

# Marxism, Education and Southern Africa

FRANK YOUNGMAN

From an international perspective, a significant trend in educational studies in the last decade has been the application of Marxist principles of analysis to educational phenomena. There has been a growing number of Marxist theoretical and empirical studies of education and vigorous debates have arisen both amongst those working within the Marxist tradition and those who are critical of its validity. In this article I seek to provide an introductory review of Marxist approaches to education and examine their significance for educationalists in Southern Africa.

The trend within educational studies reflects the broader renaissance in Marxist theory and analysis in the social sciences which has taken place since the early 1960s. The renewed Marxist scholarship has confronted many problems within the Marxist tradition itself, such as tendencies to dogmatism, economic determinism and Eurocentrism, and it has extended research into new fields. It has led to creative application in many areas of study, ranging from literary criticism to development theory. This renaissance has taken place not only in Europe and North America but also in the Third World. In Africa, researchers in disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, politics and economics have found the Marxist method of analysis a useful tool for understanding society.<sup>1</sup>

However, the contemporary importance of Marxist thought for the study and practice of education in many parts of the world is not reflected in much of English-speaking Southern Africa. In Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in particular, teachers in training hear very little about Marxism and education, and educational researchers in the region seldom use a Marxist approach. It therefore seems useful to fill this gap by looking first at some of the implications of Marxist theory for the study of education, and secondly at aspects of the practice of socialist education.

## Marxism as a Method of Analysis

Marx and Engels, working in nineteenth century Europe, produced a voluminous body of publications. These works have provided the basis of an intellectual tradition in the twentieth century whose major figures include people such as Lenin, Lukacs, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Gramsci, Mao Tse Tung, Sartre, Althusser, and Habermas. The writings of these figures represent a great variety of views and indicate that it is erroneous to dogmatise or to propose a single 'correct' (or 'official') version of Marxism. The work of Marx and Engels cannot be canonised and the tradition derived from it is in fact complex, multi-faceted and continually developing.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Marxism is better conceptualised as a method of analysis rather than a unitary body of thought and practice.

The philosophical basis of this method is materialist, in the sense that the relationships which people enter into in the process of meeting their material requirements are seen as the foundation of society. Thus economic activities and relationships are regarded as having a decisive influence over the nature of social institutions such as education (an idea expressed in the controversial metaphor of base and superstructure<sup>3</sup>). For this reason, the concept of class is fundamental as it expresses relations to the means of production (for example, the proletariat own no means of production and therefore are forced to sell their labour power). The analysis of the objective existence of particular classes in a given social formation thus becomes an essential methodological starting-point.

But class relations do not only signify an economic relationship, they also embody dimensions of power. Hence the economic structure engenders institutions and practices in the political sphere of society. Indeed, i. the Marxist tradition it is the contradictions and conflicts between the various classes which create social development. Marxism therefore adopts a conflictual perspective in the study of society, analysing how the different economic interests of the different classes lead to conflicts in other spheres. For example, the state in Marxist

theory is not seen as neutral but as a political institution which is a significant site of class struggle, a position with important ramifications for the study of public education.<sup>4</sup>

A central problem for Marxist theory and its empirical application to particular societies is to define (and demonstrate, rather than assert) the precise nature of the influence of the economic on other spheres. Any simplistic model of economic determinism provides a form of reductionism which Marx himself avoided. Yet if social institutions are regarded as autonomous then the distinguishing feature of Marxist analysis is lost. Much recent discussion within Marxism (including the Marxist study of education) has been related to this question and to the need to unravel empirically the subtleties of the dialectical relationship between the superstructure of political and cultural institutions and the basis of economic relations. The methodological issue is how to retain the primacy of the economic while avoiding the negation of human agency. Marx's own formulation remains valid :

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.<sup>6</sup>

The materialism of Marxism is therefore dialectical. It proposes that human activity takes place within structural limitations while simultaneously modifying those structures. In its application to the science of society it is also historical. Marxist approaches analyse specific social phenomena within a historical perspective that seeks to elucidate the dynamic processes of change in society which result from the contradictions and conflicts within the mode of production.<sup>7</sup> For example, patterns of capitalist accumulation have evolved over several centuries, with imperialism and the world market being a relatively recent stage of development. (It should be noted that the theoretical and practical necessities resulting from imperialism have forced Marxism beyond the eurocentric tendencies in its origins).

