The Impact of Political Violence on Education in South Africa:
Past, Present and Future

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Introduction

The impact of violence on society due to political and ethnic rivalry is a well-known phenomenon. On the African continent, political and ethnic tensions have led to armed conflicts; many of these conflicts have made their way into schools and classrooms. In South Africa in particular, political and ethnic strife, originally fuelled by the apartheid regime, still smolders despite democratic governance and a new social order. Last year's Truth and Reconciliation Report documented the devastating impact of the political and ethnic violence of the apartheid years on South African society. Amidst the extensive literature about violence under apartheid, the role of the education sector in reinforcing and incorporating state sanctioned political violence is often denied attention.

On the other hand, while political violence was at the heart of the apartheid agenda, violence was also used as a tool to challenge the dominant power structure and government of South Africa. In South Africa, and in the KwaZulu/Natal province of South Africa in particular, political violence in education has a unique legacy. It is the outcome of a powerful and vocal student movement which resulted in schools becoming important sites of anti-apartheid struggle. The numerous student protests in the 1970s and 1980s were followed by an alternative education system called "People's Education for People's Power" which generated debate and challenged the apartheid regime. Interestingly, the escalation of political violence that targeted the education community during the apartheid era helped to raise international awareness. This in turn initiated important changes that improved schooling and challenged discriminatory policies against the black majority and other groups that were grossly disadvantaged by the apartheid system.

This article first explores the impact of political violence in South Africa on education during the period leading to the first democratic election in 1994 and the parallel effect of schools socializing students into cultural violence. Second, this article examines the notion of unity and diversity in multicultural programs in South Africa. The article discusses ways in which education and schooling may be used to re-socialize children and thereby promote national identity, as well as cultural, ethnic, and linguistic tolerance. It suggests ways in which teachers as transformative intellectuals may assume the role of promoting change in the transformation process. Lastly, the article presents an alternative critical pedagogy that should inform teachers' practice.

Race, ethnicity and identity formation

Political turmoil and armed conflict have negatively affected schooling in various parts of the world. This is especially true in transitional developing countries that have recently gained independence and are in the process of discarding the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. Many African colonial states used education to

indoctrinate and subordinate the African "natives" servants of the colonial system. Issues regarding language of instruction and underlying cultural values (including religion) were often sources of conflict and violent protest. Even today, the content of curriculum, in addition to international standardized tests, are sources of conflict, debate and political turmoil.

In many African countries the resurging nationalism that arose out of the independence movements of the 1960s reinforced earlier colonial classifications of people according to territorial distinctions. Paralleling the development of nationalist movements was the development of "tribal classification" or ethnic divisions (Wallerstein 1991, p. 189). Wallerstein sensitizes us to the influence of labels, stating: "people shoot each other every day over the question of labels" (1991, p. 71). Labels and identities have profound effects on political violence and schooling.

It is also worth noting that labels and categories in apartheid South Africa were important ways to divide and control the various groups that lived in the country. In South Africa, apartheid created a taxonomy of racial classifications to aid in the pursuit of apartheid policies. The education system, perhaps more than any other sector, helped to reproduce categories of the "African," "Coloured," "Indian," and "white," and served as a primary means of constructing and reproducing racial and ethnic identities. These classifications determined which schools certain students could or could not attend.

The following portion of this article will explore how history and "pastness" were used in education to encourage political protest that often resulted in political violence in South Africa.

History: Political violence and education
In 1948 the South African National party formulated what subsequently came to be known as the Christian National Education (CNE) policy, which was designed to justify apartheid and separate development ideology. A major political consequence of the CNE policy was the design of a segregated educational system with separate schools for different cultural, ethnic, tribal, and linguistic groups, ultimately culminating in the infamous Bantu Education Policy Act of 1953 (Eislen, 1953). The justification for separate schools was contained in ten principles, each dealing with specific aspects of society (For example--these principles justified separate schools and curricula, separate living areas, and restrictions on employment for blacks.) This was embedded in CNE policy and penetrated education in South Africa for over forty years. One of the principles advocated the creation of separate schools for the different races, specifically because each race had a distinct culture, ethnicity, language, history and religion.

