

Adult Literacy: A Social Policy for The Mass Democratic
Movement of South Africa

by

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degree of Masters of Arts in Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Abstract	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: A Historical Overview of Education	6
Chapter Two: Literacy Provision in South Africa	38
Chapter Three: Emancipatory Literacy: Normative Considerations for an Emergent New South Africa	78
Chapter Four: Toward a Social Policy	101
Conclusion	127
Appendix A	132
Appendix B	133
Bibliography	134

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
BCM	BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT
BLL	BUREAU OF LITERACY AND LITERATURE
CNE	CHRISTIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION
COSATU	CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS
DET	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
ERU	ENGLISH RESEARCH UNIT
HSRC	HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
IFP	INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY
L & T	LEARN AND TEACH
MDM	MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT
NECC	NATIONAL EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE
NGO'S	NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS
NLC	NATIONAL LITERACY CO-OPERATION
NUMSA	NATIONAL UNION OF METALWORKERS OF SOUTH AFRICA
SAALAE	SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION
SACHED	SOUTH AFRICAN COMMITTEE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
SACP	SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY
SACTU	SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS
SAIRR	SOUTH AFRICAN INTER RACE RELATIONS
SASO	SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS ORGANISATION
USWE	USING SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a possible solution to the problem of illiteracy among black South Africans. It is argued that for adult literacy to be translated into an effective policy, it should be fought for as an emancipatory ideological construct integrated into the Mass Democratic Movement's political theories.

The arguments leading to such a recommendation are based on an analysis of the state's character as illuminated by its orientation to policy formation in relation to blacks. Through an analysis of the formal education system and literacy provision for blacks, it is argued that illiteracy is reproduced as a characteristic of the black working class.

Thus, literacy is identified as a vehicle that could provide adults with access to different forms of education in order to transcend political, social and economic subjugation, and to participate in the reconstruction of South Africa to a non-racist country.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines adult literacy as an important component in the emancipation of South Africa. In so doing, it also looks at the historical origin of illiteracy and the significance of adult literacy in contemporary social and political struggles for justice in South Africa.

South Africa has entered a crucial stage in the struggle for national liberation. This critical and historical moment demands unity within the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) around common interests and issues that are of crucial importance. Literacy is clearly a significant component in the development and transformation of South Africa, although more urgent political struggles have always overshadowed it. Now that the systems of white minority domination can no longer be maintained, literacy has taken on a new urgency.

South Africa has a large number of black illiterates which is a direct result of historic systems of capitalist exploitation based on colonialism and a "scientific" racist ideology. Illiteracy is also more than simply a social problem; it is intertwined with other apartheid policies which clearly reflect the complex dynamics of class and race relations in South Africa. Literacy is inescapably implicated in the political, and economic forces of the country. The national liberation movement aims to resolve a wide spectrum of social, political and economic issues. It is within this context that literacy becomes a central component. The

national liberation movement demands and requires the active participation of all people in society. This demand is underscored by Mkwatsha:

The education that is demanded by the liberation movement aims to equip and train 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.¹

Literacy is clearly an important component of any reconstructed educational system that would enable adults to participate in the reconstruction of South Africa.

This thesis regards adult literacy programs as a fundamental vehicle to provide adults access to social, economic and political power. Adult literacy is also regarded as central to helping provide adults with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to live more productive lives. However, adult literacy is required on a large scale, which in turn requires an effective policy. To formulate literacy policy for South Africa, one has to consider: (1) the historic characteristics of the state apparatuses--the changing character of the class/race alliance that underlies the constitution of the political regime; (2) the social, economic and political characteristics of the literacy clientele², and (3) how an appropriate literacy policy would link to economic, political and social development.

The first chapter attempts to sensitize the reader to the origin and nature of illiteracy among blacks in order to help the reader to understand the present situation, as well as to

illuminate the character of the state as the policy-maker. Welton captures the importance of history by stating "If we all want to know where we want to go, we must know where we have been... knowledge of the past lays the foundation for its use by those living in the present".³ By focusing on the provision of formal education for blacks, the chapter explores the historic roots of illiteracy in order to show that illiteracy is not a product of contemporary conflict but rather structurally embedded in the historic development of the country. The chapter also attempts to provide insight into the reproduction of illiteracy of the black working class. However, blacks did not accept political, social and economic subjugation. Resistance to the unequal education system emerged in different forms and this chapter gives an overview of such resistance.

The second chapter analyses the contemporary literacy situation. For various reasons, literacy in South Africa suddenly has become a matter of enormous concern. This chapter identifies the different agencies involved in literacy provision, and it provides an analysis of their interests and limitations. Participation in adult literacy programs remains extremely low, and this chapter attempts to reveal some of the reasons for this.

From the analysis in chapter 2, which lays the groundwork for the articulation of a literacy policy for South Africa, chapter 3 outlines a theoretical-normative perspective for

adult literacy policy formulation. In order for adult literacy to translate into an effective policy, it will be argued, literacy should be fought for as an integral part of the social movement. Furthermore, the chapter explores an approach to learning congruent with an emancipatory ideology of literacy.

The final chapter, sketches a literacy policy and the administrative structures and programmatic requirements to implement it. It will be argued that this policy can be made practicable in the form of a mass literacy campaign. The chapter also signals possible difficulties of such a social policy.

NOTES:

1. Kruss, G. (1988). People's Education for People's Power: An Examination of the Concept. Centre of Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape: Bellville.
2. Torres, C.A.(1991). The Politics of Non Formal Education in Latin America. Praeger Press: New York, p.131.
3. Welton, M.(1987). "On the Eve of the Great Mass Movement": Reflections on the Origin of CAAE. In Faris, R & Cassidy, F.(eds.) Choosing Our Future: Adult Education and Public Policy in Canada. OISE: Toronto. pp.12-35.

CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Blacks in South Africa have always been denied the right to a good education. Even when they did receive an education, it was considerably impoverished, blatantly racist with specific political, ideological and economic consequences. Through focusing on the formal education system as the major political and ideological instrument, I want to show the functional roles that literacy has assumed in order to serve the changing needs of the white ruling class. I will argue that the interconnectedness of literacy with language policy in South Africa was a major force in the construction of power relations which shaped the black working class. I will also demonstrate that the specific configuration of power and knowledge was sustained by violent repression which has restrained resistance to an illegitimate education system.

(I): LANGUAGE AND THE SUBJUGATION OF AFRICAN CULTURE

The history of education in South Africa is well documented. I will highlight certain areas which link directly to the development of the high illiteracy rate among the black population. For the purpose of this thesis, I would like to emphasise the aspect of race, which has been neglected by white South African analysts, as a key concept in the apartheid model of social engineering. The apartheid story is usually constructed around the notion of "population groups"

with distinct and separate "cultures". Many South Africans have always perceived of themselves as belonging to a "hierarchical scheme of things" which is the foundation of the apartheid model.

Freda Troup informs us that education in pre-colonial African societies was an important aspect of daily living.¹ Her observation is echoed by Thompson's idea that:

All [African] societies have at all times sought to develop appropriate behaviour patterns to spread the possession of knowledge, understanding and skills among their members, even though the degree of organisation and the extent to which aims were articulated tended to be limited (Thompson cited in Keto).²

Pre-colonial education, whether formal or non-formal, has not been recognised by Western educators, with the result that education is perceived as being brought from the North by the European community. It is within this context that illiteracy should be understood, particularly in South Africa with the imported fragments that constitute its education system. The education policies, which consisted of Western values and ideas, had detrimental effects on the development of the indigenous people, who were viewed as a people without history, time and space-- blank pages upon which history could be written.

The creation of education policy influenced by Western culture is adequately summarised by Malherbe's comment:

There is perhaps no country in the world where the educational system has had so [much] buffeting and tampering from without as the education of South Africa. At no period was education to any extent

the spontaneous expression of the ethos' or genius of the people. To a very large extent ... educational system has been the resultant [sic] of successive superimpositions of systems or bits³ of systems from without (Malherbe cited in Keto).

Language was the central component of the education policy--the most important instrument of colonial domination. Both the Dutch and the British governments ignored the importance of the indigenous languages by enforcing their own mother-tongues as "superior" spoken and written languages. Their languages, combined with their cultural values, demanded an education system which alienated the languages and cultures of the indigenous people.

Freire and Macedo inform us not to ignore the role of language as a major force in the construction of human subjectivities.⁴ They also make it clear that literacy is a form of cultural production, an integral part of the way in which people produce, transform and reproduce meaning.⁵ Language reflects the concreteness of one's existence and one's experience. Through the subversion of their [African] languages and cultures, the way in which the African people defined the concreteness of their existence was subjugated.⁶ The way they conceptualised the world and reality was eroded by the imposition of foreign languages. Language itself became the ideological and political weapon which forced the African people into a "culture of silence"⁷, which left them vulnerable to racial domination, domestication and control.

This suppression of African culture has resulted in the authoritarian education structure of South African schooling.

Institutions of socialisation under the Dutch government in the mid-seventeenth century had two basic objectives. First, they enslaved the Africans in order to create a workforce which could provide the necessary economic assets, and secondly, through educational policy they facilitated Dutch literacy in order to Christianise the indigenous "savages". Consequently, the "superiority" of a Dutch culture and language could be transmitted and sustained while the African culture was subjugated. It is thus not surprising that the African people resisted this education from the moment it was implemented.⁸

The arrival of the British, 168 years later, precipitated a cultural struggle of which language was the nucleus. Although the British proved to be more liberal toward the blacks, by providing more educational opportunities to "raise their level to that of the European", they too ignored the importance of the pre-existing rich cultures and languages. They aimed to anglicize the Dutch and the Africans. Furthermore, in light of urbanisation and industrialisation in Britain at that time, they imposed English literacy for economic development. This cultural struggle, combined with the intensified conflict over the control of South Africa's vast wealth, resulted in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in which the British were the military victors.

The Afrikaners claimed the preservation of their distinctive language and culture defied any anglicization imposed by the British. This defiance would later develop into Afrikaner Nationalism and the Christian National Education (CNE) policy. As the British dominated the education system, urbanisation and industrialisation in South Africa, the political and economic consequences of a rigid ethnically stratified population deepened the African "culture of silence"-- "the uneducated man [sic] can be exploited as an economic asset"(Wilson & Thompson).⁹

Since 1866 the Afrikaner community fought to protect the nearly extinct Dutch language, and they demanded segregated education with specific political and economic benefits not available to the African people. Their demand was fuelled by fear that they "will become hewers of wood and drawers of water".¹⁰ This cultural struggle led to the existing language policy which recognises both Afrikaans and English as the official languages, lawfully subjugating the importance of African heritage and history. The Smuts Act of 1907 stated:

The language regulations may ... be summarised by saying: Every child may learn Dutch (Afrikaans), but every child must learn English.¹¹

However, by 1925 the Act of the Union recognised both languages as official. This language struggle between Afrikaner and British clearly demonstrates: (1) the attitude of superiority regarding their own cultures, (2) the

subjugation of African culture and language, and (3) the silencing of the African voice and history.

(II): THE EMERGENCE OF A BLACK WORKING CLASS

As racial stratification intensified based on British and Dutch competition for South Africa's vast wealth, education became an instrument to institutionalise the political and economic exploitation of the blacks. Le Roux (1892), an official from the Natal Native Commission, said:

In my opinion schools for natives should give two hours a day to reading and writing, and three hours to manual labour. The importance of manual labour should be brought into prominence at these schools. As far as possible I would teach at these schools every occupation that a servant is required to do in the colony. Why is it that I employ the Red Kaffir boy as my groom and gardener? Simply because he demands half the amount that the educated boy does; he does his work as well, if not better and is more amenable to discipline (Rose & Turner cited in Christie).¹²

As industrialisation progressed and the British authorities reduced support for African education, political and economic exploitation were sanctioned by the Native Commissions' 1892 policy, which stated that:

If natives are to be taught at all, they should be taught industry. I do not myself see much use in teaching the natives to read and write without teaching them to make use of their hands as well. Industrial instruction should form the most important part of native schooling. There are certain natives who can be educated to get their living without working with their hands; a few of them are clergymen, and there are some schoolmasters. There are some interpreters in the magistrates' offices and so on. And these can gain a good living without working with their hands. But

the great bulk of native people must work with their hands in order to gain an honest living. To teach them to read and write, without teaching them to work is not doing them any good (Rose & Turner cited in Christie).¹³

Industrialisation radically transformed the economy of South Africa. The economic imperatives of black schooling became evident when questions such as "Does it pay to educate the native?" were raised (Albert Leroy, a clergymen in 1918).¹⁴ Such racist discourse led to the restatement of educational policy (1936) for economic exploitation. The Interdepartmental Committee of Native Education argued that:

On the other hand any such [educational] policy ... would in the present structure of South African economic conditions lead to competition of Native tradesmen with European, which is at present prohibited ... or to a deadend of unemployment for the Native.

Having regard to the present attitude of the European towards the employment of Natives in industry, where skilled or even semi-skilled labour is used, it seems inevitable that the [white] educationalists in South Africa must pursue a [shrewd] policy in regard to the training of Native boys and to this extent must turn his back upon sound educational principles.¹⁵

Such a racist policy prevented blacks from developing trade and other higher level skills. Education aimed to prepare blacks primarily for manual labour on farms and in mines.

The social, political and economic subjugation of the indigenous people is clearly reflected by the extent to which they were educated. By the early twentieth century only 5% of the African children attended school. The students had low reading, writing and arithmetic skills; 2,5% were in Standard

5 (Grade 7); 60% never reached Standard one (grade 3); no textbooks were available in their own languages because the medium of instruction was English and/or Afrikaans (see Appendix A).

English as a second language was an important part of education. However, in the view of some, the functional purpose of English literacy should be limited. Dr Steward, a principal at Lovedale, felt that despite the importance of English it should not be used "as a medium of instruction in subjects having an educational value of their own or intended to develop the reasoning power of the pupils".¹⁶ Nevertheless, in spite of recommendations to include vernacular medium instruction, with English or Afrikaans as second languages, such measures were never implemented.¹⁷

Segregated schooling distinguished between "indigenous" and "civilised", the ruled and the ruler, the "savage" and the "citizen". The school, as the major component of the "ideological state apparatus"¹⁸, socialised students to assume "appropriate" personality traits, work norms and worldviews required in the apartheid economy. Neo-Marxian structural-functionalist theorists, associated with the work of Althusser, Bowles and Gintis¹⁹ have argued that schools reproduce the class system. In South African society, it is evident that the class associated with labour is constituted by a specific race--the black working class.

Proletarianisation in South Africa is thus associated with not only class, but race.

