

Art. # 901, 8 pages, <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>

## Historical continuities in the education policy discourses of the African National Congress, 1912-1992

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This article considers the nature and trajectory of the African National Congress's (ANC) education policy discourses from its founding in 1912, until its repatriation from exile by 1992. The broad issue that this article considers is how to explain why the ANC was inadequately prepared to address the educational challenges of a democratic South Africa. The article considers the relationship between its political struggles against segregation and apartheid and the particular educational focus that it favoured during this period. From its inception, the ANC was actively involved in the political arena, with the purpose of opposing racist rule. The article suggests that its involvement in the education arena was subordinate to its political focus, with consequences for the type of educational change and curriculum orientation that it favoured. Employing a historical-sociological perspective, we divide ANC involvement in politics and education into two broad and distinct periods. The first period from 1912 to 1960 examines ANC involvement within South Africa. The second period from 1960 to 1992 examines the ANC in exile. We end the article with some discussion of the ANC's education reform trajectory from 1992 to 1995, in other words, its educational orientations during the context of political negotiations, and the first years of a democratic South Africa. It will be argued that during both periods, the ANC focused on struggle politics that relegated education to a position ancillary to its political struggle, which resulted in discursive continuities in its educational orientations. Despite some contestation, these continuities were characterised by their remarkably consistent support for a traditional liberal education across the existence of the organisation.

**Keywords:** academic education; African National Congress; Bantu Education Act; education policy discourses; exile; historical continuities; missionary education; political education; polytechnic education; traditional-liberal education

### Introduction

From its inception in 1912, the ANC was actively involved in political opposition to racist rule in South Africa. Its involvement in related spheres such as social welfare, health and education was subsidiary to its oppositional politics. For example, its development of its position on educational change was never a primary consideration. A consequence of this was that the ANC had not formulated a clear, concise education policy by 1992 when it repatriated to South Africa. Employing a historical-sociological perspective, this article discusses the ANC involvement in the political and educational arena in two periods between 1912 and 1992, followed by some thoughts about its education reform orientation during 1992 and 1996, i.e. the period of political negotiation, followed by democratic rule. The first period from 1912 to 1960 examines ANC involvement in South Africa. The second period from 1960 to 1992 examines the ANC in exile. The core argument presented in this article is that the ANC's education policy discourse displayed an inclination for a liberal academic form of education, similar to that provided for white children during colonial and apartheid rule. This was as much facilitated by the preference of its mission-educated leadership for an academic education, as it was influenced by the organisation's identified need for education to supply the necessary human resources that would be needed to run a democratic country after liberation. More radical options, such as education for socialism, education for production, or the human rights-informed education vision espoused in the Freedom Charter that was produced by the ANC and affiliate organisations in 1955, while present at some stages of the ANC's development, did not manage to dislodge the organisation's proclivity for a liberal academic education.

### Political and Educational Involvement of the ANC within South Africa from 1912 to 1960

In the first part of this period, that is, from 1912 to 1940, the ANC focused on political issues that included the Land Act of 1913, the organisation and structuring of the ANC as a political organisation, the women's pass campaign of 1913, South Africa's World War I campaign, and the challenges presented by the establishment of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in 1914 and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1921. In education, however, the ANC only gave attention to two issues, that is, its education policy pronouncements in 1912 (discussed below) and the establishment of the Night School Movement in 1925. In the second part of this period, from 1940 to 1960, the ANC focused on political issues that included the establishment of the ANC Youth League (1943), responding to the apartheid policies of the National Party from 1948, the formation of Congress Alliance (1950s), political mobilisation around the Freedom Charter (1955), and the formation of the Pan African Congress (PAC) in 1959. On the education front, the ANC's 1912 position remained its policy and strategy, until 1955, when the Freedom Charter was adopted.

