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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH43.v1.9>

ISSN 0258-2422 (Print)
ISSN 2415-0509 (Online)

Journal for Contemporary
History
2018 43(1):178-195
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HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND: A FREIREAN APPROACH

Abstract

Paulo Freire's widely respected work on pedagogies of the oppressed (1996) and hope (1992) made him known across the world. He is known to have, among many of his unravelling thoughts, objected to oppression and illuminated hope and freedom for the oppressed. In addition, Freire maintained that the liberation of the oppressed and, by extension, the liberation of the oppressor can emanate only from the oppressed. Thus, the ball in this regard may inadvertently be seen to be in the court of the oppressed. The South African higher education system in particular, as well as the education system in general, have continuously presented, contrary to the oppressors' intentions, lecture rooms as sites or spaces where oppressive tendencies were deliberated and challenged. Contributing to the interrogation of, or on, oppression was an underlying quest for liberation, grounded on the utility of higher education as a vehicle for liberation. Therefore, higher education could not be divorced from the liberation struggle. In this article, the author traverses the history of the liberation struggle through the eyes of those who cared to write about it, as well as those who walked and toiled the grounds and lecture rooms of the then University of the North (Qwaqwa Branch), and the three former teacher training colleges in the former Qwaqwa homeland. It is argued that, while the reason for the existence of the former was to build capacity among the civil servants in the homeland and the provision of teaching qualifications for the latter (colleges), those higher education institutions made far-reaching and indelible contributions in respect of dealing with oppression and advancing the liberation struggle during the apartheid era and beyond.

Keywords: Liberation struggle; education for empowerment; higher education; oppression; freedom; hope.

Slutelwoorde: Vryheidstryd; onderwys vir bemagtiging; hoër onderwys; verdrukking; vryheid; hoop.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that education was used as a means of oppression or subjugation, with a view to create a sense of inferiority among the Africans living in South Africa (including the former Qwaqwa Homeland), while preparing

them for menial jobs (RSA 1953), is well documented (Hartshorne 1992; Kallaway 1984; 2002). It is, therefore, not surprising that education was seen by the oppressed majority as a means of liberation ([re]sources), and as both a conduit and leverage for circumventing or misdirecting the oppressive intentions. While it was expected that the school curriculum content would be structured and presented in a manner that perpetuates oppressive and often “malicious” intent, the resistance movements in schools mounted an attack, even though such efforts may have been hamstrung by the rigid and alien curriculum content. The rigidity and foreign curriculum content, with a colonial repertoire, was more effectively challenged at higher education institutions. These students formed the majority of students exposed to legislation, such as the Bantu Education Act, 1953 (Act 47 of 1953) and the Group Areas Act, 1950 (Act 41 of 1950). Some activists, being progressive and conscious lecturers, included seemingly innocuous and laudable, but emancipatory and liberating content, aimed at tapping into all forms of capital and, in doing so, challenged the oppressive tendencies.

Egerö (1991) argues that the homelands transformed from being dumping grounds to battlefields, suggesting that the unintended consequence of segregated development was the liberation struggle. The notorious Bantu Education Act drew its misguided logic from the notorious Verwoerdian oppressive ideology which argued that, “[e]ducation must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life” (Mbeki s.a.:29). “What was the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics which it could not use in life?” (ANC 2012). As regards rolling out the Act, McGregor (s.a.) branded it the “chaotic” Bantu Education Act. We can conclude that the most fertile grounds for perpetrating and perpetuating the struggle for liberation would have been seen to be more feasible at the one university campus of the then University of the North (Qwaqwa Branch) (affectionately known as *UNIQWA (The free dictionary s.a.)*).