Illiteracy, a characteristic of the black working class, was one result of the ideological apparatus of the insufficient schooling. It was sustained by repressive mechanisms employed by the ruling class. Some of the repressive mechanisms that maintained the division between colour or sub- and superordinate positions in society include, not only inadequate funding of schools, but also mechanisms such as police, laws (i.e., the 1913 Land Act) and labour bureaus. These mechanisms ensured the reproduction of black subordination. People were segregated into distinct groups according to colour, and class differences (richer white children gained better education) reinforcing the development of social inequalities. Industrialisation demanded skilled workers for complicated and responsible jobs, as well as a large unskilled labour force. The former was provided for by the whites and the latter by the uneducated and illiterate African population.

Earlier institutions did not satisfy the needs of an industrialised economy. The ideological dimensions of schooling for blacks, which aimed specifically at the reproduction of unskilled workers, became instrumental to the new capitalist system. Basic literacy for communication in the language of the employer became an important aspect of the curriculum, integrated with moral and religious values such as

punctuality, deference, cleanliness, honesty and so forth. This shift, to adapt the African to the changing needs of industry, had significant effects on the education system of an extremely inadequate black education. Schooling for blacks was mainly disorganised and severely underfunded. The conditions in schools between 1925 and 1945 were characterised by: (1) a very low participation rate; (2) inadequate funding; (3) inadequate supply of teachers; (4) overcrowded and inadequate buildings; (5) an average schooling equivalent to 4 years; and (6) neglect of mother tongue instruction.²⁰

The median student age and the number of years spent in school are particularly important aspects of the differences in black and white schooling. The Native Commission (1946 - see Table One) indicated that: (1) African children started school 2.3 years later than the whites; (2) they took 3 years to emerge from the sub-standards; (3) they spent an average of four years in school; and (4) their median age is 3.8 years older than the white child.²¹

Table One:

	<u>Age of Pupils:</u>		
	Sub A	Std.6	Form 5
White	6.48	13.10	17.62
Black	8.69	16.42	19.38

(1946 Statistic Yearbook; Bureau of Statistics)²²

Table Two:

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK PUPILS (1925 -1965)					
	1925	1935	1945	1955	1965
SUB A - STD 2	83.7	83.4	75.9	72.7	71.6
STD 3 - STD 6	15.8	18.3	22.0	23.8	24.8
FORM 2 - 3	0.5	0.5	2.1	3.5	3.4
FORM 4 - 5	0.073	0.053	0.157	0.206	0.218
SUB A & B (only)	61.9	58.2	51.3	46.4	44.6
(%) of the population	-	5.42	7.6	10.67	16.07
Teacher-pupil ratio	-	1:49	1:42	1:46	1:56

(Union Advisory Board on Native Education & Official Bulletin of Educational Statistics (1947 - 1959)²³)

Table Three:

	COMPARATIVE PUPIL DISTRIBUTION BY STANDARD (%)	
	BLACK	WHITE
SUB A - STD 2	71.6	38.63
STD 3 - STD 5	24.6	25.61
FORM 1 - 3	3.5	24.29
FORM 4 - 5	0.3	8.98
(Unclassified)		2.49

(National Bureau of Educational & Social Research):1964)²⁴

If one studies the educational statistics, Tables One - Three, a number of parameters indicate how disadvantaged black students were. First, they were generally older than their white counterparts (Table One). Secondly, there is a very high drop out rate among blacks after just four years of schooling (Table Two), and thirdly, white students were far more evenly distributed across the different standards than were black

students (Table Three). These statistics are of particular importance as in 1960, for instance, the Department Circular no.37 stated that blacks students over the age of 16 years are not eligible to remain in school while still in lower primary (meaning Sub A - Standard Two).²⁵ The same Circular stated that a student is allowed to fail standards 3-4 once. Such regulations indicate that there was no real concern to keep black children in school. Therefore, the schools for blacks were producing drop-outs for unskilled labour. The fact that most of the students left school after the completion of four grades shaped a definition of a black literate person in South Africa--that is, someone who has completed four years of schooling. Tables Two and Three illustrate how African children were concentrated in the Sub-standards and the unusually high drop-out rate that occurs thereafter, especially compared to that for whites. This means that most of the students left school actually before they reached the secondary standards. The inequalities perpetuated by segregated development for economic advance is further accentuated by the 1946 Census.

Table Four

Percentages of Literacy: (Africans aged 10 years and older)

	African Language	English	Afrikaans
Read only	1.9	1.4	.9
Read & write	27.0	10.5	4.6
Neither	69.0	86.5	92.5
Unspecified	2.1	1.6	2.0

(1946 Census)²⁶

From Table Four one can see that by 1946: (1) 69% of the blacks were illiterate in their own mother tongue (not all the African languages were written languages), (2) 86.5% were illiterate in English and, (3) 92.5% were illiterate in Afrikaans. One can assume that between 86.5% - 92.5% of the African people were also poor in an Afrikaans and English speaking society. Despite the high illiteracy among blacks as a result of poor schooling, educational restructuring congruent to Afrikaner ideology, would later emerge, which perpetuated the black educational order.

During the period prior to the 1946 census the Institute for Christian Education developed a policy for white education through the Afrikaner "intellectuals", the Broederbond, which would become the cornerstone of apartheid. During the same period, education for blacks stagnated because of high and increasing financial demands, arising from increased school attendance. The difference in funding for education, per capita, between white and black children was approximately tenfold in favour of the former.

Table Five

 EXPENDITURE: PER CAPITA IN SOUTH AFRICAN RANDS

	BLACK	WHITE
1945	7.78	76.56
1953	17.08	127.84
1960	12.46	144.57

(Bulletin of Educational Statistics for the Union of SA:1947 & Hansard 7 of 1968 cols 2379, 2401)²⁷

The poor African communities had to supplement the reduced government expenditure while the enrolment in schools increased by as much as 75%. This significant increase in primary education seemed quite satisfactory, but the ideological purpose was to provide for the economic demands of industrial advance at the time. For one thing, an educational policy was needed which would perpetuate a largely unskilled black workforce. This policy was fuelled, argues Hyslop, by slum housing, increase in crime, inadequate schooling facilities and poverty which threatened the very reproduction of the working class as a workforce with the appropriate level of skills, work discipline and physical capacity required by urban employers.²⁸ Secondly, industries displayed a growing appetite for semi-skilled machine operatives whose work required some internalised work discipline, skill of language, literacy and numeracy and some training.²⁹ This led to the promotion of literacy now defined as four years of schooling. In 1964 W.A. Maree (Minister of Bantu Education) asserted that 4 years of schooling "gave a child an ability to read and write in his own language reasonably, a reasonable knowledge of the two official languages, and a basis for further education".³⁰

(III): CHRISTIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (CNE): 1949

In 1945 the National Party came to power. The National Party was dominated by Afrikaners. Their policy for Native

education had profound implications for literacy in South Africa. There were two important aspects of the policy for Native education. First, the Eiselen Commission, a mouthpiece for the CNE, recommended mother-tongue instruction for the first eight years, but that Afrikaans be taught from an early age with the hope that the "Bantu child will be able to find his way in European communities to follow oral instruction or written instruction; to carry on simple conversations with Europeans about his work and other subjects of common interest".³¹ Second, Africans were responsible for their own educational expenditure under white supervision.

The issue of mother-tongue instruction had specific ideological implications for the black children especially in the light of already impoverished conditions in which education was undertaken. The shift to Afrikaner ideology was supposed to adapt the students to "the living world of the Bantu child, a world which differs greatly and fundamentally from that of the child in Western society"(Duminy cited in Davies).³² The Apartheid capitalist ideology³² intended to: (1) inculcate tribal consciousness, thus perpetuating division; (2) reinforce cultural division between blacks and other racial groups, especially whites; (3) alienate blacks from the industrial, commercial and the professional sectors (their languages were not the medium of commercial transaction); and (4) alienate them from the rest of the world, especially from technological and scientific

information communicated in English. These ideological dimensions of language policy were institutionalised by instructing black children in three different languages from a very young age.

The national government (in 1949) moved quickly to reinforce the "divine"³³ Afrikaner cultural identity by seizing all schooling, placing it under direct control and formulating a carefully planned policy of segregated socio-economic development for blacks, sustaining their identity as the inferior black working class. The ideological shift to CNE ensured the reproduction and participation of the working class black population through its formal schooling system. The famous comments of the Minister of Education, Verwoerd (1954), clearly linked the role of education to the political and economic exploitation of an illiterate black population:

...The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.... For that reason it is of no avail to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent for an education which has no specific aim but it is also dishonest to continue it. It is abundantly clear that unplanned education creates many problems, disrupting the community life of the Bantu and endangering the community life of the Europeans.³⁴

Through this ideology blacks also had to assume that their unique cultural, social economic and political condition

was a "natural" one and should go unchallenged. The social relation of working class reproduction is summed up by the Eiselen Commission's statement:

We should not give the natives an academic education, as some people are too prone to do. If we do this we shall later be burdened with a number of academically trained non-Europeans, and who is going to do the manual labour in the country? ... I am in thorough agreement with the view that we should so conduct our schools that the native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country (Eiselen, 1954).³⁵

(IV): RESISTANCE TO AN OPPRESSIVE EDUCATION

Black resistance to the purposeful subordination of their culture and the incorporation of dependence on the structures of Western civilisation, dates far back into history. Students resisted attempts to inculcate servility and docile labourer attitudes and to impose subordinate positions in 1658, by staying away from classes.³⁶ The authorities were forced to close the only school because their ability to implement policy was constrained by the rejection and resistance to the alienating and oppressive system. For most of the nineteenth century, blacks continued to resist schooling by outright rejection or avoidance. The nineteenth century was described as "a century of bitter resistance to ... colonisation and subjugation".³⁷ Resistance of a more militant nature occurred repeatedly in the 1920's, 30's, 50's and 60's when students' grievances against the education policies were raised, and later through the African National

Congress and affiliates in search of an alternative education. For example, in 1954, after the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which marked the beginning of segregated education, a "Resist Apartheid Campaign" mobilised the school boycotts of thousands in the Transvaal region. Later, in the 1960's, student resistance was violently suppressed by the police, precipitating the infamous Sharpeville massacre.

Within the last two decades critical theorists³⁸ like Paul Willis (1977) began to emphasise the active production of English class culture which includes culturally specific resistance - within the overall dynamic of social and economic production. Here, Willis' analysis helps us to understand forms of resistance present within South African schools. Once again, I would like to emphasise that the class cultural theory applies specifically to black students and teachers. Another aspect of the active resistance to domination was that it is aimed against a whole system of political and economic exploitation and subordination. It emanated from a rejection of school knowledge. The critics recognised the ideology of competition and self-advancement black students faced in relation to their white counterparts. Similarly to "the lads" (Willis' term) the black students' failure brought about by their active resistance and militancy ensured their future status as members of the black working class.

The Soweto revolt of 1976, in which language was a major issue, was an important form of resistance to the CNE policy. Black students were forced to learn from a young age two foreign languages with emphasis on oral and speech exercises. The result was that many children were taught these languages but not well enough, not even their mother-tongue. This inadequacy is clearly reflected in the time allocated to these languages (see Table Six). Therefore, black students demanded the abolishment of Afrikaans as a compulsory language of instruction in 50% of their subjects.

Table Six:

TIME ALLOCATION TO LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION (1968-)			
(Minutes per day)			
SUBJECT	SUB A & B	STD 1 - 2	STD 3 - 6
English	125	270	240
Afrikaans	125	270	240
Mother-tongue	185	210	180

(Horrell) ³⁹			

Table Six shows how mother-tongue instruction received less prominence, while English and Afrikaans received more. By the time that students had reached standard three, the time allocated to mother-tongue instruction was reduced to an hour less than that allocated to the official languages. The foreign languages were imposed to develop functional literacy in the English and Afrikaans hegemonic society, while their own language received less prominence.

This language policy should also be understood in conjunction with the low standard of teaching. Teacher training and qualifications among black teachers declined sharply with the introduction of the new language policy. Teachers in the black schools can, like their students, be described as victims of exploitation and oppression within the hierarchical bureaucratically-organised and segregated system. Many left because they refused to participate in the reproduction of an illegitimate education system. Teachers' incompetence to teach in these languages and their resistance led to overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages and the prevalence of unqualified teachers in the already impoverished circumstances. The percentage of unqualified teachers in Black schools in 1984 was 70.2%.

During the 1980's black schools were turned into political battlegrounds, and student organisations mushroomed across the country in order to co-ordinate their resistance. Many students fled from persecution and detention; others were jailed, serving long sentences. In 1980 the Department of Education and Training (previously known as the Department of Bantu Education) closed 77 schools because of the unrest.⁴⁰ This means that approximately 100,000 pupils were left on the streets-- learning but uneducated! In 1984, when mass school boycotts flared up, the DET closed a further six schools, leaving at least 6,000 more pupils unschooled.⁴¹ By the end of 1985, students were calling for 1986 to be the year of no

schooling, under the slogan "Liberation first, education later".

The students' resistance⁴² can be best understood as an effort to liberate themselves from the psychological dehumanisation of the CNE policy. Their "praxis" reflected a growth in maturity but the students also suffered substantial defeats. The defeats left large numbers of students out of school. This is most unfortunate because by 1987, 1 052 189 African children between the ages 7-16 did not attend school.⁴³ The closing of schools and the related unrest contributed to the growth in potential illiterate and semi-illiterate adults who emerged from this social turmoil.

The following statistics give an indication of unchanged and deteriorating conditions in schools.

Table Seven:

EXPENDITURE: PER CAPITA IN SOUTH AFRICAN RANDS		
YEAR	BLACK	WHITE
1976	48.55	654
1977	54.05	551
1978	71.28	724
1979	91.29	1169
1980	176.20	1021
1981	165.23	1221
1982	192.34	1395
1988*	540.00*	3887*

(DET: Public Relations Directorate Pamphlet:1989, *)⁴⁴

Table Eight:

 TOTAL CURRENT SHORTAGE IN PHYSICAL SPACE FOR PUPILS AND COST IMPLICATIONS (COST IN SOUTH AFRICAN RANDS)

	SPACE	LOWEST COST	HIGHEST COST
PRIMARY	1 583 748	1 444 378	1 764 295
SECONDARY	283 851	397 164	557 029
TOTAL	1 867 599	1 841 542	2 321 324

 (HSRC:1981 @: 80 -86; 1981)⁴⁵

Table Nine:

 CAPACITY (PHYSICAL SPACE) IN SOME WHITE SCHOOLS

	Capacity	Enrolment	
		1985	1989
L H Harris	529	378	190
John Mitchell	539	238	145
Observatory East	549	350	173
Kensington Ridge	499	352	250
Malvern West	459	194	137
Athlone Girls	709	345	259
Malvern High	874	411	303

 (Source: Sunday Star Johannesburg, August,27 1989:19)⁴⁶

Table Seven shows clearly how discrimination has been maintained through inadequate funding for black students. Black children, for instance, do not have enough textbooks, laboratory equipment and the necessary facilities for a healthy learning environment. The student:teacher ratio in black schools remained more or less stable during the 1980's at 1:32, while statistics indicate a significant difference to that in white schools where the ratio has been 1:18 for the last decade.⁴⁷ While black schools have always been

overcrowded, enrolment in white schools has declined (see Table Nine). Table Eight shows the great need in physical space and the associated financial cost to accommodate black students. This means that a number of schools are needed to solve the problem. On the other hand, a number of white public schools have plenty of open spaces (Table Nine). In the last two years a number of whites schools have been closed because they did not have sufficient students.

