

SADTU PRESENTATION
FOSACO WORKSHOP, UWC
SAT. 10 AUG 1991

This input has been the result of an initial process started within the SADTU by teachers concerned with curriculum development based on the principles of alternative education such as Peoples and Popular Education, Experiential, Learning in short learning in new ways for a new South Africa.

We realize that teachers need to seriously reclaim their space as initiators and developers of curriculum, we realize that many teachers feel powerless and are facing a very real legitimation crisis and that our new growing union has to involve teachers not only in discovering a sense of dignity and self worth as workers but also in developing a keen sense of what in essence is the nature of their work.

We talk in our union of a culture of learning, of a teachers culture, of Peoples Culture but these debates like the formulation of an alternative Education Policy are limited to a few activist teachers and, teachers who are cultural workers. They are uneven often erratic discussions. They have not impacted on the agendas of staff meetings and if truth be told SADTU has not only to define and build a new teacher culture but it has to educate teachers into realizing that it is their right to have a voice that they possess and historical agency, that culture in its broadest sense ie the ideational beliefs and values and the lived experiences dynamic, are constructed through our meaning making process as well as through the economic condition of a South Africa divided along race, class and gender.

Given this profile we need to ask a number of questions about the State of Art, Education and Cultural Rights in the Formal Sector of Education.

- (1) What do teachers understand by the terms Culture, Peoples Culture or non-racial, non-sexist, democratic Culture, Ethnicity or Nationality ?
- (2) Having been schooled in a race, class and gender stratified society how equipped are we to begin to challenge the dominant culture, respond to an emergent culture that has been born without many of us noticing.
- (3) As teachers of expressive forms of culture such as music, art and drama are we fully aware of the meaning making processes ? How empowered are we to make meaning and not just interpret it ? How effective are we as critical readers of meaning ?

If we consider the above in the context of unequal state funding of education, lack of or non-existences of facilities and equipment and a tendency towards a "scientific reductionis technocratic education " where the ethos of the school has been the superiority of science subjects such as mathematics, biology and physics over the poorer, less important and often non-existent art education or moral education, then we must become perturbed about Art, Education and cultural Rights in the schools.

The States New Education Renewal Strategy must be met with suspicion at least and with a keen, critical and organised teachers voice at best, it must be met with our version for an alternative education policy and system. An initial reading and workshop of the document by the Atlone Central Branch of SADTU has revealed the states concern with the concept of culture. We are aware how the state has in recent years where its race policy has been rejected by the people - how it has collapsed the concept of race into the concept of culture. In its proposals laid down in the ERS it " abandons race as the main pricipile that allocates people and resources to the schooling system. Instead the ERS submits and another pricipile, that of DIVERSITY - ie differences of language, religion and above all what they call culture." These differences should be accomdated in the new system. The principle of diversity leads to decentralisation. The best way to achieve decentralisation and promote cultural diversity is to devolve authority and therefore choice to local school districts and to schools.

This would mean the following:

A particular school district or school may choose to protect and promote a particular language, religion or culture. The school communities will be given far great antonomy and choice, which will be exercised by each school Management Council.

The Council decide on:

- (a) admission criteria to the schools
- (b) the appointment of teachers
- (c) the responsibility for text books and other resources
- (d) the hiring out of school facilities
- (e) the responsibility for services, expenses and finances

One can easily see how cultural diversity can lead to cultural differences being employed to keep out students from particular schools. How it can, within the context of privatising of education, lead to cultural elitism, how culture instead of race. will result in schools being segregated.

The above has been restricted by what the document terms the lack of money. It proposes free and compulsory education for only the first 7 years. In effect the government is suggesting the privatisation of education, and is trying to dignify that by appearing to give ear to the demand of Peoples Education for greater control of schools by the community. P.E is clear in its demand that the state provide education but that the community is to be engaged and consulted in policy decisions with regards to school. What the ERS has arrived at is greater funding of schools by the community - which will lead to schools being divided along class lines. This has led to questions about class consciousness as an aspect of culture are we happy with using education so manifestly to stratify children into class structured society what implications does this have for developing a National culture of non-racism non-elitism, non-sexism and democracy. What implications does it have for building a culture of tolerance and non-violence. For what the ERS propose will lead to is a dominant culture that is characterized by being rich and white change existing harmoniously within a school. The pathetic state of poor and black schools will be justified by "cultural differences". This in turn will lead to reinforcing stereotypes and all its negativity.

