

BusinessDay

ANC fleecing SA with 'sheep' education

Mbulelo Nguta

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In the book *Critics of State Education*, a project of the Cato Institute, George Smith surveys historical thinking on the nature and role of education from the days of Sparta through to Plato and early modern times.

According to Plato: "Education is, if possible, to be, as the phrase goes, compulsory for every mother's son, on the ground that the child is even more the property of the state than of his parents."

This is the same "baby-sitter and authoritarian" spirit that fuels ANC decisions in running our education today. The only addition might be the depraved motivation behind this, namely to use education to indoctrinate children into becoming ANC sheep rather than participants in economies of the future.

We spend billions of rands on education each year. Yet we are one of the worst performers in terms of quality in general and the quality of maths and science in particular. More than half of our pupils disappear before they reach matric, and only a small number manage to graduate with strong marks.

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To solve the problem, each year the ANC government goes into overdrive to massage the matric results through the standardisation process and the lowering of pass requirements, in order to present a rosy picture that makes some, mainly them, feel good. In the meantime, the army of unemployed and unemployable youths keeps swelling.

In a country like ours you would think our obsession would be to fix the quality of our education, especially high-demand subjects such as maths, science and technology. Alas, the ANC has chosen to twist the knife in the wound. They want us to swallow the absurdity that our priority as a nation is history. They would have us believe that to produce skilled graduates who can

participate in the economy of the future we must make history a compulsory subject up to grade 12.

History is important as a school subject until it is used as a tool to indoctrinate children in the hope of inclining them from their youth towards a certain political party.

The signs have always been there. Not long ago, the ANC's Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma protested that "schools are anti-ANC" and thus needed to be transformed urgently. South African history glows with the heroism of ANC leaders in the anti-apartheid struggle.

In the party's long-term strategy to remain in power, it is hoped that if young minds hear more of this ANC heroism in the classroom, the ANC will have a free ticket to rule until the return of Jesus. They won't have to work hard to justify their corruption or defend their record in government.

However, you can be sure that when it comes to their own children, ANC politicians do not gamble by feeding them history over maths and science, as they do with the masses.

To the ANC, education is just a beach ball to be tossed and kicked around, either to buy the South African Democratic Teachers Union's (Sadtu's) political allegiance or for pure brainwashing to stem the breeding of "clever blacks".

Why can't maths and science be compulsory? Because the ANC would have to face the prospect of hating itself for a less rosy picture of the matric results. I have a bitter taste in my mouth because this history business seems to have been at the say-so of Sadtu, a hardened enemy of quality and accountability in education. It appears this idea might have leapt from its discussion documents, which is hardly surprising coming from comrades who spend up to two months a year in political meetings when they should be in class teaching.

In any event, how will this history business ensure teachers are in class, on time and teaching? How will it help us ensure the right people teach our children? How will it make sure no one is a teacher because they are paid money, goats or cattle to get the job?

The ANC hates education. It has given up on maths and science. In his elegant book, *SA Can Work*, Frans Rautenbach calls us to action. Decentralising power and opening up our education to edupreneurs is the only way to fix our education.

We will achieve this like a man does when crossing a river — "feeling the stones one at a time". We must pray for and rally around experimental reforms such as the Western Cape's "collaboration schools", whose champions have not given up on quality education for poor children.