In the period 1990-2 the majority of the 55 000 schools in South Africa remained "whites only" and more than 80% have opted to become private schools.

(V): THE ADULT EDUCATION MOVEMENT

The history of adult education in South Africa is poorly documented. There is virtually no reference to adult education in the standard histories of education. Bird (1984), De Vries (1987) and French (1987) are perhaps the only sources that give a glimpse of adult education in South Africa.

As part of the resistance to the exploitation of the working class, many Africans showed a growing desire for education, especially in the early twentieth century. This followed years of bitter resistance to schooling and the growing power of the white ruling class, who dictated the terms of future development. A sector of Black adults rejected the differentiated education as undesirable and they sought alternative means to improve their wages and conditions. This

led to increased demands for education which was a clear advantage to better employment. This demand was not met and a rather militant and frustrated section of the proletariat emerged. This resulted in the Adult Night School Movement on the Witwatersrand (1920) which gradually spread across the country.

The first night school was set up by the Communist Party in the 1920's with the aim to recruit and train black working class leaders.⁴⁸ The Communist Party also initiated a drive against illiteracy, but the outcome of this is not known. The lessons conducted by volunteers included reading, writing, simple arithmetic and topics related to working class interests. These often took place in slum residences, poorly equipped but well attended by determined adults. Unfortunately, the night schools suffered frequent police harassment. Students also needed passes in order to avoid arrest after nine in the evening, while poor physical conditions and the prevailing poverty affected their attendance. These factors weakened the movement. However, it is evident that the night schools influenced the political consciousness of a number of Africans, because well-known leaders such as Thomas Mbeki and Moses Kotane, who were active in the struggle against oppression and exploitation, were partly educated in these schools.

Other radical groups such as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and Industry and Commerce Workers'

Union (ICU) in the 1930's, and the African National Congress in the 1950's, were also involved in adult education. However, internal organisational incompetencies and the state's repressive mechanisms, such as the pass laws, eventually weakened their work.

Unlike the radical groups who focused on collective organisation, liberal traditions which emerged in the 1930's focused on individual skill development and more structured education. Particular prominent schools, the Mayibuye School and the African College, were formed. University students were actively involved in these schools. Both these schools operated until 1953 when the Bantu Act was introduced. According to Bird these schools were well attended, although, like the Communist night schools, similar reasons affected individual attendances.

With the introduction of the Bantu Act (1953), literacy education was restricted because "anyone who demanded equality with Europeans was a Communist".⁴⁹ Consequently, all education had to be undertaken within the framework of the Afrikaner political and economic prescription. The Bantu Education Act classified all unregistered schools as illegal, which affected informal education in the black communities. Literacy rates among the blacks in 1957 reflected a great need for literacy provision. Statistics indicated that: (1) 31.8% were literate in their mother-tongue; (2) 12.09% were literate in English, and (3) only 5.7% were literate in Afrikaans.⁵⁰

Despite the urgency for literacy development, the government reduced the financial expenditure on adult education from R 46,000 to R 1,000 during the period 1957 - 1964.⁵¹ The Act also affected more than 10 000 adult learners, 79 night schools and many volunteers who were involved in the movement.⁵² In 1962, for instance, only 33 night schools with 2,218 students were recorded by the Minister of Education. This reflects a drastic reduction in adult education. This attack by the state on the adult education movement certainly looked like a carefully planned manoeuvre in order to strengthen the implementation of the apartheid model.

One of the few literacy programs that survived the period of "grand apartheid" (1950-) was the South African Inter Race Relations (SAIRR). SAIRR, with a strong religious rather than political, content and methodology flourished because the government subsidised the work. In 1956, when the SAIRR was well advanced in literacy work, the Bureau of Literacy and Literature (BLL) was initiated under the auspices of the SAIRR. The BLL was also affected in the 1960's by the government's new regulations, but it was revived by the mining sector. It continued to work closely with the industrial sector, promoting religious views of the world and facilitating minimal education necessary in the workplace. The BLL, based on the Laubach tradition, expanded rapidly in the 1970's and is still active in literacy work.

Innovative approaches to literacy re-emerged in the late 1960's via student groups who were attempting to educate adults to participate in a job market demanding more sophisticated knowledge and skills. Literacy efforts toward a program was initially based on the work of the BLL. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), which began in 1968 with the South African Students Organisation (SASO) as the representative body, started literacy work in black communities. The aim was to foster pride among blacks. In the 1970's SASO, BCM and the University Christian Movement, ascribing to Freire's conscientisation methodology, conducted literacy work across the country. This followed a long period of passive resistance and also a time when the South African government was concerned with their unstable borders, especially with Mozambique where the national liberation movement had forced the Portuguese government into submission. However, this work by the new radical groups was stopped in 1977 when the Soweto riots took place.

The only literacy programs that remained intact after 1977 were those ascribing to the modernisation ideology. These programs were administered in the workplace, i.e., Anglo American Corporation and Operation Upgrade.⁵³ Most of these programs are still operating today.

Throughout the history of South African education it is clear that blacks resisted the ruling racist ideology in order to overcome the oppression illiteracy imposed upon their

lives. Unfortunately, the government with its repressive apparatuses--army, police and laws --contained all efforts through the process of violent colonisation in order to sustain power and control over the black working class.

From this analysis, it is clear that illiteracy in South Africa is: (1) deeply rooted in the history of the country; (2) a result of the social, political and economic forces of the system; (3) sustained ideologically through institutions and other repressive mechanisms of the state, and (4) an integral component of racism and the maintenance of a black working class as an economic asset to the white ruling class.

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CHAPTER TWO

ADULT LITERACY PROVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA:

In this chapter, I will focus on current literacy provision in South Africa. I will argue, that for different reasons, the state, corporate sector and non-government organisations are not providing an efficient framework for literacy. In the introductory sections, I will outline the current illiteracy dilemma among the blacks in South Africa. This will be followed by an analysis of literacy provision offered by the different agencies. In the final section I will provide a brief synopsis of the deterrents to adult participation in literacy programs.

(I) THE PRESENT LITERACY DILEMMA

The need for adult literacy work in South Africa has become urgent. Many blacks of school-going age are out of school. At least 4 million blacks over the age of 19 years have no formal schooling; in 1991, only 39% of the matriculants had successfully completed their schooling, of which only 10% had passed well enough to qualify for a university education.¹ Of even greater concern is the increase in illiteracy rates. According to estimates supplied by Barbara Hutton² in 1990, 9.5 million or 50% of the black adult population over the age of 20 years, were illiterate. Of this figure, 6.5 million or (35%) were also illiterate in their mother tongues. Although the 1990 illiteracy figure of 50% is

lower compared to previous years, the actual number of illiterates has increased by 237% since 1960 (see Table 11)! This certainly presents a challenge of overwhelming proportions to literacy providers.

Table Ten

Illiteracy Rates for Blacks and Whites:

Year	Blacks		Whites	
	No.	%	No.	%
1960	4.0 million	62.5	40 000	1.9
1970	4.5 million	51.8	23 500	0.9
1980*	3.3 million	33.0	23 000	0.7
1990**	9.5 million	50.0	15 000	0.5

Source: SAIRR³

* Take note: the 1980 statistics exclude illiteracy in the homelands where illiteracy is high.

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Before we consider current literacy provision, it must be emphasised that the reliability and validity of these statistics, and those of previous years, are questionable because of the criteria used during the process of estimation, as well as the general difficulties involved in the process, especially in an unstable population such as South Africa. First of all, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write in any one language. Secondly, the process is based on self-assessment, and third, the age level representing an adult is 15 years and older.⁴ Six years of schooling is also used as an additional criterion. These criteria were criticised by Wedepohl.⁵ What follows are a few considerations which challenge the validity of these statistics: (1) Self-

assessed literacy involves subjectivity; (2) Many illiterate adults tend to hide their illiteracy, because of the negative influence of the stigma attached to illiteracy; (3) Many people resisted or avoided participation in literacy programs, especially in the rural and urban ghettos where illiteracy is usually high; (4) It is not certain whether the criteria were consistently applied. Consequently, it is possible that a large number of adult illiterates escaped the census net and that many who were surveyed did not give accurate information. Furthermore, the statistics of 1990 exclude the 15-20 age group. For all these reasons, it is most likely that the estimates are an under-enumeration of the real situation. For instance, literacy in one of the official languages is estimated at 50%. However, if one considers that 55% of the black population are 15 years and older⁶, an illiteracy rate of 61.9% represents 9.5 million illiterates (the black population is estimated at 28 million). The original statistic also excludes illiteracy among the age group 15 - 20 which could represent a significant number, especially under circumstances where high numbers of school-aged black youths are out of school-- growing up into poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. It is also important to realise that if a black person did not achieve literacy in the first fifteen years of his/her life, the chances for that person to become literate decreases.⁷

By international standards, which stipulate six years of schooling for full literacy, illiteracy in South Africa among the blacks might even be higher. According to the 1985 government survey, 66% of the blacks have reached only standard 3 (Grade 5) or less.⁶ The 1990 figure has been estimated at 74%!

Most important, although the criteria for literacy require literacy in one language, blacks need literacy in at least one of the official languages (English or Afrikaans) in order to survive economically in South African society. However, for the greater part of the black population, the official languages can be regarded as foreign or third languages, because their second language is usually another African language. I will elaborate this point later in this chapter.

From these statistics and information, it is abundantly clear that many black adults do not have the general educational skills needed to benefit from training programs beyond a very basic level. For this reason, there is an urgent need to focus on non-formal education, especially adult literacy at basic compensatory levels.

(II) LITERACY WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although adult literacy work has operated and continues to operate in South Africa, it has suddenly gained wide attention from different agencies, owing to the social,

political and economic effects of illiteracy. The main agencies currently involved in literacy provision are the state, the corporate sector, the NGO's and the trade unions. Their attitudes to literacy work seem to differ from one another. The philosophical orientation of the state and corporate sector toward literacy can best be conceptualised as the human capital tradition, while the NGO's' orientations can be divided into the Laubach tradition and the conscientisation traditions. The trade unions, although not directly involved in literacy provision, are participating actively in policy discussions and research.

The Human Capital Tradition:

State Provision:

The modernisation theory or "developmentalist" ideology, originated in South Africa in the 1960's as an integral part of industrialisation. Literacy within this ideology is defined according to economic development. Literacy (functional) remains strongly associated with a level of skills, which will enable the individual to operate efficiently in performing routine literacy in the apartheid capitalist system. Literacy in one of the official languages is an integral part of this approach.

Prior to the apartheid capitalist development of the 1960's, in which farming and mining were dominant, the economy was dependent on cheap black labour. Wolpe and Legassick argue

that a black working class was necessary for high economic returns, especially after the Second World War, and also was important to allow whites to gain a higher standard of living.⁹ The black labour force was largely uneducated and unskilled, easily replaceable in occupational structures, especially from the Bantustans (homelands) which provide the labour reserves. This labour force was also vulnerable to intense repression, criminal prosecution and dismissal in the event of strikes. By the mid 1960's apartheid was almost completely implemented, especially after the ferocious repression of the oppositional black liberation movement. Instrumental to apartheid was the maintenance of a cheap and controlled labour force, and a high rate of exploitation under conditions of increased capital intensification and changes in the character of the majority rural and minority urban labour forces.¹⁰ However, with the rapid expansion in industrialisation, a particular racialised form of economy emerged. In the early 1970's when the illiterate black proletariat was well established, the state identified skill shortages which were detrimental to economic advance (high illiteracy and unemployment were major problems; the gold price dropped from \$800 to \$300; and 95,655 skilled jobs were available).¹¹ Job reservation legislation necessary to incorporate the white working class, especially the Afrikaner, in the early phase of class struggle in the 1960's, failed because the rapid expansion of employment in manufacturing and

the unavailability of white skilled manpower, blocked the development of production. The government failed to fill these skilled shortages which were reserved for whites, although they emphasised vocationalisation and technicalisation of school curriculum for whites, as well as increasing immigration of whites.¹² Bantu education became a site of conflict between industry and the state because industry and commerce suffered the consequences of the prevailing black educational order. The government was forced by these circumstances to develop an ideological framework that would allow them to maintain control over a majority black working class, while satisfying the economic needs with cheap black labour. Hyslop argues that:

industry saw the skill shortages as both crisis and opportunity; it wanted not so much to replace white artisans with black artisans as to replace expensive skilled white workers as far as possible with cheaper, semi-skilled forms of black labour.¹³

The state instituted controlling measures by means of two processes as part of a deracialisation process: (1) they hesitantly recruited a black middle class, and (2) they stratified workers within the workplace, which would ensure that a large black working class would remain. I will discuss later in this chapter these processes as part of working class reproduction.

Modernisation required a more stable and better trained productive labour force with major emphasis on the fragmentation of skilled labour and semi-skilled work. Basic

literacy levels (functional literacy) became "an absolute requisite" for an efficient functioning labour market.¹⁴ Ironically, with high illiteracy in the 1970's, the government failed to launch a literacy campaign as a prerequisite to rapid economic growth (According to UNESCO a 80% national adult literacy rate is required for rapid economic development).¹⁵ Instead, the government focused its attention on the education of the smaller urban black population, particularly at secondary and technical levels. In this way the government could sustain classical Bantu education and have greater control over the reproduction process and the reserve labour force. The government also responded with small scale literacy programs in the form of night schools. These literacy classes were identical to formal black schooling, providing certification and equivalent qualifications. The teaching of the vernacular and the two official languages remained an important component of the curriculum.

Today, the state remains the largest provider of literacy programs accounting for 90% of the literacy programs. Adult education is provided through numerous departments including the Prison, Population and Development, Forestry and Water Affairs, Electricity Supply Commission, Human Science Research Council, Rural Foundation and the Department of Education and Training (DET).¹⁶ The DET remains the largest provider with an annual enrolment of approximately 12,000. These programs can be described as continuing education (with a literacy

component) which provide formal school qualifications or equivalences from Standard Two (Grade 4) to Matric (Grade 12). When all is said and done however, statistics indicate that: (1) 1% of illiterates are involved in existing programs; (2) only 0.41% are effectively helped; (3) the drop out rate is higher than 60%.¹⁷ These literacy and continuing education programs have been criticised by educators. The authoritarian curriculum and the conservative methodology characteristic of the formal system do not provide a suitable learning environment for adults. Another criticism is that the programs do not assist learners to cope with their daily lives or work situations.¹⁸ It was suggested that a department should be created by the government that would deal specifically with literacy provision.¹⁹

The Corporate Sector:

The corporate sector provides mainly functional literacy programs which it believe will bring immediate economic returns. Currently, functional literacy provision operates within the mining sector in such companies as GENMIN, Barlow Rand Group of Mines and others. These groups employ consultants for the administration of literacy programs (eg., READ, Litsa, and Operation Upgrade).

