THE PEOPLE'S EDUCATION MOVEMENT
IN SOUTH AFRICA —
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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R. MUHAMMAD
IN MEMORY OF MY LATE MOTHER, KULSUM HAMED, WHO ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ME TO ENHANCE MY STUDIES
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Die doel van hierdie ondersoek is om te bepaal in watter mate People’s Education beskou kan word as 'n proses om 'n nuwe opvoedkundige bestel in Suid-Afrika te bewerkstellig.

Om bogenoemde te bereik, is van 'n geskiedkundige benadering gebruik gemaak om sodoende die People’s Education - beweging se ervarings histories te evalueer. Hierdie ondersoek gaan van die veronderstelling uit dat 'n toekomstige onderwysbedeling nie losgemaak kan word van die onderwysstryd in die verlede nie. Die ideale post-apartheid onderwysbedeling behoort daarenteen, 'n natuurlike gevolg van hierdie vroeëre stryd te wees.

Die People’s Education - beweging was altyd, op een of ander wyse, 'n endemiese deel van die onderwysstryd in Suid-Afrika. Deur alternatiewe opvoedkundige middels voor te stel, krisissituasies op te los en stukrag te gee aan die soeke na 'n alternatiewe opvoedingstretatgie, het die People’s Education - beweging 'n onmiskenbare rol gespeel op die gebied van die Suid Afrikaanse onderwys en verdien daarom 'n historiese evaluering.

In die navorsing is bevind dat die People’s Education - beweging deur drie hooffases heen ontwikkel het:

Tydens die aanvanklike fase het "flitse" van die filosofie rondom People’s Education hier in daar kop uitgesteek vanaf so vroeg as die neêntiende eeu. Die skepping van die uiteindelike slagspreuk, "People’s
Education", in 1986 kan gesien word as 'n natuurlike voortvloeiSEL van die geskiedkundige stryd.

Die tweede fase (1986 - 1990) van die People's Education - ervaring toon 'n tweeledige stel reaksie van die staat en 'n reeks teoretiese voorstellings afkomstig van die publiek en verskeie akademiese kringe.

Die finale fase (1990 - 1995) van die People's Education - beweging toon belangrike bydraes in belang van "People's Education" soos die formulering van beleidsdokumente wat by die onderhandelingstafel gebruik is. Gedurende hierdie fase het People's Education ten volle deelgeneem aan die oorgangsprosesse, maar dit terselfdertyd nodig geag om sy eie rol binne 'n toekomstige bedeling te heroorweeg.

Hierdie studie beskou elke fase van die People's Education ervaring as belangwekkende proses in die rigting van 'n uiteindelike nuwe onderwys - bedeling. Die aanvanklike fase toon dat die People's Education reeds in 'n baie vroeë stadium 'n inheemse deel van die historiese stryd uitmaak. Die tweede fase dui aan dat die People's Education noodsaaklike teoretiese debatte ingevoer het en 'n wye reeks sienings na hierdie debatte genooi het, wat noodwendige prosesse is om 'n nuwe onderwysbedeling te formuleer. Die derde fase toon dat People's Education konkrete bydraes gelewer het in sy ondersteuning van die uiteindelike ewolusie van 'n nuwe onderwysstelsel.

Die bevindinge van die studie dui dus daarop dat die People's
Education - beweging inderdaad 'n belangrike bydraende invloed was by die opstelling van 'n nuwe onderwysbedeling in ons land.
CHAPTER ONE

THE PEOPLE'S EDUCATION MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA -
THE PLAN AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and plan of Research

The injection of radical political changes in South Africa during the past two years has resulted in the urgent necessity of drawing up a new educational dispensation as soon as possible. Where do educationists start in this enormous task? Having inherited an education system which is racist, undemocratic, grossly biased and a scene of constant struggle, it is obvious that compiling a fresh educational order is no easy task. As Hartshorne (1986) a leading educationist has very accurately expressed: "It is relatively easy to break down the old in education ... but to build up the new is another matter, demanding agreement, common purpose, imagination, energy and commitment".

The eventual drive towards the formulation of a new educational dispensation has been undoubtedly inevitable. Apartheid education, with its gross racial bias, ideologically motivated goals, and numerous inconsistencies only served in sowing the seeds of its own destruction. It was therefore not surprising that apartheid education was continuously possessed with internal 'furnaces' of struggle, challenge and anger. Throughout the period of the apartheid era it was always either directly or indirectly obvious that such an unjust education system could not
continue and that a new educational agenda was essential. The eventual move towards formulating a democratic and fair education system soon after the 1994 first democratic elections was long overdue. While this very urgent and essential task has indeed proved to be a difficult one, what is certain is that any formulation of a new educational dispensation would be incomplete without reference to past educational theories.

People's Education, which has been one such alternative educational attempt is especially relevant in any South African educational debate for several reasons. While People's Education never intended to represent the new educational system as such, the very fact that People's Education emerged as a result of a long history of educational upheavals and succeeded in laying down some kind of framework for transformation attests to its significance. It has also fulfilled the task of taking invaluable pre-emptive steps in formulating the desired education system, and it has played a major participatory role during the negotiating process and beyond. The overwhelming response it received from students, parents, the community, workers, the press, educationists, and the state has itself confirmed the importance of People's Education.

Zille (1987: 16), has hailed People’s Education as being "the most significant shift in resistance strategy this decade". The Natal Witness (1987: 8) described People’s Education as "a lit candle" and stated that People’s Education needs to be "debated and discussed precisely because it is a significant alternative to a system which has failed". Kruss, (1988: 41) has described
People's Education as the "embryo" for a future education system. She has stated that "few discussions of a future education system occur without responding to the challenges raised by People's Education. In many ways the concept of People's Education have set the terms for debate".

These positive quotes, which are among many, prove that the People's Education movement has implanted a lasting impact on the South African educational scene. Indeed, People's Education has not been all positive. It has possessed many limitations and has raised numerous criticisms. This study perceives these shortcomings and challenges as part of its historical experience.

It is the task of this research report to map out the historical experience of the People's Education for People's Power endeavour and to highlight the extent to which it has laid down a fundamental basis for a new educational dispensation in South Africa. This goal will involve three main levels of analysis: First, (in chapter two), a brief history of educational struggles from as early as the nineteenth century will be mapped. This history of educational struggles will show that the concept of a People's Education was not a new idea. Contrary to popular belief, People's Education represented a germination of a seed which was ever-present throughout a long history of educational struggles.

Second, (in chapter three), a reconstruction and assessment of the process of emergence and development of the People's Education movement from its inception in 1986 would attempt to
show that the People's Education movement experienced an intensification of state repression, floods of academic scrutiny and state accommodationism of the concept. However, these theoretical debates have tended to enrich the importance of the People's Education movement, instead of diminishing its value. This is so, because these debates have served to open up a public discussion on a future dispensation and has pre-ordained problems which a new educational dispensation could encounter, thus simplifying the task of educationists by 'warning' them of such dangers when drawing up a new educational prescription.

Chapter four of this dissertation would attempt to contextualise the People's Education movement within the present climate of political change. This will include a survey of the contribution and participation of the NECC (the National Education Co-ordinating Committee) in political negotiations and in the drawing up of transitional education policy drafts.

The final chapter will summarise the findings of this study and draw conclusions on the extent to which People's Education has contributed towards the construction of a democratic educational dispensation.

1.2 Stating the problem

It is obvious that the essential problem which has driven and motivated the move towards a radically new educational dispensation in South Africa has been the presence of an unjust, racist, and ideologically dominated apartheid education. The apartheid bureaucracy has proved that any system which fails to respond to the needs of the majority and which deliberately
neglects the voice of the people is bound to entangle itself into a web of struggle and resistance.

It has finally become clear that a new educational order is on the agenda in South Africa. However, it is important not to lose sight of historical struggles and popular movements which have played crucial roles during the apartheid era. People’s Education is especially relevant in educational debates since it has represented the first real effort made by the oppressed people of South Africa at seeking out an alternative educational order. While People’s Education has not been directly responsible for the move towards a new educational order, it did however, mobilise the move and succeeded in reiterating the notion that the voices of the majority of the people should be reflected in our future education system. It is important to evaluate the extent to which People’s Education has mobilised the move towards a new dispensation both theoretically as well as developmentally. The dawning of a new educational era should not consist of foreign imposed theories since these would clearly be inappropriate to our unique historical experience. Rather, a new educational prescription should ideally evolve out of a context of past educational struggles. It is therefore important to evaluate the importance of past educational endeavours such as People’s Education.

1.3 Rationale

While a significant proportion of material has been written on People’s Education, much of the literature has concentrated
exclusively on its conceptual aspects and its basic principles and problems. No significant attempts have been made to examine its importance to a future South Africa. Where this has been done, the historical experience of People’s Education as well as its implications for a future dispensation have been neglected. This study should thus be seen as an attempt to unearth the theoretical and practical experiences of People’s Education, which in turn would assist in highlighting its place in the process of construction of a non-racial and democratic education system for the post-apartheid South Africa.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The major hypothesis in this study, as has been explained earlier, is to examine the extent to which People’s Education can be interpreted as a process towards a new educational order. An exploration of this hypothesis has necessitated tracing the experience of People’s Education from its initial introduction to the present. The existing studies have discussed the concept, rationale and implications of People’s Education without adequately examining the process and concrete experience of People’s Education. This study differs from this tradition in that it assesses the significance of People’s Education in the light of its historical experience.

It assumes that any assessment of People’s Education needs to be traced historically. This has been a widely shared approach in many social studies. For example, Marx has suggested that we must think historically the problems of the present and future. Abrams, a major protagonist in the field of historical sociology,
has provided a sound rationale for this methodological enquiry: "Whatever reality society has is an historical reality" (Abrams, 1982: X).

This study also perceives the People’s Education movement as a process, a mobile and active movement rather than a static, conceptual theory. It is this perception of People’s Education which attests to the historical method of enquiry inherent in this dissertation.

1.5 Research Methodology
The primary research method which has driven this study has involved an analysis of both primary as well as secondary sources. Initial research was conducted through an extensive review of the existing literature. Secondary sources helped in achieving an overview on the types of debates, questions, perceptions and interpretations which People’s Education raised at particular times. Primary sources such as newspapers, pamphlets, documents, resolutions and meeting minutes provided theoretical information on the perceptions of People’s Education from the actors themselves. Newspaper articles in particular have helped in tracing the historical experience of People’s Education from the state and community points of view.

While the use of primary and secondary sources have provided the bulk of information, much was achieved by the author’s personal attendance of early NECC public speeches and debates. An interview with Mr Desmond Thompson, the former media officer of
the NECC has provided invaluable insights into the internal dynamics of the NECC structure. In addition, an interview with Mr Nazeer Carrim, who has written an internationally published article on the future role of People's Education has provided interesting information on academic perceptions of the national closure of the NECC.

1.6 Research limitations and problems

The problems experienced by the researcher in conducting this study have been twofold:

Firstly, while it was relatively easy to find information on the experience of the NECC between the years 1986 - 1993, it proved to be difficult to locate NECC material after 1993. Copies of NECC meeting minutes which consisted of valuable and lengthy debates on the eventual closure of the NECC were unavailable. It was discovered that as a result of the national closure of the NECC, all NECC material had been sent to the archives of Mayibuye Centre at the University of The Western Cape. However, on arriving at the above destination, it was unfortunately discovered by the researcher that NECC material was still tightly boxed, unfiled and therefore inaccessible.

Secondly, the researcher wished to conduct interviews with NECC proponents and founders. However, it was discovered that the majority of NECC personnel had been absorbed into government structures who proved to be too occupied and therefore unavailable for interviews.
CHAPTER TWO

EVALUATING AND HISTORISISING THE APPEARANCE OF PEOPLE’S EDUCATION AND ITS ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE 1980’S

2.1 Introduction

The formal appearance of People’s Education in 1986 aroused a wide range of responses from various sectors of the South African community. However, it is the purpose of this chapter to show that while the concept of "People’s Education" has represented a new notion, much of the philosophy inherent in People’s Education, such as the need for parental and community involvement in education and the necessity of a more relevant and just syllabus have in fact been concerns which have been expressed from as early as the eighteenth century. People’s Education therefore represented a natural and historical product of a long history of educational upheavals. This chapter also aims at historisising the formal appearance of the People’s Education movement and its experience in the 1980’s.

2.2 The Impact of Pre-1986 educational struggles on People’s Education Philosophy

Kros (1987), has described People’s Education as a "premature delivery" and has used verbs such as "rush job", "feverish rush" and "well-intended frenzy" to describe the materials which People’s Education produced. However, as will be shown later, the concept of an alternative education is in no way new or premature. The oppressed people of South Africa have, almost
from the very beginning of educational struggles tried to set up independent 'People's Education' schools in one form or another. As an article in "de Kat" (1987: 41) very accurately stated: "Swart skole - onrus in Suid Africa is so oud soos hierdie land self". Afrikaaner educationist, Van der Walt (1987: 244) has also acknowledged this: "Hoewel die term "People's Education" eers sedert 1985 sterk op die voorgrond getree het, kom die gedagte van People's Education uit 'n relatiewe lang tradisie van drie dekades of meer ...".

From as early as 1658, when colonists opened the first school for slaves in order to teach them obedience and discipline, there existed clear signs of resistance from slaves. They opposed the subordinate role that the school attempted to plunge them into by running away from school and going into hiding. This attitude of the slaves forced the school to eventually close. Schools which were later opened to Blacks received similar forms of resistance. A report drawn up in 1869 stated that "there is considerable repugnance on the part of the heathen Kaffirs to send their children to school" (Moltino, 1990: 52). There are signs that resistance during this time was not only undertaken by students, but by their parents too. Grievances revolved around the stress on manual labour in schools and the lack of academic education offered. Outright rejection and avoidance of schooling occurred throughout most of the Nineteenth Century (Moltino, 1990: 52/53).

