
J.J.W. Aitchison
Centre for Adult Education,
School of Education, Training and Development,
University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Inaugural lecture:

Postcards to the new prisoners in the global classroom

Past, prospects and policies for South African adult
education in the new millennium

Introduction

Though the subtitle of my address tonight is “Past, prospects and policies for South African adult education in the new millennium”, that adult education has prospects is debatable. At a conference on the history of adult education held in Hungary in August this year, the well known adult education scholar, Peter Jarvis, presented a paper¹ (Jarvis, 2000) which suggested that adult education as we had known it was about to meet, or indeed already had met, its demise.² As one scheduled to give an inaugural lecture as a professor of adult education, a relatively new discipline in South Africa which got its first professor (Clive Miller at the University of Cape Town³) in 1981, this was somewhat disconcerting. Who wants to be a professor of a discipline about to be terminated before, even if just before, reaching its South Africa majority?

This unpleasant news suggested that it might be incorrect after all to draw strong parallels between the history of development of the 20th century social sciences as fields of academic study and the development of the adult education discipline in South Africa in the last two decades⁴. In 1983 Slaughter and Silva⁵ noted that the new social sciences such as sociology and psychology became disciplines by exchanging their expert research service to a society beset by social problems for the resources to build the new disciplines. By so doing they were able to demonstrate the usefulness of the new sciences, advertise their professional and technical competence, generate a need for such skills in a wide variety of organizations, and point out career opportunities to prospective students – and thus, above all, were able to claim public and private resources. These intellectual entrepreneurs selling service expertise became careful and skilled negotiators with the political and economic interests outside the universities and built alliances. Because they were institutionally

¹ Jarvis, P. 2000. *Adult Education – an ideal for modernity: the end of adult education as a social movement?* Paper delivered at the Ethics, ideals and ideologies in the history of adult education. VIII International Conference on the History of Adult Education, Janus Pannpnius University, Pécs, Hungary, 20-24 August 2000

² Jarvis argues three propositions: that many of the aims of adult education as a social movement have apparently been fulfilled not by this movement but by the forces of global capitalism; that these same forces of global capitalism have brought the adult education project in the West to an end; and thirdly, since this world is still far from perfect, the ideals of the adult education movement are still relevant to adult educators in the new market of lifelong learning.

³ He was also its last! In 1999 the University of Cape Town, in the midst of the by now collective corporatist rush of South African universities to merge Departments into larger Schools, closed down the Department of Adult Education. A few of its staff remain as individuals in the School of Education.

⁴ Although South Africa was a late developer, even in the United Kingdom, despite the long and proud history of university extension, many universities did not accept the academics working in extramural education as full members of the academic community until the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, they are still finding it difficult.

⁵ Slaughter S. and Silva E.T. 1983. *Service and the dynamics of developing fields - the social sciences and higher education studies. Journal of Higher Education*. 1983, Vol. 54, No. 5, pp. 481-499

dependent they also tended to align themselves with those groups able to deliver resources predictably (namely, the powerful, the rich, the stable) and thus with the existing order (in the aberrant circumstances of South Africa in the Eighties, for adult educators the resource deliverers were the funding agency intermediaries of Northern wealth) – so that they might attain “academic prestige attainment and institutionalization”.⁶

Heedful of this personal moment of academic prestige attainment and institutionalisation, I have chosen to reflect on the issue of the discipline’s prestige and institutionalisation in a world⁷ of which South Africa is now indubitably a part, by excavating some of the intellectual foundations of South African adult education and by examining what they mean for its prospects and for the policies that might realise or thwart those prospects in the new millennium (which pedantically I must insist starts on the 1st of January 2001). In presenting this, and conscious that a full treatment of the history⁸ and future of adult education using Paul Gauguin’s questions “Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?” would subject you to a speech of Minister of Home Affairs’ length, and, in accordance with the modern predilection for inserting fictional stories into supposedly sober descriptions of non-fictional matters⁹, I have chosen to present my thoughts embellished by a conceit that three old education activists, members of a sort of adult education Amnesty International¹⁰, have sent a postcard or letter each to some of the South African inmates newly imprisoned in the global classroom.

⁶ Which is not to say that this necessarily meant completely disowning adult education’s social movement for change roots which had been characterised by loose uninstitutionalised organisational structures that often worked outside established frameworks.

⁷ It needs to be re-iterated that the current fragile state of the discipline of adult education has an almost inverse correlation with the fact that, in modern highly industrialised economies, there are now more people engaged in adult education and training (broadly conceived) than there are in schooling. In higher education adults now increasingly are the majority of students, even in small Third World countries like Namibia (Dodds, 2000).

⁸ See my paper which presents an initial attempt to describe the history and current policies of South African adult education: Aitchison, J.J.W. 2000. *Struggle and compromise: a history of South African adult education 1960 - 1999*. Paper delivered at the Ethics, ideals and ideologies in the history of adult education. VIII International Conference on the History of Adult Education, Janus Pannpnius University, Pécs, Hungary, 20-24 August 2000

⁹ As seen in Ansie Krog’s 1999 work *Country of my skull* on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation.

¹⁰ Amnesty International groups ‘adopt’ particular prisoners of conscience and send postcards and letters to these people imprisoned in a variety of less salubrious countries where democracy and human rights are lacking (as well as making more formal representations to the authorities who have persecuted them). These letters are meant to indicate to the prisoners that they are not forgotten, that their lives and sacrifices had some recognition, and that efforts are being made to change their situation of imprisonment and oppression.

But first, some explanation of this notion of people being imprisoned in the global classroom.¹¹ I do so by citing an all too real current example.

In July last year, the new Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, announced¹², with some fanfare, that there was going to be a new initiative to end illiteracy in South Africa within five years, something that had clearly not been done in the first five years of our new democracy (though access to adult basic education was declared to be a right in our new constitution). After some toing and froing in the corridors of Sol Plaatje née Magister building, the headquarters of the national Department of Education in Pretoria, an exciting plan was devised by a group of some of the best adult literacy educators in the country to run a campaign to bring very basic literacy to the totally uneducated using innovative educational and organisational strategies and materials and which would rely heavily on the involvement and commitment of civil society (churches, NGOs, unions, associations, individuals) as well as state departments. The plan is now effectively on hold, and probably doomed, because bureaucrats in the national Department of Education are insisting that no campaign can go ahead unless it is designed so that all participants can sit examinations that will give them National Qualifications Authority credits equivalent to School Grades 3 and 5 (ABET sub-levels 1 and 2 of the NQF level 1 (General education)). During the same time the said Department published an Adult General Education Bill which, in a number of its clauses appeared to replicate¹³ some provisions of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which made it an imprisonable offence to provide any

¹¹ That we are all imprisoned in the global economy is of course now as assumed as is the belief that night follows day.

