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Education and poverty:
Some perspectives
by
Bill Nasson

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Education and Poverty: Some Perspectives

Bill Nasson

This is going to be an education program. We are going to eliminate poverty with education, and I don't want anybody even to mention income redistribution. This is not going to be a handout, this is going to be something where people are going to learn their way out of poverty.*

In this paper, I want to discuss some aspects of the knotty relationship between poverty and education. This is not an easy question to approach. In the case of South Africa in particular, it is conventional wisdom to emphasise that what really counts in the educational sphere is segregation, and the unequal distribution of resources, with the result that such fundamental questions as the impact of schooling upon income distribution appear to have attracted scant attention. We have little existing analytical work on local conditions which would enable us to assess whether income distribution and employment opportunities could be significantly tilted towards the disadvantaged, by means of educational mechanisms. It would, nevertheless, be unfair to conclude that the question has been wholly ignored. Rather, the liberal shibboleth that rising levels of educational investment and increasing educational equality will help to engineer a more equitable distribution of income, has been taken more or less for granted by most critics of apartheid education.

As a point of entry into the debate about schooling, income, and poverty, this paper devotes considerable space to a body of theoretical and empirical studies dealing with education in societies in Europe, North America, and parts of The Third World. Their findings suggest that education cannot be viewed as a simple passport to rising earnings for groups at the bottom of the ladder of class and inequality. The relevance of such argument to those concerned with the formulation of equitable development goals for South Africa's impoverished and dispossessed majority, should require little emphasis.

The core of beliefs about the relationship between schooling and income can be stated quite simply. It is a truism, but for all that an important one, to say that lack of education inhibits the occupational prospects and earnings of vast numbers of people. The level of an individual's certificated education is an important determinant of income and life chances – a general relationship which is arguably just as valid for socialist societies as it is for capitalist ones. Consequently, it follows that a vigorous and sustained policy of investment in education would enhance social justice and effectively ameliorate the condition of impoverished groups, or perhaps even contribute directly to the eradication of poverty altogether. Deprivation, unemployment, underemployment, and low status could all be countered as long as the poor are given unlimited access to educational resources of good quality.

It is important to emphasise just how widely and confidently this general proposition was embraced in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the hypothesis was still proving durable in the 1970s. Even when expanded schooling was shown to be having little impact on income inequality and poverty in Britain and North America, its equalising properties were still being used as the principal argument for educational investment in many developing societies. As recently as 1975, an OECD Conference championed the idea that educational expansion would lead to more equitable income distribution, by describing education as a mechanism for transforming social structures, and for reducing income inequalities. In Education and Income, published in 1980, World Bank staff continue to hold the optimistic view that expanding systems of education may have some role to play in the achievement of more equitable income distribution. Commenting on the World Development Report for 1980, the editor of Education and Income affirms that a major incentive for the adoption by the Third World of educational investment policies, is education's 'contribution to growth in incomes, and in some, but not all, circumstances, to greater equality of income.'

The influence of the argument that there is a necessary correlation between expansionist educational strategies and a reduction in income disparities, has undoubtedly been immense. For the greater part of
the past three decades, the assumption of much educational sociology has been that an interventionist schooling policy would generate more egalitarian trends in earnings and income. In capitalist democracies, it was asserted, the dynamics of education were contributing, or were likely to contribute, to the emergence of a more just social order, unscarred by poverty. Compensatory education and positive discrimination were the levers of future prosperity, promoting the interests of the disadvantaged and impoverished, and widening horizons for those whose life chances were most severely curtailed. In Britain, for instance, the influential Plowden Report of 1967 endorsed this view most emphatically, by proposing positive discrimination through educational priority areas, as 'good schools should make up for a poor environment.'

The roots of this view of the contribution schooling makes to economic and social development, lies in human capital theory. The literature on this concept is large, and still growing, and to make only a few comments may seem trite. Nonetheless, some basic points do need to be underlined. The best known contemporary formulations of human capital theory were advanced during the 1960s by Theodore Schultz and Mark Blaug. Blaug's unambiguous opening premise is that 'In all economies of the world of which we have knowledge, people with more education earn on average, higher incomes than people with less education.' Fundamental to human capital theory is the notion that both individuals and nations will profit from investment in educational resources, as such investment will increase skills and competencies and therefore, productivity. This will, in turn, fuel economic development and generate wealth. The development of education is thus linked squarely to the goals of furthering economic and social development. For domestic policy planners, the elimination of disparities in educational provision will encourage the diffusion of manpower skills throughout society, and thereby remedy the conditions which consign successive generations to an impoverished existence.

Clearly implicit in human capital theory - and this is what links it most obviously with functionalist theories - is that there is a free market for labour. Put very briefly, the educational system is seen as engaging with the labour market in the following way. As every
society has a supply of skilled jobs which are well remunerated, the function of the education system is to regulate the supply of labour for these posts. Those who have the ability to acquire the requisite educational credentials will become the beneficiaries of better paid jobs. Expansion of, and equality in, the distribution of educational opportunities will ensure that talent vital to the skill requirements of a complex industrial society is identified and developed. Moreover, this form of human capital investment will achieve a more socially just and equal society, by ensuring that all sectors of the population have an opportunity to acquire the educational rewards which, by and large, have been appropriated by the privileged few.

These hypotheses were severely jolted in the 1970s. Assessments of the value of education in shrinking income inequalities in the Third World, began to take on an air of deepening pessimism. Ceylon, to advance one example, had experienced a considerable educational expansion in postwar decades, which had raised general education levels in both urban and rural sectors. Literacy rates rose from 57.8% in 1946, to 71.6% in the 1963 census year. Census returns also indicated that of the post-35 age group, over 85% were both literate and numerate. Yet, over the same period, there had been a very meagre increase in per capita production rates with base level incomes remaining depressed. More recent research continues to offer little comfort for Third World societies. Richards and Lenor, in their major study, Education and Income Distribution in Asia, demonstrate that as income distribution owes more to the distribution of occupational income, independently of educational level, than to the distribution of education, expanded schooling cannot be expected to improve income distribution significantly. It follows, therefore, that there will be a continuation of the inter-generational reproduction of poverty. Finally, and most gloomily, the authors point to what they see as the futility of special vocational education policies, as they 'merely promise hope for the poor, while keeping them from the education of the rich.' In similar vein,
in a recent special issue of Comparative Education devoted to the theme of 'Education and Development', the editor argues that it is unrealistic to pursue education policies on the premise that we might transform societies by transforming their schooling. Paul Hurst says of education that 'Except in unusual circumstances its contribution to development is easily exaggerated, and its role in social transformation, usually insignificant.' 13

