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**Cosatu's Policy on Worker Education, 1985-1992:  
Changes and Continuities**



by  
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of the  
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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

Signed by candidate

Date

27/02/2003

University of Cape Town

## **Abstract**

The South African literature on worker education notes developments in Cosatu's approach to education from the 1980's to the 1990's. I critically explore the changes and continuities evident in Cosatu's policy on worker education from 1985 to 1992.

I examined the national documentation produced by Cosatu during these years and conducted selected interviews with 11 people in the Western Cape who were active in Cosatu during this period. I qualitatively categorise and analyse the information on Cosatu's policy. Secondary data, together with the interviews provide both illustrative and contextual information on the policy, practice and politics of Cosatu at that time.

The approach to worker education contained in the policy from 1985 to 1988 can be distinguished from that of the 1989-1992 period. Cosatu's policy on worker education in the 1985-1988 period contained a critique of capitalist education, an argument that education should contribute to socialist transformation, and the assertion of an 'alternative' education founded on progressive principles.

In the 1989-1992 period some of the progressive principles evident in the 1985-1988 policy on worker education were still asserted. However there were stark changes from the earlier policy. The 1989-1992 policy asserted that education should assist with reconstructing the economy and developing individual careers. Cosatu was no longer promoting an alternative to the existing capitalist education, but was pushing for workers to have greater access to this system.

I characterise the dominant approach to worker education of the 1985-1988 period as 'radical' or 'transformatory', whereas the 1989-1992 period increasingly manifested elements of a 'service' and 'instrumental' approach, which I characterise as 'reformist'.

*This thesis is dedicated to the Drama Group of the South African Domestic Workers Union, that educated many people, including me.*

University of Cape Town

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## **Description and acknowledgements of pictures**

*Cover picture:* Dismissed hotel workers celebrating (Dismissed Workers Collective, 1989).

*Picture preceding Chapter 1:* Same as cover picture

*Picture preceding Chapter 2:* Workers reading in a group (Dismissed Workers Collective, 1989).

*Picture preceding Chapter 3:* Workers toyi-toying<sup>1</sup> at an anti-LRA rally (Dismissed Workers Collective, 1989).

*Picture preceding Chapter 4:* Nono Silimela performing in a SADWU play at a Western Cape Cosatu meeting. To her right is Regional Secretary, Nick Henwood. Both are interviewees in my research (Ekitchini Collective, nd).

*Picture preceding Chapter 5:* Workers toyi-toying at Cosatu's 1987 National Congress (entitled 'Congress delegates sing for socialism,' in Cosatu, 1987a).

*Picture preceding Chapter 6:* Cosatu Education Conference 1987, (from left to right) Cosatu General Secretary, Naidoo; President Barayi; Education Officer, Erwin (Cosatu, 1987b).

*Picture preceding Chapter 7:* Workers performing a play (entitled 'Worker plays show the reality of workers lives', in Cosatu, 1987a).

*Picture preceding Chapter 8:* Negotiations: (from left to right) Raymond Parsons (Business) and Tito Mboweni (ANC); Tito Mboweni (ANC) and Sam Shilowa (Cosatu) (photograph by John Woodruff on cover of Baskin, 1994).

*Picture preceding Chapter 9:* Children of workers toyi-toying (entitled 'Workers of tomorrow', in Cosatu, 1987e).

*Picture preceding Bibliography:* FAWU workers jubilating at Cosatu's 1987 Congress (entitled 'Viva COSATU, Viva FAWU, Viva the working class', in Cosatu, 1987a).

*Picture preceding Appendices:* Workers voting at Cosatu's 1987 Congress (entitled 'Democracy means the majority position decides for all', in Cosatu, 1987a).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Toyi-toying' refers to the militant, political singing and dancing, common in South African struggle.

## Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CEP	Centralised Education Programme
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
CUT	Central Unica Trabalhadores (Brazilian trade union federation)
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers Union
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Union
IIE	Institute for Industrial Education
ILRIG	International Labour Resource Information Group
LACOM	Labour Commission (of Sached)
Ledcom	Local Education Committee
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MAWU	Metal and Allied Workers Union
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NC	National Congress
NDS	National Democratic Struggle
Nedcom	National Education Committee
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
PRP	Participatory Research Project
REC	Regional Executive Committee

Redcom	Regional Education Committee
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAB	South African Breweries
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union
Sached	South African Council for Higher Education
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADWU	South African Domestic Workers Union
SALB	South African Labour Bulletin
SDT	Staff Development Training
SOE	State of Emergency
SRC	Student Representative Council
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
TULEC	Trade Union Library and Education Centre
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UTP	Urban Training Project
VAT	Value Added Tax
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand
WPWAB	Western Province Workers Advice Bureau

### **Note on terminology**

Under apartheid laws, the South African people have been categorised, and treated differently, according to the racial classifications that were given to them by the state. The categories the state created were 'Whites', 'Indians', 'Coloureds' and 'Africans'. I will generally use the term 'blacks' to refer to the latter three categories. At times however, I find it necessary to use the distinctions made by the apartheid state in order to clarify the differential treatment accorded to a specific grouping. The term 'Bantu education' was used by the state to refer to the education given to Africans.

Cosatu used the terms 'racism' and 'racialism' interchangeably. Similarly it did not distinguish between the terms 'non-racism' and 'non-racialism' (and 'non-racist' and 'non-racial'). The way in which the latter terms were used by Cosatu encompasses both an opposition to racism (perhaps more accurately termed 'anti-racist') and a choice not to distinguish between races. I use the term 'racism' to describe prejudice based on race, and 'non-racism' and 'non-racialism' to refer to the choice not to distinguish between races. For example, I describe Cosatu as 'non-racial' because it did not organise members on the lines of race.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research aim, objectives and motivation

In 1986 the national education officer of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) asserted that: "Education is our spear in the struggle for socialism" (Erwin, 1986:3).

Concluding his speech to the 1987 Education Conference, Cosatu's general secretary, Naidoo stated:

Thus we see our education programme spills over the narrow confines of capitalist education and must become the weapon in our hands to shape the mass struggles of our class of the present and mould the future of our class. It is only with the complete understanding and active participation of our membership that we can make a major contribution to the struggle to free ourselves from the chains of poverty, racism and exploitation (Cosatu, 1987b:6).

Consistent with this perspective, Cosatu asserted the need for worker control of education in 1986 and 1987 (Erntzen, 1986:13; Cosatu, 1987b:17,18,20).

Three years later, however, Cosatu argued that the state "should undertake a programme to skill, educate and train workers to participate at all levels of an enterprise. This training programme will relate directly to the needs of the labour market" (Cosatu, 1990b). A 1991 document echoed the earlier assertion of democracy and socialism in its title: "Educate for Democracy and Socialism" (Cosatu, 1991h). But in 1992 Cosatu stated that union education should be "institutionalised", "professional", "modular and progressive" (Cosatu 1992f:6,7).

Even a cursory reading of these statements in Cosatu's official documents indicate that there have been continuities and changes in Cosatu's approach to worker education. The aim of this thesis is to critically explore the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education from 1985–1992. I have selected this time period as it covers Cosatu from its formation to the period of the 'new dispensation'.<sup>1</sup>

The political period from the 1980's to the 1990's is commonly acknowledged as one of political 'transition' (see Grossman, 1996; Marais, 1998). As I will explore further in my literature review, the educational and sociological literature notes changes and continuities in the political and educational approach of Cosatu in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The 1980's were years of mass worker action and political resistance, which were met with ineffectual state reforms and harsh repression. In 1990 the apartheid state instituted significant reforms, including unbanning organisations, releasing political prisoners, and the beginning of constitutional negotiations. The state and the leadership of the progressive movement created the conditions for a negotiated settlement, leading to the first democratic elections, which were held in 1994 (McKinley, 1997). The 'new dispensation' of 1990 led to the setting up of numerous tripartite<sup>2</sup> negotiating and advisory bodies. By 1992 Cosatu was represented on many of these structures and forums, including the National Training Board (Bird, 1992) and the National Education Forum (Cosatu, 1992j).<sup>3</sup>

As Grossman (1996:6) notes, there is a tendency in the dominant literature to characterise the 1980's as 'merely oppositional'. Dominant political analysis tends to reduce the 1980's to a time of 'ungovernability' and 'resistance', and herald the 1990's as a time of 'reconstruction' (see for example Baskin, 1991; Von Holdt, 2000; ANC, 1991; Cosatu, 1996). Vally (1994) and Baskin (1991) note what they consider to be positive advances in Cosatu education that took place in the late 1980's and early 1990's. However, at the same time as acknowledging political and educational changes, there is a dominant perspective that the changes did not signify a substantive shift in the position of Cosatu, but rather a pragmatic adaptation to changing external conditions (see for example Baskin, 1991; Erwin, interview 2002).

Cooper (1998b) and Grossman (1996;1999), in contrast to some of the above positions, argue that there was an *alternative, progressive* political and educational tradition being constructed in the workers' movement in the 1980's, that went well beyond 'merely oppositional' politics. They note that this tradition began to be undermined and changed

in the late 1980's and early 1990's. They link the undermining of the progressive educational tradition to the increasing dominance of the ideology of the capitalist market and to the new, more 'accommodationist' political positions adopted by Cosatu leadership.

Were the changes in Cosatu's approach to worker education substantive shifts or pragmatic adaptations? These contrasting perspectives indicate that the educational tradition of Cosatu, and analysis of this tradition, is a subject open to different interpretations and debate. I have elected to contribute to this debate by focusing on one major aspect of Cosatu's approach to worker education: the written *policy* of Cosatu. Although this is not a direct or reliable indication of what was *practiced* in the realm of worker education and learning, it does provide indisputable evidence of what Cosatu *stated*.

In my research findings, I present the period 1985-1988 as separate from 1989-1992. The selecting of 1989 as the beginning of a second period was suggested by the changes noted by Grossman (1996;1999) and Cooper (1998b); and confirmed as a significant change through my documentary analysis.

Although the 1985-1988 period was a time of intense political and educational activity, the history of this period has been minimised in much of the literature, and there is contestation in the interpretations of what happened. Grossman (2000b:5-6) argues that memories and history of this time have been denigrated, undermined and trivialised. Hence, in my presentation of the research findings, I give a particular focus to this earlier period in order to provide a fuller and more accurate picture of the educational traditions of this time.

I considered the best means of establishing the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy to be an examination and analysis of its official national documents. To supplement this documentary evidence, I have also conducted a limited number of interviews. Information from these will be used primarily to illustrate aspects of workers'

and unionists' practical experience of Cosatu's educational activities. They also provide some insights into possible reasons for the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education.

Although the period (1985-1992) under research is relatively short, I believe that the issues raised have relevance far beyond these years. As Cooper illustrates, the educational tradition of the 1980's was a continuation of that of the 1970's, and the 'different' approach to education prevalent in the labour movement today began as early as 1989. Cosatu's approach to education was also very influential in shaping the present-day government's approach to adult education and the entire education system (Cooper, 1998a;b).

In order to critically explore the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education, I will:

- Examine Cosatu's policy on worker education.
- Describe and categorise the main features of Cosatu's approach to worker education expressed in the policy.
- Locate the policy in its political context.
- Locate the policy in the context of the practice of worker education and learning.
- Periodise the information to reflect major changes or continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education.
- Characterise and analyse these changes and continuities.
- Suggest some possible reasons for the changes and continuities within Cosatu's policy.

## **1.2 Organisation of the research report**

Chapter 1 is my introduction. I introduce my topic and my aim, and give my motivation for selecting this subject. I then describe briefly what is covered in each of the chapters.

Chapter 2 is a literature review. I outline the international literature on worker education, and the studies on South African politics and worker education. I focus on the contemporary studies on worker education in South Africa that cover the time period I am examining. I note significant debates and themes in the literature that have influenced my choice of research subject, and shaped my research process.

In Chapter 3, I define the theoretical framework that informs my research methodology. This chapter is also a continuation of the literature review, in that I develop further on what I reviewed in Chapter 2, as well as introducing other literature related to theoretical issues. I define and explore some theoretical terms and concepts relevant to studies on trade unions and worker education. In particular I provide a working definition of 'radical' worker education.

In Chapter 4, I describe my research methodology. I outline my method of research and my process of data collection and analysis, and discuss key ethical issues I encountered.

In Chapter 5, I address the political context of the 1985-1988 period. I describe the policy of Cosatu and the context of worker struggle. I also note the relationship between Cosatu's political policy, and some aspects of its political practice.

In Chapter 6, I describe Cosatu's stated policy on worker education from 1985 to 1988. I broadly outline Cosatu's approach, and then characterise the 'key features' of the espoused pedagogy that is evident in its policy.

In Chapter 7, I do a preliminary exploration of some aspects of Cosatu's *practice* of non-formal education during 1985-1988. I raise questions related to the implementation of the principles that were asserted in its policy. As part of this assessment, I also give some description of the informal learning that was taking place. I also suggest possible reasons for the gaps that exist between its policy and practice.

In Chapter 8, I look at the period 1989-1992. I outline Cosatu's political positions. I then describe the key features of Cosatu's policy on worker education in this period. I also integrate some information on Cosatu's educational practice.

Chapter 9 contains my analysis and conclusion. Here, I summarise my research findings. I then note some of the significant changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on education from 1985-1992, by comparing the key features of the earlier period (1985-1988) with those of the latter (1989-1992). Drawing on the theoretical definitions given in Chapters 2 and 3, I suggest some broad characterisations of the different approaches manifest in the policy. I then propose some possible reasons for the changes and continuities. I link my findings to the theoretical arguments and debates raised in the literature, and suggest issues for future research.

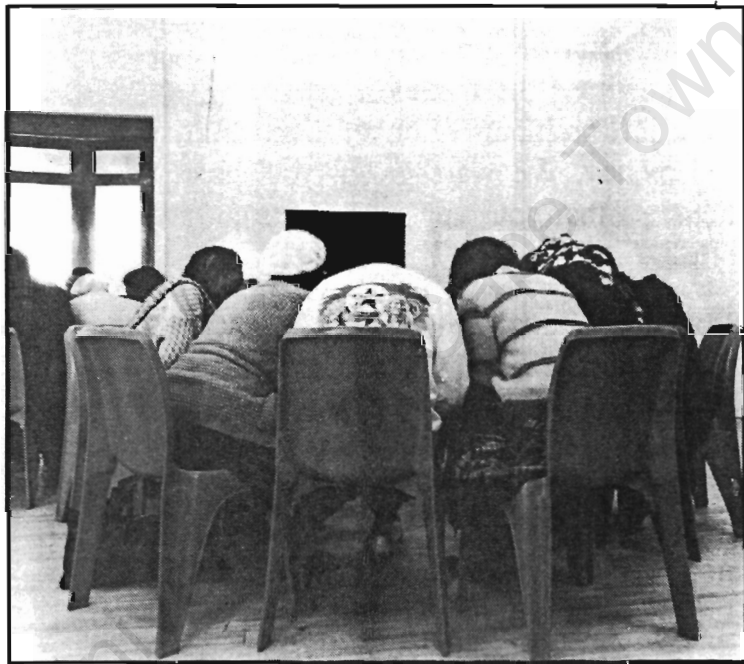
#### NOTES: CHAPTER 1

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<sup>1</sup> Although this was initiated in 1990, I have allowed until 1992 in order to indicate its impact on the politics and policy of Cosatu.