In justifying separate residential areas, Bantustans' policy and the Homelands system, Articles 6 (5) of the Institute of Christian National Education, argued that: "We believe that every nation is rooted in its own soil which is allocated to it by the Creator" (1948). This CNE policy was exclusivist and chauvinist in that the form of Christianity it invoked implied that white Afrikaners were the chosen race. Accordingly, "the Christian infers to the views as expressed in the creeds of the three Afrikaans churches, that religious teaching in schools was to accord with the theology of the three Afrikaans churches" (Rose and Tunmer, 1975, p. 119). Following Calvinistic principles, nationalism

implied the Afrikaner nation and excluded all other groups in the country. The apartheid hegemony reinforced beliefs that God had allocated separate places to people of different races (Institute of Christian National Education, 1948); thus, people of African origin in South Africa were grouped together in particular geographical regions which later became Bantustans, Self-governing states and Independent homelands. The result of these groupings was a resurgence of ethnic-nationalism and identity (Cross, 1992, p. 142). However, the [un]banning of political prisoners and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1992 resulted in the amalgamation of all the former homelands into a unitary South Africa. This move led to the inevitable political conflicts that spilled over into education and schooling.

Although education and schooling in South Africa was successfully employed to suppress particular communities, education simultaneously facilitated social change, political emancipation, and democracy. The creation of strong resistance movements that challenged the ruling party was one of the unplanned effects of Bantu Education. Hence, in South Africa, schools also played a major role in transforming the country from an apartheid to a democratic state. During the 1970s and 80s education became the center of political struggle in South Africa when fierce and often violent anti-apartheid protests were held in schools throughout South Africa. "Liberation before Education" was the protest mantra that became the battle call for the liberation movement. The international media coverage of white South African police taunting and abusing children helped to focus intense pressure on the apartheid regime. While the student uprisings were pivotal in challenging and tearing away at apartheid, there were also several consequences. The culture of violence that arose in schools as part of the resistance movement carried over into the learning climate and the way schooling was viewed. Criticism of the curriculum extended to criticism of teachers and eventually to schools as part of the establishment. As a result, many schools failed to function as centers of learning and many were eventually shut down. The inability of the education sector to educate nearly a generation of students reflects the negative impact of violence and political conflict on education.

Political violence in the KwaZulu province during the period under review in this article is more complex and unique because of the historical conflicts that existed in ethnic, tribal and cultural areas for many decades. KwaZulu Natal is the South African province that is dominated by the Zulus. Historically the Zulus were members of the Inkatha Freedom Party, the most significant rival to the African National Congress (ANC), which consisted of a variety of ethnic and racial groups across South Africa. Hence, political strife in KwaZulu must be understood against the background of the political rivalry between ANC and IFP supporters and also against the background of ethnic differences between Xhosas and Zulus. These differences were undoubtedly encouraged by the white Nationalist party in the implementation of its divide and rule policy.

Perhaps the most frequently recorded incidents of the aftermath of political violence during this period were those between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The South African Institute of Race Relations (1996/7, p. 601) records thousands of victims of violence from both the ANC and IFP sides. Clearly, the fruit of the divide and rule tactic embedded and encapsulated the separate development policy of the CNE. Tensions between the IFP and the ANC were fed by the

former apartheid regime, which used the IFP to destabilize the ANC liberation movement. Thousands died in political and ethnic clashes staged between the IFP and other political rivalries in South Africa. In the run up to the first democratic elections in 1994, when political affiliations and group allegiances became more pronounced, ethnic violence escalated in KwaZulu Natal, culminating in what was perhaps the most devastating social and political upheaval since the Bhambatha rebellion of 1906 in which thousands of Africans were killed (Nzimande and Thusi, 1998, p.3).