Marxist theory provides a number of basic concepts which can be used as tools for the empirical analysis of concrete situations. This analysis has the purpose of going beyond surface appearances to explain underlying realities. Its stress is therefore not only on gathering and interpreting data but on generating broader explanations of society. The measure of the usefulness of the Marxist method in the study of education is therefore the extent to which the application of these concepts generates more comprehensive understandings of educational phenomena.

The study of education in capitalist societies from a Marxist perspective has involved applying this conceptual framework, with the dual purpose of improving understanding of educational phenomena and of advancing Marxist analysis theoretically and methodologically. In order to review the field, I will consider education at two levels and outline how Marxist writers have approached them. The first is that of the relationship between education and society, considered at the structural level. The second is that of the nature of educational institutions themselves considered in terms of their organisation, curriculum content and teaching methods, that is, at the cultural level. This distinction between the two levels is purely for clarity of exposition, because a major concern of Marxist analysis is to elucidate the complex (and contentious) relationship between the two and to unify them in a theoretical totality.<sup>8</sup>

### Education and the Economic and Political Structure

On the first level, Marxist approaches assume that education is not a totally autonomous institution but reflects the economic and political structure of a particular society. The development of education is therefore not seen simply as the result of individuals and their ideas but also as the result of the development of the mode of production. Educational issues are therefore always analysed within a wider context and from a historical perspective. The emphasis of much of the recent writing has been on historical study of the development of state education within capitalist societies.<sup>9</sup>

These historical studies have argued that education reflects the class nature of capitalist society. Although the relationship between education and the economic and power structure of society cannot be conceived in reductionist terms, its general form is clear - education is one way in which the ruling capitalist class seeks to advance its economic interests and consolidate its political position. The ruling class, through the state, has sought to develop mass public education for two purposes. Firstly, to develop the productive forces by producing a labour force with the requisite skills and attitudes. Secondly, to reproduce from one generation to the next the social relations of production of capitalism, by differentiating the labour force and legitimising this hierarchical division of labour. Education acts as a medium of social control by promoting the ideological subordination of the dominated classes and it perpetuates class divisions by providing different kinds of knowledge and skill to different groups (for example, by a dual system or by internal streaming).

But whereas the capitalist class has used the state to reinforce its rule through education, the working class has also seen education as a potential source of strength and therefore education has been a site of conflict between the classes. Changes in education reflect the changing needs of the dominant capitalist class, including their need to contain working class pressure and resistance. Marxist analysis suggests that education is inherently unequal and perpetuates the structural inequality of class (and race and gender) in capitalist society. It is in direct contradiction to the liberal view of education as 'the great equalizer'.

The major themes of this level of Marxist analysis are those of class, the social division of labour, the state, social control, power, and the reproduction of capitalism. The most important work is that of Bowles and Gintis and their book Schooling in Capitalist America, published in 1976, is a landmark.<sup>10</sup> Most of the structural analysis has been in terms of the advanced capitalist countries. But Bowles<sup>11</sup> has extended the analysis to the Third World and there are studies of African countries, such as Weis on Ghana<sup>12</sup> and Samoff on

Tanzania.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it is arguable that in Africa these structural relationships have taken a clearer form. Rodney in How Europe Underdeveloped Africa<sup>14</sup> provides a continent-wide perspective which is useful for its periodisation of education. He identifies forms of education in pre-capitalist modes of production, of which the initiation school provides a good example. He differentiates these from education in the colonial period, when the capitalist mode of production was penetrating African societies. He sums up colonial education as 'an instrument to serve the European capitalist class in its exploitation of Africa'.<sup>15</sup>