Although enrolments in black schools steadily increased early in
the Twentieth Century, resistance by parents, teachers and the black community in general continued. According to Molteno (1990: 59), grievances centred around the food issue and domineering staff. Their lack of influence over educational issues was also cited as a major grievance. This attests to the fact that students already at this early period found links between education and liberation and expressed a desire to have some control over their education. This latter point can be seen in an article which appeared in the 1945 issue of the South African Outlook (70): "... It seems unthinkable that any body of pupils should have claimed the right to govern, or thought themselves capable of governing an educational institution, in any of its internal affairs or in regard to appointment to the staff, but it is just these unthinkable things that are happening amongst some African students today". Resistance during this time took the form of the boycotting of food, chapel and classes and in a few cases, violence against staff and property (Molteno, 1990: 81).

There is also clearly documented evidence of independent or alternative forms of education. In 1919 the International Socialist League and the ANC (African National Congress) set up a night school as an attempt to recruit and train black working class leaders. Despite continuous state harassment, there were 19 night schools by 1947. In 1924 another endeavour to set up an alternative structure was established. These schools were called "party schools" and their main aim was to eliminate illiteracy amongst Blacks (Bird, 1990: 198-204).
According to Bird (1990: 198), "all these radical organisations were concerned with political education. Their aim in general was to train leaders and allow as many as possible to understand the structure that oppressed them".

Parental involvement and concern in education was also clearly visible at this early stage. Molteno (1990: 78) has observed that parents, teachers and the black community at large were at various times and in various ways involved in this resistance. As early as 1939 a parents association was formed in Natal, which acted as a base whereby parents expressed their dissatisfaction in the content and structure of Native Education (Kallaway, 1990: 85). A 1943 issue of "Inkundla ya Bantu" stated: "this 'native education' seems today to mean a special type of inferior education which is meant to lull the native into the old sheep that has weighed him down for decades... we must do away with this 'dummy' sort of education". Furthermore, the connection between education and broader national issues was recognised as early as 1943 when an article in the same newspaper as above stated: " On the education front, Africans are gradually marshalling their forces for united action... the struggle for better education and higher salaries is a national affair and part of the national struggle" (Moltino, 1990: 85).

The search for alternative school structures continued throughout the early part of this Century. Black parents in the Transvaal established 'shanty' secondary schools in 1948 whereby subjects such as History (from the workers and materialist point of view), History and development of trade unionism, sociology and...
economics were taught. According to Molteno (1990: 88), these schools only enjoyed limited fruition, and most of the resistance before 1954 was not co-ordinated or linked with outside organisations.

The passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 sparked off an immediate response of resistance from both parents and teachers. Molteno (1990: 88-94), identifies spasms of student unrest in the Transkei, in Natal, Bethal and Coligny. Parents, in many cases refused to send their children to Bantu Education schools, and in a few cases, schools were burnt down. The ANC attempted to mobilise parents in a joint campaign in the resistance to Bantu Education. The African Education Movement attempted to set up 'culture clubs' which contained alternative educational programs whereby songs, stories and games were used to teach subjects such as Mathematics, History and Geography (Snelling, 1992: 16). These clubs were initially hailed as viable alternatives, but seemed to diminish in intensity by the 1960's. Most of the opposition movements of the 1950's were geographically isolated and sporadic.

By the 1960's, there appeared to be clear connections between student unrest and political upheavals. Political incidents such as the introduction of pass laws, police attacks at Sharpville and Langa, the banning of the ANC and PAC (Pan African Congress) saw a wave of student disturbances. Students expressed their opposition through walk-outs, boycotting classes, avoiding manual work, and sometimes through arson (Molteno, 1990: 98/99).
In the 1970’s, this history of resistance reached a new peak. The decision by the Minister of Bantu Education that 50% of all subjects should be taught through the medium of Afrikaans sparked off a massive protest demonstration by 20 000 students (Molobi, 1988: 156). Police intervention resulted in the death of numerous students. The Black Consciousness Movement was banned and many student leaders detained. The 1976 school riots was so bloody, that it attained international interest, and the event remains well documented in South African Educational Journals.

In 1980, another school boycott occurred. This boycott proved to be more widespread, with 140 000 students from Black, Coloured, and Indian schools involved. Amongst student demands, was the removal of security forces from schools, the improvement of school buildings, and the recognition of independent SRC’s. According to Christie (1989), some forms of alternative education took place at this time, but they varied from school to school. Students organised talks on various subjects, they invited guest speakers, taught one another songs, made posters or placards, watched films and videos, ran discussion groups, etc. Throughout most of the 1980’s the educational scene was spotted with recurring school boycotts, and pupils continued to make uniform demands. According to the DET (Department of Education and Training), 674 275 black pupils at 907 schools were affected by school boycotts in 1985.

The above summary of educational upheavals in South Africa has shown that resistance in one form or another was a prominent
feature in black schooling ever since the appearance of the first institution. However, according to Mashamba (1990: 33-35), the concept of 'equality' changed meaning throughout these struggles. He argues that before 1950, Black people demanded political equality with Whites. In the 1950's, equality came to mean "a struggle for the extension of that which existed to a wider constituency". The 1970's and early 1980's saw struggles which were 'qualitative' with demands for "equal access and resourcing of education for all South Africans and the elimination of racism from texts, teaching and the organisation of education". By 1985 the attitudes of students was labelled as 'immediatism' with the logo 'liberation now, education later' (Kruss 1988: 7). This meant that pupils were, at this time prepared to sacrifice their education for the immediate collapse of apartheid.

It has often been argued that it has been a direct result of this latter attitude that People's Education for People's Power was founded. As will be shown later, while it is true that the People's Education movement materialised as a response to the 'education later' attitude of pupils, it is also true that much of the ideas inherent in the People's Education endeavour were present amongst the oppressed people decades ago. While the People's Education movement, as will be seen later stressed the importance of parental and community involvement in education, and the creation of parent-teacher-student organisations, this as has been shown above, has not been a new idea. Parents have almost always been involved in school struggles. Furthermore, the connections between education and liberation and the broader
national struggle, which People's Education has represented, has been inherent throughout the history of educational struggles. The idea of setting up alternative educational structures is also an old idea. As has been shown above, alternative schooling has taken place in the form of party schools, night schools, shanty schools and cultural clubs. The aim of People's Education, to make people aware of their oppression was also the aim and aspiration of the night schools set up by the ANC in 1919. The eventual appearance of the People's Education movement has therefore represented a natural occurrence out of a long history of educational struggles. As Gerwel in the manual 'People's Education for teachers' (1987: 4) has phrased it: "People's Education is not just another academic experiment. People's Education has been conceived and developed out of the crucible of struggle and it gets its full meaning and significance if it is read and understood in its full social, political context of People's Education for People's Power ".

2.3 The Arrival of People's Education - 1986

The 1984 / 1985 boycotts resulted in a rapidly deteriorating and unhealthy teaching and learning environment. Schools were infested with police. The complete breakdown of the 1985 examinations reflected the emergence of the slogan 'liberation first, education later'. Soweto parents, concerned about this postponed concern in education decided to call a meeting. The Soweto Civic Association arranged a meeting which was promptly banned by the state. A second meeting was called in October 1985 out of which the Soweto Parent's Crisis Committee (SPCC) was
formed (Kruss, 1988: 1-12).

The SPCC consulted with the DET (Department of Education and Training) and demanded the end of the state of emergency, the withdrawal of the SADF (South African Defence Force) and the unbanning of COSAS (Congress Of South African Students). The DET replied that these demands touched the barriers of national issues and could not be regionally negotiated. At this point, the SPCC realised that the "struggle for Black education was indivisibly a national issue and a National Consultative Conference was born" (ANON, 1986: 1ff). Thus, the SPCC started off as a locally based initiative but grew into a national body. The SPCC began to have intensive interviews with the broad community, (including student groups, teacher organisations, parent and community organisations, the churches, organised industry, commerce and the ANC). Through these discussions it was concluded that further learning could not be postponed and that children should return to school.

As a result of the above decision, the conference in March 1986 decided to establish a People's Education Commission under the leadership of Zwelakhe Sisulu. A National Education Crisis Committee (NECC)* was set up at the same time. A History and English subject Committee was founded and a research unit for the development of curriculum was established (Molobi, 1987). By 1987

* Before 1991, the NECC represented the National Education Crisis Committee. After a decision made in 1991, the NECC was changed to represent the National Education Co-ordinating Committee.
there were 10 NECC regional branches which were supported by about 200 local committees in both rural and urban areas (Lautenbach, 1987: 24). The NECC continued to urge pupils to return to school. Its central aim was to reclaim the schools and use them as a base for teaching People's Education. Attendance, however, remained weak. Government repression also made it difficult for People's Education to progress.

A third Consultative Conference was called to discuss the lack of attendance at school but the state prevented this meeting from taking place. The consequent jailing of the majority of NECC leaders and police intervention in many of their meetings severely crippled the progress that was intended to be achieved by the People's Education forum (Kruss, 1988: 1-12).

2.4 The Aims of People's Education For People's Power

Earlier, it was shown that much of the aims and aspirations inherent in the concept of People's Education were in fact present throughout the long history of educational struggles in South Africa. Thus, People's Education represented a significant process in this long history of struggle, and its aims represented an extension and natural result of such a history.

What the arrival of People's Education did do, however, is organise and publicise these ever present aims into a more systematic, well defined, concrete and concentrated effort. Its very arrival celebrated the importance of education in creating social, political and ideological transformation. It added to the
long history of protest the concept of challenge, and shifted the commonly shouted slogan 'liberation first, Education later', to 'Education for liberation'.

The proponents of People's Education announced the idea that its call was for an education which enhances liberation, justice and freedom, that education is part of society and the community and that educational decisions cannot be made outside of this framework. According to Mkatshwa at a NECC meeting held on the 28/29 Dec 1985 at the University of the Witwatersrand, the three elements inherent in the People's Education philosophy were: consciousness (achieving an understanding of the nature of oppression and exploitation), mobilisation (moving from anger towards concrete action and activity), and organisation (consolidating these forces into disciplined corps). In the keynote address on 23 November 1986, the NECC stated that People's Education was essentially political with the main aim of helping the oppressed people's of South Africa build confidence in themselves which would consequently help in the achievement of People's Power. People's Education also brought together different sectors of the communities, making everyone responsible for educational decisions.

The National Education Union of South Africa listed the following as primary goals of People's Education:

a) To enable the oppressed to understand the evils of apartheid and to prepare them for a non-racial democratic system.

b) To eliminate the capitalist norms of competition and to
promote collective input and participation and to stimulate critical techniques and analysis.

c) To eliminate illiteracy, discrimination and exploitation of any person by another.

d) To equip all sections of peoples to participate actively and creatively in the struggle to obtain People's Power.

e) To allow students, parents, teachers and workers to be mobilised into appropriate organisational structures.

f) To enable workers to resist exploitation and oppression in the workplace.

Perhaps the single most important element in People's Education has been its stress on 'process'. As Muller (1987: 13) has said: "The strongest element in the People's Education prospectus is likely to be in the insistence on 'process'". This is especially true since, as seen earlier, People's Education did not represent an alienated concept which occurred suddenly or abruptly. Rather, the evolution of the concept of People's Education was the result of a process of educational upheavals. This insistence on process also explains its unfinished, flexible nature. People's Education is in no way a complete and finished entity. Instead, its process of development has been seen by its proponents as continuous.

2.5 The Advances Accomplished by People's Education in the 1980's

The implementation of People's Education has proven to be by no means an easy task. Continuous state repression which took the form of detaining NECC leaders and the banning of all its
meetings, made it difficult for People's Education to progress as it should have. Lack of interest by some students and teachers who were well rooted in the old apartheid system added to the slow progress of People's Education. The Weekly Mail (Nyaka, 1986: 8), reported that teachers were reluctant to allow an extra two hours to be allocated to People's Education. On similar lines, the Cape Times (Anon, 1986: 10), stated: "Teachers used to the present system and those set in their ways do not know how to restructure teaching approaches on the basis of People's Education".

Despite challenges set up by the state and other practical difficulties, the NECC continued in its strive for a People's Education. It set up a commission to rewrite the English and History syllabus by August 1986. The Star (Plemming, 1986: 15) reported that subject committees in History and English had almost completed their work and other subject committees hoped to complete their work by 1987. The history text which the People's Education commission finally produced proved to be radically different from that which pupils were given by the DET. It consisted of about 32 exercises and contained pamphlets, photographs, interviews and evaluation sheets. It also contained five to six empty pages for pupil's notes. These prominent features in the book attested to the fact that it encouraged comment and pupil participation, and showed that the book was not a finished product but an ongoing process. Contrary to what South African students were used to, the NECC material focused on processes and collective action rather than on dates and
individuals (Bloch, 1987: 11/12).

The English Commission decided to use existing materials as a means of developing skills of critique, while alternative material was to be found in newspapers like 'The Youth Express', 'Cape Town Scenes' and other Community Newspapers. They decided to link classroom activities to community concerns. Group work was to be encouraged through debate, discussion, argument, storytelling, etc, and finally, the teacher was to create an awareness of the power of language to control it for one's own purpose. The language programme emphasised that a democratic language policy for a post-apartheid South Africa should necessarily bear features that accorded with the cultural aspirations of the working people of South Africa.

With regard to Mathematics, Mathematical problems was to reflect people's everyday lives and experiences. Group work, as opposed to the teacher dominated 'chalk-talk' method of teaching was to be encouraged.

Other subjects which were to be introduced included African Art, Story-Telling, Astronomy, Sociology, Criminology and Administration (ANON, 1987: 36-43).

