

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF POLITICAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH
AFRICA:
AN EXAMINATION OF NEO LIBERAL GLOBALISATION,
THE MEDIA AND EDUCATION IN A TIME OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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It is dangerous to do this kind of education, to push the boundaries ...if people dont take chances they'll never keep pushing. They must explore and push as far as they can. People get the exhilaration of liberating themselves, pushing the boundary line until they push it to the place where they're challenged, and they either have to back off or go further...."
John Horton 1933

When considering the changing context of political education in South Africa two obvious processes dominate our perspectives; the political transition now a decade old and South Africa's formal reintegration into a global economic system that has increasingly come to enforce neo liberal capitalist orthodoxy.

From these two processes a myriad of issues emerge that demand attention in order to sketch a conceptual and concrete context to consider political education in contemporary South Africa.

We start by clarifying some conceptual issues relating to theory, control and power and then give attention to the nature of the processes that have unfolded both in South Africa and globally, analysing some of the forces that have informed these over the past decade or so. In doing this we shall emphasise the importance of the notion of control over the definition and constitution of knowledge and briefly give reference to the role played by the media in this, looking at the implications this has for learning more generally and political education in particular.

The Underlying Context Of Control

A brief look at the world we live in will suggest that there is a large amount of control evident in society and our own lives, while some of this control is very visible some forms are more subtle or even manipulative. There have been volumes written about control, authority and power. Different approaches such as typologies, continuums and the location of these concepts in social subject and object have been offered. It is not the intention to engage in the debates that emerge from this literature but is suffice to point out that throughout peoples attempts to define and understand these illusive concepts and their interconnectedness is demonstrated, revealing a need to place the issue of control and its changing forms at the centre of any analysis of political education, its context and role in society.

The notion of control enjoys central consideration in much thought around social processes both inside and outside of the workplace. Braverman (1973) and Buroway(1979) present compelling arguments for the notion of control being implicit in the labour process itself. Hyman(1980) argues cogently for a conception of industrial relations in terms of a frontier of control where different parties struggle for control over distribution of surplus value. Much of the both humanist and radical education literature refers to control and emancipation in some form or another. Fanon argues the nature of control in the impact on identity and self as function of colonialism through the use of instruments such as language and 'culture'. Habermas speaks of the understanding of self and experience as part of emancipatory knowledge allowing people to rise above systemic control. Palo Freire (1970) argues very convincingly for the need to value own knowledge and experience as a way of diminishing systemic control in the pedagogy of the oppressed. Castells (1998) and Rifkin(2000) see control lying in information and networks and differential access to these. The propaganda model of the media suggested by Chomsky, details the relationship and role of the media in social control needed in a 'democratic society'.

Political education itself is a very broad concept. It can mean anything from party political propaganda, through voter education to activities that cerebrally emancipate those being 'politically educated' by making them aware of and value their own knowledge and in some instances connections to the collective. Having your water cut off, being evicted and getting arrested could all constitute political education. Again definitions will not advance the purpose of this paper but what is probably a more useful endeavour is to consider the purpose of political education that informs our presence as labour service organizations, activists, and educators at this forum.

There is a tautological trap here but this merely reflects the contested nature of our realities. Should we conduct research in this room we may well find that different people hold different views as to the purpose of political education. Some might argue that it is to capacitate a citizenry to engage actively in policy processes so that all interests in society may be represented within the frameworks of social control. Others may say that political education is to transform the individuals view as to the necessity of social control in the first place and yet others may take the view that political education serves to build towards transforming those who exercises control in society or even the ends to which it is exercised. There may be those that argue it is to do all or any of these as it is simply a vehicle to convey knowledge and the ends to which it is put depends on those undertaking the education. This is in itself another position.

Political education is then a contested terrain but what these different purposes hold in common is that they value knowledge differently and see knowledge having a different relationship with control as it impacts on the marginalised of society. Vanessa Sheared describes marginalisation as, "the silencing of lived experiences in discourses constructed through legislation and policies created by the dominant culture, which either "commatises or negates" the political, economic, historical and social realities of those living in the margins of society." (2002: p1) The authors thus argue that political education has as its purpose some form of impact on control in society through an alternative process of valuing knowledge or valuing alternative

knowledge. This is the framework in which the context of political education is explored detailing various changes to regimes of control both at a global and local level as well as the links that exist between these.

The Post-modern/Marxist debate

Central to a consideration of the context of political education must rest the debate that exists between post-modern scholars and their Marxist counterparts. Both sets of ideas are carried in this analysis in an attempt to balance some of these notions. The debate itself is left to the reader to research further as it is not the purpose of this paper to decide rather to highlight the argument and context of the different traditions. On the side of historical materialism from Marx himself and his Hegelian forerunners lies a particular conception of power that is linked to the means of production and as such see power as more or less a fixed sum that classes struggle over. As a counter point the postmodernist tradition often building from the work of Foucault take a more complex view of power maintaining that the traditional dichotomous understanding of power is insufficient. Instead he refers to inner power and the ability to resist meaning oppressed people are not powerless and therefore power can not only be exercised by institutions. Foucault (1980) locates power at the micro individual and local/regional groupings arguing this to be its primary location not central institutions of capital or state. Within this localised power lies identity.

The Marxist tradition holds a contrary view that locates power in the central institutions of the state and capital and therefore resolves a change in system through one central mobilisation. Implicit in this is in varying degrees a rejection of identity politics because of the fragmentary possibilities of this. Thus Marxist would take issue with Castells (1998) assertions that class struggle has been replaced by a struggle for identity. Simon, B(1990) writes

“One of the implications of Foucault’s analysis of power for political struggle is a questioning of the strategy of unified, organised mass action. Mass political movements in this view may not be the most effective forms of social change. Rather smaller groups of activists may be more successful in bringing about change than large-scale mass organizations (Grosz, 1990). Because if power and control are not vested in any central point, then resistance does not arise from a single point. Thus, a very different form of political organising is required. We need an alternative strategy to the frontal attack on the state led by one revolutionary subject. We bring about social change through local struggles that undermine institutional power where it reveals itself in ideology under the mask of humanism, or as it operates in homes, schools, prisons and factories (Martin, 1986).”

How you view power is important in deciding what you will do about it and for this reason political education needs to surface these somewhat contradictory traditions. Perhaps some measure of understanding can be achieved through less deterministic readings of Marx. Thus McLaren writes, "a pedagogy of the oppressed involves not only a redistribution of material resources but also a struggle over cultural meanings in relation to the

multiple, social locations of students and teachers and their position within the global division of labor" (p. 163).

At the same time it is necessary to realise that when Castells for instance talks of the networked society he is really talking about a small group who experience the extreme dilution of class struggle to the point that identity becomes the only point of collection. For the vast majority of people subjected to the onslaught of neoliberal globalisation class struggle is still very much a reality but is in these objective conditions more difficult given the increasing mobility of capitalism created through both technological and social means. Maclaren summarises his position in analysing the pedagogic traditions of Che Guevara thus;

"Che's emphasis on revolutionary consciousness would make him an intransigent adversary to those postmodernists who advocate local struggles underwritten by identity politics. While he would affirm the centrality of racial and gender justice in any politics of emancipation, Che most assuredly would have little truck with the pallid apostasy of postmodern critique with its toothless liberalism and airbrushed insurgency that sets itself up against the grand internationalist narratives of liberation that Che made his lifework." (p. 89)

Both positions are analytically useful as they tend to find the strength in their arguments at the point of weakness in the other and as such are invaluable tools in building analysis. For these reasons both traditions are represented here.

South Africa's Political Transformation in the Context of Neo Liberal Globalisation

Defining Globalisation

Globalisation has generated a substantial amount of debate in recent times. Everywhere you turn, someone has privatised the concept with his or her own definition. People are either polemically denouncing its contribution to the growing poverty gap between rich and poor countries or they prophetically embrace its promise of global prosperity in a world with no barriers (Benjamin, 2001:68).

Isaacs, in her book "South Africa in the Global Economy" (2001) defined globalisation as a process of increasing the economic, political, social and cultural links between different countries, industries and individuals of the world. Expanding on this definition, Stiglitz, former economist of the World Bank states that "it is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world ... [through] the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and to a lesser extent, people, across borders (2002:9). The heroic stance given in the definitions of globalisation, reached a crescendo when Michel Camdessus of the International Monetary Fund claimed that globalisation had "brought the world half a century of unparalleled prosperity" (ILRIG, 1998:5).

In "Globalisation and its discontents", Stiglitz outlines all the good he sees globalisation as giving to the world: it has allowed for organisations to start networking, for international corporations to freely move capital, goods and technology across borders, for renewed attention on international intergovernmental institutions such as the UNO, ILO and WHO. He also claims that "many, perhaps most, of these aspects of globalisation have been welcomed everywhere" (2002:10). Then Stiglitz asks almost naively, "Why has globalisation - a force that has brought so much good - become so controversial?" (2002:4). He then goes on to answer this question stating that capital globalisation has deepened the chasm between rich and poor and has plunged the Third World (the majority world) into a deepened and entrenched situation of poverty. He states that the "actual number of people living in poverty has actually increased by almost 100 million¹ (2002:5).

Stiglitz's answer to his own question has led many writers to capture the concept in an attempt to politicise it. Leaving the concept as an unpoliticised term allows for fluctuations between nebulous and vague to heroic and egotistical in an attempt to allow the minority (rich) to view the world in a skewed (yet comfortable) way.

Capitalist globalisation (or as Bond calls it "global neoliberalism" (2000)) can be defined as "the power of a global capitalist economy to create a new scale of wealth generation by penetration of the world's markets and exploitation of resources through international free trade"². This accumulation of wealth has left the majority of people across the globe in a desperate situation of poverty, insecurity, joblessness³, as Stiglitz correctly pointed out. Capitalist globalisation, like capitalism of any kind, has given privileges of wealth and accumulation of resources to the already rich at the expense of the poor. This is not just done in our community, or in South Africa at large, but its done on an international scale. So there are poor people sitting in trenches on the side of the road in Los Angeles as there are poor people squatting near the intersection of West and Gardiner Streets. And whilst there is a Bill Gates in the USA, there is a Jack Welch (CEO of General Electric) in India.