Nor is this scepticism confined to the Third World. From the United States, numerous studies have emerged to challenge the confident assumptions of human capital theories. In 1972, Lester Thurow argued that formal education among white American males had become visibly more equal between 1950 and 1970. Measured as a percentage share of years of educational attainment, the lowest fifth had increased their hold on education, while the highest fifth had had theirs reduced. Yet, during this period, in direct contradiction to the human capital thesis, the distribution of income had become increasingly less equal. Thurow concluded correctly that investment in education has not proved a sufficient measure to promote a more egalitarian social order. 14

Probably the most publicised critique of American beliefs in the equalising properties of education was that produced by Christopher Jencks and seven co-authors, in 1972. Their Inequality is an account of exhaustive, statistically-based research which attempts to demonstrate conclusively that schooling has had no visible impact on an unequal distribution of economic and social resources. According to Jencks, the major fallacy of American liberal social reform in the 1960s was an uncritical adoption of human capital theories which predicted that the abolition of poverty was possible through investing in the work skills of the poor. 'The egalitarian trend in education', Jencks concludes firmly, 'has not made the distribution of income or status appreciably more equal over the past twenty-five years.' 15 Jencks' Inequality triggered off considerable debate on both sides of the Atlantic about the principles and aims of equalising educational opportunity. Commenting on his work in 1973, he reflected:

'The evidence presented in Inequality seems to me to show that variations in family background, I.Q., genotype, exposure to schooling, and the quality of schooling, cannot account
for most of the variation in individual or family incomes. This means we must reject the conservative notion that income inequality is largely due to the fact that men are born with unequal abilities and raised in unequal home environments. We must also reject the liberal notion that equalizing educational opportunities will equalize people's incomes'.

The perspective adopted by Jencks and his colleagues is that if patterns of economic inequality are to be reversed, such a goal will only be realisable if the actual economic structures which reproduce and sustain poverty are attacked. Schooling cannot be expected to improve the unequal distribution of income and wealth. Although inequality does not recommend pruning educational expenditure, or perhaps deschooling, and instead stresses the contribution made by education to improving the quality of contemporary life, the implication of its argument does seem to be that we ought to attach no weight to schooling in any redistributive strategy.

Another critic of the liberal position who, if anything, pushes his arguments even further than Jencks, is Walter Feinberg. In Feinberg's harsh judgement:

'If the goal of full equality of educational opportunity were actually achieved, if the instruments for identifying talent and the institutions for training it were perfected, then it is likely that the society would be even more unequal than it presently is. Talent will be removed from the lower classes, the instruments for control that exist in large bureaucratic structures would become even more efficient...With talent removed from the lower classes, their ability to articulate real injustices would be destroyed, and along with it, any incentive for others to address social injustices. In American society, the appeal to equality of educational opportunity has consistently been used to mask basic inequalities in social, economic, and political institutions. The schools have been used to hold out the promise of pie-in-the-sky for everyone, while the economics of the situation have denied to some even a loaf of daily bread. The problem with schools is not that they have failed to achieve equality of opportunity, nor is it that they have not tried,...The problem is that the schools have advanced the idea of equality of opportunity in the context of an economic system that would bankrupt itself if everyone who was employable and wanted to work were actually given a job. Indeed, if everyone were to stay in school up to the same level, and were to come out with very similar competencies, employers would have to find some other trait to distinguish 'employables' from 'unemployables.' Equality of educational opportunities has been such an appealing idea because people have not wanted to deal with the problem of equality'.
The shrinking number of liberal theorists who still incline to the view that education has had some equalising impact in industrial capitalist societies, are increasingly cautious in their judgements. For the most part, their claims are modest, and hedged about with qualifications. Writing in 1979, C.R. Winegarden, while arguing that the 'effect of education on income distribution remains unclear and controversial', nevertheless feels obliged to concede that 'schooling does not provide the only avenue to reduced income inequality.' For C.R. Link, an analysis of data on black earnings in America suggests that by the 1970s, 'even though investments in education and training have undoubtedly played a significant role in helping to improve the position of blacks,...the gains are not as large as earlier data indicated.'

The analysis of postwar education policies in Britain undertaken by Philip Robinson, demonstrates that while at the micro level there has been some marginal mobility and private advantage for individuals from impoverished backgrounds, at the critically important macro level, the interests of the poor as a group have not been aided by the concept of equal opportunity. For both Britain and the United States, the evidence and argument of these perspectives is that while education can undoubtedly be a factor in the promotion of occupational and income mobility for a minority, a naive belief in its capacity to bring about greater economic equality is misplaced. The main lesson of educational sociology in the 1970s thus seems to have been the impossibility of achieving a more equitable social order through educational reform, in a capitalist society structured by unequal relations of class, race, and gender. Or, as the British authors of Unpopular Education put it bluntly, 'social divisions within the adult education, far from disappearing magically when confronted with a couple of O-Levels, are very deeply rooted indeed.'

Smolensky's far-sighted conclusion in 1966 that 'pessimism is the most optimistic position on an education policy for an economist with any compassion for the poor,' has now been recited ad nauseum by writers at many points of the ideological spectrum. Even as establishment a document as the education report of the Australian Government Commission of
Inquiry into Poverty in 1979, concludes that education points towards no kind of easy solution to structurally generated poverty and social neglect.

There is widespread belief in our community that of the many solutions to poverty, education more than any other provides the way out for poor people. But the evidence in our Report raises basic queries about the validity of such beliefs. Our investigation of the outcomes of schooling has revealed that success in school and in the competition for rewarding careers is largely determined by such factors as social class, ethnic background, and geographic location. The structural inequalities in our society are nowhere more evident than in our school systems. Far from being a way out for poor people, schools act as a sorting, streaming mechanism helping to maintain the existing distribution of status and power. The belief that schools provide the best possible potential for intervention in the poverty cycle is in conflict with the actual function schools carry out...People who are disadvantaged are victims of a societal confidence trick. They have been encouraged to believe that a major goal of schooling is to increase equality, while in reality, schools reflect society's intention to maintain the present unequal distribution of status and power. Education cannot serve as a panacea for poverty. 23

The idea that education has the potential to set to rights disparities of wealth, welfare, and opportunity, is certainly experiencing a crisis of credibility in the 1980s. Virtually everyone, not least the World Bank, now concedes that hopes were overblown. 24 Even writers like George Psacharopolous, who have in the past made ambitious claims for rates-of-return analysis, have now retreated to a cautious position. A point made recently by Psacharopolous is that as educational expansion worldwide has been accompanied by a marginal decline in the income advantage of the more educated, it might be argued that education has had an indirect, if extremely slight, equalising effect. 25

If one accepts that what is really required to eliminate poverty is a massive redistribution of income and wealth, then the prima facie case for enlisting education in the battle appears derisory. For the dice which are so heavily loaded against the poor are not educational. As Samuel Bowles has argued, 'The primary obstacle to more bountiful and broadly shared economic rewards is the distribution of power, not the distribution of human capital.' 26
This directs our attention towards a further substantial contribution to the education debate, namely that provided by a Marxist perspective. Here, the emphasis is that the liberal push for equality, access, and opportunity, is misplaced.