There remained clear signs that People's Education had reached the schools to a certain extent, although this was un-uniformed and sporadic in character. For example, the Star (Spiro, 1986: 3), reported that there were a number of schools in the townships which were run by teachers, parents and pupils and that the
Department of Education and Training had lost control over many schools. The Business Day (Tuch, 1986: 7), stated that some schools in Soweto had undergone name changes along the lines of 'Nelson Mandela High', 'Oliver Tambo High', and 'Joe Slovo High'. Mr Mokae, the head of the private school, St Barnabas, announced in the Cape Times (ANON, 1986: 2) that his school had introduced People's Education once a week. Shell, a leading petrol station introduced and distributed a new series of history charts which took into account South African historiography which was previously ignored (ANON, 1986:2).

People's Education also ran a broad leadership training workshop during the July 1987 holidays with WECSCO (Western Cape Student's Congress). This workshop discussed practical problems such as how to approach headmasters, how to form SRC's and meeting procedures. During the latter part of the 1980's, the NECC initiated the 'Back To School' and 'Intensive Learning Campaigns' "which were popular initiatives to make an impact on the quality of schooling" (Chetty, 1992: 29). The People's Education movement has left a marked impression at Langa High in the Cape, where the DET closed the school after a demonstration by students who refused to participate in a racially arranged sports tour to Durban. With the help of the NECC, students and teachers on their own initiative opened the school (ANON, 1987: 36-43).

Despite these advances, numerous practical problems remained unsolved. There existed an obvious unevenness in both the frequency and content of programmes between different schools.
People's Education programmes put a financial strain on student organisations. Costs of hiring equipment and films, photocopying and the buying of various resources greatly handicapped the completion of programmes. As said earlier, teacher's ability to help also affected the programmes. Teachers lacked the necessary political training. They were therefore unmotivated and possessed a fear of experimenting due to state repression in the schools and the exam system.

2.6 Chapter Summary
The above chapter has attempted to show that the People's Education movement has not represented a new or alienated concept. Instead, the concept of People's Education and its aims have been moulded through a rich and long history of educational struggles. This chapter has also tried to trace the practical progress achieved by the People's Education endeavour. It was found that despite numerous practical difficulties, People's Education had succeeded in drafting preliminary texts in English, History, and Mathematics. The actual application of the People's Education programmes, however, experienced much difficulty due to various reasons. There is little doubt, however, that much work and effort had gone into drawing up the various texts and in the redefining of educational aims. There is even less of a doubt that these achievements would be referred to in the drawing up of a new educational dispensation. It was quoted at the beginning of this essay that the drawing up of a new education system demands agreement, common purpose, imagination, energy and commitment. People's Education had clearly proved to possess a
remarkable amount of imagination, energy, and commitment. The following chapter will reveal that the People's Education endeavour did, on the other hand initiate an intensive debate amongst the public, educationists and the state alike, who did not seem to demonstrate agreement or common purpose in their respective perspectives and perceptions of the People's Education movement.
CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DEBATES SURROUNDING

PEOPLE'S EDUCATION (1986-1990)

3.1 People's Education Evokes a Range of Responses

The appearance of the People's Education movement almost immediately sparked off a wave of responses from almost all sectors of the community. These responses, which emanated from the general public, the state, and various academic circles, were publicly promulgated in the media and a number of journals.

Initial criticisms included the usability of the education proposed by People's Education. It was argued that People's Education represented a theory which was largely unrealistic and therefore of "little practical use" (ANON, 1987: 14). In an article labelled "realism needed", a member of the public noted that the proponents of People's Education had not thoroughly thought through the practical implications of such an education since no school could possibly operate without the assistance of the Department of Education and Training (DET), (ANON, 1986: 12). On a similar note, Professor Ashley (dean of the faculty of education at the University of the Cape) said that People's Education was operating at a "parish pump level" since it did not meet the needs of the people who participated in the mainstream, and it also did not meet the needs of a sophisticated industrial network in the first world (Barkhuizen, 1987: 6).
These initial criticisms gave rise to an intense and lengthy debate on the workability and usability of the People's Education proposals. This chapter employs attention to the various debates and criticisms levelled against People's Education soon after its appearance. As will be seen, the heart of these debates involved a detailed conceptual examination of People's Education. In the process of outlining these various debates, this chapter will conclude that while People's Education experienced a trial of intense criticism, this served to enrich its experience and enhance its value, instead of bringing to question its significance. People's Education gave rise to an intensive debate on a future democratic education dispensation and succeeded in involving all sectors of South African society in this debate.

3.2 People's Education faces severe State Repression

The arrival of People's Education was initially met by a cold and largely neutral response by the state. However, this attitude was soon transformed into one of severe repression. Obviously, the state did not regard People's Education as an unrealistic and unworkable theory. As Kros (1987: 1-10) expressed, once the state had decided that "People's Education represented a real enough threat, it introduced harsh new restrictions to suffocate it in its infancy and incapacitate many of its progenitors".

The government imposed impermeable emergency regulations and on the 9th of January 1987 published an order which severely restricted any movement by the NECC. The order prohibited any
"gathering organised and convened by the NECC at which discussion is held on the presentation or proposed presentation on DET school or hostel premises, or any other school, of a course which has not been instituted under the Education and Training act of 1979; the determination of the syllabus of any such course with a view to presenting that course" (Sussens, 1987: 5). As a consequence of this act, schools that showed any signs of teaching People's Education were promptly shut and the SADF (South African Defence Force) presence ensured that they were not re-occupied by the people. By the end of 1987, a total of 73 schools were closed, and all but one member of the national executive of the NECC was in detention (Muller, 1987: 8-10).

The state not only attempted to stamp out People's Education physically, but also used every opportunity to defame its aims by verbally attacking it. For example, in 1987 defamatory pamphlets were distributed by helicopter in Soweto which accused the NECC of encouraging pupils to go back to school so that they could be taught "stone-throwing, arson, necklacing and boycotting" (Muller, 1987: 8). Furthermore, members of the DET (Department of Education and Training) and the NP (National Party) did not resist airing their distaste for the NECC. Mr. Sadie of the South African Teachers Union said in the Burger (1986: 3), that "People's Education is indoktrinasie, 'n aansporing tot geweld en het niks met opvoeding te doen nie". The Citizen (1986: 17) similarly announced that the state would strongly oppose People's Education because it represented a revolutionary type of education which promoted violence,
disorder, the political conditioning of pupils, and the passing of educational control from professional educationists to political activists. Dr. Viljoen confirmed this opinion by publicly announcing that "there can be no doubt that the main goal of the so-called People's Education proponents is to politicise school subjects so as to turn them into an instrument for promoting dissatisfaction, and consequently militant, radical and even revolutionary unrest and change" (ANON, 1987: 2). These repressive state measures handicapped the NECC motivations to such an extend that many educationists predicted that it would spell the end of People's Education.

Why was the state so severe in its response towards People's Education? Dr Viljoen continuously announced in newspapers (eg, ANON, 1987: 2), that People's Education represented a kind of revolutionary education which aimed to promote socialism. This issue raises the very fundamental subject regarding the ideological fabric of the People's Education discourse.

3.3 The Ideology of People's Education

Mr Stoffel van de Merwe, (Minister of education - 1990) stated on SABC TV (South African Broadcasting Corporation Television) 8pm news (12 July 1990) that "People's Education is almost an ideology... we need a system free from ideological hangups". The state has not been the only one to query the ideological standing of People's Education. This subject has occupied much debate from educationists as well. Prof. Ashley from the Education Department of the University of Cape Town commented that People's Education had a few problems, one of which was its emphasis on ideology and
that "heavy ideology in education will kill the goose that lays the golden eggs" (1986: 28). Hartshorne (1986: 14), in a similar vain stated that for much too long South African education "had to carry too much excess ideological baggage". Prof. Schreiner also stated in the Natal Witness (1987: 3) that he predicted a recurring problem with the mere movement from one ideological based education to another ideologically based education which could also produce another kind of crisis.

What type of ideology did People’s Education propagate? An adequate answering to this query necessitates a brief examination of the ideology of the apartheid era. This is essential since People’s Education had evolved much of its ideological arguments from criticisms of the apartheid ideology.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1979: 533) defines "ideology" as a "science of ideas...manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual...". Thus, the ideology of a group is reflective of the ideas which the group follows.

Many writers have agreed that the reason for the existence of the apartheid ideology had been the state’s primary aim to maintain and reproduce racial capitalism. In its control over education, the apartheid state was able to mould the conditions and nature of education in such a way that the Black people of South Africa were only educated to a minimal level, thus ensuring that they would automatically be secured a subordinate place in the workplace and in society. "Via its control over school curricula
for example, the state is partly to a text-book campaign bent on indoctrinating white superiority, Afrikaner superiority, patriotism and non-questioning of authority" (Javis, 1984).

People's Education showed a strong resistance to the capitalist ideology present in the apartheid South Africa. For example, Johnson (1986), a keen spokesperson in the NECC said that "the education system we have, only serves the interests of the rulers and the capitalists in order to maintain their balance of power and ideology". Thus, People's Education, in its resistance of the apartheid education system also resisted the Country's broader ideological standing. In its search for an alternative education, People's Education also searched for an alternative ideology. Johnson (1986) has stated that "it is important to note that the education issue is fundamentally an ideological one".

If People's Education resisted the capitalist ideology inherent in apartheid South Africa, what kind of ideology did it propagated? Father Mkatshwa (1986) directly answered this question: "when we struggle for a national democratic society we are advancing the struggle for socialism. Socialism cannot be achieved unless the people govern...". Similarly, Alexander (1986) of the NECC said: "literacy programmes, distance education programmes: these are some of the more obvious and more important areas in which slow, plodding progress made today will ensure solid foundations for a democratic socialist Azania tomorrow".
While People’s Education propagated a direct link to socialist ideals, there have been many aspects inherent in its aims which have also inclined towards Marxist ideology. For example, People’s Education continuously stressed the importance of educating the whole society in order to make them aware of their oppression. So too, "Marx and Engels held that both in a capitalist and socialist society workers must be literate to become conscious of their exploited situation and to contribute to the building of a socialist society" (Fagerlind and Lawrence, 1983). Furthermore, Giroux (1981) has held that the struggle for radical change should involve both teachers and pupils working for change both within and outside of school boundaries. Struggles, they have argued, have to be understood as well as be connected to other sectors of society. People’s Education similarly stressed that the educational struggle was a national struggle which involves all sectors of the community.

From the above analysis it can be concluded that People’s Education, in its search for a free and democratic education largely resorted to Marxist or Socialist solutions. The Socialist dimensions in People’s Education could be perceived in its academic aims, its public speeches, and above all, in its total rejection of the apartheid capitalist system.

It has been this Socialist inclination of People’s Education that occupied the interest of many conservative educationists. For
example, Afrikaner educationists Van der Walt and Postma, have recognised the non-static component of People's Education and have acknowledged that it has contains many advantages or as they put it, "pluspunte" (1987: 169). However, they have added that it could not be regarded as an educational philosophy or educational theory (1987: 157). They have stressed that the Socialist or so called "revolutionary" content of People's Education has been inherently negative as it defies Christian standards and would therefore be an unacceptable theory to the religious members of South African society. They concluded that: "daar aanvaarbare fasette in People's Education op te merk is, byvoorbeeld dat enige regsinnige mens simpatie met hulle demokratiese strewes en hulle ouer-onderwyser-gemeenskap-vennootskaps-gedagtes kan hê maar nie met die revolusionêre (Marxisties-georienteerde) bevrydingspolitiek wat People's Education ten grondslag le nie" (Van der Walt & Postma, 1987: 169).

While it has been true that the ideological standing of People's Education captured critical responses from both liberal as well as conservative educationists, it would be mistakably reductionist to resort to assessing the ideological framework of the People's Education movement without accounting for it historically and contextually. It must be remembered that resistance during the early 1980's saw an increasing interest in the reasons for inequality in education which gave rise to a criticism of school hierarchies and the content and method of education. During this period students began to draw connections
between apartheid and capitalism and consequently developed a critique of capitalism and the role of "gutter education" in reproducing the working class (Chisholm, 1987). Having developed during this time, People's Education contributed to the debate surrounding the deficiencies of capitalism and inequalities in the apartheid education system. It was therefore historically natural that People's Education resorted to Socialist ideals. In the context of the gross inequalities and racial prejudices of the time, Socialism appealed to the oppressed people of South Africa as a viable alternative. Furthermore, it is important to remember that People's Education always propagated that it is a process in development. As will be seen later in this study, while it is true that People's Education initially relied heavily on Socialist ideology, it at the same time stressed democratic initiatives. With the eventual collapse of Marxism/Stalinism in the USSR, People's Education also tended to show a shift in ideological standing by no longer emphasising Marxist ideology. This shift points to the flexible, non-static nature of the People's Education movement, and emphasises its commitment to "process". More fundamentally, what the criticisms surrounding the ideology of People's Education have done, is mobilise a broad range of debates surrounding the ideology of a future, post-apartheid South Africa. Debates of this nature are vital in the re-structuring of any society, and can be viewed as a natural and necessary occurrence in this context.
3.4 State Accommodation of the Concept of People’s Education

While the state on the one hand used severe, repressive measures to stamp out the flame of the NECC, it at the same time tended to accommodate and adopt many of the ideas propagated in People’s Education. As Mashamba (1990: 2), stated: "coupled with these disruptive and destabilising tactics of the state, there have also been 'pre-emptive' forays into the People’s Education discourse to co-opt and generally dilute the whole concept and programme of the People’s Education movement".

Various members of the DET and Educational officials announced repeatedly that they welcomed the idea of community involvement in education, and in this regard, People’s Education had some degree of merit. Mr Viljoen said in the Star, (Pleming, 1986: 13) that "it was his wish that the community should have a meaningful say in the control of education - "progress towards this end remains an ideal of this department". In agreement, the Deputy Minister of education and development aid, Mr Sam de Beer added that "if education becomes more relevant to the children’s backgrounds and helps them fulfil a positive role in the future of this country, I would see People’s Education as positive" (Plemming, 1986: 10).

