Education for reconstruction:

A post-apartheid response to the education crisis in South Africa

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Abstract

In this article education is presented as one of the important tools for the reconstruction of the South African society after the demise of apartheid. The kind of education that, in my opinion, will effectively achieve the reconstruction objective, is what I prefer to term "education for reconstruction". The construct: Education for reconstruction is further developed. It is postulated that Ubuntu Education is the kind of education that will make the grade in the drive to achieve the goal of reconstruction. I focus on the best I believe the envisaged Ubuntu education can bring about. I recommend Ubuntu education which is presented as the promoter of interdependence, loving relationships, caring, mutual respect and commitment. The relation between Ubuntu and the Biblical social values is highligted and the importance thereof for education, indicated. I conclude by urging those who are responsible for the education of the country's youth not to divorce education from responsibility. I subsequently express the conviction that, if used correctly, Ubuntu education will facilitate the smooth integration of young people into the community, church, industry and the global community.

1. INTRODUCTION

The birth of the democratic dispensation is an important milestone in the history of South Africa. The democratic dispensation brought with it, the political and social freedom, and prospects for economic development, respect for human rights and the opportunity of giving genuine thought to societal reconstruction. While all these point to positive

developments in the life of the South African society, the democratic dispensation is also loaded with challenges. By challenges, it is meant in this paper, calls to the South African society to examine its past, recall the plunder and pain that the apartheid policies brought upon it and then engage in self-reconstruction, vow to henceforth bring about and ensure peaceful living for all the people of South Africa. To that end serious work must be done on different fronts, to ensure that the reconstruction objective gets achieved effectively. It means that instruments for effective reconstruction will have to be sought, found and put to good use. Education is one such instrument of reconstruction to which I attach great importance. It is true that in the past, education was used by the apartheid regime to subdue, enslave and dehumanise the majority of the people of South Africa. In the light of the importance of education as a liberating and reconstructing tool, visionaries among the oppressed people, like Fr Smangaliso Mkhatshwa started more than ten years ago, to campaign for a suitable education which became known as the People's education to counter and undo the effects of the Bantu Education poison (Nolan 1997:2). The people's education was then looked upon to be a system that would be integrative – no longer serving the interests of the privileged while relegating the poor to second class citizens (Jones 1996:5) because as Jones rightly says: Second-class education today is third-class citizenship tomorrow (Jones 1996:5).

An education that is suitable for the present time is required, for the democratic government to deliver on the promises that it has made that include the realisation of plans for economic growth, job creation, a better life for all and a better education system. Nolan (1997:2) emphasises the importance of education further when he cites the words of former president, Nelson Mandela, at the launch of the campaign for the building of a culture of teaching and learning: "In the fight against poverty and crime", the former president is reported to have said, "our weapon is education". What prospects can be of value to the previously disadvantaged, and therefore, impoverished and crime-riddled people of this country, than the successful alleviation of poverty and the combating of its companion – crime? From the afore-said, it is clear that education stands at the centre of genuine reconstruction.

I therefore argue, in this paper, that the relevant form of education for the present time, that is the time after South Africa's great liberation that was sealed in 1994, is what

I prefer to call Education for Reconstruction. The People's Education, to which I have referred earlier, was seen as an alternative education to the Apartheid's Bantu Education System. My assumption is that the period after April 1994, is the time for reconstruction, following the destruction that was caused to the country by the apartheid government policies which caused political, social and economic upheavals that marked the entire apartheid epoch. The time after liberation is indeed the time to rebuild the nation and consolidate the country's celebrated democratic victory. If it is true that education is an important instrument for the rebuilding of countries and societies (and I am convinced that it is), then I repeat that the most relevant education for doing so, as already mentioned above, is Education for Reconstruction.

2.   THE PREMISE OF THIS TOPIC

In consideration of the afore-said, I have chosen to examine the concept: Education for reconstruction. That choice is premised as already pointed out, on my observation that the present circumstances in South Africa demand that we focus on reconstruction. This though does not intend to suggest that we should ignore and forget about other goals of education, for example liberation. My assumption is that there is presently a need for heightened concentration on reconstruction. Carmichael (1996:182) confirms this view, saying: "For many years the pre-dominant themes in Christian life and witness in South Africa were justice and reconciliation. Now the priority is becoming creative, recon-struction and development." Education is in my opinion, the right means to help people become creative that is, to be agents of reconstruction and meaningful transformation. It can therefore only be pleasing to hear opinion makers in the country commit themselves to the promotion of education. Such a commitment was expressed by the former deputy minister of education and the current mayor of Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), Fr Smangaliso Mkhatshwa as cited in (*The Sowetan*, 19 December 2000, p 4). He has indicated that his council would pay keener attention to the education needs of the people (*The Sowetan* 19 December 2000, p 4).