Education is not a neutral force, to be pressed into service in order to achieve greater equality within a capitalist framework. It is a product of, and is conditioned by, the capitalist political economy of which it is an integral component. As such, the form, content, and distribution of education mirrors the distribution of power and authority in an unequal and hierarchical class society. The work of the American writers Herbert Gintis and Samuel Bowles is influential in this area of analysis. In Britain, Marxist critiques have emerged from, among others, academics connected with the Open University and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, in the University of Birmingham.

Bowles and Gintis offer a series of rigorous propositions about what they see as the primary purposes of education. And their arguments undoubtedly merit careful consideration. Human capital theory is given short shrift, on the grounds that it simply provides 'a good ideology for the defence of the status quo.' The western education system works to legitimise economic inequality under the garb of an open, objective, and ostensibly meritocratic structure. In reality, its purpose is to assign individuals to 'an array of economic positions whose income structure is determined in large measure independently of the distribution of human resources.' The strength of capitalist culture has always lain in the way in which its processes have remained anonymous and hidden, appearing natural and neutral, and divorced from the structures of privilege and poverty that they actually sustain.

Having blown away education's ideological mystifications, Bowles and Gintis conclude that 'it is illogical to suppose that the reduction in inequalities in the distribution of schooling might lead to changes in income inequality.' Their 1976 volume, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, hammers home the reasons why a more egalitarian school system could be judged to have failed to create a more equal distribution of income and opportunity. In the United States, equal opportunity as
a concept, and as a strategy for educational action, had done nothing to effectively remedy the hardships and deprivations of the poor, the black, and the exploited. The authors' discussion of educational reform leads them to conclude that:

'Liberal strategies for achieving economic equality have been based on a fundamental misconception of the historical evolution of the education system. Education over the years has never been a potent force for economic equality...despite the important contribution of education to an individual's economic chances, the substantial equalization of educational attainments over the years has not measurably to an equalization in income among individuals.'

Bowles' and Gintis' position is that education cannot be abstracted from its relationship to unequal economic, political and social structures in capitalist society. Thus, while American blacks and Hispanics are undeniably educationally disadvantaged, the roots of their exploitation lie outside of education, in a system of economic power and privilege in which racial criteria play a crucial, determining role.

The two writers' remind us that it is the failure to confront the structural dimensions of poverty and inequality which has resulted in a preoccupation with policies and programmes which attempt to alleviate the educational disadvantages of pupils from impoverished environments. Planning of egalitarian school reforms has not faced up to the nature of the social structures which prevent equitable ends from being realised. The failure of reform reflects the fact that inequality under capitalism is located not in low educational motivation and inadequate occupational preparation, or in cultural deprivation, but in the structures of production and in property relations.

A further contention is that compulsory, mass state schooling has for the past century been an agency of control and repression which has legitimated unequal political and economic structures. Education helps to reproduce the social relations of capitalist production by virtue of the correlation between school, hierarchies of knowledge, and social class. *Schooling in Capitalist America* contends that:

'The education system, basically, neither adds to nor subtracts from the degree of inequality and repression originating in the
economically sphere. Rather, it reproduces and legitimates a pre-existing pattern in the process of training and stratifying the work force. How does this occur? The heart of the process is to be found not in the content of the educational encounter - or in the process of information transfer - but in the form: the social relations of the educational encounter. These correspond closely to the social relations of dominance, subordination, and motivation in the economic sphere. Through the educational encounter, individuals are induced to accept the degree of powerlessness with which they will be faced as mature workers.31

From this standpoint, the education system is, perhaps more clearly than any other cultural agency, by definition a part of the superstructure, responding to, and adapting itself to the requirements of a capitalist infrastructure of productive forces and productive relations. As such, the educational process enjoys no actual autonomy as a neutral force serving the needs of labour and capital equally, but functions as an agency which either implicitly or explicitly, helps to reproduce an inequitable social and economic order. Thus, in capitalist societies, far from reducing inequalities, education generates them.

Even if the educational system does become progressively more equal - as in the marked narrowing of the black education deficit in the United States for example - the benefits accruing to the poor will represent small beer. Formal schooling can serve as no more than a means to higher status and earnings for a small percentage of the urban poor, and an even smaller fragment of the rural poor. For the unequal structure of income and occupation is determined outside the education system. Hence, education just registers and mediates inequalities, through a system of values and beliefs all of which, ultimately, confirm and consolidate an unequal distribution of wealth and privilege under capitalism. If we press this line of argument, then strategies for equality of access and educational opportunity can serve, paradoxically, to further legitimise an already deeply unequal society. When the distribution of educational resources is seen to be grossly unequal and unjust, it is clear that the ideological authority of schooling systems will be blunted. Popular consent will not be readily obtainable. It follows that for capitalist societies, the ideological force of education to mask and legitimate class inequality will be at its peak when schooling itself is seen to
be organised on a just and equitable basis. With poverty viewed as a natural and accidental, rather than as a structural product of capitalism, equality of access to schooling will come to serve as an open sesame to equal opportunity and enlarged incomes for the poor.

Bowles' and Gintis' analysis is powerful and persuasive, and deserves scrupulous attention. Yet, the real problem with critiques of this kind is that they risk bringing discussion to an abrupt halt. The end result of the book's Marxist theorising is to dispel any lingering, gossamer hopes we may have had about a positive role for education in social transformation, and to reinforce pessimism. For if we accept the logic of the argument, it is extremely difficult to see in which direction further debate can most usefully go. In Bowles' and Gintis' view, as Dale has correctly concluded, 'schools are regarded implicitly as being directly controlled by the needs of capitalist accumulation, and hence it is only by changing that that we can change what goes on in schools.' 32 With education making no visible incremental contribution to transforming economic and social relations, it is difficult to know from structuralist analysis what strategy, if any, would not be an educational palliative or reformist diversion that would up dumping the poor and powerless.