The ANC was born largely out of the need for a national organisation to counter the Native Land Act of 1913. It went to great lengths, both in South Africa and in England, to present its objections to the Act (Beinart,

1994; Meli, 1989). It was also caught up with organisational matters, which involved setting up a comprehensive machinery to manage and direct national, provincial and branch affairs (Meli, 1989). The ANC also became involved in the pass campaign of women in the Free State Province (Meli, 1989). The outbreak of World War I in 1914 placed it in the invidious position of having to decide whether or not to support South African involvement in the war (Meli, 1989). In 1919 and 1921, the ANC had to respond to the establishment of the ICU and CPSA respectively. These organisations threatened to diminish the ANC's relevance in resistance politics in the country. Although the ICU was a trade union, it operated as a mass-based political organisation, concentrating on 'bread and butter' struggles of the African poor (Lodge, 1983). The ANC had to guard against becoming eclipsed by the ICU. The ANC also had to consider an alliance with the CPSA and the ideological impact this would have on the organisation (Lodge, 1983).

Against this political backdrop, ANC involvement in the education arena from 1912 to 1940 was minimal. Its pronouncement on education in its "21 Objects" in 1912 and its "participation" in the Night School Movement in 1925, marked the sum total of challenges to segregated education till 1955 (Govender, 2011:8). In 1912, the ANC formulated its '21 Objects', which outlined its policies and strategies as a political organisation. Part of this was a strategy on education that would aim "to agitate and advocate by just means for the removal of the colour bar" (Meli, 1989:52). In other words, the ANC rejected segregation in education. It favoured a conventional academic education, similar to the type of education that whites received at that stage (Govender, 2011). The context of the ANC's choice of an academic education is located in twentieth century debates among academics and colonial policymakers about the type of education deemed to be suitable for Africans, which revolved around two policy tendencies. The first emphasised conventional western education as the goal of missionary and colonial education, whilst the second emphasised 'adapted' education (see Hunt Davis, 1976).

According to Kallaway (2002), the discourse on education policy development in British Colonial Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century was shaped largely by the British Colonial Office in association with a number of American philanthropic organisations like the Carnegie, Rockefeller and Phelps-Stokes Foundations. Debate about the nature of education and the curriculum to be provided centred on whether education ought to be aimed at citizenship and work in a modern society and economy, or whether it should support traditional rural African life in a colonial context.

Kallaway (2002) argued that the dominant tradition of mission schools in the Cape Colony in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emphasised the 'same' curriculum and quality of education for Africans as did schools for the colonists. The beneficiaries of this education could become citizens of the Colony, and could enter the labour arena with the same qualifications as the colonists. This form of education had strong support from the emerging African elite. The ANC leadership was by and large a product of premier mission-based educational institutions. The appeal of conventional, western education was its social and economic value in the colonial and modern context (see Kallaway, 2002).

In contrast, the 'adaptation' model, which was derived from Tuskegee, Hampton and other similar institutions in the American South, proposed that Africans receive an education that was different in some way from the colonists. According to Kallaway (2002), the 'adaptation' model could serve any of four purposes. The first was that Africans would be educated in their own languages and cultural traditions, so as to prevent alienation from their own language and culture. The second was education for the countryside, as peasant farmers. The third was the provision of a rudimentary 'adapted' education for a perceived position in the labour market in colonial life. The fourth was to provide modest industrial skills to work at the lower end of a modern economy and health, hygiene and family life. Critics argued that these orientations fitted too easily into the role that whites wanted Africans to hold in colonial society. The African elite and many liberals therefore rejected 'adapted' education.

From the 1920s onwards, South Africa's emerging industrial sector had a demand for more skilled and educated blacks to work in the growing urban economy. Blacks were to provide the core of an industrial workforce so as to ensure economic productivity. On the other hand, urban blacks called for increased access to quality education. Mission schools were too poor and too small to cope with the increasing demand for education, and were often rocked by divisions between authorities, students and black communities, over curriculum priorities (Hyslop, 1990). The government did not address the demand for the education of blacks due to its commitment to protecting white privileged access to education and employment. In other words, the ruling United Party and later National Party were committed to the education and the job colour bar during the 1920s and 1930s (Govender, 2011). This meant that access to black education and skills was restricted. The only way to do respond to the demand for education by blacks was to evoke further refinements to the policy of separate racial education and development. Without

educated blacks, the 'white' economy could not function.

To meet the increasing demand for education by blacks, the Johannesburg branch of the CPSA started the Night School Movement in 1925 in a slum in Ferreirastown (Roux, 1964). The Night School Movement was actively supported by radical groups, such as the ICU and the Transvaal African Teacher's Association (TATA). The Night Schools addressed literacy, numeracy and political education for black adults (Kallaway, 1984; Roux, 1964). The ANC, however, showed little interest in this education endeavour, choosing to focus on political and organisational issues.