The learning of English as a Second Language has taken on a special prominence in the industrial sphere and is frequently confused with literacy. Generally, the programs set

high standards for teacher selection, with tertiary education as a prerequisite. Despite this factor, it is the content of the programs that is important to analyse. Programs focus predominantly on language skills, specifically English, with literacy and numeracy as secondary concerns. These courses are material-oriented with detailed prescriptive lessons, drill and repetition. There is also an emphasis on oral and speech exercises, before literacy is introduced.

Both language and numeracy bear a strong job-oriented vocabulary geared to increase "worker effectiveness". This was reported by teachers who felt that courses were obviously designed to raise worker productivity.²⁰ The courses follow a strongly functional approach, geared to company language and work activities. Even consultants hired to develop courses are expected to "learn the company language" and to incorporate this in the course design.²¹

A major issue involved in the course is the unclear distinction between literacy and the teaching of English as a Second Language. Teachers felt that training placed an overwhelming emphasis on English grammar in isolation while literacy and numeracy are neglected. Many adult basic education workers tend to believe that they can teach people to speak a second or foreign language by teaching them to read and write in that language. On the contrary, language learning is a complex process which requires sophisticated knowledge

and skills, which many companies think could be taught in, for instance, 100 hours.²²

It is thus clear that the purpose of literacy in the workplace is largely functional. Industry's major interest in literacy is related to the facilitation of communication and training which lead to higher productivity and greater economic advance. This functional purpose that literacy has assumed has been described by French as "disappointing", apparently aiming to create a black petty bourgeoisie.²³ These programs have also been described by Prinsloo and Hutton as technical, ignoring social and cultural factors particularly. According to Prinsloo and Hutton, (white) experts conceive of literacy learners as ignorant, leading difficult and dreary existences without context and direction, and this is reflected by the key feature of the approach to literacy programs and its design.²⁴

(III) ANALYSING THE LIMITED INTEREST OF THE STATE AND CORPORATE SECTOR

Adult literacy provided by the state and the corporate sector focuses mainly on continuing education and vocational and technical skills training as the imperatives of human capital tradition. This tradition shows congruency with apartheid capitalist ideology and its investment in racially segregated human resource development. The state's limited commitment to adult literacy and the emphasis on "training"

are ideological measures to preserve the status quo, therefore ensuring the reproduction of a majority (urban and rural) illiterate black working class as an important component of apartheid capitalism. In the case of adult literacy, it is simply a matter of controlling and restricting the access of adults to education, literacy and training.

(1) Limited Financial Provision:

Adult literacy in South Africa remains the most marginal educational activity. This is reflected by the current provision and the budget allocated to adult education. The budget for adult literacy in 1980 was less than 1% of the total education budget for blacks, while, for instance, the budget for defence spending and subsidised loans to white farmers, formed a significant portion of the national budget.²⁵ Furthermore, state adult education through the DET has fallen sharply in recent years. In 1988 for example, 13,000 out of a total enrolment of 104,000, acquired literacy skills. However, in 1990, the total enrolment dropped to 67,000 of which only 10,000 acquired literacy.²⁶ Between the period 1988 to 1990, the number of centres through which learners were reached, was also reduced from 390 to 258.²⁷ This slow "growth and the low-profile status within [adult] educational policy formation should be attributed particularly to the socio-economic characteristics and structural location of the potential clientele, and that clientele's lack of power".²⁸ The clientele of adult literacy in South Africa

consists mainly of the "voiceless" or "second class" citizens. By ignoring the importance of an effective framework for literacy provision, the government indicates that the reproduction of a large black working class as a source of cheap labour remains part of carefully designed policy of segregated socio-economic development.

(2) The Formal System: The Only Route To Literacy

It is important to realise how "literacy" is understood in relation to "training" and "education". In South Africa, literacy is officially regarded as education, and training not. Therefore, literacy is not the responsibility of industry, but rather the responsibility of the education departments. South Africa is regarded as a certification-oriented society, with the result that the formal schooling system is perceived as the only entrance for the illiterate to the mainstream of society. This certification-approach has also been described by the Riekert and Wiehahn Commission as crucially important, especially for blacks in order to compete with whites for employment and salary parity.²⁹ However, this schooling system reflects, in provision and structure, an overt inadequacy to deal effectively with the problem of illiteracy. In addition, the education generally provided through the DET has been rejected and labelled as inferior Bantu education by the same people who are now supposed to be served by it. In short, a recognised standard of literacy can

only be achieved via the oppressive and discriminatory education system.

(3) Industries: Lack of Training Opportunities:

The view that literacy properly belongs to the domain of education partially affects the contribution that industries can make in the struggle against illiteracy. Yet illiteracy hampers training. Since 1981, companies that embarked on industrial training for the purpose of advancement and the creation of skilled labour, qualified for substantial tax concessions. In order to receive these cash grants, companies had to submit the program for approval and evaluation. If these programs met the departmental requirements, concessions were granted, but if the program constituted "literacy" and thus "education", it was not eligible for any incentives. For this reason many companies perceived literacy more as a consumption expenditure than an investment, because they believe that literacy certainly does not have the high private and social return rate compared to other educational modalities. Production is more highly valued than training. This is reflected by the average expenditure of less than 2% allocated to training, compared to an average of 5% in most other countries.³⁰

Recently, as the result of amendments to the Manpower Training Act (1990), companies lost the tax incentives and cash grants; therefore training is now also viewed as a cost and not as an investment in human resources. The few larger

companies that introduced literacy courses, realising that illiteracy blocks training and economic advance, are plagued with problems such as irregular attendance and high drop-out rate, a concern that will be discussed later.

(4) Setting High Educational Requirements:

Another way of controlling access to skill training is the tendency to set higher formal educational requirements, with emphasis on mathematics and science subjects as prerequisites. Such requirements are beyond the educational qualifications of many black adults. Ironically, even young black matriculants who enter technical institutions realise that the employer would rather accept an apprentice instead of a qualified artisan. In this way many technically trained people simply rejoin the ranks of the unemployed. A statistic released by the HSRC (1987) shows that only 25% of trained unemployed people, including all races, received jobs.³¹ Even with the current MOSGAS (discovery of oil) project, the South Africa government would rather import technical workers from overseas at a high cost instead of utilising or training local talent.

(5) Ignoring Informally Acquired Skills:

It is also evident that large numbers of workers are performing skilled labour because of years of experience. These "unskilled" workers performing highly skilled work are complaining because highly educated technicians and engineers are taught by them in order to become productive, but there is

no financial recognition for this service or their experiences. It is important to realise at this point how a "skill" has become an ideological tool of the human capital tradition. According to Trapido (1971), much skilled labour performed by blacks is categorised as unskilled, and paid unskilled wages. Furthermore, the teaching of skills remain purely technical and with the aim to socialise blacks into values such as diligence and punctuality.

(6) Stratification and the Role of the Black Middle Class:

A recent survey (1987) conducted by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) shows that the selection of trainees involved certain processes which link to the creation of new social strata. NUMSA reported that: (1) management selects individuals for literacy courses; (2) trade unions have no access to planning, implementation, developing and monitoring of courses; (3) there is no link between training and progression in terms of clear career paths; (4) although courses are relevant to the workplace, they are linked to management, eg., learners are taught slogans such as "I must work hard"; (5) no modular approach to literacy exists so that there is no clear possibility for advancement; and (6) courses are not recognised as credits or equivalent to formal school standards, with the result that the learner can not enter the formal education system.³² These processes point to the creation of stratified labour within the workplace (i.e. a black middle class). This process came into effect even

before 1981 when the De Lange Commission (dominated by the Broederbond) attempted to renegotiate the racial component of state ideology. The De Lange Commission proposed reforms which would streamline the existing education, substituting for the existing system technical and vocational education. Peter Buckland gives a succinct analysis of this ideological restructuring of educational policy. The restructuring of policy aimed to replace the existing policy with a new authority legitimated by: (1) scientific research and the (white) expert view; (2) technocratic language so that technological advancement, industrial expansion and development are expressed in the language which is part of the capitalist social order; (3) silence on the deskilling and dehumanising consequences of technological advance; and (4) silence on the role of the school in maintaining and perpetuating structures of domination and exploitation.³³ As part of a deracialisation process, a small black middle class was created to remove some of the blatant forms of discrimination and oppression for a handful of blacks. However, the division of labour and the progressive deskilling and increasing subordination of manual labour along racial lines were ensured. This division was sustained through an ideology of stratification within the workplace, ensuring white upward mobility in the workplace and sustaining exploitative unskilled black manual labour through technological mechanisation. Stratification was easily

sustained by the racist education of which blacks' access to technical education was effectively controlled by the schooling system. This means that the black education system did not prepare them for technical and vocational jobs. Christie and Collins describe the introduction at a later stage of technical and vocational education for blacks, as a strategy to replace manual labour training.³⁴ Advanced technological mechanisation in the workplace brought about job fragmentation, and it also demanded greater flexibility from the workforce. Even highly skilled jobs are fragmented through traditional Taylorist practices, and this is taught by the "sitting next to Nelly" or "do as I tell you" approaches. This job fragmentation gave rise to the development of narrow technical competencies (eg., maintenance of machinery). Job fragmentation mobilised more blacks into these narrow skilled labour jobs, which resulted in reduced wage rates as an essential component in reproducing the working class.

The manipulation of the petty bourgeoisie for greater control over the black workforce is another important process in the workplace. Over the last 20 years, and more specifically in the 80's workers' strikes have been a common manifestation of workers' discontent and resistance. Most strikes continue to be over wages, and most unions, if there is one, have yet to attain the goal of a living wage. The black middle class became an important tool to: (1) make communication within the workplace effective; (2) monitor

black workers' nationalist ideology, and to exploit and utilise it in order to neutralise workers discontent; (3) promote greater class differentiation among blacks; and (4) cool out workers' grievances, strikes and work stoppages.³⁵

(7) Resistance in the Workplace:

Workers' resistance to training in the workplace has been visible since the early 1970's. Participation in the Soweto revolt led many workers to resist wage labour, widely perceived by the working class as a form of slavery. The interrelatedness of workplace resistance and community unrest both involving intense struggle, revealed that the "experience of racial/national oppression is inseparable from that of their class exploitation".³⁶ Street-resistance culture, work-based resistance and hostel-based resistance, were marked by restricted output, absenteeism, dodging of work and "trying to gain as much as possible from the world of slavery".³⁷ This resistance to increased productivity and the "free market system" is clearly a reaction to the inherent exploitation of apartheid capitalism. Although this resistance fostered a degree of political consciousness, it ensured that many blacks remained as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers with insufficient literacy skills. This shows that the workplace is a place where class organisation, consciousness and action are immanent, but it is also the place where capital disorganises, dehumanises and degrades the proletariat.³⁸

The analysis of black working class illiteracy must to be viewed within the larger political and ideological conditions of complex capital accumulation in South Africa. The description given above of the studies shows that the restructuring of education to technological needs, aims to reproduce the illiterate black population. The central idea of functional literacy or skill acquisition "appears to be as much to intensify ideological control over workers and to wed them more firmly into capitalist values as it is to provide for South Africa's manpower needs".³⁹

(IV) EMERGENCE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS:

In response to the government's minimal and ideology-specific interest in adult literacy education, voluntary NGO's have emerged in order to address the high illiteracy among the disempowered. The emergence of NGO's is undoubtedly a result of the socio-political context of the literacy crisis and can be described as a part of the resistance or counter-hegemonic movement of civil organisations in an ongoing ideological struggle.

In contrast to the state's approach, most of the NGO's ascribe to the conscientisation tradition. Literacy work through this tradition is no longer seen as an investment in human capital but rather as a collective act of cultural liberation; education to liberate the learner, a process of group-based self enlightenment; understanding the personal

experience and recognising the social, political and economic forces of which personal experiences are part. However, a smaller group uses the Laubach method which has been widely criticised for the stimulus-response (behaviourist) theory which informs its methodology.

A third bureaucratic NGO-type operates in a more neutral sphere with common features such as (1) commitment to no particular political affiliation; (2) focus in the private sector; and (3) certification with links to the formal education system.⁴⁰ Although all these NGO's are playing important roles in literacy provision, the focus here is on the conscientisation tradition because it tends to provide literacy work within a specific political framework.

The Conscientisation Tradition:

In the late 1980's the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC) was formed as the coordinating body for all literacy work that takes place among the conscientisation⁴¹ projects. In 1989 fourteen such projects for blacks only were operating across the country as members of the NLC except, in the Orange Free State.

In 1989 the National Education Coordinating Committee's (NECC) national conference under the theme "Consolidate and Advance to People's Education", with the subtheme "Literacy and Numeracy for All" recognised the role of the NLC in literacy provision and in locating adult education within

developing an understanding of "People's Education for People's Power". The affiliation of the NLC to the Mass Democratic Movement was also raised. Although it was strongly felt by most of the participants at the conference that the NLC should affiliate to the MDM, the issue remained undecided.

In April 1992, a major adult literacy body, South African Association of Literacy and Adult Education (SAALAE), was launched at a conference in Johannesburg, with twin themes "Empowerment to the Oppressed" and "Taking Literacy to the Oppressed". The conference was attended by approximately 100 organisations including NLC affiliates. Three important concerns raised at the conference were the importance of recognising the danger of "elitist" taking over development initiatives, second, the fear that the SAALAE would duplicate existing work, and the fear that division of literacy and adult education work might occur.

The NLC as the progressive coordinating body is experiencing a large number of interrelated problems in facilitating and providing effective programs throughout the country. These problems should be understood in relation to the repressive socio-political context in which literacy work is still being undertaken. It should also be understood in terms of how the ideological, social and political forces in the country make accessibility difficult, because there are many barriers and deterrents to participation. Before I look

at the barriers to participation, I want to focus on the intertwined difficulties experienced by literacy projects.

Finance:

As part of the counter-hegemonic resistance to the state, NGO's function within a repressive climate which devises increasingly sophisticated strategies to contain opposition and to promote survival. It is obvious that mutual fears and suspicions between the state and the NGO's exist. Picon (1991) lists a number of such antagonist perceptions that exist between state and NGO's which are relevant to the South African context.⁴² The state's repressive apparatuses, such as the Disclosure of Foreign Funding Act and the Fundraising Act, which affect all organisations receiving funding from abroad, and from other smaller companies and political organisations, is one example of the NGO's diverse problems. Most NGO's are dependent on financial assistance, and renewed funding depends on the evaluation of the projects. NGO's are vulnerable to such criteria especially in light of the intertwined factors that influence adult participation and the organisation of the projects. In a society shaped by political turbulence and instability, NGO's are the first organisations that lose financial support. In the past, literacy projects were stopped because of political upheavals in the country. This means that funders have to be content with such conditions in which literacy provision is undertaken.

