Civic education in the context of South Africa’s history and political struggle

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Abstract

While there is wide agreement that civic education is a good thing, there is little or no consensus on what it is or how it is to be achieved. In a world where secular values dominate public education, this is often the space selected by policy-makers for the inculcation of the ideals of the good life or the moral order to the next generation, yet the ambiguities of teaching values in a non-partisan democratic schools context have often been noted. It would seem that situations of political crisis often provoke calls for the development of curricula to meet these ends. International initiatives in this regard date from the time of the League of Nations and have been endorsed by UNESCO more recently. They have also been significantly stimulated by the post-9/11 situation in the USA. In South Africa there has been some activity with regard to Values Education in recent years in the context of rebuilding civic society, but there has been little in the way of an analysis of the history of civic education or the successes and failures of previous initiatives. This article seeks to initiate a debate in this neglected area in the interest of providing clarity for teachers on what it is that they are expected to do in this regard.

What is civic education?

President Jacob Zuma recently called for a focus on political education in South Africa in order to promote a deeper understanding of the democratic, non-racial tradition of the ANC and its significance for civic education (Davis 2009). Set together with the hosting of the CIVITAS World Congress on Civic Education in Cape Town in 2009, this seems to signal an appropriate moment for a reassessment of the meaning of civic education as an aspect of history of education in South Africa, and suggest the need for

research related to the promotion of this field in the context of contemporary struggles to promote an ethos of democracy in South African schools.

The CIVITAS international forum undertakes to promote political socialisation, advance the cause of democracy and promote education in knowledge, skills and values essential to democratic systems that respect human rights and cultural diversity. It is understood to promote the good person and the good citizen in terms of moral development. In more expanded terms it undertakes to shape positive values with regard to society and community. This entails encouraging attitudes of tolerance and acceptance for those who might be considered ‘other’ in the community, the nation or the global context (Civitas 2006: 1).

The public discussion of these issues in South Africa in 2009 is of some significance. From being an international beacon of hope for equity and democracy in the 1990s, something of the shine of the Mandela honeymoon period has rubbed off by this time, with the realisation that South Africa is in many ways just another Third World country battling with sets of intractable problems associated with neo-colonialism, poverty and equity. In that context of increasingly heated political controversy, the question of how to strengthen and support the democracy for current citizens won after such a protracted struggle and at such a high price demands to be assessed with care. The recent spate of xenophobic attacks, heightened racist polemic and community and labour disputes have all highlighted the problems of human rights, democratic governance and the powers of the judiciary. And these issues have thrown the spotlight on the role of the education system and educational institutions in promoting the constitution and a culture of democracy and human rights.

At the present time the defence of civic education is fundamental in addressing the decline in citizen commitment to democracy in established democracies as well as the disenchantment of the youth in Third World contexts. That youth disaffection has to do with political process, with governmental abuse of power in many democratic states, and the general lack of respect for politicians manifested worldwide. It has often been noted that the future of democracy is ironically more uncertain now than ever (European Union 2008). The challenge for civic education lies in the promotion of democracy by making young people informed about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship – whatever they might be in a contested world.

The roots of these questions can be traced back to the great philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle and the debate about the good citizen and the good state, to notions relating to eighteenth century concerns about the primary aim of education in the production of the rational citizen and the rational man. (Boyd & King 1975: 288) Amy Gutmann notes that civic education requires schools to support ‘the intellectual and emotional preconditions for democratic deliberation among future generations of citizens’ and ‘the teaching of mutual respect is instrumental to assuring all children the freedom to choose in the future’ (Crittenden 2007: 13-15) These assumptions,
which form the basis of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, entail the promotion of effective and active citizenship for a democratic society and the need to strengthen civil society.

Jack Crittenden gives an excellent summary of those debates relating to civic education, and provides an exploration of how such debates came to influence political and educational debate in the USA from the nineteenth century. He states the central dilemma of civic education concisely:

How far should the ‘curriculum’ go? Citizens are taught to obey the laws; should they also be taught to challenge the laws and customs of the (society)? ... Civic education in a democracy, though not in every kind of regime, must prepare citizens to participate in and thereby perpetuate the system, and at the same time prepare them to challenge what they see as inequities and injustices within that system. So democratic education is both conservative, as in conserving the stability and continuity of the system (of government), and radical, as in calling into question the roots or the foundations of that system. (Crittenden 2007 : 5)

Civic education is commonly considered to be concerned with the promotion of effective and active citizenship and the preparation of the youth of a country to carry out their roles as citizens. It encourages the youth to think and care about the welfare of the community or the common weal. Some would argue that the enterprise is fundamentally flawed and that it rests on the myth of the homogeneous ‘citizen’ or ‘nation.’ Mason (2007) argues that the civic education project would attempt to ignore or gloss over the fact that the nation is never a homogeneous unit. The notion of democratic citizenship would imply that all citizens are equal and that the state treats them all the same. But in a real world the nation state is ‘an imagined community’ constituted ‘to make culture and polity congruent’ and bring all participants ‘under the same roof’ by ‘papering over the cracks’ that divide the citizenry in terms of gender, race, class, culture, region and ideology. Once those issues are engaged with through real political debate and contest it is very difficult to find substantial common ground for a curriculum programme on ‘citizenship’ which is intellectually coherent and sustainable. (Mason 2007: 177)

This paper attempts to examine these issues in an international context and to explore the historical roots of civic education in South Africa with a view to clarifying its potential meaning at different historical periods and the usefulness of the notion for the study and practice of education in contemporary South Africa.