It should be stressed that Bowles and Gintis do not discard the idea that education might one day become a substantial force for reform. Education, for them, can serve as a democratic, egalitarian force. Ideally:

'An equal school system would substantially undermine the basis of hierarchical privilege. Indeed, we believe that the movement for social equality, and the widespread dissatisfaction among increasingly well-educated workers is, to a degree, the result of the increasing equality of educational attainments. But a more equal school system will not create a more equal society simply through equalising the distribution of human resources. Egalitarian school reform must be explicitly political: its aim must be to undermine the capacity of the system to perpetuate inequality... An egalitarian program of educational reforms must make it perfectly clear that equality is not a question of subcultural values, nor is it a biological issue, nor is it a narrowly economic issue... egalitarian reforms in education must seek to disable the myths which make inequality appear beneficial, just, or unavoidable.' 33
Overall, however, the conclusions to be drawn from most Marxist commentators are deterministic and negative. While the central arguments of Bowles' and Gintis' analysis seem irrefutable, there is one aspect which appears less than satisfactory. There seems to be, at the very least, an area of doubt about the way in which they seek to demonstrate a relationship between the ideology and practices of schooling, and the reproduction of capitalist social relations.

There is no doubt that a key function of education is the production of a potential labour force with the appropriate attitudes, aptitudes, and familiarity with capitalist work practices. It is equally true that the economy does have a consuming interest in hierarchical forms of schooling which determine that labour is reproduced with varying levels of competencies and work skills. It is certainly evident, for example, that the Human Sciences Research Council's recent report on South African education, to which we will turn shortly, is deeply immersed in the question of precisely how best to respond to that manpower requirement.

But does this mean that the social relations of schooling can be seen as always having a simple, functional relation to the practices and rituals of industrial capitalist society? While it is clearly absurd to believe that there is no connection, the relationship is arguably more complex and problematic than Bowles and Gintis would have us believe. For the fit between schooling and the labour market is never total. And American education, as much as any other system, has periodically been a casualty of this mismatch. As Tapper and Salter have argued, one critically important paradox about state education is that it represents an agency of control and socialisation within which there are deep tensions, contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties. There are sharp, significant, and irresolvable tensions between the social control mechanisms of education, and its ever-present potential (given certain conditions) for liberating large numbers of individuals. The latter result may invariably be fortuitous, and education may be organised in ways which try to damp down its latent potential for sparking off popular movements and popular discontent, but the opportunity is nevertheless always present. For a recent, local example of such developments, we need look no further than the 1980 educational disturbances in Coloured high schools in the Western Cape. In this spasm of pupil unrest,
we saw the fabric of educational authoritarianism being shredded, as students began to challenge the hierarchical structure of segregated schooling, and the ways in which it transmits knowledge in an apartheid social order. Pressing from within for a radical modification and reinterpretation of the curriculum, high school pupils encroached upon the traditional prerogatives of the teacher, in order to win control over the classroom encounter, and what ought to constitute a progressive curriculum. This episode of popular upheaval illustrates the way in which education can, to some degree, and in some circumstances, be taken over and oriented towards reflecting and propagating beliefs in a more just society. Martin Carnoy, for example, argues that a robust contest to subvert the hierarchical structure of schooling is of crucial importance:

"If we begin to change income distribution through political action, we must also change the distribution of schooling, and especially its hierarchical structure and the way it transmits knowledge, or else we will not change one of the important factors contributing to the old structure of income." 36

At a time when apartheid education has been under the greatest stress it has ever endured, what are the implications of these perspectives for educational reform and development in South Africa? It is clear that recent state initiatives in the sphere of compulsory mass education represent an attempt to rescue the black schooling system from its Cinderella status, and to lower the temperature of education-based conflict. The expansionary Education and Training Act of 1979, and the 1981 Human Sciences Research Council's Report on Education Provision in the RSA have both been hustled forward to provide some measure of reassurance that the state is attempting an honest diagnosis of the education crisis which besets it. The background of traumatic disenchantment with schooling, and student militancy of 1976 – 1977 and 1980, against which the HSRC Inquiry ought to be assessed, needs no elaboration here.

The importance of the official Report of the De Lange Commission is not simply that it purports to offer partial, interim, or over lasting solutions to paralysis and disarray in black education. It is equally, as Buckland has argued, an attempt to patch together a comfortable consensus on educational reform. 37 Clearly acting on the
belief that the academic credentials of the HSRC would lend any education report greater credibility than one produced by a government commission of inquiry, the state has to some degree managed to invest the De Lange Inquiry with an air of impartiality and political neutrality. Yet, for all its protestations of free intellectual enquiry and scientific objectivity, the HSRC Report is firmly wedded to new, modernist thinking in the politics of segregation.

Is the Report nevertheless of any value to those concerned with progressive educational transformation? On the part of the state, can we anticipate full, or more realistically, partial acceptance of its findings and recommendations? Could De Lange give birth to a universal system of equal education for all South Africans, including those millions have had, and are having, their citizenship confiscated by the white state? In its Interim Memorandum of provisional comments of October, 1981, the government accepted the Report's principles for the provision of education 'subject to points of departure', such as the reaffirmation of 'the Christian and broad national character of education', as defined in the 1969 National Educational Policy Act; the principle of mother tongue education; 'that each population group should have its own schools', and that implementation of some of the Report's more minor recommendations would depend upon flexibility in the political field. Although quite considerable publicity has been given to the government's mild, if not grudging response to the Report, it is virtually certain that some type of reformed, unitary education system is still on the political agenda. According to Professor J.P. Lange himself, the implementation of some new policy to restructure and refine apartheid education is in the offing. 'I cannot elaborate on the exact constitutional procedure', De Lange has been quoted as saying, 'but there is no doubt that a single, macro-level education policy aimed at parity and relevance is on the way.'

