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Gramsci’s concept of hegemony exposes the dialectical relationship between the economic base and the superstructure. His focus on the superstructure not only expands the concept of hegemony but also highlights the partial autonomy of the state. More importantly, it is the concept hegemony that has provided neo-Marxists with the intellectual tools to address “the dilemma presented by mechanical functional analyses of the relationship between the base and the superstructure” (Au, 2008, p. 32). By recognising the potential for human agency in this dialectical relationship between the base and the superstructure Gramsci encourages the proletariat to liberate themselves from their ideological subordination by cultivating their own interpretation of reality and to transform itself from an “objective ‘class in itself’, into a ‘class for itself’ – a class with class consciousness, aware of its political project to replace capitalism” (Greaves et al., 2007, p. 7). Marx, who very rarely expressed his views on education in particular, writes:

[i]f we may take an example from outside the sphere of production of material objects, a schoolmaster is a productive labourer, when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, does not alter the relation (Marx and Engels, 1975-2005, vol.35, p. 510).

What Marx alludes to is that the education system does not offer the average student much prospect other than exploitation at the hands of the capitalist system. It for this reason, that Greaves et al. (2007, p. 5) suggest that “Marx certainly would have scoffed at the humanist notion that education is geared to the interests of the child”. The Marxist conceptualisation of education, as articulated above, in my view forms the antithesis of functionalist ideology. Marxists contend that to appreciate the role of cultural institutions such as education, we

cannot take their strategic roles for granted. We can only fully comprehend the role of these institutions if we consider the social class interactions in society and, in doing so, appreciate the implications of this role (Greaves et al., 2007). French scholar Bourdieu's contribution to critical theory came through his analysis of three forms of capital – namely, cultural, economic and social capital. His focus on how inequality is produced not only through capital but also by education was on the whole instructive. He reasoned that those who possess cultural and social capital have a distinct advantage especially if the education system serves the interests of the ruling class. Bourdieu points to the exclusionary nature of social capital which serves as nothing more than a weapon used by the elite to ensure that their social circles are not open to the disadvantaged (Bourdieu, 1986). The emergence of critical education theory spawned the emergence of critical policy analysis which led to the interrogation and critique of education policies to be analysed through a different ideological lens. In a paper entitled *The World Bank, the IMF and the Possibilities of Critical Education*, Robertson and Dale (2008, p. 6) acknowledge that “the process of globalisation profoundly challenge the mental frameworks that we have used to make sense of education policy problems, both objectively and subjectively”. The point that Robertson and Dale (2008) make is that as a result of globalisation there is an urgent need to revise the conceptualisations required to do critical theory. They (Robertson and Dale, 2008, p. 8) postulate that

Important aspects of education policymaking and processes are taking place within, as well as beyond, national borders, and that policy itself is produced or mediated by an expanding array of actors, not just the state, who are operating across multiple scales. It is increasingly evident that some of the key actors involved in making and shaping policy on education operate well outside of the traditional education system.

There is a wide ranging consensus amongst academics and researchers that neoliberal globalisation has deeply impacted the transformation of education policy and practice internationally. As the hegemonic discourse in the education arena it forced researchers to review their academic practices to begin to understand the impact neoliberal globalisation on education. Rizvi (cited in Simons et al., 2009, p. 13) postulates

If national policies, which have been the objects of our research efforts, have themselves acquired international and global dimensions, then we need to ask how this has become so, and what implications this has for thinking about national policy programs, local policy initiatives and internationalising policy dialogue. In this research agenda, that is in my view fundamental to the globalisation of education policy research. But beyond this, it is essential to our



attempts to develop an alternative education policy agenda to neoliberalism, which demands not only fine sounding policies but also the creation of an alternative social imaginary committed to strong democracy and global justice.

As a counter-hegemonic research methodology and analytical framework, CPA illuminates the oppressive and exploitative nature of the neoliberal world order and the policies that facilitate its hegemony over the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa and invokes the quest for a radical political pedagogy for South Africa in an emerging post-globalisation world order free from the dominance of neoliberalism.

## CONCLUSION

The exposition of the concepts in this chapter particularly that of neoliberalism and privatisation, is an attempt to accentuate the point that neoliberalism is more than a “slippery concept”, but that it has very real impact on the material conditions or “lived realities” of millions of people around the world, particularly in education.

Neoliberalism has shaped the post-apartheid state’s governmentality that has maintained political control within and through the framework of the state in favour of the neoliberal white elite, locally and internationally. What frustrated many South Africans is the blatant political swindle or the “false decolonisation” that has rendered ordinary South Africans into *homo economicus*, holding true to the apparent universalist ideological assumptions of individuality, rationality and self-interest that have commandeered the policy programmes of the majority of western countries through Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Peters, 2012), leading to the displacement of more radical transformative educational projects like the vision of People’s Education that emerged from the political struggles in South Africa’s townships during the anti-apartheid struggle. What made the political swindle seem more palatable or acceptable is that many former public intellectuals, activists and academics stooped to the neoliberal dogma almost in keeping with Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis. The suspension of critical thinking and lack of intellectual resistance to neoliberalism led to virtual “state of false consciousness” arising in academia. Too many academics capitulated and disappeared into the neoliberal establishments’ woodwork renouncing their duty as critical intellectuals who could potentially spearhead the revolutionary interventions that could not only unmask the catastrophic political concession that drowned out the legitimate expectations of an entire nation, but also assist in

developing effective counter-hegemonic strategies favouring effective social justice solutions. This academic subservience or capitulation to neoliberalism and positivism has led to the virtual demise of the Marxist discourse in the exposition of the post-apartheid society. The subsequent gap that has developed in the literature is disconcerting. This thesis responds to that concern, electing Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) as preferred methodology, to explore the main research question.



## Chapter 3

### CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

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#### Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology and introduces the concept of Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) as an analytical tool to make sense of the post-apartheid education policy regime. CPA provides researchers with the critical tools to unpack the impact of neoliberalism on education systems internationally. It provides for the exposition of the role of key powerbrokers in the education arena at a national as well as international level. Chapter Three points to the methodology that underpins both the exploration and illumination of the strategic imperatives that underwrite the neoliberal ideology and its impact on education policy.

Critical Policy Analysis provides me with a powerful political tool to critically read the South African political discourse developed under the aegis of a hegemonic neoliberal discourse which framed the political transition since 1994. CPA also allows me to understand how policy impacts the lives of ordinary people in relation to issues around equity and policy contexts and the imbalance of power in a post-apartheid South Africa (Diem et al., 2014). Central to this study is the belief that by critically engaging with the political discourse embedded in the state's educational policies, I accept that I have an ethical and moral responsibility to tell the truth to advance the quest for a socially just and democratic South Africa.

#### Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative study will be underpinned by an intensive exploration of documents to address the principal question of this study and examine how the power, exercised by the key political actors, influenced the education policy making process. Document analysis in this instance will facilitate an examination of education policies of the South African state and an understanding of the historical, political and economic contexts of these policy documents. This analytical process may shed light on the political events or historical phenomena that shaped the formulation of local education policies since the establishment of the De Lange Commission in the 1980s. This qualitative study will analyse state policy and

its effects on society through the lens of critical policy analysis. It will, amongst others, undertake an analysis of key education policy documents that have influenced public schooling in post-apartheid South Africa, like the *South African Schools Act of 1996* and the *National Norms and Standards for School Funding of 1996*. It will also focus on the ideological foundations on which these educational policies were formulated, why, when and for whom, as well as the effects that these policies had on post-apartheid society. My focus on document analysis could potentially bring about a convergence of contextualised information from a variety of sources that could only provide the study with greater credibility and integrity. Education is a critical component in the development of a democratic state, it is therefore crucial to understand the educational policies generated by the state as they empower us to appreciate the connection between the individual policy and the broader association it has with social structures and the political system. Document evidence can provide this context, bearing witness to past events laden with historical insight, and how these conditions impose on the phenomena under investigation. State policies are explicit instruments of ideological domination and the impact of such policies on an unsuspecting nation need to be critically examined (Simons et al., 2004) I analyse the data to illuminate the relationship between the values and often intractable assumptions that underpin these policy processes. The approach and tools of critical policy analysis informs my analysis of the educational policies and policy related scholarship embracing the five critical approaches outlined by Diem et al. (2014).

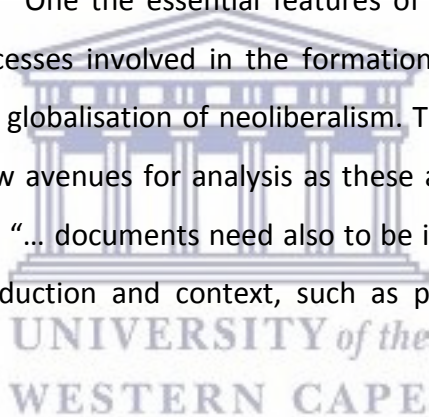
### ***Choice of Data***

This study analyses two sets of data. The primary data set consists of the South African Schools Act of 1996 and National Norms and Standards for School Funding of 1996; a historical synopsis of the emergence and context of People's Education and the De Lange Commission Report of 1981. The above-mentioned documents have been selected as they are generally understood as the policies that led the inauguration of the neoliberalism orthodoxy into the South African education policy discourse (Sayed, 2008). The second set of data includes a review of the data bases of existing scholarship and policy related documents including research reports from various educational policy research institutions, government education departments and articles from relevant education journals such as the *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*. The focus on secondary data is underpinned by the notion that the available secondary data will assist me in potentially

developing concepts and theories that would assist me in developing an understanding of the wider social dynamics that have been shaped by the ideological and economic forces which have impacted public policy development in South Africa.

### **Data Analysis**

The analytical lens will focus on the ideological contexts and processes involved in the shaping of post-apartheid South African policy discourses. Through the application of Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) as analytical framework, I will provide a “critical reading” of the post – apartheid education policy texts to expose the neoliberal values embedded in these texts and how it unveils the post-apartheid state’s political and ideological interests. Olssen advises that undertaking educational policy change must not only be seen as an opportunity to transform education but also an opportunity to change society (Olssen in Simons et al., 2004). It is important to understand that the focus of this study will go beyond the mere content analysis of the texts. One the essential features of this study is to examine the ideological contexts and processes involved in the formation of South Africa’s education policy discourses through the globalisation of neoliberalism. The critical document analysis in this study will open up new avenues for analysis as these are not politically neutral. As McCulloch (2004, p. 7) states “... documents need also to be interpreted in light of specific factors involved in their production and context, such as personal, social, political and historical relationships”.



The exploration of the text remains important as it assists the researcher in exposing the dominant ideological discourses embedded in the text. Through this critical analytical process new ideological perspectives are opened up creating the opportunities to agitate for progressive change. Taylor et al. (1997) observes that “the analysis of education policies is at the same time a commitment to try to have an impact on education policy and to support education reforms that lead to a more equal and less coercive society” (Taylor et al., cited in Simons et al., 2009, p. 176). The analytical process also entails selecting, appraising and collating data contained in the various documents. The study of a variety of data sources and methods also affords the researcher the prospect to understand the convergence of information. The opportunity to corroborate the information also becomes possible. The corroboration of evidence could help minimise prospective preconceptions that may well exist in a single research project/study. Bowen (2009, p. 24) reminds us that “documents of

all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research problem". Through the practice of critical policy exploration we begin to understand the inconsistent role that education plays in the advancement of liberal, aspirational notions like equality in capitalist societies (Rata, 2014). One of the key objectives of this study is to expose the rising supremacy of neoliberal ideology through the state's education policy discourses that poses a direct threat to the purpose of democratic education practices as articulated through the vision of People's Education. Another contributing scholar to the school of critical policy is Kellner who considered a critical theory of education as crucial to promote the radicalisation of education to change society. Together with Freire, Kellner explicated the link between critical theory and critical pedagogy. Kellner, commenting on the work of Freire, notes

Freire argued that the oppressed, the under classes, have not, equally shared or received the benefits of education and they should not expect it as a gift from the ruling classes, but should educate themselves, developing a 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (Kellner cited in Millar-Wood, 2008, p. 10).

### **Critical Theory Materialises**

The emergence of critical education theory spawned the emergence of critical policy analysis which led to the interrogation and critique of education policies to be analysed through a different ideological lens. Although emanating from different intellectual orientations it is imperative to note that critical theorists share the conviction that policy exploration should be supported by a strong obligation to social revolution and equality. The collective understanding is that all decision making procedures should be transparent, and, that knowledge and decision-making processes should be open to critique and lead to the empowerment of citizens (Simons et al., 2009). Postulating on the emerging critical policy approach as part of the broader critique of the state under advanced capitalism Levinson, Sutton & Winstead (2009, p. 774) writes

In this body of research we see a melding of Gramscian and Foucaultian perspectives to elucidate policy as a practice of power – that is, the production of normative discourse for the reproduction of inequality, hegemony, and subordinated political subjects. On the one hand, this critical approach has tended to emphasize the production of education policy as a contested political process in which dominant groups themselves best to order an education system in its own vision and interests. The capitalist state serves as an important arena for such over determined policy formation.

Ball (1994) points out that the idea of being critical for any researcher should also have a reflexive attitude with regard to the broader social and educational contexts in which they work. Linking his thoughts on policy making to the role of ideology in policy studies, Ball argued that Raymond Williams' "...conceptualisation of positions as useful and pertinent. Williams identifies three groups and ideologies which emerge most clearly in the nineteenth century as 'influences on the very concept of education'" (Ball, 1990, p. 4). Ball also argues that it is crucial for any researcher to focus on the effects or outcomes of policy making. In the then emerging field of policy sociology, Gordon, Lewis & Young (1977) postulates that critical policy analysts have to understand the difference between the examination for policy and the examination of policy in trying to give direction to policy research. Ball (1994) later proposes that researchers consider "two new contexts for analysis: the context of outcomes and the context of political strategy" (Ball cited by Fimyar, 2014, p.7). Lingard & Sellar (2013, p. 267), pronouncing on Ball, postulates that

Ball set the foundations of policy sociology in education...The policy sociology approach was important because it provided a critical and contextualised account of policy steering of education systems, recognised that policy was more than text and included processes, while also acknowledging a recursive relationship between structure and agency across the policy cycle.

Balls' definition of policy emphasises a "dual conceptualisation of policy as text and policy as discourse (Ball, cited in Fimyar, 2014, p. 7). Explicating policy as text Ball argues that policies are the product of manifold agendas and concessions which by implication suggests that antagonistic methodologies may have been excluded from the policy formation process. The lack of public participation in the education transformation processes in post-apartheid era did not only signal the authoritarian tendencies of the new political elite but indeed indicate the purpose of public education drifting from democratic priorities to economic priorities. This is further highlighted by the restructuring of public school curricula that reflects the demands of the market. Ball asserts (1994a, p. 16) "[the texts] are cannibalized products of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas". Neoliberal policy approaches by insinuation are therefore not pluralistic, but profoundly authoritarian. In his book, *Politics and Policy Making in Education* Ball (1990) provides the underpinning for understanding the role of the "education state" in the production of policy texts during the Thatcher period and the conservative "cultural restorationism" within the curriculum which was set against

the “radical” neoliberal restructuring of the state. Ball recognised the impact of politics inside the state on policy making (Lingard & Sellar, 2013, p. 267). On policy Ball writes

Policy is...an ‘economy of power’, a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings. Policy is text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far they relate to or map onto the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. Policy practice is ‘created’ in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom. Thus policy is no simple asymmetry of power (Ball cited in Lingard & Sellar, p. 269).

Referring to the above quote, Lingard & Sellar (2013, p. 269) draw our attention to what scholars have described as the “gaps and relationships between policy and policy enactment, and, how in one sense, policy always simplifies while practice...is always complex and contingent”. Given the complexities between policy and policy enactment referred to above, Diem et al. (2014, p. 1072), draw our attention to what they consider to be the five fundamental concerns employed in critical educational policy studies. They are as follows

First, attention is often given to the difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality. Some of this work involves an interrogation of the policy processes while other scholarship focuses on the rhetorical devices and the symbolic nature of educational policy. The second concern focuses on the policy, its roots, and its development. Scholars are interested in how it emerged, what problems it was intended to solve, how it changed and developed over time, and its role in reinforcing the dominant culture. Here scholars seek historical and contextual clues that might help them gain a better understanding of policy changes, conditions and results. A third concern is with the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge and the creation of “winners” and “losers.” Here the unit of analysis may be the policy system itself, the site of implementation, or who gets what, when, and how. Social stratification, a fourth and related concern, focuses on the broader effect a given policy has on relationships of inequality and privilege. Researchers ask questions such as: Does policy X somehow reinforce or reproduce social inequalities? Finally, many critical policy scholars are interested in members of non-dominant groups who resist processes of domination and oppression and who engage in activism and use of participatory methods to employ agency within schools.

### **Critical Policy Analysis of Neoliberal Globalisation**

As a result of the methodology highlighted by Diem et al. (2014) above, critical policy scholars have been able to closely study the emergence of global neoliberal policies. This new area of research resulted in a paradigm shift that came to influence critical policy studies quite significantly and provided new authority for Marx’s theory of immiseration as



the reproduction of social inequalities have been growing at a prolific pace since the 1970s as a direct consequence of the application of neoliberal policies at national and global levels (Greaves et al., 2007). Rata (2014) postulates that the impact of neoliberal globalisation greatly influenced the role of the nation-state in policy formulation. She asserts that the minimalist role of the state led to a complete ideological shift from social democratic policies to neoliberalism which resulted in policies that dramatically altered the educational landscape through privatisation. Rata (2014, p. 348) writes

the shift to critical policy methodology involved the increasing use of empirical research into how education policy shapes practice, while at the same time retaining theoretical explanations of complex patterns of causation from a political economy approach. This combination of theoretical analysis and empirical research enables researchers to avoid the descent into propaganda...At the same time it maintains both importance of theory that is central to the critical approach including critical theorists' commitment to equality ideals, along with enabling researchers to directly address educational practice.

As a result of the state-centred approach in education policy development, Roger Dale (1989), in responding to the rise of neoliberal globalisation, used the axiom “the politics of education” through which he tried to capture the impact that the emerging transnational social, economic and cultural contexts had on the politics of the state and education policies. Dale’s emphasis, as indicated earlier, on the “politics of education” developed a new orientation for critical policy studies that related to how the various actors in the field determined policy agendas. Dale thus suggests focusing on the ‘politics of education’ next to the more narrow field of ‘educational politics’, that is, how actors within the field determine the policy agenda (Simons et al., 2009). In a paper entitled *The World Bank, the IMF and the Possibilities of Critical Education*, Robertson and Dale (2008, p. 6) acknowledge that “the process of globalisation profoundly challenge the mental frameworks that we have used to make sense of education policy problems, both objectively and subjectively”. This is particularly relevant with regard to the implementation of non-negotiable performativity cultures as a means of controlling the output of teachers. In South Africa the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) not only resulted in an increase on the workload of teachers but substantially altered the “subjective existence” of teachers and their relations with their colleagues and students. Ball (2012, p.19) writes, “within the rigours and disciplines of performativity we are required to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do rather than doing it”. The argument

that Robertson and Dale (2008, p. 7) make is that as a result of globalisation there is an urgent need to revise the conceptualisations required to do critical theory. Balls' paper, *Big policies/small world: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy* (1998) is his first attempt at making sense of globalisation and understanding the impact that it had on education policy. Balls' focus here is limited to what Lingard & Sellar (2013, p. 270) calls the "vernacular national policy responses to the flow of 'global policyscapes'". Ball notes that the globalisation had dramatically transformed the relationship between the state and capital. This was evident in the movement away from Keynesian welfare policies to neoliberal policies which a strong emphasis on new managerialist strategies. Ball (1998) also alleges that these global 'policyscapes' would bring to new policy problems to bear on national systems. Balls' research, according to Lingard & Sellar (2013, p. 272), not only casts an

intense gaze on the global, but also the recognition that this gaze demands new methodologies, new epistemologies and ontologies for doing research, while also acknowledging that the nation-state remains important, but its state structures now work in different ways and in different relationships with the private sector and in scalar terms.

Robertson & Dale (2008, p. 7) draw similar conclusions. They write

There is an evident shift away from a predominantly national education system to a more fragmented, multi-scalar and multi-sectoral distribution of activity that now involves new players, new ways of thinking about knowledge production and distribution, and new challenges in terms of ensuring the distribution for access and social mobility.

Ball (1998), Robertson and Dale (2008) concur that neoliberal globalisation had a dramatic influence on national economies and the role of the state. They argue, quite sensibly, that it is important that critical education policy researchers should consider how the role of the state has been transformed as a consequence of globalisation. The state can no longer be viewed as the sole arbiter in what constitutes education policy. They also point out that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are continuing to shape the education agendas of both developing and underdeveloped nations as means of incorporating these countries into the global knowledge economy (Ball, 1998; Robertson & Dale, 2008). In the light of these observations Robertson & Dale (2008, p. 13) recommends that the tasks and focus of critical theory be re-examined as "it has both to examine and seek to reveal the play of power at the policy shaping stage, and to examine the means of governance...especially the role of the state". They, secondly, also recommend that

a critical theory perspective needs to be continually vigilant in making clear 'for whom' and 'for what purposes' it is working. In other words, critical theory needs to link more firmly back to its historical material roots (p. 13).

### **Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) as Counter-Hegemonic Strategy**

While Ball (1998) is not as explicit as Robertson & Dale (2008) in developing a counter-hegemonic strategy against the influence of neoliberal globalisation, his scholarship in response to the new private-public sector relationships have brought important new insights into how these developments impacted on national education policy discourses. Ball points out that there is clear “democratic deficit” involved in the processes, especially when edu-businesses and international organisations develop education agendas. He does, however, encourage researchers to reflect on a “necessary politics” as the ebb and flow of globalisation unfolds. Robertson & Dale (2008, p. 14), concurring with Ball (1998), conclude their paper contending that “the processes of globalisation, the rescaling of education and emerging spaces of governing, require not only new conceptual approaches but that this is a necessary step in order to advance and enable a socially transformative agenda for critical policy analysis”. I concur with this view as the policy initiatives introduced by the post-apartheid state since 1994 have clearly failed in terms of the social justice aspirations prefaced in these policies. I will argue that the social justice rhetoric espoused by these policies is nothing more than a political red-herring to “garner our acquiescence” (Allman, 2010). There is a wide ranging consensus amongst academics and researchers that neoliberal globalisation has deeply impacted the development of education policy and practice on a global scale. As the hegemonic discourse in the education arena it forced researchers to review their academic practices to understand the impact neoliberal globalisation on education.

Rata (2014) concurs with Rizvi (2006), believing that what was missing was a methodological link between what transpired at a global level and the events at a local level. This missing link was facilitated by the manner in which critical policy methodology hypothesised the link between the global and the national to enable the incorporation of theory and empirical studies (Rata, 2014). Fimyar (2014) holds a similar view in that the analysis of policy processes will be incomplete if the international factors shaping policy beyond the national borders are not taken into consideration. She refers to the research of Monkman & Baird

(2002) who concluded that globalisation without question curtails the powers of the nation-state when it comes to determining their educational priorities (Fimyar, 2014). Following Rata, the ever expanding influence of neoliberal globalisation allowed critical policy analysts to develop a methodology integrating macro-political theory and economic movements with an analysis explicating how policy relates to the dominant power relations. The methodological link that was provided by critical policy analysis provided researchers with a vital instrument to evaluate the roots of policy processes. Diem et al. (2014, p. 1075-1076) concurs in that they found that critical policy analysis (CPA) “enabled a deeper critique of the contextual nuances and the complexities of the policy process”. I support Diem’s findings. I selected CPA as analytical frame work as it would be able to provide what Paulo Freire referred to as a “critical reading of the word, and the world”.

This study into the post-apartheid education policy discourse is an endeavour to offer a critical analysis of the policy “text” that would lay bare the post-apartheid state’s political and ideological commitments, and expose the political compromises that were made during the process of the negotiated settlement at the expense of the social justice pledges that were made during the anti-apartheid struggle. Diem et al. (2014) suggest that CPA permits scholars to examine the role of power in the formation of knowledge which they conclude are always fashioned by relationships of power. At the heart of these investigations lies the fact that it enables researchers to understand power relations and how these provide access to policy making processes. More importantly, Diem et al. (2014, p. 1082) highlight the fact that researchers applying CPA as an analytical framework and methodological tool were also able to challenge the dominant beliefs of the status quo and focus on “issues of power and inequality to capture the complexities of oppression impacting marginalised people”. I was drawn to CPA because of its strong social justice component and its radical political commitment to more egalitarian society. It is important not only to understand the power relationships and processes in policy making, but also crucially important to understand the ambivalence of the democratic state in a capitalist society and the paradoxical role that it plays, especially with regard to the accommodation of neoliberal globalisation. I concur with Rata (2014, p. 352 - 353) who claims that the nation-state is “the site of political regulation, it faces the demands of global capitalism’s inequalities and the opposing demands of national democratic equality...Education operates at the crossroads of this paradox”.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study, underpinned by CPA, is to offer a different vision for education practices in a neoliberal South Africa – a vision that stresses the development of a critical consciousness that would challenge the dominant notion that “there is no alternative” to capitalism. I posit that a democratic socialist alternative to capitalism is possible. I argue that critical policy analysis is crucial to the process of revolutionary social transformation. It is essential to understand that South Africa’s post-apartheid education policies “naturalized the incursion of neoliberal ideology into the domain of public education in ways that reinforce and reproduce the differential distribution of power and other social goods” (Ayers, 2005, para 53). By the same token it is important that we understand that policies are about change and it is through the imposition of revised, alternative or even hegemonic policy discourses that governments choose to transform or reform education systems. Ball (1994, p. 10) argues that “Policy is text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as intended”. This perhaps is a tacit admission that policy goals are not always achieved in reality. While we recognise that national governments still have the authority to create their own policies it is imperative to recognise that the nature of their authority has been transformed by the emergence of neoliberalism, which gives policies a transnational character and in effect advocates a minimalist role of the state in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). It is within this historical, political and economic context which I analyse South Africa’s education policy discourse which reduces learners to human capital.

In Chapter Four I critically examine the historical conditions that preceded the ANC’s neoliberal turn and the continuities of the De Lange Commission’s vision of privatisation of the South African education system. Chapter Five revisits the notion of People’s Education, a vision of an alternative education system that emanated from the township education struggles but terminated with the inauguration of the neoliberal discourse into South Africa’s education policy processes. Chapter Six scrutinizes the neoliberal ideological imperatives introduced into the *South African Schools Act of 1996* and the *National Norms and Standards for School Funding of 1996* and related policies, which introduced a new educational discourse that was replete with the rhetoric of “freedom, choice, standards, excellence, tradition and parental rights”. By the same token this study will show that while South Africa’s education policy discourse may pay lip service to egalitarian and democratic goals, the ideology of market fundamentalism: individual achievement, competition, choice

and economic growth poses a very real threat to public education as this market logic eventually destroys any possibility for collective and democratic controls of the schools (Engel, 2000). This study will point out that neoliberalism has led to the complete recontextualisation of the education discourse in post-apartheid South Africa, away from the prospects of democratic education. Chapter Seven considers the devastating impact of neoliberalism on South Africa and the rest of the world since its emergence as the global hegemon. Chapter Eight introduces the notion of radical critical pedagogy, based on Freire's pedagogy, as a counter-hegemonic discourse to the neoliberal ideology embedded in the post-apartheid educational discourse. Chapter Eight concludes with a summary of the findings of this study. As Dewey (1993, p. 160) warned

And let those who are struggling to replace the current economic system by a cooperative one also remember that in struggling for a new system of social restraints and controls they are also struggling for a more equal and equitable balance of powers that will enhance and multiply the effective liberties of the mass of individuals. Let them not be jockeyed into position of supporting social control at the expense of liberty.



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## Chapter 4

### APARTHEID EDUCATION UNDER SEIGE: QUO VADIS?

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This chapter considers some of the central proposals of the De Lange Commission and its underpinning of the reformist initiatives of the apartheid state. I contend that the Commission's reformist discourse and subsequent recommendations formed part of the inauguration of the neoliberal imaginary into the South African educational discourse; leading to the commodification of education in South Africa.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a brief historical overview of the education policy discourse between 1976 and the insurrectionary political rhetoric of the 1980s that gave rise to the radicalisation of the youth in the townships; the militant school boycotts and protests against apartheid education. Section two focuses on the recommendations of De Lange Commission of Inquiry into the apartheid education. Section three considers the liberal and radical responses to the De Lange Report. Section four provides a critical discussion of the Report, while section five concludes examining the resolute resistance in the townships after black political organisations and progressive academics condemned the report for its blatant opportunism.

#### THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND GLOBAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

In this section I posit that the apartheid state was compelled to reassess its own political survival as the youth in the townships took a more militant stance in opposing the apartheid state. I contend that the apartheid state's counter revolutionary *Total Strategy* must be considered in the context of the rising tide of neoliberal globalisation that recolonised almost every country across the globe. As the schools in the townships became sites of struggle, more and more young people joined the political underground as the slogans of liberation rang out across the country. The state was forced to review the apartheid education system. By the mid-70's most of the Western economies, including South Africa, headed into recession. South African racial capitalism faced a dire organic crisis. The economic recession had a devastating impact on black employment while the rising cost of living directly impacted the calamitous living conditions of black folk living in the townships. Marx (1992, p. 61) postulates

Unemployment doubled in the year before the 1976 uprising. In the manufacturing sector, in which an average of 2,850 new jobs had been filled by Africans each month throughout 1974, fewer than half as many new jobs were created in the subsequent eighteen months. The effect of this economic downturn on the black population was dramatic, and as usual, the poor suffered the most in the down swing.

