THE LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE INCULCATION OF VALUES

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Abstract

Values form part of a society's culture and have a direct influence on an individual's life. Some values are ethnically based, whereas others may emanate from the economic activities in a community. Both official and non-official values have to be taken into account.

Traditionally the Afrikaner believed that all aspects of life fell under God's law and as a result he emphasized principles and had clear guidelines for his life. The values of the contemporary Afrikaner are more secular and he displays hedonistic individualistic characteristics.

The white English-speaking South African's values vary from Christian to pragmatic with economic prosperity playing a major role.

Traditional black values were determined by a belief in the ancestral spirits who prevented cultural change and magical powers. Consequently casual explanations were not looked for. Many members of the contemporary black community consider themselves Christian, although the belief in ancestral spirits is still strong.

In comparing the value systems it is clear that the South African community is heterogeneous. It is typical of such communities to have only vague aims of education. Groups should not be ignored in a future educational dispensation. The structuring of the education system should be such that it is possible for the teacher to convey certain values. The existence of different sets of values should not lead to the forced separation between cultural and other groups. The idea of 'value articulation' should be explored. Biblical Studies as an examination subject wil disappear, but biblical values will not only remain, but become more important.

1. Introduction

It is not an easy task to reflect on and to make a study of values. Joubert (1986:1) even calls it a 'brave undertaking.' From Joubert's work, it is evident that values as a phenomenon can be studied from a variety of perspectives.

In this paper, which highlights the limitations and possibilities of an education system transferring certain values to the pupils, it is not possible to go into great detail about the results of studying values from various perspectives. It is debatable whether values as such should in fact be studied because it could lead to the demythicisation thereof (cf Joubert 1986:96). I will therefore limit myself to a few general remarks with regard to values as it is relevant to the theme under discussion, thereafter I will discuss a few important values which have a strong influence on life in South Africa. In the last instance, the functioning of the education system will be discussed with reference to the inculcation of values.

2. Some general remarks with regard to values

2.1 Values form part of a society's culture - they have a direct influence on the individual as an individual and as a member of various societal structures. These values surround him like the air he breathes (Benne 1958:197) so that he is not always aware of their existence. However, if these values are threatened, many members of a community may lay down their lives to protect them. Leaders can also incite a community to violence by pointing out the danger of losing precious values.

2.2 Values have a compelling character, they 'force' the members of a community to live in a certain way. If a person obeys the values of a community he will be respected, whereas the non-observance thereof will lead to censure by the community. The compelling character of values led Dooyeweerd (1983) to coin the term 'ground motive' which forms the spiritual root of a constellation of values. It is beyond the scope of this paper to debate Dooyeweerd's views, however, a case could be made for the idea of motives being 'active' in a community. Because education 'is immersed in values' (Brameld 1975:12) and because formal education is concerned with the whole child, one finds a culmination of all the values held in a community in its education system (Badenhorst 1979:40). The education system often becomes the arena for the contest between sets of values.

Although values have a compelling character, it does not mean that the individual is powerless to make decisions contrary to the accepted values. Van Til (1972:28) argues from a Christian point of view that man is not completely determined by his culture (values), because he is a religious being who has an eternal destiny which enables him to transcend culture for values. On the other hand, pressures within a group can force the individual to make decisions contrary to his values. The whole question of power structures in a community is therefore also of great importance. Joubert (1986:76) emphasizes the fact that values and power structures interact in a community.

2.3 The cultural diversity which is characteristic of most modern communities results in individualism. According to Smith (quoted by Joubert 1986:40) 'there seems to be

a strong pull away from the objective requiredness of self-values, leaving people exposed with their unguided wants. "If it feels good, do it", one increasingly hears.'

2.4 In the RSA ethnicity has become a derogatory term because it is linked to the hated word *apartheid*. Benne (1990:10), however, points out that:

> The re-emergence of ethnicity as a basis of personal identification and political action is widely apparent in contemporary societies.