¹² Asmal, K. 1999. *Call to action: mobilising citizens to build a South African Education and training system for the 21st century. Statement by Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, Tuesday 27 July 1999.* Pretoria: Ministry of Education

¹³ The Adult General Education and Training Bill published in the Government Gazette of 31 March 2000, Vol. 417, No. 21052, Notice 1505 of 2000, states in section 27 (1) that no person may establish or maintain a private adult general education and training centre unless it is registered by the Head of a provincial Department of Education and any person who contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding five years or to both such fine and imprisonment. Section 38 (1) that any person other than a registered centre, or an organ of state, who without the authority of an adult general education and training centre, offers or pretends to offer any adult general education and training programme or part thereof; is liable on conviction to any sentence which may be imposed for fraud.

education to black people unless it was in a government registered school or centre.¹⁴ In the late 1950s and 60s this sort of legislation had the effect of excluding black adults from any classroom, in the new millennium it will have the effect of locking adults requiring adult literacy into a state approved system¹⁵ that valorises universal but thoroughly decontextualised globally tailored standards¹⁶ and in which the only recognised form of education and training is that credited and certificated by a state bureaucracy. It invalidates all other forms of education and especially the non-formal which has been at the heart of much adult education.

¹⁴ The Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953 was the cornerstone of *apartheid* education. One of the purposes of this act was to concentrate control of education for blacks in the hands of the State. One of the provisions of the act meant that Church schools and night schools had to be handed over to the State or face diminished subsidy. Only the Roman Catholic Church was able to retain some control of its schools until the cost became prohibitive. The Act required the registration of all voluntary organisations concerned with black education but the registration was intended to control the institutions involved and was not used for purposes of co-ordination or promotion as such. In response to the passing of the Act some people ceased working in night schools on principle and in protest against an unjust system. Later regulations issued in 1957 in terms of this Act made it effectively impossible for night schools to continue. The publication of Government Notice 1414, entitled *Regulations for Night Schools and Continuation Classes for Bantu pupils in European areas* explicitly linked adult education in night schools to that given to children in the formal sector; automatically excluded young people, the unemployed and those self-employed in the informal sector; ruled that all night schools had to be registered, and in European (White) areas applications for registration had to be accompanied by permits from the Group Areas Board and renewed annually. These night schools had to be controlled and administered as private schools by the proprietor or his representative who had to be a European. The regulations were further tightened in 1963. In 1967 the Department of Bantu Education issued a letter closing most night schools and by the end of that year most night schools, with a few exceptions, had ceased to exist.

¹⁵ That itself shows every sign of stagnation. Evidence for this in the state's Adult Basic Education and Training system can be found in the University of Natal report on the state of ABET in 1998/1999 (Aitchison, Houghton and Baatjes *et al*, 2000).

¹⁶ Rather oddly called 'unit standards' in South Africa (because they are the smallest unit of educational achievement that can be credited for certification).

Ivan Illich and lifelong learning

Now this current story could be seen as a perfect case study of what Ivan Illich (the first of my postcard writers) warned about in the mid-seventies. Illich is, of course, best known as a searing critic of the institutionalisation of learning and the dire effects this has both on learning as such and in converting social stratification into educational and supposedly meritocratic hierarchies that effectively both reiterate and mask the exercise of the power of certain classes of people over others.¹⁷ Illich, wrote in the late 60s in the midst of a savagely anti-democratic period in Latin American history and was particularly concerned that it would be unlikely that these countries would ever have the wealth to provide equal education to all. Subsequently there has been a considerable democratisation of Latin America and other parts of the world and knowledge work¹⁸ has become a far more indispensable basis for the wealth of nations and this is having a profound impact on education. Whilst this has led to developments that must revise Illich's contentions, many of his basic arguments remain intact.

In 1974, Illich and a number of collaborators published a manifesto¹⁹ which denounced the then trends towards "lifelong education" in which the educators and authorities decide what is to be learned; only certified teachers may teach, the learning work people do is graded and certified, and education is separated from living and working. Not only did they think "lifelong education" undesirable, they saw its promises (of retraining for employment, technological upgrading and upward

¹⁷ Ivan Illich (born in Austria in 1926) is best known as the author of *Deschooling society* (Illich, 1971) and as an incisive critic of the hidden curriculum of school. He studied theology and philosophy in Rome, history in Salzburg and was vice-rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico for five years. In the sixties he worked at the controversial Centre for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) he founded in Cuernavaca in Mexico.

He sees schooling as a perpetuator of exploitation and domination and as a destroyer of real learning, which ought to be lifelong. However Illich is critical of what is currently called "lifelong learning" which he sees as perpetuating the interests of continuing education professionals and the commodifiers of knowledge who will prescribe what is to be learned and extend schooling into a lifelong sentence.

Illich is therefore also critical of professionalisation and the institutionalisation of education. He argues that education should be separated from the institution of school and operate through educational networks (only now has the Internet made some of Illich's ideas about networks more realisable).

¹⁸ Bertrand Russell is credited with saying that "Work is of two kinds: first, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relative to other such matter; second, telling other people to do so. The first kind is unpleasant and ill paid; the second is pleasant and highly paid." Knowledge work, which consists of moving symbolical material around, may well now constitute a third major category of work, and, as far as payment for it is concerned, occupy a middle position between Russell's two categories.

¹⁹ Center for Intercultural Documentation. 1974. *The price of lifelong education*. Cidoc Doc. I/V 74/70. Cuernavaca, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Documentation

mobility) as essentially unrealisable.²⁰ Qualification inflation would render adults' certificate chasing worthless anyway and this learning would not, as a rule help them become more self-reliant and creative in their everyday lives. By treating alike people of different cultural backgrounds, it translates social inequality into educational success and failure and so conceals the way in which it reinforces class differences. It says that persons are inadequate unless and until they have had a certain amount of formalised education and makes the right to do things depend on credentials which can only be had from educational authorities, and so discourages self-reliance in learning and doing. They had little good to say even of adult education, which, though it calls for formal changes in the schedules, institutions, media and financing of learning, has the same hidden curriculum as schooling and hence cannot but maintain the prevailing social, political and economic conditions. They rejected the professionalisation of adult education and of all legal requirements that certain grades, certificates and examinations are preconditions of having any job.

In 1976 Illich and Verne followed this up with a monograph, *Imprisoned in a global classroom*, which argued that the growing stress on work-related education and training would ultimately give the employers a greater control over a work force that was being made to feel constantly inadequate by the introduction of continuing education systems, that also served to provide jobs in the low-end professions for the subalterns²¹ of capitalism coopted and groomed by the university. They wrote ((Illich and Verne, 1976, pp.12-16):

Without doubt, deschooling here falls into a well-concealed trap, laid by those who wish to utilize it to justify the educational megamachine of the year 2000. ... With the spread of industrialization of education, and the commercialization of knowledge, it amounts, basically, to bringing back the hidden curriculum of schooling and confirming the obvious consequences. ... a guarantee of our permanent inadequacy ... education makes existence the subject of a study course. ... the semi-skilled worker(s) ... will be given the clear impression that they have at all times the possibility of climbing the social ladder, with the help of education and training and the educational resources which have been assigned to them. They will have the permanent knowledge that the opportunity to reach the top of the ladder is always there, and that it is entirely due to their own deficiencies if they fail to grasp it.

Jarvis (1999) notes that Illich and Verne were prescient in recognising that the modern capitalist system was taking direct control over continuing education for its

²⁰ The document argues that retraining cannot create jobs that do not exist and that continued retraining in fact often helps to make skills obsolete, and so threatens job security and seniority rights. Educational programmes help the privileged more than the poor and so increase the advantage of the privileged over the poor.