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All education is value driven. We have to decide on priorities. As RS Peters used to put it, ‘why do we teach this rather than that?’ (Peters 1966). Public policy-makers in education must consider what they would regard as priorities and how they intend to achieve the goals set. In so doing, ‘the values and preferences integral to policy reflect not only different goals, but also different means of achieving goals. The values re-
flected in civic education are in one sense embedded in educational policy-making’ (Christie 2008: 117). It is not the consideration of values in education in that broad, embedded sense that is under consideration as a major focus of this paper, but rather how specific arrangements have been put in place over time in South Africa to deal with the promotion of citizenship education. The only area of the formal curriculum that will be referred to briefly as impacting on the field of civic education is history education.

What if the community concerned is not committed to democratic virtues? What if the primary ethos of the country promotes race, ethnic, class, religious, gender or other forms of intolerance? What if the educational system is designed to promote the advantage of a political clique? Or what if that community does not extend that notion of citizenship to all citizens, as seen in the case of Nazi Germany, the Southern States of the USA prior to the Civil Rights Movement and many colonial societies? I grew up in such a context in a village in the Eastern Cape during the fifties where white supremacy was a given and loyalty to the apartheid government was taken for granted at school. ‘Civic Education’, if we ever used the term, was understood to be about loyalty to the apartheid government!

It would be naïve to imagine that all so-called democratic societies have solved issues of division and conflict over resources and power. It is very clear then, as Pam Christie has pointed out, that these are highly complex educational issues. Civic Education is not simply a matter of teaching children ‘good values’ – for the simple reason that it is always difficult to arrive at an adequate social consensus regarding what values to prioritise. What is often neglected in debates of this kind is the question of whose values are to be taught and whose interest those values will serve.

A review of the programme of the CIVITAS conference in Cape Town reveals that the international initiative to promote civic education in the post-9/11 era seems to be dominated by a variety of American government and non-government organisations, but it is important to note that there has been a rich history of international engagement with the area in the 20th century that needs to be taken into consideration to get a full sense of the field. The South African experience and the specifically South African challenges in this regard at the present time need to be understood against that background.

Civic Education for Democracy: From the role of the League of Nations to the role of CIVITAS

The League of Nations, founded to promote democratic government after World War I, did not establish a specific institutional framework for dealing with educational issues, as they were deemed to be too sensitive to national differences. But it did promote a climate of cooperation and a central coordinating focus for civic education based on the templates established by various pre-War non-governmental or philan-
thropic or religious networks. Such thinking originated in the early attempts at co-
ordinated debate regarding educational issues and had its origins in exhibitions at
world fairs or educational conferences held since the late 19th century. These provided
a foundation for established networks relating to the promotion of education that
sought to establish the best methods of training the young generation to consider
international cooperation and the best method of conducting world affairs (see
Kallaway 2006 and Fuchs 2004).

Through the above arrangements the League became a central mediator of
educational ideas, particularly for the ideas associated with democratic education,
peace education or civic education, as it came to be called in later times. Most
significantly, it made education a public international affair that involved govern-
ments and set up durable standards for the conduct of education that have prevailed in
large part to the present day. As Fuchs points out, the key differences to the earlier
period were that the transnational philanthropic and religious networks of the 19th
century were replaced by professional actors and experts whose profession was
education. There was transfer from informal to formal international networks, and
the beginning of an attempt to act as ‘the central and coordinating agency for edu-
cation’. That institutional governmental initiative was linked to the emergent Pro-
gressive Education movement, which represented a framework for considering the
school curriculum and its linkages to the world outside of the school. The emphasis on
the significance of ‘real-life experiences’ for effective education and the need to provide
opportunities for students to engage with the circumstances of life in the world outside
of educational institutions implied, for Dewey and others, an engagement with issues
relating to the relationship between education and work and between democracy and
schools. (Dewey 1916; Crittenden 2007: 23-24). As part of that initiative, fragile
though it was at times, curriculum reform was a key issue and it was relevant to the
present case with particular reference to ‘peace and moral education’ and to textbook
revision, with an emphasis on school history.

From the 1930s the focus of the League and the New Education Fellowship shifted
abruptly from the earlier focus on the promotion of progressive pedagogy towards the
need to provide a democratic response to fascism, communism and Nazism and the
dangers of racial chauvinism, nationalism and totalitarianism. The influences
reached South Africa with some force in 1934 at the Cape Town and Johannesburg
conference of the New Education Fellowship organised by EG Malherbe and ID
Rheinallt Jones, at time when the values of democratic governance formally accepted
at Versailles were increasingly under threat internationally and in South Africa. This
issue will be taken up below.

After World War II the establishment of the United Nations Organisation and
UNESCO meant that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights provided a
significant template for those who sought to promote the project of civic education for
democracy internationally. This led to a slew of projects aimed at effective civic edu-
cation which were centrally driven by the educational initiatives of UNESCO.

In the context of the Cold War and the response to the educational ‘revolutions’ of the 1960s in Europe and the USA there was a review of the field. In the United Kingdom, Tapper and Salter (1978: 31-33) point out that there was a revival of the idea, both from the Left and the Right, that educational institutions could be better prepared in the field of civic education. Most of the debate was directed at the limited scope of established patterns of political education and their failure to supplement the successful building of national loyalty with the inculcation of participatory norms. Traditional political or civic education curricula were attacked for their avoidance of controversy and blandly optimistic content, which ended up endorsing participatory values in a manner that was little more than ritualistic. The argument was that these approaches often led to the avoidance of delicate issues like race relations, gender inequality, the nature of capitalist society and American imperialism and ensured that civic education lacked educational rigour. The counter-argument was often voiced by schools and teachers. If they did attempt to make the curriculum real and engage with current issues in the community at large, they were bound to cross the boundary into controversial ideological terrain and they would be accused of indoctrination or bias by parents who objected to the nature of the intervention. On the whole, British commentators remained much more cautious about their claims for civic education than colleagues in the USA. In the post-9/11 era in the USA there has been a resurgence of interest in the area, but this lies beyond the scope of this paper.