That controllers of state power in the colonies used education to advance the economic and political interests of capitalism is excellently documented by Moumouni in Education In Africa, his seminal work on the French colonies of West Africa, first published in 1964.<sup>16</sup> He firmly locates education within the context of particular modes of production, and his extended study distinguishes between the early period of colonialism (prior to 1945) and the later period. The objectives of the early period are summarised in a quotation from Brevie, the Governor-General of French West Africa :

The duties of colonialism and political and economic necessities have imposed a twofold task on our work in education. On one hand, we must train indigenous cadres to become our auxiliaries in every area, and assure ourselves of a meticulously chosen elite. We must also educate the masses, to bring them closer to us and transform their way of living.... From the political standpoint we must make known to the people our intention of bringing them into the French way of life.... From the economic viewpoint we must train the producers and consumers of tomorrow...<sup>17</sup>

The imperialist objective of developing the productive forces and social relations of capitalism is clearly stated.

The changes in international capitalism after 1945 were reflected in colonial education. The rise of the United States to pre-eminence in the capitalist world-system after the devastation of Europe during

the war led it to encourage decolonisation in order to give access to US capital to the extensive areas previously controlled exclusively by the European colonial powers. The emergence of the socialist bloc and the development of nationalist movements hastened the process, and the colonial powers, under US pressure, sought forms of granting political independence that would enable the West to retain its economic ties.

Moumouni shows how the contradiction between African aspirations for independence and the French desire to provide it only on their own terms was reflected in the field of education. Thus the major re-organisation of education in the French West African colonies in 1948 only 'adapted the old existing structures to the new requirements of the situation'<sup>18</sup> and it continued 'to protect the political domination, economic exploitation and cultural oppression of France on its colonies in Africa, if possible by developing new justifications'.<sup>19</sup> He then goes on to show how these forms of education continue to be perpetuated after political independence because they represent the cultural plane of the economic dominance of imperialism.

As far as Southern Africa is concerned, such historical materialist analysis of education is scarce. For South Africa itself, significant attempts are being undertaken to develop a political economy of education, as Kallway's Apartheid and Education testifies.<sup>20</sup> But little is being published in the rest of the region from a coherent Marxist perspective. For example, the writings of Koma and van Rensburg on education in Botswana<sup>21</sup> reflect Marxist influences but their analysis lacks depth both in the theorisation of concepts such as class, the state and imperialism, and in terms of their empirical application. Similar criticism can be made of the collection by Mugomba and Nyaggah Independence Without Freedom, which is rather misleadingly subtitled 'The political economy of colonial education in Southern Africa'.<sup>22</sup> Although the book contains a lot of useful empirical information, there is a lack of unifying theory. The phenomena of education in a region characterised by settler colonialism and migrant labour are well described - for example, the development of education for subordination and the resistance to it as exemplified by the history of Bantu Education in South Africa since its introduction

in 1953. But they are not satisfactorily related to the overall context of imperialism, capitalist penetration and class formation.

The context of imperialism has stimulated Marxist study of its operation at the cultural level. Moumouni's 'white-blacks', Fanon's 'black skins, white masks' are common expressions which capture the phenomenon of mental colonisation. The role of education in this is studied at length by Carnoy in his book Education as Cultural Imperialism.<sup>23</sup> He deals with the theme mainly at a structural level, analysing how education serves to maintain capitalism and legitimise the inequality of society through case studies of both colonies and the USA. But he also develops the idea of the psychological dimension of colonisation, by foreign powers in the Third World and (in an analogy) by the bourgeoisie in relation to the working class in advanced capitalist countries. He discusses in general terms the role of education in inculcating a sense of inferiority in the colonised, who are alienated from their own culture and incorporated into the ruling class culture of the colonisers, internalising capitalist attitudes and values. The essays and novels of Nguni wa Thiongo provide excellent illustrations and discussions of this process in Africa.<sup>24</sup>