²¹ In British military terminology, the inferior ranks below captain, used in academic post-colonial studies texts, which themselves borrow from Gramsci's use of the term for groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes, to describe members of subordinated populations, distinct from the co-opted native elites, who engage in various forms of political or cultural insurgency against economic or racial oppression. Debates exist as to whether the subalterns are or are not able to speak except through the use or appropriation of the dominant language, discourse and concepts of the elites.

own ends.²² Many of the important transitions that Jarvis (2000) has identified²³ in the move towards lifelong learning in the last forty years reflect this new direct influence of capital over learning.

²² Marxists have long argued that capitalism used education for its own ends, the difference here is the new directness of the control compared to a general ideological influence.

²³ These transitions include:

- From adult education (with some entitlement to provision) to continuing education (with less entitlement) to lifelong learning (for which there is none). There is a sleight of hand here obscured by the “learner-centred” terminology. Learning is the responsibility of the individual, education that of the state (or was in the 20th century). This semantic shift absolves the state of responsibility to provide and blames the un- or under-educated victim for failing to consume sufficient learning.
- from teacher-centred to student-centred education (even if only rhetorical)
- the rapid growth and relativisation of knowledge (and, positively, the affirmation the learners have to reach their own decisions and ‘truth’, negatively the growth of various fundamentalisms in reaction)
- the notion of curriculum coming under strain (from too much knowledge and its relativity) and being replaced by the packaging of knowledge into little and unrelated short courses mechanically joined into programmes (that can be certificated and sold). Adult education was often an early adherent of “modularisation” (as a means to serve adults demanding flexible part-time courses and programmes) and an equally early opponent (as the marketeers of bland MacDonald’s education began to dominate).
- from rote learning to learning as reflection. Some of this transition was aided by a new interest in cognitive psychology (that influenced South African academic support programmes in the late 70s and 80s) and the need in an environment of information overload for pattern recognition rather than rote learning skills.
- from face-to-face to distance education as massification of education provision and the rapid obsolescence of much technology related learning made face-to-face too expensive and new information technologies made distance education more possible
- from liberal to vocational to the extent now that so-called “lifelong learning” is actually only work related education and training. This tendency has now infected virtually every aspect of South African education including universities which are increasingly pressurised to offer vocationally oriented first and postgraduate degrees.
- the decline of the distinction (in the anglophone world at least) of the traditional distinction between education and training as work demands are increasingly knowledge-based
- from educational needs to market demands as the responsibility of the state to provide for educational needs is disappearing as fast as the welfare state. Now education is a marketable commodity that should earn money (and this is best done when education is packaged, modularised, certificated and delivered to masses of clients by distance education means).

Like many other supernovas in the history of educational thought, Illich slowly faded from the educational scene (partly because he chose to re-direct his ferocious intellect onto the medicine, transport, energy, and new para-professional industries). Because, *sans* the Internet, most of his 60s musings were unimplementable, he tended to be dismissed as an overeducated Don Quixote about to be brushed aside by the forces of modernisation and the massification of education in the Third World. What resonances there were to his ideas in South Africa were either in the alternative education NGOs (such as SACHED²⁴) whose antipathy to “the system” was a temporary revulsion from the apartheid one (and many of whose staff happily became bureaucrats in the new post 1994 system²⁵) or in the continuing existence of non-formal extra-mural programmes run by universities in South Africa and internationally, and by bodies such as the Workers Educational Associations in anglophone countries and by study circles in Nordic ones.

²⁴ The South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) was formed in response to the restrictions of the Bantu Education Act and other legislation such as the so-called Extension of Universities Act. In 1959, the year after the Government imposed strict segregation on the universities (which had by custom if not by law in most cases been *de facto* segregated) and taken direct control of the one black university, the University of Fort Hare, and from it expelled staff and students considered to be politically suspect, a committee was set up to enable the expelled students to study by correspondence for United Kingdom O and A level examinations and the to take University of London external degrees. In 1965, David Adler, who had been the Director of Welfare for the National Union of South African Students (a non-racial anti-*apartheid* body) became its Director and over the next 12 years transformed it into one of the most effective and largest educational NGOs that South Africa has ever seen. The early experiment with the University of London external degrees was short lived and SACHED started to support students studying through South Africa’s own correspondence university, the University of South Africa (a large, powerful and interesting, if at times unedifying, institution in its own right) and by running a secondary education correspondence college which produced superb course materials. SACHED, particularly in the 70s and early 80s is important because of its espousal of alternative education that is different, and indeed consciously in opposition to that run by the state. In the period of disruption to schooling after the Soweto uprising in 1976, SACHED produced an innovative educational supplement in *The World* newspaper. The final form of this supplement, called “People’s College” included significant quantities of adult education material. In 1977 *The World* newspaper and the Director of SACHED, David Adler were banned. Adler was followed as Director by John Samuel who ably led the organisation until he became the first Head of the Education desk of the African National Congress after its unbanning. Subsequently SACHED as an organisation faded away as a result of mismanagement (for example by Trevor Abrahams) and the withdrawal of donor funding from many education NGOs in the 90s.

²⁵ Two national Department of Education officials most insistent on the deadly formalisation of Asmal’s literacy campaign, Khetsi Lehoko (Chief Director, Further Education and Training) and Gugu Nxumalo (Director, Adult Education and Training) are both ex-SACHED employees.

Postcard one

Here is the message I imagine Ivan Illich would send to the new prisoners in South Africa wing of the global classroom prison:

I write to you as an old political activist who once worked for the Italian resistance against fascism. Stories of your concentration camp atmosphere suggests that we are very close to the final victory of the enemy. Resist. Develop a spirit of passive resistance and tear up whatever certificates you have. Build the first modern society which totally rejects knowledge capitalism.

I know this sounds extreme and I speak as a truly innocent clown. I do know that arguing from a position of strength inherent in poverty and discrimination is very unfashionable. As soon as I say, "Thank God, the truly poor don't have these certification hangups!", people try to destroy me personally and say: "But are you not a highly qualified university professor!" "Yes, but I will not allow my being of a certain kind of birth and being of a certain kind of background to be used to disqualify my rational statements."

I distinguish between the formal, explicit, visible curriculum of school (which is under the rational control of a bureaucracy) and the implicit, hidden, latent curriculum of schooling. But, no matter what is part of this explicit curriculum, this implicit curriculum of schooling stays the same. What it inevitably does is convince people that learning that is the result of being directed and taught is better than being an autodidact; that learning that is prescribed by a bureaucracy and therefore bureaucratic management is better than what one can pick up in life situations; that knowledge is a commodity that is transferred and channelled by operators into the minds or behaviours of students whose capital value will rise as more of this stock is transferred into them; that knowledge acquisition represents the finest, the most valuable, the most durable, the least expropriable form of capital ownership. You are only worth as much as you have acquired education and education is measured either by hours or examination certificates. This hidden curriculum of a graded system of education cannot be eliminated even though the overt curriculum teaches the contrary. Schooling is expected to produce the right kind of person and for that purpose, having first to engage in the, kind of tooling up for, the production of the right kind of teachers.

It is not enough to deschool education, society must be deschooled. Simply deschooling the education system would simply lead to more manipulation of adults by so-called educators. We must disestablish schooling as formerly the church was disestablished, by combatting discrimination because of absence or presence of a certificate as given by pedagogues as we formerly abolished certificates of baptism or of confession issued by priests.