<sup>2</sup> 'Tripartite' refers to the three parties of Government, Business and Labour.

<sup>3</sup> This marked a shift from Cosatu's earlier policy of independence of worker education from employers and state (see Cooper et al, 2002).



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I review the literature specific to worker education in South Africa, and also explore some of the broader subject matter relevant to my topic. In this chapter I will address literature on international studies of worker education, the history and politics of South African trade unions, and worker education in South Africa. In Chapter 3 (where I outline the theoretical framework that informs my methodology) I draw on literature pertaining to socialist politics and practice, the nature of trade unions, and the different traditions and theories on worker education and learning.

### 2.1 International literature on worker education

There are a number of international studies on worker education and socialist education. These include historical and contemporary studies on Britain, Canada, Italy, Russia and Australia (see Phillips and Putnam, 1980; Cooper (undated a); Welton, 1991; Entwistle, 1979; Forgacs, 1988; Jackson, 1981; Showstack Sassoon, 1982; Walters, 1989; Williams, 1975; Cooper, 1995; Newman, 1993; Law, 1993,1994). Although less commonly and thoroughly documented, there are also numerous studies that look at worker education in 'third world' countries. Comparative Education Review (1991) had a special issue on socialist education, with contributors from all over the world. A significant proportion of its writings were on worker education in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. There are also studies on worker education in Chile, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Brazil (see Archer and Costello, 1993; Sketchley and Moore, 1980; Women's Program of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAEWP), 1989; Fischer, 1997). Roux (1992), Hopkins (1985), and Cooper and Nicholson (1997) have done international studies noting different approaches to worker and trade union education. The above-mentioned research documents the worker education activities and traditions in various countries as well as the development of the theoretical approaches of worker activists and educators, including Lenin, Gramsci, Horton and Freire (see Cooper, 1995; Entwistle, 1979; Newman, 1993; Fischer, 1997).

## 2.2 Themes and arguments in the international literature

All of these studies note a relationship between education and political and social factors. It is argued that approaches to education are shaped by political context, *and* that worker education contributes to social change. ICAEWP (1988) documents the experience of Nicaraguan farm workers, and illustrates that education was a ‘tool for social change and the empowerment of women’. Fischer (1997) argues that the approach of the Brazilian trade union federation (CUT) was shaped by its political agenda. She quotes one of CUT’s documents: “CUT National Education Policy is based upon the idea that education should be an instrument for the transformation of reality and for workers’ liberation from all forms of domination...” (CUT, 1994 cited in Fischer, 1997:50).

Many of the ‘Third World’ studies explore the changing approaches to worker education in relation to political transition, and in particular they note the relationship between education and socialist transformation (see Fischer, 1997; ICAEWP, 1988; Sketchley and Moore, 1980). Samoff (1991:1-22), introducing articles in the *Comparative Education Review*, notes the diversity of perspectives and interpretations that characterize the critical discourse on education and socialism.<sup>1</sup> He notes that there are distinguishing characteristics of education in transition societies. He also notes that there are gaps between the theory or intentions of the education programmes, and the actual practice of what happened. This point is made in a number of the other studies on worker education. They note that although the principles of worker democracy, independence, and control of their education have been asserted, these have not always been implemented (see Roux, 1992; Cooper and Qotole, 1996; Vally, 1994:15). Samoff (1991) argues that there was often ‘democratic rhetoric’, but ‘authoritarian practice’. Ruling class ideology, the authoritarian practice of trade union leadership and bureaucracy, and the influence of the politics of the parties that the union movement was allied to, were all factors that have at times impeded implementation of these principles (Samoff, 1991:1-22; see also Philips and Putnam, 1980:22-25).

Faulkner (1998), of the Commonwealth Trade Union Congress, notes contemporary international trends in trade union education amongst 'Anglophone Unions in the North and South'. He observes a tendency for education to become more 'routine', 'technical' and 'professionally assessed'. He notes a shift from collective to individual goals. He is critical of these changes as moving away from 'core trade union values' (including democracy, collective learning, and valuing workers' experience as well as knowledge). He links the contemporary shifts in education to the broader failure of the trade union movement to 'engender a lasting culture of democracy'.

What is apparent from the studies is that worker education is not only related to politics, but that there are *different* and *competing* ideological and political currents within worker education historically, and that these have shifted over time (see Cooper, 2002:5,6; Lovett, 1988). Phillips and Putnam note that: "...the banner of independent working class education...could assume different and possibly contradictory meanings" (Phillips and Putnam, 1980:32). The political form of worker education is a site of *contestation*. Law (1994:2) argues that "worker education and training continues to be a site of contestation between capital and labour". This class contestation, although not always explicitly mentioned in the international studies, is a significant factor in shaping the political currents that are documented in these studies. Worker education was shaped by the traditions of Marxism, as well as by bourgeois traditions of adult education (see Newman, 1993; Phillips and Putman, 1980). Further descriptions from the literature of the different traditions of worker education are outlined in Chapter 3.

There are some notable gaps in the international literature. The majority of the studies on worker education address gender issues not at all, or only tangentially.<sup>2</sup> The studies mostly tend to focus on the 'non-formal' and 'formal' aspects of union and worker education. Most of them do not look at the 'informal' learning of the working class (see section 3.3 for definitions of these terms). Exceptions to this are those studies that explore the activities and approaches of communist leaders such as Gramsci and Lenin (see for example Cooper, 1995; Entwistle, 1979; Fischer, 1997).

### 2.3 Literature on trade unions and politics in South Africa

There is a wealth of historical and contemporary sociological literature on South African politics (see for example ILRIG, 1987; Labour History Group, 1983-1987; Buthelezi, 1983; Friedman, 1987; TULEC, 1998; Baskin, 1991; Grossman, 1985,1996; Fine and Davis, 1991). These all examine to a lesser or greater degree the working class, trade unions and the politics within them. The literature describes some of the struggles of the working class, and the development and politics of trade unions. It documents the collective action of the workers, and the rise and fall of major trade union federations that were organising black workers. These writings illustrate that there were varied and contested political policies and practices in the union, and explore the unions' relationship to political parties. The research indicates that worker democracy and control was not necessarily integral to trade union politics, and that the strength and militancy of the workers was not always supported (and was at times undermined) by the leadership (see for example Friedman, 1987; Grossman, 1985,1996).

Within the more contemporary literature, there is a fair selection of writings dealing with aspects of the 'transition' in South African politics during the 1980's and the 1990's. They address various stages of the transition from the apartheid government to the non-racial ANC-led government, as well as political changes that have taken place since the 1994 democratic elections. Although they are looking at 'broader politics' they do include references to the labour movement and the activities of the working class (see Marais, 1998; Lodge, 1999; McKinley, 1997; Bond, 2000). This literature indicates that there were significant political changes taking place in South Africa in the late 1980's and early 1990's that were impacting on the labour movement.

There are writings which focus specifically on the labour movement during the period I am researching (see Kraak, 1993; Adler and Webster (eds.), 2000; Baskin, 1991,1994,1996; Fine and Davis, 1991), and literature specifically studying women workers (see Meer, 1990; Lacom/Speak/Cosatu Wits Women's Forum, 1992). Articles by Grossman (1996) and Sitas (1996) explore the activities and the consciousness of the

working class from the 1970's to the 1990's (Sitas focusses on Kwazulu-Natal). There are also numerous articles in *South African Labour Bulletin* from 1985-2002, as well as *Work in Progress* and *Speak*, that comment on and debate issues in the labour movement, the activities of the workers, and the politics of Cosatu.

All of these writings note a transition that took place in the politics of the labour movement from the late 1980's to the early 1990's. However there are different interpretations as to the cause and nature of the transition. Many of the more mainstream historians and sociologists present the transition as 'natural' and desirable (see Adler and Webster, 2000; Von Holdt, 1992,1993; Baskin, 1992a,b). It is seen as an appropriate, 'pragmatic' and 'realistic' response to changing circumstances, and a logical shift from 'resistance' to 'reconstruction'. An article by Von Holdt (2000) is a particular example of this perspective. He portrays the 1980's as a period of 'chaos', confusion and intimidation, and reduces the struggles of the workers to 'resistance' and 'ungovernability'. He contrasts the (implicitly) 'destructive' nature of politics in the 1980's, to the 'constructive' engagement of the 1990's as manifested in the practice of 'strategic unionism' (Von Holdt, 2000:100-128).

Fine and Davis (1991), McKinley (1997) and Grossman (1996) are critical of the dominant historical and political interpretations. They illustrate that the 1980's were not 'merely oppositional', and argue that there was a strong (albeit embryonic and uneven) alternative progressive working class tradition being built. McKinley (1997:87), Grossman (1996:6-8) and Fine & Davis (1991:285) emphasise that the political shifts (including the engagement in broad cross-class alliances, a negotiated settlement and social contract agreements) were a result of a political *choice* made by the leaders of the liberation and labour movement, and not just a 'natural adaptation' to 'changing circumstances'. They argue that this choice was neither inevitable, nor the only political option, and that it was one that undermined the collective strength of the working class.

Fine and Davis eloquently critique conventional historiography:

In the conventional mode of analysis there is a tendency to rationalise the strategies adopted by the leading liberation organisations as the only rational course of action that could have been adopted in the circumstances of the time...The party itself appears to have been left 'no choice' but to adopt the strategies which it did adopt. In this approach the diversity of political views and the political debates over what was to be done are ironed out in favour of the apparent inevitability and immanent rationality of the decisions which were finally reached...Conflicting strategies are either hidden from history or portrayed as irrational...This conception conceals the political nature of the strategy as the visible and tangible expression of parties seeking to make sense of their situation and act upon it (Fine and Davis, 1991:285).

Another critique made of conventional historiography is that there is a tendency to de-emphasise the role of working class struggle in shaping politics and history (Grossman, 1985:5). Workers are presented as the masses that are 'impacted upon' rather than the driving force of change. Hein Marais (1998), for example, when exploring the 'political economy of transformation' focuses on the strategies of the state and the policies of the liberation movement, and minimises the struggles of the working class as forces of transformation. Grossman (1996:1) however asserts Trotsky's premise that "the most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historic events". Grossman (1994,1995,1996), Sitas (1996) and Kraak (1993) all place the struggle of workers at the center of their historical narratives.

#### **2.4 Literature on worker education in South Africa**

There is information pertinent to the subject of worker education in South Africa contained within much of the above-mentioned sociological literature. Friedman (1987) and Baskin (1991) describe the formal educational activities and approaches within the union movement, as well as some information about workers' cultural activities. Some of the historical literature, which looks (to a lesser or greater degree) at the collective activities and organisation of the working class, provides information on the informal learning processes of the workers (see Grossman, 1994,1995,1996,2000a,b; Kraak, 1993; McKinley, 1997; Fine and Davis, 1991).

There is literature dealing with the history of worker and union education in the 1970's and 1980's. Theses and articles by Seftel (1983), Maree (1986) and Morphet (1984) record worker education activities in the 1970's and early 1980's, including the work of Universities, the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE), Urban Training Project (UTP), Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB), and education work in the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). This research illustrates that since the upsurge of collective worker action from 1973 onwards, worker education has been related to and integrated with establishing and building trade unions. It deals with issues including: the relationship between educational organisations and trade unions; form and content of education; control of education work; and the relationship between worker education and union democracy.

Within the more contemporary literature on the subject, there are some works that deal with the cultural activities and class consciousness of the workers (see Sitas, 1996; Kromberg, 1993; Von Kotze, 1988; Bonnin, 1987). Although these are not presented as research on 'worker education', they do illustrate that there was an intense process of informal learning taking place through cultural activities and class struggle during the 1980's.

The writings which I consider most significant in addressing worker education in Cosatu in the period I am researching are theses by Vally (1994) and Ginsberg (1997), and papers by Cooper (1998a,b) and Grossman (1994,1999,2000a,2001).

Vally (1994) documents worker education activities from 1973 to 1993. His research and documentation is thorough and detailed, and he illustrates that there was a rich and progressive tradition of worker education. However, his analysis of the data is limited. Although observing changes in the early 1990's he does not explore the significance of this, and creates the impression that the essential progressive tradition remained the same (although with different emphases).<sup>3</sup> He presents information on political tensions in Cosatu, makes clear his own political perspectives and makes proposals and assertions as to how worker education 'should' be conducted. However he does not clearly locate or

analyse worker education within its political context. Although he notes the significance of informal learning he focuses almost exclusively on formal education.

Ginsberg's (1997) study on trade union education is based upon a MAWU/NUMSA case study (covering the period 1973-1996). Drawing on Eyerman and Jameson's (1991) theory of cognitive praxis, he defines 'intellectuals' as the 'actors' in trade union education. He argues that union education (and politics) was shaped by the contestation between the 'professional' intellectuals (whose source of knowledge is external to the trade unions) and 'grassroots' intellectuals (usually workers, whose knowledge is internal to the unions). He argues that the politics of the latter was 'populist' and the former 'anti-populist' (also referred to as 'workerist' or Marxist)(see Ginsburg, 1991:20-28).

Ginsberg offers insights into the role of intellectuals in the union movement, and addresses the 'informal' learning of grassroots intellectuals. I would argue, however, that his thesis is marred by both historical and conceptual inaccuracies and omissions. He does not define the working class collective as an 'actor', but only the individual 'intellectuals'. The reduction of union political tensions to differences between 'populists' and 'workerists' hides the reality of the range of dynamics that shaped union politics. Historians have pointed to the reductionism and inaccuracy of these 'labels' (see for example, Fine and Davis, 1991:278). For example there is an inaccurate conflation of the term 'workerism' with 'Marxism', 'anti-populist' and 'anti-political'. In addition to the problematic nature of the labels used, Ginsberg's *application* of the labels is historically unfounded. For example, he asserts that the 'professional' intellectuals were all 'anti-populist' and the movement intellectuals (along with the mass of the working class) were all 'populist'. Although it is true that in NUMSA, for a period of time, there was a dominance of middle class intellectuals who were labelled by some as 'workerist', many of Cosatu's intellectuals and leadership were labelled as 'populist', and many of the 'workerist' intellectuals in NUMSA adopted 'populist' politics from 1989 onwards (see Baskin, 1991).

Ginsberg notes the 'effects' of the changing South African politics on the politics of Cosatu, but presents Cosatu's response as 'obvious' and not as a political choice. He presents NUMSA's shift from a predominantly 'workerist' perspective (in the early 1980's) to a populist and nationalist perspective (from the early 1990's), as a victory of the workers over the ('professional') intellectuals. He blames the decreased worker control and democracy on the legacy of 'anti-populism.'

