Justice (as fairness and ubuntu) and equal education opportunities in south afric...

Introduction

In the 1970s Harvard University political scientist John Rawls (1999, p. 4) argued that a society is well-ordered when it is effectively regulated by a public conception of justice in which "(1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles". Firstly, I will use my understanding of justice as equity and Ubuntu, and equal education and critically consider how certain issues in South Africa contribute to unjust education. Secondly, considering the potential of the Nussbaum's and Kevin Kumashiro's idea to bring more just education in South Africa. Lastly, I will use examples from the South African landscape.

Impact of HIV and Aids on education

HIV Aids is having a major impact, not only in SA but throughout the world. It is reducing the supply of qualified teachers and may disrupt schooling for a whole generation of children. Over a period of time, the diminishing investment in human capital may delay social and economic development. The major issues are discussed below:

- The HIV/AIDS epidemic is diminishing the progress being made in the education sector.
- There is a reduction in the supply of educational services due to teacher deaths and absenteeism. Studies predict teacher shortages in

many countries, including Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia and
Zimbabwe.

- There are high medical and other costs being imposed on the
educational system for medical care and death benefits for infected
teachers and for recruiting and training replacements for teachers lost
to ADS.
- There is a reduction in the number of school-aged children due to HIV
and Aids.

When children are born with the virus, they rarely live long enough to attend
school. ' Orphaned children are often neglected and less likely to attend
schools than no orphans. Children drop out of school to assist ill parents and
provide care or help financially with menial jobs. Studies by the HSRC in sub-
Saharan African countries show low rates of enrolment among children when
both parents are deceased. ' The quality of education is reduced through the
impact of HIV/AIDS. Teachers that are infected are often absent or too sick to
provide acceptable education.

Substitute teachers may not have the experience or qualifications to replace
qualified teachers. Thus, the quality of education would suffer when the
government focuses on diverting funds into the fight against the HIV/AIDS
epidemic (www. statssa. org. za)The Medical Research council revealed that
there was a rapid increase in HIV Aids during the period 1993 and 2000. The
possible reason for this was that people were distracted by the political
changes. HIV Aids was becoming widespread as the South African people
and the world's media were focused on the political and social changes

occurring in the country. The results of these political changes may have been positive, but the epidemic did not get the attention that was needed. It is possible that the impact of the epidemic could be reduced by prompt action. The head of the Medical Research Council has stated that ADS killed around 336, 000 South Africans between mid-2005 and mid-2006. (www. avert. org/safricastats. htm)

The quality of educationSouth Africa is facing a major skills shortage in various facets of the economy (Pandor, 2007). Maria Ramos, CEO of Transnet mentioned that there is a severe, potentially incapacitating skills challenge as SA attempts to build sustainable higher levels of economic growth with shared benefits. She mentioned that SA is not alone in this quandary; other developing countries are facing similar skills shortages. " Globally, some estimates suggest that 50% of firms in developing countries are facing a skills shortage, Ramos said (Ramos, 2008). One of the possible reasons for this predicament is the shortsightedness of government in the restructuring of teacher training colleges. One of the beneficial aspects in the apartheid era was the teacher training colleges that produced teachers for the primary and secondary sector (Ramdass, 2007). The challenge is to improve the quality of education in all schools. This is a daunting task. The schools are deprived of resources, facilities and qualified teachers. It is extremely unimaginable to have efficiency, effectiveness and quality in education under these circumstances. In the last budget speech by Minister Trevor Manuel, education took a priority with an allocation of R 105 billion.

Hopefully, the education sector would improve in the next few years (Pandor, 2007).

The Impact of Crime in Education

There is a total lack of discipline in schools. It has deteriorated to such an extent that students severely injure teachers and fellow colleagues to an extent that the crime " kills them" (Berger, 2003). The well-being of young people in South Africa is threatened through crime and violence in schools. A study on security in Durban schools found that " schools are places where drugs, thugs, and weapons move as freely through the gates as the pupils" (van der Berg and Burger, 2003). Despite national efforts to restore a culture of learning and teaching, incidents of theft, vandalism, burglary, rape and even murder are reported on school grounds (Beger, 2003). Teaching and learning should actually start at home, with disciplined upbringing which could be developed in future years. The school environment is " contaminated" through crime and violence which jeopardizes the educational process.

The element of fear within an educational environment creates long-standing physical, emotional and psychological implications for both teachers and pupils including: distress, reduced self-esteem, risk of depression and suicide, reduced school attendance, impaired concentration, fear and a diminished ability to learn (Schultz and Mwabu, 1998). Democracy and economic stability is threatened by crime and violence which inadvertently impacts on the peace of the country. With racism " peering its head" from time to time, the social fabric of communities and the nation as a whole is

thwarted by crime and violence which endangers the health of both children and adults. It disrupts the provision of basic services and destroys respect for human rights. Crime and violence can also deepen gender and social inequalities and reduce the overall quality of life (Simkins, 2001). The school plays a central role in the socialization of a child and it is critical that schools offer a safe environment in which learning and growth can take place.

The transformation of education in South Africa has created multiple challenges for both teachers and pupils. Democracy has brought about dramatic changes in the resources available for schools and the way in which they are governed. In addition, schools have had to adapt to racial integration, reduction of staff and a new outcomes-based cubiculum. Over the past five years government and non-governmental organizations have initiated a number of pilot projects throughout the country in an attempt to promote safer school environments. Security has been upgraded in many schools and life-skill programs, psychological empowerment and peer mediation efforts are now common (Naidoo, 2006). According to the February Community Survey 2007 conducted by Statistics SA in all provinces, covering 246 618 households and numbering 949 105 persons, progress was noted with regard to attendance in the past 10 years.

The percentage of people aged 5-24 years attending school has increased (from 63% in 1996 to 73. 6% in 2007), particularly for those aged 5-17 years. Provincial differences in school attendance are minimal, with percentages having increased all provinces between 1996 and 2007.

Both males and females have equally benefited.

However, disparities exist on a racial basis. Attendance at an educational institution among persons aged 5-24 years in 2007 was 68% among Asians/Indians, 74. 7% among blacks/Africans, 64. 4% among coloreds and 73. 1% among whites. In 1996 the percentages were 70. 1%, 70. 7%, 64% and 70. 6%, respectively.

The percentage of persons aged 20 and above with no schooling has decreased substantially from 19. 1% in 1996 to 10. 3% in 2007.

The percentage of persons aged 20 and above with some secondary education has increased from 33. 6% in 1996 to 40. 1% in 2007, while the percentage with a higher education has increased from 7. 1 % to 9. 1%. Based on the findings from international comparative research the SA Institute of Race Relations claims that "' South African schools are among the worst in Africa. " Among Southern and East African countries that participated in a study on schooling quality, South Africa scored below average on reading and mathematics proficiency for pupils in Grade 6. Only one in five Grade 6 pupils in SA had attained the desired level of reading mastery. This was despite SA having a higher per capita gross domestic product, a higher human development index rating, and higher spending per primary school pupil than many of the countries that recorded better scores.

Conclusion

In this essay I have teased out the ' justice as fairness' in order to ascertain its resonance with Ubuntu as an indigenous African notion of fair communal

justice. Furthermore, I evaluated the issues in the South African landscape such as poverty, crime, equal education and HIV/ADIS. In this issues the government need to take responsibilities and implement a well- structured campaigns to solve the issues. In addition teachers must take party in this campaigns. Lastly, I used the ideas of Nussbaum and Kumashiro to address the issues on the South African education landscape to promote justice (as fairness and Ubuntu) and equal education opportunities.