

Harold Wolpe
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Jonathan Jansen:

It is an honour to be here this evening to talk about education and also to honour Harold Wolpe, an incredible hero of the struggle. I had prepared speech, but I've decided not to use it.

My question is this: How do you teach values in a society at war with itself? How do you teach values when black-white tensions pervade society? How do you teach values when there is a ship circling the coastline with armaments for a country that is imploding and when the leader of our country says that there is no crisis in Zimbabwe? How do you teach values when the leader of ANC has unprotected sex with his friend's HIV-positive daughter? How do you teach values when so many of our children go to school hungry? How do you teach values when Camps Bay exists in same region as Khayelitsha?

We fool ourselves to think we can convince young people to live with respect when their parents do not. When teachers in townships teach for a fraction of time compared to those in white schools, how do we get to the conclusion that tinkering with the school curriculum will help, when we have a fundamentally sick society. How do you teach values when the context in which we exist is one in which a great teacher of values is gunned down. How do you teach values when the ideological view of George Bush is the same as Osama Bin Laden – each of them believe that they are right all the time and are not willing to compromise? How do you teach values when you can find a space on the internet where white South Africans pour out racism? How do you teach values when our very language solidifies the notion of victor and victim?

This is not about getting better textbooks or better trained teachers; it's not about another revised curriculum. What matters is if in parental, political and religious leaders, children see reflected the values we desperately want in society. From my personal experience, I've found that it is easier to lead thousands of students in Pretoria University than two teenagers at home.

I was in Alexandra yesterday because something promising had happened at one of the schools there. Students and parents had taken a list of teachers to the Education Department and told them that the teachers don't show up and when they do show up, they can't teach. The Department of Education did something truly unexpected then - it fired them. The teachers are out and so is the principal. Here, the teachers' union, which defines its agenda around its own interests and not around the children's interests, has its power challenged. The unions can't strike anymore because now the kids, parents and communities will take a stand. I spoke to the kids that stood up and made the list. They said that they had had enough - teachers must teach and learners must learn. I don't have faith that the government will have the balls to stare down the union. However, maybe the answer lies in the communities taking back the schools.

I interviewed a blind guy who thought that this is the best country to live in. I thought 'maybe you need to be blind to believe that'. He said that possibly the only way everything will be sorted out is if Jesus comes. So I've spent the last few days praying hard that Jesus will come soon.

Questions:

1. From the speeches we've heard here, there seem to be two different pictures of education in South Africa. One is a lot more hopeful and full of promise than the other. What is the reality of the situation in the country?
 - Cameron Dugmore: Contrary to what your impression seems to have been, I think Jonathan gave us a real sense of hope. The Alexandra incident gives me a great deal of hope. It shows that learners are starting to take a stand about the behaviour of teaching with regard to things such as late-coming and about the quality of their education. Education is an incredibly difficult issue. If one were to look at the literacy and numeracy results, one might want to throw up one's hands and say that we're not doing enough. In addition, violence in schools is a major issue. But young people generally remain hopeful and this gives me hope. Jonathan referred to Polokwane. One thing that gave me hope was the resolution that elevated education and healthcare to top priorities. It held that teachers not being in class etc are non-negotiable issues. I think that's hopeful. More and more there is an acceptance that education is a fundamental priority and must be dealt with.
 - Jonathan Jansen: The book I wrote is optimistic. None of us would work in education if we weren't optimists. For example, one of the most under-funded aspects of education is primary education. Yet, there are people who have very little money and food of their own, but are making sure that children of a young age are getting lessons, food and a sense of togetherness. The Waterkloof Four scared the hell out of us. But provided that in our leadership we are empathetic and respectful, we can have an impact on the children. Politically, I understand that commissions are important, but I feel that they won't get to the core issues of what happens in teaching and learning. Maybe there is a need for South Africa to have more open sessions in the vein of the TRC. I don't think we should have these to make white people look bad, that is not going to happen. Rather, we need to create new ground for talking about these things. You won't get at these hard issues by pretending there's no crisis.
 - Gail – when I look at the big picture, I get overwhelmed. My hope lies with the teachers who are in our project. In the project something of critical importance happens – we take the time to talk. There is so little that we know of each other given the past. I'm also given hope by the stand these teachers are taking in schools, for example, against poor principals, and by the care that they take with the children.
2. MEC Dugmore: what is preventing the department from instituting compulsory learning of African languages in model C schools?