It was noted that civic education initiatives have often been located within the general educational curriculum of the school and not as conceived above as a separate enterprise. In such circumstances the most common form of intervention is to introduce civic education or citizenship education or political education into the history syllabus of the school, overtly or covertly. The issue of ‘bias’ in history teaching has attracted attention from educators over the years, though much of the work is descriptive and naïve about historiography and epistemology. The most significant accounts of the field were pioneered by UNESCO (1949 and 1963), Lauwerys (1953) and the Georg-Eckert-Institut. These initiatives had some impact on South African researchers in the field of civic education, with the interventions taking the form of investigating constitutional arrangements in different national contexts or vetting textbooks to ensure that they did not offend international ethics on race, ethnicity or nationality. In general, such intervention did not take up issues of gender or class representations. Cultural or religious conflicts within nations seldom provided the focus of such studies, as these were too sensitive to admit of outside intervention. Only in circumstances like South Africa under apartheid, with its political polecat status, was it possible for UNESCO to engage in a number of critiques of the manner in which history was purportedly falsified in schools in a state that gradually came to be seen to lie beyond the norms of civic virtue.
Civic education in the context of SA’s history and political struggle

Although the new South Africa provided something of a model for democratic values and peaceful transformation, the recent Ministerial report by Crain Soudien and his team on *Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Education 2009) is just one of many examples indicating the persistence of racism and the lack of a transformational ethos. This has led to renewed calls for civic education or values education, last heard of in terms of a policy directive of 2001 when Kader Asmal was the Minister of Education in the form of the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*. More recently, (then) Deputy President Jacob Zuma was to lead the Moral Regeneration Movement, a national civic education campaign (Department of Education 2001a).

By 2010 it is therefore significant to pose questions about just what ‘civic education’ might mean in a society entangled in civil strife. The questions then arise regarding the changing nature of civic education over time in South Africa. What follows presents preliminary investigation of the nature and meaning of the term at different periods in history and the potential relevance (or irrelevance) of this notion to contemporary debates about educational policy and practice.

Civic education in the South African context: The periodisation of civic education

Schools, whether for slaves, indigenous peoples or burgers (white settlers) from earliest colonial times in South Africa had a primary emphasis on the dissemination of Protestant Christianity and its corollary of literacy as a function of the need to read the Bible. Such education placed a high priority on the inculcation of personal moral virtues in keeping with the Christian Protestant religion. Yet as early as 1804, during the governorship of JA De Mist, plans for the secular or ‘liberal’ control of education based on the lines sketched during the French Revolution came to exert an influence on policy-making. In keeping with the general political framework of the Batavian Republic, there was an emphasis on Rousseau’s ideas of a ‘social contract’ and the ‘fundamental moral category’ of citizenship. There was therefore the beginning of a secular focus on civic education and citizenship training rather than the previous exclusive focus on religious criteria for education, which emphasised Man’s relationship with God.

In preparing for the establishment of a Department of Public Education in the Cape in 1838, John Fairbairn, a former headmaster and at the time editor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, emphasised that the purpose of public education was ‘to provide for the happiness of the people by making them wiser and better.’ Public education was seen to entail the need to ‘cultivate education as a branch of moral and political science’ (cited in Malherbe 1924: 86-87). It is therefore notable that a strong element of civic education was introduced to dilute the sectarian religious influence of earlier times. Even missionary education increasingly came to be regulated by a secular state curriculum. It was assumed (if largely unarticulated) that such education would pro-
vide the ‘civilising influence’ necessary to ensure an adequate ‘civic education’ that would provide good citizens – whether they were Bantu, Boer or Briton.

‘Civic education’ was not taught overtly in the schools of the Cape Colony, yet the overall bond between the ideological orientation of the society and British imperialism was amply demonstrated in such aspects of the curriculum as religious and history teaching. Yet even here it was not possible to push these assumptions too far, for by the closing years of the century the Afrikaner Bond was an increasingly powerful and influential presence in the field of education and guarded the rights of Dutch language and Afrikaner identity with care.

When the South African Republic drew up a constitution in 1858, education was regarded as a national government function. There was a clear focus on notions of citizenship here. ‘The people were the source of all authority; there was to be no equality between blacks and whites; the State began to take the initiative with regard to education.’ The Draft Regulations stipulated that the curriculum should include ‘history of the fatherland’ (Malherbe 1924: 227-231).

In the Cape and the ZAR it is therefore possible to suggest that the strong ideological assumption with regard to the school curriculum in relation to loyalty to the state and the Empire or the nation was to a large extent embedded in the assumptions about curriculum choices and priorities in mainstream education. There is little sign of overt political or civic education for citizenship.

The South African War
A dramatic instance of civic education, or the attempt to ensure that education was used effectively in the political struggle for British control in Southern Africa, is an aspect of educational history that has been highlighted by Afrikaner nationalist historians. This is the history of education in the concentration camps of the South African War and the Boer response to that initiative in terms of Christian National Education (CNE). EB Sargent was brought to South Africa by Lord Milner as part of his team of experts, the kindergarten, to take control of education in the northern colonies (Denoon 1973). On the model of a school set up in the Green Point concentration camp in Cape Town, Sargent developed a plan for further education in the northern concentration camps for Boer women and children. All education was to be in English, barring religious education which was in Dutch. By May 1902 there were nearly 30,000 children in these schools. Emily Hobhouse, a fierce opponent of the war and of concentration camps, wrote that these schools ‘were the single redeeming feature of camp life’ (Bot 1936: 60). The overall intention of the schools was clearly to promote ‘civic education’ – Anglicisation and an acceptance of British rule. It is of course difficult to assess the effectiveness of such an exercise or to separate the educational issues from the wider political and humanitarian results of the concentration camps exercise. These circumstances gave rise to an extremely strong sense of
civic injustice, which was to fuel Afrikaner nationalism for a century.