This intended special focus on education by the council is very welcome and will hopefully contribute positively to the general goal of education. The fact that South Africa has a large number of people, who are functionally illiterate, makes focus on

education the more necessary. Van Aardt (1993:9) indicates by means of national statistics that in 1991, 53,9% of the total South African population had achieved just a Standard 4 level of education. Van Aardt concludes that, that 53,9% of the population can therefore be considered to be functionally illiterate. Highlighting the gravity of the situation further, Van Aardt points out that 31% of the total South African population, 15 years of age and older were functionally illiterate. Most of these people who are said to be functionally illiterate are also effectively unemployable, with little or no capacity to make a contribution to the country, which causes them to think about themselves as worthless and as a liability to the country. That state of affairs destroys their self-esteem further. How can our new nation be built on such a shaky foundation? The situation is indeed untenable and unacceptable, and therefore needs to be remedied urgently.

A serious look at the poor matriculation results of the past six successive years, since 1994 (except for 2000, with somewhat improved results), especially in former exclusively black schools, reveals that something drastic should be done urgently to improve the education environment of our youth. The choice of the theme: Education for Reconstruction, is a conscious one that seeks to emphasise the fact that successful reconstruction needs a particular approach that will be capable of addressing the apartheid legacy effectively. It means that, for the success of our democratic society, we need to give people education and skills that will be capable of turning the tide of poverty and crime. *The Sowetan* 19 December 2000, p 4, is right when it cites the former deputy minister of education, Fr S Mkhatshwa's statement that says: "Poverty is among the many reasons behind the rise in crime and we'll be creating alternative, honourable opportunities for people when we give them education and skills to use their hands for better, constructive and life-giving things." Mkhatshwa's above-mentioned statement expresses in very clear terms, the necessity for the reconstruction of people's lives through education. Former state president, Nelson Mandela has, as already pointed out, rightly singled out education as the effective weapon against poverty and crime.

In the present context the purpose and task of education will have to be the rebuilding or better still, the reconstruction of human, social, cultural, political, economic and other infra-structural resources that the apartheid policies have had more than 40

years to destroy and break down. The kind of education that can effectively achieve the needed reconstruction must be truly resilient, that is having the power of resuming the original form after compression (Fowler & Fowler 1924:692). It means that this education will have to have the ability to retrace God's original plan with the world and in our case, with South Africa in order to be able to fully embark on and succeed in the mammoth task of reconstruction. Education for Reconstruction could have the required resilience for the task at hand.

3.   WE NEED A RECONSTRUCTIONAL EDUCATION

A reconstructional education is needed. A reconstructional education should be able to do two things simultaneously, that is firstly to undo the destruction that was caused and secondly, to rebuild all that needs rebuilding. I remember one musical number of our times, by Jimmy Cliff, entitled: "Remake the world". The message of that song is still true and relevant for us today, and education is being challenged to accomplish the task in order to concretise the ideal of remaking or better still, reconstructing our world.

Such an education must embody an extreme measure of hope. To say that education must embody hope means that education must display and express anger at the injustice committed in the past, yes – at the destruction of the past that has led to the suffering of too many people, in the words of the above-mentioned song. But that is not enough, it must also have the courage to do something to transform totally, the unjust situation, empower the poor and suffering people and to look forward to joyous and happy times when a reasonable measure of reconstruction shall have been achieved, to enjoy momentous celebration. Education for reconstruction cannot succeed if it is not friendly to the entire South African society.

It means that education for reconstruction must be a deeply caring enterprise. Mbigi (1997:136), pleas for the reform of the country's education system, from the one that ignores the need to integrate the liberative and emancipative values of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is known for its collective and caring conduct and lifestyle, found among the peoples of Africa. The envisaged education for reconstruction fits well into the mode of the education that Vaswani (1997:10) calls humane education. I envisage an education

that befits the name Ubuntu education because it must be caring and able to commit itself actively to bringing about change that aims at betterment of the situation. Such an education is undoubtedly underscored by the philosophy, practice and lifestyle founded on Ubuntu. Writing about what he calls humane education, Vaswani (1997:10) says: "Humane Education, while recognising the scientific, literary and philosophical training, seeks to go deep enough into the life of the younger generation to reach the home of those emotions and impulses which are the determining factors in the development of human character". It is concerned about delivering education and skills to the youth and adults of the country without watering down its intense interest in their human personhood. Such an education seeks to restore, in a loving way – mutuality, respect and reciprocity to all the youth and community. For Vaswani (1997:10) this humaneness of education should extend beyond the human to the animal and plant worlds. That description fits my envisaged education for reconstruction quite well. It is highly sensitive to people and to the ecology as well. I want to call that education, Ubuntu education. Before exploring the theme Ubuntu education I want to attend to the concept Ubuntu as a suitable context for reconstruction.