Does the De Lange investigation have anything new to offer researchers? First of all, for all its flaws and gaping omissions, it is undoubtedly the most comprehensive national inquiry in the history of South African education, and represents the first weighty official state
document on black education since the 1935-1936 Inter-Departmental Committee on Native Education, and the 1951 Commission on Native Education. Secondly, the scrupulous accumulation of a mass of empirical evidence which lays bare the inequalities of educational provision under apartheid, leaves no further room for misinformed complacency about just how meagre are educational resources for black South Africans. The provision of statistical evidence confirms massive differences in educational attainment between the country's population registration groups. To instance merely a small sample:

Table Percentage Distribution of Racial Inequalities in Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils completing 12 years of formal schooling, 1963-1965</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Coloured</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58,4</td>
<td>1,96</td>
<td>4,4</td>
<td>22,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching corps which is severely underqualified, i.e., does not hold a minimum of a Std. 10 certificate and a teaching diploma</td>
<td>3,6</td>
<td>85,0</td>
<td>66,14</td>
<td>19,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching corps which is qualified, i.e., holds a degree and a postgraduate teaching certificate</td>
<td>34,0</td>
<td>2,45</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>20,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Republic's 1,446 black secondary schools, there were, at the most recent count, merely, 1,378 qualified, graduate teachers. On several other common indices of inequality and educational deficiency, the data generated does little more than induce gloom. It is estimated that to achieve parity in pupil-teacher-ratio (PTR) by the year 2020, the following numbers of trained teachers will have to be provided for a racially differentiated education system: White, 24,981; Black, 245,405, Coloured, 22,078, Asian, 6,946. For a universal PTR of 30:1, based on probable movements of the birthrate, the demand for white teachers will shrink from 48,700 in 1980, to 27,800 in the year 2000, whereas the demand for black teachers will leapfrog dramatically, from 95,000 in 1980, to 240,000 in 2000. 40
Currently, PTR in black schools appears to be in a degenerative state. Between 1953 and 1969, it widened progressively from 1:41 to 1:60, while by 1979, the PTR in primary schools (excluding the Transkei) had moved to 1:78. Figures for the Bophuthatswana 'homeland' in that year reveal that double-shift classes were languishing under a PTR of 100:1.

On the assumption that the present structure of formal schooling will continue, and that the 1980s could mark some turning point in the state's niggardly spending on black education, Roukens De Lange still concludes of PTR developments:

'even under the most favourable conditions of teacher retention and a high production rate of secondary teachers, the PTR will remain unfavourable for at least another 10 years. The need to keep a large number of teachers with primary teaching certificates employed in secondary schools for many years hence, in order to keep down the PTR, is shown up very clearly. It can also be seen that unless the popularity of teaching as a career is to become unexpectedly high, the PTR in primary schools will not drop below 30, even by the year 2010.'

It is clearly vital not to underrate the size of the staggering gap which exists between present educational expenditure, and the resources required to achieve a minimal elementary standard at which common, basic, educational requirements can even begin to be fulfilled.

This leads one to pose the central question - what path does the HSRC expect South African education to follow in the foreseeable future? One difficulty in reflecting upon the Report is that beyond large and lumpy generalities, such as 'the reduction and elimination of demonstrable inequality', 'the improvement of the quality of life for all the inhabitants of the country', and that learning ought to develop the 'humanity' of individuals, there is little sense of a coherent, general theory of education. Perhaps the special quality of the De Lange Report lies in its unwillingness to become contaminated by new sociologies of education, and schooling's relationship with ideas of social justice and redistribution. To say this is not to subscribe to the inflationary hopes which have been invested in equal opportunity theories in other parts of the capitalist world,
but simply to point out the absence of clearly articulated theoretical foundations to the De Lange approach. Nevertheless, the Report does have a recognisable ideological lineage. The HSRC's stress on technical and industrial training, on vocational education, on compulsory, universal school attendance, on upgraded worker efficiency, and on the critical importance of linguistic skills, represents some fairly well-thumbed notions. One can locate their historical antecedents in recommendations of several previous South African government reports and commissions, from the 1936 Welsh Committee to the 1951 Eiselen Commission.

What is of foremost significance is the fact that the state appears willing to accept what is probably the simplest yardstick of equal educational opportunity - equality of access to resources. The brief of the Commission indicated a policy commitment on the part of the authorities to 'equal educational opportunities', 'equal standards of education', and 'education of equal opportunity for all population groups'. The De Lange Report appears to concede at certain points that segregated and unequal schooling is an infringement of the most elementary principle of educational equality. It states that:

'differentiation also rests purely on the basis of race or colour, which cannot be regarded as relevant for inequality of treatment. Examples of this are the treatment of different racial groups in a way that is strikingly unequal, for example, in the distribution of education in terms of per capita expenditure, proportion of qualified teachers, quality and quantity of facilities.... A further example is where admission to educational institutions is regulated mainly on a racial basis.... Differentiation based purely on difference of race and colour...is...contrary to the social and ethical demands for justice.' (emphasis added)

Furthermore, the Report concedes that, 'The distribution of education will have to be organised in such a way that everyone will receive a rightful share, regardless of race, colour, socioeconomic context, ethnic context, religion, sex, or geographical location. 42

On the most optimistic reading, liberal educationists may take comfort from the probability that there will be a departure
from the parsimonious principle that 'education for blacks must be so financed that it is not conducted at the expense of the whites', and that black education may in future become the beneficiary of proportionately greater shares of resources. However, intractable problems arise when we consider the interpretation of equality of educational opportunity advanced by the HSRC. For De Lange's proposals for parity in expenditure, and for a unitary, national education system, remain firmly locked within a segregationist framework. Evidently mindful of the Cabinet's directive to the HSRC that it construct 'a programme for making available education of the same quality for all population groups' (emphasis added), the De Lange Commission expresses support for a strategy aimed at 'the reduction and elimination of demonstrable inequality in the provision of education available to members of the different population groups'. By any judgement, this points us in the direction of segregated but 'equal' education. Education of equal quality means equal but separate education, with equal resources to be spent on ethnically differentiated segments of the education system. This is not a position behind which one can rally easily. As the provision of segregated educational facilities seems certain to continue as an unassailable principle of official National Party policy, the prospects for desegregated education remain bleak. Given this racial framework, it is hard to see what meaning, if any, the concept of equal educational opportunity can possibly have. The established United States Supreme Court principle that segregated education inherently means unequal education, unquestionably still holds true.

It is important to emphasise that far from representing any fundamental break with apartheid ideology, the De Lange recommendations are, in fact, wholly consistent with current reformist trends in state policies, intended to modernise white domination. Thus, Buckland has correctly summed up the Report as an attempt to modernise and streamline apartheid education.

Central to this strategic reconstruction of education is the fact that South Africa is experiencing a general, chronic, and continuing post-Soweto crisis. In what has now indisputably become a siege
society, politicians, industrialists, the mass media, and other interests involved in the manufacture of public opinion, are emphasising that a major contributory element to the current political crisis is the problem of economic reproduction. Rising inflation, a deepseated crisis of profitability in sectors of secondary industry, growing foreign indebtedness, increasing levels of black structural and cyclical unemployment, and the increasing pressures of working class militancy, have been multiplying the barriers to further, rapid, capital accumulation. With the spread of severe crisis, depression, and instability through the 1970s, into the 1980s, the familiar doctrine of national interest is increasingly translated into the need for an acceleration of economic growth. Many of the arguments of national interest are no longer founded on crude populist ideologies of race and racial domination, but squarely and unhesitatingly, on the long term interests of the market order.