Trends and Counter Trends

Other assessments of global capitalism, notably Castells and Rifkin point to a new form of capitalism, a networked society, where the importance of property rights is being replaced by the importance of access to information and services.

Trends

Castells (1997) examines important historical events linking these to the technological revolution, and a consequent restructuring of capitalism where through the network the system reaches a new level of integration and its nature changes. He argues that in the network power comes to lie in the net,

¹ Stiglitz is quoting from an IMF report on IMF supported programmes in the East.

² Developed by the author using Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's logic.

³ Not only are they unemployed but there are no jobs being recreated to absorb them.

in the exchange and not simply at the "nodes" or identifiable physical points of action. "Presence or absence in the network and the dynamics of each network vis-à-vis others are critical sources of domination and change in our society," he writes. "Places do not disappear, but their logic and their meaning become absorbed in the network." (1997:3) In this change Castells emphasises the **growing importance of identity** in a globalised world. In his own words "In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning. This is not a new trend [but now] identity is becoming the main and sometimes the only source of meaning". (1997:3)

Castells distinguishes between types of identity: those of legitimation, of resistance and of project. The first gives rise to a civil society dominated by information. The second one is a counter movement: an informational guerrilla. The third produces 'social subjects', collective social actors.

In these processes Castells sees the decline of relevance of organised labour as the importance of industrial capital looses space. He argues that there is no such thing as a global labour force, in the sense that there is global capital. There is however an increasing interdependence between local and localised labour forces as a result of:

- 1) global employment in multinationals
- 2) the impacts of international trade on employment and conditions both North and South,
- 3) the local effects of global competition and flexible management. Work and labour are not going to disappear under the new mode, but labour's relationship with capital is being transformed. Labour is localised, disaggregated in performance, fragmented in organisation, diversified in its existence and divided in its collective activity. Under a networked and continually altering capitalism, it is difficult to even identify the owners, producers, managers and labourers.

So labour stays but its movement has lost its power for change. This is taken on by those with an information guerrilla identity such as the environmental movement and issues based social movements. *"Labor loses its collective identity, becomes increasingly individualised in its capacities, in its working conditions, and in its interests and projects."* (1997: 506)

Rifkin's (2000) main point in his book the age of access is that the next era will be as different from market capitalism as market capitalism was from mercantilism. Power no longer will be based on property but on access to services. Business no longer will be determined by place but by the decentred nature of cyberspace. Markets, the mainstay of industrial capitalism, will give way to what Rifkin calls networks. He refers to capitalism in this state as hyper capitalism.

"In a market, you have a seller and a buyer and you exchange property, which is the way we've defined capitalism since Adam Smith," says Rifkin. "In networks, there aren't any sellers and buyers. There's no exchange of property. There are servers and clients, suppliers and users and 'just-in-time' access to what you need, but the property never alienates.

In other words, it stays in the hands of the suppliers and they lease it." (2000:6)

He expands this notion pointing to the danger implicit in the transferral of ownership of property from the public to the private sphere where it will perpetually be leased back to society.

Counter Trends

Castells also notes huge areas of exclusion in the world that have no part of the network society. He termed these areas of exclusion the fourth world to draw a distinction between these areas and those referred to as the first, second and third world in order to emphasise the lack of connectivity. The fourth world is left to its own devices to get on whilst the connected and the elite cut themselves off by barricading their homes and neighbourhoods. These areas are not limited to Africa, Latin America etc but also include inner city ghetto's in rich countries. Just like the elite have more in common with each other across borders than with their own countrymen, so to inhabitants of the fourth world have much in common but stay divided as the fourth world is by definition not connected. This is a critical area and given that most people on the planet have as their social reality a fourth world existence it is an area necessary to develop political education praxis. Because of its very nature this area remains under researched and under resourced. In fact in the construction of many social realities it is an area that is simply ignored and, given the importance of airtime in the networked society, effectively does not exist for this society.

This raises the question in as far as political education objectives are concerned, as to what audience political education is aimed at. Is it to develop a conscience in the elite, guilt the middle classes into giving donations, to develop those clinging onto the third world in the hope of finding a small stake in the system, or the socially marginalised to develop their own capacity and value their own experiences.

Rifkin also acknowledges this huge divide and illustrates the point with sobering statistics.

"While nation-states are beginning to buckle under the pressure of a new global economic and social order made up of vast networks of shared interests that bypass national boundaries, eclipse geography and exist in cyber space, we need to understand that most people on earth are not connected to the new worlds. They exist outside the electronic gates in another world of poverty and despair, in which the sheer physical survival dictates the terms of daily life. For them life is toil and drudgery...in an era in which the affluent fifth of the population is leaving poverty behind in search of cultural experiences and personal transformation, the remaining four fifths have meagre belongings and wish to be propertied" (2000:229)

Statistically global integration is not a homogenous picture either; a number of countries when rated on integration indices a reversal in

their extent of integration suggesting difficulty in maintaining the pace of networked markets and production. Kearney (2003) states:

“Even as emerging markets attracted \$265 billion of new FDI, for example, their share of total flows declined for the fourth year in a row—from 43percent in 1997, followed in each year by 30 percent, 23 percent, and 21 percent. Meanwhile, African countries attracted several million new tourists but saw their combined share of the booming global tourism market hover at 4 percent of the global total. Moreover, evidence suggests that some regions are becoming relatively less integrated within the world economy. The African countries, for example, saw their average level of economic integration fall, then rise, and then fall again over the past six years, a reflection of variable economic performance and the rise and fall of prices for oil and commodity exports, their main connection to global economic markets.”

The knowledge based society and economy will have important impacts on how people see education and political education but it also has implications for the marginalised in society. In industrial society the gap was largely an economic one that lay in the institution of private property. Knowledge has now become the pass key and as this has evolved the nature of knowledge and access to social resources has been privatised effectively abandoning the majority of the world’s population to die in poverty.

The Basic Tenets of Capitalist Globalisation

Stiglitz explained that globalisation was the ability to move capital, goods, services and technology around the world with relative ease, therefore indicating that boundaries no longer exist for capital. Patrick Bond also referred to capital globalisation as global neo liberalism indicating further that there was a new kind of freedom operating in the global arena of economics and trade (2000:155). How then does big capital get free access to the markets of nations?

This newfound global freedom in trade and the economy was not a natural phenomenon that evolved along with the human species. Rather it was a calculated and enforced move by global capital and involved international institutions like the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the governments of countries that form the G8 together with willing governments in other countries. This calculated move involved the following structural changes to national economies:

- The “invisible hand” of the market determines the rules of trade not governments;
- State assets and state service delivery are privatised by transnational corporations and private businesses as a means of reducing costs to the state;
- Governments remove laws that may hinder the operation of business, trade and the economy to attract foreign direct investment;
- Governments cut spending on social and welfare programmes;

- Increased competition between products, companies, workers and countries for more work and more profits;
- Trade is no longer regulated thereby opening up the national market to the world;
- Flexible employment and the introduction of new forms of work;
- The promotion of the individual (as opposed to collective forms, i.e. group interests in the form of trade unions) (Benjamin, 2001:69)

How do the above structural changes outlined in a framework come to effect changes in a national economy? Stiglitz mentions that globalisation has brought a reminder of intergovernmental institutions like the United Nations Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation. However, the UNO was rendered useless during a series of wars (Iraq, Congo); the WHO stood helpless as millions die from the AIDS pandemic (in Africa and South Africa in particular) and the ILO stood by handcuffed as thousands of women were beaten by their co-workers and bosses in factories (Malawi) or worked for 18 - 20 hours in an Export Processing Zone (Philippines). What went wrong with the international intergovernmental institutions that are supposed to function as the international policy making arena?

Whilst globalisation has allowed for us to be reminded of the above institutions, capitalist globalisation has given us the World Trade Organisation that houses the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) as well as the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) (amongst others), the International Monetary Fund that houses Structural Adjustment Programmes (amongst other loan conditions) and the World Bank that houses the horrors of big dams in poor countries (amongst others). These three international institutions, with the backing of big capital and rich countries, hold the keys to a supposedly free market. To get to the free market, national governments have to sign their agreements, their loan conditions and their big dam projects. National governments sign away their tariffs that protect their employed people, they sign away their natural resources and they give away the water, electricity and homes of their poor. They agree to build big dams displacing millions of people off their land and from their livelihood. They sign away their assets to big capital. Arundathi Roy has a name for big capital. He is called, "Rumplestiltskin" (2002 :129). His minions would be the researchers from the IMF and World Bank and national governments.

Roy describes Rumplestiltskin as "...the kind of king the world has never known before. His realm is raw capital, his conquests emerging markets, his prayers profits, his borders limitless, his weapons nuclear." (2002:129) He operates in a world of systems and subsystems that clouds visions so that it becomes difficult to point fingers at the culprit who is responsible for Christina Manquele's water being cut. (Desai, 2002: ??) As Roy states, "a sub-world whose life's endeavour was to mask intent" (2002:135). This sub-world presents poverty as a natural phenomenon that people are naturally born into. A sub-world who claims that building a big dam on the Narmada in India is a step forward in saving India and bringing it into the world of the civilised, even though it displaced 50 million people. (Roy, 2002:56⁴)

⁴ This was a conservative estimate done by Arundathi Roy. The figure is much higher.

Big capital, national governments of the rich and poor and the Big Three Global Capitalist Institutions are not just taking and giving away our natural resources or decimating our industries and succumbing the women, men and children of the world to a life of extended poverty, they are also taking and giving away the public realm that is policy making. As Roy puts it:

“What they’re lobbying for is not simply the privatisation of natural resources and essential infrastructure, but the privatisation of policy making itself” (2002:135).

Capitalist globalisation has turned national citizens into pockets of profit. Part of the raw material needed to spin gold. We have lost our right to have a say in the protection of our rights. We have lost our land, our water and our homes to big capital. And national governments stand as vanguards to multinational corporations’ best interests. In an interview Noam Chomsky unveils the sentiment underlying these processes,

“....look at the leading figures who have written about this. They all say (I’m partly quoting), the general population is “ignorant and meddling outsiders.” We have to keep them out of the public arena because they are too stupid and if they get involved they will just make trouble. Their job is to be “spectators,” not “participants.”