The post-war era and reconstruction
Milner’s plan for education after the War was for ‘closer union on educational lines’ and in this struggle for local control the language issue was to loom large. There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that Milner’s policy was to use the power of the state to denationalise the people through the medium of the schools (Malherbe 1924: 306, 314-5). The reaction to the Camp Schools and to the general British Government School educational plan for Anglicisation after the war provides an excellent example of civic education and civic initiative to advance education of a particular kind. Only gradually were the goals of the CNE movement partially integrated into government policy. The gaining of those rights was of course part of the overall process of rebuilding a white democracy in South Africa and granting political rights to all white citizens. When Responsible Government was granted in 1907 as a result of a Liberal Party victory in Britain, Lord Selbourne took over from Milner and he relaxed the previous policy. With the granting of Responsible Government, the passing of the Smuts Education Act of 1907, and the advent of the new Director of Education, John Adamson (Director of Education in the Transvaal 1903-24), the issues of local control of white schools and language policy were agreed to in relation to government schools. To put it in Malherbe’s words, ‘the new educational principle was that the welfare of the country would depend chiefly on a mutual recognition of the rights of the two white races, instead of the dominance of the one race over the other’ (Malherbe 1924: 324-325). This had significant implications for notions of civic virtue and civic education.

The place and nature of education for black South Africans was investigated at length by EB Sargent and within the brief of the British Government’s extensive *South African Native Affairs Commission* (1903-1905) report. But in keeping with the political winds of the time these issues were to be neglected in the context of the political rights and the educational dispensation crafted in the Selbourne Memorandum (1907) and the Act of Union (1909), which set the preconditions for the new Union of South Africa. One set of civic rights had been gained but another had been lost. This would have fundamental consequences for civic education for the century to follow (Thompson 1960; BPP Cd. 2399 1905; EB Sargent 1904, 1908).

Civic Education from 1910 to the 1930s
There was a need for the establishment of a new civic order in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War and the state-building process that culminated in the Act of Union in 1910. The Union of the four provinces in 1910 placed a new complexion on issues of religion, language and vocationalism. In that context new loyalties and new meanings came to be given to notions of civic virtue and civic education. A new nationality – the
‘one-stream policy’ – was crafted by the South African Party under Generals L Botha and JC Smuts, forging a new citizenship between Afrikaner and English South Africans and putting in place a new allegiance to the British Empire and the free market economy. That broad civic identity was to remain hegemonic until 1948, but it was strongly contested throughout the intervening years by an alternative vision of national identity represented by Afrikaner nationalists who emphasised a ‘two-stream policy’ with regard to language and culture – and hence citizenship. This version of patriotism also challenged the close linkages to the British Empire and pursued a more vigorous policy of defending white, and particularly Afrikaner, interests. The more extreme factions of this group at times even challenged the legitimacy of the state founded in 1910 (the Afrikaner Rebellion in 1913 and the Ossewabrandwag movement of the 1930s). The emphasis of these groups was on democratic virtue, but those virtues were interpreted in narrow ways that confined their reach to the defence of the rights and interests of whites in general and white Afrikaners in particular (Moodie 1975). Those policies were to have particular implications for the politics of the industrial colour bar and were instrumental in shaping the nature of white politics throughout the century.

General JB Hertzog and the National Party, founded in 1913, pursued these goals within a constitutional framework, but those norms came at times to be challenged from within Afrikanerdom, particularly in the context of the Great Depression and the rise of the Gesuiverde Nationale Party led by DF Malan. Groups of extremists like the Rapportryers and the Ossewabrandwag demonstrated support for fascist ideology during the 1930s. The great commemoration of the Great Trek in 1938 and the building of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria provided an opportunity to celebrate this vision of white South African histories and civic identity. This movement provided the civic mythology relating to the nature of Afrikaner (nationalist) identity that was to fuel the vision of the National Party in its campaign to gain political power in 1948, and was to be the bedrock of the conception of ‘citizenship’ for white South Africans for the next 40 years (Witz 2003; Grundling & Sapire 1989).

Civic Education and the New Education Fellowship conference: 1934

In contrast to the developments noted above, it is important to recognise that there were significant challenges to the notion of civic education associated with the emergent white racist politics. These views ranged from notions of civic identity that were associated with British Empire loyalists to constitutional liberals, African Nationalists and socialist/communist interpretations of civic education.

Perhaps most significant insight into the general debate of the time can be gained by a consideration of the proceedings of the international conference of the New Education Fellowship held in South Africa in 1934, where there was a strong emphasis on the role and duty of civic education in the defence of democracy in the context of an international situation threatened by depression, fascism and war. The Minister of
Education, JH Hofmeyr, who was significantly more liberal than most of his colleagues in the South African Party (Paton 1971), emphasised that the new era brought with it the need to address two issues: firstly, the ‘training of producers who would have to compete in world markets’ and ‘the necessity of training men and women who will at once be quick with the realisation of their South African citizenship, and ready to meet the obligations which rest upon them as citizens of the world.’ Jan Smuts, senior statesman and at this time deputy prime minister in the FUSION government, in his opening address at the Johannesburg leg of the conference, added to Hofmeyr’s message, observing that in a world where the influence of dictators was on the increase, and where the traditional ‘standardising influences of home and religion’ were declining, ‘the whole burden of preparing human being for the best type of society has fallen on the schools – an enormous burden for them to carry’ (Malherbe 1937: 4).