Overcrowded township schools, offering the urban youth nothing more than a bleak future of starvation wages or the dehumanising spectre of permanent unemployment, contributed to the stifled anger. In early 1976, the South African Student Movement (SASM), a minor affiliate of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), began resisting new policy initiatives to introduce the teaching of Mathematics in Afrikaans. Many students saw this as an attempt to bolster the inferiority of black students who were unable to speak Afrikaans. The students refused to be taught in the “language of the oppressor”. On June 8, a minor clash took place between students and two policemen when they tried to arrest the secretary of SASM at his school. The students effectively beat back the police. On June 13, the students reorganised themselves as the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) and set out to organise peaceful demonstrations for June 16, to protest against the introduction of Afrikaans into their schools (Marx, 1992).

On June 16, 1976 the anger and frustration with the apartheid state, motivated by a newly found black consciousness, exploded onto the streets of Soweto when the police fired on the demonstrating students. Those dramatic events of June 16 introduced a new political resistance discourse into the townships of South Africa that would bring a new militancy to the fight against “Bantu Education”. Contributing to the militancy of the youth was the humiliating retreat of the SADF from Angola and Mozambique in the face of the devastating onslaughts from the national liberation movements in those countries. Scenes of captured South African soldiers paraded to the media drove home the notion that the apartheid state could be defeated. It spawned a revolutionary fervour unseen since Sharpsville 1960 (Marx, 1992; Callinicos & Rodgers, 1977). The challenge for liberation movements in South Africa was “to translate the political militancy of the youth into revolutionary leadership in the factories. The ruling class is well aware of the danger such a prospect presents.”(Callinicos & Rodgers, 1977, p. 173). The downturn in the South African economy in the early 1970s concurred with the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement. The Black Consciousness



movement was founded by Steve Biko with idea of encouraging “the liberation of the black man first from the psychological oppression by himself through induced inferiority complex, and second from physical oppression”(SASO Policy Manifesto, 1970 cited in Marx 1992, p. 12). Marx (1992, p. 46) postulates that

the BC ideology with the emphasis on altering self-awareness, was based on an idealistic conception of how a movement can affect social change. BC advocated that blacks’ ideas about themselves could and must be changed before the material circumstances of oppression shaping those ideas could be addressed.

The rise of racial audaciousness fuelled by apartheid and material deprivation brought by the devastating economic downturn made for a deadly, explosive combination. Between 1976 and 1981 the apartheid state faced a persistent onslaught from the youth in the townships in their rejection of “Bantu Education”. The continual resistance struggles and boycotts of “Bantu Education” almost led to the complete collapse of education in the townships, reaching critical proportions at various stages, forcing the apartheid state to undertake a reformist trajectory, writes Hartshorne (1985). In an act of political self-preservation the state proceeded to formulate the “*Total Strategy*”.

### **The State’s Total Strategy and the Inauguration of Neoliberalism**

The development and implementation of the apartheid state’s counter revolutionary *Total Strategy* should be seen in context of the above developments which presented a clear and present danger to racial capitalism (O’Meara, 1983). Moss argues: “...the crisis has to be met by an attempt to restructure certain fundamental relations between and within classes, between classes and the state, between the state and the economy, and within the state itself” (Moss cited in Wolpe, 1983, p. 1). Dan O’ Meara (1983, p. 253) describes *Total Strategy* as follows

The emerging Total Strategy doctrine argued that blacks had to be given a stake in the capitalist system. They would have to begin receiving the ‘benefits’ of that system, through an improvement of their ‘quality of life’, hopefully thereby engendering a commitment to the defence of South African capitalism against ‘the Marxist threat’. But the doctrine was very clear that such improvements were possible only through the closest co-operation between the state and the ‘private sector.’ Thus, the Total Strategy Doctrine began to create the basis for an explicit alliance between the military and monopoly interests.

O'Meara (1983, p. 255) further elucidates the doctrine summarising that

...as a response to the simultaneous recession and intensifying mass struggles of the 1970s, 'Total Strategy' is based on the institutionalisation of a new alignment of political forces in the state. In an attempt to secure the political and economic conditions for renewed capitalist prosperity and stability, the South African capitalist class as a whole has connived at a notable centralisation of power in the hands of one individual, and, without undergoing the process of a formal coup d'état, through the militarisation of politics generally.

Concurrently, public education systems across the globe came under pressure to restructure as part of the imposition of neoliberal ideology and private capital on public education policies. According to Heynemans (1999) this change in policy direction was driven by the World Bank's (WB) *Education Sector Policy Paper* published in 1980. Heynemans (1999) further contends that the *Education Sector Policy Paper* was the first in the history of the World Bank to include human capacity building (i.e. education) as its central tenet. It was during this period that human capital theory was re-introduced into the public education discourse. Using human capital theory as its foundation, the rate of return analysis was used to measure the success of education. Bonal (2000) notes that since the dawning of the eighties the influence of the World Bank on education increased exponentially. Bonal (2000, p. 4) submits that in terms of policy content, "the WB has been responsible for producing and delivering a hegemonic model of development...the WB has used all kinds of mechanisms to produce discourses and practices subject to a neoliberal rationality". Bonal (2000, p. 9) further notes that the

WB has encouraged a major presence of the private sector in developing countries as a means of improving educational opportunities. Privatisation is defended, on the one hand, as a means of compensating for the contraction of public expenditure. On the other hand, privatisation relies on a supposed better effectiveness of private schools.

The subordination of education systems to the conditionalities of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) posed a credible warning to the egalitarian ambitions of the various liberation movements locally, and internationally (Hill, 2003). Although Hartshorne suggests that it is provocative to note the private sector's entry into the South African education crisis at this point, Hill (2003) argues that it may have been more than a coincidence given the international agenda of neoliberal capital at the time. Hill (2003, p. 2) describes it more succinctly

The restructuring of the schooling and education systems across the world is part of the ideological and policy offensive by neoliberal capital. The privatisation of public services, the capitalisation and commodification of humanity and the global diktats of the agencies of international capital-backed by destabilisation of non-conforming governments and, ultimately, the armed cavalries of the USA and its allies and surrogates...

The De Lange Commission of Inquiry was appointed as part of the State's *Total Strategy* policy framework to placate not only the black communities, but also Capital, hence the framing of South Africa's educational problems as a technicist "skills and manpower" question.

### **THE DE LANGE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY (1981)**

This section illuminates how some of the key proposals of the De Lange Commission reinforced the reformist educational initiatives of the apartheid state and monopoly capital. I will consider some of the responses to the recommendations of the commission and the implications these had on the shaping of a post-apartheid education system. In June 1980, the South African government invited the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the state of education in South Africa. The cabinet request to the HSRC (HSRC, 1981, p. 1) stated:

Your Council (HSRC) in co-operation with all interested parties, must conduct a scientific and co-ordinated investigation, and within 12 months make recommendations to Cabinet on:

- (a) guiding principles for a feasible education policy in the RSA in order to
  - (i) allow for the realisation of the inhabitants' potential
  - (ii) promote economic growth in the RSA, and
  - (iii) improve the quality of life of all the inhabitants of the country
- (b) the organisation and control structure and financing of education
- (c) machinery for consultation and decision making in education
- (d) an education infrastructure to provide for the manpower requirements of the RSA and the self- realisation of its inhabitants, and
- (e) a programme for making available education of the same quality for all population groups.

The investigation must be conducted in the light of, among other things, the present educational situation; the population composition in South African society and means that can be made available for education in the national economy. The investigation must cover all levels of education, i.e. pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary.

The De Lange Commission was not the first commission of inquiry appointed by the apartheid government. As part of its reformist trajectory launched in 1977, the government also appointed the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions of Inquiry. The Wiehahn Commission

investigated labour legislation while the Riekert Commission investigated influx control. The findings of both these commissions set the stage for the recommendations of the De Lange Commission which underpinned the notion that education is crucial to the creation of economic growth. This also pointed to the introduction of human capital theory into South Africa's educational discourse. In summary, the main purpose of the De Lange Commission was to create a "new" education philosophy to replace "Bantu education" (NEUSA, 1982). The appointment of the commission must also be viewed in the context of the growing militant demands of black students over a period of six years and the growing impatience of capital with the lack of educational reform (Davies, 1984).

### **Salient Features of the Report**

The following section contemplates five of the more salient features of the report, namely the composition of the commission; its guiding principles; its claims of objectivity and neutrality; equal education for all and the three tiers of education as proposed.

#### ***Composition***

The De Lange Commission consisted of twenty four members most of whom were education professionals and members of the government. Amongst them were the president of the HSRC, the Government's chief financial planner, the director of the Transvaal Education Department, the vice-chairman of the National Manpower Commission, the vice-principal of Potchefstroom University, the director of the South African Institute for Educational Research, senior academics in Afrikaans and English universities and at least four members of the Broederbond (NEUSA, 1982). The list of members is a clear indication of the conservative bias of the commission and the interests they represent. The Main Committee appointed by the HSRC consisted of 26 members. The committee (NEUSA, 1982, p. 3) was

headed by Professor de Lange of the Rand Afrikaans University. Fourteen of these members are employed in government departments, 9 by universities, 2 are representatives of government recognised teacher organisations, one representative of private enterprise employed by Anglo-American and one teacher, also the only woman on the committee. Of the university representatives, one was from an English speaking campus, 5 from Afrikaans campuses (controlled by the Department of National Education) and 3 members from the Bush colleges to serve so called Indians, Coloured and Africans. Six members are officially classified black.

Other prominent members of the commission (NEUSA, 1982, p. 3.) were:


Dr J. G. Garbers, the president of the HSRC. Dr Garbers was dean of the faculty of

education at the Rand Afrikaans University before joining the HSRC.

- Dr S. Brand, chief of financial policy in the Department of Finance. Dr Brand was an economic adviser to the Prime Minister, and the Government's economic planning chief before his appointment to his present post.
- Prof. J. H. Jooste - Director of Education in the Transvaal since 1975. Dr Jooste has devoted his entire career to education, and was the rector of Potchefstroom's College of Education in 1964 and 1965. He was also listed in the book "The Super-Afrikaners" as a member of the Broederbond.
- Prof. A.N. Boyce, a well-known author of school history books, and rector of the Johannesburg College of Education. He was also president of the Transvaal Teachers' Association In 1979 and 1980.
- Prof. R. E. van der Ross, rector of the University of the Western Cape, who was also a member of the Theron Commission of Enquiry into the Coloured people.
- Prof P. J. van der Merwe, vice-chair-man of the National Manpower Commission. Apart from these six, there are three based at educational institutions, Mr Franklin Sonn, director of the Peninsula Technikon, Professor A C Nkabinde, rector of the University of Zululand and Mr A. Pittendrigh, director at the Natal Technikon, and the vice-principal of Potchefstroom University, Prof N. J. Swart (a member of the Broederbond).

Each member of the main committee was appointed to chair one of the eighteen subcommittees that were co-opted to investigate various parts of the educational system.

These committees were constituted as follows

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- Educational principles and policy - Prof. F. van der Stoep
  - Education Management - Dr K.B. Hartshorne
  - Education Financing - Dr S.S. Brandt
  - Education system planning - Mr J.B. Haasbroek
  - Curriculum development - Prof. F. van der Stoep
  - Guidance - Miss C.C. Regnardt
  - Education for children with special educational needs - Dr J.G. Garbers
  - Building Services - Mr F.A. Sonn
  - Health, Medical and paramedical services - Mr R.D. Nobin
  - Demography, education and manpower - Dr P.J. van der Merwe
  - Teaching of the natural sciences, mathematics and technical subjects - Mr J.B. Haasbroek
  - Recruitment and training of teachers - Prof. N. T. van Loggenberg
  - Innovation strategies in education - Prof. W. B. Vosloo
  - Programme for equal quality in education - Prof. R.E. van der Ross
  - Legal matters - Mr M.C. O' Dowd
  - Educational Technology - Mr A. Pittenburgh
  - Languages and Language Instruction - Dr P.R.T. Nel

### ***Guiding Principles***

The Commission's work was guided by eleven principles which functioned as recommendations for the various work committees. The eleven principles were also to serve as themes of engagement for its recommendations "for the provision of a system of

education that would take into account the commonality as well as the diversity of the inhabitants of the RSA and fulfil individual and group expectations as well as the needs of the country as a whole” (HSRC,1981, p.16). The principles listed below appear in Chapter 2 (HSRC, 1981, pp. 14–16).

**Principle 1**

Equal opportunities for education, including equal standards in education, for every inhabitant, irrespective of race, colour or creed or sex, shall be the purposeful endeavour of the state.

**Principle 2**

Education shall afford positive recognition of what is common as well as what is diverse in the religious and cultural way of life and the languages of the inhabitants.

**Principle 3**

Education shall give positive recognition to the freedom of choice of the individual, parents and organisations in society.

**Principle 4**

The provision of education shall be directed in an educationally responsible manner to meet the needs of the individual as well as those of society and economic development, and shall, inter alia, take into consideration the manpower needs of the country.

**Principle 5**

Education shall endeavour to achieve a positive relationship between the formal, non-formal and the informal aspects of education in the schools, society and family.

**Principle 6**

The provision of formal education shall be the responsibility of the state provided that the individual, parent and organised society shall have shared responsibility, choice and voice in this matter.

**Principle 7**

The private sector and the state shall have shared responsibility for the provision of non-formal education.

**Principle 8**

Provision shall be made for the establishment and the state subsidisation of private education within the system of providing education.

**Principle 9**

In the provision of education the process of centralisation and decentralisation shall be reconciled organisationally and functionally.

**Principle 10**

The professional status of the teacher and lecturer shall be recognised.

**Principle 11**

Effective provision of education shall be based on continuing research

The final report was tabled in parliament in October 1981. It indicated a significant departure from the original guidelines of the commission. What stood out were the recommendations of a single Ministry of Education and the introduction of free, compulsory education up to secondary school level. The principles of equal education for all; including equal standards was proposed while differentiation on a racial basis was rejected. The notion of free association was also proposed (Davies, 1984). The Report offered no comment on the issue of social justice. The De Lange Commission's appointment came at the height of the nation-wide 1981 school boycotts and a failing economy. The Commission's Report was considered by many liberals to be a pioneering episode in the history of South African education. Davies (1984, p. 360) notes

The business community, the (PFP) and the English Language newspapers not surprisingly took the Report to their collective bosom. The Federated Chamber of Industries gave the Report its blessing, and the PFPs Alex Boraine described it as the 'true voice of South Africa' and a 'vindication' of his party's policy.

While the liberal press lauded the findings of the commission, white South Africans generally viewed the findings of the commission with nervous trepidation. "At a Volkskongres, Afrikaners were divided. The conservative group saw the proposals as a possible strategy for reform" (Christie, 1985, p. 270). On the other side of the tracks the appointment of the De Lange Commission was viewed by many black South Africans as a half-hearted attempt by the reformists in the apartheid establishment to defuse the political crisis through granting economic concessions to blacks while at the same time retaining the exploitative racial capitalist system and the system of unfettered white privilege (Christie, 1985). Davies (1984, p. 359) posits

The actual deliberations of this commissions had got off to a faltering start when several educational organisations, including the Soweto Committee of Ten, refused to participate because of grave doubts about the impartiality of a body so closely associated with the state and whose main committee were so replete with establishment figures. The most comprehensive criticism of the commission came from the non-racial National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA), which rejected the commission on the following grounds: (1) The demands of black students were by now so well established that the commission must therefore be a 'stalling tactic' aimed at defusing conflict and providing some relief to industry by 'tinkering' with the education system; (2) the totally unrepresentative nature of the main committee which neither contained popularly recognised community leaders nor students; (3) the function of the commission was to align education policy with the aims of Total Strategy, and to

divide black people by means of bestowing concession on the middle class and exercising repressive control over the working people

The recommendations of the various subcommittees were all included in *the Main Report, Education Provision in the RSA, July 1981*. The Main Report was essentially a summary of the more than 20 000 pages of evidence gathered.

### ***Claims of Objectivity and Neutrality***

The most striking feature of the Report is its spurious claim that it was “scientific” and not the opinion of any particular member or members of the commission. Having made this claim it suggested that its recommendations were “objective” or “neutral” and that it did not represent any particular interest group. The Report by implication attempted to “depoliticise” the education debate and consequently could ignore any denunciation of its conclusions as being unempirical. The Report advocated that the problems with regard to education were technical, not social, and could therefore be solved by technical solutions. I disagree with this claim. Following Habermas, “educational decisions are not simply instrumental. They occur within a background of political, professional, and public interests” (Ewert, 1991, p. 351). Bullough & Goldstein, (cited in Ewert 1991, p. 348) posit that Habermas's criticism is

the instrumental rationality, inherent in this knowledge-constitutive interest, has become a pervasive ideology. It is ideological when instrumental rationality is applied, without valid proof, as the criterion for all forms and realms of knowledge. The end result is the reduction of moral, aesthetic, educational and political issues to technical problems: why and what are reduced to how.

The Report is also brazenly ahistorical as it fails to recognise the role that apartheid ideology and capitalism played in the shaping of the apartheid education system in South Africa. What is clear is that the De Lange commission attempted to frame the reformist debate around the education crisis in South Africa by claiming to be “scientific” and politically neutral. By outlining the debate in this way they were also able to arbitrate the reformist discourse. Another shortcoming was the deliberate omission of the representative views of the Black communities, including students & teacher organisations, trade unions and church organisations from the Report. This conspicuous omission again points to the fact that the commission deliberately set out to frame and control its own political agenda. In its attempt to depoliticize the education debate, the commission exposed its narrow conservative bias



as they appeared to disregard their instrumental approach to education that has led to the unjust, exploitative political dispensation that they were instructed to reform. Their mission, quite unambiguously, was to realise the state's agenda to neoliberalise apartheid education on behalf of Capital (NEUSA, 1982; Buckland, 1981).

### ***Equal Education for All***

At first glance the Commissions discourse created the impression that it had moved away from the apartheid inspired racial categories. For example, in principle 1, it notes: "Equal opportunities for education, including equal standards in education, for every inhabitant, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex, should be the purposeful endeavour of the State" (HSRC, 1981, p. 14). This has always been the most basic of demands made by protesting students since the 1950s. This very simple demand eventually appeared on the commission's agenda hypothetically ready to be introduced into the state's education policy discourse. Nasson (1990, p. 56) notes that

the De Lange Report stresses that 'the distribution of education will have to be organised in such a way that everyone will receive a rightful share, regardless of race, colour, socio-economic context, ethnic context, religion, sex or geographical location'.

The idea that education can improve the material welfare of the poor if they are provided with equal opportunities has been at the heart of the liberal reformist hypothesis, with the added notion that their educational achievements could stimulate the development of the economy. The commission's superficial concern with the material well-being of poor underprivileged blacks, however, had a sting in its tail. At the heart of the "education of equal opportunity for all" rhetoric lay the human capital rationale. Very simply put, the education system that the De Lange commission advocated was part of a strategic objective to create a deracialised education system that "is driven by the need and desire of capital for capital accumulation...it is a system that is designed to train or educate for the purposes of capital" (Hill & Kumar, 2009, p. 115). The commission's propagated belief that the abolition of inequalities in educational provision will boost the circulation of work skills throughout the economy and thereby remedy the circumstances which committed consecutive generations to an impoverished existence. Parallel to this liberal delusion is the notion that this kind of "human capital investment will help to secure a more socially just and equal society, by ensuring that all the sectors of the population have an opportunity to

acquire the educational rewards that which, by and large, have customarily been appropriated by privileged elites”(Nasson, 1990, p. 90). Carnoy (cited in Nasson, 1990, p. 91) contended that this blinkered hypothesis was clearly out of kilter with “the empirical evidence that proved that the social rate of return on public education expenditure is close to zero”. The De Lange commission peddled the nation a bankrupt aberration. The commission, given its neoconservative disposition, failed to grasp that education was not a neutral undertaking that could be engineered to achieve greater social equality in a capitalist society.

### **Three Tiers of Education**

The Main Committee made the following recommendations with regard to the formation of a new educational system for South Africa. It proposed (HSRC, 1981, pp. 14-16) that

education should be provided in three successive phases: pre-basic, basic and post-basic; that pre-basic education should be directed towards school readiness, that basic education should be directed towards basic literacy and its subsequent consolidation and that post-basic education should be directed towards differentiated educational needs.

One of the most significant focal points was that “education should be directed towards differentiated educational needs”. This “differentiated” education system implies that “instead of discriminating against students on racial grounds, the committee recommends distinguishing between them on the basis of individual ability” (NEUSA, 1982, p. 7). Nasson (1990, p. 67) posits that “the Report advocates differentiated curricula which would contribute more concretely to the production of the kinds of knowledge, skills and ‘developed value systems’ sought by the economy”. At that early stage it was clear that the commission sought to deracialise the education system to respond to the demands of the South African economy.

### ***Pre-basic Education***

The committee considered the substantial waste taking place in the education system recognising that many poor black children are not properly prepared to enter school. While the Report acknowledges that providing crèches and nursery schools could overcome this obstacle, the Report noted that it was not realistic to provide these facilities on a national scale. The recognition of the disadvantage suffered by underprivileged children may well be

commendable, but the Report makes no recommendations that would eliminate this disadvantage. By implication they ignored the impact of uneven economic development in the country. The rural poor would be left out of the development loop as they would not have access to the same resources that their urban counterparts have. I concur with Nasson that the principle of social justice would elude the rural poor, exacerbating their deprivation (Nasson, 1990).

### ***Basic Education***

The Report recommends six years of basic education to provide all children with the essential literacy and numeracy skills. Basic education was to be the only obligatory phase of education. More importantly is the emphasis that the commission placed on the development of “technical” and vocational skills. The commission does not clarify its position with regard to the difference between obtaining “technical” skills and the acquisition of creative and reasoning skills that provided a more universal approach to education. The next step of the recommendation suggests that children at this early stage of their schooling careers be channelled according to their academic accomplishments. It argues that by the time the students reach the age of twelve they would be clear about their ambitions. This phase was recommended as compulsory and state funding was to be focussed here. The National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA, 1982, p. 8) noted

...by means of streaming (what the report calls canalisation methods) it will be possible to determine who moves from the formal to non-formal education and when. For example, after six years basic schooling, a pupil will be streamed either into an academic secondary school or into a technical school, or into the sphere of non-formal education, e.g., in service training.

### ***Post-Basic Education***

The recommendations for this phase mirror the British Educational Act of 1944 (Randall, 1993). Concurring NEUSA (1982, p. 8) points out that

the English system of education which was abandoned some years ago, namely the division of children into either ‘secondary modern’ (technical, vocational, commercial) schools or grammar (academic) schools. One of the most important reasons that this was abandoned in England was that this kind of schooling limited, rather than expanded, pupils’ choices concerning their future careers. It was found to be educationally unsound. Pupils in secondary moderns developed a low self-image, suffered from lack of motivation and were prevented from entering universities if they were late developers.

If we followed this model it by implication meant that pupils will be “canalised” into three forms of post-basic education according to their academic aptitude. The De Lange Commission understood “education” as “formal” secondary schooling. Accordingly, academic schools would no longer be compulsory. Before being “canalised” students would be subjected to a variety of tests to measure their “inborn mental abilities”. As NEUSA (1982, p. 9) appropriately observes

Pupils from white middle class backgrounds will be channelled into academic schools, universities, and in time, into professional and managerial jobs. Black working class children will be forced to make do with technical education or will be pushed out of school onto the job market after an initial literacy and numeracy training.

The Commission did not hide the fact that non-formal education was aimed at “blacks, coloureds and Indians” noting that it considered the growing number of “blacks, coloureds and Indians” who acquired academic credentials while “the present and future SA situation needs people with skills” (HSRC, 1981, p. 138). While the three phases of education appeared to be pointing to a potential deracialised education system for South Africa it exposed the reformist mandate of the De Lange Commission, which fell far short of the expectations that the black communities had with regard to the radical transformation of the apartheid educational system. These recommendations, in my view, were at best a contemptuous ruse to placate the black community. It was manifestly obvious that these recommendations would not in any way have been able to address the inequalities reproduced by racial capitalism. The commission’s insistence on merit also brings into contention the notion of “equal opportunity”. In a meritocracy individuals alone are responsible for their own success or failure. To be successful in this meritocratic environment the individual’s success would ostensibly be determined by hard work, personal talent and a positive attitude. The liberal protagonists of the meritocratic society believe that because the meritocracy is considered to be a more unbiased it will give rise to a more just and productive society and differences based on race, class and gender will moderate over time (Kennedy & Power, 2010). The rise of the neoliberal orthodoxy, in which the meritocratic ideology is embedded, has seen education systems globally being shaped to the needs of global capitalism. Consequently (Kennedy & Power, 2010, p. 226)

governments have sought to legitimise these neoliberal ideas and increasing social and economic inequality by transferring responsibility to the individual and the promotion of a meritocratic society...hence, we would argue...the state’s use of this meritocratic rhetoric actually helps to further perpetuate existing

inequalities in the education system, and essentially serves to make the existing unequal societal status quo seem 'natural'."

In the De Lange Report "individual ability" masks the meritocratic discourse which would leave mainly black pupils from underprivileged backgrounds unable to compete with white pupils saturated with apartheid benefits. The existing class inequalities and racial inequalities would be entrenched, if not amplified. Davies (1984, p. 362) posits that

the typical method employed by meritocratic ideologists to mask the inherent elitism of this doctrine is to characterise it as an "open society" doctrine. It is therefore hardly surprising that the principle which has most captured the imagination of those who welcomed the Report enthusiastically is that of "open" education...this notion of (racially) integrated education turns out to be a highly exclusive one, seen to embrace only the private schools and universities.

### **Responses to the De Lange Report**

In this section I will briefly consider some of the responses to the De Lange Report. The most critical and lucid critiques of the De Lange Report were offered by white radical academics. Buckland, Chisholm and Muller, amongst others, have strongly argued against the technicist / human capital ideology and expounded its dominance on the educational discourse in South Africa. The National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) also delivered a robust critique of the de Lange Report. The Liberal response came mainly from the English business community, private sector think-tanks like SYNCOM and the Progressive Federal Party. The Afrikaners completely rejected the Report.

#### ***The Liberal Response***

It is quite evident that the recommendations of the De Lange Report had been subordinated to the general demands of monopoly capital. It is equally obvious that Capital had put forward a clear set of very specific demands to the apartheid government regarding its expectations, i.e. that the priorities for a reformed education system should be directed at meeting the manpower needs of the country. SYNCOM, a private sector "think-tank" established in the 1980s supported the De Lange Commission's discourse by advocating for the privatisation of education through a series of "Privatisation Positions Papers" (PPPs) (Benade, 1988, p. 499) they published.

One of SYNCOM's latest initiatives in responding to current government moves toward privatisation has been the planning of a series of 'privatisation position

papers'....the purpose of the PPPs is to analyse key aspects of those areas of society and economy which might fruitfully be partially or wholly privatised. These areas include healthcare, transport, telecommunications and social security. The PPPs were aimed at '...politicians, top civil servants and decision-makers in the private sector.'

These papers put forward a set of proposals in which strategic areas of society and the economy are identified and opened up to privatisation. Benade (1988, p. 490) suggested that SYNCOM's motives for the privatisation of education had been "myopic and misdirected". He argued that SYNCOM's motives were directed at moving the economy closer to their vision of capitalism. More critically though Benade concluded that SYNCOM's calls for privatisation were mistaken in the belief that schooling could be made more "efficient and productive" and potentially "depoliticise" schooling. Benade further condemned SYNCOM's proposals because he believed that they glorified a technicist and consumerist approach to schooling. He stressed that SYNCOM saw schooling as having only extrinsic aims (such as preparation for the job market); and regarded the process of schooling as a product which can be articulated in terms such as 'efficiency', 'productivity', 'inputs' and 'outputs'"(Benade, 1988, p. 502).

Jan Steyn, Chairman of the Urban Foundation (UF), indicated that "the private sector is showing increasing willingness to challenge the existence of inequalities and injustices in South Africa. The private sector has an obvious interest in the education system as a source of skilled power" (Steyn cited in Benade, 1988, p. 499). I concur with Benade's criticism of the De Lange Report's recommendations when he stated that they are essentially a blueprint for the establishment of technical/vocational system of schooling which will give "Capital control over the content and processes of schooling with schools producing the kinds of people Capital requires if it is to function properly." (Benade, 1988, p. 500). Principle 7 of the Report stated that "The private sector and the state shall have shared responsibility for the provision of non-formal education" (HSRC,1981, p. 15). Complementary to Benade's critique of SYNCOM, Hill (2004, p. 514) asserts that

Changes to education more widely have been effected through the repressive as well as ideological means available to the state, like its political dominance, secured through definite institutional forms and practices: the ideological apparatuses of the state.

Hill (2004, p. 515) points out that both Althusser (1971) and Bourdieu (1999) noted that

schooling and the other sectors of education are generally regarded as politically neutral, and not as agencies of cultural, ideological and education production. The school, like other institutions in society such as the legal system and the police, is always presented in official discourses as neutral, non-political and non-ideological.