In the second-half of this period, i.e. from 1940 to 1960, the ANC focused on political issues that included the establishment of the ANC Youth League (1943), the National Party and apartheid, the Congress Alliance (1950s), the Freedom Charter (1955) and the formation of the PAC in 1959. In the 1940s, the ANC had to respond not only to the National Party government's apartheid policy, but it also had to contend with criticism from the ANC Youth League over the methods and pace of its campaign for political and civil rights (Govender, 2011). Influenced by the ANC Youth League, the ANC became involved in the broader political struggles against apartheid, which culminated in the Programme of Action in 1949 and the Defiance Campaign in 1952 (Lodge, 1983). The Defiance Campaign involved the ANC's participation in the Congress Alliance, which included the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO), the Congress of Democrats (COD) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) (Meli, 1989). In 1955 the ANC, together with the Congress Alliance, adopted the Freedom Charter, an ambiguous document, which lends itself to a variety of political interpretations. For some Africanists in the ANC, i.e. those who rejected the increasing influence of white groups on the ANC, preferring black leadership and control, the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the ANC was unacceptable. These Africanists split from the ANC to form the PAC in 1959. The pass campaign of 1960 subsequently resulted in both the ANC and PAC being banned.

The National Party won the 1948 elections and responded to emergent policy debates on education and training in white political and business circles by setting up the Eiselen Commission in 1949 to produce a policy blueprint for "Education for Natives as a Separate Race" (Worden, 1994:96). The Commission was established amidst the crisis in urban social reproduction occasioned by the increasing defiance among black protest organisations against the impending apartheid policies and the implantation of Bantu Education (Hyslop, 1990). In 1951 the

Eiselen Commission published its report. The report's guiding principles for black education included that education be reconstructed and adapted to modern requirements of "Bantu Culture"; the centralisation of control; the harmonising of schools with "Bantu social institutions"; increased use of African languages and personnel, and an increased expenditure on mass education for blacks (Hyslop, 1990; Lodge, 1983). The Commission recommended central planning of syllabi, so as to ensure the production of skills appropriate to the subordinate role in the economy assigned to blacks under apartheid.

The Bantu Education Act, which was promulgated in 1953, transferred direct control of education from the provinces to the Native Affairs Department. In due course, it imposed a uniform curriculum, which stressed separate "Bantu Culture" and prepared students for semi-skilled work (Worden, 1994:96). Although superficially Bantu Education may have appeared attractive, it had many disadvantages for blacks. The insistence that primary school children learn both official languages, English and Afrikaans, meant that it would make it more difficult to acquire proficiency in English, which was a minimum requirement for most white-collar jobs. The rural basis of the proposed syllabi would have been objectionable to parents in long-established urban communities. Working mothers would be negatively affected by the shortening of the school hours. Bantu Education would also increase the financial obligations of black parents who intended to send their children to school (Hyslop, 1990; Lodge, 1993). While the number of black children at schools doubled between 1954 and 1965, government spending did not increase accordingly. In real terms, the expenditure on a black child decreased from R8,70 to R4,90 (Liebenberg & Spies, 1994). The system of financing that compelled blacks, who were the poorest part of the population, to pay for the education of their own children, was resented, as it amounted to a situation where blacks had to pay increased taxation without representation (Liebenberg & Spies, 1994).

Resistance to Bantu Education came from teachers affiliated to the Cape African Teacher's Association (CATA), the TATA, the Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA), the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and some churches (Lodge, 1983). The campaigns of CATA and TATA predated ANC campaigns. Mphahlele, secretary of TATA, commented that, "the African National Congress was caught with its pants down" as far as the introduction of Bantu Education was concerned, and that, "it took the ANC a long time to digest the message of our campaigns of 1951 and 1952" (Hyslop, 1990:162). According to Hyslop (1990), the secretary of TATA had approached the ANC at national level in 1952 about the impli-

cations of Bantu Education, but the organisation did not show much interest in becoming involved in organised activity that opposed Bantu Education. The ANC was at this time more focused on political action via the Defiance Campaign than on its response to developments in black education.

