

**EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT  
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What is education for empowerment?

The route to a definitive answer is through tortuous analysis and interpretation of several fundamental principles. To understand education for empowerment is not merely to qualify the literal meaning of education with that of empowerment. An understanding of this subject lies not in one's mastery of the Queen's language, but in one's hopefully more than casual acquaintance with sociological concepts, philosophical concepts, political concepts and importantly with metaphysics – the theory of existence. To derive a useful answer, one has to postulate on the theories of man, theories of knowledge and concepts of power.

This forum does not allow us to delve into first principles, fundamental principles of these theories. The theories about to be propounded will have to be largely taken as given to see where they lead us in our quest for understanding the essence of education for empowerment. Furthermore, our assessment and application of these theories may for the most part be implicit or oblique.

There are, however, some key concepts and theories fundamental to our understanding that we have to address explicitly in due course. These are theories of knowledge, life and existence and the concepts of efficacy and power. Theory of knowledge will inform us about education. Efficacy and power will inform us about empowerment. I hope to achieve a useful exposition of these concepts without being too esoteric and pedantic.

To speak of education for empowerment is to suggest that education may be for purposes other than empowerment, that there is, or may be education for enslavement; education for impoverishment; education for subjugation. To reflect even briefly on our troubled educational history for the past generation, one cannot but agree that in the life of nations, education has been used for enslavement, for impoverishment and for subjugation.

Yet I wish to state categorically that education cannot be but for empowerment.

How can this be, in an age where it has become even more apparent with every passing year that as a nation we are impoverished, we are mentally enslaved and we are subjugated? The fruits, if so they may be called, of Verwoerdian ideology manifest themselves daily as we continue to be corporate outcasts, political impotents, intellectual phantoms, social schizoids and technological illiterates. Is it then not self-evident that there is education for subjugation?

I say not. I submit to you that the abomination of Verwoerdian ideology called Bantu Education and its mirror-counterpart, Christian National Education, cannot be called education. A phenomenon or entity acquired its name and its meaning not by what one may claim for it or call it, but by its intrinsic nature.

What then is education? May I take you on a conceptual detour, to facilitate a brief acquaintance with theories of knowledge and with theories of man and existence.

Knowledge is perceived reality, a recognition of fact as opposed to fantasy, wish or desire. Man's mind or his brain is his only tool of knowledge – not his heart, not his feelings, not his gut. By his sensory perceptions man assimilates facts and by a process of thought, of applying reason he conceptualises and categorises these facts. When he has conceptualised and categorised these facts by using thought, reason, he has acquired knowledge. While the act of perception is involuntary, the process of reason, of thought, is not automatic, it is not involuntary. It is volitional, it is by choice and it has to be learned. The process of exercising that volition and the learning of applying thought to fact, is called education.

Only by this process is man able to deal with the physical and social environment around him. Man by nature aspires to liberty, happiness and self-preservation. He therefore uses his knowledge to create for himself an environment that is safe, that he can derive sustenance from, and that in which he may achieve self-actualisation. By his knowledge man does not adapt to his environment. He adapts his environment to suit him.

When the environment becomes inhospitable to an animal species, the animal migrates or becomes extinct. When the environment becomes inhospitable to the human species, the human adapts his environment. This he can only do if he has knowledge. Knowledge is acquired by education. Therefore, when pestilence afflicts animals, they perish. When pestilence afflicts man, he develops preventative and/or curative solutions to control and eradicate disease. When scarcity of food afflicts animals, they perish. When scarcity of food afflicts man, he devises agricultural, industrial and lately molecular biology technology to create food. When the animal kingdom is afflicted by predators, the animals perish. When the human kingdom is afflicted by predators, man devises rules, laws and government to render the environment safe. Therefore, education is an instrument of power.

However, knowledge is power only over the environment, not over other men. Power over other men is derived only by force, not by reason. When man exercises reason over another man, he exercises influence. When a man exercises force over another man, he exercises power. The difference between a well-educated man and a poorly educated man is not force, it is intellect. Intellect is an instrument of persuasion, not coercion. Therefore, an educated man seeks influence and persuasion over other men, now power over his fellow men. The only power he seeks is over his environment.

What then can we say about Bantu Education and Christian National Education – the two poison wells of South Africa?

What has been the design and the effect of Bantu Education? The design was explicitly spelt out by the chief architect, Dr Verwoerd for all to understand. Simply to deprive the black man of the ability to effectively handle and adapt his environment and to render him unable to deal as an equal with fellow men.

If our method of dealing with fellow men is by force instead of reason, then are we a people of education? If our method of dealing with economic reality in the form of unemployment, poverty and famine is more than to bewail our plight while we steadily perish, then are we a people of education?

If our method of dealing with political predators (ie. People who subscribe to the use of force instead of reason) is to turn inward upon ourselves instead of against the predators, then are we a people of education?

As products of Bantu Education we have been designed to be deficient human beings, incapable of dealing with our physical and social environment and therefore subservient to the elements and to other men. We do not have power over our environment.

What then of Christian National Education? What has been the design and effect of Christian National Education? Again the design has been manifestly clear from inception. Simply put, to ensure the domination of whites in general and Afrikaners in particular over blacks in South Africa, and to ensure a survival for the former, not by mastery over the environment but mastery of a subjugated people.

If one's method of dealing with scarcity of resources is by looting, appropriation and hoarding of God-given resources instead of technology and hard work then are you a people of education? If one's method of dealing with political reality is by use of force and a denial of reality (ie. Inability or refusal to apply reason to fact) then are you a people of education? If one's method of dealing with fellow man is not by measure of one's intellectual worth but by appealing to the mysticism and baseness of tribe and race, then are you a people of education?