In his critique of the De Lange Report, Buckland contends that the technicist language of the recommendations reflected a discourse which appeared to be ideologically neutral. Stanley (cited in Buckland, 1981, p. 371) defined technicism as

essentially technicism is a state of mind that rests on an act of conceptual misuse, reflected in a myriad of linguistic ways, of scientific and technological modes of reasoning. This misuse results in the illegitimate extension of scientific and technological reasoning to the point of imperial dominance over all other interpretations.

The problem, however, is that the dangers of this “technicist ideology is that it is deeply embedded in western cultural patterns...which tends to ignore the dialectical nature of social problems” (Buckland, 1981, p. 141). Buckland believes that this is a manifestation of the “end of ideology” discourse which was nothing more than a form of positivist pedagogy which, according to Giroux, tacitly supported “deeply conservative views about human nature, society, knowledge and social action...its elimination of “ideology” works in the service of social engineers” (Giroux cited by Buckland, 1981, p. 141). Buckland (1981, p. 140) cites Giroux in support of his critique of the de Lange Report’s attempt to project education as being largely apolitical:

...acknowledging the social and cultural basis of the character of different modes of pedagogy is important but incomplete. This approach must be supplemented by analysing the assumptions embedded in a given educational paradigm against larger social and political interests. Questions which arise out of this type might take the following form: What interests do these assumptions serve? What are their latent consequences? What are the material and intellectual forces that sustain these assumptions and their corresponding paradigm?

I conclude this section with Kallaway (1989, p. 271) who observed that

The critique of the De Lange Report (1981) and the White Paper (1983) introduced a wide-ranging debate on the linkages between private sector engagement in the field of education and its relation to the reform of state policy in this era. Coming at a time when there had been increasing focus internationally regarding the relation between education, ideology, the state and capitalism, the Report provided a convenient pivot for local debates on these issues. In the South African situation it was not simply the nature of the relationship between state

education and capitalism that was held up for critical analysis, but the critique of De Lange was also a critique of the 'liberal' argument fostered by the private sector which 'fostered the image that the free enterprise system is the enemy of racial ascription'.

The De Lange Commission and its promotion of the meritocratic ideology pointed to nothing more than the promotion of class-based benefit through exclusive schooling, effectively obscuring the sustained reality of white privilege in South Africa (Kennedy & Power, 2010).

### ***The Radical Response***

Chisholm contends that the appointment of the de Lange Commission of Inquiry into Education was a major attempt by the apartheid state to “renegotiate the racial component of state ideology in education” (Chisholm, 1983, p. 149). With reference to the ideological orientation of the De Lange Report, Muller (1987) contends that the state’s reformist strategy was a new alignment of focus in the ruling class alliance that was made up of the reformist wing of the National Party (NP), the military and monopoly capital. He pointed out that “for the first time liberal economic considerations would not only be tacitly accommodated but would set the very terms of the discourse...” (Muller, 1987, p. 173). The liberal reformist discourse became the dominant theme in the new ruling class alliance’s strategy. The discourse was further developed and deepened with the assistance of academics into what Muller calls the “a quintessential discourse of reform and development for restabilising the capitalist state” (Muller, 1987, p. 173). I concur with Muller as it is clear that the liberal reformist discourse does not in fact translate into “equal opportunities for all” as suggested by the commission. Instead of addressing the issue of inequality, the commission introduces a meritocratic discourse which clearly means that instead of discriminating on the basis of race, “individual ability” would now be the criteria for discrimination. This kind of technocratic criteria will not only leave the inequalities generated by racial capitalism untouched, but in fact entrench these inequalities. Chisholm (1983, p. 150) posits that

The report proposed reforms designed to streamline and rationalise the existing education system. It also articulated a new meritocratic, ‘non-racial’, technicist educational ideology, with a brief to provide recommendations for an educational system that which would meet the manpower needs of South Africa and provide education ‘of equal equality’ for all population groups; the Commission recommended a system of formal (academic) education running parallel and interfacing with a non-formal (vocational) education structure.



Chisholm (1983, p. 152) argues that, read together with the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions, the De Lange Report represented nothing more than an extension of the ruling alliance's strategy to "deracialise aspects of state structures through the co-optation of a small black middle class and increasing controls over the working class". This notion was supported by Schaffer (1984) who indicated that by 1981 the discourse of the state and capital was largely in accord and focussed on creating a new ideological cohesion to complement the reform of state policy in a manner that will counter the more radical discourses of the revolutionary working class locally as well as those of critics abroad.

While I concur that it might have been the part of the overall strategy of the state to convince its detractors that its "reform" ideology included setting in motion a process of "deracialising" the economy, we dare not disregard the fact that there existed a suite of state policies which must be contextualised with the expansion of the security apparatuses which, while preaching "reform" on the one hand, continued the violent repression of black people on the other. This ideology of "reform" was nothing more than a devious carrot and stick strategy which continued to reproduce the honoured position of privilege for whites under the aegis of racial capitalism. It was clear that no measure of reform would alter the subordinate position of the black working class (Wolpe, 1983). More concisely put: "... there is little to suggest that the political / economic interests of monopoly capitalism involves a general undermining of the position of white subordinate classes" (Wolpe, 1983, p. 11). Buckland contends that the De Lange Commission had to be viewed against the historical significance of Bantu education in relation to the broader political economy of racial capitalism in South Africa. Richard Levin (cited in Buckland, 1981, p. 135) supports the notion by claiming that

Bantu education does not merely provide an ideological mode of manipulation in the wider attempts at controlling the circulation of labour-power, but in itself becomes a political strategy aimed at the subjugation of the black proletariat.

I concur with Muller, who in his explication of the Afrikaner response, concludes that

The first is an economic threat to the worker/petty bourgeoisie factions, primarily in the form of competition (from blacks). The second is a cultural threat to the whole notion of Afrikaner identity which has always defined itself vis-a-vis its psycho-social distance from "the black man." The approaching realignment in the economic base is being strenuously resisted by the "conservative" faction in terms central to the cultural domain; indeed the "conservative" faction has always

selected as its chosen terrain of struggle, and as the best means to defend its interests, its claim to constitute the authentic voice of the "Afrikaner volk".

The apartheid state's liberal reformist strategy, initiated via the De Lange commission, unmistakably boomeranged as it failed to convince the black majority, including the militant student movements, that it was honourably committed to political transformation.

## **CRITICAL DISCUSSION**

This section critically reviews some of the more ambiguous recommendations of the De Lange Report which led to its complete rejection by black political organisations and progressive academics alike.

### **The Equality Myth**

The De Lange Commission's recommendations do not in any way suggest a major departure from earlier state policies regarding the nature of black education. It was quite clear that the majority of blacks would continue to be presented with an inferior education. NUESA (1982, p. 6) posits

With regard to financing, it seems that while De Lange is suggesting that the State assist in some form of "private" education (one can assume on-the-job training), de Lange is basically suggesting that financial responsibility for the provision of education will fall increasingly on the community and the private sector and less and less on the State. This obviously has very important implications for future inequalities in the provision of education, as richer communities will be able to provide better facilities than poorer ones. It also means that many people who are unemployed, or whose employers choose not to provide training, will not benefit from "non-formal" education.

The funding provisions regarding schooling, as explicated in Chapter 3.3.2 (p.28–30) of the Report, read together with Principles 3, 6, 8 & 9 of the commission pointed to an ideological connection between the World Bank's *Education Sector Policy Paper* of 1981, which promoted the privatisation of public education and the deregulation of the market. The De Lange Report put paid to any notion of free education. The commission noted in particular, "it is regarded as educationally unsound for education to be altogether free" (HSRC, 1981, p. 116). The guiding principles of the de Lange Commission reflected the institution of neoliberal imperatives: these included free school choice policies, funding formulas and user pay principles alongside the state subsidisation of private schooling (Bonai, 2000). For

example, Chapter 3.3.2 (HSRC, 1981, pp. 28-30) states that basic education would essentially be free up to the age of 12. Post basic education would not be free. When children are ready to be channelled into either academic or vocational training the funding of further education becomes the responsibility of the parents. Parents will pay for academic secondary training while the cost of vocational training will be carried by capital. This is also a clear indication of the state abdicating its social responsibilities by regulating rather than providing essential social services, like quality public education. Chisholm (1983, p. 2) highlights the implications

Instead of being denied academic schooling, as in the past, as was largely the case in the Bantu Education system, academic schooling could now become a possibility for blacks as long as they can afford it. This is allowed for in the principle of 'parental free-choice' specified in the report which could allow parents to send students to expensive multi-racial schools. On the other hand, an escape route is provided for some black working class and petty-bourgeois students. The majority remains where they were while an ideology of upward mobility and equality of opportunity, made possible by the easing restrictions on the training of blacks, disguises the continuities between Bantu Education and the present initiatives.

The introduction of the user fee system would continue to reproduce the ubiquitous class and racial inequalities in education spawned during the apartheid era. In essence, bringing about the desired levels of equality in black education would now become the burden of the communities where such schools are located. Nasson (1990, p. 71), citing Pring, contends

It is now all too clear that growing fiscal restraint in levels of public provision of white education is typical of the broader pattern of privatisation policies; thus the maintenance of social spending on schooling is to become dependent on private means, in which 'services that should be free within the state sector, depend on parents paying for them'.

The poor would simply become poorer and denied the "equal opportunities" propagated by the commission. Ironically, the De Lange Commission's recommendations, if implemented would simply have reinforced these educational inequalities. The De Lange Commission was cognisant of the impact that the globalisation of neoliberalism was having on the education discourse globally, thus, in acquiescence, the commission laid the foundation for the privatisation of public education in South Africa, gearing the education system to the needs of neoliberal capital.

## Education Reform and the needs of Capital

The De Lange Commission's mandate was to ensure that the reforms it proposed would meet the demands of Capital for more skilled jobs to create economic growth, as a matter of national interest. De Lange (HSRC, 1981, p. 4) argues

A factor which emphasises the necessity for "careers guidance" as a specialised service is technological and industrial development which has forced specialisation upon the occupational sector and made guidance essential in order to orient prospective workers in the complexities of the occupational world. The tremendous increase in the population – particularly black population – also makes it essential that school going children should receive vocational guidance at school in order to equip them for their future careers.

The De Lange commission exhibited a remarkable antagonism towards academic learning as academia seemed to place too much value on the acquisition of knowledge. The commission recommended that there be a merging between education policy and the country's economic interests with regard to vocational education and technical training in schools. It consequently recommended that a shift be made towards "a concrete experience of science, technology and management" (HSRC, 1981, p. 32). While establishing the importance of linking school and work experience in "the struggle against unemployment, economic deprivation and alienation...the concept of integrating education with production provides potential ways of structuring work, social and political relations along more equitable and democratic principles" (Nasson, 1990, p. 68). The strategic question, however, is what exactly the terms and conditions of that link between school and work would be and, of course, what the agenda of the commission was? Domenech and Mora-Ninci (2009, p. 157) notes

The WB policy analysts have argued that education is crucial to create economic growth and reduce poverty levels because it enhances the development of human capital through quality investments and specific outreach to the most needy in society, which should in turn help to achieve sustainable benefits for its investments.

The Washington Consensus became a strategic driver of economic progress during the 1980s, underpinned by Human Capital theory; it replaced the Keynesian models of development. According to Unterhalter & Wolpe (1991, p. 3) in the 1980s

the human capital theory was widely accepted by the regime and by large corporations as the 'correct' path to economic growth and hence, political stability within a system of White minority rule...The De Lange commission

encapsulated this approach. Its major finding was that education was the key to economic growth, equality and, hence “political stability”.

Human Capital theory played a central role in the educational discourse of various state education systems around the world. The very neoliberal nature of this notion saw it working in combination with powerful organisations such as the World Bank and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Following Chisholm (2004, p. 4)

Human capital theory posits that improving individual educational attributes will lead to economic growth. On the surface this is a concept with which few can disagree, in the sense that it may denote the wish for education and economic growth and a link between the two. As a descriptive wish, there is little harm in it. As an analytical tool and basis for making educational decisions, however, it is deeply problematic. The concept is usually applied in a manner that removes from the analysis of national education systems their history, social and economic content, complexity and interrelatedness with socio-economic and political

The commission’s recommendations were based on the assumption that there is a direct relationship between national economic growth, human capital development and productivity. The resultant conclusion was that school should prepare students that are ready for the “world of work”. What this recommendation does is to endorse the myth that “everyone has an equal opportunity” and that the hard working participants deserve their top jobs and their greater rewards that are part of the meritocratic system. It is for this reason that it is important to recall that Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued that rewards and occupation are not based on individual ability, but on the individuals’ social background. They contend that (cited in Sever, 2012, p. 656)

schools are training young people for their future economic and occupational position. Students of working class origin are trained to take orders, to be obedient, and are subject to more discipline whereas children of professionals are trained using more progressive methods, which gives them internal discipline and self-presentation skills. People have no choice because their futures are in it.

Following Stolcke (cited in Domench and Mora-Ninci, 2009, p. 154) I concur that the theory of human capital is a liberal illusion that assumes that through mere will, and with a lot of effort and time, most social obstacles can be overcome, but that in fact is an ideology that hides the underlying causes of inequality in a system of exploitation of the majority by a small powerful minority.

This “liberal illusion” is exactly what the De Lange Commission was promoting. Feinburg, (cited in Nasson, 1990, p. 92) a critic of “liberal aspirations and rhetoric” wrote

If the goal of full equality of educational opportunity were actually achieved, if the instruments for identifying talent and the institutions for training it were perfected, then it is likely that the society would be even 'more unequal' than it presently is. Talent will be removed from the lower classes, the instruments for control that exist in large bureaucratic structures would become even more efficient. With talent removed from the lower classes, their ability to articulate real injustices would be destroyed, and along with it, any incentive for others to address social injustices. In American society, the appeal to equality of educational opportunity has consistently been used to mask basic inequalities in social, economic, and political institutions. The schools have been used to hold out the promise of pie-in-the-sky for everyone, while the economics of the situation have denied to some even a loaf of daily bread. The problem with schools is not that they have failed to achieve equality of opportunity, nor is it that they have not tried...The problem is that the schools have advanced the idea of equality of opportunity in the context of an economic system that would bankrupt itself if everyone who was employable and wanted to work were actually given a job. Indeed, if everyone were to stay in school up to the same level, and were to come out with very similar competencies, employers would have to find some other trait to distinguish 'employables' from 'unemployables.' Equality of educational opportunities has been such an appealing idea because people have not wanted to deal with the problem of equality'.

The De Lange commission's recommendations regarding “equal opportunities” for black students turned out to be nothing more than a hollow functionalist platitude. Klees, (2016 b, p. 663) argues that

the theory of Human Capital is deeply embedded in a neoliberal market fundamentalist regime that reproduces and advances the prevailing social order. Educational policies that promote, for example, vouchers, charters, and other forms of privatisation and narrow approaches to testing, accountability, and standards, are seen as furthering inequality and ignoring the realities of unequal power.

The De Lange commission failed to acknowledge the relationship between the economy and the social structure. It also has also neglected to observe the role of ideology and conflict that has shaped racial capitalism in South Africa and the manner that it impacted the lives of the oppressed majority. Schools are not neutral institutions, and until it is recognised that “schools also act as one of the primary modes of production of cultural commodities needed by a corporate society” (Apple, 1982, p. 45), the injustices committed in education and the remedies to those injustices will remain out of reach for the majority. It is for this very reason that it important to recognise that South Africa (society) cannot be transformed

through education alone unless it involves a radical change in the country's political and economic systems.

### **Education Management**

The Main committee made several recommendations about the management of education which would have enabled the state to progress toward "the establishment of educational facilities of equal quality". It sought to create, develop and maintain (van den Berg, 1981, p. 13)

(a) centralised (national) decision making structures and processes, forms of participation, negotiation, co-ordination and control which are representative of all the inhabitants of the RSA; ...in shared decision-making on matters of common national policy, allocation; of resources, the teaching profession, the broad curriculum, standards and certification. (Principles 2,9 and 10)

b) decentralised (e.g. regional, local) decision-making, participatory, co-ordinating and control structures and processes that which ensure the right of 'free association', the greatest possible freedom of parental choice and the wide range of options to meet the needs of the individual (principles 2, 3, 4 and 9).

c) "Reconciling" management structures and processes that will provide balances between centralised and decentralised control; ...so that there is no breakdown in, diminution of the common aims and objectives set as policy at the national level (principle 9).

To produce, develop and maintain management organizations and procedures which ensure

a) the provision of education which will maintain a balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of society (principles 4 and 6).

b) an integrated, flexible relationship between formal and non-formal education, between school and the world of work, in the context of life-long continuing education (principles 4,5,6, and 7).

c) the recognition and achievement of status for teachers, and effective channels of negotiation (principle 10).

d) a system of education that will remain sensitive and responsive to changes (social, economic and political) and which will be based on continuing research, so that it contributes positively to the creation of a society in which equality of opportunity becomes increasingly attainable (principle 11).

The World Bank's intervention in the education sector brought about a significant change in the state's role in the administration and funding of education. The De Lange Commission, in keeping with these interventions, proposed the conversion of the management structures of the South African education system accordingly. The World Bank (1999, p. 18) stressed that

the state should support those processes towards decentralisation of the economy and the administration, promote the growth of the private sector in financing and educational implementing services, and assure the betterment of quality and efficiency in education and the management of evaluation in education.

The proposed decentralisation of education indicated that some of the authority and funding responsibilities that were formerly vested in the central government would be transferred to provinces, districts, directly to school governing bodies, or to private corporations that would supplant the state in the provision of public education. With the concomitant rise of neoliberal globalisation policies, a political strategy of state restructuring was introduced that effectively collapsed the infrastructure of the welfare state replacing it with a neoliberal state that promoted state withdrawal, privatisation and localisation (Astiz, Wiseman & Baker, 2002). Astiz et al. (2002, p. 70) posits

These neoliberal policies, which decentralized and privatized school systems, claim the following virtues: (1) being democratic, efficient, and accountable; (2) being more responsive to the community and to local needs; (3) empowering teachers, parents, and others in the education community while improving the effectiveness of school reform; and (4) being able to improve school quality and increase funds available for teachers' salaries through competition.

The De Lange Commission's recommendations proposing these newly envisaged education management structures represented a serious challenge to education policy development, especially if we consider the inequalities spawned by the apartheid education system. The De Lange commission's recommendations could, as Tan (1998, p. 47) argues, "...exacerbate not only the disparities between schools in terms of educational outcomes but also social inequalities". The very notion of "educational or school choice" serves the interests of those that can afford these choices. Black working class parents in South Africa do not have such choices in this so-called "free market" of education, simply because they do not have the supplementary monetary resources to finance their children's education (Kennedy & Power, 2010). While the notion of decentralisation and privatisation may appear to be democratic, the De Lange commission appears to have upended its own recommendations regarding the achievement of equity through the distribution of human and physical resources. The World Bank (1995) optimistically argues that

There are several potential advantages to increased user fees. In principle, charging fees can increase educational spending per student enrolled. It can also improve equity by allowing the public sector to target subsidies more effectively to students from poor families. Moreover, increased cost-recovery can improve



school accountability to parents. In many cases, increased cost-recovery leads to increased parental involvement in running the school.

As pointed out earlier, given the social inequalities in South Africa, it is clear that the majority of black parents would not be able to subsidize the education of their children. That being the case, black children would be brought no substantive relief from their impoverished environments. While the De Lange commission may have enthused about the provision of equal opportunities for all children to quality education, their compliance with the neoliberal orthodoxy would simply entrench the extant inequalities in the education system. Bonal (2000, p. 10) argues that

At present, there is no evidence that decentralisation policies have improved the quality of education. Some have pointed out that the real objectives of most decentralisation reforms are not related with the quality of education. Rather, decentralisation is undertaken as a means of reducing financial and political responsibility to the state level. During the 1980s, decentralisation and marketisation educational reforms in Latin America have increased school inequality and geographic inequalities.

### **Technical Education**

Chapter 3.3.3.3 (HSRC, 1981, pp. 31-32) of the de Lange Report deals with technical skills. It reads:

South Africa is a developing country that is changing more rapidly than most developing countries. Modern science, technology and management skills...are not yet the cultural assets of significant sectors of all our population groups...this partly explains the shortage of skilled manpower in technical and scientific fields...

The Report suggests that by improving the Bantu Education system that black students might be able to become technical workers. While these skills might have provided black students with the technical competencies to complete the required tasks at hand, it would not have provided them with the skills to develop an understanding of the social forces which controlled their lives. The workforce would thus remain dependent on the factory and therefore dependent on Capital – their subordination to the uniform dictates of labour will complete the circle of exploitation (Chisholm, 1983). In light of the reformist trajectory of the de Lange Report, Greaves et al. (2007, p. 14) points us to the assertion by Marxist theorists that education is part of the state ideological apparatus that serves the capitalist economy and that it “helps to produce the necessary social, political, ideological and economic conditions for capitalism”. The De Lange Report, in general, provided a clear

indication that attempts to 'deracialise' education did not automatically imply the abolition of the capitalist system. In fact, the De Lange Report attempted to implement their recommendations within the framework of a capitalist and racial division of labour with the view to create a form of neo-apartheid. Here we are again reminded of the umbilical connection between apartheid and capitalism (Kallaway, 1984). Althusser theorises that children are "structuralised by education because the education system is part of the state ideological apparatus that cannot do otherwise than to work in the interests of Capital" (Althusser cited by Graeves et al., 2007, p. 19). Graeves et al. (2007, p. 19) goes on to state that

this process prepares the student for passive acceptance of inequalities in expectation and reward that will be faced in the world of capitalist production. Indeed, education is preparation for the future market evaluation and the process of commodification through which capitalism assesses human value and work.

It is more than obvious that Capital had put forward a clear set of very specific demands to the De Lange Commission regarding its expectations, i.e. that the priorities for a reformed education system should be geared to the expectations of the manpower needs of the country.

Bill Nasson (cited in Randall, 1993, p. 55) notes that

The implications are ominous. What the De Lange reforms deliver is an educational system structured by social privilege and grossly unequal income distribution. Middle-class communities will enjoy selective access to partially subsidised formal secondary schooling, while poor working-class children will be shunted into heavily subsidised, narrow vocational and technical training, financed directly by market interests. For the children of urban elites there is expensive schooling in facilities endowed by levies and funding from wealthier communities and individual parents. For the children of the poor, the pickings are very much leaner, as they find themselves liable for streaming into technical or 'career-oriented' education from the tender age of twelve.

## **THE NEOLIBERAL INFUSION**

Nasson's comment points to the reality that the educational system has to be understood as a site of struggle, epitomising the ideological tensions between those who wish to transform it as part of a process of radical transformation and those who ultimately see schooling as an instrument of social reproduction and control (Sarup, 1983). The infusion of neoliberalism as the dominant discourse in the De Lange Commission's report points to how neoliberalism has succeeded in containing the transformative role of education. It is my contention that the De Lange Commission report should be viewed in the context of the neoliberal imaginary of globalisation that has ostensibly created new incentives for the

rethinking of education world-wide. “Neoliberalism,” Rizvi (2017,p. 5) contends, “presents various aspects of globalisation as historically inevitable with which people, institutions and nations simply have to come to terms with and negotiate them as best they can”. Although the various authors cited in my analysis of the De Lange recommendations did not explicitly refer to the influence of the neoliberal ideology on the De Lange Report, I consider the De Lange Report instrumental in the unfolding global political project framed by neoliberalism. The commission’s recommendations were without question influenced by the policy prescriptions of the World Bank and Capital. These recommendations were also conspicuously imbued with human capital theory which is a key feature in neoliberal ideology. The nature and content of De Lange Commission report highlights the important economic and ideological role education systems play in capitalist societies. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) points out, in the US context, the education system not only prepares people for work; they select what should be taught and they determine how education can best serve the interests of capital. The De Lange Commission provides the basis for education and the capitalist system in South Africa to become more firmly intertwined. More interestingly though is that the commission draws our attention to the emerging but dominant role that South African corporations were beginning to play in social policy formulation. It is on the basis of this premise that I would argue that neoliberalism can no longer be seen as simply another ideology, but as Rizvi (2017, p. 5) suggests

it has acquired a taken-for-granted status, the only way in which economic, political and cultural relations can be envisaged. It has thus become a way of thinking shared by ordinary people, a kind of common understanding that makes everyday practices possible, giving it sense and legitimacy.

The tragically ironic upshot of the reformist discourse in South Africa was that while the majority of black political organisations rejected de Lange Commission’s recommendations upon its publication in 1981, these very recommendations propagated by the World Bank in the 1980s, became the central tenets of the post-apartheid education system. These very contentious measures, that inaugurated the hegemonic neoliberal ideology into the South African education system, soon became part of the “common sense language” that dominated the South African education policy discourse post-1994. In essence the post-apartheid ruling class had achieved a form of “hegemony by consent” as the nation “interiorize the values and norms which dominant classes themselves have adopted and believe to be right and proper” (Vance, 2017, p. 2). The impact of this hegemonic neoliberal

ideology on post-apartheid South Africa's education policy discourse will be more closely examined in Chapter 6.

### **A LUTA CONTINUA: CONTINUING RESISTANCE IN THE TOWNSHIPS**

By 1985 black students made their rejection of the state's reform initiatives quite clear and continued their struggles around their demands for completely new, non-racial education system. The massive national student boycotts that followed brought the system of Bantu education to the brink of collapse. The situation was aggravated when a state of emergency was declared in 1985 and the deployment of troops in the townships (Muller, 1987).

Hartshorne (1987, p. 126) postulates

The rise of the trade union movement, with its own special feeling for the crucial importance of education, also led to greater awareness of the economic, as well as the political factors involved in social change. Economic as well as political reconstruction is now on the agenda and any consideration of the present or the future of education has to take this into serious account.

Having to contend with an intransigent, repressive state apparatus, a number of community organisations, nationally tried bring an end the massive country-wide school boycotts. These initiatives led to the development of a popular campaign for People's Education. Any reasonable expectation for the implementation of the De Lange recommendations amongst the reformists had by now evaporated into the Highveld smog. The youth had thrown down the political gauntlet. Callinicos and Rodgers (1977, p. 168) concludes

South Africa's young blacks have put the destruction of apartheid on the agenda again. Their rebellion has been carried out with tremendous courage and militancy. They have shaken the regime to its foundations and braved one of the most ruthless repressive machines in the world. However, their rebellion has its limits. Young, unemployed blacks and school children do not have the power to topple apartheid. That power only lies in the hands of the black working class, which did not take the lead in the Soweto events. Workers acted, massively, but only in response to, in solidarity with, the initiatives of the black youth. The black youth rebellion in the 1960's. Both movements developed with fantastic militancy, verve, imagination, spontaneously and rapidly workers' movement way behind. At the same time, both movements lacked the power to break the system.

In the aftermath of the De Lange Commission's failed reformist debacle, the emergence of the People's Education Movement (PEM) and the birth of NECC marked a clear shift in the strategies adopted in opposition to the apartheid education system. The school boycotts were abandoned in the search for constructive, democratic alternatives. People's Education

was an articulation of the desperate hope expressed by the oppressed for a more aspirational educational alternative. The struggle for people's education became "a symbol of a national educational and political movement in the making (Muller, 1987, p. 18).

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter argues that the De Lange Commission of Inquiry into education was nothing more than an opportunistic ruse of the apartheid state to retain political control over the unfolding education crisis in South Africa. More significantly though was the fact that the De Lange Commission's recommendations, although initially rejected by the apartheid state and black political organisations resulted in the inauguration of the neoliberal orthodoxy into South Africa's education policy discourse, via the apartheid state's Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS), which laid the foundation for post-apartheid education policy discourse. Framed by the reformist liberal discourse, the commission's recommendations pointed to the more direct intervention of the private sector in the state's social policy framework, especially with regard to the privatisation of education. In Chapter Five I will illuminate the rise of the People's Education Movement and its vision of creating a democratic, egalitarian education system in a post-apartheid South Africa/Azania.



## Chapter 5

### PEOPLE'S EDUCATION: A DREAM DENIED?

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This chapter posits that the People's Education Movement (PEM) provided the oppressed with a potentially viable counter-hegemonic strategy to the apartheid education system. It contends that the mantra "people's education for people's power" marked a crucial turning point in the struggle against racial capitalism; moving from school boycotts to the development of a vision for a more radical, alternative form of people's education. More importantly though, through the interrogation of the primary documents generated by the consultative conferences of the movement, I advance the proposition that despite its revolutionary potential, inspired by the enabling vision of Paulo Freire, the People's Education Movement was ideologically compromised by the unfolding reformist project of the national liberation organisations that occurred concurrently with the intensification of globalisation and its hegemonic neoliberal discourse that ultimately saw the education movement yielding to the reformists by embracing human capital theory as one of its central tenets for the transformation of education in post-apartheid South Africa/Azania.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the historical conditions that led to the emergence of the People's Education Movement in the 1980s; the second section specifically focuses on the apartheid state in crisis, while section three deals with the NECC and the birth of the People's Education Movement. To further illuminate the development and challenges faced by the People's Education Movement, section three has four subsections dealing firstly with the ideological ambiguities within the movement; secondly, I consider whether it was an embryonic reformist or revolutionary movement; thirdly, I examine the movement's internal political discourse, considering its potential as a reformist Trojan Horse or not, and finally, I reflect on whether the vision of a genuine, revolutionary People's Education movement had been permanently scuppered or just tentatively deferred.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In this section I postulate that the waning supremacy of the Black Consciousness Movements led to the consolidation of the liberatory movement into two ideologically incompatible camps; the dominant being the charterists consisting of mainly the United

Democratic Front, and the National Forum, consisting mainly of Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Cape Action League (CAL) and other organisations with a more revolutionary agenda. This ideological parting of the ways is what I will argue led to the demise of the People's Education Movement, with its marxist humanist vision. In the years following the Soweto uprising South African oppositional politics experienced an ideological shift which marked a decline in the Black Consciousness Movements' domination of anti-apartheid opposition politics and the state banning of all Black Consciousness organisations. Numerous activists reconsidered the "racial focus and idealism of Black Consciousness toward a more active strategy of opposition and an inclusive national ideology" (Marx, 1992, p. 106). At the time a broad alliance of charterist groups amalgamated into the United Democratic Front, while AZAPO and a few other left formations formed the National Forum. Marx (1992, pp. 106-107) postulates

The Charterist movement consolidated and moved from ideological realignment to action, its concern with developing an effective strategy began to force subtle changes in its ideology. The rhetorical use of class waned, as it both scared off potential supporters and did not accurately describe a movement that was more active in communities than factories and led more by professional activists than by workers...and postponed the class struggle for economic justice until after the national struggle for democratic political rights, which was reminiscent of the ANC campaigns of the 1940s.