I invoke Ubuntu, not as an element of African culture which is mechanically extracted from the rest of the African culture (Maluleke 1999:13; 1996:26) to serve as a magical potion that is to solve the specifically African problems but as a golden thread that runs through the African culture. In other words, I invoke Ubuntu as a way of being human in Africa, that is as the core of humanness. My view of Ubuntu is one that recognises its centrality to African humanness, thus to the entirety of African culture. Saule's (2000:4) definition of Ubuntu is perhaps the closest to what I have in mind when venturing the Ubuntu talk: "Ubuntu is a sum total of human behaviours as well as a system of values inculcated in the individual by society through established traditional institutions over a period of time". I see the revival of Ubuntu as the right place to start to respond to the challenge (Maluleke, 1996:25) for "African intellectuals to begin to reflect upon our indebtedness and connectedness to African culture more positively and more deliberately." I think that attempts to retrieve a people's humanness are not an exercise in futility. It is indeed a humble but innovative effort towards assisting in the self-rediscovery process of a people that has been convinced over many years that the

best thing that could count for them as real civilisation was to do what is inappropriate (Maluleke 1996:23&24), namely: "to outgrow or dress out of the African culture," as some African intellectuals suggest. This attempt does not intend to reverse the history, but rather not to try to reinvent the cultural wheel but to draw from the wisdom of past generations and bring it into interaction with the evolving cultural resources. It is in that sense that I invoke the Ubuntu context as a suitable one for a thriving education for reconstruction.

4. UBUNTU IS A SUITABLE CONTEXT FOR RECONSTRUC-TION

The concept of Ubuntu is quite an important one in Africa. Ubuntu is defined differently by different people, but it has at its centre dependence on God and interdependence between and among fellow humans, as well as concern and compassion for those in need. Battle (1996:99), presents the concept *Ubuntu* as a concept that, according to him, originates from the Xhosa expression: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye bantu* [sic], and goes on to explain the expression thus: "Not an easily translatable Xhosa concept, generally this proverbial expression means that each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others and in turn individuality is truly expressed. Or a person depends on other persons to be a person". Louw (1994:25), citing Saayman points to the differences between the Western and African approaches: "In this regard Saayman refers to the Western approach which is based upon the statement of Descartes: *cognito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am). Within an African context this means: *cognato ergo sum* (I belong through kinship, therefore I am)." This expression is used also in many other African languages and is generally regarded as the heart of the way in which Africans view and understand themselves. African people, according to this insight, see their own person and personhood in the other. Ubuntu then, is to be aware of one's own being but also of one's duties towards one's neighbour. Mbigi (2000:6) points to the importance of interpersonal interactive relationship in the development, both of the individual, the organisation, society and the country. The development of relationships is thus, of the essence in the education, school as well as in any organisation's management system. Mbigi (2000:7) writes in this regard: Central to the philosophy of Ubuntu is values of

solidarity, interdependence and love. These values of Ubuntu are very important in all spheres of African life, including education.

The Ubuntu lifestyle relates well to the worldview of the ancient Mediterranean culture, which is the predominant context within which Biblical narratives have their grounding. In his comparative study of the social values of the ancient Mediterranean world and those of Africa in the context of today, Botha (1997:178) confirms this view when he says: "There can be no doubt that what is true for the ancient Mediterranean in terms of values and human relationships is also true for Africa: it is group-centred and the spirit of Ubuntu is all-pervasive". Group belonging, interdependence and mutual respect are therefore equally at the heart of African-ness as they are at the heart of the Mediterranean culture. The dyadic personality is the technical name given by anthropologists to a group of people who thought of themselves as part of a family and other groups and who lived and worked according to and in the interests of those groups. Such people derived their identity from others that is others become one's mirror. He/she sees himself/herself through the eyes of others (cf Pilch & Malina 1993).

5.   WHAT THEN IS EDUCATION?

We have had a glimpse of what Ubuntu is. It is now the time to turn to the definition of education. Griesel, Louw & Swart (1991:4) define education thus: "Education is a human occurrence and is in fact an indispensable condition for being human." To say that education is in fact an indispensable condition for being human loads education with unequalled significance for human life and development. Any member of the society, therefore, whether an adult or a still-to-be-adult who neglects education, does so at his/ her own peril. Elliot (1984:178) defines education thus: "Education is the means by which the accumulated skills and wisdom of society are preserved and perpetuated down through the generations." While Elliot's definition emphasises integration of generations of learners into societies they have come from, which is to be appreciated, it concentrates more on education as a means of preserving and perpetuating accumulated social skills and wisdom. While this preservation and perpetuating (of accumulated societal skills and wisdom) are important, it is vital that education should also continually develop new skills and unearth new wisdom. D'Souza (2000:12) also offers a useful definition of

education, namely: "...education is the process of leading the student into the arena of human formation – intellectual, moral, emotional, spiritual, psychological, political, cultural, historical and religious." D'Souza's definition describes education more as a holistic human-guiding and formative process that prepares members of society to become viable in the totality of life. D'Souza therefore understands education to be a dynamic process, which interacts meaningfully with life as lived and as emerging, for the benefit of the youth and society as a whole.