Beatrice Ensor, the World President of the New Education Fellowship, in her opening address to the conference, confronted the question of World Citizenship and social reconstruction, noting that educators ‘have set ourselves a gigantic task – to change the whole face of history by making cooperation and consent, instead of self-will and competitive force, the basis of behaviour. This means that we will have to create a new attitude of mind in mankind.’ Her message to the conference was essentially about the duties of civic education:

The schools must give the child training in citizenship. Here, as at home, he will learn his first lessons in the great art of community living. The child must learn ‘consent and cooperation’. He cannot learn these things by precept. He must learn them by practice. The New Education Fellowship insists that the school is a microcosm in which the child will learn how to live with his fellows. If he learns at school that might is right, that the small and the weak exist only for the convenience of the strong, he will not easily forget these lessons. If he learns at school to care for the greatest good of the greatest number, to work for the common good, the lesson too will ‘stick’ (Malherbe 1937: 6, 8 9).

Significantly she pushed the notion of civic education to include economic justice in the global context. She went on to stress that in South Africa it would ‘not be sufficient to cope with the white population’ in this regard, but that it was essential to evolve a far more general and carefully thought-out policy as regards the education of the non-European, one which would help him ‘to develop into a self-respecting and self-supporting citizen, contributing his share to the community.’ In that context no teacher was fit to be a teacher ‘if he poisons the minds of the young by antagonisms, by racial barriers and all that leads to separateness’ (Malherbe 1937: 10). These were lofty political ideals in the dangerous political atmosphere of the 1930s and they helped to reassure many teachers, but as was the case elsewhere in the world, there was only limited long-term commitment from many of the countries represented.

Civic education under apartheid
After 1948 the Afrikaner nationalist programme relating to civic education came to be
embodied in the apartheid education project. In 1964 Brian Bunting reviewed the aims and objectives of apartheid education. He argued that:

For the apartheid state to endure the Nationalists must exercise complete control over the minds of the young. The Afrikaner, the Englishman, the White man and the Black man each must be brought up to understand the role which has been allocated to him by the State. There must be unquestioning acceptance, the White man of his superiority, by the Afrikaner of his right to leadership; by the non White races of their duty to serve. (Bunting 1964: 244)

The Nationalist devoted systematic attention to crafting such a system on the basis of the proposals for Christian National Education that had first been released at the FAK conference on CNE held in Bloemfontein in 1939 as part of the celebrations for the Voortrekker centenary (Giliomee 2003; O’Meara 1996). As part of the programme of the Institute for Christian National Education (ICNO), Prof. van Rooy argued that in the ‘cultural struggle, which is now also a school struggle … we want no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religious, and no mixing of races’ (Bunting 1964: 245). That project rested on an emphasis on Christian and Nationalist values, and stressed the role of religious teachings, mother-tongue instruction and the teaching of geography and history in such a way as to ensure that they promoted ‘a love of the Fatherland’. In that scheme there were to be no *mixed schools* between either English and Afrikaans-speaking children or black and white children. ‘Native Education was to be based on the principles of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; the aim of education would be to both inculcate the White man’s view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee’ (Bunting 1964: 245-9; Behr & Macmillan 1966: 248-9.) But apartheid education was also paradoxically to promote the culture and language of the African people.

The most notorious aspect of the apartheid education enterprise was the advent of Bantu Education as the outcome of the Eiselen Commission Report on Native Education in 1953. African education was finally transferred from the Provincial Education Department to the Department of Native Affairs. A strong emphasis on religious conformity and mother-tongue education remained, but the state was to take over the management of black education, which had until this time been largely in the hands of missionary societies, as it had been elsewhere in colonial Africa. Most significantly, the goal was to reshape education for all people who were not white to ensure that it was more ‘in keeping with African cultural traditions’ and that ‘the school must equip him to meet the demands which economic life in South Africa will impose on him,’ on the assumption that those demands would be very different from those of whites (Bunting 1964: 260).

There was an emphasis on mass education, with priority being given to the expansion of primary education. Although the school curriculum was never radically changed to conform with the more extreme statements of Verwoerd and other apartheid ideologues during the period of high apartheid from 1955-65, the under-funding of the schools and the poor qualifications of most teachers in effect meant that few children
had access to quality education and few reached the higher standards until the 1980s, when the whole system began to be reformed in quite radical ways under the political and economic pressure of reform politics after 1976. The whole ethos of the school and the curriculum was infused with apartheid ideology, but the curriculum for subjects like history was not radically different in white and black schools, though there was more emphasis in some social studies textbooks on the apartheid homelands and ethnic citizenship as conceived of in the apartheid vision. Contrary to widely held assumptions, there was no distinct civic education component to the education offered to blacks.

The history curriculum as a component of civic education to 1994

Up to this point I have glossed over the major aspect of civic education in South Africa, namely the extent to which it was imbedded in the history syllabus. As far back as 1934 AE du Toit, principal of Voortrekker High School in Boksburg, made the observation at the NEF conference that many of the lofty ideals of civic education tended to evaporate in the classroom and he ventured some suggestions on how to stimulate interest in the teaching of civics at local level. He noted that the Transvaal school history curriculum emphasised South Africa’s relationship to the world and its role as a mandatory power of the League of Nations and as an economic unit with international trading relationships. He noted that there was a decided lack of enthusiasm for these dry ‘international aspects of the teaching of contemporary history and civics’ (Malherbe 1937: 70-72), but it is clear from this evidence that even prior to apartheid times the inclusion of these topics had the political purpose of demonstrating South Africa’s role in a wider world.