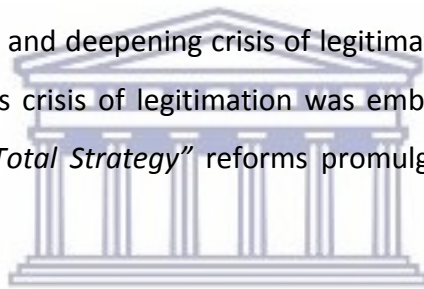
By the end of 1980 another wave of student boycotts exploded onto the streets of South Africa. Students in Cape Town were calling for "a new revolutionary strategy'... that would build on the achievements of BC and in which workers, parents, and students would 'stand united as one community'" (Marx, 1992, p. 112). The continuing dissatisfaction with the apartheid state's ability to reform the education sector led to the mainly 60 000 "coloured" students striking for "a non-racial educational system and for free and compulsory education" (Davies, 1984, p. 356). Davies advances that the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) found the volatile situation in the Cape quite disturbing because the mass of protesters were "coloured" students which were considered the "natural" allies of white South Africans. Their fear was that alongside the young politicised African generation there would emerge a generation of radical "coloured" youth. The state acted without restraint. Riot police fired on protesters and placed hundreds of student leaders in detention, which left many bitter and angry (Davies, 1984). Despite the PFP's feelings of "betrayal", sociologist

Molteno (cited in Christie, 1985, p. 249) cites a pamphlet, released at the end of the 1980's boycott that hails one of the major achievements of the boycott:

Apart from the promises of material reform and improvement, the major gains of this campaign have been political and organisational. The degree of unity attained is almost unprecedented anywhere in the country at any time in its history. A base has been created upon which lasting buildings of the future can be erected.  
(Molteno as cited in Christie, 1985, p. 249)

### **The Apartheid State in Crisis**

This section contends that it is during the 1980s that the apartheid state considered its possible political demise and resorted to a number of opportunistic political strategies to not only legitimize its own survival, but also that of the capitalist economy. It realised that by abandoning its white supremacist ideology, it could fashion a black comprador class that could help maintain a deracialised capitalist economy. By 1981 the South African economy entered one of its longest and deepest recessions. During this period the apartheid state also experienced “a sustained and deepening crisis of legitimation” (Cobett; Glaser; Hudson & Swilling, 1986, p. 137). This crisis of legitimation was embellished by the failure of the state to give effect to the “*Total Strategy*” reforms promulgated after the 1976 student revolt.



The escalation of opposition in the townships and the rapid growth of the trade union movement exacerbated the crisis for the state. By September 1984 the state faced another wave of militant resistance in the townships. These revolts were without doubt the outcome of the severe economic recession the country experienced. As the recession took its toll on the deteriorating material conditions in the black townships, the levels of anger escalated, radicalising their political views. The student boycotts in the Vaal triangle demonstrated that the school boycotts had become a major concern in the struggle. By November 1985 parents had come out in support of the students and the boycotts not only intensified, but had spread to other parts of the country. The boycotts continued well into 1986. In July 1985, Botha responded in classical form through repression and declared a partial state of emergency. By this time the boycotts had spread to the Western Cape where large numbers of students were detained, injured and killed (Kruss, 1988). Anthony Marx (1992, p. 130) in his seminal book, *Lesson of Struggle*, writes: “By 1985, a nation-wide poll of urban Africans estimated that 64 percent described themselves as angry; and 57 percent cited



grievances related to economics, education, and welfare". Marx goes on to cite Lawrence Schlemmer who concluded in his 1984 study: "It is probably no accident that the disturbances of the late fifties and early sixties, of 1976 and 1977, and the current unrest, have occurred during periods of economic downturn, after phases of employment growth or real increases in black incomes" (Schlemmer cited in Marx, 1992, p. 151). The unfolding events clearly demonstrate the exploitative connection between apartheid and capitalism. It is during this period that the debates between the "workerists" and "populists" gave an indication of how polarised the political debates in the townships had become. At the heart of this debate lay the question of whether the independent workers organisations should lead the struggle or whether the black majority should subject themselves to the leadership of the ANC and the United Democratic Front (UDF) in its quest for black majority rule (Fine & Davis, 1991).

While the debates around political strategies and alliances were vigorously debated in the townships, at another level the world economy was undergoing major ideological shifts. There was a clear, uninhibited shift towards neoconservative monetarist policies. This had resulted in the prolonged recession South Africans faced. More significantly the major causes of the recession could be related to the successful imposition of Reagan and Thatcher's neoconservative economic policies on a stagnating world economy. These policies led to massive unemployment and severe impoverishment across the world, including South Africa, where the major burden of the recession was endured by the working class (Keegan, 1984). Cobbett et al. (1984, p. 138) contend that as a consequence of the world economic depression the apartheid state was "faced with a shrinking material basis for concessionary economic reform and growing mobilisation behind the demand for the extension of political rights, the country's ruling groups have begun the search for political solutions to the crisis". In 1983 the state announced the launch of the tri-cameral system which excluded Africans, representing almost 75 percent of the population, from participation. Cobbett et al. (1984, p. 149) notes that "...sustained nation-wide resistance to the constitution and the popular revolts in the townships during 1984 forced the state to incorporate Africans into the RSCs...in November 1984". In 1985 the ANC had established a military presence in the rural areas. This strategy, according to Lodge (1987, p. 42), was to lead to the "revolutionary overthrow of the existing ruling class, and the complete dismantling and replacement of the state apparatus". Although the internal protests of the

mid-eighties largely took place independently of the ANC's influence or control, the "coincidence of rising township activism, stepped-up guerrilla attacks, and calls by the ANC for a mass uprising put the South Africa government on the defensive" (Marx, 1992, p. 159). The heightened tensions in the townships resulted in the misguided notion that a popular insurrection against the apartheid state was in the offing. Reality, however, dictated that the ruling class was still firmly in power with no sign of an impending military insurrection. Callinicos (1986, p. 17) contends that

...what the ANC's calls to arms are leading to is heroic young blacks squandering their lives in hopeless assaults on the security forces. Such episodes – which were occurring with increasing frequency in late 1985 and early 1986 – will train no-one in anything except (with luck) the bankruptcy of the ANC's entire strategy.

By the end of 1985 it became clear that education in the townships was descending into chaos. The state also realised that it lost control over education in the townships. As a result of the partial state of emergency that was declared in October 1985, the South African Defence Force (SADF) occupied many schools and townships. There was also concern that the slogans "Liberation first, education later" together with "education for liberation" might become the strategy for 1986 (Muller, 1987). The slogan "Liberation first, education later" was rejected by the NECC at its conference in 1985 and replaced by the slogan "people's education for people's power". 1986, the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising, soon became known as "the year of no schooling", coincidentally it was also known as the "Year of Umkhonto we Sizwe". Alarm bells started ringing as it became apparent that students were willing to sacrifice their own education, believing that the collapse of the apartheid state was imminent. According to Muller (1987) by October 1985 it became apparent that the approaching final exams would become a major fiasco if the student uprising were to continue. A national parent committee was established to avert the pending disaster but it was later banned as a result of the Department of Education and Training's intransigence. Callinicos (1986, p. 17) contends that

the ANC's strategy of 'ungovernability' may help to bring this result. In light of this strategy, the ANC tended to treat the school boycotts which spread throughout the country in 1984-1985 as a matter of principle. Its activists put forward the slogan 'liberation before education', implying that the schools should be closed until white power was overthrown. This approach only made sense on the assumption that insurrection was the order of the day. The effect of the long school closures was to deprive the township population of one of the few focuses of collective organisation and activity they posed...The result was that mass participation in the student struggles declined, with only a small, and

very brave minority taking to the streets to engage in unequal battles with the security forces.

## **THE NECC AND THE BIRTH OF PEOPLE'S EDUCATION**

This section considers the birth of the People's Education Movement, which Motala & Vally (2002, p. 174) describe as "an education movement, a vehicle for political mobilisation, an alternative philosophy, or a combination of all three". From its euphoric rise to its tragic denouement, this movement served as an emphatic vision of liberation for millions of South Africa from the inexorable clutches of Bantu Education. The Soweto Parent's Crisis Committee (SPCC) organised the first National Consultative Conference at the University of the Witwatersrand on 28-29 December 1985. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was established at the second National Consultative Conference in March 1986. The SPCC defines People's Education (Kruss, 1988, p. 12) as a discourse

which enables the oppressed to understand the evils of apartheid and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system; which eliminates capitalist norms of competition and individualism...and encourages collective input and participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking.

In terms of the conference itself, Muller (1987, p. 21) notes that

...the idea of a national conference on education struck a major cord across the country despite differences between political organisations and in regional priorities, and despite the fact that it originated in Soweto. The state of emergency, SADF occupation of the townships, the banning of COSAS and the struggle for 'proper' education were indisputably national issues... the overriding concern was to resolve the school boycott issue. The African National Congress sent a message urging a return to school.

Both the consultative conferences rejected the mantra of "liberation first, education later" and adopted the slogan "people's education for people's power" (Unterhalter & Wolpe, 1991, p. 10). Motala & Valley (2002, p. 174) posits

In the 1980's up to the early 1990's the concept of People's Education, in contrast to the apartheid education system, captured the imaginations of many South Africans. It promised liberation from an authoritarian and unequal system of education to one which could provide an alternative and basis for a future democratic education system fulfilling the potential of its citizens. It was defined variously as an educational movement, a vehicle for political mobilisation, an alternative philosophy, or a combination of all three.

Unterhalter and Wolpe (1991, p. 10) interprets the slogan as follows

...this slogan expressed a radical redefinition of the relationship between education and the social system. The core of the policy of people's education was that, under the specific conditions of apartheid capitalism in the mid-1980s, the creation of new education structures and the institution of new practices could contribute to a process of social transformation. This could be done both by challenging the role of bantu education as a mechanism of reproduction of apartheid and capitalism, and by intensifying the contradictions in the system through the subversive effects of alternative, radical education structures.

For Jakes Gerwel (1992, p. 12) "*People's Education for People's Power*" was

an attempt to return the education struggle to the schools. There were two core elements to this: (i) the construction of new, democratic structures of governance (parent teacher student committees) and (ii) the development of fostering non-racialism, democracy, critical thinking and collective work (Gerwel, 1992, p.12).

### **Ideological Ambiguities**

The different interpretations of People's Education became increasingly evident in the aftermath of the consultative conferences but more particularly the extent to which people's education would shape the existing education landscape, as well as in a future South Africa. Zwelake Sisulu, in his Keynote Address to the NECC on 29 March 1986 (People's Education, n.d. p. 30) asserted that

We are no longer demanding the same education system as Whites, since this is education for domination. People's education means education as a whole, education that liberates, education that puts people in command of their lives.

In commenting on the conceptualisation of liberation education by national liberation movements in Southern Africa, Samoff (cited in Prew, n.d., p. 3) comments

Liberation education was imbued with progressive or scientific Socialist beliefs that all citizens should have equal access to education and skills so that they can take up any role in society, assist the society in achieving its modernising development objectives, develop an appropriate revolutionary character (which rejected race, ethnicity, religious orientation and regional identity and espoused class and international solidarity) and play a full role in transforming a class based society to one based on merit and the people's will.

The People's Education project faced enormous challenges. The concept in itself was subject to the long and divided history of the liberation movement. The battle over what constituted "People's Education" was deeply embedded in the ideological debates and

strategies regarding the exact nature of the struggle and the nature of the transformation to shape the future South Africa. Reflecting on this dilemma Neville Alexander (1990, p.66) posits

Education in South Africa, we are never tired of saying, is in a state of crisis. But so is that which we call alternative education, education for liberation, or people's education. Whatever the major and peripheral differences of approach, the fact is that we are in serious danger of stagnating at the level of slogans. Already when one reads some of the descriptions and analyses that attempt to define people's education or alternative education practices, one is often deeply disturbed by the hopelessly myopic, uninformed naïveté that underlies some of these pretentious essays.

Similarly, Sisulu, (cited in Alexander, 1990, p. 67) during his address at the National Education Crisis Committee in March 1986, warned against such delusions.

It is important that we don't misrecognise the moment, or understand it to be something which it is not. We are not poised for the immediate transfer of power to the people. The belief that this is so could lead to serious errors and defeats. We are however poised to enter a phase which can lead to transfer of power. What we are seeking to do is to decisively shift the balance of forces in our favour. To do this we have to adopt the appropriate strategies and tactics, we have to understand our strengths and weaknesses, as well as that of the enemy, that is, the forces of apartheid reaction.

The idea of developing a counter-hegemonic strategy for education or to develop education as a counter-hegemonic strategy was as divisive as much as it was instructive. There was no ostensible disagreement regarding the eradication of apartheid education. The rub, however, in my opinion lay in what was to constitute an alternative education system, for a post-apartheid South Africa. The influence of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire proved to be inspirational and provided an ideological platform for the constitution of a radically different educational future which could, potentially, lay the foundations for a radical counter-hegemonic education system within a radically transformed egalitarian society. In his keynote address to the National Consultative Conference on the Crisis in Education in December 1985, Father Smagaliso Mkatswa (People's Education, n.d., p. 9) postulated

From the inherent ambivalence of education, namely its capacity to bring about what is least determined in man, as well as to programme and determine this, Paulo Freire derives what I think is his fundamental thesis: that there is no neutral education. Education is either for domestication or for freedom. Although it is customarily conceived as a conditioning process, education can equally be an instrument of deconditioning. This because people are essentially capable of reflecting on their action and behaviour.

Mkatswa's position pointed to the ideological conundrum that was to confront the People's Education movement. As the Charterists took control of the movement they virtually isolated those who had a more dynamic Black Consciousness or socialist disposition.

### **Reform or Revolution?**

When 1989 dawned on the world, it brought a whole new dynamic to world politics, which proved to be the nemesis of revolutionary politics world-wide. Eastern Europe underwent rapid change. In South Africa, the National Party all but grudgingly shifted towards a policy of negotiations with the liberation movements. The challenges that confronted the People's Education Movement in terms of its conceptualisation, definition and implementation, in my view, were spawned by the ideological differences in and between the various political organisations involved in the liberation struggle. The theoretical cum ideological debates in South Africa were largely dominated by the ANC, PAC, the BCM, trade unionists and a small number of leftist groupings. Many of these debates centred on race, class and nation. No single ideology shaped the struggle against racial capitalism, and consequently the same liberal and radical ideological trajectories gave shape to People's Education (Unterhalter & Wolpe, 1991; Motala & Vally, 2002; Prew, n.d.). Anthony Marx (1992, p. 236) comments on the role that ideology plays in the shaping of certain historical circumstances. He writes

Ideology, as lived through, is more than just a set of abstract ideas. It is a way of experiencing reality, a form of 'practical consciousness, based on a combination of culture, and individual and historical processes. Ideology is encapsulated in images of collective identity, such as race, nation, or class that imply different potential constituencies, goals, and strategic affinities. Elites manipulate such images for political advantage but are constrained in this process by the need to project ideas that will resonate with the masses under particular historical circumstances.

While there had been major ideological shifts among the liberation organisations the struggle for hegemony within the liberation movement, in my opinion, was defined by the ideological accommodation that was reached between nationalism and socialism among organisations engaged in the liberation struggle. This marriage of convenience between the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and the ANC it was argued (Fine & Davis, 1991, p. 259), became necessary as

nationalism is both the natural form of opposition to apartheid and the true expression of the consciousness of the masses under conditions dominated by

the fact of racial oppression. The role of socialists is defined as supportive of the national liberation struggle, indeed as its most consistent and radical supporters.

After the formation of Umkhonto We Sizwe in the early 1960s, The CPSA (Fine & Davis, 1991, p. 261) declared its support for

the leadership of the ANC and the ideological hegemony of African nationalism. It adopted with the ANC a mutually agreed definition of the state as a 'colonialism of a special type', a programme based around the armed struggle and interlocking leadership. The convergence of nationalism and socialism was nearing completion.

The marriage between nationalism and socialism dogged the liberation movement for decades. Joe Slovo justified this marriage by suggesting that it was an "ideal fusion of political currents". Slovo (cited in Fine & Davis, 1991, p. 261) argued that

The two most important determinants in the South African economic structure-class and race have given birth to two complementary streams of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary organisation...The ANC is the main constituent of the liberation front in its quest for majority rule...The SACP...represents the aspirations of the working class and aims for the eventual establishment of a socialist South Africa.

In 1976, Joe Slovo, in an essay entitled *South Africa-No Middle Road*, argued that there was no middle road for the oppressed except a left-wing revolutionary road..."national revolution was inseparable from socialist revolution"(Harris, 1993, p. 91). These vision of insurrection and the overthrow of the South African ruling class had been dominant in the townships, hence the slogan "Liberation now, education later". Lodge (1989), however, reminds us that the youth had failed to consider the "more socially conciliatory tradition in ANC thinking" (Lodge, 1989) Lodge (1989, p. 47) claims

The ANC's willingness to contemplate a negotiated accession to power runs as a counterpoint to the language of seizure and insurrection which is so central to a section of its polemical literature...A senior leader was quoted in January 1986 as asserting that the ANC's main objective 'lay not in a military victory but to force Pretoria to the negotiating table'.

Callinicos (1990, p. 110) advances that

the ANC and its allies in the SACP have long been committed to a two-stage strategy of revolution, in which national liberation, ridding South Africa of apartheid, must precede the struggle for socialism. The Path to Power, the new programme adopted by the SACP at its 7th Congress in 1989, reaffirmed the analysis underpinning this perspective, namely that apartheid is a 'Colonialism of a Special Type', in which 'the colonial ruling class with its white support base on the one hand and the oppressed colonial majority on the other hand are located

within one country'. The most plausible interpretation of the ANC's leadership's real strategy was that it had a long-term orientation towards a negotiated settlement and that various methods – armed struggle, strikes, township risings, peaceful protests, and economic sanctions – were all to be seen as forms of pressure, intended both to force the regime to talk to the ANC and to ensure that the terms of any deal were as favourable as possible to the resistance.

The ANC–SACP alliance's two-stage strategy was counter posed by Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution". Neville Alexander (cited in Fine & Davis, 1991, p. 264) posited that

...the role of two-stage theory has been to relegate working class leadership out of sight to an indefinite future...an incorrect strategy in the context of a highly proletarianised society, whether one is concerned with the specific interests of workers or the wider struggle against apartheid...the liquidation of those institutions and practices which have given rise to national oppression...This means nothing else than the abolition of capitalism itself.

When the ANC's NEC announced its position on negotiations in October 1987, they almost patronisingly reaffirmed that "the ANC and the masses of our people as a whole are ready and willing to enter into genuine negotiations provided they are aimed at the transformation of our country into a united and non-racial country" (Lodge, 1987, p. 42). As disappointed as many activists were with the ANC -SACP alliance strategy of negotiating a political settlement, there were also serious doubts as to whether the ANC would be able to achieve the first stage of its two-stage revolution, i.e. national liberation. Using the Zimbabwe's Lancaster House agreement as an immediate example, there were serious doubts that such a political settlement would favour the black majority. Callinicos (1992, p. 135) as a salient reminder, repeats Trotsky's words "the historic weapon of national liberation can only be class struggle". Callinicos (1992, p. 135) concludes

negotiations may achieve black majority rule. But there is no guarantee that they will. The only way to ensure the destruction of apartheid is through a socialist revolution in which the black working class takes both the political power and control of Africa's richest economy.

The resolutions from the National Consultative Conference on Education held at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 28 and 29 December 1985 (People's Education, n.d., p. 39) stated the following with regard to People's Education:

- This conference notes that Apartheid education
1. is totally unacceptable to the oppressed people
  2. divides people into classes and ethnic groups
  3. is essentially a means of control to produce subservient, docile people
  4. indoctrinates and domesticates
  5. is intended to entrench Apartheid and Capitalism



Therefore we resolve to actively strive for people's education as the new form of education for all sections of our people, declaring that people's education is education that:

1. enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the Apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system.
2. eliminates capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development and one that encourages collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis.
3. eliminates illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of any person by another
4. equips and trains all sectors of our people to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to attain people's power in order to establish a non-racial, democratic South Africa.
5. allows students, parents, teachers and workers to be mobilised into appropriate organisational structures which enable them to enhance the struggle for people's power and to participate actively in the initiation and management of people's education in all its forms.
6. enables workers to resist exploitation and oppression at their workplace.

The actions of the NECC largely dominated the ideological direction of the People's Education Movement as it eventually became isolated from the "people", guided by professional elites that supported the liberations movements' reformist discourse.

### **People's Education: Reformist Trojan Horse?**

The exploration in this section underpins my contention that People's Education, viewed as a potential radical alternative to Bantu Education in a future South Africa/Azania, was ideologically and conceptually compromised by the very historical conditions out of which it arose. There is no denying that the vision of Paulo Freire had a profound impact on the People's Education Movement in South Africa. Alexander (1990, p. 61) posits

I want to stress that transplanting Freire to South Africa in the decade of the seventies meant inevitably the radicalisation and overt politicisation of the educational arena. This was particularly the case after the Soweto uprising in 1976 and we are all fully aware of the dramatic developments that have followed in rapid succession during the last twelve years, developments which are equally significant when viewed from a narrow pedagogical perspective or from a broader political point of view...

I concur with Alexander. It is my argument that it is precisely the "radicalisation and the overt politicisation of the educational arena" that exposed the ideological tensions within the People's Education Movement, but more particularly the slogan "people's education for people's power". The NECC Conferences formulated many of the key features of People's Education. These resolutions are clear in their rejection of apartheid education and the education of capitalist domination. It is also evident that the slogan "people's education for

people's power" served as an educational, as well as a political strategy. While this may reflect the revolutionary ambitions of the People's Education Movement there is, in my view, not enough in the movement's discourse that could be interpreted as a credible threat to capitalism in South Africa. What is clearly evident in the NECC conference resolutions was the role of education in the broader struggle for freedom. In his keynote speech at the March 1986 Conference, Sisulu (cited in Kruss, 1988, p. 17) states:

Ever since 1976 the people have recognised that apartheid education cannot be separated from apartheid in general. This conference once again asserts that the entire oppressed and democratic community is concerned with education, and that we all see the necessity of ending gutter education and we shall see that this is a political question affecting each and every one of us.

Sisulu clarifies the link between politics and education, and correctly so. This demonstrated that the conferences primarily concentrated on the political and ideological implications of people's education. While both NECC conferences confirmed that education and politics are linked, two virtually contradictory themes surfaced in their resolutions – one focussing on educational rights and the political significance of education, the other advanced the notion of education as the acquisition of skills. These divergent, mutually exclusive policy positions saddled the NECC and the democratic movement as a whole with an apparent political dilemma. Stuart Hall (cited in Randall, 1993, p. 52) comments on similar debates in the British context

The fact is that the very counterpoising of 'education' against 'vocationalism' and of 'skills' against 'education for its own sake' are the only other ways of reinforcing the existing social divisions, because these concepts are already inscribed and imprinted within it. It is the productive system under capitalism which gave education the task of reproducing the divisions in the first place.

Herein lay the ideological rub for the People's Education Movement. Richard Shaull, writing in his foreword to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, p. 34) describes Freire's notion of two forms of education, pointing out that neither is neutral.

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom", the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

The People's Education Movement's objectives were indisputably political as it focussed on the transfer of political power from the apartheid state to the people, promoting the transition as an apparent socialist democracy. The NECC's resolutions point to the radical transformative intentions of the People's Education Movement, stating that People's Education intends to "eliminate capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development and one that encourages collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking" (Kruss, 1988, p. 12). This quote points to the fact that the People's Education Movement clearly defined itself as the "practice of freedom", advocating democracy and radical social transformation. The crucial question however, is whether or not the People's Education Movement was punching above its political aspirations? More simply put, is whether or not an education movement alone can be an agent for radical social transformation? The answer must be an unequivocal no! The fact that an instrumentalist discourse on education surfaced in the NECC's resolutions highlights the ideological challenge the People's Education Movement faced. This challenge however was nothing new to the nationalist movement, as the Freedom Charter clearly points to the role education and training would play in the transformation of society without clearly considering how the education was to avoid the limitations of the racial capitalist state's social, political and economic arrangements (Unterhalter & Wolpe, 1991). The NECC's accommodation of an instrumentalist discourse is not entirely inconsistent with the liberal reformist discourse of the ANC which pointed the way to the deracialisation of a future capitalist South African state.

More interesting is that this instrumentalist discourse, with its emphasis on vocational training, also surfaced in the De Lange Commission's recommendations (mimicking the World Bank's *1980 Education Sector Policy Paper*) and later in the apartheid government's Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) which, incidentally, shaped the foundational principles of the post-apartheid education policy discourse. Randall (1993) points out that this instrumentalist discourse was ironically proposed by a number of left-wing organisations aligned to the People's Education Movement, including the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as well as the *National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI)*, a 'think-tank' appointed by the NECC to study and develop models and options relevant to the community. Morphet (cited in Randall, 1993, p. 45) derisively refers to this "think-tank" as a 'De Lange of the Left'. A

classic “talk left, do right” dance of deceit, I would argue. Following Freire (1970), it is imperative to understand that education can play a significant role in the development of ideological work that anticipates the transformation of the state, but it can only ever be complete when control over the state apparatus is achieved by “the people”. Alexander posits (1990, p. 24),

History teaches us that the very system of the rulers can be transformed into a weapon against them provided we have politically conscious, i.e., really educated teachers and a disciplined and organised student body and student leadership. Rather than vacate the schools and abandon a major terrain of struggle to conservatives and reactionaries, we have the task of transforming the terrain to suit our liberatory purposes.

Gramsci maintains “class consciousness cannot be completely modified until the mode of life of the class itself is modified, which entails that the proletariat has become the ruling class” (Gramsci cited in Larrain, 1983, p. 82). Alexander (1990, p. 12) points to the heart of the matter.

Many students have become the victims of the romantic illusion that the students are the vanguard of the national liberation struggle and that they can make decisions without any reference to the workers movement. This is a dangerous delusion and it will lead to disastrous defeat for the most heroic actions of the student mass. Let us state it clearly once again: the workers alone, as an organised body, have the strategic strength to bring about fundamental change in our society. All other struggles, no matter in which arena they start, whether it is a struggle begun by women, youth, the churches, students or by other groups, have got to link up with the struggle of the organised working class if they are not to be defeated or to be deflected into reformist and even collaborationist paths.

How did the People’s Education Movement arrive at this ideological cross road? In an attempt to clarify this, Randall (1993, p. 47) cites the notion advanced by Levin (1991) and Nasson (1990) that

this is due in equal measure to a 'conceptual imprecision' at the heart of People's Education: it has proven unable to sustain the commitment of the people because they were unable to embrace its full implications and were unable to do this because of a lack of clarity on the part of its proponents. The prescriptions for People's Education were neither sufficiently developed nor sufficiently precise. Hence it was not sufficiently emphasised that education cannot compensate for society.

While I concur that the “conceptual imprecision” may well point to the movement’s misconstruction of its revolutionary objectives, I am not entirely convinced that it is as

simple as that. The former Minister of Education and Development Aid, Gerrit Viljoen's (cited in Levin, p. 119) response to the People's Education movement points to an ideological convergence between the apartheid government and the leadership of the NECC, as they seemed to agree on certain aspects of people's education. Viljoen advocates

In terms of the basic terminology of 'People's Education', there are also positive aspects which has been part of our approach and which should be further emphasised and given effect. People should participate in the government of education. Parents and the community should be allowed to take part at local and regional level and have a meaningful share.

Viljoen's championing of the People's Education cause did not occur as a result of some form of divine intervention, but was the direct result of De Klerk's new reformist discourse to deracialise capitalism and the concept of decentralisation advanced by the World Bank. This strategy led to co-option of the liberation movement and put paid to the apparent revolutionary aspirations of the People's Education Movement. At this point the ANC had already indicated its support for a negotiated settlement. More importantly, other than one or two of the NECCs resolutions, there is nothing that points to the fact that the People's Education Movement posed a revolutionary threat to the apartheid state. In fact, isolated from its mass base, the opposite proved to be true. People's Education was to become a casualty of the reformist discourse advocated by the liberation movement's leadership controlling the NECC, leading to the revolutionary vision of People's Education being deferred...