They are allowed to vote every once in a while, pick out one of us smart guys. But then they are supposed to go home and do something else like watch football or whatever it may be. But the “ignorant and meddling outsiders” have to be observers not participants. The participants are what are called the “responsible men” ...So there are the smart guys who are supposed to run the show and the rest of them are supposed to be out, and we should not succumb to (I’m quoting from an academic article) “democratic dogmatism about men being the best judges of their own interest.” They are not. They are terrible judges of their own interests so we have to do it for them for their own benefit.

Actually, it is very similar to Leninism. We do things for you and we are doing it in the interest of everyone, and so on. I suspect that’s part of the reason why it’s been so easy historically for people to shift up and back from being, sort of enthusiastic Stalinists to being big supporters of U.S. power. People switch very quickly from one position to the other, and my suspicion is that it’s because basically it is the same position. You’re not making much of a switch. You’re just making a different estimate of where power lies. One point you think it’s here, another point you think it’s there. You take the same position.” (1997)

By handing over policy making to international institutions within the framework of capitalist globalisation, national governments have relinquished their privilege as being caretaker of their citizenry. Instead they have become the caregivers to the interests of big business and stand as vanguards to multinational corporations’ best interests.

Implicit in much of this shifting of control is the impressions and understanding of what is happening in these processes and the need to counter the dominant understanding or impression created by Roy's 'sub-world whose life's endeavour was to mask intent'. Political education must go to the heart of how people conceive of society and its control at a general level but in a more specific way needs to begin to challenge the building blocs that mask the intent which are the products of research and writing that are used to develop opinion in the media and justify policy direction. What also emerges is that these products are produced at many different levels in society and therefore need to be challenged at many different levels, not least of which is in education institutions. It is essentially a struggle for 'airtime' and over the definition of reality and how this 'reality' comes to inform poverty.

So who is winning the war of the unmasking or veiling of intent?

This newfound global freedom in trade and the economy is not a natural phenomenon that evolved along with the human species. Rather it was a calculated and enforced move by global capital and involved international institutions like the World Trade Organisation, The International Monetary Fund and The World Bank and the governments of countries that form the G8 together with willing or coerced governments in other countries. This relied on a particular construction of reality through forms of mass and distorted information. Media clearly plays a central role in this and particularly in the sense that it impacts on the development of culture and identity. The process of information and misinformation enabling a dominant ideology to inform peoples understanding is reflected in the failure of most people to relate their everyday experience to the agenda of accumulation driving the process of globalisation. A recent study, the Pew Global Attitudes Project (2003) assessing attitudes towards globalisation, is illustrative.

Good for the Country, Bad Personally?

Kenyans have a unique perspective on the impact of increased foreign trade and business. Fully nine-in-ten say this trend has been good for the country - and 63% say it has been very good. Yet people in Kenya take a sharply negative view of trade's impact on individuals. Only a third say it has had a positive effect - just 10% say very positive - while 66% believe more trade has been bad for them and their families. This 53-point gap in very favourable assessments of foreign trade - between how Kenyans view its impact on the country and on them personally - is by far the largest of any country surveyed. But other publics also have sharply different impressions of how expanding foreign trade affects their countries and how it affects them and their families.

In Bangladesh, for instance, 46% of respondents say growing foreign trade and business had a very favourable impact on the country, but just 22% believe it has been good for them and their families. There is a similar gap in attitudes in South Korea and Uzbekistan and to a lesser extent in South Africa. These differences also are apparent in several Eastern European countries, including the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria and Ukraine. Similarly, in former East Germany, where unemployment remains persistently high, people are twice as likely to see global economic connectedness as very good for the country

as they are to see it as very good for themselves and their family (40% vs. 19%).

Where would citizens develop the notion that it is good for the country despite personal experience (read evidence) to the contrary? It is likely to come from an external source that clearly exert power on the media and other networks of control.

Globally, Problems Worsen

People's attitudes toward the global changes that are affecting their nations and their families are best understood in the context of whether they think their lives are getting better or worse. For the most part, the people surveyed by the Pew Global Attitudes Project think life has deteriorated in many ways over the past five years. Majorities, in most cases strong majorities, in 34 of 44 nations surveyed think the availability of good paying jobs has gotten worse in the last five years. Even in relatively successful economies such as the U.S. and Canada, most people say the job situation has gotten worse (55% U.S., 52% Canada). The notable exceptions are Vietnam (92%), Philippines (68%) and China (52%), where people generally think job opportunities have improved. People in most parts of the world also think that working conditions for ordinary workers have deteriorated. This is particularly true in countries that have suffered economic reversals in recent years - Argentina (94%), Kenya (89%), Peru (85%), Brazil (84%), Bolivia (83%) and Japan (80%). This view is widely shared in nations that are making the transition from socialism to capitalism - such as Poland (83%) and the Slovak Republic (85%). By comparison, a majority of British (57%) and about half of Americans (50%), Canadians (48%), South Koreans (47%) and Filipinos (45%) believe working conditions have improved.

Strong majorities of the public also think that the gap between the rich and the poor has worsened in the last five years. In 30 of 44 countries, at least seven-in-ten people say economic inequality has grown, including 94% of those surveyed in Argentina, 92% in Russia, 91% in the Slovak Republic and 90% in Germany. Such concerns are particularly widespread in Eastern Europe, with the single exception of Ukraine. Roughly half of Ukrainians say economic inequality has decreased over the past five years, while 44% say it has increased.

Most people also believe that diseases spread more rapidly today than they did half a decade ago (The survey was conducted before the SARS outbreak). This is particularly true in Africa and Latin America where, in 16 of the 18 countries surveyed, more than seven-in-ten people think the incidence of disease has gotten worse. These are many of the same societies where AIDS and other infectious diseases are viewed as top national problems. But concern about the spread of disease is not limited to poor nations. Two-in-three Americans (68%) and more than half of all Western Europeans and Japanese share such fears.

Globalisation Not Blamed

People are also unwilling to link problems like economic inequality, the lack of good-paying jobs and poor working conditions to globalisation. At least

half of the respondents in every country surveyed, except Ukraine, believe the gap between rich and poor has gotten worse over the past five years. But for the most part, people do not blame this on “the way the world has become more connected”. In Europe and North America, sizable percentages in every country say economic inequality has worsened. But fewer than three-in-ten respondents in each country believe it has occurred because of global interconnectedness. This pattern is apparent in other regions as well. Globally, there is only one country, Indonesia, where more than four-in-ten respondents (44%) blame the growing gap between rich and poor on globalisation. Similarly, people almost everywhere think there are fewer good-paying jobs these days, but they generally do not link this to the way the world has become more connected. Only in a handful of countries, such as Guatemala (38%), Bolivia (34%) and Lebanon (33%), do sizable minorities blame the deteriorating job situation on globalisation.

The societies where people are most likely to think the world around them is getting better and who attribute that improvement, at least in part, to a more connected world include Vietnam, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the Philippines and Indonesia. In each of these nations, at least half say that two or more indicators of well-being - the availability of good-paying jobs, the quality of work life, the rich-poor gap, and the availability of food and modern medicines - have improved in the last five years thanks to globalisation. Only in a few countries - Guatemala (40%), Bolivia (36%), Jordan (34%), Mali (33%) - do a sizable number of people see a decline in two or more of these quality-of-life indicators and blame global interconnectedness for it.

What these figures from the Pew Global Attitudes Project suggest is that the struggle to define reality is being convincingly won by the benefiting elites who control media and therefore public opinion. What is concerning is that the evidence of the reality of global capitalism lies in the experiences of the people who come to make this system up and yet despite this evidence that emerges from lived experience there is still a tendency for the working classes of the world to recite the words of elite “investment good, we need flexibility, private is efficient and cheaper, we don’t have the necessary know how’ and so the list would continue. It begins to suggest a massive task for political education in South Africa where we suffer the added difficulties of formally entering the system of neo liberal global capitalism at a time when its propaganda machines and formations of cultural control such as the American sit com or reality definition tools such as CNN are already well established and the hegemony of reality long established limiting even the extent to which as a country we can turn to those facing similar experiences and say, “isn’t this wrong”. How else do we account from the sudden retreat from socialism; the private smiles on the faces of a labour workshop participant when socialism is discussed. The labelling of the ultra left who call for nothing more than what is recorded in a hundred different union resolutions most of which we assume are still binding resolutions.

As hegemonic control over what constitutes social knowledge tightens the documents of the past come only to remind us of the path but not the intent. In the face of the denied intent of global forces of accumulation do we lose sight of our own? What role can political education play in reawakening intent for human friendly change?

The global context for political education sets up a number of areas for focus in political education;

- A challenge to hegemonic portrayal of social reality
- Challenge to the research and conclusions that mask intent and further the agenda of ruling elite
- Challenge to policy processes, and interests inherent in these
- A valuing of own experience as explanation of social reality
- Using this as a basis to explain causes of this social reality
- Using this as a basis to evolve micro level economic alternatives
- Removing the language hegemony in debate e.g. peoples reality
- Exposing the intent of elites
- Exposing the mechanisms with which intent is translated to accumulation

The Role of the Media

In profit over people Chomsky(1999) writes, "These issues were addressed 250 years ago by David Hume in a classic work. Hume was intrigued by "the easiness with which the many are governed by the few, the implicit submission with which men resign" their fate to their rulers. This he found surprising, because "force is always on the side of the governed." If people would realize that, they would rise up and overthrow the masters. He concluded that government is founded on control of opinion, a principle that "extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."

Hume surely underestimated the effectiveness of brute force. A more accurate version is that the more "free and popular" a government, the more it becomes necessary to rely on control of opinion to ensure submission to the rulers." By control of opinion Chomsky is of course referring to the media. Control of opinion is of course not neutral or purposeless it has mechanisms and interests in mind. In developing this notion Chomsky quotes from Edward Bernays a leading figure in the public relations industry in the US.