After 1948 school history textbooks came increasingly to emphasise Afrikaner nationalist historiography and interpretations of historical events and processes. The glorification of the fatherland was seen to be a major goal in history and geography teaching. Malherbe (1977: 148) pointed out the parallels between these developments and those of Nazi Germany in 1933. A key aspect of that reframing of history education, in terms of its emphasis on civic education, was the place given to constitutional history in the high school history syllabus. This emphasised the ontological nature of Afrikaner nationalists’ portrayal of South African history as it recounted how ‘the heroic nation’ had risen from the ashes of defeat in 1902 to its hegemonic position at the present time: from independent Boer republic to conquest, to colonial status within the British Empire under General Hertzog, to Dominion status under the Statute of Westminster (1931), to the election of the NP in 1948, to Republican status after 1961. The naturalisation and normalisation of apartheid ideology was pursued in the history class with the evolution of the Bantustan policy represented as a normal part of that constitutional development, which was intended to grant citizenship and civil rights to black South African in their ‘own’ homelands. Key figures in the rewriting of that history, its inscription in the syllabus and the popu-
larising of this ‘commonsense view’ of politics are remembered by generations of students, black and white, who were subjected to the matriculation textbooks written by FA van Jaarsveld, Fowler and Smit, and CFJ Muller.

Although the high school history syllabus was not different in black and white schools, the response in black schools in urban areas like Soweto was often dramatic. By the 1970s history was one of the subjects that provided the focus of attention for anti-apartheid student activists. When I visited black high schools on the Witwatersrand during that time to supervise student teachers there was always a lively interest in a topics like the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. In the cauldron of opposition to apartheid during the United Democratic Front (UDF) political campaigns of the 1980s, the revisionist perspectives of African and Neo-Marxist historiography were constantly interrogated with special regard to ‘Peoples’ History’ themes relating to human rights and democracy (Maree 1984). This was civic education with a real political edge!

Significant critiques of the teaching of history in school, which highlighted this kind of bias, were produced by Frantz Auerbach and others, as well as by UNESCO. They focused on inaccuracies in the content presented in school textbooks in keeping with the general guidelines developed by the League of Nations and UNESCO since the 1920s (Auerbach 1965; Dean et al. 1983; Kallaway 1984; Du Preeez 1983; Nishino 2006). Surprisingly, they paid little direct attention to civic education or the implications of the ‘historical falsification’ for notions of citizenship under apartheid. They also failed to appreciate the relevance of the presentation of constitutional issues referred to above for the promotion of bias relating to civic education.

Only during the 1980s did the History Alive series and other alternative textbooks attempt to present an alternative view of South African history for school by applying the new revisionist historiography and the New History Teaching to school history, but these books were never allowed to be used as textbooks in African (DET) schools.

Youth preparedness

‘YP’ was an extra-curricula activity in white schools and was a specific initiative dedicated to civic education under apartheid. Taking its cue from the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides movements of an earlier age, or the Voortrekker movement among Afrikaans youth, it took the form of veld excursions for urban students and was a direct pro-apartheid propaganda exercise with paramilitary training aspects. Group leaders emphasised the swart gevaar or communist or terrorist threat. As Malherbe pointed out, instead of encouraging an outward-looking notion of civic life, YP (especially as practised in white Afrikaans-language schools) as late as the 1970s came to take on the negative character of ‘warding off’ the enemy and being on the defensive against the enemies of the volk/nation. It promoted a ‘laager mentality’ in terms of the goal of civic education (Malherbe 1977: 142-151; Behr 1973).
Civic education and the opposition to apartheid education

The emergent forms of apartheid-aligned civic education did not go unchallenged. The international conference on ‘Education and Our Expanding Horizons’ convened by Malherbe in Durban in 1960 was a notable landmark in that regard. Julian Huxley, the first UNESCO Director-General, spoke out against racism in politics and education and the need ‘not for separateness, but contact and social intercourse in education and the urgency of closing the gap between privileged and underprivileged through education’. Addressing the key theme of civic education, Prof. C Washburne of Brooklyn College, New York, defined ‘broad-mindedness’ as the goal. He argued that the teachers must embody these attitudes and virtues. ‘In the action of the teachers the children must see our common humanity; they must see the value of differences, and they must see our interdependence because it is what the teacher is, not what he says, that affects most of our children’ (Macmillan et al. 1962: 9-23, 99-108). These principles reflected the ethos of many teachers who battled to maintain independence and integrity within the apartheid educational system.

Paulo Freire’s ideas and pedagogy form part of the literature that arose out of the educational radicalism of the 1970s and the revival of anti-colonial literature. Freire followed Dewey in many ways in his insistence that civic education be used as a means to liberate people from their oppression – by others, by economic forces, by gender and ethnic stereotypes. The preferred form of educational pedagogy was ‘problem-posing education’. To overcome their oppression, students must first liberate themselves by recognising the causes of their oppression.

A major cause of such oppression is identified as the nature of the traditional education received by the majority of the world’s poor, which was held to turn the majority of students into ‘receptacles’ to be filled by the teacher. What Freire advocated was a dialogical exchange or praxis to help the learner clarify the issues that are central to her life and what action to take with regard to changing those circumstances. This is the methodology for civic educational initiatives primarily because it prioritises individual action and encourages learners not only to consider external mechanisms relating to their domination, but to look for the dual nature of consciousness, where individuals come to be dominated by their own fears and inadequacies. For Freire it is essential for students to be able to ‘read the world’ in theory or language and understand their own relationship to their background if they want to change the world. This methodology was most significant in the field of adult education and was remarkable for the manner in which it provided a pedagogic tool for revolutionary groups in Latin America and elsewhere. From the 1970s Freirian notions of civic education were a significant feature of political struggle in South Africa and these methodologies were propagated by significant leaders like Steve Biko and were associated with the Black Consciousness and trade union movements (Freire 1972; Nekhwevha 1984; Crittenden 2007: 25-7).