On the 8th of February 1988 it was announced in major newspapers that the government had begun to make plans to adopt key elements from the People’s Education movement, and thus develop a new curriculum which would focus on the experiences, values and inspirations of the Black majority. However, it was at the same
time immediately announced that "politically aggressive" material (such as the history of the ANC in textbooks) would not form part of this new curricula and that the government would continue to be committed to a separate but equal education system. Viljoen said that "while I see positive aspects in People's Education which we are implementing ourselves, that does not mean we accept the broader concepts with which other people are using People's Education, because they clearly say that it should be used to destabilise, to make ungovernable the education system..." (St Ledger, 1988: 16).

It is as a direct result of this dual attitude of the state that various educationists began to question the merit of People's Education which in turn precipitated a lengthy and flammable scrutinisation of the concepts employed in People's Education. Many academics realised that while on the one hand People's Education seemed to represent a fundamental and radical challenge to the apartheid educational regime, it at the same time contained categories which were compatible with the existing system it so opposed.

This weakness in People's Education seemed to bring into serious question its ideological position. Many critics concluded that People's Education contained liberal as well as radical categories. Muller (1987: 106), observed that People's Education represented an "unresolved tension between liberal and radical tendencies". Similarly, Van den Bos (1986: 21) argued that People's Education embraced "liberal concepts of equality and
freedom, linked to a democratic dispensation which has certain elements of socialism coupled with free enterprise.

Thus, in the period between 1987 and 1990, educational academics were locked in a zealous and energetic analysis on the meaning of the various terms employed by People's Education. The meaning of words such as "education", "people", "democracy", "equality", "freedom", and "power", amongst others, were critically evaluated. It can thus be said that People's Education at this time evoked a critical look at terminology which was until then used without serious interest. People's Education helped bring these terms into historical perspective.

3.5 People's Education as a Conceptual Debate

The state's dual reaction towards People's Education made it increasingly obvious that People's Education was perceived differently by different people. While the state saw both negative as well as positive aspects of People's Education, scholars saw it as an education which at long last would give them the necessary foundations to participate fruitfully in society, while academics questioned its meaning and relevance. Muller (1987: 106) summed up this lack of uniformity in the understanding of People's Education thus: "People's Education is a notion that has acquired wide political currency in South Africa today. For ordinary Black South Africans, it is the name of a promised liberation from an inferior and destabilising education system. Conversely, the state considers it a threat to law and order that must be restricted, for academics it is a
concept to be dissected, defined, and provided with academic lineage. For the NECC, its patron organisation, it has become the focus for an increasingly complex strategy of contestation and challenge. For all of them, People's Education is less a concept with precise semantic content than the sign of a national education and political movement in the making.

The state also began to recognise the conceptual unclarity of the term. Dr Viljoen told the Star that People's Education meant different things to different people (Pleming, 1986: 13). Similarly, the proponents of People's Education themselves acknowledged this lack of conceptual clarity: "The concept of People's Education is not one that can be categorised in a neat definition, packed and nicely priced and available for immediate consumption... the outcome of People's Education will be determined by the concrete conditions that make up the social fabric of South Africa" (Molobi, 1986).

The feverish atmosphere of conceptual debates saw an interesting set of labels being attached to People's Education. People's Education was regarded as a "catchy slogan" (McKenzie, 1986: 2), "a very fluid concept" (Kruss, 1988: 18), a concept which "lacked form" (Kruss, 1988), "a contested terrain" and a concept that contained "ambiguities and uncertainties, lack of purpose and direction... with weakness in theoretical and conceptual armoury" (Mashamba, 1990: 1).

Indeed, many academics began to fear the conceptual unclarity in
People's Education as being more disabling and dangerous to the movement than state repression. Levin stated that "People's Education is currently in a crisis, not only because of state repression, but because of considerable unclarity over precisely what it means. It is always easier to coin a slogan than to give it serious content and direction" (Levin, 1988: 20). Gardiner, in agreement wrote that "such attitudes, well meaning when they are not simply neurotic, are perhaps a greater challenge to People's Education than the ferocious restrictions currently imposed by the state" (Gardiner, 1987: 60). Sebidi (1988: 49-61), took this point further by arguing that People's Education was being attacked on two fronts: the institution and the professionals. He has argued that the latter attack was more devastating in its effects than the former. This is so, he argued, because academics believed that they and they alone held the "key to the authority of knowledge" and that concepts such as "education", "schooling", "learning" etc were for their use only and should not be manipulated by non-academics. He has gone on to argue that these concepts were "turned into specialised subjects only understandable to the professionals", thus excluding the very people who are physically affected by these various terms. He further commented that it was essential that such attitudes be revoked and people from all spheres of life be given the opportunity to have a say in educational affairs (Sebidi, 1988: 49-61).

The lack of a brief answer to the question "what is People's Education" has often been justified by the proponents of People's
Education and many academics by the central argument that People's Education has been a process of growth and has essentially been developmental in form. Van den Bos (1986: 2), has proposed that People's Education did not possess a precise definition not because it was vague or lacking a clear direction, but because the idea of People's Education has invited the prospect of international debate. She further argued that it never aimed to be the subject of academic scrutiny. Levin (1988, 1-10) has also accepted that People's Education has been an ongoing process "rather than a given, defined entity". Mashamba also justified the lack of definition in People's Education by saying that it did not represent a formulated body of "final doctrines" (Mashamba, 1990: 1). He has continued by revealing the very essential point that the lack of conceptual clarity in People's Education cannot be accounted for in isolation since it was a collective failure of adequate conceptual inquiries and insights during the struggle against apartheid as a whole which contributed to conceptual confusion in People's Education.

However, the heavy emphasis placed on "process" has, in turn also invited debate. It has been argued that if People's Education has been a mere process, it could not possibly have had any predetermined ends and purposes. Krus (1988: 26), has raised the point that "the centrality of process raises questions such as the role and function of educators, their relationship to learners, the teaching procedures used, learner involvement in the production of materials, subject content and the relationship to the curriculum, methods of evaluation and systems of
accreditation and so on". It is the author's opinion that the stress on "process" in the philosophy of People's Education has been its strongest mode. Within the context of the state repression and limited resources of the time, it would have been almost impossible for any alternative educational body to compile a concrete, non-flexible set of educational doctrines. The flexibility of the People's Education philosophy has complimented the context of our rapidly changing and transitional political situation.

2.5.1 The concept of "people"
Centrally lodged in the conceptual debates on the People's Education movement existed the detailed enquiry on the implications of the term 'people'.

Significant questions have been raised on the subject of who the 'people' in the People's Education philosophy refer to. Many writers have expressed that the 'people' in People's Education merely refer to the Black community since NECC spokespersons have only made reference to the inadequacies in Bantu Education and have failed to critically remark on the limitations inherent in the White Education of the time. Afrikaner Educationists, Van der Walt and Postma (1987: 157) have equated the word 'people' as used by People's Education as the Socialist used term the 'proletariat' and have gone on to argue that the terminology employed by People's Education was inherently Marxist-Socialist in character. Thus, to them, the term 'people' only referred to the poorest and most oppressed members of society. Hartshorne
(1986: 21) has raised the very interesting argument that it was essential that the term 'people' in People's Education not be interpreted as 'die volk' of Afrikaner nationalism, since this distinction would merely represent a 'new sectional nationalist ideology'. Hartshorne's latter observation has been of particular relevance since there was clear evidence that this attitude was adopted by some. For example, a member of the public actually drew clear connections between CNE (Christian National Education) and People's Education: "Dit is die Afrikaner wat gese het: ons wil nie 'n Engelse regering he nie; ons wil nie verengels word nie, en ons wil hê julle, die luiers, moet dit vir ons op 'n konstruktiewe en geordende wyse sê en vir ons 'n ander onderwysstelsel gee en dit is wat People's Education is" (Cloete, 1988: 9). Hartshorne has gone on to argue that this lack of definition with regard to who the 'people' were raised the haunting possibility that even within a new dispensation, sectional interests could go on dominating the scene and that "there is still the danger of putting new wine into old bottles" (Hartshorne, 1986: 22).

Hartshorne (1986: 21-23) has argued that no matter what ideology People's Education adopted, it may still have perpetuated minority rule: the problem, he has argued, was that it was essential that a new education system not be controlled by a dominant ideology or party which did not necessarily reflect the wants and needs of the broader society.

This view, that a post apartheid education may face and inherit
only sectional interests and merely operate under a different ideological banner could best be understood by Dr Levin's attempt at conceptualising the 'people' in People's Education.

Levin (1988: 1-22), has argued that although People's Education might have included radical and transformative methods of creating a new educational dispensation in South Africa, these have not been totally revolutionary since People's Education also contained much "which was acceptable within bourgeois democratic discourse". Furthermore, since People's Education had arisen and operated within a capitalist structure, the moulding of "ideas in a capitalist society does not unfold in a vacuum, but takes place under specific social, political and economic conditions" (Levin, 1988: 1-22). He has argued that it is largely this inadequacy which has made People's Education vulnerable to state manipulation.

Levin furthermore argued that many of the calls that have been made by People's Education such as calls for political emancipation and intellectual freedom, duplicated the calls made during the post world war 2 period which demanded schooling based on mass education. He has supported Kallaway's reasoning that mass education did not increase equality or display power to the people. Levin has also argued that history around the world has shown that even if the bourgeoisie join forces with the working class in the fight for freedom, the outcome is seldom the "social emancipation from exploitation" (Levin, 1988: 1-22).
The essential problem in People's Education, Dr Levin has argued, lies in the concept of the 'people'. His argument has been that the notion of the 'people' did not refer at all to class differences existent amongst the people. Living in a capitalist society, the 'people' whether Black or White do have class differences and not emphasising this would create problems. As he has explained, "the outcome of a people's struggle will vary for different social classes amongst the people, and depends on which class leads a people's movement", and it was for this reason, he emphasised, that People's Education should move beyond a common formula for mass education (Levin, 1988: 1-22).

While Levin (1988) saw the absence of "class differences" in People's Education as a weakness which made it susceptible to being a common formula for mass education, Afrikaner educationists on the other hand have argued that the aim of People's Education to transcend class, race, creed, colour and cultural differences made it an unworkable theory in a multi-cultural society as ours (Van der Walt, 1987: 243). Van der Walt concludes that: "dit moet aanvaar word dat People's Education nie aangebied of beskou kan word as 'n model vir multi-Kulturele onderwys nie, of selfs vir onderwys in 'n multi-Kulturele samelewing nie" (1987: 252).

Van der Walt's paper raised an important point which was the extent to which People's Education adhered to the multi-cultural aspect of our nation. It is clear that the cultural and linguistic differences present in our country cannot be
overlooked and many authors have felt that any post-apartheid education system should recognise and retain rather than suppress these differences. However, it is at the same time obvious that the attachment of overseas multicultural prescriptions to the South African context would be unworkable, due to our unique history. It must be remembered that the apartheid regime relied on ethnic, cultural and language differences as a justification for racial segregation. A historical analysis of the apartheid legislative laws, (which is beyond the scope of this study), would show that the concept of 'culture' was manipulated by law to legitimate, justify and romanticise racially divisive laws. Partington (1985), has argued that South Africa has been a unique example of 'extreme multiculturalism'.

It is thus imperative that a new educational system does not ignore the South African historical contexts of struggle and political relations of domination. While the proponents of People's Education have not laid clear guidelines on the issue of multiculturalism, they have emphasised the need to strive for a 'people's culture'. Sisulu has said: "let us strive towards a people's culture, one that is not imposed, but one that emanates from the history of our people and their collective experiences". (Goodal, 1989).

The multicultural debate is undoubtedly a contested one and is bound to continue well into the post-apartheid era. What is clear, however, is that differences amongst South Africans have for too long been stressed and the focus should now change to
similarities and equalities. The debates surrounding the People’s Education movement have also revealed that concepts such as ‘culture’, ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ would have to be reconstructed to implicate a more just and democratic meaning in our local context.

However, the concept of ‘people’ has evoked the greatest amount of interest amongst educationists. Mashamba (1990: 1-10) in a critical response to Levin has counter-argued Levin’s argument by stating that while he agreed that the concept of the ‘people’ was the most controversial in People’s Education, it was clear that the ‘people’ were “neither populist nor workerist, but specifically non-racial and democratic. It recognised the unity and diversity of the social forces which constituted “the people” and the central leading role of the working class within the perspective of the national democratic struggle” (Mashamba, 1990: 8). Thus, for Mashamba, there has been little doubt that the working class has lead the democratic struggle. He has qualified this by saying that the literature of People’s Education has clearly and unambiguously made reference to the leading role of the working class in the struggle. With this, he dismissed Levin’s argument as unfounded (1990: 7).

In addition, Mashamba (1990: 6ff) has argued that the concept of ‘the people’ could not be seen in isolation. Rather, the concept has been concrete and historical in character. In trying to put the term ‘people’ in historical perspective, he argued that the ‘people’ in 1910 made reference to Whites only, as stated in the
1910 Union Constitution. With the arrival of the ANC in 1912, the concept of the "people" widened to primarily refer to African people. From the mid 1940's the concept of the "people" broadened to include all ethnic and racial groups. In the 1960's, with the Black Consciousness Movement, the concept of the "people" came to represent only the Blacks, Coloureds and Indians.

Mashamba (1990) has argued that similarly, within the People's Education movement, the concept of "the people" has changed in meaning historically. For example, during the first consultative NECC meeting, spokesperson Mkatshwa referred to "the people" as Blacks only and his speech referred exclusively to Bantu education. This reference Mashamba argues should be seen in context of time, since it was, at that time understood by many that the crises in education almost exclusively affected the Black community. However, by the time of the second NECC meeting, the concept of "people" changed, when Sisulu, in his speech used the term "people" to mean both Blacks as well as those Whites who sided with the oppressed (Mashamba, 1990: 4).

