

An adventurous Cinderella

CLIVE MILLAR

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THE RISE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Current conceptions of lifelong learning reflect commitments that are strongly egalitarian, strongly orientated to social development and strongly integrationist. Egalitarianism expresses itself not only as a basic commitment to an open society where freedom of access to education is unrestricted by race, sex or social class, but also to a further kind of openness consisting in the availability of educational opportunities throughout life for personal growth and for training in vocational skills. Such commitment finds expression both in **reformist** elements in current policy, of which compensatory education of various kinds is the main example, and in **radical-reconstructionist** elements which go well beyond compensatory education. A Council of Europe paper on 'permanent education' states:

'Whereas the aim of social advancement is to reduce individual inequalities while the social environment which produces them is left intact . . . the aim of collective advancement is to give individual education and at the same time influence the social context in which the individuals live . . . Without collective advancement there can be no genuine individual advancement, but only uprooting.'

This quotation highlights only one of the integrationist themes that characterise current thinking: that of the integration of personal growth and community development where educational policy is part of a broad development policy. Such statements only dimly reflect current realities. The present position nationally and internationally, as far as I am aware, is that

the virtues I have been describing are given free rein **outside** the established structures of tertiary education, within the safety of what could be called the 'non-formal' sector of education. It is not unrealistic to define adult education administratively as non-formal education; the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies itself works outside the formal structure of university education. Though I have made it clear, I hope, that this is not an adequate conception of adult education and is one that reflects its depressed status, it is nevertheless one that encourages an adventurous Cinderella, a Cinderella who had to learn to look after herself and who may be a vocal critic of her sisters in the establishment. Non-formal education has the capacity to be critical, innovative and alternative, a capacity that becomes a duty when formal systems are judged inadequate or unjust. Indeed, one of the consequences of the current disenchantment with formal systems of schooling, reflected in a range of radical and reformist educational movements throughout the world, is the emergence of non-formal education as a highly valued phenomenon.

I take the view that the conceptions of lifelong education that I have been describing will **not** continue to flourish only in the gaps left by formal education, especially formal tertiary education, without effecting changes in formal structures. A range of factors is slowly changing our conceptions of what is normal in educational experience. These include:

- Population growth,
- Escalating costs of formal education,
- The problem of teacher supply,
- Radical questioning of the real benefits

of formal education from political, economic and cultural perspectives,

- The development of educational and communication media,
- The growing visibility of alternative models of educational provision.

In the absence of a 'new international economic order' Third World countries **must** explore non-formal alternatives in education. They, in particular, can afford no other option.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In South Africa the position is complicated by our uncertainty about whether we are in fact a Third World or an African country, in that we constitute a classic case of a population divided on racial lines into First World and Third World sectors and where our present policy of separate development, pared of all its rhetoric, attempts to confirm First World status for urbanised, and possibly white, South Africa and define quite different routes for economic development as appropriate for homelands or Bantustans. In such a situation the development of non-formal or open systems of continuing education is likely to be seen as a discriminatory Third World dispensation unless such provisions are introduced, not as alternative educational routes for some, but as part of normal educational provision for all.

EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN SA

Educational policy, like politics, is the art of the possible, and perhaps gives us some cause to question the viability of our own fragmented educational system. I am doubtful whether the provision of greatly extended opportunities for adult education will be acceptable to blacks in this country if they are perceived as alternative to white formal education or as compensating for the lack of it. In this country the issue of educational provision is inescapably the issue of citizenship.

Education for Blacks in South Africa should be seen — and I believe is seen by blacks — as both an individual opportunity and a political constraint. This is why their perception of the education they re-

ceive, and their resultant action of protest or co-operation, is sensitive to political events both inside and outside formal education. The death in detention of a political leader or the shooting of black school children will continually fan into overt rejection and protest the mild form of passive resistance, of working to rule, that attendance at ethnic universities constitutes for black students.

Education is for blacks an act of compromise in the face of overwhelming political realities, the cost of which in terms of collective solidarity, moral commitment and even intellectual development may, at times of crisis, be judged to be too great to be acceptable. (Editor's italics).

If the basis for this compromise is seriously upset by massive unemployment for black matriculants, as was the case in 1976 and is the case again now (ironically as the result in part of a more generous provision of high-schools in urban areas following the events of 1976), the situation becomes explosive.

ADULT EDUCATION

If education is a means of political control — as I take it to be — one can see why Government monopoly of black education is entirely rational and why initiatives in adult education concerned with the application of such ethics as social awareness, social criticism and social integration have been, or are in danger of being, severely restricted as subversive activities.

Adult education in South Africa, therefore, not only has to work within the gaps between formal educational systems but also within the gaps left open by restrictive legislation. At present we are experiencing a mild thaw: opportunities for adult education for blacks in urban areas are being accelerated by the Government, sometimes in co-operation with private organisations. However, the recent history of private enterprise in education in this country is a history of restriction, and I take little comfort from Clause 8 of the Education and Training Act, 1979, which sets out the penalties for those

who provide education for a black person (and this explicitly includes adult education) without their institution being registered by the Department of Education and Training or qualifying for exemption from such registration. Such a national context

is by no means a congenial one for creative work in adult education. Nonetheless it is the only one we have, and it is our obligation, and in more senses than one our privilege, to work out policies and strategies that attempt to match idealism with realism.

(Greatly condensed extracts from the Inaugural Lecture of Professor Clive J Millar, Professor of Adult Education and Director of Adult Education and Director of Extra-Mural Studies at UCT).

The Government says:

MR HEUNIS said fingerprints were the only irrefutable proof of identity, and the new measure would also help prevent forgeries of various documents.

His department was now engaging in a four-month programme to decentralise the system to the point where every city and town, however small, would have its own representative of his department.

The representatives would be in constant contact with local offices of Government departments, other Governmental authorities and private sector organisations which provided services to the public such as banks, building societies, life insurance companies and estate agents.

They would all be used to assist with the immense task of keeping an up-to-date register of the population changes and the addresses of registered persons, he said.

Rand Daily Mail 15/1/81.

The Black Sash replies:

IF THE GOVERNMENT'S proposed plans to introduce uniform finger-printed identity documents for all people are indeed designed to 'limit, as far as possible, attempts to infiltrate strategic installations and key positions' (RDM 15/1/81) then it is tantamount to sending out an army to catch a mouse.

If they are further designed to prove to the world in general and South Africans in particular that the Government is sincere in its attempts to do away with discrimination, then Minister Heunis' statement that 'What measures the Department of Co-operation and Development will take for influx control is a matter for that department' (RDM 15/1/81), is an instant and total denial of the end of discrimination.

If they are an integral part of 'total strategy' to contain 'total onslaught,' then the baby is being thrown out with the bathwater. All citizens are now to be subjected to the restraints and humiliations that black people have been justifiably resenting and resisting over the years, and the curtailment of rights and freedom is being extended to protect — what? Liberty? Freedom? Democracy?

In our view these latest Government proposals present a 'total onslaught' on the privacy of all citizens, subjecting them to indignities like finger-printing that are generally reserved for criminals in Western societies. And we seriously question the motivation behind these moves. We resent the fact that our fingerprints, in addition to all the other data which the Government already requires about our persons, should be recorded in the depths of a computer in Pretoria, possibly to be used against us if and when the Government decides that we should no longer be permitted to express our dissent from its policies.

JOYCE HARRIS,
National President.