“Liberation”, a word defined as, “setting free or releasing” (*The free dictionary s.a.*), is said to have graced humanity in the 15th century and had its original focus not necessarily on politics. Some thoughts around liberation can be traced to slavery. For example, Sweet (s.a.) states that in America, “slaves ‘naturally’ resisted their enslavement because slavery was fundamentally ‘unnatural’”. Douglass (1855) further indicates that, as was the case with slavery, the struggle for liberation intensified under colonial rule. In both slavery and oppression, the common denominator was an attempt to claim some measure of freedom against an institution that defined people fundamentally as property (Sweet s.a.). It later became associated with politics during the colonial era. Douglass (1855) believes that learning to read and write was a liberating exercise. In South Africa, early forms of resistance and desire for liberation may be traced to the Freedom Charter (1955) (Vadi 1955), which became the common programme enshrining the hopes and aspirations of all the progressive people of South Africa.

Liberation is further explained as, “seeking equal status or just treatment for or on behalf of any group that is discriminated against or the gaining of equal rights or full social or economic opportunities for a particular group” (*The free dictionary s.a.*). From the definitions provided above, it can be concluded that liberation may, in its complex nature, be anticipatory, aspirational, imaginary and futuristic. Liberation appears as an expression indicative of longing for a different future to the one that a particular group is subjected to. Concomitantly, there exists a realisation among the group engaged in a liberation struggle that the rights, privileges and status aspired to by the group are enjoyed by other groups.

The liberation struggle, aimed at freeing the majority in South Africa, may be interrogated at least at two levels: the oppressed South Africans residing outside the former homelands or Bantustans at one level, and those residing within the former homelands at another level. Therefore, it can be concluded that oppression was meted out in various forms in various contexts. The South African Students’ Congress (SASCO) (s.a.:2),¹ which was established in 1991, captured the historical context pertinent to the liberation as follows, “The process of transforming the education system is not independent of the broader struggles of our people-struggles of creating the emergence of a classless society from the total elimination or exploitation of man by another group. Any attempt to engage the process without an attempt to make an analysis of the visible DNA inherited from the system of apartheid capitalism is a mere shadow boxing and a sure recipe for disaster.”

This analogy presupposes that liberation efforts had to be amorphous and multipronged. In short, the liberation struggle was guided by political, socio-economic, cultural and educational interests. This article addresses higher education and the liberation struggle in the former Qwaqwa Homeland. In the next section, a brief history of the former Qwaqwa Homeland will be given.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND

In line with the ideology of separate development, the now defunct National Party Government established self-governing territories in South Africa (Khunou 2009:81-82). The Bantu Homeland Citizenship Act (Act 26 of 1970) was meant to give credence to “self-determination” by inadvertently and unceremoniously, at least in the eyes of the African majority, denaturalising Africans and allocating various African polities as the citizens of their tribal homelands. This Act was repealed in 1994 and replaced by the Interim Constitution of South Africa 1993 (Act 200 of 1993), which reversed citizenship from that of being a Qwaqwa citizen to that of being a South African citizen, which later became the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) and the Black States

1 COSAS is a student organisation associated with the African National Congress (ANC). See, <docplayer.net/37968523-Education-for-total-liberation.html>.