Do we then disallow cultural practise in schools? Do we oppose cultural diversity and impose a formulation of National Culture? How do we begin to safeguard differences in a future school system.

We have been in a sense defining here our limitations as teachers but we realize there is also potential for empowerment of teachers, students and with the subjects like music, art and drama the potential for self-representation is empowering in itself.

Perhaps we need to look now at the state of the subjects in schools to define what needs to be done in terms of the subject and in terms of SADTU's tasks..

SCHOOL MUSIC

An analysis was done across the 4 education departments. All have a Eurocentric bias except for the Indian schools where a component focus on Indian music is also taught.. All four departments use the standard procedure of class music lessons ie songs, notation, guided listening, instrumentation. Movement to music in all departments seems restricted to the kindergarden developments. High school class music seems restricted to songs and guided listening.

The major problem with the music curriculum is not so much the curriculum itself. But the very exam orientated system emphasised in schools, so much so that when a subject does not end in an exam those periods on the school time table often become free time for homework etc.... Often also the teachers given the subject are untrained in the field and do not have the well being of the subject in mind. In DET schools, class music is non-existent in practise. Most times only taught by student teachers during their 6 week teaching slot.

There needs to be an introduction to a broad spectrum of music from various cultural backgrounds eg Indian, African, Chinese, European etc. Other styles should be represented eg. non-European, jazz and Ethnomusicology should also be offered.

With class music the school budget also determines what the school can afford in terms of instruments (record-players etc..). Due to the very uneven government budgeting of the 4 education departments facilities and equipment obviously vary accordingly. Poorer schools do not have music on their daily curriculum. At primary schools it is referred to as Extra-curricula (meaning not part of the school syllabus ie not compulsory) A R15 fee is required per term, per student.] The department has devised a syllabus for PIANO, RECORDER, VIOLIN, GUITAR called the step system. At the end of step 4 pupils would have reached (STD 5) and will therefore have the option of studying it at High School as a subject. At which point tuition is free. In a narrow context it is an acceptable syllabus in that it takes the pupil up to Std 10 level and then prepares pupil for tertiary study.

No external examiner is supplied by the department and many parents and teachers expect their children to be examined by more recognised bodies eg Trinity College, Royal School, Unisa. These exams are costly

The department brings in teachers for other instruments - (Orchestral). in the white schools however this not the case in other departments so PIANO is the only instrument studied in coloured schools / recorder in Indian schools. The syllabus at no stage involves an integration with the arts at school level.

DRAMA

An analysis across the departments revealed that Drama as a course is non-existent in African schools (Des. schools). Like music the drama syllabus in the few schools in the Western Capr in fact, in only two schools in the Western Cape, is Eurocentric, and exam oriented with a great emphasis on the theoretical aspects such as Principles of Drama-in effect a literary criticism of 3 plays, Principle of Voice Production, a History of Western theatre and the Practical aspect of Oral Interpretation. The course is offered at both the higher and standard grades. The actual teaching then is often formal, even ossified in set technique and not sufficient attention is given to the dynamism of dramatic form-because in effect teachers given the training look to structuring learning around tests, mark book requirements and western values of taste and aesthetics prevalent in departments Drama festivals and Eistedfords.

What have teachers who are also cultural workers done about this. Attempts are been made to broaden our syllabus- to include the study of aspects of Indigenous Indian drama and expressive dance movement. Understanding the oral tradition and story telling in African/Indigenous culture, the study of Kathakali basic Indian expressive dance movement and to understand these in their historical context is being taught. Activist drama teachers have included in their approach the idea that theatre is not confined to the "talented" - and the school variety concert (although still viewed by the administration as the big fund raiser) engages many students. So that a concert often includes western disco, Hip-Hop and Bharathanatyam, student workshopped skits and extracts from a teacher's favourite Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller play. A more serious emphasis has been the experiment with courses in community theatre and participatory theatre in the vain of Augusto Boal. Interviewing community and documenting peoples history and creating drama around people who create culture has given the drama student a sense learning to Create meaning, of discovering the power of expression and instead of being handed down "product of culture" is learning to make culture. Learning is process- oriented. Not many teachers are doing this - not many subject advisors are open to learning.