### The Internal Processes of Education

The theme of cultural imperialism provides a concrete instance of the relationship between the economic and political structure of society and the internal processes of education. Indeed, Carnoy finishes his book with the injunction :

Teachers and students must ... face their own reality in the school, and the function of that institution in perpetuating inequalities.<sup>25</sup>

It is these processes at the level of the organisation, curriculum content and methods of education - the 'reality in the school' - that have provided the second major level of study for Marxist writers on education. Analysis at this cultural level has sought to explain exactly how education maintains and legitimates the capitalist social order. But recent studies have also stressed that education, like



other institutions of the superstructure, is not only a site of class reproduction but also one of resistance and opposition. While reproducing the capitalist mode of production, education also reproduces the contradictions inherent in that mode. Giroux in particular has argued against tendencies within Marxism to economic determinism and has stressed the need for greater emphasis on politics and culture, on the role of human agency and of resistance to class domination within educational activities.<sup>26</sup>

The dimension of the organisation of education has been considered in terms of how schools relate to the social division of labour. Attention has therefore been paid to the way in which education forms a selective system that produces a structured and differentiated labour force. As Gorz has put it :

The production of failures and school drop-outs is as important to the reproduction of hierarchical social relations as the production of school graduates: a set proportion of adolescents must be persuaded by the impersonal process of schooling that they are incapable of becoming anything better than unskilled labour. They must be persuaded that this failure to learn is not the school's failure to teach them but their own personal and social shortcoming.<sup>27</sup>

The way education is organised plays an important part in this. In many countries there are different kinds of schools, differentiation taking place in terms of race (as in colonial situations and in South Africa today), or ability to pay (where there are elite private schools alongside state schools) or according to definitions of children as 'academic' or 'vocational'. Even when there are not physically distinct schools, internal streaming or tracking serves the same purpose. The processes by which education is organised to carry out this selective function are therefore important for understanding how the class structure is reproduced.

Central to these processes are the labelling of children as 'bright' or 'dull', 'A stream' or 'C stream', and so on. Marxist writers,

such as Simon, have undertaken a critique of intelligence testing in particular as a pseudo-objective yardstick of selection.<sup>28</sup> In their analysis, they argue that selection procedures reflect class-divided society and serve to justify this status quo. Thus such everyday activities as marking work are part of the way education has been organised to institutionalise the allocation of young people into the class structure.<sup>29</sup> However, it should be noted that such processes within education are not viewed as the result of a 'conspiracy' by teachers and others but as reflecting modes of thought and behaviour generated by the wider dynamics of capitalist accumulation in society.

The second dimension of the reality in the school is the content of what is taught, both in the overt and hidden curriculum. This has been given a lot of consideration in recent years by Marxists, who have focussed on how the power relations in society (including those of race and gender as well as class) penetrate the content of education. Their starting point is that the knowledge which is taught in schools has been chosen from a wider body of available knowledge, and these choices are based on particular values. The relationship of these values to the class structure of society is found in the concept of ideology.

This is a rather complex concept in the Marxist tradition.<sup>30</sup> Basically it refers to the set of ideas and values which express the interests of the dominant classes by obscuring the real nature of class relationships. Emphasis is given to the fact that the ruling class uses its control of cultural institutions such as churches, the mass media and education, to promulgate those ideas which will sustain the legitimacy of its position in society. In Marx and Engels' original formulation:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.<sup>31</sup>

In this way the subordinated classes come to have a misleading understanding of society, accepting a view of society which is not in their own class interests. But ideology is not simply a formal system of ideas imposed by the ruling class. Contemporary writers use Gramsci's concept of hegemony to show how ideology is also internalised through the activities of everyday life to the extent that it becomes a part of 'common sense'. In practice, the relations of domination and subordination in society 'are a saturation of the whole process of living'.<sup>32</sup>