Defining educational borders
Today, a large degree of political tension in South Africa continues to revolve around questions of labels, identity, and political categorization. In these countries political affiliations are often related to cultural, linguistic, racial and ethnic divisions which pre-date colonialism, and, to a large extent, still dictate national politics and civil society. Identity/ethnicity in political groupings were also significant in traditional African society. Today, in many transitional African societies, inter-group and power issues across groups have re-emerged since the colonial structures that suppressed them have now disappeared. Such divisions are often expressed through open confrontation and violence. The extent of the problem of violence in education is captured in the following:

> In my class, there is a desk that has been empty for the past months or so,
> despite the fact that we share desks in our class because of overcrowding….
> his desk use to seat my classmate who was hacked to death by Inkatha just
> outside the school yard (Nzimande and Thusi 1991, p. 7, sic).

Political violence serves to delineate and define particular borders--parameters in education. Although the uniting force among the oppressed has been a fight against white domination, ethnic nationalism became prominent in the school curriculum during the period leading to the democratic election in South Africa in 1994. This was understandable because the apartheid policy deliberately encouraged people to develop pride exclusively in their own culture, ethnicity, language and history. This policy created fertile ground for further political violence (Christie, 1990). Nzimande and Thusi (1991) argue that, in line with ethnic nationalisms supported by apartheid ideology, the IFP syllabi was made compulsory as a non-examination subject in all KwaZulu/Natal schools. They further contend that the two aims of the syllabi were to create unified ideas that blended in with the goals of IFP policy and to facilitate the creation of the IFP youth Brigade branches in all schools to implement these objectives.

Moreover, in the 1990s, just as there were "no-go areas" because of political differences or affiliations, children could no longer attend schools in areas dominated by rival political parties. For example, Mbali Township in the Pietermaritzburg region was clearly divided between the ANC and IFP supporters--children from either side encountered difficulties if attending school in the area controlled by rival parties (Ntshoe, 1999).

An SRC member also had this to say about ways in which politics defined the parameters of education in the KwaZulu/Natal province:

> "He died in my own hands before I could get him transport to hospital…since then, I have had to arrive at school either very early or late…. Sometimes I leave school together with other students but make sure that I travel inside a bigger group. That is how I have afforded to be still attending school up to now" (Nzimande and Thusi 1991, p. 8).

Research conducted by Ntshoe (1999) in the implementation of innovation and change by the Science Education project in 1999 in the Mbali township, supports the evidence provided by Nzimande and Thusi. Students attending schools in this township in 1995 related sad tales about the effects of political strife in the area. Some schools were standing empty not because there were no children to use them, but because children were scared to go to school while other schools were closed completely. Furthermore, the closure of schools outside the normal school term or the extension of school holidays because of political instability was a common phenomenon in the area.

Furthermore, violence external to school is complemented by internal violence. The South African Institute of Race Relations (1995/96) observed that violent crime, such as assault with the intention of committing grievous bodily harm and rape, increased substantially in 1995, particularly affecting women and girls. Weapons that were used or intended to be used against political opponents, are often seen in schools, especially in the urban areas.

Multiculturalism
I postulated earlier in this article that education and schooling are necessarily political and that they have been systematically used to support the apartheid ideology. I also argued that the Christian National Education Policy formed the cornerstone of the education policy during the apartheid era and promoted racial, ethnic, tribal and cultural diversities at the expense of unity. One of the key strategies used to achieve the intended separatist outcomes was the introduction of multicultural educational discourse. According to Christian National Education (CNE) policy, multiculturalism exclusively emphasized racial, cultural, and ethnicity/tribal differences. Consequently, multicultural education within the CNE discourse promoted fragmentation by emphasizing the importance of ethnic differences and stressing the need for autonomy (Garcia, 1991). Policies enforcing ethnic autonomy were pursued regardless of the danger of promoting a particular type of nationalism that clearly had the potential of undermining the notion of nationhood (Graham-Brown, 1991).