Without claiming any scientific correctness or appropriateness, I humbly suggest the following definition, constructed from the framework of my experiential position: Education is a process-based task of parents, the state, the church and the community, whereby the learner meets and co-operate with the educator, for meaningful accompaniment and guidance towards wise, responsible and moral living through the days of childhood, youth to real maturity and balanced adulthood. This task is to be carried out by educators in partnership with learners, parents and other resourceful stakeholders who provide different forms of support. Each stakeholder must benefit from the educational process. It follows that education is indeed a helping and mutually helpful relationship among learners, educators, parents, government and society. I have attempted to describe the two concepts Ubuntu and education separately. I think it will be helpful to define the combination Ubuntu education, its nature and implications.

6.   UBUNTU EDUCATION, ITS DEFINITION, NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS

What is Ubuntu education? Ubuntu education is to my mind, that equipment for life, which has a broader view of the human being and human development. D'Souza (2000:19), citing Melchert, refers to education as the presence of something that can only be called *wholeness*. It implies that genuine education should have the entirety of human being in focus, in its search for human development. It means that Ubuntu education considers seriously, not only the cognitive aspect of human development but also the affective, conative as well as the spiritual, social, religious, systemic and cultural aspects. Ubuntu education, as I construe it, has a high regard for the human being as one created

in God's image and likeness. Human being is described in the following exalting terms, in Ps 8 (adapted for inclusive language):

> What is human being that you remember him/her?
> And the child of human being that you think of him/her?
> Yet you have made him/ her a little less than the angels and have crowned
> him/her with honour and glory.

It means that Ubuntu education acknowledges the honour that human being has been endowed with by God. Such recognition of another person's reputation in the society is quite important to one's identity and selfesteem. One's interaction with others can either be boosted or shattered by how others view, talk to or act towards, you. In other words, Ubuntu education as an education that is geared towards reconstruction does not look down upon the learner as an object but considers the learner a co-subject of the education process. It regards learners as people who are actively involved in their own education. Piek (1991:79) affirms the importance of respect for the learners: "Pupils are in a better position to learn when teachers help them to build a concept of themselves as people who are worthy of respect and affection both within and outside school". Educators can do this and benefit both the learners and themselves, by having genuine regard for learners and not being guilty of dehumanising them. The context of Ubuntu ensures that stakeholders in education do not dehumanise each other, because to do so is tantamount to self-dehumanisation. Battle (1996:102) says the following, citing Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "... when I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself." Indeed, Ubuntu education, like Black Theology should resist objectification and dehumanisation of fellow humans and promote humanisation of human beings (cf Balcomb 1998:69). The following are then some of the characteristics of the envisaged Ubuntu education:

6.1 Love should form the core of Ubuntu education

In order for education to be meaningful in its task of reconstruction, it must be done with love and within the context of a loving environment. Goldstein (1998:268), after writing at length about what she calls teacherly love as the basis for effective and helpful teacher-learner relationship, gives the reason why teaching with love is important, saying: "First

of all, it benefits the children being taught. Teaching with love provides teachers with the opportunity to teach children more than academic knowledge and skill." Yes, teaching with love presents teachers with the opportunity to teach learners to care for others by themselves caring. Love, coupled with respect can effectively instil moral responsibility. D'Souza (2000:22) is right when he mentions that: "Moral responsibility and duties appear to become deeply rooted when they are integrated with the dynamic spiritual capacity to love and to respect the other person as a person, a person who as Christianity proclaims, is created in the image and likeness of God." Effective inculcation in the youth, of moral responsibility and duties is achievable in the context of a loving teaching and learning relationship. Goldstein (1998:268) points out, citing Noddings: "we learn how to care through the experience of being cared for, children taught with love will learn, to be caring people". So, education as a loving teaching and learning relationship is and should be beneficial to both educator and learner. Educators do get an opportunity of being deeply and personally involved with children – something that has been found to be very satisfying and mutually beneficial (cf Goldstein 1998: 269).

Goldstein (1998:259) explains teacherly love in terms of Sternberg's triangular theory of love, adapted to suit love relationships in the classroom environment. The three components of this triangular theory of love are intimacy, commitment and passion. Goldstein (1998:260) describes intimacy as "those close, connected and bonded feelings that are found in loving relationships." Goldstein (1998:260) distinguishes these close, connected and bonded feelings that describe intimacy, from feelings found in erotic and romantic loving relationships: "... but the concept must be writ large enough to move from a one – on – one setting to the sort of large scale intimacy that is found in a classroom." True love is known for its selflessness and non-exploitative-ness as opposed to erotic and romantic kind of love that is selfish, exploitative and self-gratifying. It is indeed only in such genuine intimate relationships, as espoused by Goldstein (1998:260) that trust is born. Trust promotes and facilitates co-operation, sharing of experiences and reciprocity among participants in any enterprise. Piek (1991:79) affirms the truth about the need for a healthy loving relationship between the teacher and his/her learners, when he says: "Teachers should also be intensely interested in the pupil's work, their recreation and their domestic circumstances. The interest of teachers should not be limited to what

concerns the pupil in the classroom, but should be extended to include their extramural activities. The relationship between teachers and pupils should inspire mutual trust."