"He opens by observing that the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. To carry out this essential task the intelligent minorities must make use of propaganda continuously and systematically," because they alone "understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses" and can "pull the wires which control the public mind. Therefore, our "society has consented to permit free competition to be organized by leadership and propaganda," another case of "consent without consent." Propaganda provides the leadership with a mechanism "to mould the mind of the masses" so that "they will throw their newly gained strength in the desired direction." The leadership can "regiment the public mind every bit as much as an army regiments the bodies of its soldiers." This process of "engineering consent" is the very "essence of the democratic process ..." (1997)

In their introduction, Chomsky and Herman (2002) reaffirm the importance of the propaganda model of the media, citing the increased hyper-nature of the structural features of the media since their book was first published in 1988. These include the increasing concentration of media, the rise of the Internet, globalisation, free trade, neo liberalism, media deregulation, the decline in public broadcasting, the increase in public relations as an industry (and its effect on journalism) and overall corporate mergers.

Although the anti-communist ideology has decreased since the end of the Cold War, a new ideology has become pre-eminent: that of the pro-market ideology, or as Thomas Frabnks, in *One Market Under God* (2000) refers to it, 'market populism'.

They contend the quality of a democracy depends on the quality of the news. What is the media's agenda? You need to look at the institutional structure of the media; what kinds of information is being presented (or not?) Who manufactures the news? They go on to explore the notion of liberal media as mythical pointing to research that supports the view that the media is influenced by wealthy business and conservative interests but gets around this fact by always posing the question - is the media too liberal? This question is posed at the level of the journalists only; not at the level of the media ownership.

The propaganda model shows how the media is influenced by conservative elites and in detailing their analysis Herman and Chomsky (2002) have delineated a set of filters to discuss the propaganda model.

Political education must be sensitive to media in that media is the terrain for creating knowledge and 'social reality' that is often at odds with the realities of people. The filters offered by Herman and Chomsky may well be used as a framework for political education around the issues of the media and are thus provided below.

Filters

(1) Media Ownership and Control: agenda-setting media. Corporations and private power - interlocking directorships; Media owners are much more conservative than mainstream Americans on most issues (ex: Conrad Black, Rupert Murdoch); Implicit media and government synergies - e.g., Murdoch and Tony Blair; Power rests with owners, not journalists. size, ownership and profit orientation of the mass media. Who owns the mass media? What are the corporate interests at work?

(2) Advertising: like Dallas Smythes' audience commodity. Sell a product (advertisers) to a market (audiences); Media can't afford to offend advertisers; What are the unwritten rules? In the U.S., corporations pay \$270B/year to the media to advertise products. Advertisers demand a supportive editorial and programming environment. "Corporate censorship"; case of PBS - GE funds McLaughlin Show; conservative views dominate; advertising license to do business. How does advertising and advertisers influence media coverage of specific events?

(3) News Makers: media depends on a steady stream of powerful news sources; reporters with regular beats; sourcing and celebrity endorsers. Pressure Groups: think tanks, corporate sponsors, industry groups, lobbyists; sourcing mass media news. Who are the government or corporate sources of news? PR firms? Who are the experts cited?

(4) News Shapers: Journalists are not supposed to express opinions except in specific editorial realms. Instead, an 'expert' is put in the media to provide an 'objective' or 'acceptable' opinion. Conservative think tanks cultivate experts; i.e. American Enterprise Institute, a pro-business group, was quoted 1,297 in 1995 media. Other groups include: Heritage, Brookings, American Enterprise, Cato.

(5) FLAK - What makes it through the filters and what doesn't? Negative feedback. Flak is effective when it comes from powerful sources (corporate, industry, PR). Libel suits are flak. Case of Philip Morris the tobacco company suing ABC for libel. Also right wing organisations that monitor and discipline the media; in the U.S., AIM - Accuracy in the Media (Reed Irvine, Chairman, funded by corporate directors including 8 oil companies). Flak and the enforcers, who organizes negative responses to media statements or programs? (in response to media events or news events) which individuals, organisations do they represent?

Whilst the above filters are explained in terms of the US it makes it suggests a useful framework within which to analyse various forms of local media. Another area of work or focus lies in the manner in which opinions are formed. I.e. what sources of information both formal and informal serve to inform political opinions? Clearly South Africa is not the most networked and information based society in the world. Indeed where South Africa does show absolute levels of connectivity etc these figures are normally heavily diluted when applied in a per capita formula which simply speaks to the grossly divided nature of access in South Africa.

Castells' main message is communication is increasingly in control. This is most clearly revealed in his understanding of the relation between networking and the media. Communication is seen as a flow of information from a group of individuals to a private person (previously being a member of any organisation was the best way of getting informed). Castells sees the media as integrating written, oral and audio-visual language and compares this to the invention of the greek alphabet. Whilst he observes the growing power of the media he rejects notions of a passive and only consuming audience. Castells then deals with the recent development of the increasingly scattering electronic media versus the explosive use of Internet, and its implications for the future. Culture is getting more and more 'virtual'.

Castells argues that the brand-new and increasingly integrated communication system is both complex and dominating all others, and destroys all other modes of cultural expression. This is however quite a narrow conception as this would not include that of the 4th world necessarily because of its disconnection. What it does is create a media centric eye. I.e. if its not on TV etc it doesn't exist. It seems our world gets smaller as it tries

to grow larger. This does set up certain strategic decisions around political action and education and to what extent the media can be used to advance a progressive agenda.

Since the new system is very flexible, it allows for all forms of expression, including those of social conflict. But the price paid for entry is that of adapting to the logic of the new system. This makes the current battle over the to be chosen model quite crucial, over whether this is to be of the Internet type (democratic) or of the video-on-demand one (which actually means choosing between options offered by a central controller). Other crucial battles concern accessibility, in the sense both of economic barriers to entry and of passwords for circulation and diffusion of messages. These battles will determine who are in power, or in Castells' words, who are the *interacting* and the *interacted*.

Manuel Castells argues that new information technologies induces new rules of the game that, in the context of social, cultural, and political transformations as presented in history, dramatically affect the substance of politics. Political communication and content are created in a certain space and although he is not arguing that all politics can be reduced to the media he clearly does feel that the media has become a privileged space without access to which there can be no hope of ascending to political power. *"Without an active presence in the media, political proposals or candidates do not stand a chance of gathering broad support. . . Politics is fundamentally framed, in its substance, organization, process and leadership, by the inherent logic of the media system, particularly by the new electronic media."* (2000; P349)

This process impacts not only elections, but political organization, decision-making, and governance. The outcome of the twisted interconnection between media, politics, and the electorate, is a form of informational politics as Castells calls it. The central feature of this is the dependence political systems generate on the flow of information which he sees as one of the fundamental crises for democracy in the information age. Castells probably believes there is less control in the media than Chomsky for instance seeing it rather as a terrain that reduces politics to marketing. Either way its still capital's game but this reveals a difference in understanding of both notions of power and control between the two authors.

Our political education needs to engage participants around their experiences and opinions of what constitutes control and power, and the media provide a really good subject with which to do this.

In order to provide background some statistics are provided below giving an idea of the levels of media access in South Africa. Print media is not included as no comparative statistics were available

Television

South Africa 137.46 per 1000 people

US780.58 per 1000 people

Radios

South Africa 389.48 per 1000 people

US 2,049.46 per 1000 people

Unesco 2003¹⁰

¹⁰ Print media is not included as no comparative statistics were available

It is fairly obvious from the above that media does not have as deeper penetration in South Africa as opposed to the US and this becomes more

extreme as one moves into poorer communities. Can we therefore ascribe to the media the same role and power as what it has in the U.S. Obviously the answer must be no but similarities are emerging. SABC now reports on African events to Africa with a South African bias in much the same way as CNN does for America, with the journalists representing a collection of different groupings but the news itself fairly standardised. Political analysis of such events may on the one hand suggest a strengthening of the notion of an 'African renaissance' that will inevitably flow from media cover of our 'own' but at another level may be seen as South Africa beginning to advance an imperialist agenda within Africa, a trend clearly visible when looking at the expansion of South African corporate and previous parastatal interests throughout the continent. The South African Consumer market also supports much exploitative practice as prime examples a number of clothing sweatshops in the rest of SADC, in particular Malawi and Lesotho. Labour conditions here where manufacturing for MR Price, Pep stores and Edgars to name a few is done are no better than those better known cases of Nike etc. The fact that South Africa as imperialist expansionist is never portrayed in our media suggests that within 10 years of a clean slate the moral high ground available to South Africa has already been heavily tarnished. For political education then it seems that two imperatives are set up as a consequence. Firstly the need to understand the true social nature of globalisation and secondly to begin to acknowledge the role South Africa as a nation is actively playing in the perpetuation of wide scale misery. The fundamental tenants of NEPAD (gear for Africa) advance the very principals of the global economic order assessed above. Political education in South Africa then needs to develop an outward as well as an inwardly self critical aspect.

Thus whilst the media has a less pervasive role in South Africa than for instance in the United States its role is growing in importance and adopting a global character with a cosmetically different face. In its role it supports the notions of global integration with a capital agenda as both natural and inevitable.

Capitalist Globalisation and the Theory of Elite Pacting

The World Trade Organisation, through the GATT Agreement, came into effect on the 1 January 1995. By this time over 100 nations had signed up as members of this organisation that promised national governments a piece of the free trade pie. By signing the GATT agreement, these 217 nations opened up their domestic markets to multinational corporations.

In South Africa, this move cost the clothing, textile and leather industry over 100 000 jobs due to the reduction of tariffs on imported clothes, textile and leather (Ask Richard for reference). The General Agreement of Trade and Services signed over natural resources such as water, electricity to private companies. In Cochabamba (Bolivia) this meant that the price of water tripled and hundreds of thousands of people no longer had access to water

when the government of Bolivia signed over the supply of water to Bechtel, a US based multinational engineering firm (Roy, 2002:136)⁵.