Cooper (1998a,b) and Grossman (1999,2000a) both locate worker education firmly within its political and material context. They locate worker education in the context of the struggle and activity of the working class movement. While their writings are relatively brief (in the form of papers rather than lengthy studies), their work is a significant contribution in the field of worker education in South Africa.

Cooper describes and analyses the changes in 'discourses' in worker education. She describes changing and contradictory traditions of worker education. She contrasts the political, collective and action-oriented education traditions of the 1980's with the individualised, skills based, 'career-path' approach to education prevalent in the 1990's. Cooper explores issues related to the new National Qualifications Framework (NQF), including assessment and accreditation, as well as what and how knowledge is generated and valued. She relates the changes in educational approach to Cosatu's shifts in economic and political policy, and to its acceptance of the dictates of a neo-liberal global economy. She notes that notions of 'multiskilling', 'flexibility', 'competency based' and 'life-long learning' are closely associated with post-Fordist restructuring and the globalisation of the world economy. However she argues that Cosatu's approach to education and training cannot be merely reduced to 'neoliberalism'. She argues that there was a real need to address the low level of training received by workers, and that Cosatu's method of addressing this was shaped by the political and economic strategies that came to dominate in Cosatu (Cooper, 1998a,b).

Grossman also notes and describes a progressive tradition of worker education, and describes changes similar to those addressed by Cooper. He argues that the learning and

knowledge of workers takes place in a range of sites, and that it has historically been denigrated and denied. He notes the particular denigration of the knowledge of black women workers and 'marginalised' workers. He argues that in the 1970's and 1980's the progressive tradition of the workers' movement gave rise to an alternative, progressive approach to education, which valued the knowledge of workers. It rested on the notions of sharing and inclusivity that, he argues, could only be developed in opposition to the competitive individualism nurtured by capitalism. He notes that the worker collective was the major site for mutual teaching and learning. He argues that the progressive tradition is undermined if education programmes are subjected to the dictates of the market, and that individualism and exclusivity are nurtured by the dominant ideas of career-pathing and certification. He asserts the need for progressive educators to consciously draw on the alternative 'oppositional legacy' and to guard against the ideology of the market and its definitions of work and knowledge (Grossman, 1994,1999).

In these and other papers (see, for example, Grossman, 2001), Grossman draws on the experience and knowledge of domestic workers to illustrate his points. This focus is a valuable contribution to the field, as the experiences of women in general, and domestic workers in particular, are largely excluded from the other studies on worker education.

Cooper and Grossman both note the significance of informal learning and integrate it into their descriptions of the learning of the workers. In their descriptions of the tradition of worker education, they do not distinguish between the educational activities of the trade union federation Cosatu (which were non-formal and formal), and the (informal) learning activities of the worker movement. Although they mention Cosatu policy on worker education, they do not focus on it nor explore it specifically. Cooper and Grossman's contributions are limited largely by the brevity of their papers, which requires a certain level of generalisation. It is these latter two authors whose perspectives I find most valuable within the field of worker education in South Africa, and whose perspectives I draw on most frequently in my analysis.

## 2.5 Summary

The literature expresses rich debates and varied issues relating to worker education in general and trade union education in South Africa in particular. It notes and explores: relationships between education, organisation and politics; disjunctures between the theory and practice of worker education; the different and contesting traditions of education; as well as historical changes and continuities in trade union education. The South African literature notes that there were significant developments within the politics of the labour movement and in the approaches to worker education in the late 1980's and early 1990's. However there are different descriptions and perceptions of the nature of, and the reasons for, these changes. In particular, the perceptions of the political and educational tradition of the 1980's are contested. One view holds that this tradition was one of 'merely resistance', with an opposing view seeing it as constructing a 'progressive alternative'. In the chapters that follow, I explore some of the issues and themes raised above. Through my description and analysis of the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy, I hope to provide some fresh information and perspectives on the subject of worker education in South Africa, in order to contribute to ongoing debates.

### NOTES: CHAPTER 2

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<sup>1</sup> Although he is referring to education more broadly and not only worker education, his points are pertinent to worker education.

<sup>2</sup> There are some exceptions to this such as the ICAEWP, 1989. See also the theories and approach of Thompson, discussed in Newman, 1993:244-260.

<sup>3</sup> In later years, however, Vally is critical of Cosatu's approach to worker education and traces conservative changes in approach back to the early 1990's (see Samson and Vally, 1996).



## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that informs my research methodology. I outline and define some of the theoretical terms and concepts that underlie my approach to this research. It is, however, also a continuation of the literature review, since I elaborate on some of the arguments made in the previous chapter, and illustrate how these perspectives have shaped my approach to the research. I also provide further information from the theoretical literature in order to make my definitions. I define my broad approach (Marxist), my unit of study (the policy of a trade union federation relating mainly to 'non-formal' worker education), and my categories of analysis (traditions of worker education).

### 3.1 Marxist analysis

My political and analytical perspective is Marxist. I believe that history is shaped by the dynamics of class struggle. The studies in the literature note the strong link between education and political context. Following Grossman (1985:4-24), I would emphasise the significance of the collective struggles of the workers in shaping political events. I would also argue that ideas, policy, and approaches to education need to be understood in the dynamics of class struggle.

My perspective is that class, race and gender issues are inter-related. Although racism and sexism have existed outside of capitalism, under the current capitalist system they need to be understood in the context of capitalist class dynamics. Racism and women's oppression are not phenomena running alongside class exploitation. They are integrally bound up with capitalist exploitation. The South African literature on political theory is rigorous in its debates on class and race issues but, in general, fails to integrate gender issues. Volbrecht (1986, discussed in Andrew 1992) is critical of this failure, and goes some way to developing an integrated theory which links class, race and gender oppression and exploitation.

In an earlier paper I examine how international socialist movements and Marxist theory have addressed and not addressed gender issues, and argue that Marxism does provide the theoretical tools for addressing women's oppression and exploitation.<sup>1</sup> I qualify this, however, by arguing that it is the revolutionary socialists that have theorised and practiced this most effectively, and that reformist and Stalinist socialist perspectives have been limited in their ability to do so (Andrew, 1992).

Petty et al (1987) assert that socialism cannot be achieved without women's liberation, and vice versa. I have a political belief that in order to achieve this, gender issues need to be *integrated* into the theory and practice of the workers' movement. This is not to suggest there is not also a need for separate women's structures, or a specific political and educational focus on women's and gender issues (see Andrew, 1992).

Because of the perspective outlined above, I have attempted to integrate gender issues into most aspects of my research process and presentation. I have also attempted to assess whether Cosatu policy reflected an 'integrated' approach to gender issues.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicates that the educational policy, theory and intentions of workers' organisations were not necessarily implemented in practice. As Grossman (1985:5-24) argues in his thesis on the Communist Party of South Africa, even a political party that claims to be founded on the principles of Marxism-Leninism does not necessarily practice revolutionary socialist politics. He argues that this failure to practice cannot necessarily be explained merely by limits imposed by objective conditions, and notes that the politics of an organisation needs to be analysed in the context of social processes to which it seeks to relate.

Thus, the policy of an organisation cannot be read at face value. In my research, in order to contextualise and analyse the educational *policy* of Cosatu, I will outline the *political context*, with particular attention to *class struggle*, and provide some information on its educational (and political) *practice*. I will also look to this political context when I suggest possible reasons for the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy.

## 3.2 Tensions within trade unions

The education and politics of Cosatu is shaped to a significant extent by the fact that it is a trade union federation. Hence I provide a brief description of my understanding of the nature of trade unions. Classical Marxist theory and contemporary Marxist sociologists have produced a wealth of debates on the limits, possibilities and contradictions of trade unions (see Lenin, 1978; Trotsky, 1979:12-15; Clarke and Clements, 1977; Hyman, 1975). Some of these tensions and dynamics were discussed in the South African literature on trade unions, but here I elaborate further on the theoretical concepts.

### 3.2.1 Reformist or revolutionary

Trade unions have the potential to play a reformist or a revolutionary role. Hyman argues that the ‘union-as-an organisation’ (or institution), and its officials or leaders, “can come to be concerned more with stabilizing the relationship between capital and labour than conducting a struggle *against* the domination of capital” (Hyman, 1975:56, original italics).

Lenin (1970) argues that leadership was capable of stating revolutionary positions, while in fact maintaining reformist politics. Koval states “Lenin ruthlessly exposed the treacherous activities of the trade union bureaucrats and bourgeois politicians of the labourite stripe in the international workers movement, emphasising that their loud talk of socialism is a mere screen for their bourgeois labour policy” (forward by Koval, in Lenin, 1970:20). In my research I will maintain an awareness of the reformist or revolutionary nature of Cosatu’s politics, as well as a consciousness of the possibility that leadership and officials can make revolutionary statements at the same times as practicing reformist politics.

### 3.2.2 *Institution or workers' movement*

The struggles, activities and politics of workers, can be described as the 'workers' movement'. This may include, but goes beyond, the formal 'institutions' of trade unions (see Hyman, 1972:48). Offe (1985) argues that there is an intrinsic tension within a trade union between its role as (offensive) social movement and as a defensive organisation (cited in Cooper, 1999:6).

Although one can theoretically distinguish between the 'institution' and the 'movement', in truth these categories are not neatly separable from each other. It has been argued that the South African labour movement contains elements of both social movement and formal institution (see Cooper, 1996; Ginsberg, 1997:29-31; Adler and Webster, 1989). During the period I am researching, workers were bringing the practices and traditions developed in the broader workers' movement into the structures of the union institution. Thus they created, shaped or influenced the policy and practice of Cosatu - 'the institution'. The activities of the workers' movement were also shaped by the policy and practice of the 'institution' and its leadership.

My research focus is the stated policy of Cosatu. This is what was espoused by the formal 'institution' of Cosatu. However, I will locate this in the context of the broader workers' movement.

### 3.2.3 *Bureaucracy or democracy*

There is also a tension within trade unions between bureaucratic, top-down practice and worker democracy and control. Michels argues that there is a tendency within formal organisation for bureaucratisation to set in as the union grows, and that the organisation becomes an institution, driven to a large extent by the bureaucratic and political interests of its officials and leadership (cited in Ginsberg, 1997:29). Hyman argues that historically the institutionalisation of trade union functions has tended to result in a decrease of worker democracy. He states that: "Union control and workers' control may face in

opposite directions, and the element of power over the members inherent in union organisation may be turned against them” (Hyman, 1975:56). He refutes Michels’ argument, however, that there is an irresistible and irreversible ‘iron law of oligarchy’ involved in this process, and notes that there are many significant counter-pressures to these trends, and that the “most crucial among these is the practice of workers themselves” (Hyman, 1975:57).

#### 3.2.4 *Leadership and membership*

Hyman (1975:47) argues that “a union is not simply the sum of its members, neither is it merely the property of its leaders”. There is a dynamic and dialectic relationship between the rank and file workers and the leadership of a union. Cosatu, however, is not a union but a union federation. Its members are its affiliates. Each affiliate is made up of leadership and rank and file members (see Appendix I). The policy and politics of Cosatu is shaped by its dynamic relationship with its individual affiliates, the members of these affiliates, and the politics of the workers’ movement as a whole.

#### 3.2.5 *Conclusion*

The theorisation on the tensions intrinsic to trade unions is useful in looking for broad trends, and analysing dynamics in Cosatu. However, in reality there are no broadly generalisable dynamics that apply to all trade unions (although the writings of Hyman for example may suggest there are). The tensions within Cosatu will be specific to its own political and historical context.

### **3.3 Formal, non-formal and informal worker education**

Worker education can include formal, non-formal and informal education. Formal refers to education that is *accredited* by formal education and training bodies (such as schools, universities and technicons). Non-formal education includes activities organised specifically for the purpose of education, but not formally accredited (see HSRC, 1981).

Non-formal education correlates to some extent with Welton's definition of 'labour's schools', as "those spaces workers themselves, their leaders or sympathetic pedagogues open up for reflection on the meaning of their work and culture" (Welton, 1991:25).

Informal worker education refers to the *learning* that takes place through the lived *experiences* of workers (including experiences of formal union meetings, strikes and collective struggle). The activities engaged in are not primarily educational in purpose, but significant learning takes place nevertheless (see HSRC, 1981).

Informal learning correlates to some extent with Welton's definition of 'schools of labour', which he argues are "the socially organised workplaces" where "important technical, social, political and ideological experiential learning is taking place" (Welton, 1991:25). Informal education however, does extend beyond learning at the workplace. Any learning that is not consciously stated and construed by the workers or their organisation as 'education' I would see as falling under this category.<sup>2</sup>

My research will focus on Cosatu's policy on non-formal worker education. However, Cosatu also made proposals about the formal education system, and made comments related to informal learning. In looking at the practice of Cosatu's education, I will also integrate information on informal learning.

### **3.4 Different 'traditions' of worker education**

As outlined in Chapter 2, there are different and competing ideological and political currents within worker education. These manifest in different approaches to, or traditions of, worker education, with varied approaches to the purpose, content and methodologies of learning (see Newman, 1993; Vally, 1994; Cooper, 1998b; Fischer, 1997).

Following Fischer, I feel that the most significant distinction to be made in worker education is between the 'radical' and the 'reformist' traditions. She argues that "Fundamentally it is possible to distinguish between trade union education programmes

dedicated to the transformation of capitalist economic and social relations and those which are not” (Fischer, 1997:10).

Other theorists identify a broader range of traditions, although I would argue that they could all be categorised within the above two definitions. Related to the radical approach are traditions described as ‘socialist’ (Samoff, 1991), ‘transformative’ (London, 1990), ‘ideological’ (Aronowitz, 1990), ‘community development’ (Newman, 1993), ‘liberating’ (Werner, 1982, cited in Vally, 1994:13), ‘popular education’ (Kerka, 1997) and ‘progressive’ (Cooper, 1998b).

The radical approach is contrasted with other traditions, described as ‘conventional’, ‘reformist’ (Werner, 1982, cited in Vally, 1994:13) ‘liberal’, ‘mechanistic’, ‘psychotherapy’ (Newman, 1993:45-55), ‘institutional’, ‘service’, ‘instrumental’ (Aronowitz, 1990; London, 1990), ‘union-empowerment’ (London, 1990), and ‘human capital’ (Cooper, 1998b).

Werner asserts that: “The conventional approach seeks to conform to the dominant ideology and status quo, the second approach is aimed at reforming the system, and the last, the liberating approach, has as its objective the transformation of society” (Werner, 1982, cited in Vally, 1994:13-14).

Cooper argues that internationally and historically, worker education has two dominant approaches: “a radical ‘transformative’ approach...which emphasises the building of class consciousness and can be located in a long-standing radical or socialist tradition”; and an ‘instrumental’ approach which “prioritises training for organisation building and to facilitate the conduct of union business”, and “can be located within a reformist tradition of trade-unionism...” (Cooper, 1998b:143-144). She also argues that there is a newer third approach, emphasising vocational training for workers, which she defines as the ‘human capital’ approach. Her description of this appears to be based on London (1990) and Aronowitz’s (1990) definition of the ‘service model’ of union education.

