

# TEACHING APARTHEID: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RATIONAL APPROACH

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Thank you very much for inviting me to attend this conference. I have been particularly struck by the fact that it was in Stellenbosch that Frederick van Zyl Slabbert as a student was first introduced to the concept of 'separate development' as opposed to 'apartheid' under the new Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd, as he quoted in the semi-autobiographical book "the last White Parliament". And it is here, today, in this beautiful town of Stellenbosch, where Verwoerd himself was at the hostel "Dagbreek" where we are examining these two policies and assessing their value in teaching.

It is vitally important to teach the concepts of apartheid and separate development in SA schools at the present time. I would go so far as to say that if any section is to be made compulsory in the new curriculum it should be these sections so that young South Africans can see where they have come from and understood the forces that have shaped this country. Too often, this is glossed over or taught from a one-sided perspective. The time has now come in SA schools where this should be rectified.

Essentially, Mr Verner and I come to the topic from different perspectives. He comes largely from a multi-cultural private-school perspective and the JMB and IEB examinations which have had an honourable record in teaching, understanding and concept-solving in their examinations for many years. I come largely from a government-school system, where all but a few pupils over the years have been white and where there used to be suspicion of any criticism of the system of apartheid:

there was the desire to maintain the status quo. These ideas have been changing in the teaching and examining of history over the last few years: but they have by no means changed in all schools: it is my opinion that they should continue to change and a clear, open-minded, critical perspective of the various contentious issues be given.

Ideally, history teachers would like their subject to be one which predominates in the school curriculum. Unfortunately, this is in reality not the case and mathematics, science etc., are playing a larger and larger role in the lives of the pupils - both in the amount of time devoted to them during the school day and in the many extra lessons, homework every day etc. that these subjects often require. As a result, history generally is looked upon by many pupils as an easy, or minor subject: one that hopefully does not require too much time spent on it, as pupils are also expected to have a social life - and possibly one that can be rote-learned with not too much effort. When one also examines the extra-curricular activities that are expected of the talented all-rounders, the amount of time spent on history becomes considerably less.

One would like the above to be different, but it is not so. At present, in high schools in the Transvaal, an examination of apartheid and separate development only takes place in Standard 10 to any meaningful extent, as laid down by the official syllabi. It is possible to introduce these concepts into std. 7 history as well, but it is only peripheral to the main focus of that period of history as laid down by the syllabus: constitutional

history: not, I venture to say, a topic designed to excite the interest of all 15 year-olds - nor the interest of the teachers who hope to persuade students to select history as an optional subject in std. 8. The general history section of the syllabus, containing as it does, the world wars and more contemporary issues, is likely to be dwelt on by the teacher - giving SA history even less time and an opportunity to explore it in less detail. Private schools may deviate from this syllabus to some extent and some leeway is allowed in government schools as to interpretations of the syllabus, but in practice, the official syllabus is generally adhered to - particularly by the newer or less experienced teacher.

I mention the above, because it represents a major practical problem facing teachers at present. The situation is better than previously, as the syllabus before 1987 contained no reference to "reaction to" or "resistance to" apartheid, simply approving the policy and not discussing it: hardly a successful historical method.

What I am going to suggest, then, may seem somewhat idealistic in the light of the above problems, but some effort needs to be made here if a suitable response is to be given to teaching apartheid and separate development in practical terms in these schools.

Firstly, the material that will be handled in class should be supplemented by an enrichment programme after school hours. This could be conducted by means of a historical society, historical newspaper, journal etc., and supplemented further by the showing of relevant videos, many of which are becoming available. Notice-boards could also display articles of relevant material and historical newspapers etc. Displays, posters etc. could round off such a presentation to ensure that the topic is constantly in peoples' minds. In this way, not only will the meagre hours in the classroom be extended considerably further than what the normal syllabus would allow, but the topic and an interest in it would be extended to all pupils of the school and attract non-history students also.

Secondly, a proper discussion of apartheid and separate development should not start with the year 1948. A greater historical perspective should be given to it, going back perhaps to Van Riebeeck and the famous thorn hedge, the various policies of segregation at the Cape in the 19th century and perhaps a discussion of the contrasting policies of Grey and Shepstone, taught in somewhat global terms at school level as examples of the integration - segregation approaches. The treatment or non-treatment of blacks by the National Convention should be mentioned, followed by the pattern of segregation policy followed by successive Union governments from the 1913 Land Act to Hertzog's major legislation of 1936. It is worthwhile noting that

only the last of the above also forms part of the std. 10 syllabus in the Transvaal.

