**“IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD ABOUT OUR SCHOOLING SYSTEM”**

It is about time that we know the real truth about the South African schooling system. All this bad publicity and misinformation is tiring and simply disloyal.

The dominant discourse today is neo-liberalism whilst the progressive and radical voice is reduced. The ongoing struggle between the dominant worldview and that of the radical left is simple to be heard and an opportunity to tell the real truth. Our lives are consumed by what, when and how neo-liberalism views the economy, the media, politics and education.

Neo-liberalism portrays the economy in the media with self invested interests. This collaboration tells us to be optimistic and hopeful in the face of a global economic adversity. Economics is driven by public consumption, transactions and expenditure and is not an exact science. It is more than just the mathematics of numbers and percentages. The economy to survive recognised the value of social and psychological variables. And that is why the dominant worldview always presents a positive outlook of the economy whilst the poor suffers severely under the strain of capitalist mismanagement and corruption.

On the flipside the media and neo-liberalism paints a very different picture about education and our domestic politics. The stories they tell are that of endemic corruption, the failure of education and our schooling system, teachers that cannot teach and does not have the knowledge to teach mathematics, literacy and science. This collaboration also tells us that the progressive teacher union is a part of the problem instead of the solution. We are told to “kneel before” and follow suit the “high standards” set by the values and principles of conservative/liberal institutions of learning and teaching.

Connecting all the dots of collaborative criticism and critique since 1994 it all add up to the message ***that black people simply cannot teach or govern.*** That is the truth as told by the dominant worldview.

The media in South Africa has a huge responsibility. This article is not about where that duty of the media begins or ends. Suffice to say that it must be fair and responsible. We need in the media “a breath of fresh air” and a media that “focus on the positive side of news and aim for constructive criticism of our leaders” and the elected government’s social policies.

There is a legal concept “show me your hands”. We do not often clearly see the hands and real truth of the collaboration of the dominant worldview. It is packaged as common sense and the acceptable standards of practice and conduct...the way things have always been done. It is this dominant worldview that is now contested.

Neil Turok recently (2012) issued his book “From Quantum to Cosmos – The Universe Within” and added his voice to what the central purpose of education is;

*“our modes of education at school and university seem terribly outmoded. Young people don’t need to memorize known facts any more – they are all readily accessible on the internet. The skills they need most are to think for themselves, to choose what to learn, to develop ideas and share them with others. How to see the big picture, how to find just what they need in an ocean of knowledge, how to collaborate and how to dig deep in an entirely new direction” p211.*

I concur with Neil that we need to train the brain of our young people in new ways but the assumption that we all have readily, direct and immediate access to the internet and computers are risky. My observation is that teachers in poor communities have an additional responsible to repair the “severed link between the heart and the mind” of learners. A responsibility referred to as pastoral duty. Severing of this link happens very early in childhood and is a necessary condition for a survival defence mechanism.

The media regularly reports on stories and especially research on South African education and schooling. These reports have been damaging to the public, parents, teachers, politicians and all those who care about learners, teachers and our schools. Public trust and confidence has consistently been eroded. Most of these reports have been damning sometimes controversial, filled with misinformation and disinformation and outright treason; the central theme being that our system of schooling is failing, government is not doing enough, standards are low and the list can go on.

Let me repeat what is at the heart of this collaboration of the neo-liberal worldview. It is a conspiracy that black people cannot govern and they cannot be trusted to govern. Black teachers are lazy, cannot teach and cannot manage schools.

This article is the first in a series of five articles on the real truth about South African schooling which will include topics such as “reporting on research in education”, “learners, teachers and schools”, “arriving at South African standards” and in the words of Lenin, “what needs to be done”. [Published in The New Age]