### **People's Education: Deferred ?**

Reflecting on the resolutions above, and the analysis I extended, it becomes apparent that much of the content and transformative aspirations of People's Education could be "accommodated within the bourgeoisie democratic discourse" (Levin, 1991, p. 118). I concur with Levin as there is no evidence in the People's Education discourse, apart from resolution no. 2, that suggested that People's Education was a radical counter-hegemonic education strategy. I also fully support Levin's contention that People's Education "is compatible with a variety of bourgeoisie democratic transformations ranging from reform to revolution" (Levin, 1991, pp. 118-119). There are no qualms that the education revolts in the townships were deeply embedded in the struggle for liberation. Concurrently, there

were contending forces within the national liberation movement which sought different outcomes to the struggle for national liberation. People's Education, arising out of these struggles, was shaped by the contending liberal-reformist forces on the one hand, and the more radical socialist groupings on the other. There existed a very real belief amongst some of these political actors that the transformation of the education sector would translate into dramatic social change. Unterhalter and Wolpe (1991, p. 8) conclude

The assumption, embedded in this reformist approach, is that Bantu education is the mechanism of reproduction of white domination and inequality. Since it follows from this that by reforming education the social system can be significantly altered, no consideration need be given to the conditions external to education – that is, the structures of white political and economic power. The argument is premised on the assumption that the education system directly regulates entry into occupations.

It was into this political maelstrom that Paulo Freire's pedagogy of praxis was introduced. I maintain that although Paulo Freire's work held great appeal for many activists, liberal and radical, his work can in no way be construed to be part of the liberal or reformist discourse. It is widely acknowledged that the American liberal establishment developed an aversion to the work of Paulo Freire (Au, 2008). Paulo Freire's work was often widely misinterpreted and it was therefore unfortunate, if not opportunistic, that his work was appropriated by the neoliberal-reformist project in South Africa in the mid-1980s. Gibson (n.d., p. 1) postulates that

A close examination of Freire's theory and practice offers a window into his larger project: pedagogy for revolutionary liberation...Freire's emphasis on the role of ideas as a material force, his critical method of analysis, his determination to engage in social concrete practice, his democratic and ethical pedagogy, and his insistence that leaders become one with the mass of people, offers guides to understand how his lessons might be used to deepen questions about revolutionary education for egalitarian social justice.

We are reminded by radical scholar Wayne Au (2008), in his paper, *Epistemology of the Oppressed: The Dialectics of Paulo Freire's Theory of Knowledge*, of Freire's commitment to the radical transformation of society. He contends that "many of Freire's detractors often maintain deep misunderstandings of Freire's dialectical materialism and therefore propagate deeply misplaced criticisms of his pedagogical framework" (Au & Apple in Au, 2008, p. 176). Au (2008, p. 181) asserts that

For, Freire, to be human is to be able to both understand the world and take action to change that world. It is in taking that action, in the movement from being object to subject, where we become full human beings. It is this sense of humanisation through praxis that defines Freire's ontology.

Au (2008, p. 186) further elucidates

Freire's liberatory pedagogy revolves around the central idea of "praxis", and seeks to be a pedagogy that enables students and teachers to be Subjects who can look at reality, critically reflect upon reality, and take transformative action to change that reality based upon the original critical reflection, thereby deepening their consciousness and changing the world for the better.

The point is simply that Freire's work is deeply rooted in the Marxist, dialectical materialist tradition and that his work would only bear fruit in a country fully committed to radical social transformation. The ANC's commitment to a negotiated settlement, not surprisingly, completely dispelled any notion of radical transformation for South Africa. As one South African socialist (cited in Callinicos, 1990, p. 134) pointed out

negotiated settlements are, as methods of struggle, bankrupt, incapable of bringing into effect socialist transformation. For if one accepts, following Lenin, that socialism is only achieved by the self-emancipation of the working class, and that this implies the negation of socialism's opposite – namely capitalism... Reformists fight for reforms; the negotiated settlement is their prize. Socialists however, fight for reforms only insofar as they increase the class's cohesiveness and capabilities for the seizure of state power. To posit in any sense the desirability...of a negotiated settlement in this historic conflict dulls the senses and ultimately undermines the very project of the black South African working class.

The vision of People's Education provided an important alternative philosophy for education in a future South Africa, but regrettably, through its Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), the National Party dominated the process, and imposed its supremacist education vision on the post-apartheid nation. The ANC was strategically outmanoeuvred. Levin (1991, p. 128) explains

...the major problem faced by the ANC is that it had insufficient time to develop organisational structures and processes capable of generating on the ground the policy it needs to take with it to the negotiating table.

In addition to this, Motala and Valley (2002, p. 185) maintain

two significant changes were apparent in this period. First, there was a developing disjuncture between those actors engaged with the struggle for political rights and state power, and those involved with issues more internal and specific to education. The NECC and the student organisations at the

forefront of the struggles for People's Power during the 1980s appeared to leave political contestation to the ANC, particularly around transitional and consultative issues. Second, the discourse and content of education policy shifted substantially from the radical demands of People's Education, which focussed on the social engagement and democratising power relations, to a discourse emphasising performance, outcomes, cost effectiveness and economic competitiveness.

It is clearly evident that the very nature of the negotiated political transition and the continuing capitalist character of the state under a neoliberal orthodoxy, completely abandoned the radical transformative policies originally envisioned under People's Education. Any hope of developing a radical, transformative educational system that would free the black working class from their political shackles has been wiped off the slate. We, therefore, at least for the foreseeable future, must accept that South Africa, being part of the world economy, will continue to labour under the strains of a neoliberal capitalist economy that

knows no boundaries in pursuit of new markets and blatantly and repeatedly violates its own commitments to individual freedoms and aspirations. It undermines democratic values; social justice, critical thought and social citizenship, while adhering to the ideology of global mono-economics that tends to remove state boundaries and weaken the rights of individuals and communities (Macris, 2013, p. 21).

Rosa Luxemborg, in her essay *Reform or Revolution* (1970, pp. 49-50), reminds us why South Africa finds itself in this position. She comments that

[...]People who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of, and in contradistinction to, the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take stand for surface modification of the old society. If we follow the political conceptions of revisionism, we arrive at the same conclusion that is reached when we follow the economic theories of revisionism. Our program becomes not the realization of socialism, but the reform of capitalism not the suppression of the system of wage labour, but diminution of exploitation, that is, the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of the suppression of capitalism itself.

About five months before the April 27 elections, the Transitional Executive Committee (TEC) gained authority of the South African Government, it confirmed that the ANC had no intention of making any sweeping, revolutionary reforms upon taking office. There was a clear, seamless fusion between the old apartheid regime and the new black government



waiting in the wings. The legitimate expectations of the majority had been indefinitely dashed as the ANC opted for the “self-imposition of economic and developmental policies—typically at the behest of financial markets and the Washington/Geneva multilateral institutions” (Bond, 2014, p. 2). Following Bond (2014), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank did not unilaterally impose their conditionalities on South Africa, but it was the continued domination of the domestic principals of monopoly capital and the willing co-operation of the new democratic government that made it easier to impose the neoliberal orthodoxy on South Africa. The authors of the document, *Resistance to Neoliberalism: A view from South Africa*, claim that those who suggested that the ANC had no alternative but to accept the imposition of the neoliberal agenda “...is spurious, the kind of historical determinism which is ridiculed and dismissed when mouthed by leftists of the Jurassic variety” (Resistance to Neoliberalism, n.d.). Former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils (cited in Bond, 2014, p. 2) asserts that it was during the period of June 1994 to June 1999 that

the battle for the soul of the African National Congress was lost to corporate power and influence...We readily accepted that devils’ pact and are damned in the process. It has bequeathed to our country an economy so tied to the neoliberal global formula and market fundamentalism that there is very little room to alleviate the dire plight for the masses of our people.

Bond (2014), following Kasrils, states that South Africa was compromised because the ANC, together with the apartheid regime and the Bretton Woods institutions agreed to an “intra–elite pact” that “for most people, worsened poverty, unemployment, inequality and ecological degradation, while also exacerbating many racial, gender divisions” (Bond, 2014, p. 2). Despite the revolutionary rhetoric embedded in the resolutions of the People’s Education Movement, the internal ideological contradictions of the movement allowed it to become a “Trojan horse” that allowed it to deliver the revolutionary aspirations of the “the people”, and a genuinely democratic educational system into the hands of the neoliberal elite governing South Africa. It is clear that the vision of People’s Education was compromised as a result of the “intra–elite pact” negotiated at CODESA. This compromise led to the implementation of educational policies that exacerbated the critical inequalities in post-apartheid society. But if anyone was convinced that the notion of a radical counter-hegemonic education system has met with an unfortunate demise it would only be wise to pay attention to the rise of the #Fees Must Fall Movement on the university campuses of

South Africa towards the end of 2015. A new education movement, challenging the neoliberal hegemony in South Africa, emerged. Commenting on the student uprisings of 2015, Vally (Student Rising, 2015, p. 4) recently wrote:

The FeesMustFall student movement promoted solidarity between students and workers and challenged the corporatisation of the academy calling for an education system that speaks to the needs of citizens and not to the business of profit...students and workers en masse, expressed their support for the movement and through it their vital desire for an education that promotes a dignified and fulfilled life for all...These gains bode well for maintaining the momentum toward the achievement of free quality public education from pre-primary to higher education...We have also witnessed collective forms of organisation in many places and a healthy suspicion of backroom deals, a realisation that change will only come through mass struggle on the ground, an unleashing of popular energies nationally, an attempt and a realisation of the importance of student-worker alliances and the setting aside of sectarian differences.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that while the People's Education initially carried the hopes and aspirations of the oppressed for the creation of a truly democratic education system in post-apartheid South Africa/Azania, this vision was compromised as a result of the reformist discourse that dominated the liberation movement's political agenda. It was this reformist agenda that resulted in South African education system being shaped by the neoliberal agenda of the World Bank and the IMF, leading to a post-apartheid education system that completely undermined the democratic aspirations of the oppressed and exploited majority, resulting in greater systemic dysfunctionality of the education sector, exacerbating the social inequalities of the majority of black South Africans. The demise of the People's Education Movement has clearly paved the way for a *Pedagogy of Insurrection* which potentially remains an important process for "both the converting of certain members of the traditional intellectual strata...to the proletarian cause, but also in developing a strata of "organic" intellectuals from within the proletariat themselves"(Vance, 2017, p. 4). A clear shift in the political terrain has occurred and the #FeesMustFall student movements have in my view begun to shape the potential for a new counter-hegemonic movement in the educational sector that could challenge the neoliberal imaginary that have been imposed on post-apartheid South Africa. In chapter six I will undertake an exposition of the impact of the neoliberal imaginary on South Africa's post-apartheid educational discourse and the failure of these policy initiatives to deliver the aspirational objectives for social justice outlined in the South African constitution and the preface of the South African School's Act of 1996.

## Chapter 6

### POST-APARTHEID EDUCATION: THE REIGN OF ERROR

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This chapter argues that the failings of the post-apartheid South African education system are not simply matters of managerial incompetence or technocratic deficiencies but that they are profoundly ideological as well. It contends that the South African government's neoliberal turn resulted in the state reneging on its assurances of social equity, redress and social justice because the terms and conditions of the negotiated settlement compelled it to retain the political and economic power structures of the white neoliberal elite. I further contend that the educational policies of the ANC government are a perpetuation of the 1981 De Lange Commission's recommendations that back then, much like the present, disqualified the black majority from participating in the political, economic and social structures of South Africa. Finally, I advance the argument that instead of achieving social justice for the disadvantaged majority, the ANC's post-apartheid educational policies created an institutional framework that embraced the neoliberal orthodoxy which endorsed the political and economic interests of the white elite, exactly as the De Lange Commission intended.

This chapter consists of two main sections. The first critically examines the *South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996* and the second section examines *the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NSSF)*. Section one is further divided into six subsections which will focus on a critical analysis of these policies. The first studies the post-apartheid education system and its impact on society. The second section deals with the SASA and its social justice aspirations; section three analyses the concept of decentralisation and its political implications; section four focuses on the levying of school fees; section five analyses the impact of the GEAR macro-economic policy on education and the final section examines the notion of school choice. The second main section critiques the NSSF which outlines the state's framework with regard to the funding of public schools and independent schools. This section has three subsections. The first deals with the state's inability to transform the material conditions of poor black children via the funding mechanisms set in the education policies. The second deals with policy failure and social justice; and the final section contends that the state's commitment to the neoliberal orthodoxy has undermined

its promise to provide quality public education, exacerbating the dehumanising levels of socio-economic inequality spawned by racial capitalism.

### **THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT OF 1996: NEOLIBERALISING EDUCATION REFORMS**

In this section I posit that South Africa's post-apartheid education policies have largely been shaped by the neoliberal orthodoxy that has shaped public policy globally. I contend that the post-apartheid education policies were contrived by the De Lange Commission of Inquiry, mimicking the 1981 World Bank education policy framework, and propelled into the post-apartheid South Africa education policy discourse via the National Party's Education Renewal Strategy (ERS). I further contend that the neoliberal discourse in the education policy framework is not only opposed to the notion of education as a public good, but that it also is the converse of social justice.

South Africa's post-apartheid education policy discourse, as illuminated above, bears the neoliberal hallmarks of the negotiated settlement that was reached between the apartheid state and the national liberation movements. This process of negotiation was shaped by the terms, conditions and compromises put forward by the ruling elite and the oppositional liberation movements and had a direct impact on the educational policy discourse that was to shape the post-apartheid education system (Sayed, 2000). Sayed (2000, p. 2) states that one of the outcomes of the negotiated settlement was that "the new government had not captured control of the important state apparatuses, including the education bureaucracy...." Sayed (2000) also noted that in terms of education, the new government's capacity was limited as a result of these compromises. For Chisholm (2004, p. 13), however,

the negotiated transition of elite-pacting consolidated a social democratic order within which education could and did begin to play a role in promoting upward social mobility. For others, at the opposite extreme, the international neo-liberal, Washington consensus combined with a new and compliant national bourgeoisie created the conditions for little change to occur through and in education which continued to reflect wider social inequalities.

Chisholm (2004) posits that South Africa's post-1994 education policy discourse implies both "change and continuity". The conversion to democracy, she contends, consolidated the position of elites who accommodated the interests of corporate capital which continued to widen the social inequalities spawned by racial capitalism. The South African transition saw the country being acknowledged as one of the most impoverished nations the world. This

tragic accomplishment was no more evident than in the sprawling townships that are scattered across the South African landscape. On 15 August 1994, the Business Day Newspaper published the remarks of Isaac Sam of the World Bank. He noted that “South Africa is among the world’s most unequal economies, with 51% going to the richest of households, but less than 4% going to the poorest 40%. A growth that fails to contribute more broadly to improve economic welfare will not be sustainable”. These deplorable levels of poverty were reproduced by the post-apartheid education system, especially the township schools that were mired in levels of deep economic distress.

### **The Post- Apartheid Education System**

South Africa’s poverty crisis is the result of decades of unequal spending on education during the apartheid era. In 1994, the state’s per capita spending on education was as follows: “R5 403 for white children; R4 687 for Indian children; R3 691 for “coloured” children. Between R2 184 and R1 175 for African children”(DOE, 1995). In 2002, the South African Human Rights Commission’s *3rd Socio-Economic Rights Report* (p. 258) indicated that

of the 27 148 public schools, 2 280 (8,4%) had buildings in a state of disrepair, 10 723 (39%) had a shortage of classrooms; 13 204 (49%) had inadequate textbooks; 8 142 195 learners resided beyond a 5km radius from the school; 10 859(40%) of schools were without electricity; 9 638(36%) were without telephones; 2 496 (9%) were without adequate toilets; 19 085(70%) had no computer facilities; 21 773(80%) had no libraries and 17 762(65%) had no recreational and sporting facilities.

Sayed (2000, p. 3) stated that the apartheid education system resulted in gross educational disparities and inequities between different racial groups. The need for rectification and parity in all aspects of education was thus a necessary imperative in a new democratic system. The demand for rectification was captured in the commitment to equity, and redress and justice.

University of Cape Town economist Francis Wilson (2001, p. 3), reflecting on the history of apartheid education, observed:

The destructive impact of the “Bantu Education” system wrought damage that will take decades if not generations to repair. The old pre-apartheid system, despite many of its faults, had the potential for ensuring a decent education for all South Africans during the second half of the 20th century. But the mean-spiritedness which underlay the philosophy of “Bantu education”; the inadequacy of the funds made available throughout most of the apartheid years; and the crippling effect of job reservation and the colour-bar on the acquisition of skills and experience by the majority of workers could almost have been designed to

prevent them from being adequately prepared for the challenges of globalisation in the 21st century.

### ***Social Justice: Talking Left, Walking Right***

The promise of justice after decades of exploitation and oppression encapsulated the hopes of millions of South Africans who looked forward to living in a free, democratic society that would not only recognise but also advocate their rights and humanity as enshrined in South Africa's aspirational constitution. The right to education was entrenched in Section 29 of the South African Constitution. Section 29 (1) (Constitution of South Africa, 1996) states

Everyone has the right –  
(a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and  
(b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

I am citing the South African Constitution because I consider it mandatory to hold *the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996* up to scrutiny both in terms of its commitment to the values of human rights and the achievement of social equality, and the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights. The 1995 *White Paper on Education and Training* committed the state to “advance and protect citizens so that they have the opportunity to develop their capabilities and potential”. It also committed the state to “redress of the educational inequalities among the sections of our people who have suffered particular disadvantages and the principle of ‘equity’ so that all citizens have ‘the same quality of learning opportunities’” (DOE, 1995, pp. 21-22).

The *National Education Policy Act of 1996* stated its goal as “the democratic transformation of the national education system into one that serves the needs and interests of all the people of South Africa and upholds their fundamental rights” (NEPA, 1996). In its preamble the SASA promises that a new education system will “redress past injustices in the schooling provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners...advance the democratic transformation of society, ...(and) contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society” (SASA, 1996). The SASA principally outlined the context for school governance which permits democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs) as juristic persons in charge of the management of the school. Crucially it grants schools permission to impose user fees. It also relinquished a great deal more autonomy to schools. Being a juristic person, SGBs also had the right to sue parents who failed to pay their school

fees (Sayed, 2008). One of the main concerns that I have with the SASA is that the Act on the one hand waxes lyrically in the social justice discourse of “redress of past injustices” and “the advancement of the democratic transformation of society”, and on the other, it makes a head-spinning right turn through its introduction of neoliberal imperatives such as “decentralisation”, “user fees” and “school choice”. This, in my opinion, is clearly a situation where the Government of National Unity (GNU) exposes its political agenda in classic Orwellian double-speak. Following Bond (2000), it is clear that the ANC in the GNU has exposed itself as the conduit for the neoliberalisation of state policies. The discourse that frames the educational policies of the GNU is duplicitous. This duplicity in my view exposes neoliberalism to be more than just an ideology, it in fact mutates into a “rationality” which creates a specific political ecosystem which generalises the principle of competition (Dardot & Laval, 2011). It is within this environment that individualism flourishes. Commenting on this dialectical shift Weber (2002, p. 285) notes that

The SASA sees the state as intervening in education in order to narrow the racial and class gap. Yet it creates space for the privatisation of education that will probably create new forms of inequality.

### **Decentralisation**

I concur with Weber. The SASA’s commitment to educational decentralisation essentially evolved from two dissimilar ideological trajectories. Sayed (2008) posits that the progressive anti-apartheid organisations called for the accommodation of “dual structures of power” which would have empowered communities by involving them in the decision-making processes that would influence their children’s education. The creation of PTSA’s during the anti-apartheid era reflected the objective of community participation. At the opposite end of the ideological divide, the National Party (NP) supported decentralisation as it

allowed for greater control of schooling by those who had to pay and that it would enhance efficiency, effectiveness and quality. The National Party’s commitment to educational decentralisation prioritised “individual freedoms and rights in the matters of social provision (Sayed, 2008, p. 7).

The NPs support for the decentralisation of education management was indicative of an absolute endorsement of the World Bank’s hegemonic neoliberal policy discourse that was inaugurated into the South African educational arena by the De Lange Commission in 1981. The SASA’s deception of promoting democratic control through “community participation” and the “devolution of powers” in fact signifies a significant ideological right shift. A close

reading of Section 16 (1) of the SASA together with Principle 9 of the de Lange Commission, exposes a clear ideological link between the two with regard to decentralisation. Section 16 (1) of the SASA, dealing with the Governance and professional management of public schools, states

- (1) Subject to this Act, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body.
- (2) A governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school.
- (3) Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department.

Hill and Kumar (2009, p. 18) posits that

in connection with the principle of democratic control, quite interestingly, the discourse on 'community participation' and decentralisation has been consistently put forth by the World Bank and by United Nations agencies. However, far from being democratic they ultimately become a top down approach of governance.

The claim of "democratic control" as advanced by the decentralisation discourse is completely deceptive. The fundamental issue around decentralisation is to understand the difference between who exercises control over education and who should control education (Perry, 2009). In fact, Bonal (2003 p. 173), following Robertson and Dale's definition, argues that

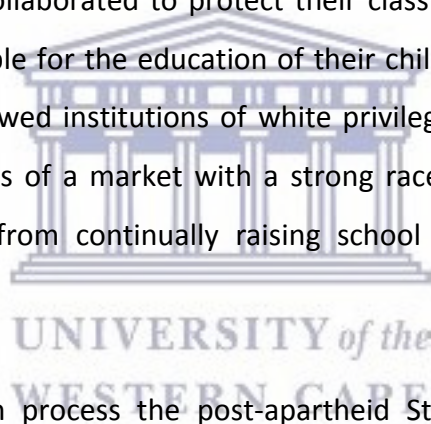
the neoliberal political rationality, with its emphasis on possessive individualism and self-entrepreneurialism, becomes a useful rhetoric to make individuals and communities responsible for their decisions and for the outcome of those decisions. This rationality serves the state by depoliticising educational decisions and therefore reducing its political burden.

It is evident that the SASAs quixotic quest for deepening the democratic processes through community participation in SGB's, and the promise of an enhancement in the quality, access and efficacy in the provision of quality schooling, is disingenuous. I support McChesney's (1999) contention that neoliberal states across the world have a distinct aversion to participatory democracy and create nothing but powerless and demoralised individuals across the globe. Similarly, the social justice rhetoric championed by the SASA suggested that the Government of National Unity (GNU) was committed to social justice and equality in education. In fact one of the first obstacles that militated against the state's apparent "equality in education" objectives was the demeanour of the SGB's at the former Model C schools post-1994 which have proven to be problematical with regard to their admissions



policies and the exclusion of the poor through extortionate school fees (Sayed, 2008; Gulson & Fataar, 2011). The recalcitrant, supercilious behaviour of many of the white SGBs, given this country's past, should have come as no surprise. The notion peddled by some commentators that these exclusions were the unintended consequences of the SASA are equally deceitful. I concur with Ball (1990, p. 17) who argued "that discourses embody meaning and social relationships; they constitute both subjectivity and power relations".

The approach of white SGB's confirmed this. The response of the Model C schools is in keeping with the attitude of the white neoliberal elite who have abundant resources. They generally tend to safeguard their social assets and so they often intentionally continue their segregationist behaviour to protect those assets. This elite recognises that education is a distributive apparatus and the gateway to preserving their social and cultural assets just as they did during the apartheid era. By maintaining the advantaged white public schools, black and white politicians collaborated to protect their class interests because it is these schools that will be answerable for the education of their children. The admission of poor, black students to these hallowed institutions of white privilege was now quite unethically being left to the prescriptions of a market with a strong race-class bias in which nothing would prevent white SGBs from continually raising school fees to exclude poor black students (Tikly, 1997).



Through the decentralisation process the post-apartheid State has quite unequivocally abdicated its responsibility by localising problems that could potentially arise at school level with regard to admissions policies and user fees. The introduction of the neoliberal imperatives into the education policy discourse will have serious consequences for the delivery of quality educational services in post-apartheid South Africa. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 37) points to the importance of understanding the evolution of neoliberalism, stating that "[t]he neoliberal imaginary of globalization has not emerged in a political vacuum, but in a context of the global flows of policy ideas". This is indeed clear in the post-apartheid policy context. There is no doubt that the quasi-market forms of educational provision constituted but one of the new methods of public administration that radically changed the nature of the post-apartheid state. Gulson & Fataar (2011, p. 273) argue "...South Africa is implicated in the broader global shifts towards neoliberalism, and the demise of alternatives such as state socialism". The SASA discourse unmistakably indicates

that the neoliberal ideology presents an unprecedented threat to those who believe that quality education is a basic right of all citizens and that it is essential for the advancement of social democracy (Zajda, 2004). Zajda (2004, p. 11) postulates that

while privatisation and decentralisation trends in education appear to be democratic and a feature of open societies by providing the key players with an opportunity of participation and ownership in educational transformation and social change they also reflect the managerial and culture of efficiency and profit driven organisations – characteristics of neoliberal ideology in the economics of education.

Following Zajda (2004) the SASA accommodated the World Bank's provisions that promoted the commodification of education consequently extending the De Lange Commission's recommendations into the educational policy discourse of post-apartheid South Africa in complete disregard of the social justice objectives promulgated by the South African constitution or the legitimate expectations of poor black communities.

### **School Fees: The poor must pay...**

The second disconcerting measure was the introduction of school fees or in neoliberal parlance known as "user fees". The Norms and Standards explain the rationale behind charging fees:

The SASA imposes a responsibility on all public school governing bodies to do their utmost to improve the quality of education in their schools by raising additional resources to supplement those which the state provides from public funds (s 36). All parents, but particularly those who are less poor or who have good incomes, are thereby encouraged to increase their own direct financial and other contributions to the quality of their children's education in public schools.

The SASA (DOE, 1996b, p. 26) in Chapter Four, Section 39, states

- (1) Subject to this Act, school fees may be determined and charged at a public school only if a resolution to do so has been adopted by a majority of parents attending the meeting referred to in section 38(2).
- (2) A resolution contemplated in subsection (1) must provide for
  - (a) the amount of fees to be charged; and
  - (b) equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial or conditional exemption of parents who are unable to pay school fees, promulgates that parents, through their participation in the SGBs, are entitled, if they so choose, to levy "user fees" that will be binding on all the parents it represents.

The SASA's institution of "user fees," acknowledges the commodification of public education in South Africa. Roitmayer (2003) addressed the constitutionality of the school fee system, as promulgated in the SASA and the NNSF. Roitmayer (2003, p. 396) concluded

that a public school financing model that relies on charging fees may create constitutional problems with regard to access and to adequacy. More specifically, the school fee system may violate s 29(1) (a), the right to basic education, because charging fees restricts or impedes access to basic education for the poor. Similarly, because the financing model relies on private resources, and because the state does not provide adequate state funding to supply basic needs for poor schools in the absence of private fees, the fee-financing regime appears to provide a substantively inadequate basic education for learners in fee-poor schools.

Roithmayer (2003, p. 384) also points out that

...under the guarantee of equality in s 9, charging school fees may violate the Constitution because fees discriminate on the basis of race and class. A school's ability to charge fees – and to provide a learner with greater funding and resources – appears to correlate strongly to the class and race of the community in which the school is located. According to the government's own research, the practice of charging school fees may reproduce apartheid-era disparities in expenditures per learner between poor black learners and middle and high-income white learners.

Given South Africa's apartheid legacy, and the concomitant levels of inequality it reproduced, it is almost tragically ironic to witness the incongruity of the policy measures the GNU resorted to as means of addressing the social inequalities we have inherited. With the state being aware of the "apartheid-era disparities", how is the commodification of public education expected to "redress past inequalities" or "to promote social justice"? Bowles suggested that the "deeply entrenched nature of the existing inequities and the embeddedness of power relations in South Africa's social fabric require 'a suitably modest conception' of the transformative powers of education" (Bowles, cited by Fataar, 1997, p. 74 ). Concurring with Bowles, the problem, in my opinion, is that "equity" in the South African context has been given political preference over actual "equality" as a result of the SASA. What it amounts to is that historically advantaged schools would for obvious historical reasons be able to improve the quality of education that they have been able to provide, while the historically disadvantaged schools would find it economically difficult to improve, or in fact maintain, their levels of education. Affordability now inevitably becomes the crucial element in the provision of quality education. That being the case, it is obvious that

poor, black children at the bottom end of the economic ladder cannot reasonably be expected to obtain any form of quality education or to gain entry into a privileged school that offers quality education. The introduction of these “quasi-market” principles in my view, does not promote social justice. The state has in this case, clearly ignored, if not violated the rights of learners from previously disadvantaged communities (Sayed, 2008; Fataar, 1997; Weber, 2002, Wilson, 2004). What further militated against improving the conditions in poorer schools was the introduction of the 1998 Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR), which focussed on and prioritised fiscal discipline (austerity) rather than social redress. Meek & Meek (2008, p. 531) reiterates that

GEAR is grounded in human capital theory, which is a doctrine based upon the belief that there is a direct link between education and economic growth. Education is considered to be an investment for the nation in which students and workers are both value-added products and means through which the economy is to be improved. Thus, education and training are considered to a panacea for poor economic performance, as it is assumed that the investment in human capital and technology will increase productivity and skills in the office and on the shop floor. Under the assumption of human capital theory, the value of education is reduced to its economic pay-off for the individual and the economy as a whole.