It is not likely, due to the above-mentioned time constraints that this section would be handled in depth; nor should it be, as it would not be the main focus of the topic. Possibly it could be given as a handout in the form of a short synopsis together with relevant source material.

The introduction of the term "apartheid" in the 1940s together with its advocacy at various congresses by the reunited National Party during the mid-1940s could then be discussed. At this point, a proper discussion of the various terms could be undertaken once the necessary background has been laid - or perhaps a preliminary discussion would have been preferable, followed by a discussion at this point, now that some more knowledge has been obtained. There is usually no difficulty in this method at all: most pupils will be more than happy to give their opinions on the matter, even if much of the discussion is loosely structured around their general race relations beliefs - or those of their parents or their current heroes. The teacher **MUST** be impartial at this point: he or she should listen to the discussion carefully and attempt to steer a neutral, non-committed course. Arguments from all sides should be listened to and considered: from those passionately defending apartheid and its values to those passionately attacking it. To suppress any point of view at this stage will simply alienate those advocates of it and could make them hostile to the teaching of the rest of the section. It is very important to show pupils that various points of view exist on this topic. Possibly, if only one point of view (for or against) is articulated, the teacher should play devil's advocate and perhaps goad the pupils into various other directions of thought.

Once the term and discussion of it have been usefully dwelt upon, one could then possibly test the students' opinions by means of some controversial cartoon or document or by the showing of an extract of Robert Kirby's "Brave New Pretoria" etc. Again, this would depend upon the time available. It is also important to show during this discussion that the terms of "apartheid" and "separate development" do not in fact mean the same thing, but in fact are separate terms, the one building on the other so that students see the differences and similarities between them.

It might also be a useful point to draw the whole discussion of this part of the topic to a close by giving a short, pithy analysis of the main factors bringing this policy about and the role of the 1948 election in allowing the National Party to implement its policies. In fact, the defeat of Smuts in 1948 is also crucial to the

understanding of what brought the apartheid system about.

The kernel of the topic should then be approached and this is a discussion of the major laws that brought about the systems of apartheid and separate development. This has been largely handled by the previous speaker, but let me also emphasize the importance of handling it chronologically and allowing the pupils to view the laws as a SYSTEM so that they are not studied in isolation. It would also be possible, though in my view, less successful, to handle them thematically: social, constitutional, economic legislation etc. Once again, the end result would be to have a bird's-eye view that is both coherent and comprehensible to the average school child: one must beware of glossing over the laws in some vague generalisation and one must also beware of handling so many laws that the final result in utter confusion in the adolescent mind.

The major Acts that I generally deal with are:

The Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act (one of the key sections), the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act which modernised the pass laws, the Separate Amenities Act, the Resettlement of Natives Act, the "Locations in the Sky" Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Arrangement of Black Labour Relations Act, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, the Extension of University Education Act, the Broadcasting Amendment Act, the Transkei Constitution Act, the Homelands Citizenship Act and the Constitutional Act as well as various economic development corporations formed over the years.

This seems to be a large number of Acts to assimilate, but each is a piece in the complex jigsaw of apartheid and separate development and each piece should be understood so that pupils can fit into the system. This would require clear teacher guidance, explaining the major acts so as to show carefully the major points of each and the inter-relationship of the Acts. Discussion and points raised by pupils are very important here, as it could well be that many are, for the first time, coming to grips with the realities of apartheid legislation and how it affected peoples' lives: it is important that the impact of apartheid be very clearly pointed out to them, particularly if the target group is predominantly white.

Having seen the major provisions of the Acts, it would then be useful to go on to the geographical component of it and see where apartheid envisaged that the so-called "homelands" should be. In viewing where these states were and of what they consisted, it would also be

important to examine the total proportion of the country given to these homelands, the nature of those sections of the country as well as the facts that the homelands were never fully consolidated. Further discussion could then follow. Further detail could then be added to the system: e.g. which homelands were granted "independence" by the SA government, who the current and past leaders of the homelands have been, their various policies etc. Quite a lively debate on contemporary politics could ensue!

Minor detail, e.g. the role of Commissioners-General, tribal chiefs etc., could be added if time permits, but one must beware of confusing students with too many layers of detail: enough has probably been given by this stage!

The economic detail of the systems of apartheid and separate development could then be handled. The various investment corporations, the concept of migrant labour, the economic position of the states with relation to South Africa, their real independence as a result of this and so on could be discussed. Certain concepts may already be clear to the pupil if aspects such as "migrant labour" and the 1913 Land Act have been discussed, in say, standard 9.

The "system" with regard to the then so-named Coloured and Indian groups could then be discussed: the removal of the "Coloured" vote by means of the Separate Representation of Voters' Act should be handled in some detail. The struggle to pass this from 1951 to 1956 has all the elements of high drama to the high school pupil and could effectively be presented in a narrative format. The significance of the moves and the manipulations could teach pupils quite a large amount about politics and politicians.