Whose interests are being served through the privatisation of water and other basic services? Whose interests are being served when a national government signs away its rights to make working conditions more flexible? Whose interests are being served when a national government spends tax-payers' money to build export processing zones (EPZ) to supply cheap, unregulated labour to corporations like Nike so that Nike can make over a billion dollars in profit (whilst the women who work in the EPZ that make Nike earn 25 cents per 18 hour day⁶. As Arundathi Roy puts it:

“Rumplestiltskin thinks big. Today he’s stalking mega-game: dams, mines, armaments, power plants, public water supply, telecommunications, the management and dissemination of knowledge, biodiversity, seeds (he wants to own life and the very process of reproduction), and the industrial infrastructure that supports all this.” (2002:137)

It is clear that some sort of pact has emerged between nation states (at a global and local level) and capital (at a global and local level). This pact has had serious implications for the development and promotion of public participation in every single country touched by capitalist globalisation. For those engaged in political education it suggests the critical importance of making the links between pacting and policy formulation as explicit as possible. To provide context we focus attention now on the policy process.

The scope of the public’s participation in policy making is indicative of the breadth and depth of influence and the power and authority that determine policy. Over the years, theorists have developed the theory for public participation starting with group theory (Bentley 1908) where groups wield power for their own interests to groups wielding power over interests that are politicised (Truman 1951) to the recognition of coercion as an indicator of public participation (Kelso 1978).

To examine the scope of participation in public policy, three basic questions are asked:

- Do we have a government by, for and of the people?
- Are we ruled by a small oligarchy of self appointed elites?
- Do we exercise control over government through interest groups that speak on our behalf?

Within the functioning of capitalist globalisation and the interference of big capital in intergovernmental institutions like the World Trade Organisation, it is clear to see that critical policy issues relating to the well-being of the citizens of a country are being decided at a forum where the public are not invited to make representations. All of the agreements emerging from the WTO serve the interests of an elite few. So it would not be too far off the mark to conclude at this point that globally, we are being ruled by a small oligarchy of self-appointed elites, i.e. big capital. We need to give consideration to what this means for political education and its practice. It is

⁵ See also the Municipal Services Project

⁷ See Isaacs for more on the Nike story as well as Naomi Klein’s No Logo.

one thing to identify an elite it is quite another to begin to mobilise a cadreship against it.

Putnam defines the "elite" as those that have more political power than others. He sees power as the ability to influence other individuals and the ability to influence collective decision making. Putnam uses power to denote the probability of influencing the policies and activities of the state as well as the probability of influencing authoritative allocation of values.

At the core of elitist theory lies the fact that political power, like social goods, is distributed unequally. This landscape of inequality divides people into two groups, viz. those who have significant political power and those who do not. In this light, and against the backdrop of capitalist globalisation, Dahl and Truman's pluralism becomes an oversimplified attempt to explain public participation. All groups in the public participation forum do not have equal access to this public space, as we would like to assume or as governments would like to believe. Using Walker's words:

"Public policy is not the expression of the common good as conceived of by the citizenry...This description of policy making is held to be dangerously naïve because it overlooks the role of demagogic leadership, mass psychology, group coercion and the influence of those who control concentrated economic power."

The exertion of political power (and how much of it one has) plays a critical role in determining whose interests get represented. So whilst there may be hundreds and thousands of different groups with different politicised interests, not all gain access to the public forum. Those that have significant political power have the access. Friedman states that political systems are stratified. Individuals at the bottom lack all the prerequisites for exercising political power. Those at the top have all the characteristics to engage in the policy making process.

Bearing this in mind, it is worthy to remember that the elite is internally homogenous, unified and self-conscious. It is self-perpetuating and drawn from a very exclusive segment of society. Such a conscious collection of resources (both political and economic power) explains capitals' access to national governments' policy making machinery and the international policy making machinery of the WTO. With its consolidation of political power into one unified, homogenous, self-perpetuating group with the same interests, capital in itself becomes an autonomous, power wielding group. In the era of profiteering and accumulation, capital has more to offer national governments than the poor person in Tafelsig.

Those excluded from the policy process may have elements in common but are less self conscious as a group than the elite. It is for similar reasons to this that the notion of negotiating settlements and social conflicts will inevitably see a movement towards more coherent and articulated interests being satisfied in the long run.

So then, what becomes of the citizen? What role do they have to play in relation to the nation state?

A reconstitution of “classical” theory of democracy into the elitist theory of democracy has seen the active and vociferous participation of the citizenry being relegated to individuals exercising their power to decide through the vote⁷. It is therefore convenient for intergovernmental institutions like the United Nations to re-conceptualise the notion of democracy to the vote. Civilised countries are countries where all people have the vote. So while South Africans have struggled long and hard and now have the vote, we are a civilised nation despite the fact that 10 million people in post apartheid South Africa have had their water disconnected (McDonald 2002).

So what becomes of the citizen? According to Walker, the average citizen still has some measure of effective political power even though he or she does not initiate policy, because of his/her right to vote (if he/she chooses) in regularly scheduled elections (Walker). In the stratified political system, the citizenry is demoted to numbers while capital plays an integral part in developing policy for profit.

Elite Pacting and Transition Theory in Post-Apartheid South Africa

South Africa has, due to its struggle history, always assumed a unique role in the political arena. However, combining elite theory with transition theory, it is clear to see that the struggle government entered into and implemented policies and agreements that have served the interests of capital well.

Ginsburg makes the point “that elite pacting is integral to transition theory” (Ginsburg:1996). By combining the two, the following theoretical assumptions emerge :

- Negotiations cannot be conducted by the masses themselves, at venues other than the bargaining table, but must be entered into on their behalf by a leadership (elite) that speaks for them;
- Not all members of the contending factions at the bargaining table are keen on pacting (there will be hardliners, reformers and moderates in the process).

Transition theory, like elite theory places only one burden on transitional governments: to be strong enough to govern effectively, but weak enough not to be able to govern against important interests (Ginsburg:1996). In addition, within a transitional arrangement, a distinction is drawn between economic democracy (workers cannot make decisions about the economy) and political democracy (but they can make decisions about human rights). This notion was carried through South Africa’s negotiation process.

South Africa’s national governments have all had long standing relationships with capital. From the 1860s (diamond mining) to the 1880s (gold mining), the mining industry accelerated the development of capitalism in South Africa. Commercial and agricultural capitalism sunk its roots into the South African economy not so long after the mining industry and flourished through to the 1970s. From the 70s onwards (for the next 50 years) the accumulation strategy of the capitalists became a centre piece for the South African economy. In order to secure heavy flows of capital and cheap labour to the mining industry, the apartheid government integrated the South African capitalist economy into the world economy (Marais:2001). Not only did the

⁷ This was Joseph Schumpeter’s summary of elite theory of democracy.

South African capital play an active role in the economy, they also actively intervened in the policy making process, pushing through policies that would effectively boost their own interests of capital accumulation (e.g. The removal of influx control and pass laws was suggested by the mining industry to allow a cheap supply of semi-skilled and skilled African labour (Marais: 2001).

With this system and structure of the national and international economy of South Africa intact, we turn to the ANC, the political organisation that would turn political party in the transitional arrangement.

The emergence of the ANC in 1912 did not happen as dramatically as one would have hoped. According to Marais, the ANC "functioned as a vehicle for the aspirations of the African middle class... Initially built around a relatively privileged layer of independent peasants...[and] followed a liberal trajectory" (Marais:2001). Not only did the ANC represent the privileged few, it also discarded the rest of the African race as "uncivilised" Africans (Marais: 2001). Its thrust into popular mass based organisation and protest was a simply a question of being in the right place at the right time.

The apartheid government and the liberation forces of the ANC and the democratic movement were thrown into stalemate in the late 80s. This was due to a number of reasons, but for the sake of brevity, the following are highlighted:

- The apartheid machinery was costing the state and its allies in capital. This costly venture was doing nothing more than rendering the country ungovernable and sinking the economy into a crisis;
- The armed struggle of the ANC and the democratic movement was turning into a failure as the apartheid military successfully isolated the "hot spots" in the country and cracked down heavily on democratic forces. They were also abandoned by their Soviet allies at the close of the Cold War.
- Both the apartheid regime and the democratic movement were being led down the negotiations route by the main Western imperialist powers who presented this as the only escape route. According to Marais, "the ANC was almost certainly notified that it, too, had to seize the opportunity if an ANC government was to qualify for substantial 'rewards' from the West (2001)".

The ANC entered into the negotiation process with a compromise position in hand. Mandela had already started hinting at compromise from 1987 when he entered into talks with the government. In addition to its liberal stance, the ANC also carried with it a notion of a mixed economy, falling very short of the Freedom Charter it helped write as well as the RDP it would later endorse. It was clear from the start of the negotiation process that an elite pact had been settled on. The ANC and the democratic movement would have an implicit say in the transition to a political democracy but that the economic democracy will remain in the hands of its long-time owner, capital. Marais states that at the point of settling on terms of the transition, the country was faced with two choices of the country's "Two Nation" character : the first would be the dismantling of the notion of a "Two Nation" state through the

redistribution of resources, power and security in favour of the poor and disadvantaged, or the second choice would be to entrench this notion and allow for a “small, increasingly multi-racial enclave of privilege and a massive, impoverished majority [to] coexist precariously”. The second option was chosen.⁸

This statement according to Marais, drew huge praise from business leaders.

The ANC and its alliance partners entered the electoral terrain with promises of a better life for all. Its mass constituency base was workshopped in all the finer details of the RDP, the policy document the ANC and its alliance partners produced as a run up to the first democratic elections. In this policy document laid the elaborate plan for redistribution of resources as well as land, the restoration of human dignity amongst the oppressed and a taking back of the state’s assets. On May Day, 1994, with the successful democratic elections still glimmering on the horizon and the presidential seat not yet warm, Nelson Mandela was quoted as saying:

In our economic policies...there is not a single reference to things like nationalisation, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology (1994). (Marais: 2001)

Out of this statement, GEAR was born: a pro-capitalist, neo liberal economic policy in keeping with the WTO’s GATT and GATS agreements. Its introduction to the South African citizenry was followed by stern warnings from Trevor Manuel that there will be no negotiations on GEAR. The elite pact was sealed. Public participation was sacrificed.

Fanon’s warnings are appropriate here,

“During the struggle for liberation the leader awakened the people and promised them a foreward march heroic and unmitigated. Today he uses every means to put them to sleep....The living party which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated in terms of the real needs of the mass of the people, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interest. Since the proclamation of independence the party no longer helps people set out its demands, to become more aware of its needs and better able to establish its power. Today the party’s mission is to deliver to the people the instructions which issue from the summit.” (1963;136)

Civil Society is Dead! Long Live Civil Society!