As a product of Christian National Education, whites have sought to create of themselves a super-race, a 'herrenvolk' that had no basis for its superiority than the accident of skin colour. It is precisely because this superiority exists only in fantasy that it has to be aided and propped by social engineering and the crude use of force, all ostensibly sanctioned by divinity. The whites in South Africa have sought power over their environment not by reason, but by force over their social environment, ie. Power over other men.

If an ostensible education system renders you as a people incapable of dealing effectively with reality in your economic environment, in your political environment, in your social environment, then education can it be called? It is not by what you claim for the system nor what you call it, but by its nature and its effect that you describe an educational system. By our definition it is manifestly criminal to think of, let alone name Bantu Education and Christian National Education as educational systems. They are not merely deficient, but indeed their core purpose is contrary to that of education.

Having explored the concept of education and its philosophical base, and of the concept of power and its nature, what more can be said of the concept of empowerment?

Apart from the concept of power itself, the central issue to explore in the concept of empowerment is the locus of action. I wish to address the issue of how and by whom empowerment comes to be. Key to our understanding of this process is the concept of efficacy.

Efficacy is the ability to direct and influence events, a measure of control over one's environment and over one's own fate. However, more important than the ability referred to, is the belief that one possesses that ability. A sense of efficacy is not innate, one is not born with it, it is learned. Before cognitive development, man is like an animal in that he lacks a sense of efficacy.

What does a lack of sense of efficacy mean? It means that one considers oneself subject to the elements; subject to one's environment; subject to fate; subject to the will of others; subject to Providence. Changes in the environment are determined by forces other than self and one's well-being is determined by the courtesy of a benign environment or the goodwill of others. Therefore, one is at the mercy of the environment and others have power over one, and what is unpardonable, one believes it only natural that it be so or is timidly resigned to the fact.

We have said earlier in the context of discussing knowledge that the critical difference between man and animal is control over the environment.

Man by nature is capable of and should seek a mastery of his environment whereas animals by nature are incapable of even conceptualising the thought, much less effect control over the environment. Therefore, a people without a sense of efficacy, a belief in their ability to shape and affect their environment, consign themselves to a status barely above those of animals.

Efficacy is a product of education. It is an understanding of cause and effect and the ability to achieve rational objectives and goals. A people without efficacy are reduced to desire without an understanding of the how, much less the ability to satisfy this desire. Therefore, their existence is reduced to wishful thinking instead of purposeful action. In other instances they pursue courses of action that have no national connection with or that are contrary to their stated goals. A culture of dependency develops in such a people, a culture of poverty, a culture of no self-esteem. No dignity. No pride.

Thus we observe a people that seeks and expects handouts, donations and aims at every opportunity. We observe a people that seeks prosperity by stealing and looting. We observe a people that expect to be taught rather than to learn. We observe a people that deprive others the opportunity to learn and then sanctimoniously gripe about the low levels of skills and the unfair burden they carry. We see a people who expect to achieve their freedom through Providence, the military intervention of others or the good offices of foreign powers. We see a people who expect to achieve freedom by denying it to others. We see a people stuck to hackneyed formulas and positions because they have no capacity to analyse or alternatively refuse to apply reason to the challenges at hand. There is no connection in our minds between cause and effect. No efficacy. To cap it all, we are genuinely stymied. We cannot understand why we cannot achieve our desired goals. We blame it on each other, on foreigners, on imperialism, on communism, on apartheid, on fate, on Providence.

Efficacy therefore is a crucial element of empowerment because the hallmark of a person who lacks efficacy is helplessness. Efficacy is therefore very importantly a process of self-empowerment because the power we refer to is that of mastery over the environment.

It cannot be conferred upon you, it is a process of thought application – a result of education. Indeed education is a necessary ingredient of efficacy. Some achieve it early in their educational life because their cognitive skills are developed, they were taught or have learned how to think. Others develop it quite late or may never develop it despite their 'education' because they have assimilated facts without applying thought to them. They have never been taught nor have they learned how to think. Such are many of our graduates today who upon graduation expect to be given a job, and expect to be pushed up a corporate ladder and expect success to be bestowed upon them while they passively hold

their hands outstretched, palms turned upwards. They ascribe success or failure to luck or to a 'god-father', never application or lack thereof on their part.

In my conceptual detour into the theories of man and existence, of knowledge and of the concepts of power and of efficacy, I hope to have established in your minds a connection between education and empowerment.

Only those societies that have pursued education as exemplified by the freedom of and importantly the exercise of thought, the subordination of force to reason, have they as a people empowered themselves.

What can we say of ourselves?

We live in a society, where physical power is the ultimate sanction, where those who lord it over us do so only by courtesy of the mailed fist, the spear, the gun. We are subjugated by men who are strangers to truth, knowledge and morality – which are products of education. We are ruled by men who confuse might with right, compulsion with persuasion and brawn with brain.

We aid and abet this thuggery by design and by default. We aid by design to the extent that we abdicate the responsibility to educate ourselves and to apply that education. We aid this by default to the extent that we as individuals and as a people lack a sense of efficacy, ie. we have no conception of what is possible and of the extent of our power.

Simply, we aid this by default to the extent that we are forcibly denied opportunities to education. Education is power.

In 1928, Lord Brougham said: 'Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave'.

We are today economically and politically subjugated. Political freedom cannot exist without economic freedom. Economic freedom cannot exist without political freedom. Neither can exist without intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom is the pursuit and the result of knowledge. Knowledge is a result of education. Education is freedom. Freedom is power. Therefore, education cannot be but for empowerment.