Furthermore, Mashamba (1990) has argued that there was sufficient evidence in UDF (United Democratic Front) and ANC statements that "the people" as they perceived it, referred to all South Africans committed to the democratic struggle. There also existed, he added, sufficient quotations to prove that class differences amongst the people were accounted for. The fact that a combination of people from different sectors of the community (workers, teachers, parents, ministers, students), were
collectively involved in the finding of the NECC in itself attested to the latter statement.

Thus, he has argued, "the meaning of a concept is not simply decided upon in people's heads, but is rather created in the context of social activity and struggles, and only expressed in people's consciousness by means of concepts" (Mashamba, 1990: 4).

While the issue surrounding the meaning of the word 'people' in People's Education occupied much debate at this time, conceptual interrogation of other terms such as 'democracy', 'education', 'power', 'freedom' etc. also took place. It is not the purpose of this research to outline all these conceptual debates. However, since the debates on the meanings of 'education' and 'power' essentially raised very relevant points, these would be briefly outlined.

3.5.2 The concepts 'power' and 'education'

Van den Bos (1986, 56-77) began a conceptual debate on the use of the term 'power' in 1986. Mashamba (1990), again took on the opportunity to clarify the term.

Mashamba (1990: 10-16) has argued that in similarity with the concept of 'people', the concept of 'power' had also grown and changed historically with time. He argued that the concept of People's Power was not confined to political power only. Instead, the term extended to the control of all aspects of people's lives, be it political, economic, cultural or educational.
Situating the concept of power historically, he argued that since the 1910 Union Constitution, the absolute controlling power of the state was possessed by the Whites. However, with the eventual rise of protests and struggles by Blacks during this last decade, this concept of power has been challenged, with the eventual rise of the term 'people's power'. He has asserted that the concept of 'people's power' in South Africa has shifted from a 'monolithic' one, (during the early 1980's) whereby people were willing to sacrifice all aspects of life including education in the pursuit of achieving state power, to a 'dispersed' notion of People's Power, meaning "the control and authority that people strive to achieve and exercise during the process of struggle for national liberation and social emancipation". Thus, power is was just physical but mental too (Mashamba, 1990: 10-15).

One argument which has remained largely undeveloped during these debates and which seems to raise a number of controversies, was the heavy emphasis that People's Education seems to have placed on the role of education as a tool for changing society and in creating some kind of political power base. Mkatschwa (1986), in one of his NECC speeches announced that the role of education was simply "either for domestication or for freedom". However, history around the world has shown that education by itself was not a sufficient condition to change society.

It is obvious that this opinion, that education is a precipitating factor in adjusting society, is a historically moulded one. The apartheid era most definitely manipulated
education in order to maintain white supremacy. It is therefore not surprising that the NECC felt that the basis to achieving People's Power lies with education. Indeed this very unlikely parallel between People's Education and apartheid education has already been drawn by a reader of a local newspaper: "the old Bantu education was education doctored for a political motive - to maintain White dominance. The so called People's Education is also an education doctored for a political motive - to achieve Black liberation" (ANON, 1986: 8). In its stress on the importance of educating the whole society in order to make them aware of their oppression, People's Education clearly adhered to the idea that educational reform was a prelude to social reform. This notion, the author believes, is historically understood, but in reality, it is a problematic theory. In order to qualify the latter statement, it would be necessary to briefly outline the experiences of other countries.

The experiences in countries such as Tanzania and China have shown that Education is essentially complex in nature and cannot be entirely controlled or planned. In China, since the 1940's, the Mao Tse Tung government placed great emphasis on an education system which would act as a pre-requisite for a broader transformation of society. To Chinese statesmen, education was conceived of as a central transforming agent for a socialistically based society. Mao's views on education were clearly embedded in Marxist-Leninist thought whereby education is understood as being part of the superstructure. He thus proposed an education which would "overcome separation between
theory and practice, intellectual and manual work, classroom and community: workers and peasants were to become intellectuals and vice-versa" (Arnove, 1983). Schools were expected to focus on ideological transformation, required to serve the needs of Socialism, and to "enable all citizens to develop morally, intellectually and physically to become imbued with Socialist consciousness" (Arnove, 1983).

However, schools on the whole resisted change and continued to be Capitalist in structure. Thus, the internal dynamics within the education system and its relationship to other social forces was oversimplified and underestimated by the Chinese government. Attention was paid more to structural changes than attitudinal ones - the complexity of the human agency and human consciousness was downplayed. Largely Capitalist schools with Capitalist teachers were expected to build a Socialist society and a Socialist economy.

The case of China has demonstrated that education does not necessarily act as a societal dimension and is not an effective social force in changing society. Kwong (1979) offered an excellent explanation for these contradictions by saying that "an education system, once started, generates its own dynamics of existence". One has only to look at our own South African example which has attested to the same point. Apartheid education, in its primary aim of oppressing the Blacks, instead saw a web of resistance and anger emanating from Black schools. The apartheid protagonists, in their quest for an unequal, unjust, and racially
biased educational structure, failed to account for the complexities of the human factor and the internal dynamics of an education system.

Similarly, the author believes that the proponents of People's Education, in many of their statements, have tended to over-rely on the ability of education in changing society and in achieving People's Power. It must be remembered that the apartheid ideology has remained firmly entrenched in the consciousness of the public and to change attitudes and ideological motives takes time to manifest. As Marx once wrote: "however carefully planned particular social policies may be, the outcomes will not be those desired by any one of the groupings concerned. Unexpected outcomes, in fact, are the rule rather than the exception" (Simon, 1983: 13).

This in turn raises the question of how the concept of 'education' was perceived in People's Education. The proponents of People's Education often advocated that People's Education could not be equated with schooling. Rather, they have argued that it was a life-long kind of knowledge which affected all members of society. Furthermore, they have also argued that People's Education was not an alternative education. Indeed, the critics of People's Education have argued that People's Education was not an education, but merely a political mobilising strategy and that its reliance on process did not make it possible for ideal and concrete guidelines to be drawn in educational decision-making (eg, Van der Walt, 1987).
Thus, the People's Education understanding of 'education' has also come under attack. Again, Mashamba (1990) has argued that the concept of 'education' has been historically moulded in the course of the struggle. He has asserted that before 1986 the educational struggle was quantitative, with grievances surrounding the equal access and resourcing of education and the elimination of racism in the general organisation and teaching of education. With the arrival of People's Education in 1986, the term 'education' meant a struggle for an education based on non-racialism and democracy and one which aspired to the nationally oppressed Blacks (Mashamba, 1990: 39-40). The issue of whether People's Education fell under the categories of alternative education and popular education have also been raised. According to a paper prepared by the EPU (Education Policy Unit), (1989: 2), alternative education was one which was out of state jurisdiction or control and could either be progressive or conservative. Popular education, on the other hand was a term which newly liberated countries have used and referred to a number of campaigns to bring literacy to the people. People's Education, they argued, was not alternative education because while alternative education worked with the existing system, People's Education worked to change the system. Mashamba (1990) has concluded that while the proponents of People's Education did not accept the term 'alternative education', "attempting to establish the credibility of one term over another would be self-defeating... however, as the People's Education discourse has shown, it was quite clear that the two expressions 'alternative education' and 'People's Education' were not synonymous. There
were real differences, though no Chinese wall between them" (Mashamba, 1990: 48).

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to identify, situate and historisise the types of debates which encircled the People's Education movement between the years 1986 -1990. It was uncovered that while on the one hand People's Education faced severe state repression, on the other hand it faced intense academic scrutiny. In its attempts to make sense of the movement, various academic circles dissected and analysed the terminology employed by People's Education. This in turn raised fundamental questions involving the ideology and general aims of the movement.

While many would argue that the numerous shortcomings encompassing the movement of People's Education severely diminished its value, the author disagrees with this view. While the People's Education movement has invited both state accommodation as well as conceptual debates, these do not necessarily handicap its purpose or belittle its importance. The very fact that People's Education attracted so much of attention from all sectors of the community, and essentially made possible a lively debate on a future education system has substantiated its merit. Until the appearance of People's Education, academic studies focused on the endless criticism and analysis of the apartheid era. Little thought was engaged towards a future education system. The appearance of People's Education changed the focus of these studies, and helped to open a debate - a
debate on the possibilities of a new educational order. People's Education succeeded in raising the question regarding the reliance on ideology in a future educational dispensation and in so doing, made educationists aware of the danger of an over-reliance on ideology in a fresh educational system in South Africa. Similarly, People's Education unfleshed debates on the meaning of terms such as 'the people', 'education', and 'equality', which have for so long remained alien and undefined terms to our nation. These theoretical debates have served to enrich and substantiate the experience of the People's Education movement in South Africa. It succeeded in pre-ordaining possible problems in a post-apartheid situation and in this way, the author believes, has placed a fundamental, and indelible mark on the history of South African educational debates.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF THE NECC AMIDST POLITICAL REFORM

4.1 Political Advances of the Early 1990's

While the latter part of the 1980's involved a thorough and intense debate on the meaning and viability of the concepts employed by the People's Education movement, rapid political transitions radically changed the focus of debates surrounding the NECC organisation. The type of questions which engrossed the movement seemed to change from philosophical, ideological, conceptual and theoretical criticisms to more practical questions concerning the role and validity of the NECC in the political climate of change. At the same time, the 1990-1995 period witnessed the NECC movement achieving a valuable status and admirable role in the negotiating process and in the transitional phase on the whole.

The aim of this final chapter is to briefly outline the political advances and changes from 1990 to the present. This overview would be followed by mapping out the role and experience of the People's Education movement during the passage of political change. It will be shown that while many protagonists felt that the impetus of the NECC had significantly waned by this time, the NECC had instead played a vital role during this phase and had been highly active during the negotiating process and beyond. The final demise of the NECC was as the result of intense discussion
and concentrated debates, rather than a sudden and rash decision in this regard.

The role of the NECC movement during the 1990's cannot be discussed in isolation since rapid and intense political changes accumulated during this time, and the NECC experience was greatly affected and conditioned by these changes. It is therefore imperative to outline the political transitions of this phase before embarking on the NECC experience of the 1990's.

The 2 February 1990 marked a new era in South African political history when the former president, F.W. de Klerk announced an immediate reform programme. The immediate political changes which followed included the release of all political prisoners by June 1991, the release of Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of political organisations such as the ANC and PAC (Pan African Congress), the repeal of apartheid legislation such as the Population registration Act, the Group Areas Act, and the Land Act. The National Party government also committed itself to a process of negotiation with the ANC via the newly formed structure CODESA (Convention for a democratic South Africa) with the aim of creating a new, democratic constitution which upheld equal rights for all in an interim government of national unity (Christy, 1994: 45).

4.2 The Educational Advances of the Negotiating Era

Advances made on the educational front from the government included the introduction of two discussion documents in May.
1991. These were labelled the "Education Renewal strategy" (ERS1) and "A Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa" (CMSA).

According to the government, the aim of the Education Renewal Strategy was to "solve on a short and medium term basis the most pressing problems presently facing our education system" (Louw, 1992: 281). The ERS recommended the elimination of race in the provision of education and equality of educational opportunity and educational standards irrespective of race, colour or gender (Christie, 1994: 45). In short, it could be said that the "ERS committed the state to decentralisation, national unity, freedom of association and diversity, decentralisation and partnership in governance" (Motala & Tikly, 1993: 51). The 'curriculum model for South Africa' stressed the deracialisation in the school curriculum and mentioned the importance of parental involvement in curriculum development (Motala & Tickly, 1993).

The major practical changes which took place by the government was the commitment to spend R355 million on black schooling (Devereaux, 1990: 13), and in September 1990, a legislation was passed which made it possible for the partial desegregation of white state schools (Sadie, 1992: 9). This became widely known as the 'Clase models' which held that if a very high percentage of white parents agreed that their child's school should be deracialised, black pupils could be admitted. Parents could choose between three models:

Model A: The school could choose to be fully privatised

Model B: The school could remain a state organisation but
would determine its own admission policy.

Model C: The school could become a state aided school (Christie, 1992: 49).

However, early in 1992, it was announced by the government that from April 1, all white state schools would become model C status schools unless a 2/3 majority of parents voted to remain a status quo or model B (Mkwanzu, 1993: 58).

Immediately following unbanning, the ANC alliance took the opportunity of proposing an education document in order to promote and give substance to an equitable education system. Documents proposed by the ANC included the papers 'ready to govern' in 1991, and 'a framework for lifelong learning' in 1993. At the end of 1993, the ANC introduced the document 'a policy framework for education and training', whereby various policy outlines were proposed, such as "the integration of education and training into a single system, the provision of adult basic education and training alongside formal schooling, and mechanisms to ensure horizontal and vertical mobility within the system and the articulation of its different sections" (Christie, 1994: 51). The ANC also launched the CEPD (the Centre for Education Policy Development) in March 1992, which was foreign funded and a National Education Conference (NEC) which aimed at bringing together a range of anti-apartheid groups to discuss ways of addressing the education crisis.

The most widely acclaimed document to emerge by the anti-apartheid front was the 'National Education Policy Investigation'
or commonly referred to as the NEPI report. The NECC proved to be at the forefront in the development of this report, with help from the EPU's at the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Natal, and the University of the Western Cape. The NECC's role in the formulation of this document will be discussed later in this chapter. The purpose of NEPI was to "initiate the process of education policy formulation from the perspective of the democratic movement" (NECC, 1990: 35). NEPI consisted of over 300 researchers and academics who divided into 12 research groups, each attempting to formulate education policy issues (Christie, 1994: 50). The role of NEPI was to prepare for the negotiating process by formulating a range of educational policy options which could be presented to the government. According to the NEPI report, "the most effective way to democratise education and to widen participation was by shifting the planning and implementation of education into the public domain, where such processes could be subject to scrutiny and challenge by organisation / individuals / networks / social movements located within civil society" (Mkwanazi, 1993: 59).