‘People’s Education’ as part of the FOSATU/UDF/ANC political campaign of the 1980s
grew out of these beginnings. The ‘Peoples’ History Campaign’ was aimed directly at
politicising black youth and built on the foundation of trade union/worker education
and community adult education programmes. Many of these community development
initiatives from the 1970s were strongly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in
the USA, the 1968 ‘Paris Revolution’ and the Anti-War Movement.

In the early 1990s in the context of redrawing the political map of South Africa, there
were many planning and redesign initiatives relating to public policy. The sphere of
education was no exception. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI),
funded by Swedish aid, set the tone by drawing together large numbers of educators of
all kinds in a broad consultative process. The promotion of effective citizenship and
participation was seen to be central to that process in a context where the majority of
the population had little experience of democratic governance. NEPI argued that ‘the
challenge of any democratic government is to find ways of restructuring the education
system to meet those ends.’ With those goals in mind, parents, teachers, students and
other relevant parties would be encouraged to participate in the education system.
‘Accountability would be ensured by structures, processes and mechanisms involving
these constituencies.’ It argued that ‘a central question for teacher education policy in
South Africa is how to prepare teachers for developing common civic virtues among
pupils from different backgrounds’ (NEPI 1993: 22, 36, 223, 238).

**Civic education and values education in a democratic South Africa: What
kind of civic education since 1994?**

Surprisingly the new education system established since 1996 makes little direct
provision for civic education. The nature of Curriculum 2000 and the Revised National
Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was framed by notions of redress, inclusiveness, pro-
gressive pedagogy and local governance. It was imbued with the spirit of the
constitution and committed to notions of access and redress. But the issue of civic
education never emerged with any force, possibly owing to the sensitivities that would
be raised. It was only with the advent of a Revised Curriculum Statement in 2002 that
the issue was taken up, and then predominantly within the parameters of the school
history curriculum. This initiative sought to promote the spirit of the constitution and
the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through a programme of values
education. Yet owing to the influence of constructionist notions of curriculum
development there was a reluctance on the part of government to overtly prescribe
what was to be taught in the early phases of these developments. Other aspects of the
new curriculum that might be considered as part of civic education were areas like Life
Orientation and Life Skills, which emphasised personal, family and health issues, but
on the whole avoided a robust encounter with the nature of democratic citizenship and
the importance of the promotion of a culture of human rights.

A key element of engagement with these issues was the Values in Education cam-
In 2000-2001 the new South African government took its first initiative in the field of civic education by launching a programme on Values in Education in partnership with the South African Council of Educators (SACE), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and various NGOs. The formal publication accompanying the launch of the Network on Values in Education in 2000 by Education Minister Kader Asmal identified the objectives as follows:

- To facilitate collaboration across sectors in support of human rights and anti-racism initiatives in education
- To coordinate activities of the Values in Education Programme of Action
- To monitor the implementation of human rights and anti-racism programmes in education

The values identified in association with the programme were democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect and reconciliation (Department of Education 2002).

Although it is not possible to engage in a detailed review of the project or its outcomes here, the minutes of the SAAMTREK conference raise interesting, and often contradictory, issues about the nature of civic education and values education. There is a frank admission that the teaching of Values in Education work ‘is both risky and important’. There was every sign of a strong desire to promote values in education through adherence to the constitution, but there are clear signs of a constructivist perception of values in the recognition that ‘the Manifesto does not prescribe values but invites debate’. The minutes even pose the fundamental question about whether you can teach values in schools or what the preconditions are for teaching to be successful. There is a recognition of the risk of ‘standing “against” rather than “for” something’. There was even a cautionary note – ‘there is a danger of not creating sustainable programmes,’ and perhaps in the light of this the need to consider how such programmes can be delivered through subjects like Life Orientation or History – a return to the strategies of previous years. The challenge was recognised of how to ensure that the values curriculum infused all subjects/learning areas and how to ensure that teachers were an embodiment of these values in order to ‘infuse the classrooms with a culture of human rights’ (Department of Education 2001b: 33-36). Mark Gevisser and Mike Morris, who apparently had an important role in drawing up the list of ‘ten fundamental values of the constitution and their relevance to education’, identified ‘respect and dialogue’ between teacher and learners and between teachers and parents/communities as the values most lacking in the current schooling system. The teaching of history and religious education in schools was seen to be a key aspect of that process, though precisely what the links are between values education and history is not explained (Asmal & James 2002: 190-219). It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate how these strategies worked out in practice, but my sense is that they have not been particularly successful or implementable and have
as a result been quietly sidelined by most provincial education departments in the years since Asmal’s departure from the Education portfolio for all the reasons associated with the problems of implementing civic education identified above. Further research will hopefully provide more definitive answers to these important problems.

Precisely what the effect of this agenda has been on the teaching of history in schools is also a question worth asking. The undeniable decline in the popularity of history in schools can in part be attributed to the overburdening of history with tasks that are way beyond its capacity to deliver on. Few professional history teachers see themselves as teaching morals or values in the classroom. History presents us with a much more complex set of issues and intellectual problem and if taught in an intellectually honest manner does not lend itself to teaching ‘moral lessons’ or promoting particular values beyond the parameters and integrity of the discipline. History does not teach ‘lessons’.