The ANC was initially slow to respond to the Eiselen Report, and the passage of the Bantu Education Act. However, when it did act, its approach to the issue was characterised by uncertainty and disagreement amongst different sections of its leadership, and between leaders and the organisation's rank and file (Lodge, 1983). After much infighting, the National Executive Committee (NEC) was forced to support an indefinite boycott of schools. A National Education Council was established to make provision for a network of "cultural clubs" that provided alternative educational programmes (Lodge, 1983). There was tension in some areas about the quality of the alternative education offered by the ANC. This was the first time that the ANC had attempted to put into practice an alternative to Bantu Education. According to Lodge (1983), children at the 'cultural clubs' were taught the rudiments of mathematics, geography, history and general knowledge through a programme of songs, stories, and games. Exactly what was meant by alternative education remained unclear. In other words, these attempts at providing alternate programmes were largely ineffectual, proving to be an unrealisable alternative to the Bantu Education offered by the state.

In 1955 the ANC was one of the key organisations that adopted the Freedom Charter. The education pronouncements of the Charter were general and vague, captured in the following two phrases: "the doors of learning and culture shall be opened" and "education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children" (Meli, 1989:212). These statements implied that the ANC would accept a single education system based on the liberal academic model that was followed by white schools, and by which most of the ANC's leaders were educated in mission schools before the advent of Bantu Education. This is notwithstanding other more radical statements in the Freedom Charter, which pronounced on education, such as where it advocated for free access to higher and technical education and adult literacy. The extension of Bantu Education to secondary schools in 1959 and the Extension of Universities Education Act in 1959 evoked little response from the ANC. There was no call on students to boycott secondary schools, colleges or universities, or to embark on action to challenge it (Lodge, 1983). It appears that the ANC was focused on 'weightier matters' such as its defiance campaign, its political work in the Congress Alliance, popularising the Freedom Charter, and dealing with the fallout caused by

those of its members who split off to form the PAC.

#### Political and Educational Involvement of the ANC in Exile from 1960 to 1992

When the ANC was banned in 1960, it decided to continue its struggle against the racist apartheid state both in South Africa as well as in exile. The post-1960 period was marked by the priority of politically realigning the ANC to the new conditions. It now had to establish and consolidate its underground operations in South Africa as well as its existence in exile in a number of foreign countries (Lodge, 1983). The key challenge in education was presented to the organisation in the form of the large numbers of students who fled South Africa in the wake of the student revolts of 1976<sup>i</sup> (Morrow, Maaba & Pulumani, 2004). Many of these students joined ANC camps in neighbouring countries. This presented the organisation with a conundrum over these students' survival and adaptation to conditions of life in exile. The continuing education of these exiled youth was a major challenge for the organisation.

In 1960, in anticipation of its banning, the ANC set up its external mission in Tanzania (Meli, 1989:200). The re-organisation of the ANC in exile involved winning the support of foreign powers and international organisations, establishing a military training programme, assuming overall leadership after Rivonia,<sup>ii</sup> convening the Morogoro Conference (1969), and establishing military training camps in Angola (Lodge, 1983).

It was only in the 1970s that any further attention was paid to education, when committees were formed in host countries to address educational issues. The growth and development of ANC educational projects in exile were shaped by circumstances confronting the organisation in the post-1976 period (Govender, 2011). Large numbers of students from high schools and tertiary institutions fled into neighbouring states in the wake of the student uprisings in South Africa in 1976. The ANC found itself having to deal with an entirely new situation. A key element of its strategy to deal with the new situation was the ANC's attempt to provide adequate schooling for these exiled youth. In this light, the organisation established the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOM-AFCO) in Mazimbu, Tanzania in 1978 (Manghezi, 2009; Morrow et al., 2004), which was intended as an institution that would provide formal schooling to these incoming youth.

A key issue that confronted the ANC was the development of a curriculum for the new school (Govender, 2011; Morrow et al., 2004). The ANC Education Department was established in Mazimbu in October 1978 to address this matter. Sharp debates arose over the appropriate curriculum orientation that the ANC as a liberatory organ-

isation might support (Govender, 2011; Morrow et al., 2004). In developing its educational policy approaches and policies, the ANC needed to contend with a number of political and educational imperatives, including the role of education in the liberation struggle for freedom, its educational-ideological orientation, the type of curricular approach it would favour, and the prospect of having to address educational change during the post-liberation period.