While both the ERS and NEPI converged on certain issues such as the favouring of a unitary system, the scrapping of all racial and segregational boulders and the formulation of a single, unitary education department, Motala and Tikly (1993: 49-50) held that the two documents were visibly different. They have argued that NEPI was a more radical document in that it concerned itself with 'redress', such as the redistribution of funds, transport facilities and institutional advantages, the ERS, on the hand
merely tended to "make up on backlogs". They also argued that the ERS and NEPI options differed in their focus and phases of action in terms of curriculum change. Other differences contained:

a. the meanings and mechanisms by which equity was to be achieved
b. centralised and decentralised control
c. vocational education and training
d. vocationallisation of the curriculum
e. the organisation of higher education
f. educational finance and management
g. policy making processes (Motala & Tickly, 1993: 52-54).

However, despite their efforts, both the ERS and NEPI have been subjected to a range of criticisms. Christie (1994) has introduced the argument that the ERS contained many ambiguities and very broad and general statements which "could conceivably entail the continuation of the existing system as well as changes". She has argued that the ERS and CMSA did not provide clear guidelines on how policy changes could be realised and physically implemented, nor did they provide methods that could solve the immediate education crises. It is for these reasons that she labelled the two documents as "discursive" (Christie, 1994: 45).

Similarly, the NEPI report has been criticised on the ground of being broad, largely tentative, and a mere guideline on policy rather than policy itself (Christie, 1994: 52). On a much harsher note, Appel (1993: 235) has written that "NEPI is a fantasy script written to fill an unfillable formative internal vacuum, and one which denies the inevitability of external
hatreds". He has argued that the NEPI report ignored that education contained inner conflicts which was influenced by social ambivalence. In addition, Mkwanazi (1993: 60) has presented the argument that NEPI ignored detailed accounts on the ways in which disadvantaged groups could be financially supported in schooling.

4.3 The Negotiating Process
It is in this political scenario that the period of negotiations took place. The ANC and the government partook in a lengthy process of research, discussion and experimentation in order to reach compromise and agreement on an ultimate transformation of the apartheid system. It was hoped that through negotiation "a common political vision, an agreed upon philosophy of education, and a concrete set of policy proposals could be sought" (Meyer, 1992: 103).

A first attempt at negotiations took place early in 1991 when the Education Delegation including 26 representatives from national, political, religious, trade union and mass based education organisations led by Nelson Mandela took the initiative to meet the State in order to discuss the Education crisis. Problems such as the textbook shortage and the repair of classrooms were unfleshed. A joint working group was established, whereby the NECC played an instrumental role (Appel, 1993: 107).

A second meeting took place on the 19 August 1991 to discuss the report of the Joint Working Group. Disappointment was expressed
during both these meetings since very few recommendations were actually binding on the state. The Education Delegation subsequently canoed the 'National Education Conference' (NEC) at the famous 'Broederstroom' Conference whereby a large number of anti-apartheid organisations formed a 'patriotic front' on education. The task of the NEC was to pressurise the state into formulating an education forum to address the education crisis within the following six broad categories: "access and effective delivery at all levels of education, equitable per capita expenditure, democratisation of the education system, halting of the unilateral restructuring of the education system, redress on the violence in the education arena and in the areas of literacy adult basic education and skills training" (Appel, 1993: 115).

While the immediate results obtained by the NEC were slow, some kind of momentum was established. On the 3 March 1992, Mr Sam de Beer announced DET plans to reform and upgrade Black Education. In March 1993, the state announced moves to unify the education system and in August 1993 the "National Education and Training Forum" (NETF) was formulated, whereby all major stakeholders in education were represented. Its aims were to arrive at agreements on the resolution of the education crisis, on the restructuring of the education system, and on the formulation of policy frameworks for the long-term restructuring of education and training" (Christie, 1994: 54). The most significant development in policy was the draft interim constitution for South Africa founded on the 17 October 1993, which included guidelines for educational reconstruction and development (ibid: 20). Overall,
1993 experienced an increase in consensus on arrangements for transition with an active role and participation of the anti-apartheid alliance in this process (Motala & Tickly, 1993: 35).

4.4 Transitional Problems
The negotiating course took place within a backdrop of a range of so called transitional difficulties. An ailing economy and ongoing violence and struggles on school premises continued unabated during the negotiating era. Teacher strikes claimed almost five months of schooling in 1993. In addition, different views of educational governance also surfaced, causing conflict in opinion. Meyer (1992: 35), has observed that "Many organisations emphasised education as initiation into cultural values, some saw education as a general preparation for employability or vocational training, and others viewed it as a critical introduction to political participation and as a contribution to the establishment and maintenance of a just society". Another problem which occupied much debate was the issue of financial redistribution in education with an ailing economy in the background. Other issues raised in negotiation included: "declining professionalism, inadequately qualified teachers, insufficient facilities, community disengagement, etc" (Grebe, 1992: 143).

4.5 The 1994 Elections
Following the period of negotiations was the country's historic event of the first democratic elections held on the 27 April 1994, with the election of Nelson Mandela as the first Black
State president of South Africa, and the consequent dissipation of all racial laws and legislation. These events gave altitude to the widely used term, "the new South Africa".

According to Chisholm (1994: 1), the national events of elections dominated the period and educational progress during this time was slow. Professor Sibusigo Bhengu was appointed as the new National Minister of Education, and many NECC officials were appointed into government posts in the education sector. All sectors of education besides the higher education sector became the responsibilities of the nine provinces (Chisholm, 1994: 6). On the 24 May 1994, President Nelson Mandela prioritised four immediate plans:

a) free hospital care for needy children and pregnant women,
b) A school feeding scheme,
c) an electrification project,
d) a public works programme (Motala and Tickly, 1994: i).

Motala and Tickly (1994: i), have reported that a number of factors, such as the introduction of legislation and the consequent appointment of new personnel in the education sector, the devolving of powers to the provinces, budgetary restrictions, etc, have accommodated much time and effort which in turn has significantly slowed the progress towards the creation of a new, democratic education system.

Improvements in Education in the 1995 year, however, have been more progressive. At the beginning of 1995, on the 28 February
1995, the department of Education released the final White paper on Education. A new core school syllabus was introduced which included a significant change in the history curriculum, an overall concentration on practical life skills and a more holistic judgement of pupil performance was emphasised (Alfreds, 1995: 11). On 1 April a single National Department of Education, with nine provincial departments materialised, and on the 30 September, concrete plans to do away with Model C schools were implemented (Alfreds, 1995: 24). On the 14 September 1995, Parliament passed a controversial 'National Education Policy Bill' which allowed the Education Minister far-reaching powers to reform education (Anon, 1995: 1).

A summary of advances made during the post election period have been summarised by Chisholm (1995: 10-11) as follows:

a) The creation of a new national and nine provincial departments,
b) Spending patterns planned to reflect a greater deal of equity,
c) New legislation introduced and all apartheid legislation repealed,
d) The introduction of a review committee on the organisation, governance and funding of schools and a national commission on higher education.

However, the post election period did not advance any improvement in terms of the continuing conflicts at schools. Instead, new types of racial tensions and discrepancies crept in.
At the beginning of the 1995 school year, students who were unable to be accommodated into already fully occupied schools threatened to take up arms and invade schools. M. Metcalfe, (Gauteng MEC for education) reported that "we know we have a huge problem with pressure on schools and human resources and have serious budgetary constraints" (Mothibeli, 1995: 5). Other problems included the surfacing of racial tensions on many University campuses and the pressures on White teachers to be removed from teaching in Black schools. However, it could not be denied that the road towards a new education dispensation was in the process of being paved and the consequent problems which occurred with it represented natural transitional boulders that had be overcome.

4.6 NECC Expansion and Participation during the political Transitional period

It was the opinion of many protagonists that by 1990 the impetus of the NECC had waned (eg. Snelling, 1992). However, contrary to this common conception, the NECC had been very active and had played an instrumental role on the side of the democratic movement during the negotiating era.

The NECC movement had, during the first half of the 1990's accumulated many achievements and handled many crisis situations which had to a large extent awarded the movement on indelibly high status during the transitional phase. According to an interview conducted by the author, (on the 25 November 1995), Mr Desmond Thompson, the ex-media officer of the NECC, stated that
the NECC's role demonstrated a very apparent shift in 1989 from being a body which firmly stood in opposition to the state, to a body which on an increasing level displayed a move towards developmental work. This shift towards developmental accomplishments was clearly visible in the experience of the NECC during the 1990's. However, the role of the NECC as a crisis management body was equally fully realised during this time.

During the disorder which engulfed schools in 1990, the NECC admirably launched an intensive learning campaign which involved the hiring of tutors and the organising of extra classes and materials in order to assist pupils in the preparation of examinations (Christie, 1990: 38-52). The NECC also during this period called for an end to mass action in the educational sector. It also proceeded with lengthy negotiations with the DET to postpone examinations for two weeks and succeeded in pursuing the DET to allow students with a minimum of 20% in matric exams to rewrite supplementary examinations in March or May 1991 (NECC press release, 1991: 1).

Early in 1990, during a process of active government closure of teacher training colleges, the NECC managed to assist students who were refused admission at the Goodhope College to gain access and registration. The NECC also showed active participation in the crisis facing rural and squatter schools. For example, the NECC helped to raise funds to pay salaries to 30 teachers in squatter schools over a period of eight months (NECC press release, 1991: 9). During 1990, the NECC also played a
significant organisational role in the "international literacy year" campaign (NECC press release, 1991: 1).

During the period of 1990-1993, the NECC, amongst other activities, accomplished the following: It agreed to draw up guidelines of credible private institutions for parents who wished to place their children into such schools. It also initiated projects for matric pupils such as the 'top student's award' and 'operation catchup', which, funded by the business sector, provided prizes, scholarships, computers and holiday trips to pupils who excelled. The NECC furthermore, in cooperation with other organisations unveiled a multi-million Rand loan scheme for tertiary students (Motala & Tickly, 1993: 7-10). A practical example of the NECC's participation in the handling of crisis management could be seen in the case of the Orange Grove Primary School whereby the latter school was closed down due to the diminishment of white pupil attendance. The NECC involved itself in lengthy negotiations with the DET concerning the possible occupation of this facility by neighbouring Alexandra pupils. The NECC was highly persuasive with this proposal and the school was consequently occupied (Carrim & Sayed, 1993: 26).

The NECC National Conference Report and Programme of December 1990 hailed the NECC as having, by then adopted a "truly national character, bridging all education departments and non-government educational initiatives and engaging education from pre-primary across all formal educational institutions to adult education
initiatives and programmes" (ANON, Dec 1990). It was within this context that the NECC transformed from the "National Education Crisis Committee" to the "National Education Co-ordinating Committee" (ANON, 1991).*

The change in name, however, did not terminate the crisis management quality of the movement, it merely awarded it a national character.

The 'national character' of the NECC (henceforth meaning the National Education Co-ordinating Committee) could be seen physically in the large expansion of Head and Regional offices. This expansion involved the appointment of a full-time general secretary, a national administrator, a national organiser, a national information officer, and the appointment of regional organisers and secretaries. In addition, a permanent People's Education Committee was set up. The NECC also during the 1989-1990 period decided to co-ordinate other organisations such as UDUSA (Union of Democratic University Staff Association), SASCO (South African Students Congress), COSAS (Congress of South African Students), SADTU (South African Democratic Teacher's Union), and COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), and thus acted as an umbrella body encompassing all these educational organisations. As Thompson has said during an interview with him, "All structures at local, regional, and national levels were composed of by the representatives of the different sectors and they were jointly known as the NECC". He goes on to say that the NECC was meant to act as a representative and unifying force to
these affiliated and associated structures. According to the confidential NECC report (1992: 5-7), The NECC also extended its efforts into the creation of Educational Policy Units (EPU's) at various Universities in order to advance the movement into the sphere of reconstruction and development.

In October 1992, the NECC hosted a Convention on People's Education in Midrand which was highly successful since it was attended by students, teachers, academics, parents, political organisations, as well as international delegates and organisations. The convention precipitated local as well as international input on how to launch a practical application of People's Education at schools (Thompson, 1992: 1). Thus, while the NECC had taken on a national character, it continued in its drive for a People's Education.

NECC participation during 1995 mainly involved campaigns to occupy under-utilised White schools. It made an appeal to the communities to identify all vacant schools and to bring these to the attention of the NECC. The NECC during these campaigns vocalised its condemnation of the local Education Ministry for remaining inactive in this matter. These latter efforts proved effective in that the ANC consequently released a statement for all educators to ensure that all schools were utilised within maximum capacities without any form of discrimination or prejudice. Another NECC activity which proved to obtain results was its affiliation with COSAS in speaking out against the imposition of compulsory school fees. In response,
M. Metcalfe announced that no child could be refused admission to any state school on the ground of inability to pay fees (Mkwanazi-Twala, Mwiria & Greenstein, 1995: 8-9). Furthermore, the Soweto branch of the NECC committed itself towards collectively assisting the police in reclaiming lost and stolen school property which had left schools badly equipped at the beginning of the 1995 school year (Anon, 1995: 9).

With regard to its role in policy development, the NECC's role during both the negotiating and post election era was significant. The NECC successfully compiled working documents on education which could be presented to the negotiating table, and in so doing gained a respectable and legitimate voice in negotiations. In 1992 the NECC initiated the establishment of the National Education Conference (NEC) "which united fifteen national organisations against the state's unilateral restructuring of education at that stage" (Thompson, 1995: 1). Furthermore, the NECC was at the forefront of the establishment of the "National Education and Training Forum" (NETF), which aimed at reaching consensus on major issues in education including the solving of crisis situations and the planning of future restructuring (Motala & Tickly, 1993: i).