London and Aronowitz argue that the *transformatory* approach is aimed at transforming social relations, and builds class-consciousness. It emphasises worker empowerment, a 'mutualistic ethic', collective action, democratic and progressive unionism and the political independence of the working class. It is based on an understanding that the interests of the working class are separate and antagonistic to those of the employers (London, 1990:109-111,119; Aronowitz, 1990:23).

They contrast this with the currently dominant *institutional* approach, which manifests in the 'instrumental' and the 'service' models. These focus on the union's institutional framework and on servicing members. Aronowitz describes 'instrumental' education as focussing on strategic and technical issues of enforcing 'the contract'.<sup>3</sup> He argues that it is directed towards full-time staff representatives, and the curriculum is increasingly technical and corresponds to the business function of contract enforcement and negotiations. He argues that with the 'service model' approach, "unions offer a wide variety of education programmes most of which aim to improve the mobility chances of individual members" (Aronowitz, 1990:27). London argues that this model "treats workers as individuals who have to increase their skills or 'human capital' in order to succeed" (London, 1990:119).

Cooper (1998b:144) notes that "this approach has been criticised for basing worker education on management terms, and as working against union collectivism". London argues that "the instrumental and service models of workers education that predominate today may actually contribute to union decline by helping to recreate conservative union bureaucracies and to reinforce an individualistic ethic among the working class" (London, 1990:119).

London also argues that there has been a newer trend he terms 'union empowerment' which "attempts a fusion of the transformative and institutional approaches" (London, 1990:109). This asserts that in a labour market short of skilled workers, union-sponsored worker education can both advance workers and exert control as the suppliers of trained employees. He argues that the "union empowerment model represents a positive

approach to worker education, but its impact will be constrained by global labour market trends and widespread management strategies to deskill the workforce” (ibid).

Newman defines the ‘mechanistic tradition’ as one which dominates the world of organisational training. It involves ‘assessing needs’, ‘setting objectives’, ‘delivering training’ and ‘evaluating’ according to ‘competencies’ and ‘measurable outcomes’. He notes that it is closely associated with the development in the United States of modern industrial and commercial practices, and that a number of the education theorists write uncritically from a management perspective. He argues, however, that this model, as well as the ‘liberal’ and ‘psychotherapy’ approaches, have useful things to offer to union education (Newman, 1993:46-49).

Although these definitions provide tools for defining and locating an educational perspective, it is likely that *within* actual approaches to education, there will be a tension *between* these different perspectives. Cooper (1998b:143-144) notes that worker education is a site of struggle, and that there are historical accounts of the conflicts *between* the transformative and reformist discourses *within* worker education.

Many of the above theorists locate the traditions they describe clearly within a class analysis, and note the historical political origins of the tradition and the political interests it serves (see Cooper, 1998b; Fischer, 1997). Others, however, fail to do so (see for example, Newman, 1993). The approaches defined as ‘popular education’ (Kerka, 1997), ‘liberating’ (Werner, 1982) and ‘community development’ (Newman, 1993) assert that education should serve, or liberate, ‘the people’ or the ‘community’, and should facilitate ‘social change’. However they do not specify which ‘people’ and which parts of the ‘community’, nor in whose class interests the social change would be.

There is a tendency in some of the literature (see for example Newman, 1993) to emphasise the significance of the perspective, approach and methods of the *trainer* or *theorist* as the primary determinant in the implementation of the radical tradition. The political context and the activity of the workers are not presented as a key factor.

Newman (1993) emphasises the influence of significant adult educators and theorists in the 'creation' of the traditions. For example, Friere and Horton are presented as if they are the 'fathers' of radical education, and the role of workers' struggle in creating this tradition is minimised. The choice of approach of the individual trainer is presented as the key determinant in the form and content of education that takes place. The power of the workers to facilitate worker control of education is seen as less significant. He outlines what he considers the various traditions of 'adult education' 'have to offer' trade union education. There is an implication that union and worker education do not build their 'own tradition', but select to draw on traditions that have developed outside of the union movement.

Contrary to this perspective, I would argue that the radical tradition of worker education is founded upon and arises out of the progressive collective activity of the working class. Activists, educators and theorists can build on, contribute to, and theorise about this tradition. They can also undermine and stifle it. But they are not responsible for 'creating' it.

### 3.5 Key features of radical education

Historically there have been identifiable key features of the theory and practice associated with radical worker education. Some of these have been mentioned in the definitions given above. However these can be further expanded and elaborated on. Fischer (1997:35-36) defines, describes and explains some of these key features. Drawing on these, she provides a set of principles, which are used as criteria against which she assesses the Education Programme on Collective Bargaining of the Brazilian trade union federation (CUT). Similarly, drawing on her and others' definitions, I will describe a number of features I consider significant in defining and assessing Cosatu's approach to education.

Radical approaches to education have generally been informed by a *socialist* perspective. Their approach to education has included a *class analysis* of education, and a *critique of*

*capitalist education and ideology. They support workers in their independent<sup>4</sup> process of understanding, organising and taking action to transform society from capitalism to socialism.*

These ideas are expressed in Hannah and Fischer's definitions of radical adult education as "a uniquely working class education based upon working class values, relevant to working class experience and working class objectives...(it) is bound up with the struggle for socialism, which implies the interrelated searching for the 'true' understanding of capitalist oppression and the development of social action to overcome it" (Hanna, 1992 cited in Fischer, 1997:15, my parentheses). Radical educators have asserted that a 'true understanding' requires a critique of commonly held perspectives and bourgeois ideology (Fischer, 1997:14-16). Gramsci argues that there was a need to break the 'bourgeois hegemony over workers' minds' (Williams, 1975:183, cited in Entwistle, 1979). Friere and Gramsci argue against the bourgeois practice of reducing knowledge to a 'commodity' which may be possessed, and assert that knowledge should be considered as a means that is used to understand the world in order to transform it (Fischer, 1997:18).

Further principles or features expressed in the theory and practice of radical education are:

### 3.5.1 *Worker control over the process of learning and teaching*

The radical education approach has aimed to establish worker control of the process of education. It has asserted that education should promote worker control of their understanding, their organisations and their actions (see Fischer, 1997:18-19,29-31; Vally, 1994:15).

### 3.5.2 *Education as a collective process*

Radical education has attempted to make education a *collective* process of learning and teaching, involving 'everyone' with the aim of changing conditions for *all* workers. It has

been driven by the collective activities of the working class (Fischer, 1997:17,35; Vally, 1994:13).

### 3.5.3 *Respect for workers, their knowledge and experience*

Progressive educators have worked ‘with people and not for people’. They take their starting point as the knowledge of the learners (see Fischer, 1997:18). Related to this feature is the development of a *reciprocal relationship between ‘educator’ and ‘learner’*. This is because workers are engaged in a collective process of teaching each other. But even where there are people playing the role of formal educators, the process of deciding on the content of learning and the learning activity itself has been a ‘collaborative venture’, taking place with consultation, interaction and ‘dialogue’ (see discussion on Gramsci and Friere, in Fischer, 1997:18,19). Progressive educators have asserted the need to respect workers, their knowledge and experience.

### 3.5.4 *Education linked to organisation, action and struggle*

The idea of developing a critical understanding in order to take action, is explored in the concept outlined by radical theorists as ‘*critical praxis*’. Fischer (1997:14,15) outlines this concept, and argues that it is founded upon Marxist philosophy and experience. In the tradition of radical education, education has been linked to organisation and action. There is an understanding of a dialectical relationship between learning and practice (see Vally, 1994:14; Kerka, 1997; Fischer, 1997:17-19). Fischer (1997:17) states “The critical collective understanding of social reality is a fundamental factor for change, but it is the action to change reality that makes possible its fully critical understanding, in other words, critical praxis”.

Radical approaches to worker education have recognised that workers learn through action and experience, particularly the experience of collective struggle (see Fischer, 1997:24-25; Welton, 1991; Manfredi, 1994b, cited in Fischer, 1997:20). Eyerman and Jamison (1991) have explored the process of learning through ‘social movements’. They

put forward the theory of ‘cognitive praxis’, as a means of understanding the material context that shapes the process of learning.

The idea of the union, the strike, and collective struggle as a ‘school’ of learning, is emphasised in Marxist texts. Marx calls the realities of life, struggle and employment the “harsh but hardening schools of labour” (cited in Vally, 1994:10). Trotsky states that: “We consider trade unions as militant economic organisations and as schools of political education” (cited in Jansen, 1993:2). Lenin argues that there was accelerated growth of consciousness during a revolutionary period and emphasises the role of strikes in teaching workers particular political lessons. He states: “This is the reason that socialists call strikes a ‘school of war’...” (Lenin, 1961:140). Luxemburg argues that “...the proletariat requires a high degree of political education, of class consciousness and organization. All these conditions cannot be fulfilled by pamphlets and leaflets, but only by the living political school, by the fight and in the fight, in the continuous course of the revolution” (cited in Geras, 1994:203). She argues that this process of learning necessarily involves making mistakes, self-criticism and self-discovery.

No pre-established schema, no ritual that holds good at all times shows (the proletariat) the road it must travel. Historical experience is its only teacher; its Via Delarosa to self-liberation is covered not only with immeasurable suffering, but with countless mistakes. The goal of its journey, its final liberation, depends...on whether it understands that it must learn from its own mistakes (cited in Geras, 1994:203, my parentheses).

### 3.5.5 *Progressive education fights exploitation and oppression*

Progressive education has historically addressed and fought exploitation and oppression of workers. In particular it has challenged racism and sexism (Fischer, 1997:26-27; Vally, 1994:14).

### 3.5.6 *Progressive education has used methods and techniques that facilitate the processes described above*

Kerka’s description of popular education covers many of the ‘methods’ and ‘techniques’

that have been practiced in the tradition of radical education.

The goal of popular education is to develop 'peoples capacity for social change through a collective problem-solving approach emphasizing participation, reflection and critical analysis of social problems' (Bates, 1996:225-226). Key characteristics of popular education are as follows: everyone teaches and learns, so leadership is shared; starting with the learners' experience and concerns; high participation; creation of new knowledge; critical reflection; connecting the local to the global; and collective action for change (Kerka, 1997:1, original parentheses).

She also outlines a variety of forms and 'techniques' that could be used to achieve the above processes.

Because it is community based, popular education takes a wide variety of forms...it often draws on 'popular culture', using drama, song, art, oral tradition, etc. Arnold and Burke recommend the use of a variety of techniques: based on the assumption that learning is most effective if participation is active, relevant, enjoyable and learners are treated as equals (Kerka, 1997:1).

The features outlined in this section are drawn from a range of international and historical literature describing the tradition of radical education. Further examples of these features are evident in descriptions of the 'progressive' traditions of worker education in the South African literature (see Vally, 1994; Cooper, 1998b; Grossman, 1999). The features and principles I have outlined here have provided a rough 'template' which has shaped the presentation of my research findings and categories of analysis.

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 3

<sup>1</sup> I argue that a key concept in integrating gender issues into Marxist theory is the development of the concept of 'reproductive labour' (see Vogel, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> I am sure the definition of some activities is open to debate. For example, I would categorise most cultural activities within Cosatu as informal, even though they are not 'lived' experience, are educational, and are 'spaces opened up for reflection'. Meetings called by Cosatu could have a very similar content, but those defined as a 'workshop' I would construe as non-formal, and those called 'meetings', as informal. Hence, in practice, there may be some blurring of distinctions. One of the difficulties of these definitions lies in the question of *who* does the defining of what is a 'conscious educational act' and on what grounds?

<sup>3</sup> I understand that 'the contract' refers to the negotiated agreements made by the union with their specific employers. It is not the tripartite 'social contract' that I refer to later in South African politics (see Chapter 8).

<sup>4</sup> Independent from bourgeois political parties, state and government.



## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This study is primarily qualitative in nature. My data analysis will adopt an inductive approach, while my analytical approach is interpretative. Although there are exploratory and explanatory aspects to my study, it is primarily descriptive in form (see Merriam and Simpson's definitions, 1995). Following Cooper, I would argue that my research approach is that of " 'critical qualitative research' in that it shares a concern about social inequality and social change, and with the basic issues of social structure, power, culture, and human agency" (Cooper, 2002:12, drawing on Carspecken, 1995:3).

The focused nature of my study (on the policy of one trade union federation in one country) means that I draw to some extent on the case study approach, since my research is an "...attempt to understand the social processes and meanings implicit in some undertaking in a restricted context" (Millar, 1983, cited in Cooper, 2002:12). "Key features of the case study approach are that it not only collects hard data but also attempts to capture the range of meanings and interpretations at work within a specific context. It also attempts to analyse the social processes at work which shape - and are shaped by - these meanings and interpretations" (Cooper, 2002:12-13).

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for research data collection and analysis and therefore has a responsibility to identify the shortcomings and biases that might impact on the study, not to make the study 'more objective', but to understand how their subjectivity shapes the investigation and its findings (Merriam and Simpson, 1995). My theoretical perspectives have been outlined in Chapter 3. These have influenced all stages of the research process. Other aspects of my subjectivity which impact on the research process are addressed under relevant headings below.

## 4.1 Data collection

### 4.1.1 Documents

My primary data has been the official national documents of Cosatu, as these contain the written policy of the federation. I have defined Cosatu 'policy' broadly, as the positions it officially espoused. Hence, I have included, but not restricted myself to, documents that Cosatu defined and recorded under the heading of 'policy' (see, for example, Cosatu 1987c:1-8). I have examined all the official documentation that I could locate that referred to education (within the period 1985-1992), that has been published by or presented to Cosatu on a *national* level. In order to understand the political context (and to locate information on education), I also examined other significant Cosatu documents, such as written reports of all the National Congresses, some of the policy and campaign workshops, and videos of major strikes and of the congresses. This policy would have been produced by, and been binding on, all the affiliates and regions. I have only looked at a few documents of Cosatu regions or affiliates, since my focus is on the policy of the federation as a whole.

The documents I draw on are those that were officially issued by Cosatu (sometimes by Cosatu Education Department). These do include some speeches by, and interviews with, *individual* leaders in Cosatu, which are a form of policy that can be distinguished from the collective, national positions adopted by democratic bodies of Cosatu. However, the individuals are all office bearers speaking on behalf of Cosatu, and their statements were ones issued by Cosatu nationally in reports, booklets or videos (see, for example, Cosatu 1986d, 1987b). Hence, I would argue that they reflect Cosatu's position, and I draw on them in establishing Cosatu's policy in education.

The documents that I prioritised as necessary for my research were reports relating to all the National Congresses and Education Conferences, and reports (or booklets) issued by the Education Department. These I hunted as 'core' documents. Other documents that I made some effort to acquire, but did not get a complete set of, were reports of women's

conferences, Cosatu national conferences, policy workshops, Nedcom minutes, and documents relating to ABET policy. I focussed on those within my research time period (1985-1992), but also got some copies of significant documents thereafter. The list of documents accessed is detailed under 'Primary Documents' in my bibliography. I have included as appendices, three of the documents that I felt encapsulated Cosatu's positions most succinctly. The report by Cosatu 1987b is a good example of Cosatu's policy from 1985-1988 (Appendix F). Whereas the documents by Cosatu 1991c (Appendix H) and 1992f (Appendix G) encapsulate the approach evident in the policy during the 1989-1992 period. The latter document addresses internal training, whereas the former describes Cosatu's approach to ABE policy. I have made frequent reference to these documents in this study.