This distinction between the conscious articulation of class interests in a body of ideas and the internalisation of dominant ideas through everyday experience has been helpful for the analysis of the overt and hidden curriculum. Specific studies of the overt curriculum have been undertaken to demonstrate how they represent a particular selection of knowledge for presentation in the schools. Whitty, for example, looks at social studies courses and concludes that 'Time after time the status quo is presented as normal, unchanging and unchangeable... social studies teaching often is a thinly disguised exercise in social control'.<sup>33</sup> Marxist approaches to the curriculum scrutinise what has been included and excluded and ask in whose class interests these choices have been made.

The study of the hidden curriculum shows how capitalist values and beliefs permeate the everyday life of the school. The experience of school encourages the internalisation of values such as competition, individualism, deference to authority and the importance of consensus. The social relations of production are reproduced by the hegemony of capitalist ideology in the schools. Apple provides an interesting case study in his analysis of a kindergarten, which shows how the specific content of lessons is relatively less important than the experiences in the classroom such as enforced obedience and definitions of normality and deviance.<sup>34</sup>

However, Marxist analysis also shows that the processes of hegemonic control in education do not go uncontested. A good example of this is to be found in Willis' ethnographic study of an English secondary school, Learning to Labour.<sup>35</sup> He describes the counter-culture of

the working class children in the school who informally resist the institution and its rules (in a similar way to that of manual workers in the work-place). He shows how this resistance opposes the dominant ideology that the school mediates in its role of preparing labour for capitalism. But while the children penetrate to some extent capitalist ideology, these insights are only partial and in the end their opposition leads to an acceptance of the structure of capitalism, particularly the crucial split between mental and manual labour. Willis points out that because there is no political attempt to interpret the children's insights, develop in them a critical analysis of society, and mobilise them for political action for change, the significance of their understanding of capitalism and their experience of class solidarity is lost. Ball has extended Willis' approach to a study of the curriculum in colonial Africa.<sup>36</sup>

Marxist analysis concludes that the content of education is never a neutral body of knowledge. Rather it can be shown, by detailed analysis, to reflect aspects of ideology, power and control emanating from the prevailing mode of production. A similar conclusion is reached about the third dimension of education, that of teaching methods. This dimension has, in fact, been given less attention. One of the most important writers is the Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire, whose philosophical rationale for his pedagogy incorporates elements of Marxism. His writings have been widely discussed since their appearance in English in the early 1970s.<sup>37</sup> Their influence can be seen, for example, on training programmes in Zimbabwe, adult literacy work in Botswana, and the struggle for an alternative education in South Africa.

Freire makes clear that the processes of learning have an ideological element - 'Every educational practice implies a concept of man and the world'.<sup>38</sup> He argues that most pedagogy is based on the 'banking concept of education' in which the teacher deposits knowledge in the student. He advocates as an alternative a 'problem-posing' method in which the teacher and students investigate social experience together and thereby participate in a knowledge-creating process. The first method of teaching encourages conformity and acceptance of the status quo, whereas the second encourages the development of an active,

critical person who can act on the social environment in order to change it. One is education for domination, the other education for liberation. Freire has elaborated these ideas mainly in the context of adult literacy but other writers have explored them in different situations. For example, Shor in Critical Teaching and Everyday Life analyses his experience of using a Freirean approach to teaching English in a community college in the USA.<sup>39</sup> He gives a detailed account of collective work styles, self and mutual instruction, peer evaluation, self-created materials and critical analysis of everyday situations as part of a learning process designed to get students to question capitalist hegemony.<sup>40</sup>

To sum up, Marxist analysis at the micro level attempts to show how the cultural practices of educational institutions relate to the mode of production of capitalist society and how actual educational activities serve to reproduce relations of power (of class, race and gender) in the face of various forms of resistance. Significant work at this level has been done in France, Britain and the USA but it seems that very little has been undertaken in the African context. For instance, a recent overview of educational research in Botswana indicates that researchers show no cognisance of the theoretical discussions about reproduction and resistance.<sup>41</sup>

### **Implications for Educational Research in Southern Africa**

The foregoing discussion has provided an overview of Marxist writing on education within capitalist societies. It has noted that the majority of these studies have focused on the advanced capitalist societies and as yet little work has been undertaken to apply these approaches to the capitalist societies of Southern Africa. However, it is possible to suggest some of the lines of enquiry that Marxist research on education in the region might explore.