Perhaps the single most important contribution the NECC made during this time was its major participation and contribution in the formulation of the NEPI policy report. By March 1993, the NEPI paper consisted of 12 reports, each engaged in discussion on a particular educational aspect. The 13th document provided...
a "conceptual and historical analysis of the NEPI process and products" (Motala & Tickly, 1993, 50-54). Briefly, the NEPI report substantiated:

a) a unitary, single department of education,
b) the participation of parents, teachers, and students in the education sector,
c) equal per capita expenditure in schooling,
d) the redistribution strategy,
e) the development of a core curriculum that had three educational phases (Motala & Tickly, 1993: 50-54).

The NEPI report proved to be a fundamental contribution to the negotiating process and newspaper articles reported the government's commitment to take serious cognisance of its contents.

These contributitional performances of the NECC acclaimed a reversal response from the state. Whereas the NECC had previously been severely repressed by the state, the latter now began to show much respect and displayed a kind of deferential esteem towards the NECC. This could clearly be seen in the example where the DET approached the NECC and requested that it make suggestions on the most adequate method a non-recurrent R800 million could be utilised within DET schooling. The NECC in response to this request, approached the EPU at the University of the Witwatersrand to make a statement which could be forwarded to the DET on how the funds could be equitably and fairly distributed and utilised (ANON, EPU report, 1990: 3).
Thus, the 1990-1995 years had acclaimed the NECC with a string of achievements. Much was done by the NECC in solving crisis situations which continued to occur, and equally much was done by the NECC in formulating policy statements and documents which were used on behalf of the oppositional terrain during the negotiating process. The NECC itself stated that, "the innovative learning campaign, the Educational governance Campaign, the Back to school campaign or the NEPI research initiatives were so essential and appropriate as to have translated into a source of national pride and international respect for the NECC and its affiliates" (Barron, 1994: 4).

A comprehensive summary of both direct and indirect projects and contributions accomplished by the NECC is listed below:

1. Back-to-school program
2. People's Education Program
   a) Education Charter Campaign
   b) Subject Commissions
3. Intensive Learning Campaign
4. Open Schools Program
5. Educational Institutional Governance Program
6. Information Monitoring and Research
   EDT (Education Development and Training)
   a) NEPI (National Education Policy Investigation)
   b) EAP (Education Aid Programme)
   c) STEP (Science Teachers Education Project)
   d) Participation in the Joint Working Group
   e) Represented in the National Education and Training Forum
   f) The establishment of the NEC (National Education
7. EPU's (Education Policy Units)
8. Private Sector Initiative
9. Joint Education Trust
10. Independent Development Trust (advisory role)
11. South African Bursary Council
12. EDUCARE
13. National Literacy Cooperation
14. Creating and implementing new regional offices
   Organisational Development of Regions
   a) Border
   b) Western Cape
   c) Northern Cape
   d) Eastern Cape
   e) Natal
   f) Transkei
   g) Northern Transvaal
   h) Eastern Transvaal
   i) Southern Transvaal
   j) Orange Free State
15. Coordination among Components
   a) UDUSA (Union of Democratic University Staff Association)
   b) COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions)
   c) COSAS (Congress of South African Students)
   e) SASCO (South African Students Congress)
   f) SADTU (South African Democratic Teacher's Union)
16. Accounting and finance
17. Administration Services
18. Secretarial Support Services
19. Organising Department
20. Participation in national and international education conferences
21. Funding proposals and solicitation
22. Crisis management and resolution
23. Farm schools outreach
24. Literacy Initiatives
25. Education Negotiations
26. Launching and servicing local NECC structures
27. Building and strengthening alliances with progressive education/political groupings
28. Organising, managing and minuting NECC Conferences:
   a) national congress
   b) national executive committee
   c) national office-bearer committee
   d) regional congress
   f) regional general council
   g) regional executive committee
   h) regional office-bearer committee

4.7 Political Changes and its effects on the NECC
Despite the above achievements, the NECC simultaneously displayed various weaknesses and the 1990 era pressurised the movement to identify a clear strategic position for itself within
the new dispensation.

The abnormally rapid political reforms which marched hastily onto the political stage took many anti-apartheid reform movements by surprise, and this did not exclude the NECC. Suddenly, the slogan 'People's Education for People's Power' sounded redundant and the term as Thompson has put it, "seemed to take a knock". While the achievement of 'People's Power' was imminent, the objectives of People's Education showed less than fruitful results in schools. As Professor Gerwel (1992: 4) said: "the politics of negotiation has resulted in the liberation movement no longer being able to argue that social and institutional changes will only follow after the seizure of state power". In agreement, Christie (1994: 52), stated: "While People's Education was directed at wrestling power from a hostile state in a period of political struggle, its radical formulations required reconsideration as the nature of the state changed. The role of People's Education within the newly expanded, national and co-ordinated framework of the NECC became an important question".

Thompson has attempted to clarify this by arguing that the NECC was depicted as the official flagbearer of the People's Education movement, which was the NECC's motto and logo. On the other hand, he also adds that People's Education was also rooted to a certain extent outside of the NECC. However, since the ideals of People's Education was driven by the NECC, the People's Education forum composed of an integral component of the NECC. This study perceives the NECC as an umbrella force and an organisational and implementational body of the People's Education movement.
With rapid political progress on the agenda, it suddenly became important to critically evaluate the grassroots progress achieved by the People’s Education movement. A study conducted by Moolla and Eckstein (1991: 19), found that the term ‘People’s Education had not been heard of by the majority of students in Lenasia and Bosmont, although the general idea incorporated in People’s Education had been embedded in their ‘consciousness’. They concluded that "those involved in the promulgation of and mobilisation around People’s Education failed in that they had not reached those who are indeed most significant, the students".

The NECC itself admitted that any kind of progress in People’s Education at grassroots level remained poor and that "the NECC was becoming more effective as a sort of aid agency - distributing study aids, presenting training on Parent-teacher-student association formation..." (Barron, 1994: 4). The author believes that while it is true that the NECC’s expansion into a coordinated structure, its involvement in policy issues such as the creation of EPU’s and the drafting of various policy documents, and its creative role in solving crisis situations seemed to de-emphasise its former energetic drive for a People’s Education, it is also true that much of the philosophy propagated by People’s Education had been absorbed into new, governmental educational initiatives. Furthermore, the NECC’s shift in focus during the transformative years was a natural and necessary rather than a deliberate occurrence. The drive toward an alternative education system was necessary during the apartheid years as students were becoming less and less motivated and
interested in the necessity of education. Thus the pronouncement of a People’s Education proved to be an essential motivational vehicle at the time. However, with a new, democratic education a future certainty, it was a natural and necessary adjustment for the NECC to locate its efforts in policy formulation and participate fully in negotiations in order to ensure that the ideals incorporated in People’s Education were considered, discussed and later legitimately incorporated into the post apartheid educational agenda. Thus, while the 1990 era did not reveal a direct drive towards a People’s Education, the philosophy of the movement had naturally penetrated the so called post apartheid "consciousness" in natural and consistent way.

4.8 The NECC faces a New Challenge
Indeed the political shifts of the 1990’s collapsed the NECC structure into a new kind of debate. Questions such as the NECC’s role and identity within the new dispensation and its relationship with its affiliated structures and political organisations such as the ANC dominated the agenda of many of the NECC meetings. As the NECC itself admitted (ANON, 1992: 2) “for the NECC, as well as other mass-based political organisations, the past 24 months have created a new terrain, generally characterised by political negotiations over armed confrontation, and has raised strategic, political, fiscal and operational questions for mass-based organisations in general and particularly for those operating on a non-party basis such as the NECC".
Sayed and Carrim (1993), in their article "civil society, social movements and the NECC" have argued that various political changes have effectively changed the status of the NECC. Using Tourain's terms, they hold that the NECC has reflected a shift from "critical struggles" (which is protest based), to "positive struggles" (which is more reconstructive and transformative). Mr D. Thompson, in an interview conducted with him, has announced that in his experience in the NECC, he fully agrees with this above argument. Carrim and Sayed have held that this change has fundamentally accorded the NECC its own "education specific identity" (1993: 21). They have argued that the new political terrain "fragmented" the anti-apartheid alliance which in turn made it possible for various anti-apartheid organisations to openly compete for political space and political power in their own right. The NECC had, in this context situated itself in the compartment of "civil society", as an independent political party (1993: 22). This change in social position forced the NECC to face the actual nature of its organisation. They cite the increased media presence of the NECC and its participation in the negotiating scene as examples of proof that the NECC had been, among other parties contesting state power. Carrim and Sayed argue that instead of being a depoliticised structure, "the NECC may conceivably be the best historical actor in a social movement of education and the degree of the NECC's representativeness will be the most important determinant in its possible future role as a major actor in the educational social movement in a post apartheid South Africa" (1993: 32).
Whether the NECC movement identified itself as a "civil society" structure is debatable and NECC meetings have, to a minor level addressed this issue. Sikhosana, of the EPU at the University of Natal (1994: 4-5), has argued that People’s Education has been an organ of People’s Power and not an organ of civil society. He has argued that Carrim and Sayed have lost sight of the ‘national liberation struggle’ and have treated the negotiating phase as a competition of political players, which it was not. In an interview conducted with Carrim on the 24 November 1995, Carrim has argued that Sikhosana had misread their article in that they have not separated the national liberation struggle from the NECC but merely highlighted the fact that a change in its strategic position was apparent.

The Carrim and Sayed article has however highlighted a number of very interesting and important points. This includes the change of status of the NECC and its battle to find a comfortable identity within the new political terrain. This latter point can demonstrably be seen in debates which consequently emerged on the relationship between the NECC and the now unbanned, legitimate body, the ANC. The question of whether the NECC was an independent structure or whether it formed part of the ANC became imperative once the ANC was unbanned. A workshop in order to tackle the above issue was held at the University of the Western Cape. The NECC held that since it had emerged during the time that the ANC was banned, the NECC therefore did not affiliate itself with the ANC and rather stood as a separate body. The ANC in its view argued that it “wishes that the NECC remain a non-
sectorial umbrella body for education with a close association with the ANC education department" (ANON, NECC regional Executive Committee Report, 1991: 17). The ANC clearly showed a great deal of respect for the NECC and this could be seen in the invitations awarded to the NECC by the ANC in educational workshops and meetings. Thompson, in an interview granted with him, has exposed that in his experience of working with the NECC, there always existed a cordial and friendly relationship between the NECC and the ANC. The ANC, he argued always ensured that the NECC shared a platform in educational workshops, meetings and educational decisions. However, the ANC had never officially sanctioned the NECC and while the ANC had given the NECC approval to continue its work, Thompson, in his personal experience had sensed a kind of reluctance on behalf of the ANC for the NECC to continue. This reluctance, the author believes could possibly be the result of two possible reasons. First, the ANC could have perceived the NECC structure as a fundamental anti-apartheid rooted movement and therefore seen no relevance in its continuation in a post-apartheid arena. Secondly, on a more controversial and speculatative level, taking note of the proposal by Carrim and Sayed that the NECC continue in a post-apartheid era as a non government body, could have been an unpleasant possibility for the ANC alliance. The NECC, as a non-affiliated, non-government body would have the consensus to challenge a post-apartheid government's educational decisions, thus acting as a possible threat. It could be speculated that the ANC's reluctance to encourage the continuation of the NECC as a national body could be seen in its consequent absorption of NECC
personnel into governmental education bodies, and in its non-funding relationship with the continuing local NECC movements.

Questions have also been raised about the relationship between the NECC and its affiliated organs, other massed based protest organisations, parent-teacher-student organisations and also its relationship with the Education Policy Units at various Universities. Having recognised these debatable questions, the NECC has stated that developments since 1990 such as the unbanning of the ANC, the coordination of other educational organisations into the NECC and the creation of EPU's have all in their own way produced new challenges for the NECC and have contributed to the necessity of finding a new status and identity for the NECC. The Confidential NECC report (1992: 5-7) recognised that while the expansion of the NECC in 1989/1990 as a co-ordinated educational organisation representing other progressive educational movements expanded the NECC on the one hand, it also, on the other hand "limited the organisational effectiveness of the NECC into the 1990's".

Furthermore, the decision to grant the NECC the broader role of coordination rather than to limit its activities to 'crisis management' in many ways tended to complicate the need to direct the aims and positions of the movement. Thompson (1995), in his experience explained this 'complication'. He has unveiled that constituent structures of the NECC had a duty to take instructions from the NECC as well as to report to the NECC as a national body. They also, however, had to report to their own
organisations on a regional as well as on a local level. The many layers of necessary input tended to complicate decisions and created widespread confusion. The NECC found it necessary to repeatedly appeal for a recognition from the affiliated structures that the it was a National body representing them and therefore required their input and cooperation. On the 9 November 1991 the NECC circulated a memo to all delegates of the NECC to make this appeal clear. It reported that many organisations had wrongly perceived the NECC to be "distinctly separate in composition, approach and emphasis from the organisations that form it... the NECC never was, and cannot be an organisation with a distinct membership - it is primarily a front structure of affiliated organisations". In agreement, Sikhosana (1994: 1) argued that the NECC was an "organisation of other organisations and had no branches (or grassroots) of its own and could only rely on sectoral inputs for its policy development and strategic direction". Thompson (1995) has enhanced this view by saying that the NECC was meant to be driven by the affiliated organisations. However, the identity of the NECC as an umbrella body signalled a new kind of emerging problem. The affiliated structures began to show less and less interest in the NECC as an umbrella body and attended less and less NECC structural meetings. They obviously felt that they could pursue their goals separately from the NECC. This, Thompson presented, has proved to be one of the major reasons for the eventual closure of the NECC as a National body (Thompson, 1995).
4.9 The NECC Debates National Reconstruction

The political changes of the 1990's as well as the above questions which the NECC was forced to face initiated a string of NECC conferences which seemed to roughly go through three phases: The initial meetings tackled the role of the NECC in the changing political arena, and its relationship with the ANC and other affiliated structures. The meetings soon changed to engage issues surrounding ways in which the NECC could restructure itself. The most recent NECC meetings involved serious discussions on whether the NECC should disband as a national body or not. These series of meetings tended to take serious cognisance of the achievements of the NECC as well as the numerous practical problems which were being highlighted on an increasing basis in the NECC. According to Thompson, in his experience with the NECC, many meetings between the years 1992-1995 revolved around how to continue, since finances during this time proved to be a major issue. Serious discussions involving the possible reorientation of the NECC occurred, according to Thompson (1993), almost on a six monthly basis.