The three educational or curriculum orientations that emerged at this time were: an emphasis on academic education; an emphasis on political education; and an emphasis on polytechnic education with SOMAFCO as a major site in which these developments played out (Bell, pers. comm.; Carneson, pers. comm.; Govender, 1997; Govender, 2011; Makgothi, pers. comm.; Njobe, pers. comm.; Pampallis, pers. comm.; Tikly, pers. comm.; Van Rensburg, pers. comm.). The orientation that gained credence was an academic curriculum, which emphasised conventional high school education that would prepare students for a matriculation certificate or its equivalent (Njobe, pers. comm.; Pampallis, pers. comm.). The academic education favoured by the ANC was intended to make up for the deficiencies of Bantu Education, and to prepare students for entry to tertiary institutions (Choabi, n.d.; Dullay, pers. comm.; Forman, pers. comm.; Mfenyana, 1980; Njobe, pers. comm.).

The emphasis on academic education was based largely on the perception that the ANC needed to focus on the 'post-liberation phase' of the anti-apartheid struggle (Choabi, n.d.; Mfenyana, 1980). In other words, the ANC sought to prioritise what it would need to successfully govern in a future, liberated South Africa. Education provided by the ANC would have to be aimed at producing well-educated, professional people capable of taking on essential responsibilities consistent with their education (Choabi, n.d.; Mfenyana, 1980; Njobe, pers. comm.).

Support for the notion of education as pivotal in national development began to take root in the organisation on the back of widespread international support from governments, international organisations and major foundations for such a role (Samoff & Bidemi, 2003). Supporters of academic education in the ANC began to see the necessity of tying a country's long-term educational goals to development in terms of high-level manpower [sic] strategies. This was consistent with the recommendations that the World Bank, via its structural adjustment prescriptions, began to prescribe to newly independent African states for educational reform since the 1960s (Samoff & Bidemi, 2003).

In keeping with this vision of education, the ANC Department of Education registered SOMAFCO students firstly with the East African Exam-

ination Board and then with the London University General Certificate of Education (GCE) O-Level examinations (Morrow et al., 2004). The registration of SOMAFCO for the London University GCE O-Level examination served two purposes: it ensured a recognised certificate for students to gain entry to tertiary institutions, and it also consolidated the implementation of academic education at SOMAFCO. As a consequence, SOMAFCO would have to adapt its curriculum to the requirements of the London University GCE O-Level examination. What this implied was that SOMAFCO would concentrate on a limited range of subjects required to pass the O-Level examinations (Govender, 2011). The ANC had to a large extent chosen to align itself with a British-centred examination system that had been widely used in post-colonial Africa, but was in the process of being abandoned by many countries in the 1980s (Morrow et al., 2004). The original idea of making SOMAFCO a distinctly South African alternative school with a revolutionary content became a secondary consideration in terms of curriculum policy from this time (Govender, 2011). Given the school's focus on formal qualifications, its curriculum orientation began to resemble a liberal academic orientation, which in effect nullified a radical or alternative ideological educational perspective.

The emphasis on academic education also reflected the missionary education backgrounds of the leading ANC figures. O.R. Tambo, for example, was a product of missionary education, having attended the Nkantolo Primary School, Ludeke Methodist Missionary School, Anglican Holy Cross Missionary School and St. Peter's Anglican Missionary Secondary School in Johannesburg (Baai, 2006). Tambo's vision of a future education is encapsulated in his 1986 'Open the Doors of Learning' message to South Africans during the period of escalating uprisings at educational institutions in South Africa. Tambo explained that:

What we want is one democratic, non-racial, free and compulsory system of education. The broad principles underlying that alternative system of education are contained in the Freedom Charter (Baai, 2006:182).

It appears that Tambo, in keeping with features of mission school education and the Freedom Charter, envisaged an education that was essentially academic, democratic, non-racial, free and compulsory. Tambo's vision of education reflected traditional-liberal values that were the widely accepted 'common sense' of that time.