It becomes the task of SADTU members to encourage teachers to take their tasks as curriculum developers seriously, to set up subject societies, to educate ourselves, to link with National initiatives such as this FOSACO workshop and other educational policy developments, to ensure that at these levels such programmes are relevant to the experiences of those at the interface of learning. As teachers we MUST MAKE OURSELVES RELEVANT to lived experience.

Within SADTU, teachers who are cultural workers should find space to expressive themselves as cultural workers. We need to write stories and poetry, create drama and dance. SADTU must ensure our cultural existence. We have set up SPAG consisting of teachers and students who are concerned to make meaning of on experiences. We insist on cultural inputs at our conferences. We have worked actively even before our first congress to develop a non-sexist culture within our union and in July this year we held a National Consultative Conference on the Gender issue

We are presently looking at a gender studies curriculum and the education of teachers especially around the gender issue. We hope that in the next year we will be able to successfully bring teachers together around subject societies and to programme SADTU festivals of music, dance and drama. We know that there is an urgency for teacher input with regard to a National Education Policy and this must seriously be addressed by SADTU members being represented on national forums, and guidelines for working together need to be formalised.

The following is proposed :

1. that as a matter of urgency, a Conference of teachers of Music, Drama, Art and Dance in both the formal and non-formal sectors of Education be convened by SADTU and all other cultural bodies such as SADYT, ADDSA, CAP, MAPP, S A. GUILD OF drama teachers, Afrika Cultural Centre, COSAW etc.
2. that a National Youth Cultural Festival of the Arts with its regional components be held annually. That in this regard we consider the restructuring of initiatives such as the Grahamstown Youth Festival.
3. that the educational sector be represented on regional art bodies such as those controlling museums, galleries, theatres. In other words that teachers/educationists begin to ensure that such structures address the imbalances in cultural education and redistribute cultural capital.
4. that SADTU together with all concerned cultural workers devise a Cultural Studies Curriculum to be implemented from the pre-school stage.
5. that at school level SADTU pressurize for the 'dignity of the Arts' and demand that as much as technical and vocational education is promoted and funded, so the arts. That every school be encouraged and in terms of regulation, to have an established school choir, dance group, drama society and a yearly Art Exhibition.
6. that schools actively engage the community to share its skills by running culture workshops for students and teachers.
7. that teachers demand that the state provide the equipment necessary for the teaching and the enjoyment of music, art, dance.

WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US. It is our duty within SADTU to point out to teachers that while many of us have failed to engage in the fight for one education department and have failed to build the first non-racial teachers union, we cannot get away from the development of curriculum. To do that is to refuse to do our jobs and that deserves the fullest censure.

WRITTEN BY SADTU CULTURAL COLLECTIVE:

Diane Gordon
Alison Lazarus
Glen Van Harte
Ntsiki Tolashe

POINTS ARISING FROM THE COMMISSION ON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION : BASIC RIGHTS

1) Cultural education - non-negotiable, integral to political demands for a constituent assembly because the state will always fund education.

A rich abundance of knowledge in which teachers are not engaged

2) Marginalisation of culture to be countered by culture as a non-negotiable element of the education system with specific funding

3) Teachers need to counter technocratic dominance in education (ERS) & (BIG BUSINESS).

4) Teacher empowerment & collegiality.

5) Re- Evaluation; Re- Structuring } Teacher - Training

6) A need to emphasis " process " rather than "product" methodologies { Syllabus development curriculum..}

7) Culture should involve school community { Teachers & students } and community at large { Macro Micro }

8) Museums - Transformation to a democratic educational commitment. Community role.

9) Literacy - Cultural, Numeracy , Literacy , } Specific programmes as

" Outreach " activities by teachers to the larger community