The acquisition of the documents was a major task. It was an extended treasure hunt/goose-chase and sometimes followed long trails of referrals beginning with: 'Try so and so, she might know where to get a copy of that document'. It took a few months and over a hundred phone calls and emails, and searching through many (sometimes unsorted) piles of papers, before I had what I considered to be a comprehensive set of documents. Most of my documents came from the archives of TULEC (Trade Union Library and Education Centre), ILRIG (International Labour Resource and Information Group), Cosatu's archives at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and the personal collections of Linda Cooper and Salim Vally. TULEC was of particular support to me in the gathering of documents. As well as having the most comprehensive and easily accessible amount, the library supported my endeavours with covering letters, and an agreement that the research data I gathered would be added to the archives of TULEC. I think that the assistance from other organisations was facilitated by the knowledge that they were contributing to the archives of a library and not just to my research process. In the case of accessing Cosatu's Wits archives, I needed written permission from Cosatu officials. Charley Lewis, of Cosatu's Information Technology Unit checked with the deputy general secretary of Cosatu, and organised a letter to be sent to the Curator of Manuscripts at Wits, where Cosatu's documentary archives are stored.

Although I have elected to focus on ‘the official policy of Cosatu’, I understand that national official documents do not necessarily reflect a single, unified, homogenous ‘voice’ of Cosatu. In Chapter 2, I pointed out some of the tensions that exist within trade unions. Cosatu could be understood as a site of dynamic interaction between different view points. This could include differences amongst leadership, between leadership and rank and file workers, and differences between the positions of regions or affiliates, and the needs of ‘the institution’ and those of ‘the movement’. The documents contained different perspectives, styles, and ‘voices’, reflecting different authors, audiences or contexts. Some were far more difficult to get hold of (and to understand) than others. For example, I easily found numerous copies of the 1987 Education Conference report. It was printed by the Education Department as a booklet. It contained pictures and was written in ‘accessible’ English. As well as speeches by leaders, and reports by officials, it contained detailed reports of the delegates ‘commissions’. This booklet contained progressive rhetoric and proposals. Subsequent education conference reports were harder to find (in fact I never found the original 1991 Cosatu document)<sup>1</sup>, dominated by the reports of officials, and with a less ‘accessible’ language style and format. These reports were more reformist (and conservative) in their rhetoric and activities discussed. Even an analysis of statements by one ‘author’ (such as a Cosatu leader) would reflect different ‘voices’, perspectives or styles, depending on the form, purpose and audience of the communication.<sup>2</sup> However, although these issues could be explored further, for the purpose of this research I have focussed on the *content* rather than the form, language and style of the documents. I have also focussed on establishing the *dominant* perspectives in Cosatu’s approach to education, since I understand the ‘policy’ to be the position that dominates in the federation, resulting in its official adoption by Cosatu.

As Ginsberg notes,

there are traditional problems with historical documentary analysis, including the weighting of evidentiary status of different types of documents and the evaluation of possible interpretations and inferences from archival data (Aminzade and Laslett, in Babbie, 1991). As is the case with any institution, minutes of trade union meetings provide only a partial view of actual history, reflecting the biases of the author as well as the leadership who might be represented in a particular meeting (Ginsberg, 1997:52, original parentheses).

Cosatu's documents, although containing some information on what was *practiced*, primarily reflect the *stated* policies, decisions, and intentions. They also refer to non-formal (and to some extent) formal education, but not to the informal learning taking place in Cosatu and the workers' movement.

In order to validate the documentary evidence, and to provide further information on Cosatu's politics, and on the practice of non-formal and informal education, I needed to locate other sources. These took the form of interviews and secondary sources.

#### 4.1.2 Interviews

My primary source of information on Cosatu's policy was Cosatu's documents. The interviews were done after I had completed much of this documentary analysis, and my interview questions were shaped by findings that I had already made. The aim of the interviews was to provide illustrative examples related to the *practice* of non-formal education in Cosatu. I also intended them to enrich the information on the political context, and to provide insights to assist me in my understanding and *analysis* of Cosatu's policy on worker education. The interviews were not intended to establish the content of Cosatu's policy.

As is common within the qualitative research approach, my sample selection of interviewees was purposeful rather than random (see Merriam and Simpson, 1995). I aimed to locate people who had experience of the educational activities of Cosatu. I wished to ensure women were represented and to include some diversity in perspectives. The interviewees included women and men, people who had played the role of 'educators', and those who were 'learners', leadership and officials as well as ordinary workers, and those who had experience on the national as well as regional, affiliate, and shop steward local level (see Appendix B for the list of interviewees). The particular set of selected individuals within these categories was largely a result of 'ease of access'. They were people I knew to have been active in Cosatu in the 1980's, or people suggested to me by these interviewees or my supervisors. They were all currently based

in the Western Cape. Apart from Erwin, who was active on a national level, they were all describing their experience within the Western Cape region. Hence their perspectives may have reflected dynamics and politics specific only to the Western Cape. Because of the purposeful nature, small size (11 people) and the regional specificity of the interview sample, the findings are not generalisable. It could be argued however, that the 'positions' of some of the interviewees, such as Western Cape Regional Secretary, and National Education Officer, did qualify them to be 'authorities' on the subject.

I used an interview checklist with structured questions (see Appendix A). As the checklist shows, the focus of my research questions was on the *practice* of Cosatu's education during 1985-1988. Questions 1 and 2 served the purpose of 'locating' the interviewees, as well as providing information on the political context. However the primary purpose of these initial questions was to assist them in casting their minds back some 15 years. Question 6 is based on the categories that emerged from my documentary analysis, which described the key features of Cosatu's policy on worker education (see Chapter 6). Question 8 was intended to elicit opinions that would assist me with the analysis of the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education.

Most of the interviews were done individually and were one hour in length. With the agreement of the interviewees, they were recorded on tapes which will be stored in the Labour History Archives of the Trade Union Library. Some people had a lot to say – and went on for about 2 hours, a few contacting me afterwards with more to add. One of the interviews was comprised of two people, and another of three people. It was interesting for me to note that those who were still workers today, when approached for an interview, requested that it be done together with other workers that they had been politically active with during the 1980's. During the interview, the richest information came from their 'remembering together', and discussing with each other. Under the current political conditions, where much about the progressive and collective activities of ordinary workers is being forgotten, denied or distorted (see Grossman, 1994), workers themselves are subject to 'altering' their memories. Although a collective of workers interviewed could also collectively 'alter' the past, they are more likely to reconstruct

'reality' together than individually. The workers I interviewed together emphasised the 'progressive' nature of the 1980's. This was linked however with their assertion that in the current context many of these features are no longer present. Thus the past may have become defined by what is lacking in the present. Under further discussion, it was apparent there were also contradictions in the past. However the things they were critical of at that time no longer dominated their memories. This perspective is one that I share and have needed to guard against in order to present a more 'accurate' historical picture.

Although I attempted consistently to steer the questions to *education* in Cosatu, people's memories and stories intertwined the educational activities with organisational and political activities. I feel this was indicative of the fact that education was integrally related to organisational activity in Cosatu. Many of the interviewees focussed on current day events, and wanted to describe the nature of today's political problems, and make suggestions for addressing them. Although this was outside of my research topic, I considered it politically important to 'allow' this. It was also indicative to me of the political and education tradition of the workers' movement that they had been (and were) part of, which encouraged critical thinking and the tackling of political issues.

Appendix C is a broad summary of some of the information I got from these interviews. I did this for my own records, and because I intended to provide some feedback in an accessible (non-academic) form to the interviewees about what the others had said. However, as was pointed out to me (September Worker Education Seminar, 2002), my way of presenting data does not use quotes clearly and hence it may be confusing as to who is the 'author' of what is said. Because of this, I have not yet given copies to the interviewees. However I still feel it is an accurate reflection of a lot of what was said, and thus have included it as an appendix, noting that it is a draft, and is not to be quoted. Quotes can be obtained directly from the tapes (available at Trade Union Library, Cape Town). This appendix could still be used in the production of a 'popular' document drawing on my research report. I have also included as appendices, email correspondence with Nick Henwood (Appendix D) and Jonathan Grossman (Appendix E). Some further

issues related to the interviews are addressed in this chapter under the headings of 'research ethics' and 'data analysis'.

#### 4.1.3 *Secondary sources*

I have used the existing literature as a secondary source to provide information that elaborates, or provides background information, on the data in the primary sources. I also draw on the secondary sources in my analysis of Cosatu's policy.

## 4.2 **Data analysis**

Consistent with the qualitative research approach, my method of data analysis was inductive. This involved extensive reading, 'immersion in the detail' of the findings, and observations of categories, characteristics and patterns, through which I 'aggregated' generalities from particulars, concluding with the formation of a general and speculative analysis (see Merriam and Simpson, 1995).

Also consistent with the qualitative research approach was the fact that analysis of the data coexisted simultaneously with the collection of the data (see Merriam and Simpson, 1995). Hence adjustments to the collection of further data could occur as a result of analysis of what had been previously collected. Thus for example the findings in my research of the secondary sources shaped my approach to the documentary analysis. And the 'key features' I found in my documentary analysis determined the questions I asked the interviewees. Many of the interviews were also preceded or followed by secondary literature that helped me to understand and contextualise the specific experiences of those interviewees. For example, the interview with those workers who had been dismissed in 1988 was enhanced by the book recording their struggle (Dismissed Workers Collective, 1989). The domestic workers' story was enhanced by their book (Ekitchini Collective, n.d.), and Theron's struggles in the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) were recorded in South African Labour Bulletins (see Cooper, D. 1990; Theron, 1990). While reading the documents, I continued to refer to secondary sources to understand and locate events and perspectives in the primary data.

My process of 'immersion' in the data, and production of 'categories' for my research presentation and analysis was not however straightforward. The interviews and documents produced a wealth of information (see, for example, Appendix C), and I had to be strict about excluding anything, however interesting, that was tangential to my aims. For example, because of a large amount of information written by Erwin in the 1980's, it could have been interesting to compare his positions then with those stated now (see Erwin, interview 2002). However since he is no longer talking on behalf of Cosatu, such an exploration is not strictly pertinent to research on Cosatu's policy.

My process of analysis was as follows. I typed up notes on all the documents I had gathered covering this period, highlighting in particular any information pertaining to education. I examined my notes, looking for changes and continuities. My readings of the documents confirmed for me the argument in some of the literature that there had been a change in Cosatu's approach to worker education that could be noted from 1989. I considered the changes significant enough to divide Cosatu's policy into two time periods. Hence, I divided all my information into 1985-1988; and 1989-1992. I focussed first on 1985-1988, and typed a brief chronological 'story' of significant political and educational events. I then divided my notes into the categories of 'Cosatu politics', 'education policy' (or 'espoused' pedagogy), and 'educational practice'. I then organised all my notes under headings similar to those used by Hopkins (1985) in his exploration of worker education internationally (that is, Why, Where, Who, How and What). This organisation of data again confirmed for me that there was a distinction between Cosatu's approach before and after 1989.

In a second phase of analysis, I abandoned the headings (above). I then elected to organise my data in a way that expressed the *features* of Cosatu's pedagogy. I do still use the initial headings (Who, What and so on) to provide brief overviews at the beginning of some chapters.

The presentation of my research data was organised according to the following logic. The core of my investigation is the education *policy* of Cosatu, which predominantly involved non-formal worker education (see Chapter 6). However, I also gathered much information (though often incomplete and inconclusive) from the documents and the interviews on politics, and on the practice of non-formal education, as well as informal education. Following the perspectives outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 (which asserted the need to locate education and policy in relation to politics and practice), I decided to include much of this as a *context* in which to understand and analyse the policy on worker education (see Chapters 5 and 7). I focussed on the earlier period of 1985-1988 (see Chapters 5-7) because it has tended to be 'trivialised' in the dominant literature (Grossman, 2000b:5,6) and also because the documentary evidence proffered a wealth of information about a rich progressive tradition. In my discussion of the 1989-1992 period, I also provide some contextual information on politics and practice (see Chapter 8). In my analysis (Chapter 9), I note the changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy by comparing the key features of the policy articulated in the 1985-1988 period (see Chapter 6) with the features of the 1989-1992 policy (see Chapter 8). In my discussion of possible reasons for the changes and continuities, I draw on the information on politics and practice that I had provided as 'context'.

#### *4.2.1 Participation in seminar groups and experience in 'the field' of research*

Another aspect of my research process, which contributed significantly to the development of my analysis and theoretical perspective, was participation in, and attendance of, seminars and courses, as well as my political and educational experience in the field of worker education. I co-ordinated and participated in an invaluable non-formal seminar group on worker education from 1998-2003. I attended UCT seminars on worker education (1998) and globalisation (1999). These seminars provided opportunities to hear, share and explore ideas related to my research topic.

Through my work as an adult educator and activist since 1986, I have had the opportunity to observe and participate in political and educational activities within the South African

liberation movement. Although I have never been based within a union, I have worked extensively with workers and sometimes with trade union structures. Since I began my research, I have attended some trade union courses in order to observe current trends and activities in trade union education. These have included the Cosatu Spring School (1997), a Ditsela course for educators (1998), as well as numerous seminars run for unionists by the Trade Union Library (1996-2002). Although I have not included these observations in my findings, my research questions and analysis were shaped by my sense of what was happening currently in union education, as well as by the political questions I am asking as an activist.

### 4.3 Research ethics

I obtained written permission from Cosatu to access its documents in the WITS archives. The interviews were all preceded with the question of whether the interviewees were happy to be recorded on tape, named, quoted, and the tapes given to Trade Union Library (see Appendix A). All the interviewees agreed to this. I do not know if the knowledge that their responses would become 'public material' may have restricted the fullness of their responses. In the context of current complex political dynamics, what people said could effect their future job opportunities or political careers. Nevertheless their responses seemed to be open, and they included criticisms of dominant Cosatu and ANC positions.

One of the concerns I have as a researcher is the question of how my research process can benefit the research 'subjects', namely Cosatu, the working class, worker educators and the interviewees. Interviewees were mostly enthusiastic and open about their experiences and opinions. For most people the interview process involved recollecting a period that was politically and personally very intense for them. The process involved many positive and negative memories. Many people had been subjected to harsh repression and violence, as well as powerful positive experiences of collective worker struggle. Most had strong emotions about the past and about the changes in the present. I attempted to be empathetic and to allow them to feel heard. For some the process may have been

emotionally cathartic as well as politically engaging. However, as someone who has had experience as a counsellor and as an activist, I felt a strong sense of incompleteness with the interview process. Nevertheless there was an expression of gratitude by a number of the interviewees, and an indication that it was a valuable process for them.