I reject the idea that we can only deschool society after everybody has got a good education. This is a stupid proposal which serves only you with your second rate college degree to establish yourself as a lord over the enormous majority who will not get as much knowledge stock certificates as you hold.

And if you want to do something useful, build libraries and resource centres for youth.

Use your horrible situation as lifelong indentured pupils to overcome the obsessions of your persecutors. They believe in the necessity of school certificates. These certificates at best range you as a more tightly controlled upper level servant. Why not say "We don't want them!" Walk out of the prison.

Paulo Friere and active citizenship

One of the reasons for Ivan Illich's fading from the consciousness of educators in South Africa was the far more powerful, and, in South Africa, illegal, influence of the Brazilian adult literacy educator Paulo Freire.²⁶ If the 60s was the nadir of resistance to *apartheid*, the 70s began with signs of a slow (and often educational process) of building up the strength to struggle again. In 1970 an important interchurch initiative,

26

Paulo Freire is known for his contribution to the field of literacy with his "dialogue" or "psycho-social" method and the use of "generative words" but more broadly for his contribution to an engaged and politicised approach to education that criticises "domestication" and encourages conscientisation and thoughtful goal orientated action (praxis).

Freire was born in 1921 to a middle class family in Recife in Brazil. He trained as a teacher and was sent to teach in a rural community in north-east Brazil. He was shocked by the poverty of the peasants and the resigned and fatalistic way they accepted their wretched living conditions and suffering.

Freire set about creating a literacy/education method that could help them free themselves from this state of powerlessness. He had noticed that although the peasants did not protest against their exploitation and had been swallowed up by a "culture of silence", they themselves had a language rich in images from nature and a strong musical and cultural tradition. Freire believed that a first essential was for these exploited people to 'learn' to use their voices again. A consciousness raising educational method would have to begin by building self-confidence. Only then could people discover that they were capable of gaining some control over the environment in which they were living. Misery would cease to be a matter of fate. The peasants would then see misery as a result of man-made historical factors and the way their society was organised - as something they could set about altering (ultimately through revolutionary action).

In the education group the learners would learn from one another with the educator acting as a facilitator or co-ordinator. There would not be the usual teacher-pupil relationship. Through the group the members would gain a wider understanding of the world and the way it is constructed by human beings. Every new discussion (prompted initially by a discussion on generative words related to their everyday experiences) helped the participants to stand back from their own situation until they could see it more clearly and critically. Many parts of their way of life were now seen not to be given and inevitable but rather problems to be studied and transformed.

This reflection is the "reading" of reality. Freire speaks of reading not just the word but the world. Then comes the will to "write" reality. Initially this may be a matter of applying human power to change nature. But then other aspects of life - social, cultural, political are also seen as amenable to change. To Freire, real education is conscientisation - a process of making people aware, through which they learn to 'read' (that is, to understand) true reality, and to write it, which means taking it into their own control. (In this sense, many highly schooled people are "illiterate" and to interpret Freire as only a propagator of a method of teaching people to read and write is to completely miss the point.)

Freire became the general co-ordinator of the National Plan of Adult Literacy and secretary of education. He was arrested during the military *coup de etat* in 1964 and sent into exile. He worked for a time in Chile (but another United States-supported *coup* there ended that work) and then in Geneva from 1974 to 1981 in the office of education of the World Council of Churches. In 1981 he returned to Brazil where he was professor of education at the Catholic University of São Paulo and Minister of Education for the region. He died in 1997.

the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SProCAS), began to publish a number of influential reports, including one on education. Shortly thereafter the radical University Christian Movement began circulating mimeographed summaries from the United States of America of the works of Freire (who, in exile, worked for the World Council of Churches in Geneva). Freire's famous book, *The pedagogy of the oppressed*, had already been banned by the South African government. Some students were trained by SACHED staff in Freire's methodology and used it in their community education and literacy classes, work which can be seen as the origins of the progressive literacy movement. But far more politically influential were Freire's concept and methods of conscientisation, which became the dominant political education process in a variety of groups and organisations. Actual direct political work was very difficult but educational and conscientising activities made use of the cracks in the system of repression to survive and, indeed, flourish, notably in the Black Consciousness Movement.²⁷

Freire's conscientisation method was often grafted²⁸ onto the "small group" methods introduced in the mid-60s from the United States of America by some of the mainline churches.²⁹ These T-group/group dynamics/sensitivity training/basic human relations training methods had been introduced largely as a means of enabling white and black church people to meet each other at a greater level of intimacy and it certainly had a

²⁷ In 1972 the Black People's Convention was launched with an emphasis on the psychological and physical liberation of black people. A number of community education and development projects were initiated by the organisation.

²⁸ Classically seen in the series of three training manuals, *Training for Transformation* by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, which propagated a seemingly bizarre amalgam of T-group theory, Freirian conscientisation, vulgar Marxist economics and papal encyclicals and was published by a Catholic Church publishing house. It became the training Bible of a large number of United Democratic Front activists in the 80s, particularly those working outside the labour movement.

²⁹ There are certain ironies in the fact that the T-group training already contained within itself educational methods from another engrafted stock. As the late sixties and seventies devotees of sensitivity training ran their courses around the country, people began to note that mixed up in the content and processes of the courses, that is, with the feely-touchy stuff, was a quite stiff skeleton of aims and objectives and indeed, with what we would now call a "systems-approach" (a systematic, factory production line like approach to designing programmes and courses which goes through a predictable set of steps, more or less in the sequence of: Set aims/define objectives/specify assessment methods/choose content, teaching methods and resources/assess/evaluate/redesign). The ironies are enhanced by T-group training and the use of objectives within a systems approach having both being developed by the United States military machine in the Second World War, the T-group training for officers, the more heavily objectives orientated training for the ranks. After the war these training technologies moved into the business world and then into the church. Finally, of course they entered the university.

powerful and emotional impact.³⁰ In the longer term it developed a cadre of church and student leaders³¹ who were adept at small group work and who would later apply some of these methods in the student,³² trades union and political contexts within the broader anti-*apartheid* struggle. Needless to say, it was to have a powerful influence on adult education in a variety of settings.³³

³⁰ Its impact was later recognised by the *apartheid* government and one of South Africa's more notorious commissions of inquiry, the Schibusch Commission, was set up to *inter alia* look at sensitivity training as a force for "subversion", which it was duly found to be! On the other hand the impact of T-groups, encounter groups, etc., was, at least as far as their original form went, limited by their addressing the concerns which were felt most keenly by the relatively affluent.

³¹ Many of them trained by the interdenominational Christian Education and Leadership Training (CELT) grouping in Natal and the Cape Province and by the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre (WFC) near Johannesburg.

³² Two of the student movement's so influenced were the United States influenced Black Consciousness Movement that began to form in 1968 on the new ethnically segregated and state controlled "tribal" universities set up by the *apartheid* state for black students and by the University Christian Movement set up in the same year. The University Christian Movement (UCM) coalesced out of some of the parts of the Student's Christian Association (SCA) (which had been broken up into racially segregated parts) and other tertiary level denominational religious associations. It made some effort to encourage literacy work and printed literacy primers (though it achieved little in practice, partly because some of the students in charge of the literacy programme were secret police spies). In 1969, Black students formed the South African Student Organisation (SASO) led by Steve Biko. It was an amalgam of United States Black power ideology, Africanism and Marxist, but not Communist, socialism. It was initially tolerated by the *apartheid* state because it was for black students only and often stridently critical of the liberal and non-racial National Union of South African students (and towards which the government's paranoia about non-racial mixing was chiefly directed).