⁸ A series of decisions were taken during the negotiations phase that steered the economy towards a more capitalist economy, with a freer more globally integrated economy. These included taking a \$850 million loan from the IMF (Terreblanche 2002) and signing of the GATT agreement in 1994 to gain entry into the WTO. . Nelson Mandela was quoted as saying “In our economic policies...there is not a single reference to things like nationalisation, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology (1994). This statement according to Marais, drew huge praise from business leaders.

Whilst elite pacting may serve the interests of the capital elite and the national government, it does so in an unstable and weak version of democracy; that which was sacrificed in order to achieve a compromised settlement may come back to haunt the national government. The inability of the masses to alter their state of being (i.e. worsening poverty) through pacted arrangements and agreements may lead to the very same masses rejecting all of the "democratic" gains achieved through negotiations. This then gives rise to the third aspect of elite pacting in transition theory:

"...new democratic governments, immediately upon coming to office, must set about demobilising those forces in civil society that were instrumental in driving the transition process from the outset" (Ginsburg: 1996).

Post-1994, saw the once vibrant civil society that fought so bravely to be free from oppression, left dazed and confused. Whilst the social and economic policies that were promised to the poor and the oppressed were not being implemented, they were also done away with in GEAR.

COSATU, the trade union federation that was at the forefront of the struggle, has protested economic policy but every election faithfully turned up to campaign on behalf of the ANC never threatening to withdraw this support as a means to effecting policy change. Tied up in an alliance of convenience, it has agreed to a series of labour law amendments that have knotted labour relations into structured and institutionalised arenas, like the CCMA, and Nedlac. SANGOCO was formed in 1994, supposedly to act as an umbrella body for the NGO sector in South Africa. However, with no lack of clarity as to what their role is in a post-apartheid regime, they have been unable to transform themselves into a watchdog body for human rights abuses (through anti-poor policies), and ultimately turned in on itself demonstrating deep rifts in how people see the social reality and what is to be done about it.

Any attack on the government's performance (coming ten years into its transition) has been counter-attacked by the ANC for being counter-revolutionary, anti-democratic, and or racist.

But as Ginsburg suggested, so it has happened. The masses (in pockets across the country) are rejecting these so-called democratic gains won through negotiations. The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Anti-Privatisation Forum, The Concerned Citizens Forum, the refugees, the pensioners, the youth are all beginning take back public spaces denied to them. They are rejecting the 'democratic' gains of the transition and are seeking to redefine the concept of "democracy". They are showing their group interest through political activity using coercion as a main driving force. Pushed into the corners of their poverty, with their backs against the wall of survival, civil society is fighting back from the dead.

The lack of cohesive consciousness and interest has meant that this has been done in a fragmented way, issue by issue. But there have been hard fought wins. The relentless pressure brought to bear by the TAC has seen government stance shift. It has not transformed radically but it has shifted. Recent announcements around a public works programme suggest that government is being forced to take the issues of unemployment seriously be it just prior to an election in much the same way as the largely ineffectual

free water quota system was introduced prior to the local government elections. Whilst one way to view these shifts is a cynical dismissal as mere electioneering to further embed the elite in power, a more optimistic view is that the demands created by the negative impacts of neo liberal policy do have potential to create some form of change on the one hand and at another level tend to erode the position that says government has no choice at all in the matter of policy, because of the global forces aligned against more socially based and redistributive policies.

According to Rifkin, (2000) the way out of the hyper-capitalist conundrum is through social movements, such as the campaigns for biodiversity and cultural diversity that underscore the local and the historical. "If we lose the sense of place, the sense of being, if you will, we may lose our sense of responsibility to intimate relations," (2000:251) says Rifkin. "The contrarian rallying cry of our time should be 'Geography counts, culture matters!'"

Rifkin sounds an optimistic note around the social movements and the Seattle and subsequent protests on the basis that a number of different groups all of which are geographically located coming together and it is in the geographic contact, the physicalness that real solidarity is possible.

The anti-capitalist movement is taking back the streets and redefining the landscape. They are disrupting the international intergovernmental and financing institutions meeting. In Durban, a handful of protestors openly intimidated their South African ministers accusing them of selling out, of being elites. Fifty thousand poor people in South Africa took to the streets during the World Conference Against Racism to raise their voices against the ANC governments anti-poor policies. Double this number of protestors took to the streets in Johannesburg a year later at the WSSD conference. No one is going to forget how the people of Cochabamba turned around the privatisation of their water services against Bentel. No one is going to forget the WTO protestor who stabbed himself as the ultimate sacrifice against capitalist globalisation. Or the huge Battle of Seattle, Prague and the 300 000 who marched in Genoa. It is clear that political education can not ignore these events. The challenge is making them meaningful to marginalised members of Castell's fourth world.

Education and political education

Emanating from the liberation that came with the vote in April 1994, South Africa becomes one of the youngest democracies with very strong roots in human rights. Is South African democracy sound? What does it need to remain vibrant and long-lasting? Is South Africa learning from experiences of countries that were liberated earlier? For any country least of all this one, an honest analysis of where the citizenry is, regarding being active political-beings is needed; For political activists to look at where they stand with regards to change from politics of protest to that of participation and engagement. Whilst in the celebratory mood that started with the results of the 1994 election we have lost sight of the importance of defending what is classically South African "robust" debate. Events in the neighbouring countries and the continent are but an illustration of the need to deepen the political engagement and debate. But what does political education mean for the marginalised?

What informs their reality? We talk of a new networked society that is faster and more integrated creating both difficulties and opportunities for political education whilst 65% of the globe's population have not used a phone and 40% have no access to electricity over a century after its discovery. There are different realities and that is probably the primary context we need to consider in political education. (Rifkin 2000)

Closer to home we note today, "50% of the South African adult population (or 10 million adults) has less than 10 years of schooling and 3 million adults have never been to school. A growing number of under-educated, semi-skilled and unskilled adults are unemployed, face retrenchments or are trapped in the informal economy. Over the last five years, the commitment by government to the provision and delivery of Adult Basic Education (ABE) as a political project has faded despite recognising illiteracy as a threat to the 'economic order' and as a profound injustice."

The accelerating divergence of these realities reflects the exercise of power and control in society. It does so by a slight of hand which is the process of how and by whom knowledge is valued in a society. Our knowledge informs our reality and like knowledge, reality is a contested terrain.

At a national level one of the most promising opportunities to develop an active and engaged political citizenry able to articulate their reality and have it addressed through policy processes, lay in the education system and more particularly adult basic education. The political imperative to redress the past provided ample opportunity to capacitate and encourage alternate forms of experience as constituting knowledge as opposed to processes that sell the American dream second hand in Africa.

"The new national government of South Africa highlighted Adult Basic Education (ABE) as a fundamental vehicle to social, political and economic power. ABE provided great possibilities in the reconstruction and development process (Bengu: 1996; Mkhathshwa: 1997). It was regarded as: (1) an integral component of building a participatory democracy; (2) having the potential to incorporate illiterate and under-educated adults into a new form of citizenship; (3) indispensable in the development of a critical consciousness; (4) a vehicle to respond to a range of social and economic challenges; and (5) an ideal mechanism to transcend exploitation, manipulation, powerlessness and oppression. In essence ABE was viewed within a larger political framework and action plan: literacy as a cornerstone in overcoming social, political and economic domination. ABE therefore linked concretely with the struggle against racial oppression and class exploitation; it was understood as an emancipatory literacy that would be fought from these theoretical perspectives. With this commitment was the realisation that South Africa needed to invest in human resource development. In so doing the country will have people who are to engage with policy at all levels and understanding their role in running their country. This running country is by no means voting once in five years." (P2)

Adult education is critical in addressing issues of social exclusion and marginalisation which was initially expressly acknowledged by the ruling

party through various utterances and proposed policies not least of which was the RDP. Within a framework of the RDP this was still a possible project and indeed the early work was phrased in terms of the RDP. As the process of pacting emerged the reinterpretation of the RDP into the neo liberal project of GEAR rendered this approach to educational liberation (read political) a non starter.

ABE became the preserve of specialists extracting funding from companies and later SETA's. Literacy becomes a minimum requirement for entry to jobs and access to information a requirement of survival in a 'modern society' as opposed to an emancipatory project. With this shift the potential for creating vibrant civil society participation in political policy and processes is lost. Education becomes a process of hardening class barriers and more clearly defining the socially excluded. As such people clamour for certificates and education comes to be viewed as purely instrumentalist holding no intrinsic or emancipatory value. A handful of organisations are then left to carry out a project that would have required the martialling of substantial resources available to the state, with a few crumbs from the funding table normally with a list of strings attached. Moreover, these organizations cannot hope to engage in any substantial way in ABE but instead must focus their efforts on developing the leadership of grass roots structures.

This has direct implications for the nature of education on the left. One of the questions most asked at workshops these days is will there be a certificate, and which institution is issuing the certificate. An elaborate system of qualification and quality assurance has been created through a myriad of bodies and institutions where even trade union education, proudly transformatory and independent in the past, is beginning to subject itself to external processes that will assess knowledge but more importantly politically come to define it. Two forces push in this direction the first is from the marginalised that see the process of education as a passport to inclusion in a system the media glamorises and distorts and the second is the providers of education who inevitably require funding in order to educate.

One could forgive the cynic who observes the potential these organizations have to become conduits for removing leadership from the grass roots as they are given certificates of entry and generally gain entry due to the systemic benefits derived by the accommodation of these individuals.

Regardless of the debates that have emerged around these issues the conclusion is fairly clear. As a process this moves control of the learning process further from the educator and more importantly the learner. By using the notions of quality and relevance we essentially enter the world of censorship, where the curriculum defines the knowledge and its relevance and conformity to the pre agreed curriculum, whether through inclusive or other processes, and means the learner can no longer determine the contents of learning. This is quite the opposite to notions of emancipatory learning as espoused by the likes of Habermas, Freer and others.