A primary task would be to elaborate the Marxist conceptual framework in the context of the specific circumstances of Southern Africa. Categories such as class cannot be applied uncritically but need to be problematised and refined in relation to the concrete social reality of a region whose economy is dominated by labour migration. A

controversial example is Parson's use of the term 'peasantariat' to try and express the class position of the peasants who migrate to work for wages as temporary members of the urban proletariat.<sup>42</sup> All the key concepts of Marxism need examining in relation to the historical pattern of capitalist accumulation that is particular to the region. As yet (outside South Africa itself) there has been no extended theoretical debate such as that in East Africa contained in the collection Debate on Class, State and Imperialism,<sup>43</sup> nor have there been rigorous attempts to relate theoretical discussion elsewhere over concepts like ideology and hegemony to the Southern African situation.

Of course, conceptual development can only take place within the context of empirical analysis in a process of investigating whether a theoretical approach helps to explain the phenomena being studied. It is a notable characteristic of Marxist research in education that it exhibits a concern with broader theoretical questions while undertaking empirical study. This is exemplified by Gaborone's pioneering study on the political economy of adult education in Botswana.<sup>44</sup> A strong emphasis on theory-building would therefore be part of a research agenda. But for topics of research, Marxist approaches would embrace the range of themes that concern educational researchers generally. The differences would emerge more over the perspective adopted, for example on the relationship between education and inequality in society, and on areas of education regarded as problematical, such as foreign aid.

However, the emphasis on priority areas for study would be distinctive. The central concerns of Marxist approaches to educational research in Southern Africa would probably be as follows :

- the relationship between education and processes of class formation and reproduction;
- the impact of imperialism on the nature of education;
- the part played by the state in the historical development of education to the present;

- the role of education in the search for hegemony by the dominant classes;
- the extent of class conflict within education and the nature of hegemonic resistance by subordinated classes;
- the ideological influences on educational practices (at the level of the curriculum, teaching methods and so forth).

These specific themes would be explored in relation to the basic hypothesis that the nature of education is shaped by the wider structure of economic and political power in society. Thus research activity would be directed to examining whether in fact the political economy does exert influence over education and, if so, how this influence is reflected in actual education policies, programmes and practices. It would thereby seek to give a greater understanding of past and present education in Southern Africa.

But Marx in one of his most famous statements said that the purpose of social science was not simply to interpret the world but to change it.<sup>45</sup> Hence it should be noted that the Marxist study of education within capitalism is not concerned simply to explain educational phenomena but also with a central practical issue - how can education be changed to meet the needs of the majority (the workers and peasants) rather than the minority (the owners and managers)? Within the Marxist tradition, two basic positions have been taken, reflecting different interpretations of the relationship between the economic basis and the superstructure of institutions. The first position regards education as totally determined by the economic basis and argues that only a transformation of society will change education, therefore action for change must take place exclusively in the realm of politics. The second, more recent approach, identifies the superstructure as a site of class struggle, in which the conflicts generated in the economic basis are played out in institutions such as education.<sup>46</sup> In this view, action for change within education is worthwhile, provided it is linked to the wider political struggle to change society.<sup>47</sup>

What both positions accept is that education itself cannot change society and that for a complete change in education the capitalist mode of production must be superseded. In the next section, I consider the form education takes in the new mode of production.