What are the implications for educational policy? As state and capital crank up to confront South Africa's deepening crises, the De Lange Report can most usefully be seen as a standard bearer of the strategy of defining the national interest in terms of capitalist efficiency and profitability. In recent years, the perennial problem of labour supply in capitalist society—the right labour, in the right quantities, at the right price, with the right qualifications, skills, and attitudes—has intensified pressure for an invigoration of black schooling, and for a general reorganisation of education, linking it to restructured manpower policies. Anxiety over crippling skill shortages in the labour market has crystallised around the argument that older apartheid education policies are responsible for structural fissures in the market economy—unemployment, stagnation, and disruption. Blame for unemployment and falling living standards is placed on inferior and inappropriate schooling. For the Report's authors, educational planning is wholly conditioned by the need to ensure that schooling corresponds to the requirements of a capitalist mode of production. Education is viewed instrumentally, as a service industry to reproduce and process a skilled, urban, wage labour force. Given the overwhelming strength of the argument that the unequal distribution of educational resources is severely hampering the supply of adequate quotas of skilled and productive black manpower, it is
hardly startling that this approach should be adopted so explicitly. The De Lange Report is revealingly candid about what it sees as the proper relation between schooling and work, and more specifically, skilled wage labour. It is incumbent upon schools to shape and adjust student expectations and aspirations to the occupational realities of the economy. The Commission therefore displays an impatience with the uncertainties and imponderables of a conventional 'academic' curriculum, and advocates differentiated curricula which will contribute more concretely to the reproduction of the industrial work skills and habits sought by the economy. Thus, we see a weighty interest in the expansion of informal adult education, as part of a strategy for enlarging educational bases for industrial training, and for the formation of technical skills. Education is viewed as a subordinating and adaptive social force, necessarily tailored to the production of functional, capitalist manpower.

What is new is not a link between schooling and work—historically, fulfilling the lower grade labour needs of capital has always been the primary objective of Bantu Education—but the need to ensure that the reproductive link between schooling and the economy becomes more responsive to the swelling demand for reskilled and upskilled black labour.

To achieve this, what kind of restructuring does De Lange offer? The Report proposes a tripartite school structure, focusing on basic education as the core of the educational system. Within this three-phase unit, the end of the first stage will lead to either non-formal education, or to academic education. The basic phase is envisaged as lasting for six years, with the post-basic element lasting for a further three years. The retrograde principle of streaming at all levels to eliminate 'wastage' is embraced eagerly. Treatment of the 'equal and compulsory' principle merits some further attention. It is envisaged that education will be free and compulsory for the first six years, during which time pupils will be the beneficiaries of full state funding. Thereafter, there are some rather
large question marks. On the basis of the original recommendations, if pupils continue through to formal secondary education, finance is to be drawn from 'the individual and the community, to supplement the state's contribution.' If, on the other hand, pupils proceed to some form of vocational education, the investment will, for the most part, be borne by capital. Here, it is important to underline that De Lange's view of post-basic education is compulsory learning for a further three years, but not necessarily 'education' in the formal sense of the term. In short, pupils may find themselves liable for streaming into technical or 'Career Orientated' education from the astonishingly early age of twelve. Middle class communities will thus enjoy privileged, selective access to partially subsidised, formal secondary schooling, while working class children will be routed into heavily subsidised, narrow vocational and technical training, financed directly by private capital. For the overwhelming mass of black pupils then, there will be a contraction in the length of formal education, with the victims having to be content with life in restrictive vocational and technical tracks. The HSRC Report thus clearly envisages a highly differentiated educational structure, in which non-formal education will process predominantly black pupils.

The Report reduces the complexities of knowledge to a simple formula by casting it as the acquisition of skills, with an appropriate 'value system' to socialise pupils into acceptance of an unequal order of economic and social relations. On the question of skills, Linda Chisholm has argued very persuasively that linking education with active work in the context of capitalist social relations, becomes a surer means to deepening class subordination. 48 She points out that:

'It is interesting to note that De Lange adopts Illich's argument that children learn best on the job (not an entirely incorrect or even undesirable option within changed social relations) to justify their early extrusion from school into restricting, vocational, on-the-job training. It is clear that De Lange is co-opting an argument from a radical education tradition...for his own, very different purposes.' 49

Chisholm is quite correct to note that there is nothing intrinsically suspect about the promotion of on-the-job learning, and technical and
vocational education. The difficulty one faces is whether it is at all possible to divest these types of education of their capitalist 'manpower' connotations. Indeed, whether in terms of the De Lange Commission's frame of reference, it is possible to differentiate vocational education from its inevitable role in furthering already stark divisions between skilled and unskilled labour. The De Lange route promises a remorseless widening of the gap between mental and manual education. These problems are compounded by the important, symbolic question of trying to secure educational legitimacy. There can be little doubt that one of the major impulses behind the call to expand and equalise education is the hope that a more equal system of apartheid education will pay political dividends. For more equal education, one may well read, more legitimate education.

There is surely no question that the legitimacy of schooling for blacks has been put at issue as never before, prompting one local educationist to go as far as to argue that 'the debate in education is not ultimately about equality or inequality: rather, it is about legitimacy.' It is interesting to note that the Report itself is quite candid about the issue of legitimacy in educational reform. It concludes:

'Finally, there appear to be serious problems with regard to the acceptability of educational practice in the RSA. This acceptability is related to two factors: in the first place, the acceptance by the 'users' of the authority responsible for the establishment of the education system; and, in the second place, the involvement of the 'users' in decision-making processes.'

Let us, however, for argument's sake, assume that equality of opportunity in education practice will eventually find firm ground in South Africa. The implications of a situation in which national resources are distributed more equally, are potentially considerable. With the provision of educational facilities for blacks no longer grossly substandard, or necessarily lacking in prestige, it is feasible to envisage a reformed education system becoming an important ladder for enhanced individual mobility. Social, occupational, and income mobility could be seen as being linked primarily to educational achievement rather than colour, as will the differential distribution of social rewards and material privilege. Under these consumptive
conditions, one might foresee education joining market and property relationships as the measure of individual privilege for an urban black elite. Can South African education reach a point at which processes of differentiation will be seen to rest upon social class, rather than upon colour, with differential attainments legitimised by an ideology of parity, meritocracy, and equality of opportunity? Can such doctrines be expected to make much headway against hierarchies of race?