Tutors and Training:

The tutors in NGO literacy programs are either full-time or part-time volunteers, and others delegated by their trade unions. They come from diverse educational, class and racial backgrounds. The characteristics of tutors also differ from program to program. Certain programs use only volunteers while others prefer part-time tutors. Tutors in one project, Learn and Teach (L & T), which employs approximately 150 tutors, indicated a distinct difference between English and Vernacular tutors. The English tutors are all white middle class individuals who expect no salary for their work, while the Vernacular tutors are paid blacks, mostly housewives and other domestic workers. L & T and other progressive projects also prefer the involvement of trade union members as tutors. Although trade union officials agree in principle with the importance of literacy work, they are unable to deliver tutors from their memberships in substantial, organised and reliable fashion. Other political issues seem to enjoy priority over literacy. The number of tutors involved in any one project ranges from 13 to 150.

Unfortunately, the programs experience a number of problems with their tutor system. Most of the projects are plagued with uncommitted and poorly paid tutors with little time for literacy work. For this reason NGOs have introduced a salary scheme for the volunteers in order to increase commitment, continuity and expertise. However, there is still

a high turnover rate. The tutoring also requires preparation which is often not done. Many projects find it easier to recruit white volunteer workers while black tutors are desperately needed. This results in literacy projects that are understaffed, unskilled and poorly resourced. Generally, tutor training is limited and rudimentary because literacy work in South Africa remains uninstitutionalised, voluntary and unsupported. There is a severely limited professional expertise available in the country. Consequently limited advance training and skill development are available for learners. Many tutor trainers are individuals with no professional training who must draw from their experiences in literacy tutoring as the only source of understanding literacy work. NGO's provide their tutors with a training session. These sessions are usually done over different periods of time. Certain programs provide a one week fulltime training course (eg.,L & T and English Research Unit), while others provide one or two morning workshops (eg.,Using Spoken and Written English). In other cases there is no training at all.

These issues which make tutor training an urgent need certainly exceed the capacity of many literacy programs because of staffing shortages. It is quite obvious that these shortages could easily result in the high exodus of tutors. There seem to arise a need for training facilities for literacy teachers as well as a support system for tutors. Tutors need to be conceptualised as a specific group within a

literacy program, with needs for training, and for organisational and pedagogical support, incentives and a distinct voice.⁴³

Methodology:

The development of congruent methodologies for an emancipatory theory of literacy is an important component in literacy administration. The NGO's affiliated to the NLC use slightly different approaches. These approaches seem to be influenced by language policy. It is believed that the same methods used to teach vernacular do not work successfully in the teaching of English as a Second Language.

Tutors often have a limited general education or social awareness and a limited capacity to guide learners toward a critical understanding of their own situations. They are sensitised to the socio-political context learners encounter as illiterates and as blacks in South Africa. Many tutors and learners are politically unaware, and in some cases tutors have questioned why such a radical methodology is needed. They fail to see the value of developing learners' and tutors' critical consciousness'.

L & T focuses on experiential learning and the learners' real life situations. Codification and decodification⁴⁴ of context based themes by means of photographs are widely used by L & T. This program believes in learners' dialogic participation in concrete problem-solving issues. The thematic

codification and decodification methodology is believed to work well with the vernacular languages because of its syllabic structure⁴⁵. The use of syllable charts developed by L & T is somewhat problematic. In some cases it was noted that word building tended to go on indefinitely without the learner developing reading and writing habits that are embedded in real-use context.⁴⁶ This delay in reading and writing as a result of prolonged phonetic drills causes frustrations in the learners and criticism of the method has called for a whole language approach to literacy.

Most of the other progressive autonomous literacy projects, such as USWE, which developed in association with L & T, uses a similar methodology. However, administrators at USWE felt that research and development on first language methodology is stagnating, with dependency on initial training and materials developed years ago.⁴⁷ This feeling should also be viewed with regard to the concept of English as a Second Language as the focus of development in both provision and tutor training and support. Although mother tongue instruction remains urgent, the emphasis on English as a Second Language should be understood in terms of the historic denial of access for Africans to the language of power and economic mobility. Many Africans opt for English as a Second Language because of the desire to enter the dominant social and economic domain.

An important aspect of the conscientisation methodology is that it seems as if a greater number of tutors do not fully

understand the methodology. A further difficulty is that because tutors are often not politically conscious, many of them need a longer period of training or even a university education in literacy education. Methods for training tutors need critical scrutiny in order to provide large scale literacy provision in the country.

USWE has lately developed an alternative by introducing the whole language approach, which is used in Canadian literacy programs. The method is applied to literacy learners with the aim to develop critical consciousness of the social context and conditions. The method is learner-centred, and the focus is on meaning and comprehension. It allows for creativity in the learner tutor relationship as well as breaking from the traditional repetitive stimulus-response methodology.

This method is new and flexible and the results are still to be produced. Penny Morell (University of Cape Town) spoke enthusiastically about the advances made by USWE in Cape Town. From her personal observation this method has proven to be promising and effective in a one-to-one relationship or in a group session. However, it demands a well-designed training course for tutors in order to prepare them as critical and competent analysts of learners' writing and reading.

Elda Lyster's experience with the introduction of the whole language approach in tutor training shows that two weeks of training is not sufficient to develop an understanding of

this method. According to Lyster the tutors reverted to the mechanical application of new methods which were only intended as guidelines.⁴⁸ This reversion is influenced by the authoritarian teacher-learner relationship, which is part of the participants' own experiences as students in the formal schooling system.

Another method under discussion revolves around the teaching of English as a Second Language. L & T has adapted the teaching of English as a Second Language to the conscientisation tradition but other progressive literacy programs such as English Research Unit (ERU), found this method unusable at basic English as a Second Language levels. ERU recommended a more systematic approach.⁴⁹

Although L & T's basic English course is still used, there is a need to produce more materials, especially with a rural focus. This seems to be hampered by the inexperience of English as Second Language tutors who have no training in linguistics or English as a Second Language course writing. ERU wants the National Literacy Co-operation to take responsibility in the production of a core syllabus for English as a Second Language.

Libraries and Materials:

Another area of great concern is the development of relevant materials and the role of the library as a resource centre. Since 1980, literacy programs have developed some

materials for learners. There is a significant group of projects, including most of the progressive projects, involved in the development of learner-relevant materials. Organisations such as the South African Committee of Higher Education, Ravan Press, English Literacy Project, L & T Publications and universities are developing materials on different topics which range from history, biographies and women's issues to innovative cartoons on social issues. Despite these contributions, the production of materials is still an urgent concern.

The production of materials is further influenced by other constraints, such as what the content should be, its congruency to methodology and tutor training, the lack in trained linguists especially in vernacular languages, and the development of materials with a rural focus. Materials available tend to have an urban and sexist bias which is not suitable to rural learners and teachers. There is also greater emphasis on English as a Second Language materials while materials in vernacular media are a great need. ERU which reduced its literacy work in order to concentrate specifically on tutor training and the development of materials, is experimenting with materials in order to develop its own basic English course. The learners, however, do not have a part in the development of the materials. It is obvious that the need for learner materials is urgent, but this should be viewed in relation to the overall problems of literacy projects.

In light of these concerns, libraries have been approached with the request that they focus attention on this aspect. In response to International Literacy Year (1990), the South African Institute of Librarianship and Informational Science met with library organisations in order to define the role of libraries in the struggle against illiteracy. It is widely known that libraries in South Africa are not only inaccessible to many, but also an environment alienating to illiterate adults especially. Inaccessibility is further increased by time schedules, membership fees, location and socio-political barriers. It was recommended by the NECC that libraries should: (1) provide accommodation for tutoring; (2) provide books on tape and other adult materials in a "Easy Books for Adults" section; (3) provide large print materials; (4) display posters with literacy information services; (5) extend literacy classes to hospitals; and (6) to produce more materials in vernacular languages. To boost the national contribution to resource development, a nationwide competition was suggested with the hope that the materials could be published for learners' use.⁵⁰

(V) DETERRENTS TO PARTICIPATION

Adult learners in South Africa tend to be accommodated "by concession rather than by a deliberate policy [which would encourage] their participation".⁵¹ Opportunity is thus

restricted and in order to foster commitment to adult learning, an adequate policy framework is needed.

While adult education in the First and many Third World countries seem to progress, it remains embryonic in South Africa. Therefore the necessary research that would explain the effects of ideological forces which shape the lives of adult education's victims, particularly with regard to deterrents to participation, is deficient. To give an account of the deterrents to participation, the writer will draw from that research conducted in other countries which is transferable to the South African context. It is of particular importance to understand the barriers to participation because the vast majority (99%) of the potential literacy clientele do not participate and the drop-out rate is extremely high. Darkenwald and Merriam (1985) argue that the decisions of "individuals' not to participate in organised adult education is typically due to the combined or synergistic effects of multiple deterrents, rather than just one or two in isolation".⁵² I will focus on deterrents which are most dominant and important in the specific socio-political context of the black illiterate of South Africa.

(1) Situational Barriers:

A recent research conducted by Judy Huang (1992) indicated that there is indeed a need to focus on the larger social forces in society influential to adult participation

instead of focusing on the individual.⁵³ The illiterate clientele of South Africa continues to live in a distinct culture of poverty which represents the basis of their inability to participate in adult literacy or basic adult education. Extreme poverty and deprivation (including lack of schooling) in rural areas and the homelands as part of the political ideology prevents participation and contributes to the already high illiteracy rate. Situational barriers include a large number of factors, but the most obvious include geographic isolation, lack of transportation, time schedules and child care.⁵⁴ These are determined by the repressive apparatuses of the racist state (eg., Group Areas Act etc.). Situational barriers should also be viewed in relation to institutional barriers which are also prevalent in South African society.

(2) Psychological Barriers:

Black illiterate adults inherited an "inferior" and "gutter" Bantu education as the major ideological tool shaping specific psychological, psychosocial and attitudinal barriers. Not only does the racist education system shapes a psychological inferiority complex in adults and youths, but it also operates to maintain and to reinforce negative attitudes to lifelong learning. Disadvantaged and working class illiterates, whose roles in society have been defined and sustained by apartheid education policies, see limited

opportunities for themselves. Thus, to understand fully these barriers, and how they could be overcome, more research is needed. It is evident that some of the barriers are surmountable because some working class adults do participate in programs.

(3) Resistance and Reluctance to Participate:

Allan Quigley's work (1992) demonstrates resistance and reluctance to participate in literacy classes. Quigley's contribution shows that beneath situational/institutional barriers "lay[s] a resistance to literacy as either unacceptable or irrelevant".⁵⁵ He mentions four resister types; personal/emotional, ideological/cultural, and irrelevance and the older learner as most important. These resister types are relevant to the South African working class illiterates. It is clear that blacks have resisted the inferior and illegitimate Bantu education for decades and are reluctant to participate in literacy, especially that provided through the DET. A similar resistance is present in the workplace.

(4) Informational Barriers:

NGO's have been criticised by trade unions in the following ways. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) felt that: (1) courses are not clearly defined in terms of levels with each level covering clear skills and

competencies, therefore, there is no clear route for progression; (2) no clear direction and real involvement from unions; (3) no linkages to work-based skills; (4) no ongoing assessment of progress and no progress and no possibility of incentives to gain recognition (certification) for progression; (5) no linkage to large scale work because of reliance on sophisticated teachers and a needs-based approach to learning; and (6) NGO's are not widely known.⁵⁶

These criticisms include different reasons for non-participation. Another reason for non-participation relates to the nature of the programs. Torres argues that the human capital tradition fails to: (1) address the needs of the poor and the increasingly marginalised; (2) close the gap between traditional and advanced production; and (3) attract people because the economic returns of its training is insufficient.⁵⁷ Becoming literate does not mean a person will get a job. Many blacks who have completed matriculation do not have jobs, and literacy certainly does not provide them with it.

From this analysis it becomes clear that literacy remains a low priority for the state and corporate sector, while NGO's can only contribute minimally. It is quite clear that a national campaign should be undertaken, especially considering the far-reaching social, political and economic consequences of illiteracy. However, regardless of how urgent it might seem, a national campaign is certainly not on the agenda of

the present regime, which is embarking on a process of slow reform. Even if a national campaign is undertaken, it would most likely be rejected or treated with widespread suspicion and distrust by the illiterate clientele. Furthermore, as I have expressed, such a venture is contradictory to the system of apartheid which depends for its existence on a largely black illiterate population.

Although adult literacy is perceived as the responsibility of the state, it is urgent that the Mass Democratic Movement attend to this great political phenomenon. It is widely known that successful campaigns were conducted following a revolution and that a committed government with a strong political will is needed. However, literacy in South Africa can no longer wait and the need to campaign for its development is greater than ever. Thus I would suggest that the MDM must give a national campaign serious consideration. Such a campaign would provide the illiterate masses with a profound political experience within the overall struggle for liberation. In this process, the illiterate clientele could be prepared for participation in the creation of new social, political and economic structures of a democratic society.

In the following two chapters, I shall provide a social policy model for literacy, specifically for the MDM, and show how such a policy could be implemented in order to wage a struggle against illiteracy.

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CHAPTER THREE

EMANCIPATORY LITERACY: NORMATIVE CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN EMERGENT NEW SOUTH AFRICA

In the previous chapters, I have attempted to show that illiteracy is a complex phenomenon which cannot be separated from race and class exploitation. As I have pointed out, the state is not inclined to address the intertwined social and political injustices associated with illiteracy.

In this chapter, I will argue that any successful literacy campaign must be an integral part of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). In the first section of this chapter, I will show that adult literacy has an important role to play in the struggle in the redistribution of power. I will also argue that the role of literacy is congruent with the political theory of the MDM. This will be followed by a section in which I will develop an approach to literacy that will hopefully lead to the empowerment of illiterates. In the concluding section I will outline an approach to learning which harmonises with my vision of an emancipatory literacy project.

(I): ADULT LITERACY AS PART OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

An emancipatory literacy project in South Africa requires "a counter-hegemonic struggle in the Gramscian sense to the degree it could lead to an alternative ideological framework that subverts the dominant patterns of thought and action,

[and] that challenges myths surrounding the vulnerability of the status quo".¹ To develop an understanding of the role of adult literacy congruent with the political will of the MDM, one has to understand how the political economy (distribution of power) of adult literacy is shaped by apartheid capitalism and also how it relates to the major theoretical currents within the MDM. To explain this I will use Marxist analysis as a guide to place adult literacy within the political and economic context of South Africa. My ultimate aim is to show that "the theory for social policy formation is not only concerned with the welfare of individuals or groups, but with the redistribution of power between groups in [South African] society".² Marxist analysis, given its sensitivity to class relations and domination, holds great potential to illuminate complex dynamics of apartheid capitalism.