Benne (1990:17) continues by saying that ethnicity cannot be explained - 'it just is, in some factual and undefinable sense.' The relationship between ethnic groups and values is self-evident.

2.5 Benne (1990:17) points out that there exists another base for group formation apart from ethnicity, namely 'a division of labor among members ... it is based not on an ascribed similarity of members but on a differentiation of function ... This basis of group formation is capable of rationalization in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of some commonly accepted and *valued* task' (my italics). Both these values (and ethnic bases values) have to be taken into consideration in the education system.

2.6 In a multicultural community ethnic groups influence each other to such an extent that when groups are being formed it is important to note the fact that these new groups need not be racially determined. The individuals of different races may have more in common with each other with regard to values than they have with individuals from their own race groups.

2.7 If ethnic based values and other values, like those needed in the economic life of the community, are not both respected the result may be endemic violence. In a peaceful community 'we must learn to respect the reality of ethnic and national identifications as we learn to organise working systems of membership across ethnic lines in serving larger common goals' (Benne 1990:17).

2.8 A further important matter concerning values is the fact that there exists so-called official and non-official values in a community. Van Dijk ([s a]:36) says that a double reality exists in a community. One has to distinguish between 'what is' (fact) and 'what should be' (norm); both these realities are reciprocally active in a community.

2.9 If one group in a community feels that its values are in danger because of the actions of another group, inter-ethnic pressure is experienced and this leads to greater ethnic consciousness.

2.10 Values do not appear as from nowhere. They are *inter alia* the result of explication by community leaders.

This concludes the general discussion on values. In the next section attention will be given to aspects of the value systems of some of the South African cultural groups.

3. Values of the Afrikaner

Although the Afrikaners form a minority in the RSA they exercise strong influence on political and educational matters. The traditional Afrikaner values originated from the Calvinistic religion. The aspects which are pertinent to our discussion are the following:

(a) For the traditional Afrikaner all aspects of life fell under God's law. Because of this, the Afrikaner was a person who emphasized principles (Vilioen 1970:35-56). This meant that the Afrikaner had clear guidelines for his actions. The contextual was of less importance to him.

(b) Because the traditional Afrikaner believed that he as a person was individually called to believe, he was a strong individualist and was not easily dictated to.

(c) Early in his existence the Afrikaner realised that he was different from the other African communities with whom he came into contact. He developed a strong sense of identity and would use force to protect it. Preserving his identity was something that he would use force to do. Yet many Afrikaners wanted to have their children educated through the medium of English because of the dominant economic and cultural position of the English speaking community (cf Coetzee [s a]).

The inter-ethnic pressure to which the Afrikaner was subjected at the beginning of this century led to a greater sense of nationhood and although the Afrikaner adopted many of the values of the English speaking community he preserved his language and his church and in that way his identity.

4. The values of the contemporary Afrikaner

Because of the contact with the English speaking community and urbanization the Afrikaner's set of values changed drastically. The most important characteristics of the contemporary Afrikaner values are as follows:

(a) They have a secular character. Although the official values of the Afrikaner are imbedded in his Protestant Calvinistic religion, his non-official values are more of a secular nature.

(b) The Afrikaner is still an individualist but his individualism is not so strongly controlled by religious values as was previously the case. He even exhibits a selfish urge to achieve and progress (hedonistic individualism).

(c) Where the traditional Afrikaner was a strong family person the contemporary Afrikaner's family ties have become loose and the home education of his children is often neglected. Therefore the role of the school and church youth movements have become more important in the education of the Afrikaner child.

Political changes since 2 February 1990 have forced the Afrikaner to review his position in the RSA. One section experienced inter-ethnic pressure, became more conscious of their identity and emphasised the Afrikaner's official values. With regard to education this is expressed by the term *Christelike Volkseie Onderwys*.

The origin of the values of the other section is not always clear. It could be either Christian or humanistic. A common denominator that these individuals share, however, is that they would like to see a fair dispensation for all the people in the land. They agree with many members of the English speaking community on values such as tolerance, 'give and take' and reconciliation.