This is in my opinion, exactly what education for reconstruction stands for. It is my conviction that a mutual trust-inspiring relationship between the educator and the learner can be achieved with relative ease within the Ubuntu lifestyle. It is indeed in that context that the learner can be wholly involved in the teaching-learning environment. In that way education as means of societal reconstruction is facilitated and is likely to occur meaningfully.

Can this teaching with love be in anyway linked with Ubuntu education? I believe that, what has been said about teacherly love fits quite well into our proposed education for reconstruction, namely Ubuntu education. It means that we can, with a view to Education for Reconstruction, speak of Ubuntu education. This necessitates that we now look closely at the implications of Ubuntu education as a loving enterprise.

6.2   Ubuntu education rejects demeaning education metaphors

With Ubuntu education, demeaning metaphors, which were used in the past with reference to the learner in the learning process, are being discarded to make way for new ones which are learner-friendly. Mention is made of two of these old metaphors, namely education as filling a container (Ward 1996:46) and education as a manufacturing process (Ward 1996:47). In the former metaphor, the underlying view is that the young learner is like a clean or an empty slate to be written on by those who know. Critics see the incorrectness of this metaphor in the fact that the learner is more acted upon than being personally active. In other words the learner is an object of education and can never be interactive in his/her own education process. The learner is seen, in this paradigm simply as a container rather than an individual person. Mbigi (1997:139) points out that: "There is a need to shift from the empty vessel approach to learning and emphasise learning by discovery". It is explicitly clear, according to this insight that the empty vessel approach is negative because it does not take the learner along, en route to discovery. It does not involve the learner in his/her own learning process. In the latter metaphor, that is education as a manufacturing process, the problem is also obvious. It sees the learner as one who is in the process in which he/she has little or no active part, that is the process of

being processed into a desirable product, that is desirable according to the education system and not according to the learner.

A new metaphor of education as a life-walk to be shared or a travel metaphor (Ward 1996:48) is proposed.

This metaphor fits well with our definition of education, which has the following words, which are related to the idea of a life walk: the process-based task ... whereby the learner meets and co-operate with the educator for meaningful accompaniment and guidance towards a wise, responsible and moral living from childhood through youth, towards a mature and balanced adulthood. In this walk of life as suggested in the new metaphor, all (the learner included), are actively in motion towards their joint educational destination. Interdependence and mutual respect are therefore quite important.

6.3   Ubuntu education focuses on interdependence and mutual respect

Ubuntu education strongly emphasises unity, interdependence and mutual respect. It encourages co-humanness and co-operation above individuality and competition. Mbigi & Maree (1995:8) capture this traditional African mode of activity rather resiliently: "there is an emphasis on being rather than doing, there is preference for collaboration to a great extent." Balcomb (1998:68-72) also alludes to the importance of being when he describes what he says are the two types of theology that are done in South Africa, namely theologies of bread and theologies of being. He describes theologies of being as having to do with: the quest for identity in a society dominated by Western values. He links the being with Ubuntu, which he describes as: "The highly developed sense of human community" (Balcomb 1998:71), which he sees as a uniquely African feature. Botha (1997:177) describes the African collectiveness and interdependence further: "friendship is valued more than achievement, competitiveness is valued less than collaboration, there is a general acceptance of the way things are, and self-esteem depends on the way in which they are viewed by the world." The emphasis on unity and co-operation is extremely important if we are to succeed in reconstructing our society. The unity and co-operation among educators, learners, the government, parents, business and other stakeholders are absolutely necessary for the reconstruction. Mkhatshwa (cited in *The Sowetan* 19 December 2000 p 4), emphasises the need for co-operation of all stakeholders: "The key is working together, making education work for us and learning

from one another for the good of our people." That co-operation is vital also in our national attempts to recover or retrieve the moral fibre of our society.

This co-operation, which is both the characteristic and the requirement of our proposed education for reconstruction, points to the centrality of interdependence. Interdependence is the heart of the Ubuntu lifestyle. This interdependence is rooted in the African worldview, in which the highest good is not independence but inter-dependence (Battle 1996:100). The ideal of co-operation, mentioned above has its basis in this interdependence. Interdependence does not thrive on individual achievement at the expense of others but on corporate achievement to the benefit of the community. Mbigi (1997:137) points out that in traditional Africa, the youth were taught to seek collective interdependence instead of individual independence. Mbigi recommends a group-oriented, interdependent, participatory and a bottom-up educational system for Africa:

> Participation and group work should be central in the management of the learning process and the classroom to reflect the values of Ubuntu. Pupils should be allowed to learn from each other through group discussion. Participating learning action is a crucial aspect of traditional African collective learning. For as Professor Reg Revans has argued people learn more from comrades. In educational systems the task of collective learning is a shared responsibility between the mentors, learners, the community and the family. Our current educational systems lack a sense of shared accountability and shared agenda. The climate of our educational system is negative. It is characterised by hostility, conflict and low morale; burning issues, which need to be, addressed in the renewal efforts of our educational system. We design management practices that seek to enhance grass-roots consensus democracy by adopting a community approach and learner involvement in the governance of our learning structures. We need to develop a bottom-up and learner-centred approach in the collective learning process. The learner needs to own the learning process and take responsibility of his learning.
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> (Mbigi 1997:138-139)

The above-mentioned insight, emphasises the learning process as both the responsibility and role of both the educator and the learner, expressed in an interdependent interaction. This kind of process would definitely exclude the arrogant and boastful attitude of some educators who, instead of spending quality time educating and empowering the country's youth, waste a lot of time boasting to their learners about either their academic or financial achievements. It has often been alleged by learners and of course also experienced by some parents that some educators concentrate on their personal improvement at the expense of the learners. Again, Ubuntu education can to my mind never include the non-caring attitude nor laziness on the part of some educators who easily shirk their responsibility of helping learners to understand their subjects, by simply referring learners who ask questions in search of understanding, to Saturday School classes for better understanding. That is in my opinion, a clear display of a lack of commitment. The Ubuntu lifestyle and education cannot allow that. Saule (2000:6) states in a paper entitled: *Ubuntu Was? Is?* that Ubuntu is, among other things, opposed to laziness. Ubuntu is clearly an important requirement for effective reconstruction. Intense love, caring for, and commitment to others should form the core of service provision by all service providers, especially educators who have the mammoth task of laying a strong foundation for the reconstruction of our society. The government has crafted the concept of "Batho pele" (people first), in addition to the bill of human rights, to highlight the importance of, and respect for people's interests in all service rendering (cf Tshabalala-Msimang 2001:1). This concept is useful in that it strengthens Ubuntu-inspired respect and caring for the recipients of service.

Mutual respect is indispensable in the task of reconstruction. The environment within which education is provided should therefore be one that is filled with genuine love and mutual respect. In the spirit of Ubuntu it is expected of the educator to teach with love, caring and commitment to achieve reconstruction. In the same vein, it is equally expected of the learner to respect educators, accept guidance, and to enthusiastic-ally, and creatively engage in learning activities in order to achieve reconstruction. It is common knowledge that at various schools in many South African townships, there are unruly elements among learners, who engage in alcohol and drug abuse, after which they make life unbearable for both educators and law-abiding learners. Such unruly behaviour

has, apart from being made known by learners who view it with fear and trembling, also been adequately shown on one controversial but revealing SABC 1 programme, named *Yizo Yizo*. The programme has shown in graphic details, the negative behaviour of some learners in collusion with certain adults and educators and the devastating consequences thereof. This matter shall not be pursued further in this paper. I think that it is enough to point out that the genesis of such destructive behaviour can be ascribed to the abandonment of the Ubuntu spirit and practice, in the structuring and implementation of our education system. This certainly weakens the basis for inter-dependence and mutual respect – a situation that precipitates and perpetuates incidents where relationships are aborted – strengthening disrespect and the resort to the law of the jungle.

6.4   Ubuntu education views life as an indivisible whole

Ubuntu education as the traditional African education, according to Mbigi (1997:137), views life as an indivisible whole that emphasises the spiritual, social, political and economic development. "Young people", Mbigi (1997:137) says: "were taught collective social, economic, spiritual and political stewardship." According to Mbigi then, the education system having reconstruction of African people as its focus, should incorporate and reflect the African collective solidarity of Ubuntu both in content and practice.

Such an education system will achieve its goal of reconstruction by encouraging and effecting the mind-set change in the learners – from that which seeks to create job seekers to the one that seeks to create job creators. In that way education will contribute positively to the reconstruction of the country. Mbigi (1997:137), after pointing to hunting, craft and pottery as enthusing activities in traditional Africa, says that the inspiration of the youth towards creativity today, could be derived from the role model of some known enterprising ancestor. Crafford (1988:84) also attests to the need for the inspiration of one or the other enterprising ancestor (in his case) in the church in Africa: "Binne die raamwerk van die *Communio Sanctorum* kan die afgestorwe vromes wat deel bly van die gemeenskap van gelowiges tog 'n rol speel om 'n invloed uit te oefen op die lewenswandel van die agtergeblewenis. Hulle voorbeeld kan dien tot inspirasie vir die lewendes."