Marxist Theory and Adult Literacy:

According to Marxist theory "any given society is a historical product undergoing a process of change".³ The source of change is influenced by the economic structure and the political conflict between classes. The fundamental characteristic of Marxism is the historic mode of production--the production of social relations which resulted in the division of society into classes and the struggle of these classes against one another. The theory also explains the political economy which originates from this struggle and the

consequent division of society and how the distribution of political power is reflected by an economy characterised by a minority having ownership of the means of production and the majority being dependent for their subsistence on wage labour - the division between mental and manual labour; a terrain of domination and subordination.

Here I want to reiterate that the subordinate class in South Africa is constituted by a majority black illiterate working class and that the reproduction of class/race relations is a result of a combination of ideological state apparatuses and organised violence within the larger context of capital accumulation. The white ruling class, as the dominant economic class, is therefore involved in the exploitation of black labour in the process of capital accumulation. This gives South Africa an endemic capitalist character, namely apartheid capitalism, which requires a large black workforce in order to maintain white domination. This means that adult literacy policy formation cannot be divorced from the political and economic context in South Africa because it is affected by the political and economic demands of apartheid capitalism. For instance, the formal education system for blacks has been developed and sustained to serve racial capitalist accumulation, while adult education has been used to legitimate the existing asymmetrical distribution of power. The limited provision of adult literacy by the state demonstrates that adult literacy serves the needs of apartheid

capitalism on the same basis as the formal schooling system. The political economy of adult literacy is clearly shaped by the ruling political class, whose power is anchored in the economic structure of apartheid capitalism. Thus, I would argue that illiteracy among black South Africans is a result of the apartheid capitalist system and must be contested by a counter-hegemonic movement.

Black working class illiteracy remains an essential component of white domination. However, illiteracy among the blacks, not only serves as justification for racial discrimination and profound injustices in the country, but it is also a growing threat to economic advance. The injustices, which remain the critical focus of the MDM, are reflected by the social malaise which is part and parcel of the apartheid capitalist system. Some of the most explicit social ills include: (1) increase in poverty - 16,5 million (59%) blacks are living below the poverty line⁴; (2) massive unemployment which is estimated at 7 million (45%); (3) overcrowded housing and squatter camps affecting 8 million (30%) people⁵; (4) fragmented families and the migrant labour system; (5) a high infant mortality rate of 52%; (6) the rapid growth of a "lost generation"; and (7) increasing violence and death... all fruits of historic oppression and exploitation of the black South African people. These social injustices cannot be separated from illiteracy because they are part of the

concrete forms of domination and asymmetrical relations of power that function to actively silence blacks.

Therefore, to overcome oppression and exploitation, a theory of adult literacy requires: (1) a social theory that will integrate literacy programs into the overlapping forms of collective resistance and struggles (class, race, gender and ethnicity); and (2) a political theory compatible with the ideal of a non-bureaucratic "peoples" society. In other words, literacy should be fought for from within a social movement, which is theoretically and practically connected to political and economic action. Therefore, adult literacy programs must be linked to organisations of political power that are determined to transform political, social and economic structures and aim to integrating people into new political, social and economic structures. Only as an integral component of a social movement will adult literacy, as an emancipatory project in South Africa, be able to translate into an effective social policy.

The Role Of Adult Literacy:

Literacy in South Africa is clearly a terrain of struggle and can only be overcome as a counter-ideological construct and a social movement. Several recognisable sources -- the unemployed, ethnic groups, trade unions, women's groups -- should pressurise the government, on the one hand, and the MDM, on the other. This is of cardinal importance because

individuals cannot participate in the political struggle effectively if they are illiterate. "An illiterate person" says Lenin, "stands outside politics".⁶ One has to remember that blacks have no political vote in South Africa. It is important that they are kept in a state of ignorance, or as Collins describes it, "kept in a state of immaturity" while their "critical powers of insight are left undeveloped".⁷ Literacy is a fundamental component of any further education and indispensable in the development of a critical consciousness. Therefore, literacy is crucial to the MDM and a central force in the political struggle for national liberation -- the liberation of the illiterate as a black and as the exploited worker.

The role of adult literacy is to provide illiterates with general, political and technical education in order for the black working class to advance their collective interests. As a social movement, literacy has to equip the illiterate with the necessary political education which is rooted in reflection upon the everyday experiences of exploitation, manipulation, powerlessness and oppression in communities and workplaces. Black illiterates require this political education to transcend the multiple forms of oppression. It is crucial that literacy be linked with the organised economic and political struggles of the people.

Adult literacy must also provide access to general education in order for adults to address the oppressive

factors involved in the destruction of community life. General education will also lay the foundation for any further education, such as technical education. These different forms of education will enable adults to participate actively in the transformation of the country to a democratic state. As active citizens they can then participate in building a strong economy. The MDM must, therefore, integrate adult literacy systematically into its political framework and action plans. To show that the struggle for literacy is as much a struggle for race/class liberation, I will turn briefly to the dominant tendencies of the MDM.

(II):THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF THE MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT:

Anti-apartheid work is fragmented in South Africa. Anti-apartheid forces emerged from genuine human needs, historical events and socio-political contradictions within South Africa. Over the last 30 years these forces suffered continuous state repression, but their resilience and determination to achieve liberal democracy have grown much stronger. In the 1980's these forces developed into a more cohesive social bloc. During the State of Emergency⁸ of 1988, after the banning of 20 anti-apartheid organisations, the Mass Democratic Movement was born to become a coherent subversive ideological power. Today the MDM, which is led by the African National Congress (ANC) in the struggle for a non-racial democratic South Africa, comprises hundreds of community organisations, trade

unions, the Communist Party, the Pan African Congress, professional groupings, sport organisations, student bodies and many more. With the rapid change in socio-economic and political conditions, these organisations find space to operate within the MDM. Education is but one of the many struggles in which the MDM is deeply involved.

The underlying theory of the multiple-layered struggle is clearly based on the exploitation and oppression of blacks as a race and a class. The political theory of the (MDM) comprises two main theoretical currents: (1) the division of society through the concept of race - the struggle for African nationalism or national liberation led by the African National Congress, and (2) the division of society into classes - the struggle against exploitation of the black working class led by the trade unions, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Let us examine briefly the two main theoretical currents.

(1) Nationalism: ANC:

The ANC argues that racial domination secures the conditions of capital accumulation; therefore capitalism in South Africa cannot exist except in a racialised form protected by white domination. Wolpe argues that in South Africa "capital relations are by definition inescapably capitalist and racial ... anti-racial or national struggle is necessarily also a struggle against the capitalist order".⁹

However, the ANC, which refers to South Africa as a "colonialism of a special type", recognises the class struggle through their thesis of a "two stage revolution".¹⁰ This "two stage revolution" is captured in the following statement:

The reality is that the chief content of the present phase of our revolution is national liberation of black people. It is actually impossible for South Africa to advance to socialism before the national liberation of the black oppressed nation...[To] proceed and say that the same nationalist struggle is also socialist in content is to make a real confusion.¹¹

The nationalists do recognise the role of the working class as a central force. But their focus is upon racial domination as the common denominator of the oppressed people. Hall summarises this point:

Race is thus, the modality ... in which class is 'lived', the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and fought through...¹²

Moreover, the nationalists argue that the situation of the black middle class cannot be adequately comprehended outside of race oppression. Joe Slovo describes this succinctly:

In any case of the black middle strata, class mobility cannot proceed beyond a certain point, again this point is defined in race rather than in economic terms.¹³

(2) Socialism: COSATU/SACP

The second theoretical current is that of socialism. The working class is regarded as the leading oppressed group because they are directly exploited by capitalism, and capable

of fighting the central forces of capital accumulation. Still, the socialists insist that the unity between national liberation and socialism is a strong one. This is clearly summarised in COSATU's statement:

The struggle against national oppression is inseparable from the struggle against capitalist exploitation. The unity of the working class based on the principle of non-racialism, democracy and worker's control is of paramount importance in our struggle. While we are involved in a struggle for national liberation, the true liberation can only be achieved through the economic and social transformation of our society to serve the interest of the working class. Workers in our country are not only striving for better conditions in the mines, factories, shops and farms, but also for a democratic socialist society controlled by the working class.¹⁴

Political unionism links workplace struggles with community and power issues.

These dialectical theories speak for themselves and indicate clearly the intertwined relationship between blacks as a race and as a class. These two tendencies were previously unified through the formation in 1983 of the United Democratic Front (UDF), which brought together more than 700 organisations, including trade unions, around a wide spectrum of social, political and economic issues. It is already clear from my analysis that the struggle for literacy must be linked concretely with the struggle against racial oppression and class exploitation. Thus, an emancipatory literacy must be fought for from these theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the MDM certainly has the potential and will to promote adult

literacy as a cornerstone in overcoming social, political and economic domination.

(3) "Peoples Education for People's Power"

A third, important movement, "People's Education for People's Power", originated in 1985 as a response to a deep economic, political and social crisis' in South Africa. People's Education focused its critique largely on the formal education system. Its philosophical perspective is best captured in Mkwatsha's statement:

Education and other structures in society, whether economic, political or social structures as a whole are completely intertwined, therefore, it is almost ridiculous to wage a struggle for democratic education and ignore the forces that are at work in society.¹⁵

People's Education has an overt political purpose-- education for liberation for active participation, self determination, collective action and social empowerment. People's Education has recognised adult literacy as a powerful force in the transformation of South Africa. It has emphasised the importance of eliminating illiteracy, ignorance and exploitation of anyone by another, and that workers must resist exploitation and oppression within the workplace.¹⁶ People's Education recognises that education stretches beyond the traditional boundaries of education, that education can give people greater control over their lives and also that it is necessary to educate workers to understand the processes of capital production-- therefore breaking the silence between

theoretical knowledge and practical life. People's Education, which is also affiliated to the MDM, certainly represents another strong movement that can play an important role in literacy work. Most mass organisations are actively involved in the promotion of People's Education.

(III):THE STRUGGLE FOR AN EMANCIPATORY LITERACY

The second component of the struggle for literacy is that it should be fought for as an emancipatory ideological construct. An emancipatory literacy should not only be meaningful as an empowering political and cultural construct, but it must also challenge the existing purposes that literacy has come to assume. The reason for such a critical and oppositional literacy emanates from the disempowering and oppressive implications of current and historic literacy ideology in South Africa. As I have shown in Chapters One and Two, literacy has been defined predominantly as functional or mechanical in order to adapt the African to serve the needs of the apartheid capitalist state, and stripped as a vehicle for critical reasoning. The dominant ideology of literacy, the instrumental ideology which celebrates the utilitarian and academic approaches of literacy, is acquired by black students through an inadequate education system, formal and non-formal. This functional literacy, dictated by the instrumental ideology, can be viewed from two angles: (1) blacks have to learn a second language in order to function within the

economic domain, and (2) the general education that they receive includes a certain level of literacy in order for them to perform their "subservient" roles in the society.

An instrumental ideology of literacy serves to denigrate the everyday life experiences and common sense of the oppressed. It also demeans and subjugates the "cultural capital"¹⁷ of the African people. Therefore, the acquisition of graphic and acoustic proficiencies in Afrikaans and English were never the medium of expressing the particular African experiences, but rather the fostering of skills, mastering of grammatical rules and appropriate values needed in the white dominated society. It is possible that this type of literacy is functionally unimportant in the daily lives of Africans, which means that even as children, blacks learned not to read.¹⁸ These forms of cultural alienation, defined by language practices, legitimate the cultural capital and values of the dominant group in society, while subjugating those of the "subservient" groups. Language plays an active role in organising and legitimising social practices available to various groups in society.¹⁹ Subservient groups are alienated when the white minority assumes that Afrikaans and English are "superior" languages and that they carry and communicate "superior" cultural capitals.

In contrast, a new emancipatory ideology of literacy must be rooted in the languages of the Africans, recognising the cultural capital of the African people and the socio-political

dimensions of literacy. Learning to read and write in the mother tongue is of critical importance, as it would give priority to the histories, cultures, race and genders of African subjectivities. It is important, as a liberating element of remembrance, to retrieve the culture and history of African subjectivity as an essential ingredient of an emancipatory theory.²⁰ Literacy should therefore recognise the historic lived experiences of people as well as recognising language as a race, class and experience-specific expression. Literacy must enable learners to make themselves present in history and to become actively involved in the construction and reconstruction of their worlds, and to understand how the political, economic and social events have shaped social problems such as illiteracy. They should understand that illiteracy is not a result of their own "ignorance" but a result of their exploitation and oppression as a race and a class. Reading and writing is therefore important in the development of a critical consciousness of their experiences, subjugated knowledge and the absence of their voices.

The significance of mother tongue literacy is noted by Freire, who argues that literacy should be "situated within the cultural reproduction [of people] and viewed as an integral part of the way in which people produce, transform and reproduce meaning".²¹ Freire mentions a number of essential advantages of mother tongue literacy in the

development of critical reflection, creativity and critical consciousness. Deficiency in mother-tongue language as a tool of analysis, illumination, self expression and communication is alienating and culturally disintegrating. Furthermore, the emphasis on mother tongue literacy is also the driving force behind enabling the oppressed to reconstruct their histories and cultures. This makes literacy more than simply being free; it becomes an active struggle for the reclamation of African history, voice and future. Therefore, literacy as part of the class/race struggle must be considered:

not just [as] the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but [as] a contribution to liberation of [humankind] and to [his/her] full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which [humankind] lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his [her] participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development... Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right.²²

Literacy from this perspective requires a congruent approach to learning. A theory of learning is, I will argue, an important component of social policy formation. Although there are different theories of adult learning, I will turn to one which has particular relevance to the South African context and congruent with the ideology of literacy.

(IV):AN APPROACH TO ADULT LEARNING:

Illiterate adults are "not empty pitchers. They have minds of [their] own. [They] can reason out things, [they] have dignity".²³ However, illiterates in South Africa are often regarded as ignorant and incompetent individuals. Ironically, they are quite often competent, hard-working and responsible individuals with many skills except those of reading, writing and arithmetic. Rozycki argues that it is often insinuated that unintentional or unconscious acquisition of knowledge and skills is not learning or education "or perhaps not as much to be desired as skills and knowledge intentionally pursued".²⁴ Often the knowledge embedded in their experiences is not recognised. It is crucial to develop an approach to learning which recognises the experiential knowledge and existing skills of the learner as the point of departure. Their knowledge reflects a particular race/class consciousness, values, theories, beliefs and expressions. It is important to realise that these class/race related systems of beliefs are shaped by their positions as blacks in South Africa. Their everyday life experiences are shaped by their social experiences and position in society, which in turn produces their view of the world. These worldviews are acquired through the authoritarian "banking education" which fills individuals with the beliefs, attitudes, values and myths dictated to them as true and correct. An emancipatory approach to learning has to deal with how illiterate people's

common senses are shaped by hegemonic ideas and their historic circumstances. Gramsci argues that in any society there are always transmitters of hegemonic ideology-- "transmitting the dominant ideas that justify the social, economic and political structure of the society".²⁵ This hegemonic ideology in turn shapes working class consciousness. The working class ideology is primarily developed through learning and experiences within the different institutions of society, which shapes a consciousness that uncritically accepts social "reality". An approach to learning can be developed that will empower learners to contest hegemonic control. This approach must exploit the enormous possibilities provided by the contradictions in people's experiences and the incompleteness of hegemonic ideology. The incompleteness of people's consciousness and the fact that illiterates are not passive individuals, provides a starting point for the production of knowledge and the creation of alternative sites where an understanding of oppression and exploitation can be developed. Eventually, learners will be able to develop a critical consciousness of their worlds through understanding their experiences and the historical circumstances in which they find themselves.