What is of importance is that amongst Afrikaners many people are found who do not live their lives from a very strong Christian conviction. They are guided by the non-official set of values of the Afrikaner.

5. The values of the white English speaking communities

This community's values have always been complex. They vary from values with a strong Christian character to those with a more pragmatic system of values where economic progress is virtually the only criterion for a successful life.

The so-called liberal tradition of the British descendants in South Africa played an important role in the shaping of the sets of values of all the communities in South Africa.

6. The values of the traditional black community

The traditional black communities values have been directed by the following:

(a)Belief in the ancestral spirits. This belief was one of the most important aspects of African traditional belief.

> They are the guardians of the family affairs, traditions, ethics, and activities. Offense in these matters is ultimately an offense against the forefathers who, in that capacity act as the invisible police force of the families and communities (Mbiti 1975:83).

This belief in the ancestors has prevented these cultures from initiating change because change could cause the ancestors' displeasure with bad consequences not only for the individuals who did not adhere to the cultural norms, but for the whole family or even the whole tribe.

A direct result of this belief was that a particular view of time was held in the black communities.

> Time is a two dimensional phenomenon with a long past, a present and virtually no future. The linear concept of time in Western thought, with an indefinite past, present and infinite future, is practically foreign to African thinking (Mbiti 1975:17).

The result of this view, says Mbiti (1975:23), is that 'African peoples have no belief in progress; the idea of human activities and achievements move from a low to a higher degree'.

(b) Belief in magical powers. According to Mbiti (1975:16) an Almighty God is the source and the controller of this power, but the spirits have access to this power. The

power in itself is neutral (Kellerman 1962:71) and can be used to effect fertility, health and success in risky undertakings. However, it can also be used to harm people (Berglund 1976:345) The results of this belief was that causal explanations were not looked for for all events, but magical explanations were often given.

7. The values of the contemporary black community

In contrast with traditional black communities with their homogeneous cultures and sets of values, present black communities have different sets of values because of Western influences. Some cultural traits and the connecting values are the following:

(a) Although the majority of black people consider themselves Christians belief in their ancestral spirits is still strong. Research conducted in the 1970's by West (1974), Möller (1976) and Berglund (1976) confirms this. The tremendous growth of the syncritistic movements such as that of the Zionists of Bishop Lekgenyane is also an indication of how the black community endeavors to reconcile the Christian and traditional beliefs.

The role of magic still plays an important role in the black community. Möller (1976:56) found in his research that the ancestral cult and the belief in magic especially where it concerns machines, is still very strong.

(b) There is, however, also a group in the black community who, although they do not keep the traditional religion, are also not Christians. Möller (1972:28) found that is was especially the youth who reject Christianity as a white religion. If this was the case in 1972 then, to my mind, the possibilities are even greater that, because of all the clashes between the black youth and the State, this will even be more the case today.

(c) One of the most important changes that has taken place in black cultures is the new concept of time.

> Modern change has imported into Africa a future dimension of time. This is perhaps the most dynamic and dangerous discovery of African peoples in the twentieth century. Their hopes are stirred up and set on the future. They work for progress, they work for an *immediate* realization of their hopes (my italics) (Mbiti 75:221).

What Mbiti wrote about African peoples in 1975 is probably even more true today of the black community in South Africa. The political events since 2 February 1990 have stirred up the black youth's hopes for the immediate realization of their expectations. Slogans such as 'liberation before education' and 'pass one pass all' are indications of this expectation syndrome.

(d) A last remark on the contemporary black community: during the period when the Government did not allow black communities to have a free voice on political matters, the differences that existed between black groups were not evident. At this moment these differences are very clear - the violence and carnage speak very clearly of this. Whether the differences that exist between the ANC and Inkhata Freedom Party are enough to explain the violence between these two groups is

questionable. It may be more a case of a jockeying for power than of differences in values (cf Joubert's 1986:76 reference to the role of power structures in the community).