### The Socialist Practice of Education

Marx and Engels identified within the capitalist mode of production fundamental contradictions that would lead to its replacement by the communist mode of production. But between capitalism and communism they envisaged a long period of revolutionary transformation. This transitional period is socialism, in which aspects of capitalism remain, including class antagonisms. The features of socialist society in Marxist theory are as follows :

- a. State and co-operative ownership of the means of production and distribution (with the steady elimination of private ownership), and planned economic development in order to meet people's needs.
- b. The development of productive forces, particularly through industrialisation and the mechanisation of agriculture, so that the economy reaches a high degree of self-reliance and disengagement from the international capitalist system.
- c) Changes in the social relations of production by democratisation of the workplace.
- d) Changes in the superstructure of institutions as a result of the use of state power to advance the interests of the workers and peasants by a party which has adopted Marxist principles. These include forms of participatory democracy, the establishment of armed militias, and changes in the legal system.

Socialism therefore means a transformation of the mode of production and of the superstructure.<sup>48</sup> The experience of different countries, such as the USSR, China, Eastern Europe, North Korea, and Cuba indicates that the period of socialism is one of intense contradictions, many derived from the legacy of capitalism and the external pressures



of imperialism. Thus whilst all these countries have made rapid economic development and achieved a measure of social equality, the development of economic and political democracy has often been curtailed. Above all, various forms of class struggle have continued, influencing the nature of changes taking place.

In the socialist mode of production, education is one of the institutions which the new holders of state power transform - as Marx and Engels put it :

The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention...<sup>49</sup>

The different kind of society is reflected in the different character of education. An excellent introduction to this can be found in The Education of the Future by Castles and Wustenburg, published in 1979.<sup>50</sup>

The writings of Marx and Engels suggested that the objectives of education under socialism are two-fold - the development of the productive forces through high levels of technical training, and the development of new social relations of production through general and political education. Together, these objectives are designed to produce 'new people' with the intellectual capabilities, technical skills and political awareness to control production and society democratically. Such objectives point to forms of education which provide a high level of general knowledge and technical training to all, combat individualism and encourage co-operative attitudes, attack racism and sexism, and which, above all, break down the division between mental and manual labour which is the basis of class society. The basic means of achieving this is to link education with productive work, following Marx's precept :

...the germ of the education of the future is present in the factory system; this education will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods

of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings.<sup>51</sup>

The historical experience of socialist countries since the Russian revolution of 1917 shows the development of education taking place within this framework. In each country there has been a massive quantitative expansion of education, whose exact nature has reflected the different economic and political situation at various times. This is well illustrated by Russia and China, where the periods in which most emphasis has been given to transforming the relations of production have been accompanied by the most thoroughgoing changes in education. Whyte's article 'Educational Reform: China in the 1970's and Russia in the 1920's'<sup>52</sup> draws interesting parallels between the period 1917-31 in the USSR and 1966-69 in China. Some of the common themes were closer links between education and production, de-emphasis of academic competition and exams, more availability of education to the workers and peasants, emphasis on politicisation, more active modes of learning, and more equal teacher-student relations. Conversely, Whyte shows how in other periods, when emphasis has been put on the development of the forces of production, education has tended to stress academic performance, exams, centralisation, and a dilution of the relationship between education and production. These changes were justified at the time by a concern for improvements in the quality of education but objectively they represent a trend towards stratification and hierarchical order. As such, they indicate the emergence of a new bureaucratic class, based on the control of state property, which seeks to use education for its legitimation and reproduction. In sum, education within the socialist mode of production reflects the economic and political struggles of this transitional society.