People usually understand matters better or find learning most meaningful when their own experiences or shared experiences become the subject of the curriculum. This means that, in the case of literacy, it is essential that people's

experiences become the "problem to which the tools of learning are applied".²⁶ Literacy should thus be based on two principles: concrete lived experience and shared experiences. Unlike traditional "banking education" or authoritarian education which is characteristic of South African schooling, emancipatory education seeks to empower learners through a process of reflection on learners' experiences. This reflective learning process requires that learning be accompanied by action; literacy as a form of learning becomes itself a form of social action. For instance, literacy as a need might, consciously or unconsciously, be resisted by blacks, this resistance having been internalised through a process of socialisation. Literacy in this case is silenced by the ruling class as a need and interest, keeping blacks from pursuing it or perceiving it as important.²⁷ This refusal or resistance to becoming literate provides a useful beginning point for transformative and emancipatory education. The learner can be assisted to address this resistance through a process whereby the person is moved beyond his/her articulated need and helped to understand the reasons for wanting it or not, and how the psychocultural forces have shaped the person's interpretation of his/her world and those of others.²⁸ Reflecting on past and present experiences can stimulate the learner to take action-- doing something about his/her condition. This action is initiated by a process of critical self-reflection. At the moment when the learner

understands, for example, the importance of literacy, a perceptual shift occurs which structurally transforms the consciousness of the learner he or she might have toward literacy. Jack Mezirow calls this process during which a learner develops a more integrative understanding of his/her experience, transformative learning.²⁹ This process of reflection on past experiences brings about a critical consciousness-- an analysis of lived experiences which enable the learner to uncover falsified realities which the learner can then begin to transform through reflection and action. This development of critical consciousness also allows him/her to challenge his/her existing "meaning perspectives" and "meaning schemes". Emancipatory education situated in the current, historic-political struggle in South Africa will, as Thomas Heaney describes it: "awaken[s] in adult learners the expectation that the power to create the future is theirs - a power which once awakened, seeks continued expression in transforming actions that threaten the permanency of all institutions, including schools".³⁰

It is also important to link adult literacy with community issues in order for adults to improve their situations in a collective way. This approach to learning requires shared experiences which can provide forums for the discussion of everyday problems. These different ideas and experiences are rooted in the shared exploitation and working class solidarity of the learners. Thus, this approach requires

that learners become actively involved in the construction of curricula. Each participant would be given apprenticeship in collective discussion and decision-making, learning how to deal with their own problems, their own cultural and productive work, histories, language and experiences. Such a democratically designed curriculum would allow the adults to read and write their realities and strengthen their abilities to analyse causes and effects of their situation. It would also enable them to take some control over their lives and environment. This process of learning will not only encourage the development of a collective consciousness, but it will also bring about social empowerment as the core objective of emancipatory learning.

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CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS A SOCIAL POLICY

To promote adult literacy, there is a growing need for an adequate social policy that would provide black adults with much needed education in preparation for critical citizenship and to become actors in the reconstruction of liberal democratic South Africa. Despite the state's "ignorance" in recognising the role of adult literacy, blacks are fortunate in the sense that they don't have to seek those "little pockets of hope and determinism"¹ to implement a national literacy campaign because literacy can be provided through the non-traditional social movement!

In this chapter I will propose a social policy model for the planning and implementation of a literacy campaign based on the normative perspective provided in the previous chapter. From a comparative analysis² of several literacy campaigns conducted in different countries, I want to propose that a social policy for literacy in South Africa must take the form of a mass literacy campaign. This model is not only of significance for the literacy campaign, but is also useful in the formulation of future adult literacy policy. This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first two sections I will outline the organizational structures and programmatic requirements necessary for the development of a more comprehensive and policy-making structure. The third part will sketch some of the essential mobilisation strategies needed

without which the literacy campaign cannot succeed. In the concluding section I will consider possible difficulties which might hamper such a major political and pedagogical event.

(I): ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

Most educational policy decisions are based on the bureaucratic centralised model. I would suggest that a model which would maximise and encourage adult participation and decision-making at the local level should be developed. A "from the bottom up" or decentralised form of decision-making should be sought. This would enable local communities and rural regions to articulate more effectively their particular needs in education, and make their voices heard in the process of decision-making. It would increase participation because the lives of those directly affected by illiteracy and its associated elements, would be encouraged. Furthermore, it would enable local and regional constituencies to shape future policy formation in adult education.

Although I would introduce an organisational model that assumes a hierarchical format with four levels, I believe it is possible to maintain an effective system which articulates needs, interests and aspirations of those whose benefits the policy intends to serve. Regional and community levels would therefore hold most, but not autonomous, power in order to encourage participatory forms of decision-making. In this way

the abuse of authority and the growth of bureaucracy would be discouraged.

Having demonstrated that the requisite political will and ideological energy to address the illiteracy problem in South Africa exist, it is important to institutionalise initiatives within the appropriate democratic structures of the MDM. This educational and political project demands a comprehensive policy-making body that would provide the necessary leadership in the planning and implementation of mass literacy provision.

(A) National Literacy Council:

First, the MDM must establish a national body for literacy provision. Such a body must be represented by all the voices of the people within the liberation movement. This could be achieved by utilising existing structures and organisations such as the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC), the South African Committee for Higher Education, trade unions student groups, community-based organisations and the existing non-government organisations that are already providing literacy. This national council would perform the following functions:

- (1) define clearly what it means to be literate in the South African context;
- (2) define clear short term and long term objectives for literacy which must include the following:

- (a) to make illiterates aware that their illiteracy is not self-inflicted, but is a result of the racist government;
 - (b) to promote literacy as a felt need;
 - (c) provide, as far as possible, all individuals from the age 13 and older with reading, writing and arithmetic skills;
 - (d) prepare people as citizens for active participation in social, political and industrial life;
 - (e) to foster a commitment to lifelong learning.
- (3) provide political leadership for the planning and the implementation of literacy throughout the country;
 - (4) establish an annual budget and distribute the necessary resources for the campaign;
 - (5) develop an evaluation system and direct the national campaign accordingly;
 - (6) develop post-literacy education for the diverse roles of adulthood - link literacy to other educational and training opportunities and job creation projects, as well as social and political issues;
 - (7) co-ordinate provincial literacy work.

(B) Provincial Literacy Council(s):

It is also important to delegate the organisational work to provincial bodies, one in each of the four provinces. The provincial bodies would:

- (1) provide the necessary training for tutors within the different regions³;
- (2) develop the materials necessary for the project;
- (3) develop links with other educational bodies such as universities;
- (4) ensure that access to literacy programs is free and that reading materials are provided free of charge;
- (5) evaluate literacy at the provincial level;
- (6) coordinate regional work.

(C) Regional Literacy Council(s):

To further increase co-ordination and flexibility, it will be necessary to create regional councils within each province. In the different provinces there are existing MDM-affiliated bodies such as the NECC which could create regional councils specifically for literacy. I must emphasise that these literacy councils should hold the most power and link literacy and any other post-literacy education with regional interests and needs.

Regional councils can play a more effective role in "disciplining the masses" and keeping literacy specific and well-focused.

In their vision of national unity, the ANC has proposed that strong and effective regional governments be created to ensure active local involvement in local issues. It is on this regional model proposed by the ANC that regional councils for

literacy would function (See Appendix B). The regional literacy councils would:

- (1) develop a thorough knowledge of the geography and population of the area;
- (2) research the needs of the region and feed information into literacy programs;
- (3) emphasise and ensure that literacy reflects the needs and interests of the region;
- (4) maximise access to literacy programs;
- (5) advertise literacy services in the region;
- (6) evaluate literacy within the region;
- (7) provide an effective communication service between the community, regional and provincial structures.

(D) Community Literacy Council(s):

This organisational structure would be the focus of literacy work and would need the most support. In many communities there are already numerous community-based organisations in existence. Such organisations could be approached and requested to engage in the promotion of literacy. Where organisations do not exist, they could be created in consultation with community leadership.

These councils would:

- (1) set community objectives which would:

- (a) provide adults with the necessary literacy skills in their mother tongue and English as a Second Language;
 - (b) encourage the sharing of collective knowledge, experiences, contacts and resources;
 - (c) stimulate a critical understanding among adults of their problems and struggles;
 - (d) produce educational research tools to promote collective analysis and action toward a non-oppressive community;
 - (e) foster solidarity and support for each other by building and strengthening a network of people and groups who are in the struggle against the oppressive structures of racism, poverty, exploitation and discrimination;
 - (f) foster personal and collective action;
 - (g) bring about transformation within the community.
- (2) establish different programs within different communities;
 - (3) link literacy directly to community needs and interests;
 - (4) conduct research work in the communities to determine who the illiterates are, how to attract them to programs, support services they require, appropriate materials to be developed, etc.;
 - (5) recruit tutors from the different organisations in the communities;

- (6) provide input for the materials which must be developed;
- (7) provide venues for the programs;
- (8) evaluate the literacy work within the communities.

(II): PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS

In order to provide the successful delivery and achievement of literacy several programmatic requirements would have to be addressed.

(A) Tutor Training:

It is important that tutors in the literacy project are viewed as a distinct group with specific needs and with support systems. They must be provided with a well-designed training program informed by the political ideology of the MDM and the critical theory of literacy. The training program should be divided into three components: (1) an orientation session, (2) formal training sessions, and (3) informal workshops.

In the orientation session, the tutors must be conscientised about the social, political and economic dimensions of illiteracy in South Africa in order to develop a critical consciousness. They should also be provided with a thorough explanation as to what is expected from them as tutors.

The formal training sessions should be designed to help tutors to do effective literacy work. Tutors must be taught

techniques and provided with guidelines for effective literacy teaching. A guide to literacy tutoring must be made available to every tutor.⁴

The informal workshops entails tutor involvement in a forum of discussion, sharing of information, problems and other areas of concern. These sessions would be spread out over the course of the literacy campaign. This will provide a basis for ongoing support and communication between tutors and an opportunity for tutors to develop greater flexibility and competencies. Tutors must also be encouraged to keep documentation on their students.

(B) Methodologies:

While traditional reading and writing instruction centres mainly on either phonics or word-recognition, the whole-language approach⁵ focuses on the meaning and the significance of what the learner is reading and writing rather than on technical skills. This approach incorporates an analysis of the reading and writing processes, as well as methods and techniques of teaching and learning. It makes wide use both of the learner's concrete experience and of dialogue with other learners and the tutor. It also has a practical "hands on" emphasis. These attributes, plus the fact that the approach is context dependent, encourages learners to problems solve and reflect on their own experiences. The approach, when clearly understood and consistently applied, fosters learners'

competence and independence as learners and stimulates their creativity. It is also extremely flexible in the variety of materials the learner can use. Furthermore, the whole language approach is effective in both one-to-one tutoring and in small group sessions. It can therefore be utilised to encourage transformative learning, which is needed in this literacy project.

(C) Materials and Curriculum:

A wide range of materials would be needed for this political project. Materials could be developed prior to and during the project. First, materials in the form of national primers could be developed that would focus on common but essential information such as human rights, health, nutrition, agriculture, housing, violence, poverty, voting and other relevant topics. Such primers would have to be written in simple and clear language. They should also be free from gender biases and should be relevant to both rural and urban peoples. Many learning materials already in existence could be evaluated and duplicated for use where appropriate.

Furthermore, learners can provide a rich source of materials during the project with focus on community needs. It is important that the learner's productive energies be organised in the development of materials, which deal with their own culture, work, histories and experiences. Therefore,

learners would be encouraged to produce their own materials, and to collect materials of their own interest.

(D) Evaluation:

Evaluation remains an essential process for various reasons. At the same time, it raises complex issues. Nevertheless, it is necessary to develop criteria for different types of evaluation: the effectiveness of the programs themselves; the learners' individual and collective progress; and the learners' participation in the life of the community.

To gauge the effectiveness of the literacy programs, all aspects of the programs must be evaluated. Evaluations must illuminate weaknesses and feed this information back into the programs. The involvement of learners, tutors and the community in this evaluation process, is crucial.

As a first step in the evaluation of learners' progress, learners must be encouraged to set their own personal and collective goals and determine whether they have succeeded. It is important that adults see the investment of their time and effort leading to results which are beneficial and significant to them and their community. Tutors can collect learners' writings and record and evaluate on a continuous basis in collaboration with the learner, the most dramatic or even the smallest advances made by the learners.

Because there are many weaknesses in standardised testing, it would be more appropriate to develop a system of general levels of literacy as a way of gauging progress. These levels could be useful in that they would give both the learner and the tutor an indication of the learners' strengths and weaknesses. Categories such as the following could be developed:

(1) Level 1: Those who have difficulty with reading, writing and arithmetic at a simple level; have difficulty with printed materials and are most likely to say that they cannot read and write.

(2) Level 2: Those who use printed material for limited purposes and who experience difficulty with everyday reading, writing and arithmetic.

(3) Level 3: Those who can use reading materials in a variety of situations if they are simple, clearly laid out and not too complex. They perceive of themselves as having some difficulty with reading, writing and maths, and tend to avoid situations requiring their use.

(4) Level 4: People with a wide range of reading, writing and arithmetic skills, but also want some assistance in certain areas.

Evaluation within the communities should also be developed which would measure the extent to which the learners' personal and collective participation brings about changes within communities. It is crucial that the acquisition

of literacy skills assist the learners to take action within their respective communities. All three forms of evaluation should take place on a continuous basis.

(E) Language Policy:

Language is one of the most important components of a social policy for literacy. Language needs critical consideration, especially in South Africa, where the choice of dominant languages has been central to the maintenance of the apartheid system. South Africa, a culturally rich country with 14 different languages, needs a language policy that will recognise its diverse ethnicity. It is necessary to focus both on mother-tongue literacy and literacy in English.

First, literacy in the mother-tongue should be emphasised and provided. Developing proficiency in the mother-tongue would not only accelerate literacy acquisition, but would also help to reinstate and revitalise the many rich cultures of South Africa. In addition it would assist in more effective second language learning.