The causes of the power struggle are complex and one does not have the time to discuss it here. However something that is clear from this struggle is the strong divisions within the black community and this division should also be reflected in the education system. One remark that one could make about the black community at this stage is that its culture is in a state of flux. Tremendous uncertainty exists about the future and groups feel themselves compelled to secure power bases.

8. A comparison of the value-systems of the different communities

If one compares the systems of values of the different communities, the following general conclusion can be made:

(a) Different groups in the South African community feel that their values are threatened. This leads to inter-ethnic pressure and violence and threats of violence.

(b) The South African community is heterogeneous. This is not only due to traditional values but also to contemporary influences. Therefore, although groups exist, these groups need not be defined along traditional (so-called racial) lines.

(c) The economic reality of the RSA could lead to groups co-operating in spite of differences in ethnic values.

(d) The fact that large sections of the South African community not only accept that change is inevitable, but is actively seeking it, creates the possibility for finding a core of values. This will necessitate that less emphasis is placed on ethnic values.

(e) Public discussion of values is necessary - the question of official and non-official values need to be addressed. The mass media could play an important role in this respect.

(f) The reality of the state of flux in which large sections of South-African society exists, has to be acknowledged. The role which community leaders (including teachers) and not only political leaders could play in explicating values, should be acknowledged. They should get formal opportunities to put forward their views.

(g) The need for a clear set of values to counter the growing hedonistic individualism is evident.

9. Limitations and possibilities of the education system in the transmission and establishment of values

In order to do this we have to consider for a moment the functioning of an education system. It is obvious that we can only consider some aspects, which have direct relation to the topic under discussion.

9.1 The education system is seen by Stone (1974:139-140) as an interwoven structure - a metaphor which emphasises the linking of the various relevant social structures.

Although the unity of the education system should not be underestimated, it should also not be seen as absolute. Glassman's metaphor (quoted by Heese 1988:138), which states that education is a loosely coupled structure is more appropriate. According to this view the education system is not a typical bureaucratic structure where the highest authority is in a position to ensure that instructions given are executed at the lowest level (the class room). One cannot agree with Holdstock (1987:31) when he says:

> The bureaucratic structure of schools is directly responsible for the domination of a social group over another. Being in the position to impose its set of values as the only valid one the dominant group effectively perpetuates its dominance.

The matter is not that simple. With regard to whites, Act 39 of 1967 stipulates that the education should have a Christian character. The execution of the policy laid down resulted only in the opening of the school day by scripture reading and prayer and the offering of Bible Education as a non-examination subject. The subject-teaching is in my opinion not done from a specific Christian perspective. May (1975:13) points out that:

> If we are to take moral education seriously, we must review the whole of our teaching, not just add one more subject to the schedule ... content and methods, and educational administration need to be revised so that this priority is felt in all we do.

Schumacher (1974:76) emphasises the fact that all subjects at school have to address the metaphysical dimension (which has particular implications for values). Both May's and Schumacher's points of view emphasise the fact that education is value-laden. If values are not clearly expressed and executed, they are not seen as valuable and rejected.

9.2 Education can lead to change, but it is not predictable (cf Heese 1988:14). (It is interesting to speculate about the contribution of formal education to the downfall of the Eastern-bloc countries).

9.3 It is typical of countries with a heterogeneous population to have only vague aims of education. Heese (1988:118) points out that because of the high expectations harboured about education it has the potential to stir up emotions.

9.4 The teacher is the key figure in the education system. The policies of the authorities can hinder or help the teacher to convey certain values to his pupils, but it cannot force him to do it.

10. What can be done in a practical way with regard to values for a new generation in the RSA?

10.1 We have to be careful not to ignore groups' values in the South African community. Groups and in particular ethnic groups should not feel that their values are in danger. This will lead to inter-ethnic pressure. Forced integration is therefore not considered to be advisable. Other ways and means should be considered to

prepare these pupils for the multi-cultural situation in which they will spend their working life.