Within Southern Africa two countries can be used to provide examples of the socialist practice of education, namely Angola and Mozambique. Both countries declared their educational policies soon after Independence, clearly linking education to the construction of a socialist society and aiming at a qualitative and quantitative change.<sup>53</sup> The policy of both countries is based firstly on an analysis of the nature of education in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, when education

is identified as serving an oppressive class system. Secondly, it takes into account the actual experience of the MPLA and FRELIMO during the wars of national liberation, when education was linked to the struggle for survival, popular mobilisation and the social transformation of the liberated areas. During this period, education was characterised by decentralisation, a high level of self-reliance, and its involvement in war, production and politics. Thirdly, policy is guided by socialist principles of education, which the MPLA enunciates as follows :

- democratic control of education through citizen involvement;
- education as a right for all;
- education to serve the needs of the working class and the struggle for socialism;
- the all-round development of the personality and the lessening of the distinction between manual and intellectual labour;
- emphasis on science and technology;
- new methods which develop critical thinking;
- the combination of education and production.<sup>54</sup>

Based on their declared policies, both countries have developed new educational systems. Education has been nationalised and there has been a rapid expansion of provision, with particular emphasis on primary education and adult education. Ministries have been restructured and school location given a rural bias. The content of education has been transformed, with a stress on the integration of the school and the community, political education, and the combination of education and production. Particular attention has been given to the curriculum. Mozambique, for example, prohibited the use of all colonial textbooks, despite the problems this caused.<sup>55</sup> And special stress has been put on the training of teachers, because their attitudes and skills are crucial to the development of the new system and yet they themselves are products of the old colonial system.

Their training therefore focuses on both competence and political awareness :

Teachers must be aware of the vanguard role they are destined to play, as promoters of the 'new man', as activists in the transformation of social relations at the level of the superstructure.<sup>56</sup>

in fact, the change in teacher-student relationships and democratisation of the school are among the most noticeable features of the new education.

Both Angola and Mozambique have been under severe economic, political and military pressure internally and externally since Independence. It is therefore difficult to predict the future development of socialism there, and the period of socialist education is so short that any conclusions are premature. But for a vivid and honest account of education in one of these socialist states of Southern Africa, the reader should see Searle's book We're Building the New School.<sup>57</sup>

This is the diary of a teacher at Nampula Secondary School in Mozambique in 1977-8 and it gives a very down-to-earth picture of school reality, with firsthand impressions of successes and failure. As such, it provides a good insight into the socialist practice of education.

Since 1980, socialist ideas about education have gained a certain currency in Zimbabwe, where the government is attempting to achieve a gradualist transformation of society to socialism. The adoption of Marxism-Leninism at the Second Congress of ZANU-PF in 1984 as the guiding philosophy of the ruling party has given greater legitimacy to Marxism, although at the level of social and economic policies this is often rhetorical. However, a number of writers have begun to develop Marxist perspectives on education in Zimbabwe. For example, recent books by Gwarinda<sup>58</sup> and by Chung and Ngara<sup>59</sup> have both sought to introduce Marxist concepts and apply them to issues of education in Zimbabwe. The political and economic situation in Zimbabwe, where the balance of contending class forces by no

means favours socialism, provides a particularly significant context in Southern Africa for the development of Marxist analysis and its application to educational practice.

## Conclusion

In this article I have sought to provide an introductory review of Marxist approaches to education. I have not attempted to assess Marxism's strengths and weaknesses in relation to other theoretical approaches. Obviously, other theoretical perspectives have their critiques of Marxism<sup>60</sup> and, indeed, vice versa. In the space available such comparative analysis has not been possible. My aim has been to indicate the increasing influence of the Marxist tradition on education and to outline the form it has taken. I have done so in order to suggest that educationalists in Southern Africa should take account of these developments in their teaching and research. The extensive references have been provided to enable interested readers to study further and reach their own conclusions.

At the moment, much of the writing on education in English-speaking Southern Africa has a very parochial air to it because it seems cut off from significant developments taking place both in the social sciences in Africa and in international educational research. This is particularly the case in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, as evidenced by the proceedings of an educational research seminar in 1981 which show no awareness of these developments.<sup>61</sup> I hope this article may stimulate more widespread consideration of the relevance of the Marxist tradition to the theory and practice of education in Southern Africa.

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