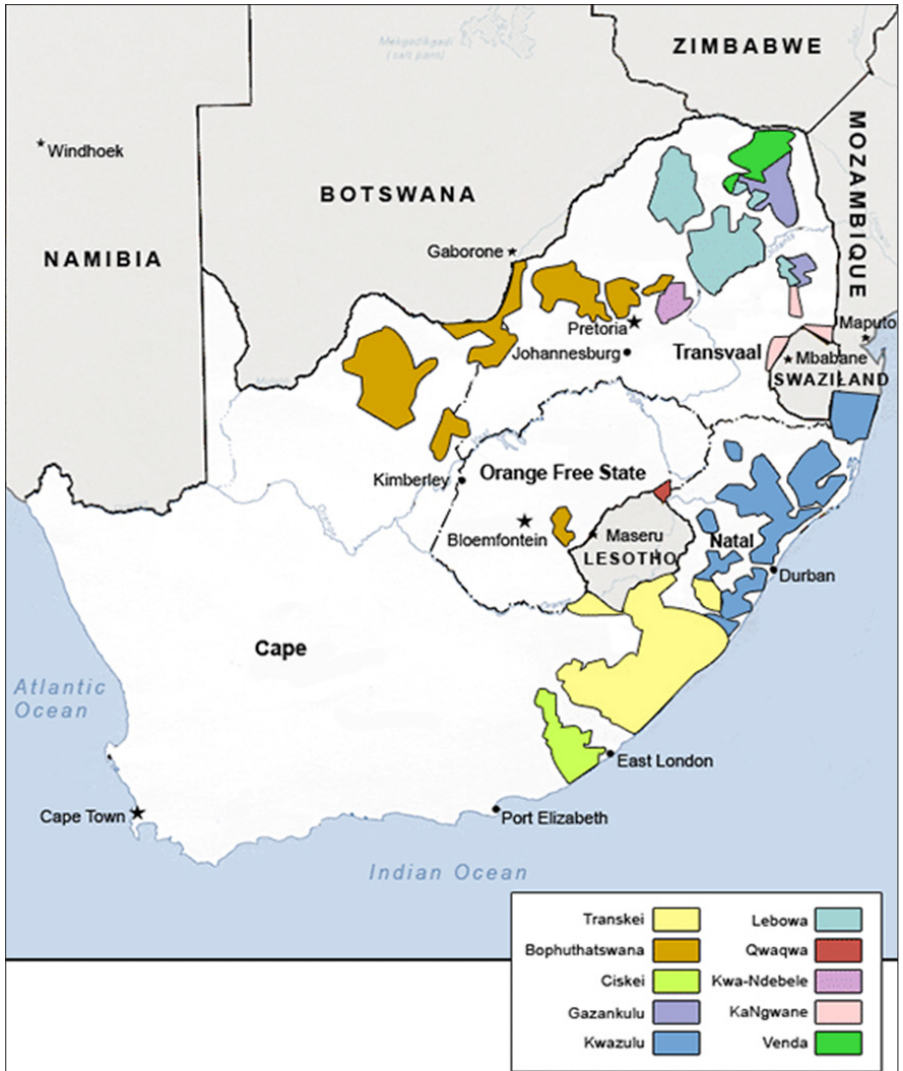
Constitution Act, 1974 (Act 21 of 1974)². This applied to all the citizenry of the Bantustans.

Geographically, Qwaqwa is found in the central part of South Africa (see Image 1). It encompasses a very small region of 655 square kilometres in the east of the former South African Free State Province, bordering Lesotho and KwaZulu-Natal. Its capital city was Phuthaditjhaba. It was the designated homeland of more than 180 000 Basotho people. The frequent snow on the Drakensberg Mountain peaks led the San to call the region “Qwaqwa”, meaning whiter than white (Radebe and Crowther 2000). Radebe and Crowther (2000) further outline the etymology of the name Qwaqwa. In Afrikaans, it was known as *Witsieshoek*, after the name of a farm. Two African polities lived in the region – the Bakoena and the Batlokoa. In 1969 they were united and the area was named “KwaKwa”. The name was later changed to “Qwaqwa” to avoid confusion with these people. On 1 November 1974, Qwaqwa was granted self-government with Dr Tshiame Kenneth Mopeli as the Chief Minister³. Unlike the homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, which acquired independence from the apartheid South Africa (Egerö 1991:9), Qwaqwa unwaveringly rejected independence (Egerö 1991:10; Khunou, 2011:245). We may conclude that the stance against independence was one of resistance or disobedience.

2 It was renamed several times during 1971, becoming the *Black States Constitution Act*; then the *National States Constitution Act*, and finally the *Self-governing Territories Constitution Act*.

3 Dr TK Mopeli was the Chief Minister of the Qwaqwa Homeland since it became a self-governing territory in 1974 until the first democratic elections in 1994.

Image 1: Map of South Africa's former Bantustans / homelands



Source: 1984 MATRIX, Michigan State University.