³³ Ironically enough, often in urban and relatively well educated ones, rather than amongst the rural poor of Freire's original context.

Postcard two

What I imagine Freire might write to the prisoners:

My dear friend Ivan Illich has suggested that I write to you. Ivan, of course often grumbles about me and nastily suggests that conscientisation is just a new ritual used by a new educational clergy to indoctrinate the poor with Marxist categories to help them discover that they are “humans” and that you need a PhD to understand most of my books and as you know, Ivan has lost interest in PhDs after collecting so many of them himself.

What I am about is not just teaching the peasants to read – though that is important. Reading, alphabetisation, is not really the issue. Lots of highly educated people can decipher letters but they cannot read their world. What is important is that literacy can be a tool through which human beings become conscious of the fact that their world, however poor, whatever the situation of oppression, is created by humans like themselves. It is human labour, and the labour that also goes into culture, that has created a human world. When a peasant comes to that insight he understands that he is a creator of the world and that therefore he can change the situation of oppression that he is in. The reader of the word becomes a reader of the world. The writer of the simple text becomes the writer of history through his revolutionary action. But I am sure you are familiar with all this because I believe I am very well known in South Africa. I have even heard jokes about my being called Paul Ferreira.

But perhaps you are less familiar with the more difficult parts of my books in which I explain how the oppressed tend to internalise the image of the oppressor and then, when they get some semblance of power, become oppressors in turn. It’s all in my *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. You must watch out for this in South Africa. Clearly the sort of education and training you are being given now is a betrayal of conscientisation. And your educators seem to be intent on the very opposite of the class suicide that I encouraged. The educational stuff you are being given is not going to help you read the world.

I think you are going to have to start again.

Maybe you should get somebody to visit me for advice.

From Robert Mager to Magister

The third writer of a postcard really needs some introduction, for it could be contended that he is, if not the chief architect, at least one of the more important builders of the prison itself. I refer to Robert Mager. “Robert, who?” you may ask. Well his books still sit on many an industry trainer or business administrator’s bookshelf. The books themselves were generally short, didactic and breezily colloquial³⁴ and are the model for whole generations of the “one minute “ guides to businessmen you find on the airport book racks. In the intellectual archaeology of South African adult education and indeed of the whole current education and training system and its discourses, Mager’s work on behavioural objectives in training³⁵ can be found mixed into the concrete of the now covered up mid 20th century foundations of our National Qualifications System and Outcomes Based Education.

And these foundations are those of American behaviourism applied (successfully we imagine) in the 40s to the rapid training of men for the Second World War and then applied (in a failure approaching fiasco³⁶) to education (though the taxonomies of cognitive and affective educational objectives developed by Bloom and Krathwohl (Bloom *et al*, 1956, Krathwohl *et al*, 1964) have an enduring and seductive appeal) and to training³⁷ where behaviourism and objectives embedded themselves and begot various offspring such as Criterion Referenced Instruction (CRI) and Management by Objectives (MBO) and who in turn begot Competence based education (CBE) and

³⁴ The titles indicate all, for example, *Analyzing performance problems or You really oughta wanna*.

³⁵ Mager argued that clearly written instructional objective that described an intended outcome of educational instruction were more useful than descriptions or summaries of content. An instructional objective had to describe what a learner would be able to unambiguously and observably demonstrate and under what conditions and to what standard. Indeed, the instructor should put the examination standards into objectives. Mager believed that the educator (or rather trainer) could not select appropriate content, materials or instructional methods unless instructional objectives had been defined first. Clear instructional objectives also enabled prior learning to be recognised. The learner could be given a copy of the objectives and if , already able to do what they are asking, could happily demonstrate his or her ability.

³⁶ It was a dismal failure and programmed education texts (which supplied behavioural objectives and minute chunks of instruction at a time) soon landed in the dustbins of educational institutions. The interest lasted longer in distance education (it is instructive to examine the Open University’s initial enthusiasm for objectives at the beginning of each course and section of the course and the speed with which they withered away) and particularly in Christian fundamentalist theological education – behavioural psychology based education might be reductionist but Freud and sex were considered more dangerous. It is worth noting in relation to psychology that on the whole the objectives and outcomes movement seems to be totally oblivious of the dramatic revolution in cognitive psychology that took place in the late 20th century.

³⁷ This is not totally unsurprising as, after all, thought in the business world is normally derivative of other disciplines or trivial, and most of what is done by way of instruction is training, not education.

finally outcomes and standards (becoming part of the newly erected vocational education and training qualifications systems in such places as the United Kingdom and Australia).³⁸ Then, newly confident in the age of monetarism, Reaganomics and Thatcherism, the domain of education was invaded again and “outcomes” were now recommended as a tool for making teachers accountable in the United States of America.³⁹ The latest emanation in this chain of descent going back to B.F. Skinner is Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 in South Africa. At this juncture it is worth going back to what the demiurge⁴⁰ of all this, B.F. Skinner, (Romiszowski, 1981, p. 3) himself had to say about education:

Those of us who know where they are going, and can define the path that leads there, are in the business of training, whereas those who neither know their destination nor the means of getting there are in education.

³⁸ Standards and desired competencies are invariably decided upon by the representatives of business and state bureaucrats, sometimes with some input from organised labour. The worker/ learner’s role in setting the competencies would seem to be minimal and the competencies seem, equally invariably, mainly for the urban, the employed, and those working in industry. Standards are invariably decontextualised and appropriate for international comparability.

It has been argued that the competency approach adopts a deficit view of its learners and of workers in general – a person is either competent or incompetent and deficient, there is nothing in between. As Edwards and Usher (1994, p. 10) say, “Behind competence stalks the spectre of incompetence” and also argue (pp. 1-2) that “in the present context of rapid and uncertain economic change, this work is to do with disciplining adults through a process whereby adults discipline themselves as learners of a particular type and in a particular way ... a strategy of governance, a means of producing consent without the need for oppression and force in the reproduction of the social order ... which ... has a narrowly confined and particular view of knowledge that excludes alternative sources of and perspectives on knowledge.” The focus is entirely on the individual as to whether she or he is competent or not, whether she or he is skilled or not, and is deflected away from the what might be the some of the reasons for the ‘lack’ of skills. The reasons may include the larger socio-political picture, and factors such as poor quality formal school provision. This “blame the learner not the provider’ trend is inevitably embedded in the notion of “unit standards” in the National Qualifications Framework. The apparent objectivity and neutrality of a standard which it is up to the learner to meet sets up a discourse which, as effectively as Orwell’s “newspeak”, makes it virtually impossible to talk about the responsibility of the state, social and historical disadvantage, and learner interests.

³⁹ Outcomes as associated with school education are often associated with the work of William G. Spady who uses the term *outcome* and *goal* interchangeably and describes exit outcomes as “competencies, knowledge and orientations” (Spady, Filby, and Burns, 1986). They claim that with “outcomes” the stress has shifted from objectives derived from course content or textbook outlines to objectives based on desired changes in the learner. This supposed distinction strikes me as spurious as behavioural objectives have always been based on what the learner is to do.