Despite the state’s specious commitment to social justice through increased spending on social services like education, the GEAR policy achieved exactly the opposite. The state’s commitment to fiscal austerity undermined any, if not all intentions, guaranteeing social justice. The GEAR policy initiated a process that led to the malicious destruction of public education. Fiscal austerity led to financial constraints on the day-to-day operations of schools; class sizes doubled; extended working hours for teachers; it instigated the systematic decline of teacher salaries and school buildings falling into disrepair. The already poverty-stricken township schools faced the brunt of these austerity measures (Bond, 2000; Canadell, 2013; Fataar, 1997; Peet, 2002). Ironically, the SASA, read together with the NEPA (1996), highlights democracy and developing an ethos founded on human rights in education. The preamble of the SASA states

WHEREAS the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation;  
WHEREAS this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in doing so lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people’s talents and capabilities, advance the

democratic transformation of society, combat racism and all other forms of discrimination... (Preamble, South African Schools Act, 1996)

The preamble of the SASA, read together with the with Section 29(1) a of the Constitution, creates the understanding that “a right to basic education” implies that all learners have an automatic and direct privilege to access free education services of an acceptable, equivalent standard. This entitlement, in my view, invariably should include the right to reparation of past disparities in the delivery of education. Sadly this is not the case. It is for this reason that I am persuaded that the state calculatingly circumvented the constitutional provisions in Section 29(1)a, as well as the commitments made in the preamble of the SASA (Roithmayer, 2003; Wilson, 2004). It would be reasonable to conclude that the state displays a complete disregard for the rights of learners as enshrined in the constitution. Consider the introduction of “user fees” in this context. Following Wilson (2004), I concur that the introduction of “user fees”, as promulgated in the SASA, is irreconcilable with the right to basic education, given the state’s apparent commitment to free education. Furthermore, Wilson (2004, p. 437) advances that

...the right to a basic education implies equal access to equally well-resourced educational institutions. The fact that everybody has the same right implies that everyone is entitled to the same benefits, and the state must distribute these benefits equally...A benchmark of adequacy is built into the very concept of the right.

In response to the clarification above the Anti-Privatisation Forum commented

We have won the right to free quality education as written into the constitution of South Africa. It is the responsibility of the government to find the funds to ensure that all South Africans have equal quality public education. But our experience of the past ten years is that more and more pressure is being put onto the schools themselves to raise funds and onto parents and families of students to pay for schooling. Our constitutional right means that there should not be school fees. According to this right, parents should not be required to show how much or how little they earn, to qualify for exemptions. According to this right, it is government’s duty to make sure that the quality of township and rural school education is equal to suburb schools and that education across the country is of a high quality (APF Press Statement, 13 August 2003 cited in Wilson, 2004, p.437).

The introduction of “user fees” unmistakably exacerbated inequality in South Africa rather than reducing it. The government’s neoliberal macro-economic myopia shifted the funding burden onto the poor. Schools serving wealthy communities are able to charge higher fees to maintain their facilities and improve their quality of education by hiring more teachers.

Poverty stricken communities have no such option (Badat, 2009; Sayed, 2008; Mestry, 2014).

Meek & Meek (2008, p. 531) contend that the GEAR policy

creates a social political atmosphere in which more richly endowed communities, those communities that over the years already have benefitted significantly from apartheid, simply continue to receive superior educational resources and facilities, thus perpetuating a system of differential and highly unequal schooling.

There clearly is a conclusive connection between the funding available to schools and the quality of education they provide. Poorer households invariably are incapable of providing quality education for their children. Mestry (2014, p. 853) postulates that

This situation prevailed because of the state's relatively low levels of funding to historically disadvantaged schools meant that even the large interventions that took place have not been enough to ensure a level of funding commensurate with the levels at the historically advantaged schools. Furthermore, the fact that in spite of a transfer of resources, resourcing levels at previously disadvantaged schools are still not nearly what they are at previously advantaged schools.

George Orwell's (2005, p. 164) maxim "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" succinctly defines the quandary. Badat (2009, p. 7) argues that

There is an undeniable and powerful link between social disadvantage and equity of access, opportunity of outcomes and achievement in schooling and education. Currently 6% of African children in South Africa come from families whose income is less than R800 per month; conversely 60% of white children are from families whose income is more than R6000 per month. The consequences of this have to be and are indeed manifest in differential school performance and achievement.

Given the post-apartheid state's commitment to the neoliberal orthodoxy, the realization of equality in the South African education system will remain nothing more than a cynical pipe dream. It is important to consider, given our commitment to "equality in education", that the neoliberal orthodoxy has resulted in an ideological shift in thinking about issues of inequality as a social responsibility to it being a matter of individual responsibility, which is exactly how capitalist markets work. Education policy cannot possibly resolve social inequalities. To attain social justice we must reverse GEAR and find alternatives, radically different from the neoliberal policy frameworks that have shaped post-apartheid South Africa, because it clearly evident that market-orientated educational policies simply exacerbate social inequality.

## South African Education in Reverse-GEAR

Badat's (2009) assessment above supports an increasingly popular view that the post-apartheid state has failed historically disadvantaged, predominantly black children. The constitutional right to education, in my view, infers that the state must ensure the progressive realisation of a system of free education. The introduction of decentralisation and privatisation of public schooling in South Africa, via the SASA, has resulted in the state subordinating our constitution, and by extension the education system, to the diktats of the World Bank and the IMFs Structural Adjustment Programmes. It is clearly evident that the state has made a volte-face with regard to social justice, particularly public education. *The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR)* argues that the "state cannot abandon their duty to regulate and protect the right to education by transferring their powers to an international organisation...governments have human rights obligations because primary education should not be treated as a commodity"(UNCESCR, 1998, par.7). With regard to the state's macro-economic policy, Wilson (2004, p. 437) cites the critique of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) which contends that:

... this constitutional right is now opposed by government's GEAR policy. GEAR says that government must pay back the apartheid debts (monies borrowed from overseas and local banks that built apartheid South Africa) and that government must cut how much money it spends on water, electricity, transport, housing, telephones, education, etc. These services must be handed over to private businesses to run. GEAR also says that big businesses and the rich must not be asked to pay too much in taxes and must get special tax holidays to keep their profit resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and growing pressure on the working class to 'take responsibility' for paying unaffordable school fees as well as the cost of uniforms, textbooks, transport, daily lunches, stationary, etc. GEAR says the education budget will be 'contained' and that government 'subsidies must be reduced' - the result has been a decline in the education budget in real terms over the last five years (APF Press Statement 13 August 2003, cited in Wilson, 2004, p. 438).

South African legal scholar Theunis Roux concisely conveys the crux of the argument:

The Constitution does not say that South Africa's macro-economic strategy is the supreme law of the Republic, and everything that government does must necessarily fall into line with this strategy (Roux cited in Wilson, 2004, p. 440).

What is evident is that the post-apartheid state has evolved into a "corporate state" that so blatantly opted to oblige the neoliberal dogma. These neoliberal policies have resulted in numerous obnoxious outcomes: these policies clearly protect white privilege; they deny black students equivalent admission to quality education; they undermine the democratic

development of communities; they undermine the country's post-apartheid vision of social justice and political integration (Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004, p.208). Chisholm (2004, p.122) advances that

The government's expression of equity has come to be framed in specific ways, consistent with neoliberal theories: universal access, but restricted through user fees; school governance with privatisation; top-down decision-making which implicates school communities in teacher retrenchments and cost-cutting.

### **School Choice: To Choose or Not to Choose**

Following Chisholm, another disconcerting neoliberal imperative in the SASA policy was the introduction of "school choice". The "school choice" rationale stems from the classical liberal conception of the "rational autonomous individual" which "presupposes that the choices made are the individual's own; that they are the independent result of freely made decisions, and that the outcomes have not been coerced, manipulated, or imposed by external institutions or by the logic of situation" (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 202). The problem of course resides in the conception of independent choice, because in neoliberal parlance "choice" is represented as a core value that would provide a wider range of choices for the individual as a way of guaranteeing greater effectiveness and fairness (Olssen et al., 2004). The "school choice" option disseminated in the SASA, has in effect given rise to competition amongst schools to attract the best and the most affluent students, which had in fact created "quasi markets" in schools. (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Gulson & Fataar, 2011). Section 5 (3) of the SASA reads

- No Learner may be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that his or her parent-
- (a) is unable to pay or has not paid the school fees determined by the governing body under section 39;
  - (b) does not subscribe to the mission statement of the school; or
  - (c) has refused to enter into a contract in terms of which the parent waives any claim for damages arising out of the education of the learner.

In this respect, some of the features of the constitution, i.e. to abandon all forms of racial classification, unfair judgement and its obligation to freedom of association and residence was adhered to particularly when read together with the NEPA, Regulation 34 (b) which states: "a learner who lives outside the feeder zone is not precluded from seeking admission at whichever school he or she chooses" (DOE, 1996). While the doors of previously white schools have seemingly opened up, universal access was not automatically guaranteed.



Money became the principal condition to these hallowed portals of white privilege. Despite the prohibitive financial hurdles Black working class learners faced, many made the most of this historical opportunity and crossed the educational Rubicon (Sayed, 2008; Badat, 2009). What is often ignored, if not completely misunderstood in the “choice” discourse is the subordination of the state’s intrusion to the operation of market forces. Miron and Welner (cited in Ndimane, 2016, p. 44) states

The allure of school choice is, in part, ideological. But the allure is also linked to a very real problem: there exists tremendous variation among neighbourhood schools in terms of quality and resources, and access to those neighbourhood schools depend on wealth. Lower wealthy families are less able to purchase a residence in the catchment (enrolment) area of high resource, high quality neighbourhood schools. Breaking the link between residence and school assignment would seem a logical way of addressing the problem.

The dominant rationale is that the “choice” option for parents is a way of promoting economic growth. What is not immediately shared by the seemingly liberal advocates of “choice” are the limitations that it imposes on the freedom of disadvantaged families, i.e. poor families simply have no choice but to accept their township schools regardless of the quality of education offered. Wealthier, former white schools will be able to choose their “customers”. The inevitable result is that “choice” results in mounting inequality and a widening of the social gap between rich schools in the leafy white suburbs and the much poorer township schools. Needless to say, the rich schools will have no incentive to enrol children from poorer communities as it could affect their economic bottom-line (Sayed, 2008; Badat, 2009). “Choice” legitimizes class discrimination. Rosa Canadell (2013, p. 45) postulates that

...choice is simply a strategy to place education within the market and, like everything that works according to the laws of the market, the negative effect always fall on the poorest classes. If this freedom of choice is also subsidised with public money we are faced with a system in which the state, rather than ensuring equality, clearly favours the most privileged social sector in the hands of private capital of double benefit: the selling of knowledge and the direct control of what should be learned by future workers.

Canadell (2013, p. 45) concludes

...to support the right to choose is to clearly support inequality in education. To have choice requires difference and this automatically implies the existence of some schools which are considered better and others that are considered worse. The goal of education that seeks equality of opportunity is exactly the opposite: the difference between schools should be minimal and the necessary resources

(financial, human, training, etc.) should be allocated to the worst schools so they can improve. It is not competition between schools that will raise the quality of teaching but the opposite: it is the exchange of experiences, working together, the involvement of parents, and the necessary human and financial resources which can raise the level of the education system...

Given this country's historical background, class and racial discrimination are two sides of the same coin. The net effect is that the vast majority of poor, black learners in South Africa will probably never have access to quality education or quality institutions in their life time. Class apartheid still rules the market. Although equality of opportunity remains a constitutional right; it will remain a dream denied in terms of the SASA discourse, despite the constitutional guarantees (Badat, 2009; Sayed, 2009; Fataar, 1997; Gulson & Fataar, 2011). Critical examination of the SASA makes it clear that the neoliberalised, post-apartheid state has ostensibly deracialised the public education sector in South Africa while recommitting itself to the principles of human capital theory. The post-apartheid educational discourse, that unmistakably underpins individual self-interest in an increasingly competitive society, has patently exacerbated the precarity of the economically excluded in South Africa's townships since 1994. The SASA discourse reflects the ideological milieu of education since the appointment of the De Lange Commission in 1981. For the last twenty three years education has been focussed on its relationship with the economic policy of the country and the demands of the labour market. The educational reforms that have been initiated post-1994 have been developed and justified with regard to their contribution to strategies for economic growth designed within the neoliberal framework as propagated by the De Lange Commission in 1981, which parenthetically, completely disregarded the social inequalities produced by racial capitalism. Its political progeny, the SASA, despite its social justice rhetoric, does the same.

### **THE NATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL FUNDING (NSSF)**

This section considers the implications and the subsequent outcomes of the NSSF in its attempt to address the more contentious social justice issues that the SASA outlined. The Schools Act (South Africa, 1996b) addresses the issue of social justice thus

the country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing provide an education for the development of our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair

discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptances of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership of the state.

The purpose of the modified NNESSF guidelines is to realise reparation and fairness in school subsidies, with the intention of gradually humanizing the excellence of school education, principally in historically underprivileged schools. The pursuit of pro-poor finance policies was based on the perception of equalizing the imbalances created by apartheid. These policies (Mestry, 2014, p. 856) include the following.

A policy of pro-poor targeting for recurrent, non-personnel expenditure: 60% of funds to be distributed to the 40% of poorest schools under an apportionment framework of 80:20 for personnel: non-personnel recurrent expenditure. The introduction of fee-free schooling in at least 40% of the poorest schools. The retention of a system of charging school fees as part of the government's commitment to pro-poor cross-subsidies.

South Africa's political transition had the government committing itself to the institution of an impartial, democratic education system committed to quality. Despite its idealistic undertakings, the South African education system is still nothing more than a dystopian nightmare for the poor, black working class families of our speciously liberated nation. The implementation of the NNESSF policy (South Africa 1998; 2008) was largely concerned with setting up the framework through which public schools will be funded; the exclusion of underprivileged parents who cannot afford fees and the disbursement of public subsidies to independent schools. The NNESSF serves as a follow up to the SASA and was an attempt address the more problematic issues contained in the SASA, especially the contentious issue of school fees. Despite the state's policy rhetoric regarding social justice, equity, redress and inequality, the education system remained largely unchanged. The following quote from the NNESSF highlights the problem:

It is ironic, given the emphasis on redress and equity by the government, that the funding provisions of the Schools Act appeared to have worked thus far to the advantage of public schools patronised by middle class and wealthy parents of all racial groups (NNESSF, South Africa, 2008).

The tragic irony reflected above is nothing more than a tacit admission by the state that its neoliberal education policies failed the poor. Callinicos (1996, p. 26) advances that

the failure of the ANC in office to pursue any real attempt to transform society is a consequence of the strategy it has pursued. Like reformists in other places and times, the Revolutionary Alliance has made its genuine desire to achieve the “social upliftment” of the black majority conditional on the revival of the fortunes of capitalism in its country. But it has done so at a time when capitalism on a global scale is experiencing profound turbulence and instability.

### **The More Things Change...**

This section illuminates the weakness inherent in the NSSF policy with regard to its objectives in addressing the multiplicity of problems it faced regarding the funding of public schools. Sections 34 and 35 of the SASA command the State to equalize historical disparities and achieve fairness in its undertakings to reform the post-apartheid South African education system. One of the key obstacles that initially weakened the state’s attempts with regard to the achievement of equity and social justice was that it had to depend on the Provincial Education Departments (PED) to achieve these objectives. The NSSF policy states that

the National Ministry of Education does not decide on the amounts to be allocated annually for the provincial education departments...each province determines its own level of spending on education...it follows that the national norms for funding schools cannot prescribe actual amounts in Rands per learner”(DOE,1998, p. 11).

This funding conundrum is the consequence of the decentralised management system in which education is regarded as a provincial competency and precludes the national government from prescribing or controlling the amounts spent on addressing equity in each province. It simply means that equal spending per learner, as intended by the national department, could not be guaranteed. This is a classic case where the neoliberal political rationality has potential to disrupt the objectives of the state to encourage equity and social justice. Bonal (2003, p. 172) posits that “policies and discourses that celebrate the virtues of decentralisation may provoke problems of national unity and social cohesion and may also weaken the control of the state over regional education policies”. I concur with Bonal. The difficulties faced by the state with regard to the achievement of equity and social justice delivery are the direct result of the “uneven effects of neoliberal economic and social policies” and not the unintended consequences of educational policies (Bonal, 2003. p. 173). Secondly, while historically advantaged schools have been able to consolidate their advantaged positions with regard to their financial standing and the delivery of quality

education, the poorer schools in the townships have not been able to do the same. In fact, given the economic decline of the country and the rising levels of inequality among the poor and the working class families in the townships, poorer schools experienced a corresponding downturn in their economic fortunes. As a result, poorer families were also forced to spend a disproportionate portion of their salary to maintain the education of their children. Those who could not contribute financially often resorted to offering their physical labour in lieu of school fees (Mestry, 2014). Mestry (2014, p. 854) following Connell, explains that

some governments, including the South African government, have long been operating from a perspective of distributive justice. For them, as long as schools are provided for the populace, universal literacy programmes are put in place, or an affirmative action programme has been established, governments are satisfied that they have met their social justice requirements. In my view this is not enough.

Given the unequal funding measures under apartheid, the NNSF was aimed at redressing the historical social inequalities that were still deeply entrenched in poor, black communities. Sadly, it is clear that the NNSF remains nothing but a blunt Machiavellian instrument attempting to redress historical social inequalities, as the state ostensibly will not be able to match the resources that are available to historically advantaged schools. Mestry (2014, p. 857) advocates that

poverty targeting takes its point of departure from the assumption that certain groups learners need more resources than others, as a result of economic advantage ...poor learners are persistently disadvantaged and it will take much longer to overcome the barriers of the past, thus prolonging the cycle of poor quality education.

The state's pursuit of pro-poor policies has been undermined by its own commitment to fiscal austerity measures. The funds that it made available to address the infrastructural and financial backlogs in the disadvantaged communities were clearly insufficient. The NNSF policy clearly failed in this regard. The quintile system, propagated by the NNSF, is another example of the misguided, blunt policy instruments the state developed to address past inequalities in the education system. The quintile system divided schools into groups that reflected their relative wealth. Each school was then allocated a state subsidy relative to their status, i.e. schools in poor communities would receive more funding than state schools in wealthier communities. The state also developed an "adequacy benchmark" through which each school would be ear-marked to receive adequate funds to provide an acceptable

level of education to the learners it serves. What complicates this approach in my view is that the adequacy benchmark links resourcing to outputs (Sayed, 2008; Mestry, 2014; Wildeman, 2008).

Research conducted by Wildeman (2008) indicates that the Department of Basic Education relied on “best practice” examples to define suitable levels of funding of schools. Non personnel expenditure frameworks were used to determine the adequate spending amount that would be allocated to schools across the country. Wildeman claims that it became evident that the application of arbitrary benchmarks proved problematic when it was found that middle class learners in some provinces were receiving allocations greater than much poorer in other provinces. The tragedy is that all these funding instruments promulgated by the NNSF proved to be seriously prejudicial to the cause of social justice.

### **Social Justice Denied**

It is clear that disadvantaged communities have consistently been required to jump through one bureaucratically created hoop after the other to gain access to proper state funding. If this is the state’s strategy for redressing past inequalities, then it must be cynically commended because, quite paradoxically, what the state’s policies actually achieved was the reproduction of the social inequalities that it apparently wanted to address (Mestry 2014; Wildeman, 2008). The state’s grandstanding policy rhetoric with regard to equality and social justice is proving to be nothing more than an exercise in ineffectuality. It is clearly debatable whether or not the SASA and NNSF education policies were actually intended with learner parity, equality and social justice in mind. Policy instruments like the “adequacy benchmarks” have clearly more to do with matters of affordability for the state instead of any coherent definition of what constitutes acceptable levels of sufficiency. It is a given that the quality of education for poor learners will be subject to economic determinants. The state’s education reforms reflect nothing more than the flagrant impact of neoliberal ideologies that “dictates the principal aims of education serving, merely, to protect the status quo and galvanise the on-going injustices that doggedly persist within our education systems” (Macris, 2011,p. 36). Macris (2011, p.36), following Schugurensky, elaborates by suggesting that

...the implications of such reforms, as a series of on-going (experimental) projects have been rooted in the systematic failure to provide equity and equality and have been devised, merely, to uphold and further perpetuate the capitalist order, while operating under the guise of 'pro-active change' and a blurred vision of school improvement.

The implementation of arbitrary, top-down benchmarks is a clear indication that there are no clear coherent connections between education policy frameworks and the intentions of social justice that these policies were meant to concretize. If pro-poor policies are going to be determined by the state's economic policy frameworks then the provision of adequate standards of education for the poor is going to remain elusive. The provision of quality education for the poor will remain out of reach unless the massive disparities that exist in our society are eliminated and public schooling becomes free for all. The state's education policy discourse which is an extension of its neoliberal macro-economic programme cannot go unchallenged because they are clearly not GEARED to address the injustices perpetrated under apartheid (Mestry, 2014, Wildeman, 2008). It is impossible to ignore the glaring, intractable contradictions that shape our society. It remains clear that the commodification of public schooling has not only exacerbated the class disparities in South Africa, but also increased the feelings of powerlessness and oppression among teachers and the historically disadvantaged communities they serve. While neoconservative protagonists in our country may assert that the education reforms have accomplished improved efficacy, diversity and choice, it is also tragically obvious that our education system has been unable to prevent the apartheid social inequalities from being authentically reproduced, resulting in a dual education system for South Africa. Neoliberal policies have been disastrous to South Africa's educational reforms. Reimers (2000, p. 55) notes that

the poor have less access to preschool, secondary, and tertiary education, they also attend schools of lower quality where they are socially segregated. Poor parents have fewer resources to support the education of their children, and they have less financial, cultural and social capital to transmit. Only policies that explicitly address inequality, with major redistributive purpose, therefore, could make education an equalising force in social opportunity.

For all the state's grandstanding claims in the delivery of social justice and equality, dystopia prevails. Mestry (2014, p. 863) argues that

Social justice can only be achieved if the state makes more funds available for learners to access education and reduces or abolishes structural forms of oppression that restricts access to resources and opportunities for exercising and developing individuals' capabilities.

While I broadly concur with Mestry's sentiments, I am persuaded the attainment social justice will remain elusive. Social justice is commonly regarded as being devoted to the delivery of access to education, but it also places constraints on our perceptions of social justice. Philosopher John Rawls suggested that to deepen our understanding of social justice we must pay attention to "the basic structures of society" (Rawls cited by Olssen et al., 2004, p. 285). Writing in *Political Liberalism*, Rawls (cited in Olssen et al., 2004, p. 285) explains the basic organisation of society as

...the way in which the main political and social institutions of society fit together into one system of social co-operation, and the way they assign basic rights and duties, and regulate the division of advantages that arise through social co-operation over time... and secures what we may call background justice.

What Mestry has left out of the equation is that the state's view of social justice and equity was created within the GEAR framework. Following Weber (2002, p. 289) this included

...restricted equality of educational opportunity and access through user fees, narrowly defined quality and curriculum reform; school governance in which privatisation and the market predominated and influenced conceptualisation of participation from below; top down decision making implicating school communities in teacher retrenchments; and cost cutting in attempts to rationalise and equalise the distribution teacher resources.

To expect the current state to "make more funding available" or "abolish structural forms of oppression" it should be clear from reading Weber, that the neoliberal state has no such egalitarian intentions. Social justice, as defined by Rawls, is the antithesis of "choice". For Rawls "justice as fairness" implies that every single individual in society is "allowed to advance in a fair way" (cited in Olssen et al., 2004, p. 218). Simply put, for Rawls (cited in Olssen, et al., 2004, p. 219) education is defined as

a basic human right and a necessary condition for liberty...Social justice obliges the state to invest in education, to maximise the gains for all, not to allow some to profit at the expense of others, but rather to safeguard conditions of welfare for all and where necessary to limit the choice of some in order to redistribute the benefits more fairly.

My contention, in view of Mestry's sentimentalities, is that we cannot expect neoliberal policies that promote the commodification of education at the expense of equity and social justice to be changed until we create the political conditions to make such change possible. The history of education in South Africa is irretrievably linked to the history of class struggle.



The sometimes unpalatable reality is that South Africa did not experience a social revolution, and Mestry's expectations of the government switching into egalitarian mode, are sadly misplaced. It is important to appreciate that "a state contrived in accordance with the dictates of a given economic form cannot be brought to perform in ways that are at odds with its structural character" (Greaves et al., 2007b., p. 59). Neville Alexander (2010, p. 1) in his paper *South Africa: An Unfinished Revolution*, delivered at the 4th Strini Moodley Annual Memorial Lecture, asserts that

...in South Africa, we have not, in this very precise sense, experienced a social revolution. If anything, the post-apartheid state is more capitalist than its apartheid parent. To deny the continuity between the apartheid capitalist state and the post-apartheid capitalist state, as some people actually do, is a futile and quixotic exercise...most South Africans, certainly most oppressed and exploited South Africans, feel that they have been, if not betrayed, then certainly misled...

While anticipating a classical working class insurrection, there remains much work for the transformative, organic intellectuals in our exploited communities to create the radical educational spaces that would facilitate the shaping of revolutionary cognizance through a pedagogy of insurrection...freeing the nation from its state of false consciousness.

### **The State of False Consciousness**

We have recognised that South Africa's education policies do not promote equity and social justice. To suggest that the situation is atrocious is an understatement. The state's commitment to the neoliberal orthodoxy has also impacted its political rationality. For this reason there exists a clear need for a radical repositioning of the social policy framework of the state. In his epic tome, *A History of Inequality in South Africa*, Sampie Terreblanche (2002, p. 419) posits that

eight years after the transition from white political domination to a representative democracy, South Africa is faced with serious political, social and economic problems...the viability of the new democracy is threatened by bureaucratic incapacity, the inability of the state to make meaningful progress in deracialising the economic system, and its failure to alleviate the widespread poverty and social deprivation inherited from apartheid...

Continuing, Terreblanche (2002, pp.31 – 32) contends that

High and rising levels of unemployment in a sluggish economy; deeply institutionalised inequalities and in the distribution of power, property, and opportunities between the white and black elite and the poorest half

of the population; disrupted and fragmented social structures and the syndrome of chronic community poverty among the poorest 50 per cent of the population; and the mutually reinforcing dynamics of violence, criminality, and ill health on the one hand and the process of pauperization on the other.

Terreblanche (2002) advances that the misguided economic policies implemented in post-apartheid South Africa is largely the result of the neoliberal economic policies which was the result of the “historic compromise” reached between the ANC and the corporate elite. He stresses that these economic policies are inappropriate because in essence it means that “the supreme goal of economic policy should be to attain high economic growth rate, and that all other objectives should be subordinated to this...”. This meant that it was mandatory for the ANC to “move away from its traditional priority, namely to uplift the impoverished black majority socially and economically”(Terreblanche, 2002, p. 96). The outcome of this agreement was that “individual members of the upper classes (comprising one third of the population) profit handsomely from mainstream economic activity, while the mainly black lumpenproletariat (comprising 50 per cent of the population) is increasingly pauperised” (Terreblanche, 2002, p. 423). Finally, Terreblanche (2002, p. 440) contends that

whatever the merits of this ideological [neoliberal] approach or highly developed and powerful first-world countries may be, it is not appropriate for a dualistic and developing country such as South Africa in which economic power, property, and opportunities are as unequally distributed as they are.

Bowles and Gintis (1976, p. 76) concluded “that liberal reforms designed to increase education equality and access would not be able to reduce or combat poverty unless sufficient jobs were available”. This neoliberal-neoconservative orthodoxy, Terreblanche (2002) warned, will have serious consequences for the future of South Africa. Education cannot be considered a commodity just to serve a rapacious capitalist economy in the name of competition. The transition from apartheid has brought great prosperity for a small number of South Africans and perpetuated the miserable, inhuman living conditions the majority had suffered under apartheid. Chisholm (2012, p. 103) argues that

Deep structural historical continuities, and contradictions between intentions and outcomes of more recent policies, are evident in continuing racially unequal learning outcomes, overall poor quality of education and high youth unemployment. And yet, although it has to be recognised that education is not a panacea that can compensate for society, social justice and equality remain the clarion call across broad sectors of the society.

It is critical to understand this hegemonic policy discourse and the political processes it generates so that we endow ourselves to create the alternative political spaces where we can liberate ourselves from hegemonic subjugation. It is equally imperative to appreciate that the education system is an inherent part of the state apparatus and thus almost habitually functions in the interests of capital. It, therefore “creates inequities, widening the gap between the quality of education for poor and minority youth and that of more privileged students” (McNeil, 2000, p. 3). Because of this process the student is prepared to passively accept the inequalities which they are subjected to. Bowles and Gintis (1988, p. 18) writes

[t]he hierarchical order of the school system, admirably geared towards preparing students for their future positions in the hierarchy of production, limits the development of those personal capacities...and reinforces social inequality by legitimating of students to inherently unequal “slots” in the social hierarchy.

As revealed earlier, it is clear that the state has turned the interests of neoliberal capital into national education policies, such as the SASA and NNSSF, which clearly promote the human capital rationale. Marxists theorists, like Bowles and Gintis, have cautioned time and again that the capitalist state controls the anti-radicalizing effect of education through the repression of creativity, imagination and critical thought. Supporting this notion, Greaves et al (2007b, p. 74) also reminds us that

the capitalist state will seek to destroy any forms of pedagogy that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament – to create an awareness of themselves as future labour-powers and to underpin this awareness with critical insight that seeks to undermine the smooth running of the social production of labour-power.