In this article, I attempted to demonstrate that education and schools have the propensity for re-defining and maintaining social change. It is clear that schools need to re-socialize children into new roles so that they can play a part in the changed conditions. In the South African context, education and schooling should be employed to inculcate values that are consistent with building democracy. This includes tolerance, respect of individual cultures, languages, religion and traditions. School teachers need to promote democratic principles including equity of genders so that it highlights the problems of women abuse and rape that is so common in South Africa. Schools should encourage "minority groups to vigorously counteract the influences of whatever group or individuals seek to deny those rights such as those relating to gender discrimination and violence against women and other minority groups" (Lynch, 1989, p. 49).

The thrust of my argument in this article is that if multiculturalism takes the form of "unity in diversity," it will be an effective strategy in promoting the cultural, ethnic, political, and linguistic diversity of a democracy. In this article, I argue that multicultural education has the potential to promote the notion of unity in diversity, provided that multicultural education policies consider the socioeconomic contexts in which models are designed. However, when not adequately interrogated, multiculturalism is open to misuse. Bombote (1993) reveals the problem surrounding multiculturalism and the way in which it helped to justify racial segregation in South Africa. He observed that: "Culturally diverse societies that pursued monist policies (whether in the form of single-party government or denial of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversities) have paid a high price in the form of civil war and internal strife" (Bombote, 1993, p.9).

Skepticism and misgivings about multiculturalism are understandable because it often means the incorporation of minority cultures into the mainstream dominant culture (Thompson, 1981). Furthermore, traditionally, multiculturalism "emphasises differences rather than similarities, categories rather than de-categorization and this inevitably contributes to stereotype thinking, increased inter-ethnic anxiety and accentuates out-open rejection" (Lynch, 1989, p.43).

Banks (1992) argues that multicultural education in the US failed because multiculturalism involved the injection of multicultural components into existing discourses, rather than the creation of components developed from an alternative discourse. In addition, Banks asserts that this program failed in part because of the textbook-driven nature of the US curricula. The argument is that because of financial constraints, textbook publishers are not often willing to create textbooks that fundamentally challenge the existing canons, paradigms and interpretations within the popular culture (Banks, 1992).

In contrast to the failed multicultural model described above, successful multicultural models must be informed by an alternative multicultural discourse and global perspective. Globalized multicultural education promotes commonness and similarity of the human species and encourages the personalization of decisions and judgements. The latter implies treatment of individual rather than group merits. Such a model of education seeks equity by celebrating legitimate differences, as well as simultaneously promoting a common knowledge and insight about things that human societies share (Lynch, 1989).

The two dimensions of multiculturalism that should be incorporated in a curriculum are content integration and the notion of knowledge creation. Content integration means conscious use of examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups in order to illustrate key concepts, principles, and general themes throughout various disciplines. Knowledge construction, another dimension of multiculturalism, implies a pedagogy that will enable teachers and educators to help and encourage students to understand, investigate and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, principles and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed (Banks, 1992).

In creating an acceptable multicultural curriculum, teachers must develop forms of knowledge and classroom practices that validate experiences and rediscover the strengths and weaknesses of students from designated groups (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986). This implies that teachers' practice should be informed by a critical pedagogy that recognizes the experiences that children from subordinated social categories bring to the school environment (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986).

Conclusion

In this article, I have explored the impact of political violence on education in countries with diverse cultural, ethnic, tribal and racial groups, and I have used South Africa as an example. The thrust of the argument is that, intolerance and subsequent violence toward those of different political affiliations and designated groups are products of identities and labels people use against each other. History reveals the origin of political violence in education in South Africa from 1948 to the present, with Christian National Education policy, one of the primary methods for influencing the education process and content. The KwaZulu/Natal province serves as an example of how political violence has regulated the parameters of education and schooling.

In analyzing the interconnections between politics, nation building, and education, I attempted to show the relationship between politics and education, while noting some reservations against multicultural programs as specified in CNE policy. If multicultural programs are to gain legitimacy, they must be carefully analyzed and conceptualized within the South African context in order to promote unity in diversity, as well as nationhood.

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