

## CHAPTER 5

### VALUES AND THEIR CONFLICTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the conflicts between the government values of economic growth and manpower needs and individual values will be analysed. Hypothesis 8 will also be tested. It states that there will be significant limitations on government efforts to create the desired numbers and types of skilled manpower, for interventionism of this sort will run counter to individual aspirations.

#### 5.2 GOVERNMENT VALUES AND CONFLICTS

As indicated in Chapter 4, the government has pursued the goals of economic development and manpower needs and tried to use the education system to further these goals. At the same time it has also attempted to provide for individual needs. Although there need not be a sharp dichotomy between the two, it is unavoidable that there will be some conflict. The colonial and Third World biases in favour of an academic education and the peculiarly South African political, socio-economic, educational, and vocational problems have acted as significant limitations on the government efforts. It may thus be said that the first part of the hypothesis has been substantiated.

This conflict of values may be seen as similar to such other clashes as liberty versus equality and the individual versus the society. Jean Hardy has identified nine such basic contradictions (1981:viii). Within an academic context, freedom to study what one desires or what the Germans call Lernfreiheit and for the professoriate Lehrfreiheit are probably the most cherished academic values. Opposed to them are the socio-economic and manpower needs of the country. Moreover, within a market economic system, competition, status, and self-interest loom large (99). Socio-economic considerations play an important rôle in

making career decisions. Education is viewed as a means to improving social mobility.

### 5.2.1 INDIVIDUAL VALUES

This emerges from the earlier mentioned 1975 survey of all of the university graduates in 1974 and early 1975 (Ehrens & Louw, 1976). It revealed that nearly two-thirds (65%) of the students went to university to qualify for some specific type of employment or profession, 20,1% said that they wanted education in some general field without a specific type of employment as the immediate goal, and 9,4% desired to obtain a broad academic background before proceeding with something else(6). That the majority view education in essentially utilitarian terms was reiterated when 63,1% said that they preferred it to have been more applied, with 33,6% preferring it as it was, and only 2,4% desiring a more theoretical approach (28).

A 1976 survey of first-year University of Fort Hare students as to their reasons for coming to university revealed an even stronger economic motivation amongst the black students, with 86% saying that it was to gain knowledge and acquire a professional skill and a degree; 73% saying (multiple answers were possible) that better employment prospects, higher standard of living, and security were the motivating factors; 71% stressed financial rewards and the same percentage opted for status; whilst only 35% expressed an intrinsic interest in their academic disciplines, higher academic goals, and to be educated in the broadest sense (Penny & Millar, 1979:65). Reward values were supported by 78,6% and self-expressive ones by 24% (65-66). The authors concluded that the "equation that education=a good job=financial security=status clearly emerges" (63).

The economic factor is clearly important, but it is not the whole thing. Cultural and social factors are also important (Anderson, 1961:263). The demand for tertiary education reflects a particular value structure of society. "The social demand for tertiary education takes place despite any decline in relative incomes" (Shippey, 1973:25). The fact that university graduates earn no more than technicians and sometimes even less,

as demonstrated in Chapter 4, is an important indicator of the persistence of university prestige, as well as the strong social demand for university education. Moreover, tertiary education overall enrolments are not normally economically determined to any marked degree, a further indication of the prestige of tertiary education and the strong social demand for it.

Although many desire tertiary education for purely utilitarian or socio-economic reasons, there is a minority which desires it for self-development or the advancement of knowledge regardless of the economic consequences. It is this minority which is impervious to government arguments about the need for socio-economic development and manpower needs, for it sees education as of intrinsic value. This thinking was well expressed by A.H. Murray, a dissenter to the Eiselen Commission's report: "Education thus has no extraneously imposed purpose extrinsic to the human individual; nor does it function as part of a greater whole. Above all, education is not there to prepare the individual for some preconceived form of society or another" (1951:170.)

### 5.2.2 POSSIBLE RECONCILIATION

Most students appear to be open to influences of a socio-economic nature, not political. They are already in the tertiary education system, but not enough of them are in the areas desired by the government -- teaching, natural and physical sciences, and technical. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, teaching and technical areas suffer from a lack of prestige. Teaching also lacks the desired monetary rewards. It is evident that "status differences in higher education are but reflections of the status hierarchy in the wider society, particularly the labor market" (Premfors, 1982:20). The second part of the Hypothesis 8 also holds true. To increase the success of the government in creating the desired types of educated personnel, it would be necessary for it to make stronger appeals based on socio-economic factors of an individual nature. Some possible approaches to this are suggested in Chapter 6.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

There is to some extent a conflict of values between the government and the individual and thus the government efforts to create the desired numbers and types of educated personnel have experienced difficulties. Broadly, individuals pursue tertiary education for socio-economic and self-development reasons. The vast majority are in the former category. There is thus the potential for greater government success by making stronger appeals based on individual interests.