A more equitable distribution of the existing structures of formal schooling will undoubtedly help to legitimise inequality. Educational expansion in the De Lange mould will not make the distribution of income more equal, nor is it likely to become a significant factor contributing to improvements in the relative, collective life chances of the South African poor. With blacks beyond the pale of full and equal citizenship and full political rights, simple educational expansion is unlikely to do away with the general reproduction of class positions along racial lines.

Such redistributive steps in education are likely to have two major consequences. Firstly, De Lange’s conception of education as servicing the labour needs of capital intensive accumulation means that educational strategy as a whole is predicated on the interests of urban citizenship and consumption. In rural developmental terms, the HSRC Report is bankrupt. A perpetuation of extreme urban bias in education, with its rhetoric of equity, will simply deepen processes of impoverishment whereby the rural poor pay the premium for higher standards of living for a skilled urban working class, and interlocking urban elites. Distance in skills, income, wealth, and lifestyle, will mark off advantaged, settled, urban labour aristocracies ever more sharply from the labouring and unemployed rural poor. Thus, we can see that both logically and empirically, the HSRC strategy will funnel resources, both private and public, to the market centres of capitalism. This will accentuate and rigidify geographical inequalities.

The second most likely consequence is that the payoff from education to those in the labour market will legitimate the myth that the
unequal distribution of rewards merely mirrors the unequal distribution of ability and competency. And here, from a longer historical perspective, we cannot ignore the truth of Carney's argument that within all capitalist economies, the payoff from schooling changes in a way which makes lower levels of attainment worth less over time, relative to higher levels. He observes that:

'just as the poor begin to get higher levels of schooling, the relative value in the labour market of those levels falls. Even when the society invests more in schooling for the poor, therefore, the labour market values that schooling less than before the poor were getting it. So income distribution does not improve in a capitalist society as the average level of schooling increases, or as the distribution of schooling becomes more equal."

Finally, it is important to note that the De Lange Commission displays a meanness in its presumptions about possible levels of state investment in education. With regard to the allocation of public resources, the HSRC repeatedly urges educationists to be 'realistic' about the level of state obligation. The stated aim is parity of expenditure, but, we are reminded, 'it is inevitable that realistic norms be set to determine the financial needs in respect of provision of education.' Government spokesmen have already indicated that a rapid equalisation of educational opportunity and provision for black and white would entail unacceptably high levels of public expenditure, and have ruled out the possibility of achieving educational parity within the next decade. Instead, social market thinking is strongly in evidence. The key concern of social market doctrine is that agreed ends might best be achieved through the market, rather than through public enterprise and public planning. It relieves the state of responsibility for adequate public provision of social resources and institutions. De Lange himself, in a revealing interview in the Johannesburg Sunday Times of 31 July, 1983, has argued that as 'the whole trend in South Africa in recent years has been towards... the involvement of private enterprise,...I don't see why education should be excluded.'
Let us now turn briefly from the failure of educational expansion to substantially improve the economic lot of those who are worst off in capitalist society, to a consideration of more radical strategies of reform. The number of countries where these have been successfully implemented is extremely small, for, as Williamson has correctly argued, 'only societies in the first flush of revolutionary ardour' seem able to make headway in freeing education from the constraints, compromises, and rigidities of the past. Accordingly, what perspectives are offered by alternatives in Cuba? Under Fidel Castro, education there has been reshaped in the aftermath of revolutionary upheaval, in which the mould of capitalist social structure was decisively broken. Cuba has experienced a radical restructuring of the traditional concept of Western schooling, anchored to curricula which relate education to production, in terms of work-study principles. The goals and priorities of Havana's educational planning have been to modify urban-rural differentials and inequalities, and to sever the established link between formal educational qualifications, and economic and social benefits. It is beyond question that this process has been accompanied by a reduction in inequalities of income and wealth. The apparent role of Cuban education in narrowing earnings differentials is thus of obvious importance to present discussion. Can one argue, therefore, that there has been a causal link between schooling reform and improvements in the income of the labouring poor? In reality, there seems to have been little direct connection. Critics are for the most part agreed that education has not been an important independent variable in the transfer of resources to the poorest. Nor, arguably, was such a separate equalising role ever conceived for it. While opportunities were equalised, the state did not flirt with compensatory education or positive discrimination. Cuban education has, in fact, played a dependent role, acting in concert with other, more directly interventionist, redistributive measures. While equalising access to education did not in itself redistribute income or expand employment, education has been an essential handmaiden of state strategies aimed at gearing Cuban society towards rural development, and the achievement of an equitable distribution of income, wealth, goods, and services. Income redistribution in Cuba, conclude the authors
of one important study:

' was accompanied by an expansion of education, particularly at lower levels, but this expansion did not lead to more equal incomes. Nevertheless, ... in the Cuban Revolution, increased schooling and more equally distributed schooling and training were ... a necessary compliment to equalised income and wealth, not only as a service which itself had to be distributed, but also as an important ingredient in socialising Cubans into the new order, and preparing them for roles in the new organisation of production.56

A second and related example of genuinely innovative educational reforms is the case of post-revolutionary China. By diversifying learning situations through the model of Kaimen bantue ('open door' or work-study education), integrating the school curriculum and other educational activities with productive labour, and by discarding the central concept of education as a formal classroom encounter, China, it is argued, has managed to turn education into a potent instrument for rural development. Education has also helped to realise important distributional objectives, by narrowing the gap between rural and urban incomes, and in assisting the growth rate of peasant incomes.57

Whether the Chinese educational model has been wholly successful in redressing various deprivations, inequalities, and disadvantages is less than crystal clear 58 It is, however, a matter of common observation that contemporary Chinese education makes a realistic attempt to grapple with the critical problems of how to reverse entrenched preferences for urban jobs and lifestyles, and has gone some considerable way towards reducing status distinctions between vocational and academic educational tracks. By pursuing a bold work-study policy, with a rural centre of gravity, 'aimed at the inculcation of egalitarian attitudes by narrowing the status gap between manual and mental work', China has been able to avoid some of the bruising consequences of conventional educational expansion, which invariably results in the formation of new urban elites which are disdainful of rural development.59

In short, it seems to be only in conditions of rupture and social reconstruction that education can be seen to be playing some part in
a collectivist policy framework which attempts the redistribution of income and wealth. In social change, education can be seen as an important participant, but not as an arbiter. Or, as Philip Robinson has so perceptively observed, 'although education cannot transform the world, the world cannot be transformed without education.'