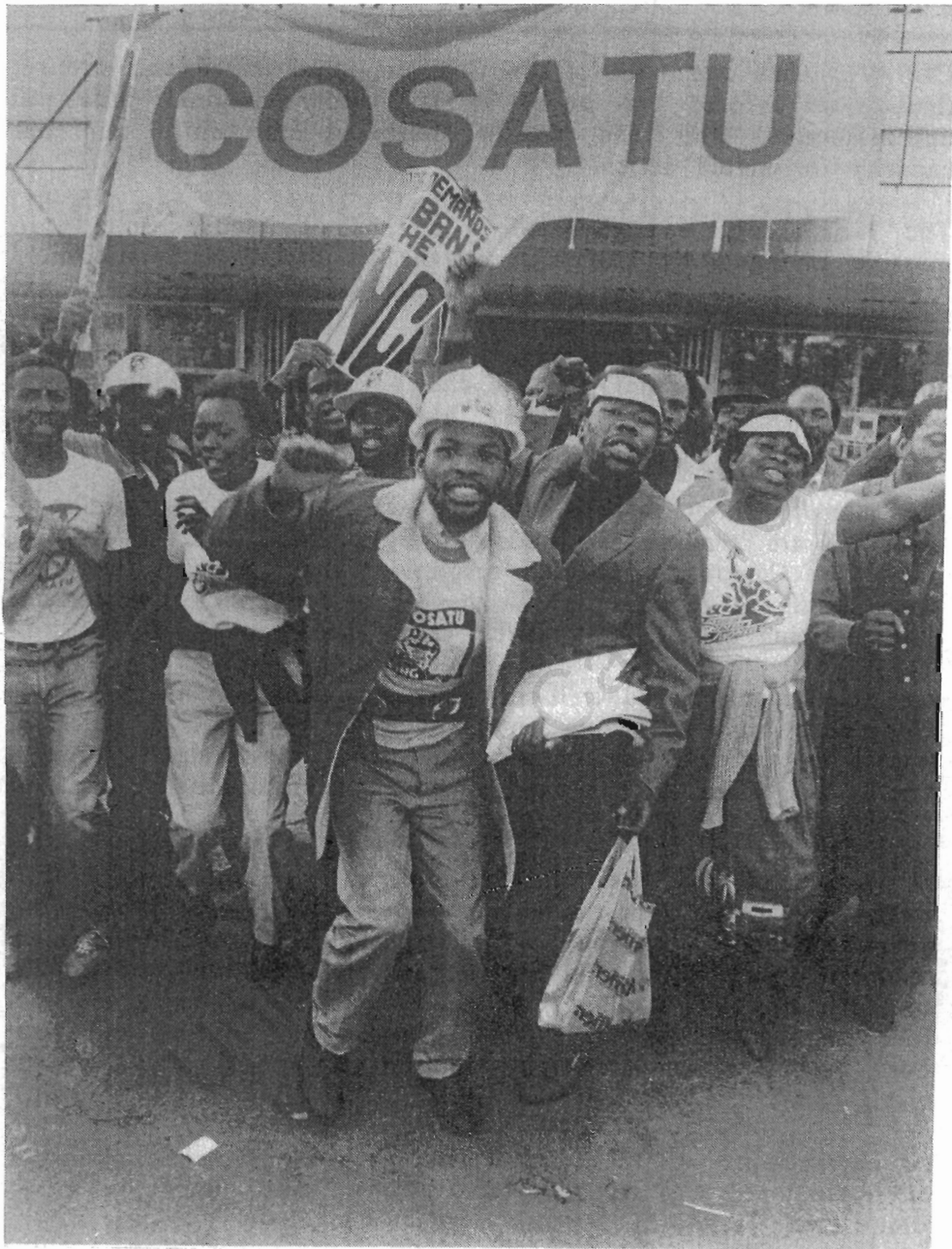
Since the data gathered through my research (documents and tapes, and the completed thesis itself) will all be given to Trade Union Library (which has set up a Labour History Archive), it will be accessible to a number of workers and worker educators (including Cosatu members). For most of the interviews I was able to use good quality recording equipment, thus the Workers World Radio Project (linked with Trade Union Library) would be able to make use of the tapes for its programmes. I have not yet resolved if or how I will produce a popular version of some aspects of my research, which may be accessible to a broader section of the working class.

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 4

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<sup>1</sup> I got my information on the 1991 Education Conference from Vally's (1994) references to the national report of this conference, and from SACCAWU's (1991) report on the conference.

<sup>2</sup> See for example General Secretary Naidoo's speech to Cosatu (Cosatu, 1987b) compared with his article in the Financial Mail (Naidoo, 1987).



## CHAPTER 5: THE POLITICS OF COSATU 1985-1988

This chapter describes the political context in which educational policy was developed. I give an overview of the politics of the working class movement and Cosatu, with a focus on the stated *policy* of Cosatu. I comment on some contradictions in Cosatu's politics, and discuss some aspects of its implementation of policy.

When I asked people if I could interview them about the period 1985 to 1988, their responses included: "Oh, that time they want us to forget" (Henwood), as well as "That was the strong time" (Silimela), and "I won't forget that time" (Ndongeni). These quotes echo the perspectives I noted in some of the literature that the history of this period has been trivialised. They also reflect a view of 'that time' as one of political significance to workers and unionists.

### 5.1 Preceding the formation of Cosatu

Although there had been progressive trade union activity since 1912, the unions which eventually formed Cosatu can only be traced back as far as the 1970's (Learning Nation, 1989; Friedman, 1987:14-35). Following the Durban strike wave in the early 1970's, there was a new mood amongst the working class of 'combativity and willingness to struggle collectively' (Grossman, 1996:2). This was also reflected in the widespread rebellion by the youth in 1976. In 1973, a number of 'independent' trade unions were formed. These were distinguishable from the conservative, racist TUCSA (Trade Union Council of South Africa) unions, in that they were independent of state and employers, and they organised predominantly black, 'unskilled' workers. In 1979, a number of these unions formed the non-racial Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). In 1980, others formed the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), which was more closely aligned with the Black Consciousness movement. Several unions existed outside both federations (Friedman, 1987). FOSATU unions began to build a tradition of participatory worker democracy, based on shopfloor practices of elections of shop stewards and worker leadership who were held accountable to the membership, and

expected to act only on mandates given by them. Most of the unions, although understanding they had a political role to play, focussed on building their factory strength, and tended to avoid overt political involvement or affiliation (Friedman, 1987).

The early 1980's was a period of economic recession, which sharpened tensions inside and outside of the factories. There were rent and transport increases, and the growth of civic associations, leading to several local struggles against high costs and poor services. Kraak notes that the trade unions were deeply affected by the community struggles that began in the Vaal Triangle in 1984 as rent and education boycotts developed into an uprising against township administration, and spread across the country (Kraak, 1993:133). Workers were taking their union experience into community struggles and vice versa.

Workers, experiencing increasing material hardship coupled with a growing political awareness initiated a number of strikes. In 1984 there was the highest number of strikes, and body of strikers to date in South Africa. In 1985 there were fewer strikes, but the number of workers involved increased. Employers responded with dismissals, which led to more strikes (Kraak, 1993:133,134). The state responded to industrial and community resistance with reforms aimed at including and co-opting a layer of black leaders<sup>1</sup>, as well as harsh repression, including a State of Emergency (SOE) in 1985.<sup>2</sup>

There were some differences in political opinion and approach among unionists. Friedman (1987:442-454) outlines some of the issues and tensions that existed with regard to how the trade unions related to politics and political organisations. These included different approaches to union democracy; political differences in understanding the path to and relationship between national liberation and socialism; as well as differences between the leadership and the membership of the unions. Both Friedman and Grossman give examples of the combativity of the workers overtaking the caution of the leaders (Friedman, 1987:442-454; Grossman, 1996:4).

As Grossman argues, the political consciousness of workers was growing, and by their activity and their questioning they were conflicting not only with their employers but were also raising broader political questions about challenging the power of state. Fosatu leadership, although making (unfulfilled) proposals about establishing a workers' party were not able to adequately address these questions (Grossman, 1996:2-4).

The workers' search for political answers coincided with increased sabotage acts by the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and with the establishment of the anti-apartheid United Democratic Front (UDF), which increasingly assumed the identity of 'the open wing of the ANC'<sup>3</sup>. These organisations were addressing the question of state power, and thus resonated with the questions raised by the workers (Grossman, 1996:4). They were however both 'petty-bourgeois'- led organisations, thus the question was raised for the workers' movement of how to relate to class alliances, and how the struggle against capitalism was related to the struggle against apartheid. Tensions arising out of different answers to these questions were to contribute to shaping the development of the union movement (Grossman, 1996; McKinley, 1997).

## **5.2 The politics of Cosatu and the workers' movement**

Cosatu was launched at the end of 1985, in a time of recession and state repression. It was the result of four years of difficult unity talks, and was a milestone in the achievement of worker unity on a mass scale, bringing together half a million workers from 33 affiliates (Cosatu Video, 1985; Cosatu, 1989a:2). It was a merger of Fosatu, CUSA's Nation Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and some previously unaffiliated unions (some of which had UDF links). In 1986, the Black Consciousness-aligned unions that had not joined Cosatu, merged to form Nactu (National Council of Trade Unions) (Baskin, 1991).

In 1986 there was a sharp increase in strike activity, which further increased in 1987 (Kraak, 1993:135) "as workers asserted the confidence flowing from new unity and organisation" (Grossman, 1996:5). Workers' forms of organisation, resistance and

struggle in the workplace and communities were creative and diverse. They included strikes, stay-aways, 'blacking action', go-slows, boycotts, meetings, workshops, congresses, conferences, campaigns, mass funerals, meetings in trains, buses and hostels, protests, self-defense committees, street committees, violent conflict, siyalala's<sup>4</sup> and cultural groups and activities (examples of these are in Cooper et al, 2002; Grossman 1996; Friedman, 1987, McKinley, 1997).

The government responded to the strike wave with the 1987 Labour Relations Amendment (LRA) Bill, ongoing violence and repression, and in 1988 imposed severe restrictions on mass organisations (Grossman, 1996:5). In 1988 there was a slight downturn in strikes, but an increase in stayaways indicated that there was not a decline in militancy (Kraak, 1993:136). In 1988 Cosatu and Nactu organised the biggest stayaway to date, as part of a campaign against the LRA and the political restrictions imposed by the government (Grossman, 1996:5). Cosatu's campaign was defending the right to strike, and hence in support of the central weapon of struggle that workers were using. In 1987, Cosatu launched the Living Wage Campaign, which resonated with the workers' demands for higher wages and improved working conditions (see Cosatu, 1987a). Grossman notes that the basic economic demands were increasingly linked to broader demands for a transformed society. This was increasingly asserted as a struggle for socialism (Grossman, 1996:5). The vision of the alternative society was inclusive: "Jobs for all, a living wage for all, a future for all to live without oppression and exploitation" (Grossman, 2000:3). Workers were not only fighting for an alternative society in the future, but in their struggles and organisations, were already building an alternative progressive tradition. Workers were "creating spaces in the midst of a brutal system and state of emergency, in which they actually collectively controlled aspects of their own lives" (Grossman, 1996:6). An 'embryonic alternative' was "grounded in the lived experience of survival, resistance, organisation and struggle to change reality. Each march, strike and meeting was the foundation of another way of doing things and another way of taking decisions - not just a vision, but also a reality" (Grossman, 2000b:6).

The 'alternative' tradition included some of the following inter-related features: a commitment to worker democracy that was participatory, collective, inclusive, non-racist and non-sexist; a strong sense of unity, solidarity and confidence in their own power; a preparedness to fight; and a commitment to long-term struggle (see Grossman, 1996,2000; Friedman, 1987; Dismissed Workers' Collective, 1989, for examples and elaborations of these features).

The testimony of workers active in Cosatu-affiliated unions at that time illustrates many aspects of the progressive features of the workers' movement. For example, Ndongeni states that workers were 'crying out for socialism'. He said that even if leaders wanted them to support capitalism, they wouldn't (interview, 2002). Silimela asserts that:

Those were the strong days...We were all leaders, and we were forcing our way through. We sang a song about us being like a car without brakes – so you must not stand in our way: *Suka endleleni* (get out of the way)! If the doors are locked we will kick them down...We were cheeky in those days (interview, 2002, my parentheses).

Sibeko, interviewed at the 1987 Cosatu Congress stated:

I tasted the strength of Cosatu for the first time at the Congress...I felt that Cosatu is the workers and every worker is part of it, whether he comes from Cape Town or Pongola. We all have the same kind of problems and we are fighting the same struggles. My spirit is very high. I felt like laughing and crying when my comrades were speaking (Cosatu, 1987a:22).

In 1988, hotel workers who were fighting their dismissal after an anti-LRA stay-away, said:

...we were speaking to one comrade and he asked us how we can manage to keep our spirit so high: 'You are wounded people, but it seems as if you are making a celebration.' And we told him: It is true, we are celebrating. Every day that we stay united we are celebrating. Because we are defeating the bosses who want to divide us. Every day we continue the struggle we are celebrating because we are defeating the bosses who want to force us onto the streets...(Dismissed Workers' Collective, 1989:15).

The dismissed workers also asserted that: "Whatever happened to us, we knew it might happen. But we are not prepared to be satisfied today if our children will suffer tomorrow...the struggle is not just for us today. It is also for our children tomorrow. We

are ready to fight to the last drop of our tears” (Dismissed Workers’ Collective cited in Grossman, 1996:1).

As Grossman notes, these progressive features

were unevenly developed, facing both internal and external challenge; they carried limitations, shortcoming and weaknesses. We are considering the development of a movement of struggle in a context of structured racial inequality, patriarchy, immense poverty, brutality, oppression, exploitation and violence. Aggressive competitiveness, individualism, instrumentalism, were dominant parts of capitalist morality, contextually affirmed, and corroding collectivism and solidarity inside the workers’ movement (Grossman, 1996:6).

Thus there were many factors undermining the implementation of the progressive tradition of the workers’ movement. Nevertheless workers continued to forge an ‘alternative’ way of life.

### **5.3 Official structures and meetings of Cosatu**

Cosatu was (and is) a federation made up of affiliate unions (see Appendix J for a diagrammatic representation of Cosatu’s structures). Its structure was as follows. The ‘highest controlling body’ was the National Congress (NC), to be held at least once every two years. This was attended by delegates of affiliates, proportionally represented (according to the size of the affiliate), with workers (as opposed to officials) in the majority of the delegation. At this congress, policy and resolutions were made and national officials elected. The Central Executive Committee (CEC) was made up of representatives from all the affiliates, plus the officials elected at the NC (Cosatu, 1987a:2). However this representation was not strictly proportional, hence there was greater representation of smaller affiliates (Baskin, 1991:103). The CEC managed the affairs of the federation between the National Congresses. The Regional Congress (RC), and the Regional Executive Committee (regional affiliate representatives and officials elected at the RC) carried out the decisions of the National Congress and the Central Executive Committee. The Local Shop Stewards’ Councils coordinated the work of affiliates on a local level, but did not have any constitutional rights (see Cosatu, 1987a:2).