3. I have a comment and a question. Someone from overseas said to me that the officials in the education department are either ignorant or arrogant. The situation was bad in 1994, but I think that it's worse now. Jonathan, if we could go back to 1994, what are the fundamental changes you would have made to the education system?
4. I am bit worried about the approach that we're taking to analysing the situation. I was involved in a youth organisation that was concerned with issues around education. Linked to education, there are issues of poverty and of safety in schools. People argue that we have the best educational policies and practices in the world. But people are leaving to go overseas. Why aren't people employed after getting their degrees. I am also concerned about the first and second speakers because they were narrow in their approach. There are more issues concerned than were raised.

Cameron Dugmore – The lack of compulsory African languages in model C schools is a resource issue. There has not been a national policy decision that is backed by the resources necessary to ensure that we can give effect to provisions promoting multi-lingualism. What we have done in this province is to introduce a language-transformation plan to try to ensure 6 years of mother-tongue based education. The literacy test scores tripled when people tested in Xhosa, but the numeracy test results did not improve. We are trying to ensure that each learner receives three years of an additional language. We have put in place a learning program, but again the issue is a lack of teachers. The plan is to have shared pools of teachers in a district to teach Xhosa and Afrikaans to a number of schools.

Jonathan Jansen - on question 2: post-1994 there were three things we did wrong. Firstly, outcomes-based education was a big mistake and we have paid the price for it. I had raised serious concerns about it at the time, but everyone now agrees on the point. The reason it failed is because it is based on a poor understanding of how schools work and don't work. Secondly, we lost the best teachers with the rationalisation program. I realise that we need to be careful not to be a-historical, but it was still a great loss. Thirdly, we populated the machinery for making education policy with a whole lot of young activists who knew nothing about what they were doing. This is a dilemma for govt. We've made the mistake and now we, as black people, need to get over our self-righteousness. We don't need another group of rash, inexperienced people making key decisions. We need people who are grounded in order to go forward. I believe that what you need to do is test the subject-matter knowledge of each teacher. You shouldn't release the results. Rather, you need to determine who the teachers who can't teach higher grade are. When you've identified them, you need to give them support for 3 years. If they don't improve, then you must get them out of the system. But the problem is that nobody will be allowed to touch those teachers. But we need to do it and we must not do it for political point-scoring.

Cameron Dugmore – there are members of teachers unions here. The minister, at a meeting, indicated that the last time an inspection of a school happened in South Africa

was in 1987. The last 4 years have taught me that where schools are effectively led and managed they can achieve a lot. If they are not effectively managed, where does the responsibility lie? In Polokwane, a resolution was passed that essentially creates a unit that will bring back school inspections. It's a positive thing that will assist in monitoring the management of schools. The reality is that parents living in certain communities accept unacceptable things. Such things would never be accepted by parents in a model C school. How does one instil that culture? We need to challenge our union members to move to talking about non-negotiables such as arriving on time and sober. Let's not start another debate about revising the curriculum. I think the minister has acted correctly by starting to focus on leadership development activities. This is a positive step.

Chair – I would like us to focus our questions around the topic we're here to discuss. Please keep all questions focused on the topic as education is a very broad subject.

5. I am one of the teacher-trainers who were fooled by government during the merger process. Our college was closed. When we had these merger talks we were told that such a closure would not happen. I constantly bump into my former students and they are demoralised. They say that they go to all these workshops and are taught by people that don't know the material and are glorified administrators. What is being done to address this? Secondly, we are talking about our schools preparing people for democracy, but schools are some of the most feared places for girls because of violence at school. What about this issue?
6. MEC Dugmore – We are preparing our learners for the future and we are living in a present dominated by technology. I am involved in a study looking at technology and how it relates to education. Educators don't embrace technology. What is the department doing to shift the mindset of educators to use technology for teaching?
7. How do you value education when learners that finish their high school education are not getting access to tertiary education? How do you value education and how does it make education entrench values when we liberalise education and make it a commodity?
8. Regarding the quality of educators themselves, there was an announcement that there was the possibility of a program for educator development being instituted. What's happened to that? You suggested earlier that it's not been taken on or put in place.

Cameron Dugmore:

- On question 5: There is a project having a big impact on the attitudes of young people and of young girls - our Peer Education Project. It has an aspect focusing on gender stereotyping. The reality is that the figures you've referred to regarding violence in schools constitute a real challenge. It is more about the education of, and working with, young boys. The minister's project that focuses on girls hasn't really

taken off. I believe that it's primarily boys that we need to work with in order to make progress on the issue.

- On access to higher education: a huge amount of work needs to be done here. For learners who do good work, but can't afford tertiary education, there is access to funding. I would like to know what our youth organisations are doing to spread this message. Polokwane began the debate about whether the government should pay for undergraduate university education for the poor.