It is true that ethnicity has become an abusive term. However, this should not lead us to ignore it. In an Unesco publication (International understanding at school [no 52/53:13]) the following is stated:

> Development is now viewed not only in terms of technological progress and economic growth, but also as comprising the whole range of actions designed to bring about the well-being of societies and ensure the flowering of their cultures, the strengthening of the sense of the human and social values which constitute the innermost being, the active participation of populations in their own advancement and greater receptiveness to other cultures.

The phrase 'receptiveness to other cultures' emphasises the fact that pupils should be prepared for a multi-cultural situation.

10.2 Although it was stated above that the education system is a loosely coupled structure and that matters cannot be arranged in a bureaucratic way, it does not mean that the authorities can do nothing to foster certain values. To illustrate: if the curriculum is overloaded with so much content that the teacher has to speed through the work without having the time to listen to his pupils' problems - the message is clear: memorising facts is valuable - human understanding and critical thinking are not. (In passing - what is the value attached to Bible Education if the periods are used to fill in a teacher's timetable regardless of his knowledge of and inclination towards teaching the subject?)

The educational authorities can by their 'structuring' of the education system make it 'possible' for the school (teachers and management staff) to convey certain values. By comparing the non-official values of the different groups, major similarities can be found, however the strength and influence of official values should not be underestimated.

In view of what was said about the key role of the teacher the question of values in education should form an integral part of teacher training. In-service training workshops should also be conducted in order to prepare teachers for their educational task in this regard.

10.4 The existence of different sets of values among the different groups should not lead to the forced separation between cultural or other groups.

In the section in which the values of the different white as well as the black communities were discussed, it was pointed out that with regard to economic co-operation there exists values which cut across ethnic lines. It is therefore probable that there are parents who would prefer to put their children into multi-cultural schools because this will prepare them better for the multi-cultural situation in the world of work.

Where such schools are established the fact that ethnic differences do not disappear should be acknowledged and strategies should be worked out for multi-cultural education. I know that much has been written in favour of and against multi-cultural

education. I would like to discuss only one aspect pertinent to the topic under discussion namely how the question of different sets of values can be dealt with in the same classroom. Lovin (1988:151) supports the idea of 'value articulation':

> ... value articulation emphasizes the ways in which values brought to verbal expression are 'articulated' that is 'connected,' to systems of belief that transcends the boundaries of individual experiences ... to be articulate about one's values is to be able to locate them within ... (the relevant) traditions and systems of belief and to be able to explore the implications that these larger contexts have for how values are applied and practiced.

Lovin's approach may sound idealistic, and it must be conceded that in order to succeed it will need much thought, discussion and preparation. However, where parents choose to send their children to a multi-cultural school, and where teachers choose to teach in such a school, such an approach can succeed. In the light of what has been said about the functioning of an education system, this approach is something that cannot be enforced by the central authority. (The authorities could, however, assist in this regard by 'allowing' room for value articulation.) The teacher as the key figure needs to be trained. Lovin (1988:157) says that teachers need not only be exposed to major cultural and religious traditions, but they need the skills of a sociologist and a cultural historian.

It is clear that the teacher needs to become more of an educator and less of a trainer.

What does all this imply for you as members of this society? I am afraid that Biblical Studies as an 'examination' subject will disappear in the new dispensation. We have to see this in the light of the state's ability to provide education and the concomitant trimming of the number of subjects offered. Biblical 'values' will, however, not only remain, but will become more important. It is on these values that the different ethnic groups may find one another and be able to co-exist in peace.

The function of Biblical Studies I think, will have to change, especially in teacher training. What we need is the 'articulation' of biblical values so that they will be of practical value for everyday life.

All this of course necessitates a re-evaluation of our education. Schumacher (1974:77) pleads for the education system to produce 'whole men' and of these 'whole men' Schumacher (1974:77) says:

> He may not be able to explain these matters (in connection with the subjects taught) in words, but the conduct of his life will show a certain sureness of touch which stems from his inner clarity.

In conclusion I would like to quote Alexander Pope:

> Not Chaos-like, together crushed and bruised,
> But, as the world harmoniously confused:
> Where order in variety we see,
> And where, though all things differ, all agree.

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