Even in our present day and age, education of our youth must be integrated with our social, cultural, spiritual, economic and political life contexts, all of which have roots in our past history and extend their vision towards our unknown but longed-for future. The practical, holistic and role-model-based traditional African education is quite appealing to Mbigi (1997:137) and moves him to suggest:

> Our schools should now seek to introduce business entrepreneurship into the curriculum that would be taught largely through practical projects and story telling, i.e. through biographies of successful entrepreneurs. One of Africa's major obstacles to development is lack of a sense of collective social citizenship and stewardship. This normally is evident in the civil service and parastatal institutions, where the culture of service is usually absent.

Mbigi (1997:137) decries the lack of basic African characteristics, influence and ways in the education systems in African schools, saying: "The spirit of African hospitality found in African families and communities, has no space in African schools and organisations, instead in its place we have a looting and mercenary mentality." This explains emphatically, the origin of the disturbing lack of discipline of some learners and some educators at our schools – something that we have alluded to, earlier in this article. People do not seem to have the interest of our national property at heart. It is quite obvious that Mbigi is proud of, and respectful of the Ubuntu philosophy as the corner stone of African development and that our drawing from it would facilitate our understanding and therefore inspire in us, more creativity. In the above quotations from Mbigi, it is demonstrated how education should take life as an indivisible whole and how ignorance of the African ways of life in African education leads to the emergence of a looting and mercenary mentality instead of the culture of service and hospitality.

6.5   Ubuntu education is indissolubly linked to religious instruction

The fact that the origin of education in many countries has been religious bodies, especially the Christian religion that did a laudable job in educating and developing nations, emphasises the importance of religion in education. Pieterse (2001:47) points to the South African Education situation prior to 1953 and after. Pieterse (2001:47)

indicates that until 1953, education of blacks was provided, mainly by churches and attests to its quality, by pointing out that it was mostly good. Because of the good quality education that was provided by the churches in the past, there have recently been various calls to the church to get involved in education. Tom Manthata, speaking at Challenge's fifth annual lecture made one such call: "Do what the missionaries did. Get involved in education again as you did in earlier times. Harness the forces of commitment at your disposal. Don't fail communities of the disadvantaged in their greatest hour of need" (Nolan 2000:27). Of course, only the opposite can be said in respect of the Bantu education, which was legislated in terms of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, through which the apartheid government took over schools from the churches, only to provide an inferior education which was meant to train merely a black working class (Pieterse 2001:47). That action of the apartheid government was and is still deplorable to say the least. The words of Tom Manthata, spoken at the fifth annual Challenge lecture express better, the despicableness of the apartheid regime's take-over of church school system: "One of the grossest violations of human rights was the apartheid regime's destruction of the church school system in South Africa in the 1950s" (Nolan 2000:26-27). The legacy of apartheid government's Bantu Education policy is severely felt even today, more than seven years after the birth in1994, of the democratic dispensation (Pieterse 2001:47). The church school system used to be – before, remained during the apartheid years and could still be the pillar of strength in the reconstruction and development of people today.

Vestiges of the good education that churches used to provide were evident even during the apartheid years as church schools that operated, as private schools became the only schools that produced good results and high quality scholars. Nolan (2000:27) attests to this when he says: Some churches managed to save a few of their schools. And today, as our speaker pointed out, these are the schools that have more than 90% pass rate for matric. What more proof, do we need that the churches can and must do once again what they did in the past? This just shows how important the contribution of religious bodies were, are and still can be.

The authors of the two above-mentioned texts decrying the apartheid govern-ment's take-over of education responsibilities from churches are, even though acting in different contexts, basically moved by the same desire to have the quality of education in

South Africa improved. The need to reconstruct and develop human resources for the fight against poverty, crime, discrimination, HIV-AIDS etc seems to be the greatest driving force behind the strong insistence on church involvement in the provision of education in South Africa. The church is therefore trusted with the important task of reconstruction of our society. How does one explain this trust? Is this trust perhaps based on the past record of the church's impeccable performance in education? It seems the past record of the church's performance in education remains an important reason for the present calls for church involvement in the provision of education. The question is what ingredient in the life and work of the church led to the alluded excellent performance in education? I will return to this question later. It is important to note here, that religion has always formed an overarching component of many cultures.

Religion also played an important role in the traditional African education. Acknowledgement and affirmation of this fact will in my opinion be facilitative of the education of our children. Mbigi (1997:138) affirms the importance of the role that religion has played in the socialisation of the youth, especially with its use of rituals and ceremonies. Mbigi (1997:138) suggests that the grafting of ritualistic and spiritual aspects back in the education system would show young people how to discover their personal destiny and purpose in life. Mbigi's (1997:138) emphasis on the role of religion in its various forms, for example African, Christian, Islam, etc is important, as it helps to close the curtain on biased intellectually and philosophically focussed education system, ushering in a more holistically-focussed education.