### **Back to Class**

South Africa’s dystopian educational policies, together with the social inequalities highlighted in this chapter, can be eradicated. Just as we resisted racial discrimination, class oppression and exploitation during the apartheid era, we are capable of overcoming the neoliberal hegemony of the post-apartheid state to redress the asymmetrical power relations in South Africa. The 2008 economic crisis, Macris (2011, p. 39) suggests, “struck a tremendous blow for neoliberal ‘consciousness’ exposing its frailty, while the ideologues of capitalism are scrambling around trying to pick up the pieces and put them back together again”, the impossible becomes possible. David Harvey suggests that “we must now

redefine and rethink neoliberalism, for it not a moment of triumphalism (quite yet), but a moment of problematizing” (Harvey as cited in Macris, 2011, p. 39). Whether South African reformists consider it plausible or not, it is apparent that revolutionary change is indispensable. During the 1980s we turned to educational theorists like Paulo Freire for leadership to provide us with an alternate ideology to that of the apartheid education system. Twenty two years into the transition we are still faced with all of the social vices created by racial capitalism, like racism and escalating inequality, and, for that reason alone, it has become necessary to return our collective focus to Class and the legitimacy of capitalism. Freire led the way in translating the radical vision of Marx into a revolutionary, transformative pedagogy. It is to these intellectual shores that we must return if we want to comprehend the crisis of post-apartheid society, especially education.

The debate around education and the social transformation of South Africa will be meaningless unless we consider the Marxist theory of consciousness/praxis. Paulo Freire, writing in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, points to the fact that the strategic issue that we have to contend with is that of domination. Pedagogically, Freire sided with the marginalised as he was convinced that they are more perceptive and thus more inspired to change the conditions of their own oppression. Viola (2009, p. 11) writes that “Freire’s pedagogy was an act of communion to address not only the questions the oppressed sought to answer but also a commitment to act in the transformation of the very forces that constrain their transformation”. Education, while not able to lead to the social transformation of South Africa by itself, can play an imperative role in challenging capitalism if students are taught “to develop their critical reasoning skills and class consciousness” (Mallot, 2012, p. 176). Bowles and Gintis, cited in Mallot (2012, p. 177) illuminates the stratagem

...movements for educational reform have failed through refusing to call into question the basic structure of property and power in economic life...We believe that the key to reform is the democratisation of economic relationships; social ownership, democratic and participatory control of the production process by workers equal sharing of social necessary labour by all, and progressive equalisation of incomes and destruction of hierarchical economic relationships. This is, of course socialism...In this conception, education strategy is part of a revolutionary transformation of economic life...We must press for an educational environment in which youth can develop the capacity and commitment collectively to control their lives and regulate their social interactions with a sense of equality, reciprocity, and communality. Not that such an environment will of itself alter the quality of

social life. Rather, that it will nurture a new generation of workers...unwilling to submit to the fragmented relationships of dominance and subordination prevailing in economic life.

Huerta-Charles and Pruyn (2004), summarising MacLaren, contend that using a Marxist-based framework could help develop new practices of pedagogy, into which we could integrate social justice values to repudiate the scourge of global capitalism and its ubiquitous toxic effects. MacLaren argued that in this proposed context, it could be understood that the creation of a genuine egalitarian, democratic socialist movement is one of the central objectives of revolutionary pedagogy. "Revolutionary pedagogy", Huerta-Charles and Pruyn (2004, p. 8) write

tries to engage us in the continuous reflection on the unjust social relations within global capitalism and invites us to stand against all cruel living conditions that have derived from it. If we engage ourselves in the struggle...for promoting teaching practices that hold a revolutionary focus, we can start thinking that the world could be transformed into a better place to live. Revolutionary pedagogy is still a quest, a process in the making that is permeated with the idea of releasing the imagination...

I believe that if South Africa's "*Road to Perdition*" is to be avoided, it is best we heed the advice of the many radical scholars who have mapped the road to genuine liberation through the teachings of Marx or we can ignore it at our own peril... Callinicos (1996, p. 27) writes

...while it proved possible in the end to remove the political institutions of apartheid within a capitalist framework, the social and economic inheritance of the maligned South African partnership between capitalism and racial domination cannot be removed without a socialist revolution. The workers' movement in South Africa therefore needs a new socialist party...Building such a party will, no doubt, be a difficult and arduous task. It is no less urgent.

There is no doubt that South Africa has been recolonized by the neoliberal orthodoxy masquerading as common sense, profoundly manipulating the country's policies and their outcomes. Neoliberal imperatives ranging from individualism, decentralisation, privatisation of education and choice have become the mainstay of our education system. The state's commodification of education has perpetuated a bifurcated education system, one for the rich and the new black political elite, and the other for the poor and destitute majority. Bourdieu offers an important aide-mémoire regarding the reproductive role of the

education system in maintaining social inequalities and the dominant culture in society.

Bourdieu (1974, p. 32) argues that

...it [education] is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition of the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one.

Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* warns against education systems driven by the rationales of human capital theory. Nussbaum (2010, pp. 1-2) declares

We are in midst of a crisis of massive proportions and grave global significance...I mean a crisis that goes largely unnoticed, like a cancer; a crisis that is likely to be, in the long run, far more damaging to the nature of democratic self-government: a world-wide crisis in education.

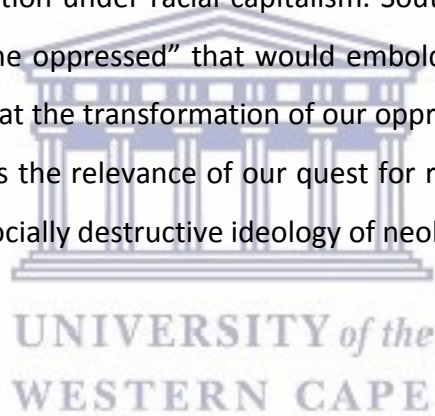
Nussbaum is of course referring to the insatiable desire for economic growth. This rapacious appetite for profit she warns comes at enormous societal cost. She warns against an education system that develops citizens who are “incapable of independent, critical, compassionate and innovative thought” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 6). Nussbaum (2010, p. 6) also strongly advocates the foundation of an education system that promotes the development of individuals who have “the faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships, rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation”. She abhors the neoliberal education policies that are profit-driven. Foucault’s (cited in Giroux (1983, p. 207) concludes

Education may well be...the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we all know that in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle lines of social conflict. Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse...What is an educational system after all, if not the ritualization of the word; if not a qualification of some fixing roles for speakers; if not the distribution and an appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that there has been both change and continuity in South Africa’s education reform process. The negotiated settlement and the subsequent surrender of the black political elite to the power of white neoliberal capital and their supranational associates, the World Bank and the IMF, created a post-apartheid corporate state that

produced an education policy framework that underwrote the commodification of education and fiscal austerity. This neoliberal education policy framework, conceptualised by the De Lange Commission, not only undermined the affirmative right to education, but also violated the right social justice, thus exacerbating apartheid-era social inequalities. This chapter further concludes that South Africa's post-apartheid education policies are clearly committed to the commodification of public education. These policies have proven to be fundamentally anti-egalitarian. The decentralisation of school management systems and the apparent devolution of state powers to local communities have failed to address the social inequalities and injustices that the state seemingly intended to address. This is the direct result of the individualistic, anti-egalitarian nature of the neoliberal ideology. This abject failure of the post-apartheid education system gives South Africans the right to demand a new radical critical pedagogy in which its teachers as revolutionary, transformative leaders, through dialogical teaching, would guide their students towards identifying the origins of their oppression and exploitation under racial capitalism. South Africa/Azania has the right to demand a "pedagogy of the oppressed" that would embolden its student youth to take revolutionary action directed at the transformation of our oppressive, neoliberalised society. In Chapter Seven I will discuss the relevance of our quest for radical critical pedagogy as an alternative discourse to the socially destructive ideology of neoliberalism.



## Chapter 7

### THE QUEST FOR A REVOLUTIONARY CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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I am a teacher who stands up for what is right against what is indecent, who is in favour of freedom against authoritarianism, who is a supporter of authority against freedom with no limits, and who is a defender of democracy against the dictatorship of right or left. I am a teacher who favours the permanent struggle against every form of bigotry and against the economic domination of individuals and social classes. I am a teacher who rejects the present system of capitalism, responsible for the aberration of misery in the midst of plenty. I am a teacher full of the spirit of hope, in spite of all signs to the contrary. I am a teacher who refuses the disillusionment that consumes and immobilizes. I am a teacher proud of the beauty of my teaching practice, a fragile beauty that may disappear if I do not care for the struggle and knowledge that I ought to teach. If I do not struggle for the material conditions without which my body will suffer from neglect, thus running the risk of becoming frustrated and ineffective, then I will no longer be the witness that I ought to be, no longer the tenacious fighter who may tire but who never gives up (Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 1998, p. 94).

In this chapter I critically explore the impact of neoliberal capitalism on the lives of the youth in South Africa and global community. I contend that as a consequence of the globalisation of neoliberalism, the youth have been particularly hard hit both in terms of education and employment, leading to the emergence of the precariat. I also propose that the teachings of Paulo Freire as a counter-hegemonic strategy to the neoliberal ideology. I argue that his vision is particularly partial to the struggles of the youth, and that if realized, could lead to a genuine democratic and egalitarian future free from the distresses of neoliberal capitalism. Finally, I propose that radical critical pedagogy is an important counter-hegemonic strategy to South Africa's neoliberal education agenda.

This chapter consists of two main sections. The first section deals with the catastrophic consequences of neoliberalism. It has five subsections: the first points to the spiralling youth unemployment in South Africa; the second focuses on the persistent promotion of the myth human capital theory; section three deals with the terminal marginalisation of the youth from society; section four focuses on the #FeesMustFall movement as a counter-hegemonic movement; section five points to the emergence of youth resistance across the world in protest against the hegemony of neoliberalism.



## SOUTH AFRICA'S NEOLIBERAL ARMAGEDDON

### Youth Unemployment

Almost twenty two years after the advent of democracy in South Africa, it is quite evident that the education system constitutes a catastrophe of epic proportions. The social inequalities reproduced by racial capitalism have been exacerbated and there is very little evidence that the political transition has radically transformed the lives of the millions of black South Africans across the poverty-infested landscapes of South Africa, especially the youth. Sadly, South Africa's youth who make up about 30 million out of an overall population of about 50 million continue to be burdened by two of the manifold scourges of neoliberal capitalism, namely abject poverty and chronic unemployment. The social injustices that the youth are being subjected to are nothing more than a continuation of the structural racial inequalities that they have suffered under racial capitalism. The reasonable expectation that these inequalities would be eradicated after 1994, have dramatically evaporated. A recent report published in *Polity* on 28 May 2015, titled, *South Africa's Youth Unemployment Problem: What we need to know* (p.1), Mmesi highlighted the problem. Its introductory paragraph stated that

Youth unemployment in South Africa has reached critical proportions: it was measured at 53,6% in 2013, and in 2014, youth comprised 41,8% of the total national unemployment rate of 25,4%. Socio-economic inequality and inadequate education are two factors that drive such high unemployment rates; rates that disguise how the situation disproportionately affects black youths. Youth unemployment is a chronic problem too, which dates back two decades under ANC leadership. Between 1995 and 1999, unemployment for high school graduates entering the job market jumped by 10 percentage points, from 28% to 38, 4%, and the youth unemployment rate was actually a shade higher in 2005(48,4%) than it was amid the global financial crisis in 2009 (48,2%)...Another contributing factor to the alarming youth unemployment figures, and unemployment overall, is the jobless growth occurring in the South African economy.

The report (p. 2) went on to warn

Instead, this generation of South African youth, especially those with lower levels of education and in locations less accessible to infrastructure and services, face diminished chances for social mobility and employment. If this trend continues it will translate into increased social inequality and alienation, an underperforming economy, lower tax revenues for the government in the future...More specifically, as black youth experience exclusion from the mainstream economy, not only are their skills progressively devalued, but their capacity to exercise citizenship is diminished. For the generation dubbed the "Born Frees", this is a cruel paradox: despite political enfranchisement, far too many of South Africa's black youth now currently look forward to only a meagre chance at a prosperous future.

## **The Education Crisis and the Human Capital Theory Myth**

After 22 years of “freedom and democracy” the Black majority have come to realise that the “historic compromise” had put paid to their expectations of a “better life for all.” Bond (2014, p. 115) asserts that “the framework of neoliberal, low intensity democracy, the secretly negotiated terms of elite transition provided benefits for a few hundred at the top of the three interest groups: White Afrikaners, White English-speaking business and the liberation movement”. Spaul’s (2012) research continues to demonstrate that 70% of the country’s bifurcated education system is dysfunctional and continues to generate poor national and international achievement scores. High levels of both learners and teacher absenteeism, low levels of teacher expertise, limited or no parent involvement, very poor institutional support from the various educational authorities and massive infrastructural backlogs continue to undermine the system. The national senior certificate examinations see approximately 500 000 students annually sitting for these final examinations, with about 30-40 % failing and only about 25% achieving exemptions that allow them to proceed to university. The system is further marred by huge learner dropouts occurring between grade 10 and 11. The Basic Education Department confirm that this rate stands at about 12%. Also, South Africa’s high grade repetition rates result in significant numbers of over age children in the schooling system. With statistics like these, there is no denying that the system is completely dysfunctional (Basic Education Department, 2011).

Given the structural inequalities in South Africa, there is the misguided acceptance in the national psyche that education remains the miraculous panacea that can save South Africa from drowning in a sea of inequity. Few understand that the current neoliberal economic framework remains the biggest obstacle globally to providing young people with access to the local or global economy. A cursory glance at South Africa’s National Development Plan (NDP) will note that it continues to promote the human capital theory myth that education has the ability to unlock South Africa’s economic growth and rescue the poor and marginalised from their precarity. Trevor Manuel’s proposal centres on the myth that was recently advanced by Thomas Piketty in his book *Capital in the 21st Century*. Piketty (2014, p. 306–7) advances the notion that “the best way to reduce inequalities with respect to labour...is to invest in education”. The NDP, like Piketty, also promotes the myth that extensive investment in education may drastically reduce inequality and reverse the gaping income inequality gaps in South Africa. According to a recent *City Press* (19 March 2017)

report *Education, then Transformation*, Servaas van der Berg of Stellenbosch University told representatives at a two-day conference in Pretoria that “the government’s policy interventions aimed at solving inequality would not produce results if the country’s dysfunctional education system wasn’t fixed”. Van der Berg (City Press, 19 March 2017) claimed that

No matter how government intervenes with social grants and black economic empowerment that is not going to solve inequality in the labour market. Start with education.

Van der Berg’s report further concluded that “the persistence of inequality was an indictment on the education system’s failure to overcome past injustices, despite the amount money South Africa invested in education” (City Press, 19 March 2017). The problem is that van der Berg, Piketty and the authors of the NDP, Manuel and Ramaphosa, are following the convention of the authors of the De Lange Commission Report compiled in the 1980s, which views education (Robertson, 2015, p. 3) as

human capital, rather than seeing education as being a key social institution involved in both the production and social reproduction of capitalist societies. It is thus a key institution in producing social relations, including class, race and gender, which in turn mediate on-going income wealth and wealth inequalities.

Robertson’s (2015, p. 13) review of Piketty’s research also cites the *2014 OECD Report* that points to the

rising gap between the rich and poor being at its highest level in most OECD countries in 30 years...the US, UK, New Zealand and Mexico, amongst others, all show a marked climb in inequalities; these are also countries who have bought into neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s.

According to Klees, the human capital theory discourse that underwrites Piketty’s argument, and the NDP’s proposals, are essentially politically bankrupt. Klees, (2016 a, p. 7) advocates that

People are not poor because they have few skills; the dearth of decent jobs is not due a lack of skills, and the horrendous inequality we see today is not because skills are not better distributed. Improving education ability to impart skills will not yield a convergence of incomes under capitalism, as it exists today...Unemployment, in general, is put at education’s door, more broadly arguing that education is not teaching what the economy needs. However, unemployment is not a worker supply problem but a structural problem of capitalism...full employment is neither a feature nor goal of capitalism.

Klees (2016a, p. 7) elaborates

...the human capital discourse, and offshoots of it, like the 'Knowledge Economy', have been one of the most destructive ideas of this century and the prior one. Solving the challenge of poverty, inequality, and jobs has been unproductively directed to a lack of individual skills and education instead of to capitalist and other world system structures whose very logic makes poverty, inequality, and lack of education commonplace.

While concurring with Klees and Roberston, I consider it essential to recognise that the solution to inequality does not lie in the capitalists' perspective of "increasing the exploitation of the working class in order to expand the amount of surplus value...which has resulted in rising unemployment world-wide; declining wages and economic depression" (Shaoul, 2010, p. 253) which is exactly what the NDP seeks to promote. The disdain for the plight of the working class, locally and internationally, is an integral part of neoliberalism's contempt for the social good. Since global capital have been allowed to recolonize the South African political domain, it has become clear that the state, and its neoliberal education discourse, have ransomed the futures of young South Africans for short term political and economic benefits for the neoliberal elite or 1%, in South Africa, dodging radical economic transformation. Giroux (Truthout, October 2015, para. 2) laments that

an overwhelming catalogue of evidence has come into view that indicates that nation-states organised by neoliberal priorities have implicitly declared war on their children, offering a disturbing index of societies in the midst of a deep moral and political catastrophe.

South African academic, Dalene Swanson (2013, p. 2), following Giroux, argues that

racialized unemployed youth in South Africa carry the burden of structural political dysfunctionality and state ineptitude, and they are pathologised and differently constructed as 'failed' citizens... as a consequence South African youth are expected to carry the burden of unemployment, but also the flag of the nation's political transformation as well, in a context of contradiction and maladministration overlaid by the debilitating effects of neoliberal governmentality.

Swanson's argument has wider implications. Globally, the majority of working class youth are finding themselves on the side-lines of society where they face a future of permanent unemployment and the difficulty of imagining a life beyond the prescriptions of a capitalist society. The spectre of finding oneself living in a world where jobs are disappearing, a world of sky rocketing education costs and disappearing social support networks, redefines the value of being human in a capitalist society (Giroux, 2002; Standing; 2011). Political activist,

Neville Alexander (cited in Klees, 2016, p. 8) on occasion concisely commented “Once the commodity value of people displaces their intrinsic human worth or dignity, we are well on our way to a state of barbarism”.

### **The Precarious Proletariat**

The youth, or using Guy Standing’s term (2011), the precariate (blend of precarious and proletariat), find themselves in a position of “terminal exclusion from society” or worse still in a “space of disposability” as Giroux (2015) would have it. This precarious position of the youth is slowly extending itself across the globe following the globalisation of neoliberalism. Sadly the masses of unemployed youth internationally are more and more being viewed with distrust and considered a threat to society. The Wretched of the Earth sustained. The neoliberal state is more constantly looking upon marginalised, unemployed black youth as “problem people” instead of “people with problems”, following W.E. Du Bois (cited in Giroux, 2015). The neoliberal state, in its infinite, authoritarian arrogance, instead of assisting the precariate in finding solutions to their basic needs, persists, quite unjustly, to subject them to the vagaries of the criminal justice system, declaring them *persona non grata* or invisible, at best. (Giroux, 2002; Standing, 2011). I concur with Giroux (2015) and Standing (2011) that the social problems of the youth, globally, have been criminalised. The growing social disregard or contempt for the marginalised, working class youth sadly seems to have replaced genuine compassion and social responsibility. Despite the existence of a variety of organisations initiated by the South African state to facilitate “youth development”, none of these initiatives have been able to transform the lives of the youth in the townships or provide access to the mainstream economy. Many of the South Africa’s black youth, are still confined to their apartheid assigned ghettos teeming with drug infested crime, gangsterism, unemployment, rape, poverty and systematic deprivation which have led to the complete alienation of the youth from what Swanson (2011, p. 200) calls

the utopianisms created through a highly–vaunted new democracy...[in which] they have been expected to take up the standard of social transformation and undo the legacy of apartheid in a single generation, tasks demanding of them the requisite knowledge and advanced critical thinking capabilities on which to execute.

The role of South Africa’s youth in the anti-apartheid struggle was nothing but heroic and revolutionary. Instead of nurturing the role of the youth in the democratic spaces that have

been created since 1994, they are only recognised annually on Youth Day when the political elites entertain the youth with anti-apartheid heroics and empty promises of job creation and youth development. That was until the #FeesMustFall movement rocked the neoliberal establishment to its core. The student–youth, reminiscent of 1976, again pointed the finger at post-apartheid South Africa’s neoliberal oppressors.

### **#FeesMustFall: A Counter-Hegemonic Movement?**

Come October 2015 and South Africa was jolted out of its comfort zone. Reminiscent of 16 June 1976, university students across the country shut down most of the universities in a country wide demonstration against the 10% increase in university tuition fees. The state’s neoliberal education policies have come home to roost. The student protests, following on hundreds of social delivery protests over the last decade, was a clear indication that there existed crisis of governance and that the institutions of representative democracy have compromised interests of the nation, abandoning public interests and collective values in favour of private commodities and individual preference (Chetty & Knaus, 2016). In their confrontation with the state, the students made it clear that their struggle was linked to that of the working class. Chetty & Knaus (2016, p. 1) advances that “South Africa’s universities are in the grip of a class struggle”. I concur. They argued that the post-apartheid educational system, because of its racial and class base, was not founded on the needs of the poor and the marginalised. They assert that the notion of class dominates post-apartheid South Africa in all spheres of society. Their definition of class relates to what they referred to as “living within a particular economic and financial resource base” (Chetty & Knaus, 2016, p. 1). Katlego Disemelo (Monitor, p. 48) of the University of the Witwatersrand made bold to say

far too long have we been black and poor students languishing under the yoke of perpetual struggle just to get an education. That is the chief impetus of our struggle...the #FeesMustFall and #InsourceOurWorkers movements have shone the light on the heinous blight of institutional racism and exploitation in South African higher education. Students and workers are the backbone of these neoliberal ivory towers.

Asod Ismi, also writing in the *Monitor* (p. 48), comments on what he believes had led to the #FeesMustFall protests

At about 0,8% of GDP, the South African state spends much less on post-secondary education than the OECD average (about 1.6%) and less than it can probably afford. The proposed 10% increase in tuition fees would have

transferred more of the cost of a university education onto students, bumping average fees to between \$3000 and \$4000 per year in a country where the median income is US \$2300, 53% of the population lives in poverty, and +40% is unemployed. South Africa also suffers one of the highest rates of inequality in the world.

Regarding the #FeesMustFall student protests across South African university campuses in 2015, Chetty & Knaus (2016, p. 2) advanced that the poor and working class youth had driven the protests which an indication of an emerging class struggle in which the majority of participating students were black. They reasoned that “race and class lie at the heart of South Africa’s exclusive university system” which fails to appreciate the youth resistance playing itself out on the university campuses across South Africa.

Commenting on the impact of modern day class prejudice at predominantly white universities, Chetty and Knaus (2016) also believes that the perpetrators at these universities are not persuaded by the class struggle of black youth. They dismissed these struggles as being nothing more than disorderly conduct and a lack of respect for the “progressive order” governing these universities. They claim that the protesting students were berated because they failed to understand the financial pressures that these institutions experience and that they ignored the rights and feelings of their peers who simply wanted to continue their studies without disruptions. Chetty and Knaus (2016, p. 2) also expressed their disappointment at the role of academics during these protests. They believe that the “voice of thinkers in the academe have been discouraged and repressed”. They further argued that

Many of the activists among us have been co-opted onto the university bureaucracy and unashamedly drive a neoliberal agenda of colour-blindness...Our silence has given consent to the deepening crisis of inequality. Once again, it’s the youth that had courage to resist the system, just as they did during the Soweto uprising in 1976. They do so at great personal risk. But students should fear less the angry policemen with their rubber bullets than the racist academe that covertly discriminates against the poor (Chetty & Knaus, 2016, p. 3).

Pearl Pillay, a master’s student in Political Science at the University of Witwatersrand, recently responded to the authoritarian hegemony raging across our country when it came to dealing with student grievances. Her article, *A burning desire to set the record straight on*

student's anger, was published in the *Daily Maverick* on 9 September, 2016. She powerfully remonstrates

The burning of buildings, particularly at institutions like UKZN, are not random acts of violence, as so many would have us believe. In fact, UKZN has been shut down since mid-August, but we only seem to notice when something burns down. Students have attempted to make their grievances heard, both through student representatives as well as management of universities like this one fundamentally disagree with the seeming radical idea that students know what they want, and are capable of making a sound arguments for it. University management has proven time and time again, that the only language they respond to is fire, and students, as smart as they are have become fluent in it (para. 3 & 4).

On the issue of constructive engagement with university management she argues:

We constantly hear universities talk about the need for constructive engagement, the need for non-violence and the importance of trust...these universities have already communicated the idea that students are criminals, and should be treated as such. It's been reported that a student at UKZN was raped this week by a person who is supposed to uphold and protect the law. Students have been tear-gassed, shot with rubber bullets and had their residences searched by armed men, instead of having a conversation about the brutality with which the police and the university management have treated students, we spent our time crying over this library. We value buildings more than we value people (para. 5 & 8).

Concurring with Chetty and Knaus's argument she avers

There is a bottom line here, and that is that the life of a black student in South Africa is an impossible one. When you exist within a system that has been designed to eliminate you, how else are you supposed to respond if not with violence? The very idea that education is a commodity, to be consumed only by those who can afford it, is violent, and that the space students are embedded in... (Para. 12).

Pillay's outcry/anger is consequential of the manner in which society has come to view the youth. Instead of being a symbol of optimism for the future, they are branded as a being a disparaging anti-social menace. Giroux (2012c, para. 1), commenting on the protests of the Quebec student movement in Canada, writes that the students across the globe have protested the hike in tuition fees because

they are fighting for a future in which their voices are heard and the principles of justice and inequality become the key elements of a radicalized democratic and social project. At stake in their efforts is not only a protest against tuition hikes, austerity measures, joblessness and cuts in public spending, but also the awakening of a revolutionary ideal in the service of a new society. In short, youth have dared to call for a different world and, in doing so, have exhibited



great courage in taking up a wager about the future made from the standpoint of an embattled present.

The student class struggle is a globalised struggle. Pillay concludes

Both the university and the government have been inadequate in addressing student needs. Universities spew out rhetoric and the government sets up commissions to distract us. The country is burning and those in power are trying to douse the flames with paper towels – and in the meantime, young people are expected to fight racism and sexism, get educated, get employed and save the economy and never, ever be angry at a system that makes this impossible...And if they do get angry, we brand them as thugs, because we refuse to consider that their anger might be justified (para. 13).

The resentment that South African students are giving expression to is a rage of righteous indignation. A *Pedagogy of Poverty* is unfolding. The wave of social and student protests in South Africa have been met by police brutality because they posed an unswerving threat to the neoliberal authoritarian hegemony and the corruption of liberal democracy across the world.

### **Pedagogy of Poverty**

The notion that the political establishment could only be challenged through the ballot box was clearly rejected by students protesting across the globe since 2010. Young people across the globe have directly challenged the basic dogmas of neoliberalism and its attendant authoritarian discourses (Giroux, 2015). It is clear that the South African state, together with its university executives, have no critical sense

regarding the historical conditions and the dismal lack of political and moral responsibility of an adult generation who shamefully bought into and reproduced, at least since the 1970s, governments and social orders wedded to war, greed, political corruption, xenophobia, and willing acceptance of the dictates of a ruthless form of neoliberal globalisation (Giroux, Truthout, January 2015, para. 12).

In fact, Hardt & Negri (2012, p. 12) have argued that “what was distinctive about the protesting youth across the globe was their rejection of the injustices of neoliberalism and their attempts to redefine the meaning of politics and democracy, while fashioning new forms of revolt”. The university protests in South Africa have implicitly followed the same trajectory. Hardt & Negri (2012, p. 12) further emphasised that these global youth movements, especially the Occupy Movement in the United States was

their emphasis on direct action and their rejection of modernist structures of representation and politics, including support for elections and traditional political parties, which they considered corrupt. As such, they did not reject the project of democracy, but asked where it had gone and how they could 'engage with it again' and win back the political power of the citizen worker.

The global economic downturn of 2008 had a dramatic impact on the futures of millions young people across the globe. Youth unemployment, as a consequence became an international crisis. *Bloomberg Business* columnist Peter Coy, writing in an article called *The Youth Unemployment Bomb*, dated February 13, 2011 called it a "ticking time bomb". He wrote:

In Tunisia, the young people who helped bring down a dictator are called hittistes—French-Arabic slang for those who lean against the wall. Their counterparts in Egypt, who on Feb. 1 forced President Hosni Mubarak to say he won't seek re-election, are the shabab atileen, unemployed youths. The hittistes and shabab have brothers and sisters across the globe. In Britain, they are NEETs—"not in education, employment, or training." In Japan, they are freeters: an amalgam of the English word freelance and the German word Arbeiter, or worker. Spaniards call them mileuristas, meaning they earn no more than 1,000 euros a month. In the U.S., they're "boomerang" kids who move back home after college because they can't find work. Even fast-growing China, where labour shortages are more common than surpluses, has its "ant tribe"—recent college graduates who crowd together in cheap flats on the fringes of big cities because they can't find well-paying work.