⁴⁰ For those not familiar with the terminology of gnostic heresies in early Christianity, the demiurge was the arrogant god who created the material universe, the product like himself of fault and ignorance, as distinct from true divinity which had nothing to do with the material universe at all.

The advantages of behavioural objectives, even to educators, are obvious – they provide them with clear and unambiguous descriptions of what learners are expected to achieve, force the educator to think and plan in detailed, specific terms and provide a rational basis for assessment and evaluation and hence can make education more accountable (Unwin and McAleese, 1978, p. 72; McDonald-Ross, 1973; Kelly, 1989, p. 60; Taba, 1962). Objectives can form the basis for units of instruction and this makes them attractive to those involved in the modularisation⁴¹ and marketing of educational provision (McDonald-Ross, 1973). But the criticisms of objectives are as legion about their value and technical usefulness, and their impact on teaching. At the philosophical level they have been criticised for being reductionist and a denial of the complexity of the teaching and learning. McDonald-Ross (1973) argues that there are many paths through any body of knowledge and that setting pre-specified objectives restricts the number of routes one can take to acquire that knowledge. Real learning is developmental rather than linear: learners often do not learn in a step-by-step fashion but rather in stages appropriate to their own development. Pre-specification of objectives also logically means that education is always a matter of existing knowledge being taught. There are never any surprises and unintended learnings are simply ignored, as is the ‘hidden curriculum’ which may be concerned with broad social and personal outcomes of real value, particularly to adults. Perhaps the most severe disadvantage of behavioural objectives is that in practice trivial objectives are easiest to operationalise and the more complex and sophisticated objectives are, the harder they are to realise. A truly complex educational task would require a pantechnikon to transport the pages of printout listing the relevant objectives.

For adult educators with a humanistic background, objectives must fail as a dominant approach⁴² because they essentially focus on the goals of instruction (and the most efficient way to meet those goals), not on the learner or his or her needs. The much touted idea that outcomes are “learner centred” is a half-truth if not a confidence trick. Just because they describe what the learner must do does not make the learner a “subject” rather than an “object” of education any more than it would be to describe job descriptions for administrative staff as “worker-centred”.

It is important to look at these fossil strata of educational technology because the

⁴¹ Modularisation moves away from the structured coherent whole course to flexible free-standing units. The former stressed the teaching process which helped give the course coherence, the latter stress learner outcomes and there is an all too easy assumption that the learner will build up a larger structure from these smaller units, accumulating credits towards various qualifications. (Intelligent discussion on modularisation in the university I work in is all but impossible because of the shallow and meaningless way in which the term ‘module’ is now applied to a semesterised course. Personal experience illustrates this point. In 1984 the University of Natal turned down the Centre for Adult Education’s design of a new 25 module Advanced Diploma in Adult Education on the grounds that this University did not permit modularised courses. In 2000 our attempts to get an intricately designed and integrated Diploma in Participatory Development approved was thrown back because it was **not** a series of mechanically regular Lego-block modules.)

⁴² Obviously, all this does not mean that adult educators, notoriously eclectic as they are in the educational approaches they use, cannot use objectives or outcomes as tools preparing lessons and planning courses and curricula.

recent arrival of outcomes in education is not some new innovation but merely a warming up of the behavioural objectives movement. However, “outcomes” cunningly avoid three significant drawbacks of behavioural objectives, namely, they are, firstly, if done rigorously, damn hard to write, secondly, it is an endlessly tedious process because of the number required, and, thirdly, behavioural objectives are only legitimate if they describe the observable behaviour that indicates that they have been achieved. Outcomes are usually sloppily written objectives.⁴³ A classic example of this is the first of the seven (yes only seven) outcomes for the “Learning area” (oldspeak “subject”) of “Language, literacy and communication” (oldspeak “English” or other main or second language) in Curriculum 2005: “Make and negotiate meaning and understanding”. This gobbledegook outcome, only understandable by people who read books on applied linguistics, is intended to cover every conceivable behavioural objective related to reading, writing, and speaking.

In South Africa, the reality is that the educational policy and implementation processes of the last eight years have *de facto* ended up with Magerism the major unacknowledged influence on South African education. So when you walk down Schoeman Street in Pretoria and gaze at the headquarters of the national Department of Education note that behind the black, humane and literate facade of Sol Plaatje lies the bureaucratic zombie of Magister whose possessing daemon is Mager.

Given these obviously critical comments on “Magerism”, one may well ask how on earth the triumphant forces of South African liberation (conscientised to excess by the struggles of the 80s, and advised by new educational policy makers in the National Education Policy Investigation of 1992 and 1993 and the Centre for Education Policy Development in 1993 and 1994), when, in May 1994, they inserted their cadres into the national Department of Education and the Department of Labour, let this happen, and, what is more, now continue to try to persuade us that it is all an emancipatory project and react with almost apoplectic ire when suggestions are made that Outcomes Based Education has failed to deliver (and was doomed to fail) (Jansen, 1997) or that adult basic education has stagnated (Aitchison, 1998).

The history of this “transformation” to Magerism is of course complex. Harley *et al* (1996) provide the best analysis of the adult basic education policy developments up until 1995 and Aitchison (2000) provides a condensed account of policy developments in the 90s. The story of what happened in the ABET sector is particularly fascinating given both the strength of the Freirian tradition and the fact that the policy creators were constructing an essentially new sector untrammelled by the past. What is more, the ABET policy experts were not ignorant of what they were doing. Perhaps the unfortunate outcomes can be best explained by saying that they assumed that the *golem* they were creating would remain under their control, which was not to be the case.

⁴³ Of course, some outcome statements, are well written and useful, but then these are closest to Mager’s prescriptions on good objectives writing. Attempts to argue that outcomes should be seen broadly, rather than narrowly, or ‘holistically’ rather than ‘atomistically’ are misplaced. Such broad outcomes are simply goals, they are no longer ‘outcomes’ in any precise sense.

One does not want to denigrate the great efforts that have been made to develop new (and in particular adult basic) educational policies nor to ignore the enormous constraints that have led to the abject failures to really transform the South African education system. We are in a very harsh economic situation in which South Africa has rejoined the highly competitive global economy in which there is enormous pressure to move towards a standardisation of skills training and qualifications.⁴⁴ But in this difficult environment, the early promise of great developments in adult education, and particularly in adult basic education and training, have been largely unfulfilled and serious threats have arisen to the university⁴⁵ and non-governmental organisation bases for adult education thinking and action.

⁴⁴ Part of the explanation for the readiness with which South African education policy makers succumbed to this pressure lies in the coincidence of the interests of the training sector who saw themselves as innovative reformists in relation to the turgid apartheid education system, the apartheid bureaucrats who abandoned their past ideology for the (seemingly of course) ideology free discourses of technicism, and of non-formal education and adult education practitioners, who, in spite of their radical ideology, frequently employed the techniques of the behaviourists as mediated by Mager.