Mopeli served as Chief Minister throughout Qwaqwa's existence. After the first democratic elections held on 27 April 1994, Qwaqwa became part of the Free State Province, with Phuthaditjhaba as the seat of the Maluti a Phofung Local Government. The municipality also comprises the towns of Harrismith and Kestell. The municipality is said to have a combined population of 385 413, of which about 80% lives in the former Qwaqwa. The population may be divided as follows: black African 98,09%, white 1,68%, coloured 0,09% and Asian and/or Indian 0,13%.

Education was seen as a priority by the then government of the Qwaqwa Homeland, as a number of schools mushroomed in the villages. The newspaper, *The Weekly* (2014), states that there are more than 300 schools in this area. This is indicative of the realisation of education as a vehicle in the struggle for liberation. The assertion that access to education needs to be tackled seems to be an idea the Qwaqwa Homeland government realised during the dark days of oppression, and which the democratic dispensation perfected. In the next section, a brief history of education in the former Qwaqwa Homeland is discussed.

3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND

Education during the apartheid era could not escape the intentions of the Bantu Education Act of 1953.⁴ In the then segregated society, which created further fragmentation of the South African nation, Bantu education served the interest of white supremacy and, resultantly, denied the African majority access to the same educational facilities, opportunities and resources provided for white South Africans. It is further indicated that Bantu education denigrated the black people's history, culture and identity through the promotion of myths, racial stereotypes and indoctrination in its curricula, syllabi and prescribed textbooks (Michigan State University s.a.). While there was some physical access to education, it was clear that epistemological access was not necessarily an intention to be striven for (Hlalele 2010:98).

In his eulogy to the late Mopeli, the premier of the Free State Province, Ace Magashule, praised him for his, "unwavering commitment to education of the children and adults in Qwaqwa" and mentioned that, "his legacy will live on as he had invested heavily in education" (*The Weekly* 2014). Furthermore, the premier hails Qwaqwa as the "hub of education" through the commitment that no child in Qwaqwa should walk to school for a distance of more than five kilometres, due to Mopeli's efforts (Lebesa 2014). In a quest to improve the qualifications of the civil servants, Mopeli, as a visionary leader in his own right, commissioned a

4 The *Bantu Education Act* was meant for the school system/education, but had implications for higher education.

fact-finding mission to the United Kingdom (UK) with a view to understand how polytechnics operate (UFS 2007).

The former Qwaqwa Homeland was also a major educational centre in the old apartheid days, where at least 80% of the schools in the present Free State Province had teachers that were educated in the former homeland. It had a fully functional university, but its teachers' colleges had been turned into Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, now Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges. The university was called, "the University of the North, Qwaqwa Branch", (affectionately known as "Turfloop"), which opened its doors in 1982 and was based at Lere-la-Tshepe in the Tseki Village. The campus occupied new premises on the Kestell Road a few years later in 1988.⁵ Owing to the mergers and incorporations of universities in South Africa (Ministry of Education 2003), the then branch was incorporated with the University of the Free State (UFS) in 2003 and renamed the "UFS Qwaqwa Campus". In reflection, the prevalence of unequal power relations is immediately sensed. The observation could be made that the merged universities and campuses had more or less equal powers and could therefore negotiate and engage the process from a stronger position. In the case of the Qwaqwa Branch, negotiations were, arguably, from a compromised position.

4. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Drawing from the title, as well as the thrust of the article, the debates are underpinned by Paulo Freire's much-revered work on the pedagogy of the oppressed, of hope and of freedom.

4.1 Pedagogy of the oppressed

Russel Botman (2010:1), in assessing the place and role of the university in society, drew on Freire's, "initial contributions [that] came at a time in Brazil when a lot was being done for the elite and very little for the poor people, especially in rural areas. He [Freire] started thinking that if education could be provided, they could make progress in life." It may be gleaned from the pedagogy of the oppressed that reality is not necessarily absolute in meaning; there is very little likelihood of a possible situation where there would be, "total or absolute" oppression, and where nobody has the slightest ambition to break the shackles of oppression. In Freire's (1996) words, "In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation they must perceive the reality of oppression

5 The author of this article registered for a BA.Ed.-degree at the Qwaqwa Branch of the University of the North (now UFS, Qwaqwa Campus). Apart from this degree, he completed four post-graduate degrees, including a doctorate, at the Bloemfontein Campus of the UFS and served in various positions at the Qwaqwa Campus during his 13 year tenure.

not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform” (Botman 2010:5).