The rising levels of social inequality and the austerity measures imposed by governments across the globe have led to creation of a generation of young people that may never enjoy the economic opportunities and material possessions that the generation before them have enjoyed. Coy continues

In each of these nations, an economy that can't generate enough jobs to absorb its young people has created a lost generation of the disaffected, unemployed, or underemployed—including growing numbers of recent college graduates for whom the post-crash economy has little to offer. Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution was not the first time these alienated men and women have made themselves heard. Last year, British students outraged by proposed tuition increases—at a moment when a college education is no guarantee of prosperity—attacked the Conservative Party's headquarters in London and pummeled a limousine carrying Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla Bowles. Scuffles with police have repeatedly broken out at student demonstrations across Continental Europe. And last March in Oakland, Calif., students protesting tuition hikes walked onto Interstate 880, shutting it down for an hour in both directions.

Political activist, Zach Zill, writing in the *International Socialist Review*, Issue no. 81 concurs with Coy

The crisis facing youth today is deep and broad, cutting across national borders and affecting those from all but the most privileged backgrounds. A combination of devastating cuts to education, skyrocketing student debt loads, and meagre youth employment opportunities faces not only working-class but also middle-class young people at every turn. The primary channels through which young people become integrated into society—education and early employment—are being cut back and choked off, making them unavailable to most youth. Add into the mix political systems that appear not to know or care about the crisis they have helped to create, and the result is an explosive mix of insecurity, precariousness, frustration, and anger. It is alarming how similar these conditions are in different countries around the world.

Both Coy and Zill confirm that crisis of the youth is an international crisis. The globalisation of neoliberalism and its attendant austerity processes have led to disturbing budget cuts in the education sector, ballooning student debt and a major unemployment crisis is facing the youth internationally. Education and employment are no longer an option. This has no doubt led to the alienation of the youth on a massive, global scale (Giroux, 2002; McInerney, 2009). McInerney (2009, p. 24-25) defines alienation

Marx used the term in the nineteenth century to denote the profound separation of individuals from their true human nature—something which he associated with the rise of the capitalist mode of production in which workers were effectively prevented from controlling their working conditions and the processes and products of their own labour...however, the issue is more commonly understood in psychologistic terms that emphasise the internal state of individuals and the various dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement and social isolation which they experience.

Zill (ISR, p. 3) points a finger at

Neoliberalism's unceasing drive toward privatisation has only exacerbated the sharp inequalities that increasingly define education in the era of the Great Recession. Policy makers in developed countries are pushing most students from non-elite backgrounds into the bottom of a two-tier educational system, while opening universities to military and defense programs and private funders.

I concur with Zill that the systemic crisis in neoliberal capitalism is definitely fuelling the crisis internationally. The radicalisation of the youth, locally and internationally, is a sign that capitalism is facing a major challenge from the youth. Young people recognise that the neoliberal ideology is weaker after the economic collapse of 2008. It opened up the spaces of contestation. Zill (ISR, p. 6) concludes

The world economic crisis of 2008 has led to political crisis that is giving birth to new struggles and opening up space for the re-emergence of a revolutionary anti-capitalist left. Unlike 1968 [students revolts] this new radicalisation is

unfolding at a moment of protracted world instability. It is this confluence of economic, social and environmental crisis that makes it possible, and necessary, to link issues of environmental degradation and the rights of women, immigrants and oppressed nationalities and groups with the question of economic inequality and class exploitation.

The youth, globally, are in my opinion, at the mercy of a morally depraved economic system that has failed its own future. As Pillay correctly concludes, the youth have been isolated from the representative structures of the political establishment and thus are denied a critical voice through which they could articulate their anxieties. In the 1980s and the 1990s the youth formed a key constituent of the liberation movement in South Africa. Twenty three years into democracy and they find themselves marginalised from society. The South African political establishment has failed its youth. It was once understood that the youth are the fountain of society's dreams. After the demise of apartheid, the crisis of the black youth or the so-called "Lost Generation" was constantly raised in South Africa. This was seen as one of the most pressing problems that needed to be resolved to secure the future of this newly found democracy. Oblivious to the impacts of Bantu Education, Mokwena (1992) reminded the nation of the impact that Bantu Education had on the lives of those affected by it. The resulting alienation was only obvious to those who cared enough to directly address the problem. The state was not. Mokwena (1992, p. 32) argued that "Bantu Education undermined the stability of black youth and was the site of much trauma, strife, violence and politicisation for black pupils". Mokwena clearly believed that the youth are being marginalised by society. Twenty two three into democracy the youth are still being alienated from society not only by a failed economic system, but also an authoritarian hegemony, which consistently brutalizes them into subjugation.

### **Conclusion**

South Africa's youth have made it clear that the utopian vision of the "New South Africa" or the "Rainbow Nation" has lost its ability to seduce them through its corporate dominated, authoritarian dogmas and that they refuse to be intimidated through threats and state violence to become part of its market-driven, neoliberal orthodoxy. Young, protesting South Africans have quite evidently not given up the hope of living in a democratic society shaped by the principles of equality, freedom and justice for all. Through their revolutionary determination they are pointing the way to a country where collective politics will lead to

recognition of the social good. Their actions, in my view, constitute a struggle for democratisation that has opened up the political spaces in South Africa that will keep the hope of a radical new egalitarian democracy alive. Chapter Eight explores the counter-hegemonic Marxist humanist vision of radical critical pedagogy as an answer to South Africa's educational woes.



## Chapter 8

### RECALLING PAULO FREIRE

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This chapter deliberates the teachings of Paulo Freire. It consists of three subsections. The first considers Marx's philosophy of praxis; the second responsabilization and the last focuses on dialogical communication. The third and final section introduces radical critical pedagogy as a critical alternative to South Africa's neoliberal education policies.

#### The Critical Voices of the Youth

Young people across the world have thrown down the gauntlet to their governments and are remonstrating against the ruthless neoliberal agendas that are tearing their nations apart. At the heart of these protests we are witnessing the re-awakening of a revolutionary vision that could potentially put an end to poverty, youth unemployment, university fee hikes, fiscal austerity and malicious public spending cuts. It is clear that neoliberal capitalism is causing unbearable human suffering and hardship across the globe as it attempts to consolidate its ruthless, authoritarian hegemony at the expense of millions of young people. It is at this time that we need to acknowledge that it has become necessary for South Africans to re-engage the work of Paulo Freire, amongst others, to provide our society with a "broader vision or critical understanding of education as a force for strengthening the imagination and expanding democratic public life" of South Africans (Giroux, Truthout, January 2010, para. 1). South African university students have also raised their critical voices against the dominant ideology of neoliberalism, against the state's modes of governance as well as the repressive ideological apparatuses of the state. These protests have signalled the wholesale, if not contemptuous rejection of how universities and the state ignore the plight of poor, young people by shutting down the democratic public spaces that would have allowed them to articulate the hardships that they constantly have to endure. Giroux argues that neoliberal state has continued to ignore the fact that

more and more young people are insisting that the real value of higher education lies in its capacity to offer everyone the opportunity to receive a free, quality education and live in an educated society. Both of which are crucial for creating genuine social security, critical agents and the formative culture necessary for a democracy to thrive (Truthout, August 2012, para.21).

It is obvious that Paulo Freire's vision, explicated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, needs to be revisited now more than ever, as we witness the spread of neoliberalism's 'accumulation of misery' across the globe. Mallot (2012) advises that it has become critical to develop a strong counter-hegemonic education strategy that could develop a "class consciousness needed for the revolutionary overthrow of the basic structures of global capitalist power" (Mallot, 2012, p. 163). Referring to the destructive power of capitalism, Karl Marx (cited in Mallot, 2012, p. 163) wrote

The capitalist mode of production (essentially the production of surplus value, the absorption of surplus-labour) produces thus, with the extension of the working day, not only the deterioration of human-labour power by robbing it of its normal, moral and physical, conditions of development and function. It produces also the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself. It extends the labourer's time of production during a given period by shortening his actual lifetime.

'Immiseration Capitalism', driven by the laws of capital accumulation without doubt is responsible for the suffering and exploitation of huge numbers of humanity and will without question be, quite justifiably, be targeted by the working class seeking retribution. In our quest for a radical critical pedagogy in South Africa it is crucial for the youth, locally and internationally to understand (Fitzsimmons & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 235) that

education is an ideological weapon that can seer into the youth a way of being and acting in the world. Once the public understands that education is politics in praxis and just how education is an ideological tool for the elite, the public can perhaps see the possible role they can play in offering a more democratic vision for the way people are educated.

I concur. Education must be radically transformed. It is with this purpose that I summon Freire's radical critical pedagogy because "his teaching concept was focused not on indifference to human hardship but on connecting students to social reality so that they would not be 'indifferent to the pain of those who go hungry'" (Fitzsimmons & Uusiautti, 2013, p. 237). Freire's critical pedagogy will enable us to develop a pedagogy that would lead to the development of a critical awareness that should empower students and teachers to appreciate their relationship with the world conquered by neoliberal capitalism. As Freire (cited in Davis and Freire, 1981, p. 59) writes

Education for freedom implies constantly, permanently, the exercise of consciousness turning in on itself in order to discover itself in the relationships with the world, trying to explain the reasons which can make clear the concrete situation people have in the world.

Freire, in developing his critical pedagogy, embraces one of Marx's critiques of Feuerbach, i.e. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however is to change it" (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 145).

### **Marx's Philosophy of Praxis**

Freire's liberatory pedagogy has at its core the Marxian philosophy of praxis, and it endeavours to be a pedagogy that enables students and teachers to understand their role as subjects who would be able critically study reality, reflect upon it and take action to radically change that reality. Engaging "praxis" would not only deepen their consciousness but also create a better world (Fitzsimmons & Uusiathi, 2013). Au (2008, p. 180) writes that "this process of human critical reflection on the world and taking conscious, transformative action on that world is how Freire conceives of 'praxis'". Freire (cited in Au, 2008, p. 180) explains

[H]uman beings...are beings of 'praxis': of action and of reflection. Humans find themselves marked by the results of their own actions in their relations with the world, and through the action on it. By acting they transform; by transforming they create a reality which conditions their manner of acting.

Regarding the purpose of a revolutionary critical pedagogy, (Fitzsimmons & Uusiatti, 2013, p. 232) postulates

[In this] we need a viable alternative to the current socio-economic order that puts profit before people at the centre-stage and begin to focus more on a renewal program where education can become a more life-like affirming experience...by focusing on a revolutionary critical pedagogy that is located in the socialist project: critical revolutionary pedagogy is dedicated to the praxis of transforming knowledge through reflection.

Aronowitz (2009, pp. ix), reflecting on Paulo Freire's writings as regards literacy and critical pedagogy, states that

...for Freire literacy was not a means to prepare students for the world of subordinated labour or "careers", but a preparation for a self-managed. And self-management could only occur when people have fulfilled three goals of education: self-reflection, that is, realising the famous poetic phrase, "know thyself", which is an understanding of the world in which they live, its economic, political and, equally important, its psychological dimensions. Specifically, "critical pedagogy" helps the learner become aware of the forces that have hitherto ruled their lives especially shaped their consciousness. The third goal is to help set the conditions for producing a new life, a new set of



arrangements where power has been, at least in tendency, transferred to those who literally make the social world by transforming nature and themselves.

The significance of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is that he makes it clear that pedagogy is an ethical and political practice that would enable students to become critical citizens. This practice would assist them in achieving a more substantive democracy in their societies. For Freire, education has a revolutionary purpose. He stresses that education is a preparation for freedom and that freedom is not a gift. Freedom must be achieved; therefore the struggle is a necessary condition. If we want to abolish neoliberal capitalism then we have to commit ourselves to achieving political solidarity and learn from the struggles that we as South Africans have been through. Freire makes it clear that individual freedom in society is intimately and dialectically connected with individual accountability. The occurrence of either is reliant on the presence of the other (Glass, 2001; Nikolakaki, 2011).

### **Responsibilization**

Freire's concept of "responsibilization" is another crucial feature if we were to achieve unity of purpose in the struggle for social prosperity across the globe. Freire's "responsibilization" is the anti-thesis of individualisation promoted by neoliberalism. Responsibilization, he asserts, will create hope for radical transformation and that we would all become the agents of our own destiny creating more radical democratic future for all. Nikolakaki (2011, p. 124) following Giroux, who supports this notion, contends that "politics demands more than understanding, it demands that understanding be coupled with responsibility to others". The student and social protests in South Africa and abroad, clearly represent an opportunity for radical political change. For this to materialise it is imperative that we understand that reality is not fixed or static—things can change. This is a central feature of Freire and Marx's concept of praxis. If reality was static then no matter how hard we struggle or what resistance we presented in opposition to capitalism, we would not be able to radically transform the world (Glass, 2001; Nikolakaki, 2011). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire (1970, pp. 70-71) sums up why problem-posing is such an important feature of praxis. He writes

Problem-posing education, allows [humans] to develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in

process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of [humans] with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all), it is also true that form of action [humans] adopt is to a large extent a function of how they see themselves in the world.

In Freire's pedagogy, problem-posing materialises via a practice of coding and decoding reality. This represents a process where there is an effort to develop a critical understanding of the problem situation. It is through this process, he suggests, that we are able to develop a consciousness. Decoding reality and understanding the "problem situation" remains a salient feature of Freire's critical pedagogy. Giroux postulates that Freire's critical pedagogy is an attempt to

enable them [students] to understand the larger world and one's role in it in specific way; define their relationship, if not responsibility, to others and to presuppose through what is taught and experienced in the classroom some sort of understanding of a more just, imaginative, and democratic life...education as a practice for freedom must attempt to expand the capacities for human agency and, hence, the possibilities for democracy itself (Truthout, January 2010, para. 11).

Giroux continues

In other words, critical pedagogy forges both an expanded notion of literacy and agency through a language of scepticism, possibility and a culture of openness, debate and engagement... (Truthout, January 2010, para. 11).



### **Dialogical Communication**

Another significant feature of Freire's critical pedagogy is his conception of dialogue. His conception of dialogue is underpinned by the understanding that knowledge acquisition is also accommodated by a social process of engaging in dialogue which facilitates a participatory and open process of communication. For Freire dialogue facilitates critical inquiry and analysis as a form of social praxis. Through dialogue humans are able to improve their knowledge. Freire argues that dialogue is part of a communication process that develops human consciousness (Glass, 2001). Furthermore, Freire (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 98) declares that

dialogue must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings. It is part of our historical progress in becoming human beings. That is dialogue is a kind of necessary posture to the extent that humans have been more and more critically communicative beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on the reality as they make and remake it.

Through dialogue the oppressed and exploited are allowed to articulate their oppression. This breaking of the silence, Freire contends, constitutes a conscientizing, liberatory process that allows the oppressed to shape their own culture, history and their own identities (Glass, 2001). Glass (2001, p. 19) states that

Deliberative and communicative action is integrated to achieve the authentic human existence that liberation entails. The oppressed must read and know the world and themselves in a critical way that reveals the process of historical formation in order to write their own future, transcending the present limits and expressing their primordial power of humanization. Without the struggle to transform reality, there can be neither genuine critical knowledge nor authentic modes of being.

Dialogue, to Freire, is an act of knowing. Through dialogue with others we are able to share our ideas with others and vice versa. This is a process where we learn to understand the world through the eyes of others. This process helps to transform those engaging in dialogue which essentially a reflexive act. Gramsci (1977, p. 350) stressed that “every social relation formed in the struggle against capitalist hegemony—that is, economic, social and political forms of domination and manipulated direction it exerts on our lives—must be an educative relation, a reciprocal relation of mutual learning”. Throughout his writings we become aware that Freire concedes that there exists an impartial world outside of human awareness. He also concurred that it is through our subjective observations as humans that we study and try to understand this world. Writing in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998, p. 66) Freire unmistakably points out that “our capacity to learn, the source of our capacity to teach, suggests and implies that we also have the capacity to grasp the substantiveness /essence of the object of our knowledge.” It is Freire’s conception of conscientization that suggests that human beings have the capacity/ability to change reality. It is this critical ability that accentuates the importance of “the role of human consciousness in relation to the liberation of humanity from capitalist oppression and exploitation” (Au, 2008, p. 179). It is through this, the transformative capacity of this consciousness that we are able to radically change the world to serve the collective good (Glass, 2001; Mallot, 2012; Au, 2008; Nikolakaki, 2011). Freire (1998, p. 14) reminds us so powerfully that

to be human is to be able to both understand the world and take action to change that world. It is in taking that action, in the movement from being object to subject, where we become full human beings.

## REVOLUTIONARY CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Without Freire & Marx's praxis, I contend that we deny ourselves the opportunity or the hope of being masters of our own destinies, by simply becoming the objects of that history. Freire reasons that we only fully realise our humanity if we constantly make and remake ourselves through culture and through history. Critical pedagogy offers an alternative vision to capitalism if we focus on revolutionary critical pedagogy. Through revolutionary critical pedagogy we will not only involve students in political struggles in their communities but we will also be able to offer students and teachers an opportunity to discover a socially just perspective of human development, but also a means of critically interrogating their world in an open democratic modus. Freire makes it clear that education alone cannot transform society. But in our quest for a radical critical pedagogy for South Africa/Azania it remains crucial to understand that education plays a crucial role in the development of a critical consciousness. If we demand radical political or revolutionary change in the world it must be understood that there is a deep connection between Freire's critical pedagogy and Marx's dialectical materialism (Giroux, 2000; Glass, 2001; Mallot, 2012; Au, 2008; Nikolakaki, 2011). For MacLaren, (cited in Rikowski 2007, p. 2), revolutionary critical pedagogy is

A revolutionary critical pedagogy operates from an understanding that the basis of education is political and that spaces need to be created where students can imagine a different world outside of the capitalist law of value, where alternatives to capitalism and capitalist institutions can be discussed and debated, and where dialogue can occur about why so many revolutions in past history turned into their opposite. It looks to create a world where social labour is no longer an indirect part of the total social labour but a direct part of it, where a new mode of distribution can prevail not based on socially necessary labour time but on actual labour time...Generally classrooms try to mirror in organisation what students and teachers would collectively like to see in the world outside schools...[And]...drawing upon a Hegelian-Marxist critique of political economy that underscores the fundamental importance of developing a philosophy of praxis, revolutionary critical pedagogy seeks forms of organisation that best enable the pursuit of doing critical philosophy as a way of life.

Neoliberal capitalism has brought tremendous misery to the world. Since 2008 we have witnessed the economic immiseration of many nations throughout the world. Poor children dying from hunger to thousands of workers being forced into greater poverty as a result of financial austerity capitalism. The social devastation taking place across the world could at best be described a form of class genocide. There is no relief in sight for the poor. This of course is no social accident, but the consequence of calculated neoliberal policy agendas

and the logical outcomes of capitalist development (Mallott, Hill & Banfield, 2013). Hill (cited in Mallott et al., 2013, p. 17) asserts

In recent decades there has been across the Capitalist world, the progression of 'relative immiseration', with the wealth of the working class growing far more slowly than the Capitalist class. But what we are seeing now, most spectacularly of all in Greece, but also in countries such as Britain, Ireland and the USA, is the progression of 'absolute immiseration', with an absolute deterioration of income, wealth and living conditions – and mass impoverishment.

I concur with Nikolakaki (2011, p. 64) when she wrote that

critical pedagogy comes to bring hope to these New Dark Ages, since it is revolutionary and reintroduces the potential for struggles to promote social justice. So, as despairing as the conditions created by neoliberalism can be, they also create the basis of hope.

I invoked the teachings of Paolo Freire precisely because I believe, like Nikolakaki and others, that revolutionary critical pedagogy could provide an important counter-hegemonic strategy to the neoliberal orthodoxy because it does not only offer us hope from the misery brought by neoliberal capital, but it will also bring us a critical, revolutionary understanding of our world. Freire's teachings are important because it would transform our indifference to human suffering and hardship by connecting our students and teachers to the miserable social realities around them so that they would not be indifferent to those who are suffering around them. Freire's pedagogy brings into reach the opportunity for radical teachers to instil in their students the democratic values that will empower them to become active agents for radical social change. Under neoliberalism they have passively accepted the neoliberal agenda. Revolutionary critical pedagogy will empower them to become the gravediggers of capitalism and to create a truly egalitarian democracy. (Mallott et al., 2013; Nikolakaki, 2011). (Nikolakaki, 2011, p. 61) declares that

Critical pedagogy contributes to democratic ethos for the benefit of both the individual and the collective. Critical pedagogy is about acquiring both knowledge and the ability to maximize individual and social autonomy, as a means of individual and social liberation. This democratic ethos is cultivated in a sense of freedom. Freedom cannot be taken for granted; it something that needs to be taught. Aristotle claims that freedom is not a means; it is a coordinated end.

Freire(cited in Nikolakaki, 2011, p. 12) believes that

Freedom is not a gift given, but it is rather earned by those who enrich themselves through the struggle for it. That is true to the extent that there can be no life without at least a minimal presence of freedom. Even though life in itself implies freedom, it does not mean in any way that we can give it gratuitously.

I have turned to Paulo Freire for revolutionary inspiration out of a deep and abiding concern for the well-being our youth across the world. The lives of our youth are subjected to large scale social and political forces at work under capitalism. The persistent alienation of our youth from the democratic processes and spaces in our society calls for a critical understanding of the political economy of education. A critical reading of Freire's philosophy of education provides us with a new direction as it incorporates a critique of student alienation or "objectification".

The quest for a revolutionary critical pedagogy is a recognition that neoliberal capitalism cannot solve the problems of South Africa's youth because capitalism is unable to ever "optimise human happiness and prosperity: the liberalisation of markets does not lead to greater competition, efficiency and enhanced well-being" (Cooper, 2008, p. 215). Critical pedagogy or revolutionary critical pedagogy embedded in the Marxist dialectical materialist tradition offers us an opportunity to form "part of the political project of challenging human oppression around the world" (Au, 2008, p. 181). The call for educational reform in South Africa, considering our experience with the neoliberal orthodoxy during the post-apartheid era, cannot be located within the reformist paradigm. Any liberal inspired reforms, as Bowles and Gintis (1976) pointed out, would not be able to reduce the rampant poverty our country and more particularly our youth, is experiencing. Curry Malott sums up Bowles and Gintis's (cited in Malott, 2012, p. 175) provocative insights as follows

Bowles and Gintis argued that liberal education reforms for greater equality in education will do nothing to create more jobs or reduce poverty beyond a very small percentage of the population. If an end to poverty is desired, a socialist education focused on creating class-consciousness and building a revolutionary socialist party is inevitable...Poverty, therefore, is a permanent feature of a capitalist economy, which education, within the social universe of capital, will never be able to overcome.

On the back of Freire's critical pedagogy, the challenge is to reject reformism and move to a socialist revolutionary struggle. Bowles and Gintis's (cited in Mallott, 2012, p. 177) view of this revolutionary approach is highlighted here. They elaborate:

...Movements for educational reform have faltered through refusing to call into the basic structure of poverty and power in economic life...We believe that the key to reform is the democratization of economic relationships: social ownership, democratic and participatory control of the production process by workers, equal sharing of socially necessary labour by all, and progressive equalisation of comes and destruction of hierarchical economic relationships. This is, of course, socialism...In this conception, education strategy is part of a revolutionary transformation of economic life...We must press for an educational environment in which youth can develop the capacity and commitment collectively to control their lives and regulate their social interactions with a sense of equality, reciprocity, and communality. Not that such an environment will of itself alter the quality of social life. Rather, that it will nurture a new generation of workers...unwillingly to submit to the fragmented relationship of dominance and subordination prevailing in economic life.

The crucial aim of revolutionary pedagogy is the conversion of capitalist society into a socialist society, bearing in mind the historical lesson that we have learnt from Stalinism. Radical critical pedagogy provides us with the intellectual tools to create a more just society. As Giroux (2000) succinctly points out, at the heart of this quest to pursue a radical critical pedagogy, there is a critical need for progressive, radical teachers, students, cultural and labour activists to begin to oppose the South African state's neoliberal policy discourses that seek to transform our public schools and institutions of higher learning into commercial enterprises. South Africa's progressive teachers must also find ways to protect all our educational institutions as democratic public spaces that are crucial in the struggle for a radical democratic society. Supporting the call for a counter-hegemonic socially critical pedagogy Allman, McLaren and Rikowski, (cited in Hatcher, 2007, p. 82) avers

The key to resistance, in our view, is to develop a revolutionary critical pedagogy that will enable the working class to discover not only how the use –value of their labour-power is being exploited by capital but also how working class initiative and power can destroy this type of determination and force a recomposition of class relations by directly confronting capital in all its multi-faceted dimensions.

In developing a resistance strategy progressive teachers need to recognise that they could play a vitally important role at these institutions. Different forms of resistance need to be developed if they wish to oppose the continued commodification of education and the

bureaucratization of the teaching process (Giroux, 2000). By embracing a radical critical pedagogy, teachers must offer resistance to neoliberal and neoconservative influences that could reduce the role that they play to being mere bureaucratic apparatuses. The quest for a radical critical pedagogy is unquestionably part of the broader political struggle for what Giroux refers to as “curricular justice” (Giroux, 2000). Giroux (2000, p. 4) defines curricular justice as

forms of teaching that are inclusive, caring respectful, economically equitable, and whose aim, in part, is to undermine those repressive modes of education that produce social hierarchies and legitimise inequality, while simultaneously providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to become well-rounded critical actors and social agents.

Teachers are intellectuals. Gramsci and Paulo Freire alike “urged intellectuals to live their intellectual lives in a state of on-going praxis” (Fishman & McLaren, 2005, p. 433). More to the point Gramsci (cited in Fischman & McLaren, 2005, p. 433) wrote

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence, which is an exterior an momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as a constructor, organizer “permanent persuader” and not just a simple orator.

### **BEYOND THE NEOLIBERAL IMAGINARY**

There is no doubt that the globalisation of neoliberalism has completely altered the discourse of educational reforms in South Africa. It is widely recognised that neoliberalism has led to the compromise of education’s morally and socially ameliorative role “and is now largely viewed as an instrument of economic productivity and growth” (Rizvi, 2017, p.10). I believe that it is for this reason, amongst others, that we need to become critically aware of the ideology of neoliberalism to direct our quest for an alternative perception that would directly challenge this conservative neoliberal imaginary and its hegemonic stranglehold over the governance and purpose of public education in South Africa. A revolutionary critical / socialist pedagogy “both purposeful (because it is directed toward revolution) and democratic (in that it is based on a deep commitment to humanization)” (Mallot et al., 2013,p. 16) A revolutionary critical pedagogy points the way forward as means to develop the class consciousness required to overthrow the forces of neoliberal globalisation across the globe. I conclude with Meszaros (2009, p. 248)

Our educational task is therefore simultaneously also the task of a comprehensive social emancipatory transformation. Neither of



the two can be put in front of the other. They are inseparable. The required radical social emancipatory transformation is inconceivable without the most active positive contribution of education in its all-embracing sense...And vice versa: education cannot work suspended in the air. It can and must be properly articulated and constantly reshaped in its dialectical interrelationship with the changing conditions and needs of the ongoing social emancipatory transformation. The two succeed or fail, stand or fall together.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter contends that neoliberalism has not only resulted in incredible social destruction across the globe, but equally so in post-apartheid South Africa. It is tragically evident from the dehumanising inequalities that we are confronted with every day. The unceasing levels of unemployment among South Africa's alienated youth, the continued exploitation of the work force; the erosion of democracy; state and private sector corruption and the wanton destruction of public education demands a radical critical pedagogy that could pave the way to a more just, democratic egalitarian society. This chapter argues that resistance to the neoliberal orthodoxy is not only necessary, but would require a complex network of social alliances to develop a solution to construct an alternative socialist future for South Africa in combination with a radical critical pedagogy.

## **SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

This study explored the impact that neoliberal ideology had on South Africa's education discourse since 1981. The first conclusion draws our attention to the fact that South Africa's post-apartheid education policies, i.e. the SASA and NNSSF, were not, as previously suggested, responsible for the inauguration of the neoliberal ideology into the education policy landscape. The neoliberal ideology was introduced into the apartheid state's education reform initiatives by the De Lange Commission of Inquiry in 1981 and introduced into the post-apartheid education landscape via the National Party's (NP) Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) without objection from the ANC. A close examination of the SASA reveals that despite the egalitarian rhetoric in the policy preamble, the policy rhetoric quite paradoxically exposes the state's commitment to market-based education discourse. The duplicitous conduct of the state as articulated in the SASA policy discourse points to the incongruity of the state in a capitalist society and the paradoxical role that it plays, especially with regard to the accommodation of the neoliberal orthodoxy. What separates

this study from most post-apartheid education policy investigations is that while acknowledging the managerial and technological deficiencies and “policy gaps” of the post-apartheid education reforms, this study points to the “politics of education” as the main disabling factor in the education reform process. It directly points to the impact of the neoliberal ideology on education policy agendas and the imperatives embedded in the post-apartheid educational discourse. The GEAR policy discourse, grounded in human capital theory, subordinated the nation’s social justice aspirations to a malicious programme of fiscal austerity through structural adjustments, placing a heavier financial burden on the poor in terms of education. This study contends that the resultant educational and social inequalities are not the unintended consequences of these policies, as some academics have suggested, but irrefutable predicted outcomes. Finally, this study points to a radical critical pedagogy as an alternative to advance and facilitate a socially transformative agenda in supporting the cause of redistributive social justice.



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