To return to the above-mentioned question, which seeks to enquire into the requisite ingredient for the church's excellent performance in education, I find myself bound to give credit to the influence of Biblical social values, which are vital in the shaping of the Christian religious life and work. One is tempted to conclude that in Africa, the Biblical social values combined well with the African social values as embodied in the concept and practice of Ubuntu to produce a humble, respectful, co-operative, loving and caring living and working environment which was definitely vital also for the education process in Africa. Botha (1997:180) points out that African social values are more closely related to the Biblical social values than it is the case with social values of the Western culture. The fact that both the Biblical and African social values

are founded on good collective and co-operative principles has in my opinion been greatly contributive to the church's wonderful performance in the provision of education. It is in this regard important to acknowledge with appreciation Mbigi & Maree's (1995:88-90) recording of these important principles in the section on development model (Ubuntu), which I present in an adapted way below, namely:

- The principle of morality. This is the insistence on the purity of both motives and behaviour in the effective strategic implementation. This is very important for credibility and effectiveness in service provision. This strong sense of morality must be one of the reasons why the church provided excellent education in the past and even today in the remaining church schools. Kudadjie (1996:187) also attests to the importance of moral and ethical components of religious instruction:

  > When people undergo training as blacksmiths, herbalists, priests or as chiefs, they are not only trained in the technical skills of their future offices but an important part of their preparation for their vocations consists in acquiring the ethics of their vocation as well as the values of the wider society. These have stood the test of time in producing not only responsible community leaders but also a generally disciplined society.

These, it is believed, will help sensitise people to what is right and wrong in life as a whole, thus reducing the potential for corruption and all vice which have delayed development programmes from effective delivery in many countries.

- The principle of interdependence, which must have boosted a high-powered performance through collective co-operation of all stakeholders.
- The principle of the spirit of humankind. This originates from the acknowledgement that humankind is entitled to unconditional respect and dignity. According to this principle those who are serving in service-providing institutions must recognise and acknowledge the fact that all institutions and organisations exist in order to serve humankind and that, should they fail to do so, they cease to exist.

- The principle of totality. At the core of this principle is the need for the involvement of everyone, of the stakeholders in the improvement of everything related to the purpose and task of the institution or organisation. It involves step by step collective improvement task by stakeholders.

These principles have in my opinion, the ability to stimulate active involvement, co-operation, loyalty, sensitivity, strategic planning and consistency in the carrying out of essential tasks. It is my belief that these principles have contributed greatly to the church's efficiency in the provision of education in the past. The church is in the best of positions as a body that is in perpetual interaction with parents, educators, learners and government officials to be a uniting and energising force for effective reconstructional education process. The church is in my opinion, ahead of many institutions in its teaching and application (knowingly or unknowingly) of Ubuntu principle of collective development and reconstruction as summarised in the collective fingers theory (Cf Mbigi & Maree 1995:111). The collective fingers theory represents the five important aspects of Ubuntu, namely respect, dignity, solidarity, compassion and survival (Mbigi & Maree). These aspects are also essential elements of church life and work. It is therefore not surprising that the church is called to get involved in providing education in a concerted effort to reconstruct the South African society.

The success of Ubuntu education will be measured against its ability to achieve the following objectives:

- Energising young people to learn, know and internalise respect for authority, starting with that of the parent and educator.
- Helping the youth to understand and agree to guiding norms and values, which give meaning to life. Griesel et al (1991:198) say the following in this regard: "A viable person is one who does not do what is proper simply because others expect it of him, but for the sake of propriety as such". In other words, she/he lives under the authority of certain norms with which he has identified. It is therefore important for young people to be guided towards discovery, understanding and acceptance of the authority of such norms in order to attain moral adulthood or

viability. The guidelines on religious/moral education, prepared by the Ghana Education Service (Kudadjie 1996:186) emphasise the need for character training, moral value and the promotion of discipline at home, school and in the community as a whole, which the Education Service believed, could effectively be achieved through religious/ moral education. Ubuntu education as I have presented in this article, is to my mind capable of achieving the objective because of its indissoluble link to religious education.

- Helping young people to understand their individual and corporate responsibilities. The youth has to be assisted to make choices, which are in their own view, proper and relevant but also to accept accountability for those choices. D'Souza (2000:17) points to the importance of the role of education in helping the learners to know and to choose what is good.

- Encouraging young men and women to always give it their best in tasks and activities, which they are involved in. In other words, education must help engender in the youth, and in others an impeccable work ethos.

- Guiding young people towards a good understanding of obedience, not as inferiority or a sign of defeat or powerlessness but as willingness to obey those self-discovered norms and values (Griesel et al 1991:182) that a dignified life expects from all human beings.

7.   CONCLUSION

I have illustrated that education can become quite a powerful tool in the task of reconstructing the nation. The nation needs to educate its youth in knowledge and skills. My appeal to those who are responsible for education in our country is that education should never be divorced from responsibility. Should we do that, we will definitely miss a golden opportunity to reconstruct our country and nation. Used correctly, education as education for reconstruction will without doubt facilitate a smooth integration process of young people into the community, church, industry and into the global community. Ubuntu Education could be, as I have shown above, capable of achieving wonderful results.

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