The constant attempts to repatriate Indians over the years should also be discussed, and time permitting, could even go back to the time of Gandhi in South Africa, but should certainly include the various conferences and agreements reached from 1926 onwards as well as the controversial "Pegging Acts" and other legislation of the Smuts government. The status and function of the Coloured and Indian Representative Councils, possibly finishing with their failure and the tricameral parliamentary system of the 1980s could then be taught. Time permitting, it would be ideal for the teacher to take the situation up to the present to show how matters have changed.

It would be essential now to look at the reaction to the policies of apartheid and separate development. I would tend to do so here, as I believe it would be easier for adolescent pupils to study a system and then react to it rather than the system and the reaction together - although many teachers would approve of the latter



method. This last section is crucially important and cannot be left out if a full understanding of the story is required - yet it is worthwhile recalling again that it did not appear in the Matric syllabus until 1987!

Once again, as comprehensive a programme as possible within the time constraints should be attempted to show the resistance of many South Africans, both black and white, to the systems of apartheid and separate development. The role of the African National Congress would be especially prominent here, looking at the change of policy within the ANC with the growing influence of the Youth League and the influence of Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu. Perhaps a comparison could be drawn with the ANC Youth League at the present time. The move towards more open resistance would then be discussed, the Defiance Campaign and the Van Riebeeck Festival incidents, followed by the major campaign of civil disobedience. One would then move on to discussing the Freedom Charter, the circumstances surrounding it and the content of it (and a copy of it should be available). This would be followed by such matters as the formation of the PAC and a new direction in resistance politics, the Sharpeville shootings and the international repercussions of these, together with the internal implications: the banning of the ANC and PAC followed by the underground resistance struggles, the Rivonia trial, the Johannesburg station bomb etc., etc., and possibly ending with the Soweto Riots of 1976 and a look to the present day and possibly the future.

This is an extremely comprehensive programme: there would no doubt be some telescoping of the detail to fit the time available and also, people may be disconcerted by omissions they might find, but it gives a reasonable study of opposition to apartheid and separate development.

Finally, in the teaching, the section should end with some evaluation: not only of what factual data the pupils have learnt from the section, but also to what extent the course has changed their perceptions of their past: for a number of white students, anyway, this is bound to be very enlightening and may jolt them from their soft cocoon of privilege which has been nurtured for a long time. Perhaps a questionnaire could be given on this and the section rounded off with some source material, e.g. cartoons in order to provide a lighter side to the topic.

There are two matters in connection with the teaching of these topics which I believe are essential to history teaching in South Africa at the present day: firstly, it is

imperative that this section is taught in the schools (in many parts of South Africa it is either not or merely glossed over) and it should also be given the prominence that it deserves. Whatever new syllabus is introduced, whatever modules are proposed, South African history, particularly recent history, is of the utmost importance in informing pupils of the factors that have made this country what it is today. It needs to be taught by teachers who do not wish to pursue a hidden agenda in teaching it, but who try to get a full perspective of the whole issue.

Secondly, it is very important that this section be examined effectively, particularly if handled at std. 10 level - and that the assessment be impartial, yet probing of detail and understanding. The way reality works in the senior classroom, is that unless something is likely to feature heavily in the final examination, pupils are unlikely to become very interested in it for purely aesthetic reasons. A comprehensive examination of this section will ensure that the pupils study it well, and hopefully from the study will come understanding and empathy.

It is a very difficult task for the history teacher to know how far his value judgements should take him: how far his subjective opinions should influence the pupils for better or worse. I believe that this is a dangerous practice and ultimately self-defeating. I remember once, many years ago, in the TED study committee, when a discussion on the introduction of political literacy in the schools was mentioned, and the committee failed to support the proposal because the conservative members were too nervous of what the liberals might teach in the classroom and the liberal members were too nervous of what the conservatives might teach in their classrooms. In the end, nothing was taught. Such a fate should not befall our recent history. The facts, in my view, if presented as objectively as possible, speak for themselves and make it relatively easy for pupils to evaluate and assess apartheid and separate development. I believe that responsible teachers can be instrumental in the important awareness and evaluation of the past and sell their subject at the same time, as most pupils find this an intrinsically interesting topic and I am sure it would win candidates over to the study of history.

Finally - it is essential that the systems of apartheid and separate development be taught now in the new South Africa - responsibly and thoroughly. We are reminded many times that after 1990, apartheid has been consigned to history ... so let us study it there in the schools and make a good job of it!