Of the policy areas facing development strategists, education is surely one of the most perplexing and complex. The general argument of this paper has been that we cannot expect a more equal distribution of schooling - whether primary, secondary, or tertiary - to precipitate major changes in the structures of economic and social inequality. Such a belief is patently at odds with the facts. One has only to consider the record. Even where educational attainments are now becoming more equally distributed (as in parts of Latin America), this is only accompanied by very marginal shifts in income redistribution. In many developing countries there is strong empirical evidence to prove that the social rate of return on public education expenditure is close to zero. This situation has prompted one Mexican educationist to reflect that 'There is one characteristic common to all the countries of Latin America: it is easier to gain access to education at all levels that to attain power or wealth.'

So, at the very least, caution is required if we consider conscripting education to enlarge the shares of those at the bottom of every distribution, whether it be income, health, housing, or job opportunities. The gap between premise and conclusion is simply too wide to be plastered over with a piecemeal, liberal, progressivism. Yet, equally, it cannot be in dispute that investment in education is not a waste of resources. While we ought to rid ourselves of inflated hopes and misconceptions about the distributionist potential of education per se, to press for an education more responsive to egalitarian principles, more relevant to social and economic needs, is a challenge that must be grasped. The goal of equality of access to common resources is a substantial principle which must be fought for, and defended, once attained. For many of those who are most disadvantaged, educational opportunity continues to represent the greatest hope for individual mobility. This is an understandable,
indeed, a defensible common aspiration. Lack of education will undoubtedly destroy life chances and opportunities at an individual level. To ignore the merits of an interim strategy which brings expanding remedial resources, special programmes to improve the learning rates of children from low-income families, and drastically improved teacher training programmes, is to deny the possible fulfilment of human needs and life.

Our intention must be the minimisation of disparities in ways which will serve the objectives of educational equity. At both quantitative and qualitative levels, regional and rural-urban imbalances in provision ought to be rectified. We need not go into the fine print of this principle here, except to remark that while education is a human right which ought to remain open to all without hindrance, inferior education is no such human right.

We ought also to start reconsidering the processes whereby educational knowledge is presently legitimated in our society. A major factor intrinsic to education, which weighs heavily against the interests of the poor, is the remorseless circuit of 'qualification inflation.' The postwar inflation of diplomas and credentials in most societies has inspired Ronald Dore's astringent critique, The Diploma Disease, and he has recently restated his argument against education as the acquisition of credited information. Dore attacks the abnormality of a system in which 'the great Sorting System that is school, makes the exam, the diploma, the sheepskin, increasingly the central focus of schooling.' Despite mounting evidence that the link between diploma and job performance is at best tenuous, the growth of credentialism is becoming ever more rampant. For the poor, the implications of this diploma spiral are grim. If job placement rests principally on proliferating levels of paper qualifications, those trapped in poverty are put most at risk. Disadvantaged individuals from low income backgrounds are most prone to early-leaving, to being shunted into lower grade educational tracks, and are least likely to be able to obtain adequate credentials. Under an ostensibly neutral process of qualification distribution, schooling shrinks opportunities for those most disadvantaged. As the 'scourge of the
certificate' grows, so the structure of opportunities to enter the labour market without rising levels of paper qualifications, contracts.

There is a need to completely rethink the traditional structure of knowledge legitimation by means of certification, perhaps along the lines proposed by Dore - early recruitment into a productive environment, and aptitude instead of achievement tests in selection procedures. Work-study principles would enable the substitution of in-career selection and training for pre-career selection and training. Robinson similarly argues for a devaluation of examination-based and diploma-credited learning. This might allow for the transmission of a wider range of knowledge, within a system which would stress the acquisition of broad knowledge and skills, and would record what critical knowledge individuals possess of the social worlds which they inhabit. The assessment of which skills and knowledge the individual ought to have, should be that of the local community.

'This does not imply a ghetto curriculum, where the rural poor learn only agricultural skills, and the urban, the ecology of the slum', writes Robinson, but a process in which educational resources are brought under democratic, community control, with relevant community needs strongly influencing the curriculum. It might then be possible for education to become primarily responsive to developmental needs and imperatives. 65 This implies open, lifelong education, resting on a bedrock of community-based education and informal learning networks, in which schooling would be geared towards say, rural economics, botany and ecology, and urban schooling, service occupations, community planning, recreational and consumer education.

There is one final, critical area to which a great deal of policy thinking will have to be directed. This is the educational welfare of South Africa's poverty-stricken rural majority.

What ought developmental priorities to be? One inescapable fact about rural distress and deprivation is that it is, at bottom, an outcome of urban-rural conflict. The contest is grossly unequal. Among other advantages, urban schools are frequently larger, enabling them to exploit economies of scale, and they are the beneficiaries of inherited teacher preferences for urban jobs, enabling them to
attract the best qualified teachers. Higher per capita incomes in urban areas siphon off talent and skills from the countryside. Because of the greater spread of urban occupational structures, schooling is far more likely to be a determinant of income and social mobility in an urban than in a rural sector.

Arising from this experience, it is clear that if we are to conceive of rural education as an ingredient in the struggle against poverty, not as a means to escape from it, ways will have to be found of ridding rural schooling of its low grade status. Given the need to combat illiteracy and ignorance, access to schooling of good quality in rural areas is a rational imperative. But we ought to press reform further, beyond the provision of non-formal literacy programmes and properly qualified, adequately remunerated, and well motivated teaching staff. In any expansion of rural education and training, steps should be taken to ensure that teachers will have competencies and expertise relevant to a rural environment. Curricula ought to be oriented towards the skill and knowledge requirements of rural development. Furthermore, programmes should be terminal, ensuring that remotely located rural institutions do not feed urban higher education, thereby draining the countryside of potential agriculturalists, artisans, and skilled workers. Ideally, there should be an integrated approach to education and development. Schools should be an integral part of rural community life, and these, and other educational centres, should be linked directly to rural development projects, thereby enabling the optimum utilisation of graduates where their skills would be most valued and needed.

Education can perhaps be best seen not so much as a resource, but as an active and changing force, with many uncertain and unintended consequences. And education is active and changing within a complex web of economic, political, cultural, and social forces, in a world of dominance, subordination, and resistance. While the present seems to hold out little hope, the current developing Southern African interest in educational and producer co-operatives, alternative institutions within the capitalist market order, may provide one of
the most important ways forward for those most at the mercy of market and political inequalities. Expanding laboratories of co-operative experimentation in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Botswana, could come to provide new pedagogies, linking learning with productive work, based on democratic community control. But the educational history of this region cannot be prescribed or written here. It has to be fought for, and made.
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