Secondly, in order to serve the needs of every citizen, it is important to use English as a language of second choice. Research has shown that most Africans generally have another African language as their second language and that most Africans use and prefer English to Afrikaans.⁶ Making English the official second language would help to give Africans an equal chance in society and access to the world beyond South

Africa. Afrikaans, even if its historic-political stigma (the language of the oppressor) is set aside, certainly does not provide these advantages.

However, a learner who wants to acquire literacy in any other language should be free to do so and should be assisted.

(F) Gender Considerations:

African women are at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder. It is essential that women's needs are recognised and expressed through the policy. All spheres of the literacy policy, (eg., materials, child care, etc.) must be integrated and clearly expressed. Women should be incorporated into all decision-making processes involved in the policy formation.

(III): MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The genuine participation of people is an absolute condition for a successful campaign and needs critical attention. People must be committed and willing to volunteer their efforts and other necessary contributions for the success of this project. Mobilisation also strengthens mass organisations and creates opportunities for large scale citizenship and decision-making. It is of critical importance to develop several mobilisation strategies without which no literacy campaign can succeed.

(A) Awareness Campaigns:

To arouse public awareness and to stimulate discussion and action with regard to literacy, an awareness campaign must be launched. People must be made aware of the negative effects of illiteracy and how the phenomenon is shaped by the political, social and economic forces of the country. Through this awareness campaign, literacy must be promoted as a felt need and a human right in a country where education for blacks has traditionally been more often a privilege than a human right.

There are numerous ways in which public awareness could be raised. Learning from past experiences, the MDM has been successful in a number of previous awareness campaigns. These strategies have included the active participation of mass organisations, trade unions, grassroots organisations, student bodies, sport organisations and teacher unions.

The mass media in many countries have been inescapably concerned with the promotion of literacy. The MDM must exploit the advantages of the communication facilities which they have access to. Newspapers and magazines such as New Nation, South and Mayibuye to which many blacks have access, should be used in different ways to promote literacy. It could also be used in advertising, recruitment of tutors, publishing of learners' writings and other materials that are easily accessible.

Radio and television must also be considered as important means to reach learners. Although the MDM does not yet have

access to the electronic media, they could also explore the future use of this vehicle. The awareness campaign must have both urgency and fervour, launched in a language which expresses a sense of combativeness to illiteracy.

(B) Community Action:

Literacy must be actively promoted through the above-mentioned means in communities. Literacy work might be an unknown activity in many communities. Existing projects and programs provided by NGO's must be encouraged and supported within communities as an important factor in understanding issues, solving problems, establishing opportunities and increasing motivation. Communities must also encourage family literacy because illiteracy is an inter-generational problem. Youths as well as adults must therefore be made aware of the importance of literacy.

Communities have important contributions to make in a pre-literacy campaign. These include the collection of statistics on illiteracy in various communities, developing an understanding of community needs and mobilising community resources in the struggle against illiteracy. Community action must foster a commitment to the education of the community's inhabitants and make literacy an essential component of community development and community events.

(C) Recruitment of Tutors:

One of the most important technical components of mobilisation and the struggle against illiteracy is the role of volunteer tutors. Given the nature of the colossal task awaiting such a campaign, volunteer tutors would be greatly needed. There are numerous ways to recruit tutors. Volunteers from the mass organisations, trade unions, sport organisations, teachers unions, women's groups, university student organisations and even high school student groups could play an important role in the tutoring of illiterate adults. Voluntarism is a common characteristic of many literacy campaigns and ongoing literacy programs. Clearly, it is cost effective. Voluntarism is so important that without it a mass literacy campaign would never be able to succeed.

(D) Role of Universities:

Until now, the role of universities in adult literacy has been minimal, although there are existing links between certain universities (eg., the University of the Western Cape) and community-based literacy work. However, university departments could be approached to assist in the development of training courses for tutors, the development of learner relevant materials and post-literacy work that would be needed in a post-literacy campaign. The vast black educated youth power available from universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education could be utilised in many

ways. These students could be motivated to become involved not only in tutoring, but also in community research and in future adult literacy and education work. Black South African students are economically, politically and socially conscious and can thus be effectively employed to make non-formal education a success.

Furthermore, universities and colleges could become the future sites for much-needed undergraduate and post graduate studies in the field of literacy. As the literacy campaign continues, it will definitely become more complex and it would need more sophisticated and well trained tutors and staff. The technical and organisational levels of the literacy project would require considerable attention. These institutions have the potential to contribute a great deal, and would definitely have to play an active role in future adult education.

(E) The Private Sector:

The private sector has a contribution to make because the economy depends upon the state of workers' literacy. Trade unions could negotiate literacy programs with the private sector that would give unions an equal say in the design, content and structure of such programs. The trade unions must continue to pressurise the private sector to give special attention to literacy and adult education. Employers must be requested, or if necessary required by law, to provide literacy and skill development programs to all employees. Such

programs must be systematically organised in partnership with trade unions, with the aim of improving the educational standards, skills, well being and wages of the workers.

Non-formal education in technical and vocational areas, based on the needs and interests of participants, should be made available. Such education could be organised through educational and technical institutions. The role of a community college, which could be an additional institution dealing specifically with adult basic education, must be considered.

(IV): POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES

The first concern that I want to raise is the timing of such a project. The question that motivates this concern is why other literacy campaigns took place at their respective historic moments. Most literacy campaigns took place under the leadership of a government that had a strong ideological commitment to nation-building or socio-economic development. Although this is certainly not the condition that exists in South Africa current economic and political forces in the country are generating a demand for literacy. Two alternatives remain: First, a literacy campaign, taking into consideration the political will of the government as a prerequisite, must be planned as a "post apartheid" event, which presumes that a new government would recognise literacy as important. The second approach is one which recognises literacy as part of

the national struggle and implies that literacy can no longer wait. This latter approach is one that I would recommend because the political will for such an event exists within the MDM. I would further suggest that such a campaign be implemented as a program model gradually expanded over time. This would be the most appropriate strategy for reasons I discuss below.

Policy formation in education is often a locus of contradictions because it is theoretically difficult to predict the possible conflicts that would emerge in practice. However, it is of critical importance to deal effectively with contradictions that might arise and to reappropriate decisions in relation to unanticipated consequences. One such area relates to the decentralised model of the proposed social policy. Although this model attempts to incorporate the different voices of the disempowered, greater participation of regional and local communities in the processes of educational decisions could become problematic. Reaching consensus between such a multitude of articulated interests and needs would pose problems, especially if one takes into consideration the ethnic, rural and urban differences between the populations concerned. How to deal with the variety of local interests, how to reconcile the articulated needs with each other and to focus on literacy with a national purpose, are certainly not easy tasks. Regional councils must, therefore, have a degree of authority that will allow them to deal effectively with

such differences and conflicts. They must have the power to exercise discipline congruent with a well-articulated vision of literacy. Furthermore, a radically decentralised model could also make communication from the bottom up difficult. It is vital that channels of communication be established through which communities could express their needs and interests.

No matter how ideal this policy might seem, it would most probably be confronted by resistance. First, the MDM, despite its massive support, is functioning within the context of a repressive government. Destabilisation tactics from government forces have often been employed to prevent any actions that pose a threat to its existence. Therefore, a literacy campaign might have to face similar repressive mechanisms in the form of laws and so forth (eg., State of Emergency).

Resistance to such a project might also involve political organisations such as, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which has different political beliefs from those of the MDM. It is widely known that this Zulu ethnic group has been supported by the existing government in the destabilisation of other ANC-dominated areas. The MDM, which rejects the homeland system, of which IFP is part, has to find means to raise critical consciousness toward literacy among this group. The IFP is clearly in support of deracialised liberal capitalism which would most likely support literacy, in the human capital tradition. This, of course, is clearly not the solution to the

multi-pronged problems of illiteracy in South Africa. For this reason, the IFP might not participate in such a project.

The fourth difficulty concerns finance. This literacy campaign would require substantial financial support because of the millions of people in need of education. However, it has been proven by other well-known campaigns, for example, in Nicaragua and Cuba, that a literacy campaign can be conducted with minimal resources available. The MDM could raise funds throughout the campaign and during the mobilisation process. The MDM could also contact the international community for assistance. It is for this reason that I would suggest that a mass literacy campaign, gradually expanded, would be a realistic undertaking.

A large number of illiterates remain in the homelands or Bantustans where the MDM does not have the freedom to campaign as it does in the rest of South Africa. This poses another problem. It would be important for the MDM to make serious attempts to raise the consciousness of the leadership in the homelands. The homeland system is part of the apartheid strategy to divide blacks. Trade unions in some of these homelands are embarking on political struggles similar to those in the rest of South Africa. They thus provide possible avenues through which literacy could be promoted. The proposed literacy policy is relevant to the homelands as well because literacy provision operates on the same principles in the Bantustans where illiteracy is high. The policy is

particularly important to serve as a means to re-incorporate the homelands into a unified South Africa.

CONCLUSION: POST LITERACY

Literacy upgrading should not end after the campaign. It is crucial that literacy be linked with post-literacy development and continuing education in order to keep people literate once they have acquired the basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. The MDM must make a sincere effort to develop a follow-up system and an education service that would increase professional competencies of tutors and would assist new literates in retaining literacy skills that they use in their daily life situations. Keeping in perspective the educational needs of the different groups, programmes must be differentiated into:

(1) Basic Literacy Programs

These programs would remain the core of the overall post-literacy work which would involve the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic.

(2) Continuing Education

These programs would provide learners with the necessary basic literacy in order to enter the formal education system at a specified level, i.e. grade six.

(3) Community Education

These programs would be linked to the community issues where learners could engage in participatory research work relevant to the interests and needs of the community.

(4) Vocational/Technical Programs

These programs would be provided so that learners could respond to national educational needs and changing technical culture in South Africa.

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2. This is a short list of the most useful materials consulted:

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3. The decision to make tutor training the responsibility of the provincial council rests on the idea that tutors might be required to provide their services in areas where needed. Training at a provincial level would also provide the tutors with

greater flexibility in understanding different needs in different regions.

4. See as an example Hutchings, M.(1986). Adult Literacy: Reading and Writing Activities. Department of Education, Dalhousie University Halifax, Nova Scotia.
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6. Schuring, G.K.(1978). Language Diversity in South Africa and Some of the Implications for Literacy Work. In Hauptfleisch, T.(ed.) Proceedings of the Literacy 1978 Conference convened by the Human Science Research Council, pp.51-69.

CONCLUSION

Arlene Fingeret notes that "the major force behind the efforts to define literacy is the desire of policy-makers to count the illiterate adults".¹ However, statistics of literacy among blacks in South Africa do not seem to concern policy-makers. Illiteracy among black South Africans is on the rise, and yet the state remains dormant and unwilling to mobilize resources to make adult literacy available to blacks. The millions of black illiterates in South Africa certainly generate an urgency for an effective literacy policy. Ironically, the state continues to blame low educational standards among its black population for slow economic growth, while at the same time, the state restricts blacks from participating fully in the economic and political spheres. It becomes necessary to understand how and why the state adopts such a perspective on illiteracy and the associated social, political and economic consequences which continue to deepen the social, political and economic subjugation of blacks. Literacy certainly is either not an issue for educational policy-makers, or the victim is blamed for it.

In this thesis I have tried to find a possible solution to illiteracy among black South Africans. What has been recommended is that literacy should be fought for as an emancipatory ideological construct and as part of the social movement in order for literacy to be translated into an effective policy for South African blacks. The arguments

leading to such a recommendation are based on the analysis of the state's character as illuminated by its orientation to educational policy formation in relation to the socio-economic characteristics of the literacy clientele.

In the first chapter, I argued that illiteracy among blacks has been reproduced through the bureaucratic centralised education system. I have demonstrated, by focusing on the formal education of blacks, that a large percentage of the black population is illiterate. This prevents them from participating in the social, political and economic spheres. Secondly, I have also pointed out that the working class in South Africa is predominantly black and that illiteracy characterises this working class. Illiteracy contributes to the white ruling class' justification of its racial domination, class exploitation and political control within the apartheid capitalist state. The political subjugation of blacks has been sustained by repressive mechanisms and sometimes violent control; yet blacks have persistently fought the forces of racial oppression. Although educational policy for blacks underwent a number of alterations as a result of such conflict, the state continues to promote and reinforce white domination and control over blacks.

Given the historical genesis of illiteracy explored in chapter one, the literacy clientele remains a black working class majority. I have argued that the agencies involved in literacy provision are unable to address the literacy needs of

blacks. From an analysis of the state and the corporate sector's involvement in literacy, it is obvious that the apartheid ideology has remained unchanged--sustaining the reproduction of a large illiterate black working class. Blacks are barred from access to education, training and literacy, which serves to restrict them from the political, social and economic world. Thus I have concluded that the racist capitalist state depends on an illiterate black working class for its existence. In this context, the fragments of non-government organisations which provide literacy, can serve only a small, almost insignificant section of the illiterate clientele.

From this analysis, the Mass Democratic Movement in South Africa, which represents the voices of the black working class, must become concerned with illiteracy if any solution is to be found. I have argued that the MDM represents blacks both as a race and as a class. Through a process of integrating an emancipatory literacy project into the MDM's political theories, the movement can provide the illiterates with pedagogical and political experiences that prepare adults for participation in the struggle for a democratic non-racist South Africa. I have identified literacy as an educational tool which can provide adults with access to: (a) political education, (b) general education, (c) community education and (d) technical education. Once adults have these forms of education, they will be able to participate as critical

citizens in the social, political and economic spheres. This, I have argued, can be achieved through an emancipatory approach to literacy and adult learning in general.

In the final chapter, I presented the practical means for addressing the illiteracy problem. I proposed a policy which requires the political will and ideological commitment of the MDM. Implementing this policy in the form of a mass literacy campaign requires the mobilization and active participation of mass-based organisations, trade unions and MDM-affiliated bodies. This political project must not be a means to an end. It is of critical importance that avenues for future adult education congruent with the needs and interests of communities and the national development of South Africa are developed.

Blacks have demanded education from the state, but their demands, voiced from their structural position as the subordinate class and race, have failed to precipitate the necessary policy. It has, therefore, become necessary for them to use their political organisation, their political power and their class/race alliance to organise for education.

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APPENDIX A

The schooling system in South Africa is divided into:

(A) Primary or Elementary School

Sub-standard A (Grade One)

Sub-standard B (Grade Two)

Standards 1 - 5 (Grades Three - Seven)

(B) Secondary or High School

Standards 6 - 10 (Grades Eight - Twelve)

or

Form I - V (Grades Eight - Twelve)

(Standard 10 or Form V is also referred to as Matric)

APPENDIX B

These are the ten regions proposed by the ANC for strong effective governments. These regions could also be used for literacy provision.



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