The story of history education in South African schools as recounted above should provide warning enough about the danger of using history in schools as an overt form of nation-building or political indoctrination. There is no true history and, as the Values in Education Programme itself acknowledges, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the teaching of civic education in schools. The most that can be hoped for is the imparting of a set of values relating to democratic procedures and conduct, but precisely how that might be overtly connected to the teaching of history in schools is far from clear. The link made between the teaching of values and the teaching of history in school cannot therefore be taken for granted.

In 2004 the Moral Regeneration Movement was launched by the South African government. It has sought to buttress the values of the constitution and to strengthen civic society, but little has been heard of the initiative since it was led by then Vice-President Jacob Zuma, who became embroiled in a rape case and accused of involvement in the Arms Deal. The report on the MRM for 2005 by CEO Zandile Mahlahla stipulated goals for ‘social re-engineering’ and outlined strategies to network with youth structures and provincial, regional and municipal government. But it gives little in the way of detail about the activities of the MRM and little seems to have been reported since then.

Current projects that focus on this field

It has not been possible within the scope of this short review to assess the impact of the above policies. One example of the outcomes has been traced to the Western Cape Education Department, where there has been an energetic attempt to foreground some of the issues raised above. Gail Weldon, the Senior Curriculum Planner for History, as been a key mover in the establishment of a project called ‘Facing The Past – Transforming Our Future’, based on an American model. This seems to be something
of an attempt to outsource the problems to Shikaya, ‘a non-profit organisation that supports teachers to use their subjects to develop young people who are responsible, caring and active democratic citizens. Shikaya has a vision of a South Africa in which every young person is inspired through enthusiastic, committed and professionally prepared teachers to become a responsible citizen in our democracy, valuing diversity, human rights and peace’ (http://facingthepast.org.za/). Funding for the project was obtained from the Open Society Foundation and the DG Murray Trust to promote anti-racism seminars for teachers and to consider the issue of democracy in schools. All this appears to fit in with the ethos of Asmal’s policy, but the scale of the operation and the fact that it is outsourced seems to imply that this is not a central concern of the policy at the present time. Only further research will reveal the full picture.

Conclusion
The purpose of this article has been to highlight a field of research in education that has been much neglected in South Africa. The World Congress on Civic Education held in Cape Town in June 2009 provided an opportunity to reassess the field in order to consider what might be done to address many of the real concerns of educators in regard to rebuilding the moral economy of schooling. Is it possible to engage with meaningful civic education in the context of a society that is as divided as South Africa? Is it possible to teach values in education abstracted from the real political and ideological issues that divide the society? Is it possible for teachers in the context of ordinary classrooms to deal with complex and divisive political topics without transgressing the line of teacher neutrality? Will an assertive civic education policy that seems to tackle the issue in a robust manner simply lead to indoctrination as it did under apartheid? In what ways can civic education for democracy be taught in schools? The presentation of the bland constitutional rights to children is not pedagogically challenging – but any attempt to take up those issues in the very real context of everyday political struggles would inevitably expose the teachers to the charge of political bias and partisanship.

Most significantly, as this short tour of the field has attempted to demonstrate, overt civic education has seldom been a feature of South African educational practice in any of the eras under review above, as the raising of contentious political issues in the classroom was considered inappropriate to a positive educational atmosphere. For the Boer children of the post-South African War context, any attempt to introduce notion of good citizenship on the British model was resisted. In the apartheid context any overt attempt to teach about the merits of apartheid was resisted in black schools, and indeed in many white schools. When civics was introduced as an aspect of the history curriculum, it was nearly always considered to be an unacceptable addition by those students and parents who were opposed to apartheid. Attempts to force the political education of white children through such mechanisms as veld school and Youth Preparedness proved to be extremely crude and encountered constant resistance from
white parents, particularly in English-language communities.

The use of history in schools as a vehicle for civic education has been universally problematic. If history is well taught in schools it does not lend itself to ‘teaching lessons’ about civic education. History is a discipline and the purpose of teaching it in schools is to induct students into the procedures and practices of the discipline. To attempt to appropriate the subject to the purposes of civic education is to undermine the independent status of the subject and the discipline and leave the teacher open to the charge of bias.

The central challenge posed by the NEPI Report of 1993 of how ‘teacher education policy is to prepare teachers for developing civic virtues among pupils from different backgrounds’ remains. What is undeniable is that civic education is a real problem for the school curriculum. While we often choose to ignore it because of the difficult issues it poses, this does not mean that the problem disappears. The challenges seem to be clear and undeniable; the implementation proves to be one of the most intractable conundrums in the educational policy arena.

As Prof. Washburne noted at the Education Conference in Durban in 1960, it is not necessarily the content of civic education that is central to its success in promoting civic virtue amongst students. ‘In the action of the teachers, the children must see our common humanity ... and our interdependence, because it is what the teacher is, not what he says, that affects most of our children’ (Macmillan et al. 1962: 99, 108). Therein lies the major challenge for policy-makers and teacher educators in our times.

As stated earlier, civic education in a democracy must prepare citizens to participate in and thereby perpetuate the system; at the same time, it must prepare them to challenge what they see as inequities and injustices within that system. Yet a civic education that encourages students to challenge the nature and scope of our democracies runs the risk of turning them away from participation when they engage with hard-nosed realities of resource disparities and even official corruption. But if that civic education has offered more than simply critique and if it is to have a basis in critical thinking which involves developing tolerance, as well as a willingness and even eagerness for political action, then galvanised citizens can make our systems more robust. Greater demands on our citizens, like higher expectations of our students, often lead to stronger performances. As Mill reminds us in relation to the citizen: ‘If circumstances allow the amount of public duty assigned him to be considerable, it makes him an educated man’ (Crittenden 2007: 34-35). How can formal educational policy make an effective contribution to that process?

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