest upon them to produce university graduates for professions such as law, medicine and engineering, for the scientific services, and also the vast numbers of teachers required in schools, colleges and universities.

It seems inevitable that at the level of university education the existence of separate institutions for different ethnic groups with little academic contact with other institutions must lead to a less vigorous growth than is desirable for developing communities. Young universities need encouragement and freedom — they need encouragement to associate their best writers and researchers with the best in neighbouring institutions and encouragement to exploit their environmental advantages for fields of study at which they can excel. Thus they would attract to themselves scholars from other universities within the country and outside, who want to come just because there is a university centre of excellence. The present system of non-white university education in South Africa seems destined to develop slowly. There is hardly any contact with the academic communities of the older universities in the country itself and with the world community of universities. It is to be hoped that this system of separate institutions for Blacks with little contact with the White universities is a transitional phase in the development of a system of university education of uniform quality for the whole population. But while the system of separate institutions lasts, everything possible should be done to raise their status and their standards.

It is easy enough to be critical of the non-White university system in South Africa. It is easy to say that 15 years of experience has established that the opponents of the scheme as it was originally proposed were right in many of their predictions. But they were right for reasons that were not given at the time. The leaders of the non-white communities have matured politically and socially much faster than was expected and they and the young intellectuals who are coming along behind are no longer prepared to accept a system which by its very nature is destined to develop slowly.

And yet even the opponents of the system must recognise that as undergraduate training institutions the non-white universities have done well and deserve respect and encouragement. The professors and lecturers are mostly Afrikaans-speaking and those that have accepted the challenge of this work out of a sense of dedication to the cause of African education, deserve much praise. Their notable service in the cause of African development is not often acknowledged as generously as it deserves to be. Surely no South African has rendered greater service to the cause of African education than the recently retired Vice-Chancellor of the University of the North — Johann Boshoff. And there are others whose contributions though possibly not so spectacular are comparable.

It must be accepted that the non-White universities will be there for some time. In many respects they have a creditable record and educationists throughout the country as a whole should give thought to the improvement of these universities and increasing their capacity to serve their students and the community which they were created to serve.

To some extent all of these universities have been striving for Africanisation and

some of the recent student unrest has been associated with demands for the administration and government of the unievrsities to be handed over to the Black communities themselves. What does this imply? It does not at this stage imply a university with Black students and vernacular instruction though it is conceded that this might come about in many years' time. It means a university with a wholly undergraduate Black student population, possibly and desirably a mixed population at post-graduate level, a Black Council and a mixed teaching staff using either of the official languages as a medium of instruction — in practice English — and the decision-making to be in the hands of a Black rector and Black administrative officials. It seems clear that there is sufficient confidence amongst the Black community in the achievements of their own universities to wish to retain and improve them. In view of this it is a matter of great importance to the national education system of this country that as much effort as possible be devoted to the advancement of these institutions. The principal need, of course, is a flow of well trained graduates, the best of whom will enter the profession of university teaching. It would be difficult to justify the view held by many Black academics that even in the present circumstances practically all new appointments must be Black and the central purpose of the Councils and Senates who govern these universities must be to make them Black institutions. It is admitted readily that staff could not be found at present and that the appointment of persons with insufficient university experience and whose talent for work at university level had not been proved would be necessary if such a policy were pursued with determination. It is difficult to see how the South African Government could impose a system of university education like this upon its Black people, as part of a move towards self-determination without breaking their trust.

The first need is a large flexible Black community of university lecturers, administrators and technicians covering all the essential academic and technical disciplines, who will be given opportunities, under a modified career structure for African academic staff, to work out their careers in the whole South African university system, and not in one university alone.

Now a word about the students. It is regrettable that there are amongst the students who attend the non-white universities a large number who, though they have passed an entrance examination, have an indifferent record of scholarly performance. They are not really suitable for further education either in the subjects offered in university courses or by the ordinary methods of university teaching. Others, apparently intellectually capable of accepting the pressure of university work, are handicapped by insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction. The faults lie not so much with the students themselves as with the schools from which they have come and the circumstances of their homes, which have not been able to make more than a small contribution to the educational process. These pupils change their medium of instruction in their elementary school years, and after that almost the entire responsibility for the educational process rests upon the school — the home and the social environment contribute almost nothing.