What shapes our knowledge? If we were engaged in a facilitation exercise we may try the following activity perhaps do it quickly in your heads, make a list of what has shaped your knowledge, What came to mind?

Parents, schools, friends, the media, organizations, communities are often the immediate responses. Only after some introspection will you perhaps arrive at yourself and the choices you make. It normally takes a bit of reflection though and that's the problem. That's how control works in the absence of reflection. I am not suggesting we all sit hear and celebrate the contemplation of our navals and our own grand importance but I am suggesting that the purpose of political education in one particular reality is developing reflection or to use a better political word consciousness. The meaning given to it here relates to developing abilities of choice.

Upon reflection Michael Newman writes of the educator:

"Our job is to help ourselves and others become truly conscious. Our job is to teach choice. Our job is to help ourselves and others develop a morality in the face of the evident amorality of our universe. Our job is to teach defiance in the face of absurdity. Ours is the job of helping ourselves and others understand that we too ... can take control of our moment. If I weed out the hyperbole, then I think I was agreeing with Turner who said: Human beings can choose. They are not sucked into the future by stimuli to which they have to respond in specific ways. ... They can stand back and look at alternatives. Theoretically they can choose about anything."

(Newman: 2002:8)

Whilst we would not presuppose to dictate what truly conscious means this does raise a second issue for deliberation and that is the relationships created around the contested space of political education and the meaning these relationships have for all those involved in the education process. The interaction of the relationship created in the education process impacts on the identity of those involved in the process and yet identity has not played a significant role in political education. Much of political education on the left has in the past made an assumption that the individual holds sufficient responsibility towards the collective to mediate their actions in favour of advancing the interest of that collective. Consciousness does not necessarily dictate action, but if there are any collective goals attached to political education we must make the assumption that part of its purpose must relate to informing action.

Conscientisation is often interpreted as the process of learners changing status from objects to subjects. The learners move from a fatalistic or naïve consciousness to a critical consciousness. They come to understand the history of their thinking, and the ways their thinking has been controlled and constrained by their social, political and cultural contexts. And they set about changing their thinking, and acting on their context. Some interpretations stress the political transformation in the process of conscientisation.

"How, without proselytising, do we teach and learn moral choice-making? If, as Sartre suggests (1947), each time we express our own freedom in the form of some action we impinge on somebody else's freedom, then every action we

take has a moral dimension. In the areas of social and political action, usually played out in situations where there are adversaries, this proposition seems particularly true since we are almost invariably trying to force or resist change. We can take action in a number of ways. We can engage in conventional action, like voting or signing petitions. We can engage in confrontational action, like blockading a road or occupying a building. And we can engage in violent action. Each action, and each escalation of action, involves a moral choice. Rules are impossible to lay down but we can offer stories of people who have made moral choices, who have engaged in the different kinds of action, and who have escalated from one level of action to another.

The educator's role in this kind of teaching and learning is not to provide codes of behaviour. It is to help learners understand morality in terms of challenges, dilemmas and choices. It is to help the learners amass a large number of stories so that when they are confronted with moral choices in the future they will have a body of their own and others' experience to draw upon. It is to help ourselves and others experience, and be able to recall at will, a state of moral consciousness."

(Newman: 2002:10)

Identity whilst not the sole determinant by any stretch of the imagination, clearly plays a role in informing action. We have seen the nature and role of shifting identities on the 'left' (no homogenous grouping to be sure) over the last decade which has tended to correlate with shifting action. It will serve no purpose here to debate causality in this regard as to whether identity shifts to justify different actions and statements or the other way round, suffice is to say that they hold a connection and this connection is important in grappling with the changing context of political education. Further we need to consider the location of identity for it suggests areas of action. By way of example, Peter Sawchuk writes:

"The everyday, cultural networks of union members have always been the foundational strength of the labour movement as a careful re-reading of historical studies of union and working-class culture shows. However, workers do not live in a cultural vacuum: competitive individualism, consumerism and capital dominate. In this context, if isolated from democratic structures informal, everyday learning has the potential to ratify divisions along a variety of lines including race, gender, age, region and nation. Beyond this, I've intimated that a variety of factors have helped to erode the traditional union power of workers' informal learning networks: dominant ways of thinking about the learning process itself; a lack of systematic research that focuses on workers full learning lives; and not least of all the cultural programs of capital."

An assessment of the purpose of the education, its role in the creation of identity along with the action it intends. Implicit in this is understanding or clarifying what reality these are based on and how the knowledge informing this reality is viewed by systems of control and exclusion in society as well as the subjects. Castells writes:

"People increasingly organize their meaning not around what they do but what they are or believe they are. Meanwhile, on the other hand, global networks of instrumental exchanges selectively switch on and off individuals groups, regions and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network, in a relentless flow of strategic decisions. There follows a fundamental split between abstract, universal instrumentalism and historically rooted particular identities. Our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between Net and Self (...) In a postindustrial society in which cultural services have replaced material goods at the core of production, it is the defense of the subject, in its personality and its culture, against the logic of apparatuses and markets, that replaces the idea of class struggle. (...)"In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning."
(Castells: 2000: 3 and 22)

Political education in the South needs to consciously engage the different constituencies that engage in the process in surfacing to what extent they form part of this networked society and how this impacts on their identities and consequently actions. It is also important to distinguish political agendas of the included and marginalised groupings in society, the relations they have to one another and for whom the political education is intended. Where social movements arise and are subject and object to an education process it is desirable that part of the analysis to emerge in the process locate itself in the political economy and ultimately class analysis.

Marx's utopian vision of a democratic society has much to offer today's educators as it does the world's exploited classes. Its task has been "less to imagine a new social order than to unlock the contradictions which forestall its historical emergence" (Eagleton, 1999, p. 35). We would do well to consider Ian McKay's reminder:
Marx . . . presents us with a vista of human beings struggling toward an infinite horizon of freedom as a manifestation of their humanity: he affirms a deontological ethic of freedom, even a freedom which, although it cannot be realized on earth, is nonetheless held before us as a regulatory ideal. (1995/1996, p. 43) in McLaren and Farahmandpur (1999;89)

Rifkin makes an interesting observation in this regard. He notes that as government becomes increasingly absent from the activities of local

communities handing these over to commerce and business becomes increasingly global and distant an 'institutional vacuum' is being created.

"that vacuum is being filled in some cases by a rejuvenated third sector ⁽¹¹⁾ and, in other instances an emboldened fourth sector made up by the informal economy, black market, and criminal culture. In the coming years, the real race in every geographic region of the world will be between the institutions of the third sector and those of the fourth sector for control over local geography in the wake of its partial abandonment by government and business. For the third sector to prevail it will have to politicize itself by bringing its institutions, activities and interests together in a shared sense of common mission. For that to happen there will have to be recognition of the importance of geography in establishing common ground."
(2000: 256)

Whilst there is an important sense of a locus of struggle and therefore education that emerges from these observations we have a sense that Rifkin over generalises the nature of the fourth sector and unnecessarily paints it as bad. Whilst the notions of gangs and criminal activities that harm members of a geographic community may well be considered thus there is much to be said for the radical exploitation of technology for instance that undermines intellectual property rights or reconnects water and electricity 'illegally' that promotes the notion of a third sector and bolsters such a sector's identity as being alternative to those promoted in mainstream media and the cultural capital of corporate globalisation, that which we may identify in this instance as being made up of community organizations with a myriad of different foci.

Where social movements start to be located geographically as well as being issues based organisations we do see distinctive and powerful forms of social action emerging, alternative heroes created and different knowledge valued; the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee being a prime example of just this. In this sense social movements can move into opposition to the clear systemic inequalities and create knowledge independently. This is political education in the making it simply requires affirming. The processes though must by their nature stand in opposition to formal systems of accreditation and controls this is tantamount to asking the oppressor for acknowledgement. Where this is not the case any counter hegemonic claim of these movements is immediately diluted.

"Contemporary social movements clearly create knowledge within an oppositional framework. As Melucci tells us, "They don't ask, they offer" (Melucci, 1985: 812). But what does this movement offer? In my investigation, it seems that through their resistance these social movement actors collectively present alternatives to the dominant norms and values of corporate globalisation - alternatives which are people-centred, emancipatory and informal. Thus, they are not only subject to their structural context,

11 The third sector in Rifkin's use refers to the cultural sphere presumably where meaning may be created. It is useful for this analysis to conceptualise these in terms of CBO's and other community based structures that are located geographically

but also shape the context in which they operate. Through the raising of the questions, the new social movement actors offer new alternatives to the present structures of domination. They seek to render the power of neo liberal hegemony visible. Thus, collective resistance has embraced the role of soothsayer - creating a terrain where the new conceptions of the 'truth' can be formed and articulated. Through this process, as Melucci has argued, all people are called to meet their full human potential, as self-aware and reflective actors embarking on a process to direct and make meaning in their own lives, as well as operating as "...nodes in a network of coexistence and communication" (Melucci, 1995: 293). They produce this knowledge in four different ways: first, through articulation that an alternative is possible; second, through the group structure in which they organize; third, in the communicative action framework which they adopt; and finally through their action/reflection cycle, or praxis.... these actors, individually and collectively, are articulating a vision of the world which represents a rejection of domination and an embrace of different tactics which support people's articulation of their own identities.

Stephanie Rutherford (2002: 6)

The pedagogic model that most comfortably sits with this type of knowledge creation and valuing is that of radical or critical pedagogy that emphasizes emancipatory above technical knowledge. An assessment of the purpose of such education is critical, along with its role in the creation of identity and the action it intends. Implicit in this is understanding or clarifying what reality these are based on and how the knowledge informing this reality is viewed by systems of control and exclusion in society. This is not to argue for relativist obscurity however in that such understandings should still be located in a concrete analysis of objective conditions along with the subjective experiences of these. To have no common analysis of the capitalist system is to fracture any possibility of real collective action.

In keeping with Newman's (2002) notion of providing guidance in moral choice in conclusion we quote extensively here from a passage in the third contract on a radical education institution formed in the 30's whose inspiration is quoted at the beginning of this paper,

Highlander was established in a region of the US where textile and mining companies often controlled whole towns, exploiting whole communities deeply affected by the depression. In its early years Highlander worked with unions, establishing them on the ground and training leadership and educators; it became the official labour school in the American South. The school offered residential workshop for people struggling for social change. In 1933 Horton wrote: "We have found that a very effective way to help students to understand the present social order is to throw them into conflict situations where the real nature of our society is projected in all its ugliness."