Thus, apart from the positions they may take to the national congresses, local and regional affiliate structures had little ongoing control over Cosatu activities and decisions. The dominant power of the CEC was constitutionally entrenched.

Cosatu's launching national congress was late in 1985, with its second congress in 1987, and a 'special congress' held in 1988. It held an education conference in 1987, and a national women's workshop in 1988. It also held other national workshops and meetings related to current campaigns (see Cosatu documents, 1985-1988). These conferences and workshops did not have decision-making powers, but could act on decisions made by the CEC or the National Congress, and make proposals to these structures. The relationship between Cosatu's structures and the education structures and officials is discussed further in section 6.1.5 and 7.1.1 (see also Appendix J).

Although strictly speaking, the 'members' of Cosatu were its affiliates, I will generally refer to the combined membership of all its affiliates as the 'membership of Cosatu'. If I am referring to its member affiliates I will state this explicitly. This is because Cosatu referred to the workers who made up the affiliates as its 'membership', and because the workers of Cosatu saw themselves as members of Cosatu, as well as members of their affiliate union (see, for example, Cosatu 1987a:22, cited in 5.2).

#### **5.4 Cosatu's political policy**

From Cosatu's policy I have drawn out their political policy. I have also selected issues that may have related to their educational policy (see Chapter 6). These are some of the positions stated by Cosatu in their official documents:

##### *5.4.1 Cosatu was to play an independent political role*

From its inception the federation claimed for itself a political role in the struggle in South Africa. At the launch of Cosatu, Rhamoposa stated: "A giant has risen. We will not stand for opposition or defeat. Long live COSATU!! Never before have workers been so

united, powerful, poised to make a mark on society. The question is how will this power be used? What will be its political role?" (Cosatu video, 1985).

The question asked was not 'should Cosatu play a political role?' but rather 'what should it be, and how should it be played?' The 1985 resolutions stated that the federation should play a major role in the struggle for a non-racial and democratic society, and should not hesitate to take political action. It stated that it was not affiliating to any political organisation, but argued for disciplined alliances with organisations whose interests and organisational practices were compatible with the interests of the working class (Cosatu, 1987a:32,33). The subject of alliances was debated and contested within Cosatu (Vally, 1994:54-56; Baskin, 1991:91-109), and will be explored later in this chapter. However what was agreed upon and frequently asserted was that any 'joint' struggle should be under the leadership of the working class (see Cosatu, 1987a:5; 1987c:2). It was also asserted that the federation would remain independent and autonomous, not only from state and employer organisations, but also from political organisations (Cosatu, 1987c:4). Although the content of its politics was contested, there was a broadly accepted understanding that Cosatu's role was political, and that politics included but also went beyond 'workplace based' issues. Cosatu issued strong resolutions and statements on a broad range of political and economic issues (Cosatu, 1987a:31-34,41; 1987c:19).

#### 5.4.2 *Cosatu was to fight for socialism*

There was a predominantly 'socialist' perspective in Cosatu, although there were conflicting and contradictory positions as to what it meant and how it was to be achieved. Support for socialism was openly asserted by workers and leaders in speeches, documents, songs and banners (see for example Cosatu videos 1985 and 1987, and pictures in Cosatu, 1987a:1,33). Cosatu was fighting to improve the conditions of workers in the present. It was demanding higher wages, better working conditions, recognition of the unions, and was fighting against retrenchments and dismissals (see Cosatu, 1987c:40). However it related these fights to its struggle for socialism (Cosatu, 1987a:5). Cosatu's resolutions on political policy asserted that: "Workers in our country

are not only striving for better conditions in the mines, factories, shops and farms but also for a democratic, socialist society controlled by the working class” (Cosatu, 1987a:31).

Although Cosatu was openly fighting apartheid, it was the transformation to socialism that was emphasised. A worker leader interviewed at Cosatu’s launch stated:

What we want is not a modification of apartheid machinery. Apartheid cannot be reformed it must be destroyed... We don’t want to change the face of capitalism, by putting black capitalists there. We want to change the whole structure and end the exploitation of man by man. It would be a proper socialist system, where workers have control of their lives and society, and wealth is shared equally amongst the people (interview with Mayekiso, in Cosatu video, 1985).

Although Cosatu decided not to affiliate to any international union federations (because of the ‘Cold War’ ideological divisions within the international movement), it argued for the development of “fraternal links with worker organisations in all countries committed to our struggle for freedom in South Africa, and the building of true international working class solidarity”. In particular it emphasised the need to build links with unions in Southern Africa (Cosatu, 1987c:4-11).

#### 5.4.3 *Democratic workers’ control*

Integral to Cosatu’s belief in socialism, were its principles of worker control and democracy. It was asserted that worker control should take place in the workplace, the union and all spheres of society (Cosatu, 1987d; Erntzen, 1986:24). Within the union this was to be implemented through mandates, accountability, and democratic structures on every level (Cosatu video, 1985; Mafumadi, 1986b:17,24). Cosatu leadership argued that political differences were healthy, and debate was welcomed. Cosatu’s policy of ‘democratic centralism’ argued for the debating of differences before taking a majority decision – which all were then expected to abide by (Baskin, 1991:242; Cosatu, 1987b:5).

Worker democracy was seen as essential not only for building effective organisation but also for equipping workers to take control of their lives and society (Mafumadi,

1986b:24). What was built in the unions and in workers' struggles at the workplace and in the community was seen as the foundation for a future socialist society.

When Cosatu president, Barayi, was asked: 'In what way are the struggles which the workers are waging today laying the seeds of socialism?' he linked socialism directly to the issue of worker control and democracy:

The workers' struggle for socialism has already begun. Finally socialism means workers having control over their own lives. To control our own lives, workers need to control everything that effects our lives. This struggle for control is going on all the time. It is one of the principles of Cosatu and is something we fight to deepen and extend every day. Whether it is mineworkers bringing their wives to the hostels or SAB workers striking because bosses are making a unilateral decision or workers fighting to throw out a rotten leadership in their union or the working class involved in building democratic community structures or whatever – it is all about control. And socialism is also about workers controlling (interview with Barayi, in Cosatu, 1987a:6).

#### 5.4.4 *Opposition to capitalism*

Cosatu was open in its rejection of capitalism. Cosatu speeches and papers argued that it was a cause of suffering for workers, and identified and criticised capitalist policies and strategies, including deregulation, government and business 'reforms' and migrant labour policies (see for example Cosatu, 1987c:19-23,41; Cosatu video, 1987a).

Up until 1988 Cosatu frequently and openly rejected class collaboration. For example, Naidoo stated "there is no basis at all for any cooperation between organised labour and so-called liberal bourgeois elements of society" (Cosatu video, 1987a). In 1986, Mafumadi (assistant general secretary of Cosatu) argued that as the capitalists were beginning to feel their vital interests threatened (by the policies of the racist regime) they had tried a number of schemes to make the country 'safe' for them. He gave the example of the Federated Chamber of Industry charter. He asserted that: "This is an attempt to moderate what unfortunately cannot be moderated. They are trying to advance the perspective of a 'permanent' negotiated settlement between us and our class enemy. This

is of course an attempt to direct our struggles into channels secure for capital” (Mafumadi, 1986b:16).

This rejection of class collaboration extended to a rejection of a negotiated settlement with the state. Mafumadi argued that political “power itself cannot be handed to us over a negotiating table”, and that “there is no earthly hope of dialogue with the racist minority regime that will lead to the dismantling of apartheid, much less to a situation where the control of mines, factories, shops and farms shall be transferred into the hands of the toiling masses. It is none but ourselves who are entrusted with the destiny of this land” (Mafumadi, 1986b:16).

#### 5.4.5 *Non-racism and non-sexism*

Cosatu’s struggle for democracy and socialism included a fight against racism and sexism (see Cosatu, 1987c:1-3,33-35). Its principle of non-racialism distinguished it from the racist apartheid state, as well as from the Black Consciousness organisations and trade union federation. Cosatu was non-racial, and its goal was to transform South Africa into a non-racial democracy. This was manifest in its commitment to end apartheid.

Its principle of non-sexism although not included in its resolutions on political policy, was covered in its 1985 and 1986 resolutions on women. Cosatu noted a number of ways in which women workers were oppressed and exploited. It noted that the kind of work women did was often limited and boring and they received lower pay, and that they faced sexual harassment, dangers while commuting, and dangerous working conditions or retrenchment when they fell pregnant (Cosatu, 1987c:33,34). In 1987 similar problems were observed, with the addition of noting the undermining and disrespectful behaviour of the ‘male comrades’ in the union. It was argued that some men prevented women being active in the unions, and were responsible for sexual harassment (Cosatu, 1987b:23). Cosatu resolved to fight discrimination against women at work, in society and in the federation (Cosatu, 1987c:33-35).

Cosatu came up with some progressive recommendations. These included proposals to fight for maternity and paternity rights, equal pay, and an end to all forms of sexual harassment and discrimination. It was also proposed that union meetings be held at a time that would encourage participation from women who have childcare responsibilities and that 'the comrades' jointly share the childcare domestic responsibilities. Cosatu committed itself to taking up, and monitoring these issues within the education programme. There was a decision to organise a national women's conference to be held in 1988 (Cosatu, 1987b:23,24; Cosatu, 1987c:33,34).

Cosatu's documents indicate that there was some theorisation and debate on the relationship between class, race and colonial oppression and exploitation (see, for example, Cosatu 1986b,c;1987c:1-7). However a reading of the documents indicates that there appears to be no integration of gender issues into this theorisation.

### **5.5 Changes, conflicts and contradictions in Cosatu's policy and practice**

Although there was enough continuity within Cosatu's politics during this time to define it as a distinct period, there were also developments, conflicts and changes within the policy stated by Cosatu, which were also manifested in the practice of Cosatu. These are best understood in the context of long-standing debates within the federation.

A number of differences in style and politics within the federation grew out of the politics and traditions of the unions that preceded Cosatu. Since the first trade unions in South Africa, labour and other political organisations in South Africa have grappled with many issues related to the nature and purpose of working class struggle (see Friedman, 1987).

I will focus on two related but distinguishable issues that were of significance to the tensions within Cosatu: firstly, the approach to worker leadership and democracy, and secondly, the relationship to broader political struggle.

### 5.5.1 *Different approaches to worker leadership and democracy*

Friedman (1987:412-415) deals primarily with this first point. He observed tensions prior to Cosatu between newer community or UDF unions and the more established Fosatu unions. He notes that they had different styles of leadership and democracy. The Fosatu unions were built on representative shopfloor democracy, where leaders were given mandates and held accountable to their structures. In the newer unions, the workers 'followed' the leaders, and mass meetings were the chosen form of organisation. He argues that these unions were more overtly political with the older unions being more cautious.

Friedman notes that with the formation of Cosatu the earlier divisions became blurred, as the older unions adopted more of the style of the newer. He states that critics charged that union democracy was sacrificed in the process. He notes that older unions attempted to inject internal democracy into the federation, but claimed that this was no easy task, for the new political climate had brought a style that strengthened the hand of leaders not fully committed to a democratic style. Friedman presents these tensions as more than just union tactics but as 'two different political strategies at war'. He argues that the outcome of this battle would decide whether the union movement continued to be the centre of grassroots democracy and whether its members would continue to pioneer a style of politics which stressed the organised power of rank and file workers rather than the charisma of a few leaders (Friedman, 1987:415).

An analysis of Baskin's descriptions of the political groupings in Cosatu and their representation on the Central Executive Committee, indicate that the pro-UDF bloc were a minority of the membership (23%) but had the most influence on the leadership level of Cosatu (49%)(see Baskin, 1991:106-108). This bloc had the least experience of building strong democratic organisation, and was supportive of ANC politics (Friedman, 1987). This suggests that the positions of the 'newer' unions were strongly represented in Cosatu leadership.

### 5.5.2 *Relationship to political struggle*

Cosatu asserted: “There is no conflict between the struggle for national liberation and socialism. The struggle against national oppression and the struggle against capitalist exploitation are complimentary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation” (Cosatu, 1987a:32). There was, however, much conflict within the federation about these issues. This included contestation on the subject of alliances with political parties and other classes, as well as conflict about how to relate to the state and capital (see Friedman, 1987; Baskin, 1991).

The characterisation of these political differences is also a contested terrain. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, there are problems with characterising the differences as ‘workerist’ and ‘populist’. Baskin argues that there were those that asserted that ‘racial oppression was the central political contradiction’. This grouping argued for the unification of classes in the struggle against apartheid, and that the fight for socialism should begin only after apartheid has been eliminated. He asserts that another grouping saw apartheid as a ‘mask concealing capitalist exploitation’, and were suspicious of class co-operation and alliances (Baskin, 1991:96). Examples of the political differences relating to these positions were evident in the debates at the 1987 Congress. For example the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) argued that the national democratic struggle was primary, and that workers needed to build alliances with those who were anti-racist. The National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) argued that socialism was the primary objective, and that workers’ alliances should be with those who are anti-capitalist. There were also debates and divisions around the adoption of the Freedom Charter (see Cosatu 1987a; Baskin, 1991).

### 5.5.3 *Cosatu’s relationship to the ANC and SACP*

In 1987 and 1988 the ANC was conducting largely secret talks – with capital outside the country and with government from inside prison cells (Grossman, 1996:7). Grossman states that “by 1988 union leadership had been informed that the ANC was being forced

into seeking a negotiated settlement by the combined pressures of imperialism and the Soviet Union” (Grossman, 1996:7). Cosatu’s relationship to the ANC and SACP was a significant, contested and complex one. The leadership and significant portions of the membership of Cosatu’s affiliates indicated support for the ANC (Baskin, 1991). Workers, in response to the ANC’s overt military and political attacks on the state, were increasingly seeing the ANC as the organisation that would lead them to state power (Grossman, 1996:5). The Cosatu president, Barayi, praised the ANC leadership at the launch of Cosatu, and soon after its launch Cosatu leadership went to Lusaka to meet with the ANC and SACP leadership (McKinley, 1997:70). The ANC-supported Freedom Charter was adopted at Cosatu’s 1987 Congress (Cosatu, 1987c:2,3). Many of the Cosatu leaders and members were supporters or secret members of the ANC or SACP. And as Baskin (1991) points out, by 1988, the dominant ‘bloc’ of Cosatu leadership had adopted ‘UDF’ politics (which was essentially the politics promoted by the ANC at the time). When the ANC and SACP were unbanned in 1990, Cosatu’s affiliations were openly revealed, and an alliance between the three organisations was declared.