- Teacher development program: a teacher development program is being put in place. It is an issue of professional upgrading through SAIS, and the government is currently putting more money on the table.

Jonathan Jansen:

- I think that the Foundations for Learning Program is great. OBE is so politically loaded. The problem with both the Polokwane resolutions and the Foundations for Learning Program is that the message needs to get out to the ordinary teacher. The Western Cape is well placed with its general education policy, but other provinces are bad. National South Africa needs to talk about the capacity of those who are supposed to do teacher development.

- Access to tertiary education is very important. It is complicated. We have two realities. In the first are universities saying that they have money and then in the other we have the kid who doesn't have the basic information to get the money. There is a huge distance between the two. Molly Black is a young American who made a movie about a bunch of kids from Oscar Mpeta High School coming to university. Until you talk about a serious re-introduction of guidance, and by this I mean career guidance and counselling to kids in high-school there will remain a big gap between those that get there and those who don't..

9. I am a learner in high school. Why is the government giving more bursaries to those who do maths and science than to those that do history and geography etc? You can't start your answer with 'the government needs more people who study maths and science...'

10. Is the Department of Education failing in educating our kids for democracy? How can you teach values to kids that are at the levels of poverty that are found in many of the provinces? The department can't respond by trying to mass manage the problem. Rather it should respond by bringing it down to the level of the individual learner. In our experience as the African Scholars Fund, we're able to take it down to the level of the learner and to address their basic needs, be they as simple as the provision of school bags and books. When we communicate and reach out to them on an individual level, even if they're in the poorest of the poor communities, they immediately start asking for guidance. They respond to what people like the president say. They'll say 'Mbeki says he wants more engineers so

I want to be an engineer.’ Life orientation is great when it is brought down to an individual level.

11. Annmarie Wolpe – on the question of values: we’re talking as though there are commonly held values. However, the value system in our society is very complex. The notion that we can inculcate a value that can address all of this is overly simplified. The teacher himself or herself reflects the values of the culture that he or she comes from. Having worked on gender issues, there is no guarantee that teachers will reflect views that promote gender equity. Secondly, the curriculum is so packed; human rights are only one small element. Then we come to the teacher training. It is very important and you’ve all touched on the need for that. But equally, the whole organisation of schools reflects poverty and urbanisation. I don’t think the informed discussion for tonight can touch on all this, but think it is relevant.
12. I’m from a religious centre where we’ve started an environmental project. So many people are disconnected from the environment. Yet, the environment is based on diversity and if we can embrace the diversity, we can realise that God wants us to be different. I want to encourage the use of eco-schools to embrace the environment.
13. MEC – what is stopping the WCED from bridging the gap between former model C schools and others in terms of sporting facilities? Township schools generally don’t have playing fields.

Cameron Dugmore:

- To the learner – We need more teachers generally and there are bursaries for teachers for more than just maths and science. There are bursaries for teachers for the languages and for teaching at the primary school level. But as a country we can’t ignore that we need to grow our economy and need certain skills to do so. We need more artisans and engineers. We would be failing our people if we did not try to address these needs.
- Regarding teaching values in a context of poverty: we don’t have a choice but to carry on and try to teach values, to add value and to support learners from poor areas.
- Regarding Dr Wolpe’s comments: I agree that we don’t have a common perspective relating to values. But we can promote and internalise the values of the constitution. We are fortunate that the values in the constitution are largely universal.
- I agree we need more environmental education and that there is work that can be done in this area.

- Regarding Sporting facilities: We have a five billion rand backlog in sports infrastructure in the Western Cape alone. That's half of the education budget. We're looking at a project to let the students of one school use the sports facilities of others. It is a budgetary issue.

Jonathan Jansen: one of the big mistakes we make as South Africans is to treat the sciences and humanities as separate things. My concern is that we're producing engineers who have no sense of history, and who are not comfortable with woman or other races. If I had my way, we'd have a year when we taught everyone humanities, when we'd teach them to think.

In closing for tonight, I remember coming to this campus for the first time as a kid and seeing all these white boys playing on a beautiful sports field. I remember feeling very resentful. Fundamentally, we're still a much divided society. I don't want young people to tolerate each other; I want them to embrace each other. We can't play racial games, we must go forward together.

Gail: as a history teacher, I think two things are happening in classrooms with the new history curriculum. I think that there is a process of self-reflection which encourages us to think about the hurt that the past has caused. The other thing is that in the new curriculum we are looking at a whole range of skills, such as life skills, that are critical in any job. There are very few other subjects that will provide us with both of those. History imparts skills that are vital, such as learning to look at and analyse situations, and to look at what is relevant and what is not. Therefore, I think we need to give bursaries to every person who wants to take history.