In the fifties and sixties, when the unions lost their radical drive, were over bureaucratized and becoming increasingly anti-communist, Highlander loosened its ties with the labour movement and began working more closely with the growing civil rights movement, offering adult literacy to enable black people to register to vote and running workshop and schools for activists.

The popular version of the labour song, "we shall overcome" was written at Highlander. Horton founded Highlander in 1932. Martin Luther King came to Highlander and Rosa Parks attended a workshop at Highlander three months before she refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus and sparked the civil rights marches of 1960's.

Highlander was closed down by a state decree and later re-established, burnt down, attacked by racists and investigated by the police. Horton, Highlander's director until the seventies, was arrested, beaten, threatened and investigated by the Tennessee state and the US senate.

Horton had an ability to anticipate social movements and was instrumental in encouraging their development. He remained active and influential in Highlander until his death in 1990. Highlander remains a single small institution deep in the American South, yet both the institution and Horton have impacted on the lives of millions of people in the US and the world.

Appendix 1

The length of this paper precluded a more full explanation of some pedagogic concepts which are usefully described below if the reader is not familiar with some of the terms used.

Jane Thompson. 2000

Emancipatory Learning

The radical tradition in adult learning is concerned with how learning, knowledge and education can be used to assist individuals and groups to overcome educational disadvantage, combat social exclusion and discrimination, and challenge economic and political inequalities - with a view to securing their own emancipation and promoting progressive social change.

What is Emancipatory Learning?

Emancipatory learning is not concerned with strategies for personal self improvement via an undue emphasis on academic qualifications by way of ladders of individualised opportunity. Its purpose is to develop understanding and knowledge about the nature and root causes of unsatisfactory circumstances in order to develop real strategies to change them.

The kinds of knowledge, pedagogy and educational relationships encouraged by **emancipatory learning** are those which are formed in solidarity with the interests of the least powerful in society. The reason for collaboration is to work with the least powerful to gain more autonomy and independence, more control over their own lives, and to bring about change in the interests of greater equality and social justice.

Emancipatory learning is relevant today because of the stark realities of increased material poverty and inequalities - not simply within societies but also between societies in the context of globalization. This includes growing inequalities of income and wealth, massive inequalities in relation to cultural recognition and social diversity, and huge inequalities arising out of access to information. In Britain there is a widening divide between those who are highly educated, skilled and well paid specialists; those who are less skilled but currently employed; and those - about one third of the population - who are poorly educated, poorly qualified, casualised, unwaged and unemployed (Hutton 1995). In this context, adult educators have a choice - if they do not take the side of the poor and powerless, then, by default, they contribute to preserving the status quo on the side of the rich and privileged. For those who want to contribute to creating a more informed, egalitarian and socially just society, the ideas and practices associated with **emancipatory learning** may be a place to start (Martin 2000).

Emancipatory learning is associated - in the literature of adult education - with some other, related ideas: for example, **Really Useful Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Conscientisation, and Transformation**. These are all ideas which come together in the campaign for Popular Education.

Really Useful Knowledge

This idea dates back to the nineteenth century in Britain and to struggles for working class education and the vote (Johnson 1979). It is relevant today in supporting the interests of disadvantaged and oppressed groups and members of progressive social movements - including people with disabilities, women, working class people and ethnic minorities. It is concerned with distinguishing between 'merely useful knowledge' – the kind of knowledge that keeps people in their place and supports the status quo, and 'really useful' knowledge that enables people to both understand the root causes of the circumstances in which they find themselves in order to make changes.

Really useful knowledge is created when individuals and groups begin to reflect upon their experience with each other, in ways that lead to greater insight and understanding, and which enable theories to be developed linked to strategies for bringing about changes.

Really useful knowledge assumes that people can learn a lot from their own and other people's experience of common problems and struggles - enough to develop theories and explanations - which can then inform social action for change. The knowledge might be political, emotional or practical. It does not imply learning to put up with unsatisfactory circumstances, it implies getting out from under (Thompson 1997, 2000).

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking assumes that people can be involved in 'making things happen' rather than have things happen to them. **Critical thinking** as a basis for learning is the antithesis of rote learning, basic training and behaviour modification - none of which imply the critical engagement of learners in initiating and evaluating ideas. It assumes that all people - whatever their intelligence or ability - must engage in the wider world if they are to survive in it and help to reconstitute it. Information produced by specialists - including government, the media, scientists, educationalists, economists – should not be regarded as the property of specific groups but something which is routinely interpreted and acted upon by all of us in the course of our everyday actions.

Critical thinking is the kind of thinking which challenges fatalism, prejudice, apathy and indoctrination. The aim is to engage active citizens in informed participation in social and political life to achieve a more equitable and socially just democracy. **Critical thinking** is not simply concerned with overcoming individual and group 'ignorance' but with encouraging ways of thinking that are critical of the kind of status quo which supports inequalities, injustices and the abuse of power (Mayo 1997).

Conscientisation

This is a term associated with the Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire and relates to the development of **critical consciousness** as a form of **emancipatory learning**. Freire's approach - first used with literacy students - is based on asking questions about the root causes of social and political problems rather than focusing on the symptoms - in order to plan strategies to address them. According to Freire, oppressed (excluded) people need to develop **critical consciousness** in order to challenge the ideas of dominant groups who are their oppressors. They

need to be able to critically assess the kinds of ideas, contexts and relationships which are usually 'taken for granted' or accepted as inevitable, in order to question the root causes of their oppression (Freire 1970).

Through the process of **conscientisation**, or developing **critical consciousness**, excluded groups can learn to identify, interpret, criticise and finally transform the world about them. Crucial to this process is the notion of **praxis** - by which Freire means 'reflection and action upon the world in order to change it'. More simply, it means being able to make the connection between experience, understanding and social action to bring about social change. It is a process which people must do for themselves because liberation or emancipation cannot be handed down from above. It must come from the bottom up.

Through the process of **conscientisation** the poor begin to replace the inevitability of their own oppression by developing autonomy, independence, responsibility and - he says - fuller humanity. In practice this means shedding the kinds of pejorative labels that are regularly attached to minority and excluded groups by dominant groups and which can become internalised - for example, apathetic, lazy, scroungers, irresponsible, unreliable, etc. Instead of going along with the 'conventional wisdoms' prescribed by oppressors and internalising them, minority groups can begin to see themselves in a new light as inherently capable and creative.

Freire is very critical of what he calls '**the banking approach**' to education in which teachers (or trainers) down-load information into learners as if they are empty vessels. This places the learners in essentially passive roles. Banking education leads to the **domestication** of learners by imposing views - however worthwhile - from above in ways that do not lead to their independence or emancipation. The approach promoted by **conscientisation** aims to encourage learners to become actively engaged in identifying problems, asking questions, making analyses and working out strategies for transformation for themselves. The teacher's role is that of an equal **partner** who engages in **dialogue** with learners in the spirit of democratic enquiry and solidarity.

Transformation

Transformation is associated with **bottom up** and **people centred** education and development strategies, in which the intention is to make changes to the kinds of social, political, personal and cultural relations in society which are currently based on inequality, exploitation or oppression. In

this sense 'the outcomes' of **emancipatory learning for transformation** are expected to include individuals and groups becoming sufficiently aware, well informed and actively involved in 'fighting back' against the circumstances, conditions, ideas and power differences that operate as barriers to equality and social justice. **Transformation** is likely to be most effective and sustainable when it is pursued in solidarity with others engaged in the same kinds of struggles (Foley 1999).

Popular Education

Popular education is concerned with how adult education can contribute to popular struggles for democracy, social justice and equality. A vital component is the commitment to **dialogue** between people as a way of making the kinds of knowledge that can usefully make a difference. Teachers and learners are viewed as equal partners in the learning process, committed to fully democratic relations, in pursuit of an actively democratic wider society.

Popular education is not simply populist education. It involves **emancipatory learning** rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people. Popular education is overtly political education which is critical of the status quo and is committed to progressive social and political change. It has nothing to do with 'helping the disadvantaged' or 'the management of poverty', and everything to do with assisting in the struggle for a more democratic, just and egalitarian society (Martin et al 1999).

Like **really useful knowledge, critical thinking** and **conscientisation, popular education** finds its curriculum in the struggles, the life experiences and the material interests of those who are the least economically, socially, culturally and politically powerful in society. Pedagogy is more likely to be focussed on collective and group learning rather than individualised learning - in order to reflect common struggles, repair damaged solidarities and build new ones. Wherever possible, links are made between education and social action (Crowther, Martin and Shaw 1999).

Adult Learning for a Change

In many ways the language of emancipation, oppression and solidarity may seem a little old fashioned in Tony Blair's New Britain, in which no one talks about social class very much any more, and opportunities are assumed to exist for all those who want to make the most of what is available. For those who are nonetheless 'disadvantaged' or 'socially excluded' - i.e. poor, ill educated, unqualified, unwaged and dependent on benefits - a number of government schemes, linked to education and training, are in place to get people off welfare and into work. Adult and community educators and trainers are likely to find themselves working with poor people in a range of formal and non formal settings. In many cases, those in most urgent need of educational support are the least likely to be involved in formal provision.

It is clear that education - on its own - cannot change societies in which there are economic and class systems which encourage vast discrepancies of wealth and access to resources, including access to information. But education can play a part in assisting people in their various struggles against discrimination, exploitation, inequalities and social injustices, and can make a real difference to peoples lives when heightened awareness gets connected to increased understanding and joint action to bring about changes. Emancipatory learning is particularly relevant in community development and community based learning; workplace learning and trade union education; educational work with women, ethnic minorities, user groups and basic education. However, the view that learning should play a part in sustaining progressive social

change - not simply personal self development - means that all kinds of learning can include emancipatory commitments. The challenge facing teachers - in partnership with learners - is how to include the commitment to emancipatory learning and practice across a wide range of subject areas and educational settings (Thompson 2000)

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