Other leading ANC educational figures such as Mfenyana, Choabe, Masondo and Njobe believed that the key economic and political posts in South Africa were in the hands of whites, and that if this situation prevailed in the post-liberation phase, the liberation struggle would have been in

vain (Govender, 2011). They wanted an education that provided access to modern, professional life similar to that received by whites in South Africa, and similar to the best missionary education that the ANC leadership had had access to, which emphasised values such as discipline, respect, and hard work. The type of education that these ANC figures emphasised had progressive and traditional-liberal elements. In essence, the ANC's school in exile provided a conventional, formal academic education with political and polytechnic education as ancillaries (Govender, 2011). SOMAFSCO exemplified the ANC's favoured curriculum approach to educational change, which, we argue established the organisation's antecedent rationales for education reform in the ensuing post-apartheid period.

#### Political and Educational Involvement of the ANC, 1992 to 1994

The 1990s was a trying and stormy period politically for the ANC. Having to respond to a changing global political environment characterised by, among others, the fall of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the ANC came under pressure to abandon the armed struggle and enter into negotiations with South Africa's ruling Nationalist government. The global international environment had also become dominated by neo-liberal capitalist economic arrangements that curtailed options for radical reform. The ANC had to transform itself from a liberation movement into a potential ruling party (Beinart, 1994). The ANC leaders who had returned from exile had to find common ground with its internal allies, the United Democratic Front (UDF), unions, civics and "highly committed but volatile comrades" (Beinart, 1994:255). It was required to focus on the tensions and intrigues of complex negotiations for the future South Africa. Despite internal opposition by some, the ANC was also obliged to suspend the armed struggle, and deal with the assassination of Chris Hanu in 1993. While all this transpired, the escalating violence in all its manifest forms demanded to be addressed. The ANC won the elections of 1994, headed the Government of National Unity, and still faced contending with the political challenges outlined above, under the pressure of a downward-spiralling economy.

Education in South Africa was a hotbed of contestation during this time, and the early 1990s was a significant point in the curriculum debates as competing political and social movements began to take up positions on education in anticipation of the new South Africa (see Fataar, 2011). Commenting on the policy convergence during this period, Fataar (2011:83) suggests that:

Between 1990 and 1994, under increasing pressure to dismantle apartheid, negotiations became the main political strategy to break the deadlock. This occurred in the context of an international ideo-

logical re-alignment, which gave rise to the dominance of global capitalism. The negotiated settlement established a liberal-democratic political framework, which laid the basis for capital accumulation in the context of a global economy. The educational-political terrain was characterised by policy contestation between the apartheid state and the democratic movement – these divergences ought to be understood at the discursive level as part of the broader contestation of political negotiations [...] but this is indicative of an underlying convergence of educational policy position between the liberation forces and the apartheid state.

In other words, the National Party government and the ANC's positions on educational reform began to converge on key aspects of educational change. These included the reduction in the length of compulsory schooling from 12 to ten years, integration of education and training, and a greater emphasis on vocational education. South Africa was a country where the majority of people had little or even no formal schooling. There were huge expectations from the majority of South Africans regarding a new education dispensation in the new South Africa.

It appears, however, that the ANC was inadequately prepared to address the educational challenges of a democratic South Africa. Besides the curricula options discussed above, it may have drawn in some way from work already done on education elsewhere. A case in point was the work conducted by Research in Education in South Africa (RESA), which was an ANC-aligned research group. In the 1980s, RESA, based at Sussex University in England and made up of South African exiles, was considering the state of education in South Africa in the 1980s. For example, at a key RESA conference in 1989, which was headed by renowned ANC social theorist, Harold Wolpe, and attended by high profile ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) figures such as Thozamile Botha, Blade Nzimande and Aziz Pahad, deliberation took place regarding possible educational scenarios for a post-apartheid dispensation. It was therefore expected that the work done by the RESA would in some way feature in the planning of the new education system in view of the research it had already conducted.

It appears that RESA was ignored, due to the fact that its broad ideological orientation was out of sync with the policy options that emerged during the negotiations period, which sidelined more radical options. The ANC favoured a traditional curriculum approach that, while consistent with the academic approach it favoured in exile, resonated with the reformism that characterised the options that emerged during the 1990 negotiations era. It could also be argued that RESA and the options presented by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which was another ANC-aligned civic group based in South Africa, and those

advanced by an amalgam of progressive educational interests, were simply too nebulous to inform the concrete requirements of the demands that democratic governance made. The ANC in government now had to contend with demands for specific policy proposals instead of the policy option scenarios presented by RESA and NEPI.