We may deduce from the foregoing that the perception above is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become motivating for the oppressed to develop the courage to struggle for their liberation. Some argue that once the motivation for liberation has been ignited and gains momentum, it usually becomes more and more relentless, and is unstoppable.

The fear of freedom, assisted by acceptance, conformity and obedience to oppression and the oppressor, may have further entrenched subjugation for the helpless and hopeless majority. In this situation, where the oppressed experience stifled humanity, they are inhibited from, “waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires. Moreover, their struggle for freedom threatens not only the oppressor, but also their own oppressed comrades who are fearful of still greater repression” (Freire 1996:4). The flipside of the discussion in this article is hinged on hope.

4.2 Pedagogy of hope

In line with the basic argument of this article, the work of the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, in his book, *The pedagogy of hope*, provides a flipside of the theoretical underpinning of the article. Freire explains hope and struggle (analogous to comedy and tragedy) as necessary concomitant forces toward an education that is strong in social justice (Hughes 2011:106), where the adequately educated can transcend social oppression, hopefully without reproducing it. In arguing that hope remains a fundamental human need, Freire (1996) cautions us against separating it from action. Freire tied all of this – hope and action, or hope and struggle – specifically with education. He represents the interwoven nature of hope and struggle as follows, “The idea that hope alone will transform the world [...] is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. [T]he attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion [...] without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope [...] of the serious progressive educator, through a serious, correct, political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be.”

In addition, Webb (2010:327) stresses the undeniable and, maybe indispensable, facet of the liberation struggle as, “the need for a kind of education in hope”, because he claims it was human hope that rendered education (liberation) possible. In short, the pedagogy of hope is undeniably linked to the utopian ideals and urge of people to break away from their current dystopia. It further seeks to embrace and execute humanising endeavours and, in my view, taps into the aspirational and imaginary attributes of humanity.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT IN THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND

It may not be easy to refute the fact that the challenge faced by institutions of higher education is to empower the communities they serve with relevant skills and knowledge, as well as being, through reflexivity, able to respond to their needs. Puukka and co-authors (2012:4) affirm this notion by stating that higher education institutions, “can play a key role in human capital development”. Human capacity development leads to desirable peoples’ empowerment. This may be attained through, among others, developing and providing cutting-edge programmes, as well as supplying graduates with the requisite knowledge and skills. The colleges of education and the university campus in the former Qwaqwa Homeland over the years produced teachers for general subjects and lagged behind in producing scientists, engineers and mathematicians. As a legacy of Verwoerd’s vision for the education of the African child, the production of teachers in mathematics and the sciences remains a challenge. The lowered productivity in the production of these teachers leads to a vicious circle where the supply of learners to take on gateway courses in higher education institutions is a contributory factor to the disempowerment of the community and, by extension, of the country, since Africans are in the majority.

The newly formed TVET College in the area also struggles to meet the desirable intermediate skills production expectations. In a nutshell, Puukka and co-authors (2012:17) state that, “the challenge in higher education and training in the Free State and by implication Qwaqwa, are inextricably linked to the underperforming school system which features high dropout rates and low learning outcomes [accordingly], many youth leave school without adequate skills to enter the labour market or higher education.” It may be argued that the failure to deliver the desired skills is linked to both internal and external factors. The absence of industries in the area is but one major limiting factor that acts as an impediment to empowerment. The limited scope of the programmes and the scarcely identifiable market, as well as a lack of industries in an area where the largest employer remains the government, stifles efforts at empowering the surrounding community. Low-income populations remain disempowered (OECD 2012). In such a situation, high unemployment levels prevail.