The problem of delivering students to the universities with a background of intellectual experience and enough knowledge, skills and linguistic facility to respond readily to the university teaching system must be taken very seriously indeed. On the whole the average products of the South African schools are not good enough to take university degrees in the prescribed time. Black students are worse off than the Whites, partly because of lack of facility with the language medium in the university and partly because the schools have had to bear the whole responsibility of the general educational process which, in the case of White students, is shared between the school, the parents and the cultural, religious and recreational organisations to which the students belong.

In the transitional period that will be needed to improve the schools for Black pupils there is quite a strong case to be made

for not encouraging Black students to aspire to attend White universities until they have proved that they can adjust themselves to conditions there. This would normally be after a first degree. And a good case could be made out for different degree structures and curricula in their own institutions.

The difficulties of establishing a school system in a developing society which will, within the normal span of pupils' school lives, prepare them for work in a modern university are very great indeed. Essentially the need is for highly qualified teachers; each school at secondary level must have at least one experienced graduate for each of the basic subjects of the curriculum. And not least, is the need for continual and proficient instruction in the language that will be used in the university. It is difficult to estimate just what resources could be found to provide Black schools with teachers of the quality they need. It is reasonable to suppose that it will be difficult for some years to find enough teachers to run even a few schools.

In these circumstances it would seem to be prudent to concentrate the best teachers in a few special educational centres — perhaps technical colleges. They would in fact be elite schools, though in this democratic age it might not be wise to call them that. The pupils could be selected from local schools according to flexible standards of admission. For these schools or colleges to achieve the best results there should be three streams of work and a limited choice of subjects. The first stream would be an academic one, leading to a matriculation certificate and perhaps a further year beyond in the principal subjects demanded for degrees in Arts and Science at the universities. The emphasis in Arts would be on languages, history, geography and perhaps an introduction to philosophy. In the science stream the emphasis would be on mathematics, physical science and biology. The second stream would be directed toward technological ends — engineering technology, agricultural science, bookkeeping, business studies, teacher training and other disciplines with a vocational value. The third stream might be one in which students would pursue applied disciplines at a somewhat slower rate than the first stream, in order to cater for those students for whom a delayed entry to the university might be the wisest course. It would be a great advantage for colleges so described to be located near and to work in close association with universities, sharing staff and facilities so far as this proved to be possible and convenient.

But what of the universities themselves? A few thoughts suggest themselves. The first is that in the early undergraduate years much attention should be paid to methods of presentation of subject matter and of intimate contact with students in discussion or seminar sessions. Linguistic proficiency is a primary requirement for university teaching and it is quite unacceptable that there should be university lecturers whose knowledge of the language of instruction is insufficient to conduct intellectual discourses on the subjects on which they lecture. Opportunities for varied academic experience must be created for all lecturers and a career structure devised which, in the competition for promotion, imposes upon the Black staff similar stresses and challenges as the White academics experience in their endeavour to improve teaching and research.

It is easier in a modern university situation to develop a reasonably satisfactory course-structure for first degrees than it is to build up the interest and capacity to deal with advanced study and research. While it is an arguable point as to whether university education in South Africa should be offered at first degree level in the same institutions, there seems to be general agreement that after first degree stage the Black and White streams should merge. Few universities are able to develop facilities for advanced work in a short time, and during the "growing period" special relationships with older institutions have proved to be helpful. This special relationship has worked with new universities in Britain and in Africa. It has encouraged critical assessment of standards, rapid

growth and the exchange of teaching and research staff. Such arrangements with all the variety of experience which they offer to students and staff would do very much to promote the development of university education in South Africa.

The transition in South Africa from the existing structure for Black education, to a school and university system which will satisfy the emerging Black intelligentsia may take some time. Indeed the pace of the change must depend upon the flow of able academic scholars into the profession of university teaching and research. It is inevitable that the Black university students and teachers will be involved in the politics of social change in Black Africa. While it would not be desirable or indeed effective to curtain directly their freedom to take part in the activities of political movements, it is earnestly to be hoped that this freedom can be exercised in ways which do not disrupt the smooth functioning of educational institutions and the cordial relationships between the men and women, Black or White, who teach and study within them. The processes of education are far too important to the welfare of the Black peoples of Africa to be disrupted in political demonstrations. Universities in particular are sensitive institutions capable of being destroyed by minorities of active social malcontents. Let us hope that in South Africa Black education will be spared this disaster.