On the 7-9 December 1990, the NECC met and reported a program for 1990 which included the need for the restructuring of the NECC along national organisational lines. In March and April 1991 the NECC Southern Transvaal successfully held two regional conferences and in April a fully fledged regional structure was formed. However, as explained earlier, the lack of participation and involvement from certain sectors proved to be a major NECC problem. According to Thompson (1993), in his view, the NECC
found it a battle to get responses, mandates and participation from the sectors who increasingly displayed a "lack of concern, a lack of enthusiasm, and failed to play an active and consistent role in meeting procedures" (Thompson, 1995).

By 1992, the NECC meetings showed signs of reviewing the NECC’s achievements and accounting for its shortcomings. At the NECC Keynote Address held in March 1992, Professor Gerwell explained that the movement’s lack of progress at grassroots level was firstly the result of the 1980 state repression. State repression, he argued, made People’s Education lose “its distinctive positive and creative content, and it became once again merely reduced to an opposition movement based on the rejection of the apartheid education” (Gerwell, 1992: 3). Secondly, he went on, the negotiating process tended to inhibit the progress of People’s Education by "subduing the radical and transformatory content of People’s Education". Thus, in his view, the NECC’s involvement in negotiations seemed to blur its initial radical tendencies and the NECC tended to reflect a more accommodating and less radical priority.

The 1992 NECC report, within the context of debates on the future role of the NECC highlighted a range of very real problems within the NECC structure. These included:

a) the regional offices’ displayed feelings of uncertainty in regard to the NECC program,

b) Regional offices showed no unity and conformity in programs and priorities and no successful coordination at the national
- regional level existed,
c) the NECC did not have an organised base of information,
d) debated whether the NECC was a component of 'civil society' or not,
e) Professionally, the NECC showed weaknesses because attendance of meetings were poor, notice of meetings were not well prepared, records were badly kept, and meeting procedures were chaotic,
f) Salaried staff required a clear and realistic job description (ANON, NECC report, 1992: 15-20).

The report thereafter announced that the NECC urgently required to consider one of the following three options in its future role:

A) The NECC could continue as before,
B) The NECC could restructure as a 'civil society',
C) The NECC could disband and dissolve,

The latter three options occupied much discussion and debate within the regional NECC offices and the EPU's participated and contributed to the reconstruction debate. The University of the Witwatersrand's EPU formulated a concentrated and lengthy report on each option. Ultimately, the Fourth Biannual National Conference of the NECC held in Midrand from 11 - 13 December 1992 resolved that "the future role of the NECC shall be a sector driven co-ordinating structure at a national, regional and local level, and further that such an NECC shall continue to fight the education crisis whilst at the same time providing alternative
education policies" (ANON, NECC Conference Report, 1992).

However, the conflict in the various NECC branches continued and financial pressures proved to be a pressing problem for the NECC. Major international funders of the NECC such as the Kagiso Trust remained sceptical about the continued existence of the NECC now that political reforms were initiated. They consequently withdrew their donations to the NECC. Financial constraints thus had a major impact on the debate revolving around the future role of the NECC (Thompson, 1995). Barron (1994: 3), reported that by 1992 the crisis in the NECC was acute. By 1994, Chisholm announced that the NECC had experienced major organisational constraints and a decision on its future had become an imperative issue.

As a contribution to the debate on the future of the NECC, Sikhosana (1994: 4/5), of the University of Natal's EPU suggested that the NECC did not require a strategic change in its focus and role and should therefore remain autonomous but, he added, the NECC needed to have a formal participation in the state's educational institutions, and needed to address the many contradictions and tensions within the NECC structure.

On the 25 June 1994, the NECC organised a national summit meeting which was attended by many of its sectoral affiliates. Here, it was decided that the NECC should continue to exist, but that the National Education Conference (NEC) should immediately dissolve since it had already served its purpose (Motala & Tickly, 1994: 15).
4.10 The NECC Disbands

However, an NECC news release on the 11 April 1995 announced that the NECC had decided to immediately terminate its national activities and to disband as a National Organisation. The paper stated that the NECC's aim of "resisting and countering the devastating effects of apartheid education" had always been its priority, and with the establishment of a single National Department of Education, the NECC's major objective had been realised. The paper listed the achievements of the NECC, such as the education development trust, the creation of the five EPU's, the drawing up of the NEPI report, the founding of NEC and NETF and its prime role in the "formation and Coordination" of its affiliate organisations.

The paper explained that the decision to disband had occurred only as a result of major consultations and meetings with the various NECC branches and the democratic movement allies, after which the NECC National Office decided on its immediate conclusion. The decision to close was confirmed and approved by the National Executive Council who added that the NECC's affiliates should continue to exist separately, and that a newly formed Committee which would meet regularly will ensure the recording of programmes of the sectoral affiliates. According to Thompson (1995), the regional structures of the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Natal and Northern Transvaal regions expressed that they would like to continue their work as before since they still had a role to play. These structures were encouraged to continue to exist on a local level. The future
experience of these regional NECC movements remains to be seen but it is obvious that their continued existence is beneficial in the solving of educational crisis which continue to occur.

Reasons for the eventual decision of the NECC to disband on a national level were given as follows:

a) The new political scene had promoted a kind of independence to the sectoral affiliates, who in turn had cast doubt on the co-ordinating role and function of the NECC as a national body,

b) The NECC had experienced a great loss of international and local funding since the new political scene which had, in turn strained the adequate implementation of NECC programmes (Thompson, 1995).

The closure of the NECC organisation could easily raise critical responses from sceptics and pessimists, who could cast doubt on the viability of the NECC movement. However, such attitudes remain frail in that the rich history of the NECC organisation in itself has applauded its value to the South African Educational scene. As Thompson (1995) stated, the concept of People’s Education seemed lost now that the NECC, which drove and owned the concept has dissolved. However, the author believes that the attitude that the concept of People’s Education ceases to exist is a major blunder, and a blind misjudgment. The concepts employed by the People’s Education movement have been unmistakably absorbed into the new educational dispensation and evidence of the People’s Education philosophy is apparent in the
Governmental White Paper and in recent educational curriculum changes.

In an interview conducted with Carrim (24 November 1995), Carrim stated, that in his view, the NECC still exists, except that it now exists on a more localised, pluralised, and decentralised level. He has argued that the NECC could be viewed in three ways:

a) as a movement
b) as an organisation
c) as an institution

Carrim (1995) argued that as an organisation, the NECC has indeed dissolved in that its national offices, portfolios, executive structures, memberships etc have all terminated.

As an institution, the NECC’s impact depends on whether its affiliated structures exist or not. Thus in all Universities where EPU’s exist, for example, the NECC’s presence is felt on an institutional level.

As a movement (in its structural orientation and philosophy), the NECC is very much in existence and has not dissolved at all. The NECC’s continued existence as a movement could be seen, according to Carrim, in the 1991 NECC initiated Culture of learning and teaching campaign which has now become a presidential project and part of the RDP. In addition to this, the NECC as a movement still exists in that many regional structures have chosen to continue, and they play a vital role in surfacing unitedly in crisis situations. Thus, according to Carrim (1995), “Nationally, as a national coordinated voice the NECC does not exist but on
regional and local levels it continues to exist... The NECC stands on the level of Historicity, that is, it does not exist as an organisational structure but that its norms and values as an alternative framework will still be called upon whenever these issues come about and more and more these are going to operate on a dispersed, decentralised, pluralised and localised basis".

According to Carrim (1995), the value of the NECC could be seen in the extent to which many of its executive members have been absorbed into the state bureaucracy. The NECC has informed the state in numerous ways and evidence of NECC input is evident in both the White paper as well as the School Provincial Bill. Carrim has stated: "the kind of vision the NECC has been able to give its affiliates through the People's Education movement is clearly what is informing the government on a whole range of levels - from the policy of life - long learning, to adult basic education and training, the creation of pre-schools, equal distribution of resources, the single system of education, the restructuring of educational bureaucracies, an alternative curriculum - all these are NECC initiated kind of projects..." (Carrim, 1995).

In total agreement with Carrim's theses, the author believes that both the extent to which the NECC philosophy has impacted on the new education agenda as well as the continuation of educational work at the local branches of the NECC, tend to enhance the valuable role it has played during the apartheid regime, the role it played during negotiations, and the future role it is bound
to embark on. the People's Education movement has always propagated that it was a movement in "process", with flexible tendencies during periods of change. This commitment to "process", the author believes, has been clearly demonstrated during the NECC experience of the 1990's. Indeed it is true that the 1990's has also presented many challenges for the NECC. The eventual closure of the national branch of the NECC has in no way belittled its past performances, instead, the NECC still exists as a regional movement and remains "process oriented", with much input to contribute to our changing education system. As Carrim (1995) has said: "Yes, there are tensions and contradictions, but these are constructive and positive, rather than destructive and negative".
5.1 Summary

The task of this research report has been to map out the historical experience of the People's Education movement in South Africa from its inception in 1986 to its eventual national closure in March 1995. The People's Education movement under the banner of the NECC had been an endemic part of the education struggles experienced in South Africa, and had played a major role in informing the post-apartheid educational bureaucracy. Its historical role is therefore a significant and essential part of our educational experience. As Wolpe (1991: 77), has said, "the historical significance of People's Education lies in the fact that its conceptions not only challenged all previous conceptions of educational transformations in South Africa, but in so doing, placed on the agenda questions which must constitute the necessary point of departure for the formulation of new policies and strategies under new conditions".

The first chapter of this dissertation has demonstrated that the concept of People's Education had been adopted by the oppressed peoples of South Africa in various forms from a very early stage and has therefore not been a new notion. The official launching of the People's Education movement encouraged extreme state repression but despite this, the movement managed to initiate the introduction up of alternative textbooks and the redirection the
opposition movement towards a more reconstructive channel.

The second chapter of this theses has attempted to trace the experience of the NECC between the years 1986-1990. It was found that the concept of People's Education captured the interests of academics who attempted to make sense of the movement by dissecting and analysing the various terms employed by People's Education. This theoretical analysis did not paralyse the movement in any way. Instead, it revitalised it and enhanced its value. As Carrim (1993) has stated, "Intellectual theorising has been an endemic part of the struggle nationally, as well as within the NECC, and at no time did it paralyse it, rather, it was enhanced and informed by these debates". Theory and practice always compliment each other. The intellectual scrutiny that the People’s Education movement experienced was a natural stage in its growth. Without the necessary theoretical debates, many ideas in the People’s Education movement would remain unworkable on a practical level.

The final chapter of this paper has historisised the People’s Education movement during the political transformative years of 1990-1995. It showed that during this time the official banner of People’s Education, the NECC, played an instrumental role in the negotiating process and at the same time succeeded in extinguishing numerous crisis situations. Its decision to expand on a national level by incorporating affiliated educational organisations tended to complicate the smooth running of the organisation, and the eventual withdrawal of international
funding on which it was so dependent, tended to suppress its organisational progress. These two major inhibiting factors precipitated the 1995 decision to disband as a national body, but to continue on a more decentralised and localised level. The closure of the NECC could be perceived as an optimistic, and progressive sign on the educational front. Its closure points to the fact that the goals and aspirations of the NECC (such as the creation of a single, unitary, democratic education system) are in the process of being fully realised.

5.2 Conclusion

While People’s Education never intended to be the new education system, and always stressed that this could only be achieved once political democracy was instated, the valuable role of the NECC in creating a momentum in the drive towards a democratic education system is undeniable. The NECC represented a legitimate voice for the strive towards a new dispensation, it fleshed out the necessary theoretical debates essential in progressive movements, and it represented an important information and vocal category on the side of the anti-apartheid movement in the transformative and negotiating years.

As the NECC (1995) itself has said that: "the NECC established a forum for innovation from where democratic education initiatives and ideas could be launched, and experimentation with democratic educational concepts such as People’s Education and the concepts of PTSA have been debated, developed and launched from the NECC as a forum for innovation... The NECC has served as a launching pad for a range of democratic education
initiatives such as NEPI and the EPU’s and bursary organisations and the NECC has articulated and developed an alternative vision of education which has left an indelible impression on the face of educational politics on the transition" (NECC report, 1995).

Throughout the world, there have been serious debates on how to effectively adjust current educational systems in order to make them more relevant, equal, unbiased and democratic. Nowhere is the need for such adjustments more intense than in South Africa. South Africa is fortunate in being given the opportunity to transform its education at root level and to start afresh. Enforced apartheid legislation has resulted in deeply cleaved racial and cultural divisions in our Country. Current Educational plans to replan our educational policies towards a more democratic, non-racist and just society is a complicated and difficult task. Pessimism and negative attitudes can only retard any progressive achievements. New educational criteria can only be really relevant if it is historically located and developed from a context which includes our educational struggles of the past. Any attempt to impose a future educational program in this Country cannot be legitimate unless it has taken into account the history of educational struggles and resistance which has initiated the search for alternatives. Since our new educational system shows signs of People’s Education philosophy, it could safely be said that our transitional education system is a natural outgrowth of a process of struggle and resistance and is therefore not artificially prescribed or superficially adopted.
Goodman (1995: 2) in his book refers to well known educationist Kiebard who has appealed to all educators to examine new and popular school movements from a historical perspective. He argues that without this perspective, it is far too easy to present educational proposals that sound like the beginning of a new direction for educating our children, but in fact result in "change without difference". It has been precisely this perspective that has informed and driven this dissertation.
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