6. PEOPLE’S EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE’S POWER IN THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND

The broader liberation struggle adopted the “People’s Education for People’s Power” to advance transformation in the 1980s (Phew s.a.). People’s Education resonated with the alternative forms of struggle and was even taught as part of the initial teacher education degrees at UNIQWA. Broadly, it was a philosophy that

sensitises the students to the alternative and complementary means of the armed struggle and, eventually, liberation. The latter was associated with a different kind of power. It aimed at empowering the people by challenging their minds and consciousness. It was envisaged that, ultimately, the students and, tacitly, the community will be empowered to adopt and act out in a manner commensurate with resistance where such action was desirable. The attainment of this was viewed in a positive light, suggesting that liberation will also be attained. The liberation education abhorred colonial education. "People's Education" was characterised by slogans such as "education for liberation", which resonated well with the role of education in the liberation struggle. Impatience for some who desired immediate gratification and expected liberation to be realised soon, crafted the slogan, "liberation now, education later". This thought is sometimes associated with the arbitrary demands for the removal of certain administrators and lecturers at the university and colleges as they were viewed as stumbling blocks towards liberation. Such demands also manifested themselves in the boycotts, strikes and vandalism of buildings and property, such as cars at these institutions.

In some instances, the perception of the unilaterally imposed Afrikaans, which was a language associated with the oppressor and oppression, forced some lecturers, who did their studies in that language, to teach at an institution where English was the language of learning and teaching. As a result, it was challenging, as the students often, through their Student Representative Councils (SRCs), raised this as a demand for the removal of those lecturers. In teasing this tendency out, at least three points are noted. Firstly, a feeling of apprehension associated with Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor may lead to resistance. Secondly, one's race may not matter, as long as one could empower the masses through knowledge – that person was somehow welcomed or tolerated, and this may have meant that he or she tacitly contributed to the liberation struggle. Thirdly, there seems to have existed an imaginary community over and above the oppressed majority. This means that there were undeclared, but somewhat trusted allies in the liberation struggle.

"People's Education for People's Power" was conceptualised as a form of resistance to apartheid education. The latter was seen as "education for domination" (Popular Education South Africa *s.a.*) and was fostered by the government which many in the liberation movement saw as, "a quasi-colonial government" (Alexander 1990:104). The former had a scope broader than the educational reform or transformation, as it set its sight on preparing for full participation in a democratic society (Kruss 1988) and was further characterised by some sense of ownership of the future. Utterances such as, "the future is ours, the future is in our hands" resonated with a sense of what can be called a "hope-full future". A sense of hope of "whatever kind"⁶ was what was realised and may be associated with the dawn of democracy in South Africa. What is of

6 See Webb (2010).

essence to note, was that the struggle for liberation in education could not be exonerated from the broader yearning for total liberation.

7. HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN THE FORMER QWAQWA HOMELAND

The call for the total liberation of education on the African continent can be traced back to the convictions of African independence leaders,⁷ because it has been an enduring call on the continent. Worth mentioning here is the renowned leader Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (1975:3)⁸ and Kwame Nkrumah,⁹ who called for a review of postcolonial education on the entire continent. In Zimbabwe, Chimurenga¹⁰ was instrumental in the fight for liberation. From the aforementioned struggles it may be concluded that the struggles were arguably diversified, with multipronged resistance to the provision of education, even though such efforts continued to be part of the broader struggle for overall emancipation. It should be borne in mind that, even though the liberation struggle pertinent to the former Qwaqwa is traversed in this article, it is not possible to completely divorce it from the broader South African struggle for equal education. Moloï (2012; 2015) adds that there were pockets of resistance in other parts of the broader South Africa. These areas included township uprisings in Soweto, Zamdela, Maokeng, Bohlakong and other places throughout the Republic. Neville Alexander (1990:44, 52)¹¹ summarises the struggle as follows, "Equal education is a fiction in an unequal society: schooling – any brand of schooling – will always be unacceptable to the majority if it occurs within an economic, social and political framework that is unacceptable to the majority".