⁴⁵ The university adult education departments which were so influential in the 80s and early 90s are now struggling for survival. Although this is partly due to the unfortunate attitudes of the national Department of Education's Adult Education and Training Directorate, the real threat is from the universities themselves. After 1994 it can be safely said that universities found themselves in a mess. *Apartheid* South Africa had multiplied the number of universities to cater for each ethnic group. Many of these were, given their illegitimacy, always hopeless institutions, but the new government was given the unenviable choice of closing many of them or spreading the declining university budget even more thinly. It chose to make no real decisions. Meanwhile, an anticipated huge increase in university students failed to materialise. (Whether this was due to faulty statistical projections, an inability to pay fees in a lacklustre economy, the rise of commercially based alternatives, the emigration of increasing numbers of white youth, or the impact of AIDS is unclear. Probably all factors play a part.) At the same time many universities started to rationalise and restructure, downsized their senates and installed various forms of American style university executive administration. Departments were collapsed into larger schools. Programmes which did not cover their costs by subsidy or fees were terminated. *De facto* the famous Department of Adult Education at the University of Cape Town is no more, the Centre for Adult and Community Education at the University of the Western Cape is under threat and the Centres for Adult Education at the University of Natal, though they still survive, are continually having to justify their existence in crass financial terms. The idea that universities should provide some form of community service through adult education has fallen on hard times.

Postcard three

What Mager might say:

I am not some lefty political educator with romantic ideas about the world. I want an efficient world and if you read my books you will become more efficient. They will help businesses become more efficient and efficient businesses mean prosperity for all of us, though us in America will of course get prosperous first, but that's the way the world works.

Going back to my books. They are written with absolute clarity and also have some humour. You'll rise from zero to be a campus hero if you read them and get your aims and objectives sorted out. Get your goals right and you know where you are going. It's self evident. Anybody who suggests otherwise is really, really stupid.

Now, I know you think you are in some kind of educational prison. Well, how did you get there? You probably didn't write your objectives properly. If you don't know where you are going you will probably wind up somewhere else. Your leadership clearly didn't know how to set clear objectives and how to follow a plan – Arts and Social science graduates I guess. My books should be compulsory reading for them.

Have your trainers got it wrong? Well, maybe these outcome statements of theirs are sloppy. But that is where the systems approach comes in. Remember:

Set objectives, decide on assessment, implement, evaluate, redesign.. Got that: - evaluate and redesign.

There is nothing wrong with Magerism. Just do it properly.

Now, set yourself some prison transformation goals.

Now, wasn't that easy.

Good luck.

Adult education has triumphed – if you can bear it!

One is faced with a conundrum. Adult education has triumphed yet the adult educators are in dismay.

Contemporary discourse suggests that everything that adult education has fought for has been realised, not, it is true by the sole efforts of adult educators and their allies, but rather by the forces of global capitalism (and to some extent, and particularly in South Africa, democratisation). As mentioned already, Jarvis (2000) believes that in one sense the need for an adult education movement is at an end. “Lifelong learning” is now accepted as state policy in most countries. A vast set of work related “learning programmes” for adults has become a feature (and a necessary feature) of any society that wishes to be part of the global economy and not be relegated to the “basket cases” in the exclusionary zones of the world (which happen to be mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South America). Adults now have access to the courses and programmes in the now global market. The remaining barriers to full access are rapidly being removed (even if grudgingly by the university as economic circumstances force it to open its doors). Outcomes based and packaged education and training allow for the flexible lifetime accumulation of credits and qualifications. The logic of this discourse extends to saying that adult education must now dissolve itself into ‘lifelong learning’.⁴⁶

But, adult educators, generally, do not at heart believe the discourse, for the world of education is still far from perfect. They stand gazing at the field of their supposed victory and ask themselves – “Is this it!” They recognise that in practice the socially excluded, and that generally means the poor and illiterate, cannot afford to buy what the market offers.⁴⁷ That the rich get richer is as true of education as it is of material wealth (and is one of the contradictions that has always challenged socially conscious adult educators). And because the emphasis is now on lifelong learning it is pointedly made clear to learners that it is their fault if they do not consume what the market provides sells or fail to succeed. So adult educators enter the new millennium in which the ideals of adult education are thoroughly distorted. Lifelong learning does not comprehend the fullness of life and access to it is only by way of indentured servitude. The vision of education as a means to active citizenship has been betrayed.

⁴⁶ This is the direction that the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education of the University of the Western Cape is moving – dissolution into a Division of Lifelong Learning.

⁴⁷ Yet they are told that, in effect, such continuing education is compulsory, not only because some of it is mandatory (as for example with school teachers) but because future employment is dependent upon it and without employment one cannot be a consumer and without consuming one cannot have an identity and in a very real, even if partly metaphorical sense, one is therefore condemned to not being fully human. As Jarvis remarks (2000), in the past “adult educators were concerned to find ways of attracting adults back to education for very positive reasons - now the government forces them into it in order to make them employable. Education is being used in the policy of welfare to work - to help people become more employable because being unemployable is to be an outcaste, to be beyond social acceptability. Another of the ideals of the adult education movement has been changed from a positive humanitarian aim to a negative one - to save the person from the stigma of welfare.”

What is now valued as “learning” is narrow and reductionist. To quote Jarvis (2000) again:

But even the language of lifelong learning is being distorted by the forces of global capitalism - lifelong learning is coming to mean work life learning; ‘real’ learning is accredited learning, usually but not always work-related. We do have to recapture the meaning of lifelong learning by emphasising that it is for the whole of life - the person, the learning city and the learning community as well as the learning organisation. It is for the person, as well as for employment.

In South Africa, given the obvious dismay in the adult education field about the developing trends since the mid-90s and the failures of implementation in ABET, it was not surprising that criticism and calls to renewal should emerge at the end of the decade. But public criticism of current policy and has largely been expressed by some academics in university adult education departments and their work has been received with the utmost hostility by the national Directorate (see for example Aitchison, 1998). Renewal moves in ABET are of minor scale – a group which has set up a new Trust as an adult literacy, basic education and development (not “ABET”) funding conduit whose work has been funded by the German Adult Education Association (ALBED Task team, 1999); a small group linked to the Umtapo Centre calling for a Freirian revival (Umtapo Centre, 1999); renewed activity by an NGO dedicated to encouraging reading among new literates (ERA Initiative, 1999); and the setting up of a South African National Literacy Initiative by the new Minister of Education (Department of Education, 2000). All these are fragile, and as already intimated, the last mentioned may be stillborn (if not already deliberately aborted). In spite of Asmal’s call to action made at the threshold of the 21st century, the prospects for the delivery of appropriate and high quality literacy instruction and adult basic education and training remain uncertain. Possible scenarios include the eventually successful construction of a state driven ABET system or the collapse or abandonment of such an enterprise. In the event of this latter conclusion, the extent to which the decimated NGO sector could be revitalised seems dubious. The future role of the business sector in ABET, though probably still the major provider, is also unclear, but current trends suggest that the business community will rapidly phase out ABET and concentrate on the Further Education and Training needed to keep the workforce competitive in the global economy.

For the lucky prisoners in the global classroom, lucky that they are not in the exclusion zones of poverty and plague and illiteracy where there will only be increasing misery and no Internet access, there is no prospect for release, though internal to the prison, promotions to trustie posts will be abundant. But, as to the routine, the hidden curriculum of prison, (as prisoners know) things do not change very fast. The Gordian knot of global standardisation and vocationally related standards and qualifications systems are now too complex to be untied. In this sense there is no scope for future policy development in the new millennium - only the tinkering with implementation plans. The knot can but be cut and we still await a liberator with a sharp enough sword. But that day will come because, as surely as Nelson Mandela knew as he waited his 27 years, a system that is profoundly wrong in its attitude to human beings, will never last; a system whose understanding of the way the universe works is also profoundly wrong will never last either

Adapting some of Wheatley's (1994) remarks in her stimulating analysis of what the new science (from quantum physics to chaos theory and fractals) has to teach us about organisations, we are in an ever extending dead end if we think that a reductionist legoland universe of discrete unit standards and outcomes and functions and roles and modularised chunks of flat earth knowledge and assessment criteria will lead to educational renewal. In a fractal universe the closer you zoom in to reality the more there is to measure.