Another major conference that contributed to the education debates was the Five Freedoms Forum-African National Congress Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia in 1989 (Louw, 1989). It was the largest conference to include the ANC in exile alongside people from South Africa. A wide variety of issues including planning for the future of education in South Africa were discussed. The aim was to examine how education could play a role in a non-racial democratic South Africa. It is interesting to note that the Commission of Education focused on discussing problems in the provisioning of education with little focus on an appropriate curriculum for a new South Africa (Louw, 1989). When the ANC won the elections in 1994 and headed the Government of National Unity, it alluded to an integrated approach to education. However, the first democratic national elections of 1994 saw the establishment of a Ministry of Education on the one hand, and a Ministry of Labour on the other, despite the rhetoric of an integrated approach to education. The Ministry of Education was beset by unrelenting demands from education stakeholders for transformation of apartheid education. In April 1994, the ANC released its Draft Policy Framework for Education and Training (University of the Witwatersrand Education Policy Unit & the National Education Coordinating Committee, 1994). The Ministry of Education produced a series of White Papers on Education after 1994, the most important being the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, which reflected the key ideas of integration and competency as elements of a system of wide education restructuring (Jansen, 1999). In subsequent policy developments in education, the notion of a liberal academic curriculum for schooling trumped other curriculum reform models. This took place despite the controversial and rigorously contested implementation of outcomes-based education as curriculum framework (Jansen, 1999). It is our argument that the endurance of such a liberal academic curriculum is as much part of the policy contestation around government after 1994 as it is an expression of a longstanding support and commitment for such a curricular orientation throughout the history of the organisation.

### Conclusion

From 1912 to 1992, the ANC favoured a conventional, academic education. This was remarkably similar to the type of education

favoured by nationalist independence organisations and their leaders all over colonial Africa during the twentieth century. Like these organisations, the ANC's primary focus was on the political struggle against segregation and racism. We have argued in this article that not much attention was paid to education. The major tendency within the ANC ensured that a liberal academic education would be implemented at SOMAFCO, firstly by appointing key figures in key positions to make this possible, and secondly, by registering SOMAFCO students for the London University GCE O-Level examinations. Despite the ANC's radical and Marxist rhetoric, it has not deviated from the academic model it espoused in 1912, into the 1990s. It has not moved beyond seeing such liberal academic education as the appropriate model for South Africa. The minimal attention given to education by the ANC during its history has resulted in it embracing a conventional, academic curriculum, despite the vastly differing circumstances confronting it from 1912, until the early 1990s.

### Notes

- i. On 16 June, 1976, large-scale student unrest broke out in the black township of Soweto, Johannesburg and spread to the rest of South Africa. The rapid expansion of a poorly resourced secondary school system coupled with the politicisation of the urban youth and national and international political changes culminated in the Soweto Revolts. The immediate cause of the uprisings was related to the issue of curriculum reform. It involved the enforced use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in arithmetic and social studies in black schools. Large numbers of students from high schools and tertiary institutions fled from South Africa into neighbouring states. The ANC as the largest of the liberatory movements decided to provide for the material and educational needs of the exiled students by establishing SOMAFCO in Tanzania. The ANC would become involved in sharp debates over the appropriate curriculum for SOMAFCO. In the post-Soweto period the National Party government established the De Lange Commission to make recommendations on educational reforms with a vocational/technical focus, in an attempt to diffuse the education crisis.
- ii. On 11 July, 1963, the South African police raided Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia near Johannesburg and arrested eight of the ANC underground leadership, which included Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Rusty Bernstein, Denis Goldberg, Elisa Motosoledi and Andrew Mlangeni. Nelson Mandela was brought from Robben Island prison to become Accused Number 1. The Rivonia trial began on 9 October 1963, and the trialists were charged with 193 acts of sabotage. All except Rusty Bernstein were sentenced to life imprisonment, and except for Denis Goldberg, who was white, were imprisoned on Robben Island. Goldberg was imprisoned in Pretoria.

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