From time to time, schools and universities would voice and manifest their anger through boycotts, strikes and to what was then known as underground resistance practices, passive resistance and cultural boycotts. In its quest for liberation and to contribute to redressing in line with national trends, UNIQWA sought to tackle the imbalances spawned by apartheid through:

7 See Ramoupi (2012).

8 Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was the founding President of Tanzania (previously called Tanganyika). He was president from 1960 until his retirement in 1985.

9 Kwame Nkrumah achieved the political independence of Ghana.

10 The first Chimurenga is now celebrated in Zimbabwe as the First War of Independence. It is also known in the English-speaking world as the "Second Matabele War". This conflict refers to the 1896-1897 Ndebele-Shona revolt against the British South Africa Company's administration of the territory.

11 Neville Edward Alexander (22 October 1936-27 August 2012) was a proponent of a multilingual South Africa and a former revolutionary who spent ten years on Robben Island as a fellow prisoner of the first democratically elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

- making determined efforts to equalise access to all the population groups to established posts;
- preventing all forms of discrimination based on race, gender, colour and religion; and
- establishing and maintaining the active involvement of all the stakeholders in collective decision-making processes in order to ensure a sense of relevance, partnership and ownership (Moffett 2008:58).

The endeavours mentioned above undoubtedly point to the fact that the institution was aware of and recognised the inevitable role they have to play pursuant and to the liberation struggle. In addition, it is also noted that the institution, while based in the former Qwaqwa Homeland, was, firstly, acutely aware of what was happening in the broader South Africa. Secondly, the institution was aware that they have a role to play and, lastly, had the courage to do so. In addition, Dr Mopeli (2007:7) summed up UNIQWA's contribution at the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the existence of UNIQWA as follows, "UNIQWA contributed immeasurably to the development of the Qwaqwa Civil Service. There was a time when we as a government were solely dependent on the University of Zululand's Institute of Public Service and Vocational Training for the further training of our personnel. With the advent of UNIQWA, our public servants were afforded an opportunity to further their studies. UNIQWA contributed significantly to the training of our public servants especially in the administrative and financial disciplines, both the disciplines which were indispensable for the smooth running of any public service. The new Free State Provincial Government was in a fortunate position to have inherited a well-trained and highly motivated personnel corps from the erstwhile Qwaqwa Government."

A few lessons may be drawn from the extract above. Over and above the immense contribution, as alluded to by Dr Mopeli, a great deal of confidence and pride is sensed. Furthermore, it appears the skills benefited the Free State Provincial Government as well. So, it may not be incorrect to say UNIQWA was in a position to unleash skills that found relevance in the apartheid aftermath. It would be correct to label these as skills for the future. One noticeable lesson pertains to border-crossing tendencies. As the homelands were conceptualised along ethnic lines with the intention of creating further walls between ethnic groups, it is noted that Dr Mopeli's endeavours were crossing over to collaborate with the Zulu nation through the University of Zululand.

Sadly, Ramoupi (2012:1) laments the fact that education in South Africa has not changed meaningfully from its colonial and apartheid mind sets that are Eurocentric as a consequence of European colonisation. On the contrary, the higher education transformation agenda, operationalised through mergers and incorporations, was meant to attain the utopian ideal espoused in the Freedom Charter and, "open the doors of learning and culture" (Mathebula 2013:1).

However, the Qwaqwa Campus and community were treated with mixed feelings. It is observed that the higher education in Qwaqwa endured two knocks or shocks since the dawn of democracy. In respect of the first one, the community was looking forward to the provision of better institutions, educational programmes and better opportunities. One of the three teacher education colleges was closed down, while the others were rationalised to become FET (now TVET) campuses. Teacher education lecturers were, lamentably, inadequately reskilled to be able to provide vocational education and training qualification. For those lecturers, acclimatisation seemed to be a tall order. Some new programmes could not draw enough students and some campuses – those located in the deep rural villages, such as Tseseng and Tseki – were not as attractive as those in Phuthaditjhaba, Bethlehem and Harrismith. It may therefore be expected that the so-called “promised land” remained elusive. It may further be expected that some felt that the liberation struggle was in vain and hopelessness continued unabated. Feelings of oppression, in a different form, continued to preoccupy their minds.