In organizations, we are very good at measuring activity. In fact that is primarily what we do. Fractals suggest the futility of searching for ever finer measures of discrete parts of the system. There is never a satisfying end to this reductionist search, never an end point where we finally know everything about even one part of the system. When we study the individual parts or try to understand the system through its *quantities*, we get lost in a world we can never fully measure or appreciate. (p. 129)

The cosmos of Magerism that has been adopted by South Africa's educational managers is the educational equivalent of the Newtonian universe and the Fordist production line. And as we all know that is a dead universe and attempts to continue down this educational route will end in a *cul de sac*. We should get out of it.

A profession of faith

In conclusion, and taking the award of the title of Professor as needing some profession of faith in one's discipline and the university, I am drawn again to the title of Paul Gauguin's enigmatic painting, "*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*" Gauguin, after completing this large composition went into the mountains to commit suicide. However, the dose of arsenic he took was so large and strong that vomiting counteracted the effects of the poison.⁴⁸ I dare venture to suggest that if the passion for adult education and a convivial society does sometimes drive us to despair as we contemplate the inevitable tendencies of contemporary society, suitable overdoses of scepticism and satire may serve to keep us alive to fight another day. This I intend to do and summon the influences on and witnesses to a faith in adult education in support of such profession. With an aged Herman Melville one wants to remain loyal to the dreams of one's youth and with Herbert Marcuse state that "That which is, cannot be true!", tempered however by the pragmatism of Marshall McLuhan observing his Edgar Allan Poe hero sucked down into the irresistible maelstrom of the modern environment going with the flow but with his eyes open and through curiosity finding a route to survival, and remembering all the adult educators and learners one has known who are the salt of the earth and hoping that, with no thought of surrender, one will continue to surf the gigantic waves of our contemporary global and national perfect storms with elegance and gaiety.

⁴⁸

Rewald, J. 1959. *Paul Gauguin*. London: Collins

References

- Aitchison, J.J.W. 1998. *Naught for your comfort: critique and its denial in South African adult basic education and training*. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal
- Aitchison, J.J.W. 2000. *Struggle and compromise: a history of South African adult education 1960 - 1999*. Paper delivered at the Ethics, ideals and ideologies in the history of adult education. VIII International Conference on the History of Adult Education, Janus Pannpnus University, Pécs, Hungary, 20-24 August 2000
- Aitchison, J., Houghton, T. and Baatjes, I. with Douglas, R., Dlamini, M., Seid, S. and Stead H. 2000. *University of Natal survey of adult basic education and training: South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education and Department of Adult and Community Education, University of Natal
- ALBED Task team. 1999. *Adult Literacy, Basic Education and Development: a call to renewal*. Unpublished paper
- Asmal, K. 1999. *Call to action: mobilising citizens to build a South African Education and training system for the 21st century. Statement by Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, Tuesday 27 July 1999*. Pretoria: Ministry of Education
- Bloom, B.S. *et al.* 1956. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. 1: Cognitive Domain*. London: Longman
- Center for Intercultural Documentation. 1974. *The price of lifelong education*. Cidoc Doc. I/V 74/70. Cuernavaca, Mexico: Center for Intercultural Documentation
- Department of Education. 2000. *Implementation Plan for Tirisano*. Pretoria: Department of Education
- Dodds, T. 2000. *Creating open and lifelong learning institutions in higher education: a Namibian case-study*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Lifelong Learning, Higher Education and Active Citizenship held at Cape Town, 10 to 12 October 2000
- Edwards, R. and Usher, R. 1994. *Disciplining the subject: the power of competence*. In: *Studies in the Education of Adults*. Volume 26, Number 1, April 1994, pp 1-14
- ERA Initiative. 1999. *Easy readers for adults in South Africa: an investigation into their use*. Johannesburg: ERA Initiative
- Freire, P. 1972. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Harley, A., Aitchison, J.J.W., Lyster, E. and Land, S. *et al.* 1996. *A survey of adult basic education in South Africa in the 90s*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books
- Hope, A. and Timmel.S. 1984. *Training for Transformation: a handbook for community workers*. Gweru: Mambo
- Illich, I. 1971. *Deschooling society*. New York: Harper and Row

- Illich, I. and Verne, E. 1976. *Imprisoned in a global classroom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative
- Jansen, J. 1997. *Why OBE will fail*. In: Goolam, F. and Khumalo, L. (Eds) 1997. *Proceedings of a national conference on outcomes based education*. University of Durban-Westville, pp. 65-75
- Jarvis, P. 1999. *'Imprisoned in the global classroom' - revisited: towards an ethical analysis of lifelong learning*. Unpublished paper.
- Jarvis, P. 2000. *Adult Education – an ideal for modernity: the end of adult education as a social movement?* Paper delivered at the Ethics, ideals and ideologies in the history of adult education. VIII International Conference on the History of Adult Education, Janus Pannpnus University, Pécs, Hungary, 20-24 August 2000
- Kelly, A.V. 1989. *The Curriculum: theory and practice*. London: Paul Chapman
- Krathwohl, D.R. et al. 1964. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. 2: Affective Domain*. London: Longman
- Krog, A. 1999. *Country of my skull*. Parktown : Vintage
- Mager, R.F. and Pipe, P. 1984. *Analyzing performance problems or You really oughta wanna*. Second Edition. Belmont, California: Pitman
- McDonald-Ross, M. 1973. *Behavioural Objectives: A Critical Review*. *Instructional Science*. Vol.2, No. 1, pp. 52
- Rewald, J. 1959. *Paul Gauguin*. London: Collins
- Romiszowski, A.J. 1981. *Designing instructional systems*. London: Kogan Page
- Slaughter S. and Silva E.T. 1983. *Service and the dynamics of developing fields - the social sciences and higher education studies*. *Journal of Higher Education*. 1983, Vol. 54, No. 5, pp. 481-499
- Spady, W.G., Filby, N. and Burns, R. 1986. *Outcome-based education. A summary of essential features and major implications*. Santa Cruz and San Francisco: The Spady Consulting Group and Far West Laboratory
- Taba, H. 1962. *Curriculum development: theory and practice*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World
- Umtapo Centre. 1999. *Report of Paulo Freire workshop, Pietermaritzburg, 1999*. Durban: Umtapo Centre Durban: Umtapo Centre
- Unwin, D. and McAleese, R. (Ed.) 1978. *Behavioural Objective*. *Encyclopedia of educational media, communications and technology*. London: Macmillan, pp. 71-72
- Wheatley, M.J. 1994. *Leadership and the new science: learning about organization from an orderly universe*. San Francisco, california: Berret-Koehler

Professor John Aitchison
Centre for Adult Education
School of Education, Training and Development
University of Natal
Private Bag X01
Scottsville
3209
South Africa

Telephone: +27 33 260-5070
Facsimile: +27 33 260-5756
E-mail: aitchisonj@nu.ac.za