Regarding the second shock for the community, the Qwaqwa Campus of the UFS experienced scaling down in respect of programmes and courses after its incorporation. Dr Mopeli’s (2007:6-7) intervention to caution the university not to allow the oversupply of teachers who majored in Sesotho, Biblical Studies and Education, again showed his commitment to producing the relevant skills. The power dynamics (resembling oppressive overtones) at play resulted in the campus being vulnerable, as there were talks of closing it down and converting it into a FET college. Therefore, an opportunity that was supposed to create hope at the time, was missed. What provided a glimmer of hope were assurances that teacher education would remain. This was reaffirmed by the introduction of the integrated four-year Bachelor of Education degree in 2007. Gradually, more and more programmes were reintroduced and new physical amenities mushroomed. In short, the shot at liberation was renewed and the spark of hope was reignited. Oppressive tendencies may either have migrated elsewhere, or taken a form that is not yet clearly defined.

While the transformation of higher education in South Africa has undoubtedly reached certain milestones, calls for the total liberation continue unabated. SASCO’s (2016:4) recent submission to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on 30 June 2016 to finance studies in higher education stated, “We must be that generation that dismantled colonial and apartheid philosophy, institutional cultures, and symbols, replaced them with our liberation and democratic order, the generation that promotes unity, social cohesion and diversity. We must be that generation that advanced economic freedom in our life time.” The expression from SASCO reminds us of the fact that students, or the youth, are still imbued with the agency that buoyed the 1976 student uprisings. Therefore, we may argue that they own a view that the struggle for liberation

continues unabated and, as such, is in their hands. It is important to note that SASCO (including other student formations) has, over the years, organised and led student struggles at the former UNIQWA, and continues to do so at the current Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State.

8. CONCLUSION

This article discussed the role played by higher education in the liberation struggle in the former Qwaqwa Homeland. A few insights came to light. The then central government aimed at using the homeland as a vehicle to further oppression. Through this, there was a conscious attempt to entrench a sense of inferiority among the homeland leaders and residents. Refusing to approve an institution of education and seeking to diversify educational provision, as in the case of a polytechnic, on the grounds that it is not found anywhere else in South Africa, sends out a few messages: Firstly, the homeland leader may not be allowed to present a superior idea, as his place is an inferior one. Secondly, the apartheid government was afraid that if this would be allowed, there may be many more situations which may not be in tandem with their expectations of “being in control” of the activities in the homelands. Thirdly, anything that has to do with the outside world may lead to the intensification of the liberation struggle, as these cross-border activities were likely to garner sympathy and support.

Comparatively speaking, the Qwaqwa Homeland was regarded as a leader in the provision of education. It may be prudent to point out that, through hundreds of schools, three colleges of education and a university campus, many reaped the fruits thereof and constituted a force with which to reckon in their own communities.

The relentless struggle for liberation was not unique to the Qwaqwa Homeland. Elsewhere in the broader South African Republic, the struggle continued. In this regard, the article suggested that the liberation struggle was pervasive. It manifested across spheres, generations, institutions and other spaces where engagement was possible. Therefore, from the peasant in Brazil to the rural village resident in the former homeland, oppression and the desire for liberation cannot be ignored. Hope and the resultant buoyancy to imagine a better or different future may be deemed as aspirational. The oppressed long for this future and hope, “keeps them going”.

While the homeland system was regrettable, the residents and leaders seem to have made the best they can under the circumstances of the apartheid legislation. It is therefore concluded that the toils of the former Qwaqwa Homeland leader, his government, as well as the residents inside and outside of the homeland, left an indelible mark in the liberation struggle, since they also contributed to that struggle for freedom, which has not yet been acknowledged. This article is an attempt to give recognition to the people of Qwaqwa and it is suggested that this legacy should be further probed, researched and documented.

Furthermore, the legacy of the former colleges of education also remains scantily documented. Lastly, investigating and documenting the liberation struggle, as expedited by student formations, constitute a lead worth pursuing.

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