It has been argued that the ANC was historically dominated by petty-bourgeois interests, (McKinley, 1997) and the SACP by Stalinist politics (Grossman, 1985). In 1988, the ANC released ‘Constitutional Guidelines’ - which committed the ANC to a programme within the framework of a liberal bourgeois democracy. These guidelines confirmed the ANC’s acceptance of a negotiated path. McKinley argues that the guidelines were issued by the external leadership and were not reflective of the position of the ANC’s supporters, and that the proposals were consistent with ANC/SACP ‘two stage theory’ and ‘united front strategy’ (McKinley, 1997:90,91). It has been argued that both parties had reformist tendencies, and acted at times against the interests of the working class, pursuing ‘accommodationist’ and ‘class-collaborationist’ strategies (McKinley, 1997; Grossman, 1996).

However, as Grossman argues, during this period of militant mass action, workers were defining and determining what *they* thought the ANC stood for. This was being imbued with workers’ radical practice of worker democracy and their visions of a socialist

society. This in effect went beyond the actual beliefs and practices of the petty-bourgeois organisation in exile that the ANC was. Although Cosatu adopted the Freedom Charter in 1987, workers still demanded a workers' charter. Although they supported 'democracy', their notions went far beyond the bourgeois democracy of merely voting (Grossman, 1996:5,6).

#### 5.5.4 *Developments in the politics of Cosatu*

In 1985 and 1986 Cosatu's politics were clearly socialist, and based on an understanding of class conflict and working class independence. However, these issues remained points of contestation within Cosatu, and over time there was a shift in the position that dominated in the federation. At the 1987 Congress, after disagreements and debates, NUMSA finally accepted the Freedom Charter as a programme of minimum political demands; but argued for the need to also develop a Workers' Charter (Baskin, 1991:214-223). The proposal for a Workers' Charter was rejected by the Congress. The 1987 Congress adopted the Freedom Charter, indicating a cementing of Cosatu's relationship with the ANC. At this same congress the exiled, ANC-aligned South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) sent a message urging Cosatu *not* to adopt a policy commitment to socialism (Grossman, 1996:5).

Increasingly the emphasis on socialism and workers' independence co-existed with an emphasis on national democratic struggle, and broad cross-class alliances. By 1988, the politics of the 'UDF-bloc' of unions had come to dominate federation politics (Baskin, 1991:298). The idea of a 'united front' of pro-working class organisations to fight apartheid capitalism, was increasingly replaced with a broad 'popular front' of anti-apartheid organisations. There was also a growing assertion of the need to negotiate with the government (see Cosatu, 1988; Baskin, 1991:277-281,294-298). However, there was still a 'small but vociferous grouping' arguing that Cosatu's 'populists' were promoting class collaboration and a negotiated settlement rather than a policy of class struggle (Baskin, 1991:295). Cosatu's 1988 Special Congress advocated broad anti-apartheid alliances, and Cosatu attempted to set up an anti-apartheid conference (Baskin, 1991).

Grossman (1996:5) notes that the later anti-LRA stay-away in 1988 was redirected away from outright rejection of the LRA, and towards the demand for negotiations with employers on the LRA, and that mass action was then replaced by talks.

## 5.6 To what extent did Cosatu practice the policy it espoused?

As I have mentioned in my theoretical framework, policy cannot be taken at face value. Cosatu's policy does not necessarily reflect the practice of Cosatu. Although a full examination of the practice of Cosatu is beyond the scope of this thesis, there are a few questions arising from my data that I feel can be raised.

Cosatu's implementation of policy would have varied according to level (for example, local, regional or national structures) and there would have been differences in geography, affiliates and over time. The secondary sources recording the politics of Cosatu in these years appear to indicate that its policies *were* in general practiced within the federation and the workers' movement as a whole (see for example: Baskin, 1991; Grossman, 1996). For the most part, the interviews I conducted with unionists in the Western Cape suggest that the political policies were practiced in this region (interviews, 2002). However there were also questions raised about the effectiveness of Cosatu's implementation.

### 5.6.1 To what extent was Cosatu practicing socialist politics?

The positions outlined earlier on socialism, class alliances, and class collaboration, were contradicted in some other statements made by Cosatu in this period. This is particularly evident in speeches and articles of Cosatu leaders that were addressed to business. Although the speeches were critical of business, they were also challenging them to 'improve', and become a force that supported Cosatu's struggle (see Cosatu, 1986b:20-33).

An article by Naidoo (1987:48-50) in the Financial Mail (not recorded in Cosatu's documents, but claiming to represent Cosatu) indicated a desire to establish a relationship between business and unions, which required them to have a common understanding on re-structuring the South African economy, and business to support the struggle against apartheid. He was effectively advising business on how to build credibility with the trade union movement and black workers, in order to ensure the protection of capitalism. Naidoo stated: "The danger of the business sectors' involvement in undemocratic ventures - particularly at a time when the majority of our leaders are in jail or in detention or in exile - is that the result is rejection not only of that political system but of the whole system of capitalism..." (Naidoo, 1987:48). Naidoo's article contained no mention of socialism.

These perspectives (communicated to business structures) contradicted Cosatu's assertions of working class independence, class conflict and socialism. However they were consistent with the political position that asserted the need for the unification of classes in the struggle against apartheid.

#### *5.6.2 To what extent was there worker democracy in Cosatu?*

Cosatu's policy, constitutions, and structures all aimed to build worker democracy. And, as I described in the section on worker struggle, there was a progressive, democratic tradition being built amongst the working class. How effectively this translated into actual worker control over Cosatu structures is hard to assess. As I have discussed, some unions preceding Cosatu had an established democratic tradition, and they carried this into the federation, but there were also unions and political practices that contradicted this tradition. The UDF unions, who had less of a history of worker democracy, dominated the CEC. The power given to the CEC over the regions, and the lack of constitutional power given to the locals, created a possibility of a 'top-down' line of command (see sections 5.3 and 5.5.1).

Vally argues that political debates and seminars did not effectively happen in most of the regions, that many workers and officials felt there was a lack of tolerance of different political views, and that decisions were being made undemocratically (Vally, 1994:56).

In the interviews I conducted, there are opinions that the leadership of the affiliates, and the national leadership, did not always operate democratically (Henwood, Theron, interviews, 2002). There were instances of the national leadership acting on significant issues without consulting further than themselves (see Baskin, 1991:74). Theron states that at the 1987 National Congress there were ‘no actual elections’: all the leadership went through unopposed. He argues that this raised questions as to how prepared the delegates were for the democratic process (Theron, interview, 2002).

Some unionists feel that in their region Cosatu operated democratically. They have the impression that in the Western Cape the elected Cosatu structures were strongly supportive of worker democracy (see Ndongeni, Caesar, Henwood, interviews, 2002). An opinion is expressed however, that the leadership of the *affiliates* did not always operate democratically. This sometimes meant that the regional Cosatu structures could not ‘access’ ordinary workers. They were blocked by a ‘shell’ of leaders that was difficult to ‘crack through’ (Henwood, interview, 2002).

However, the implementation of worker democracy was not purely determined by leadership. The strength and activities of workers forced a certain degree of control and democracy onto the federation. As Silimela says of the workers in the 1980’s: “We were all leaders and we were forcing our way through” (interview, 2002).

### 5.6.3 *To what extent was non-racism and non-sexism practiced?*

The membership and leadership of Cosatu was open to and included all races and sexes. In practice, however, most white workers did not join Cosatu, and women were underrepresented. Women still faced enormous obstacles in the home, workplace and union. Sexism in the unions was rife and Cosatu’s resolutions on gender were not

implemented. This compromised women's ability to participate fully and equally, and was thus a factor that made the building of worker democracy flawed and difficult. Women were extremely underrepresented (in fact mostly *unrepresented*) on a leadership level in Cosatu as well as in its affiliates (see Cosatu, 1988a; 1989c).

Nevertheless, women workers were active and militant, and were developing a growing confidence in themselves. In some instances men were becoming more conscientised as the result of women's struggles and joint struggles with employers around gender issues (see section 7.2.6).<sup>5</sup>

#### *5.6.4 To what extent did Cosatu support the strikes?*

Given that the strike is the workers' primary tool for collectively defending and advancing themselves, it is significant to ask how Cosatu responded to the strikes that were happening at that time. As already mentioned there were unprecedented strike waves, and Cosatu's anti-LRA campaign was defending the workers' right to strike.

The strikes were the activity of the workers of the affiliates of Cosatu, yet there was minimal coordination between them (Grossman, 1996:5). Grossman notes that there was a real possibility of a national strike movement that was lost. The 1987 Congress, for example, was both on the heels of, and immediately preceded, planned major strikes, but these strikes (and possible solidarity action) were not even discussed (Grossman, 1996:5; see Cosatu, 1987a). Although this failure could also be attributed to the affiliates – it reflected on Cosatu's functioning as a united federation. Henwood (interview, 2002) believes that in 1987, amidst a wave of strikes, the leadership of Cosatu was more interested in asserting their control over unions and workers, than in building on the wave of strikes.

### 5.6.5 *Possible reasons for tensions and contradictions in implementation*

The tensions and contradictions within and between the policy and practice of Cosatu may have been a reflection of the differences between the politics of the leadership of the federation and that of the mass of its membership. Henwood suggests that the national Cosatu leadership was mostly reformist, but allowed or espoused progressive politics, because of the social pressure of the workers. He argues that: “All along what pushed leaders not to silence or argue against revolutionary politics was that the social pressure of the workers in struggle was so great they couldn’t afford not to” (Henwood, interview, 2002). Grossman notes similar tensions between the progressive tradition of the workers’ movement, and the dominant politics of the formal institution. He argues that “the progressive tradition was inside formal organisation, but at critical moments in conflict with aspects of the dominant politics. At other moments, the weight of the progressive tradition was so great that the dominant politics had to reflect that for the meantime” (Grossman, email, August 2002). These perspectives are consistent with Silimela’s assertion that the workers were all leaders and were ‘forcing their way through’ (see section 5.2).

## 5.7 **Summary**

From 1985-1988 there was a high level of worker activity and militancy. This was evident in the strikes, stay-aways and level of organisation of the working class. The dominant politics of the workers’ movement, and the policy of Cosatu, advocated socialism, international worker solidarity, worker independence, worker democracy, worker control, non-racism and non-sexism. Although there does appear to be some significant implementation of these principles, there were also changes, contradictions and conflicts within and between the policy and the practice of Cosatu. These could have been due to the unevenness of the development of the progressive tradition of the workers’ movement, and the difficulties of building progressive practice in a capitalist context that undermines this practice. They may also have been related to differing approaches within the federation to political struggle and worker democracy. Some of the

contradictions could further be explained by the argument that the leadership of Cosatu was *reformist*, but the federation espoused and, to a large extent, practiced *revolutionary* politics because of the pressure of the progressive tradition of the workers ‘forcing through’.

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 5

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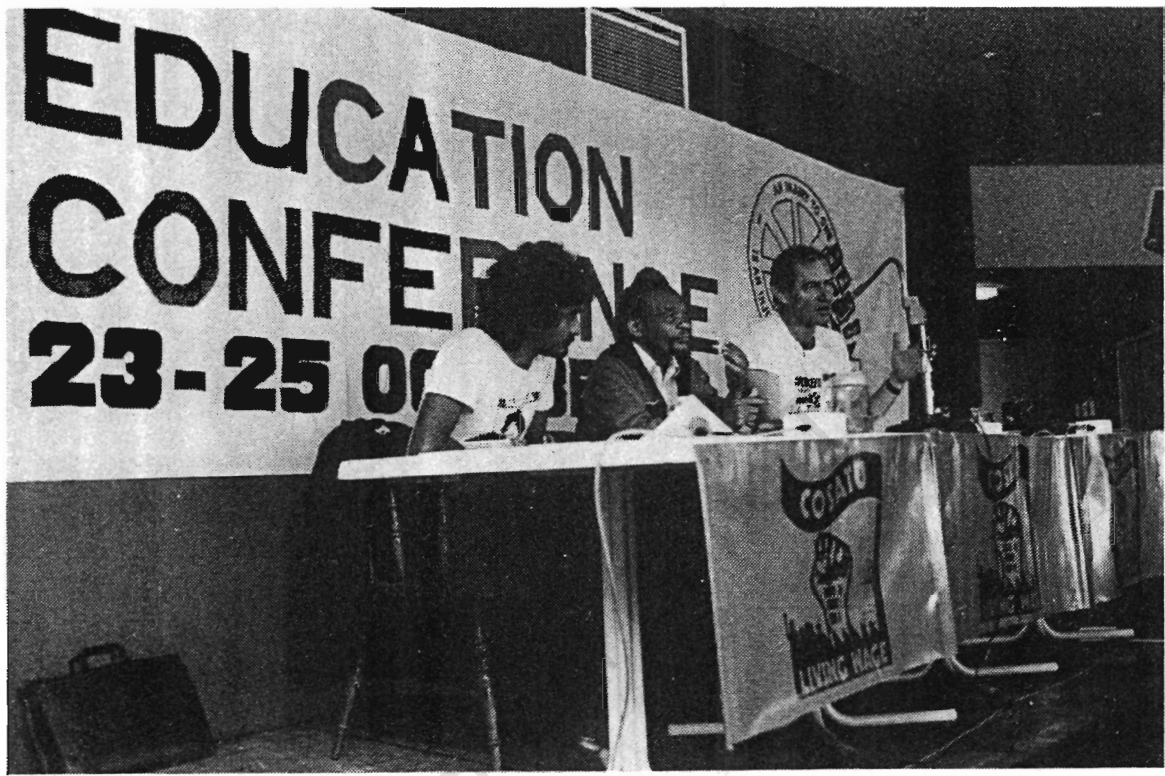
<sup>1</sup> For example the Koornhof Bills, which still excluded Africans from state power, but aimed to make Coloureds and Indians junior governmental allies of the Whites (Grossman, 1996:2).

<sup>2</sup> The SOE was the introduction of draconian laws that allowed for large-scale police harassment, arrests, detention without trial, and military occupation of the townships. It was accompanied by the ‘unofficial’ murder of political activists.

<sup>3</sup> The UDF was a multi-class umbrella body, initially formed in opposition to the Koornhof Bills (Grossman, 1996:4).

<sup>4</sup> This is Zulu or Xhosa for ‘we are sleeping over’. It refers to discussion sessions that run through the whole night.

<sup>5</sup> For examples of the problems of and advances made by women workers in trade unions, see Lacom/Speak/Cosatu, 1992; Dove, 1992; ILRIG, 1994.



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## CHAPTER 6: COSATU'S POLICY ON WORKER EDUCATION 1985-1988

In this chapter I describe Cosatu's policy on worker education in the period 1985 to 1988, drawing on its official national education documents. Policy covers the positions that Cosatu *espoused*. The question of what was *practiced* is explored in the following chapter.

Although all the information is drawn from Cosatu documents, Cosatu did not itself provide a summary or singular cohesive articulation of its educational policy or of the key features of its pedagogy. I believe, however, that the various elements of all its statements did in fact make up a comprehensive position on education which I will term and present as the pedagogy contained in its policy. Although some of the policy is addressing education more broadly, it was done with the purpose of defining and developing Cosatu's approach to worker education.

### 6.1 Brief overview of Cosatu's stated approach to education 1985-1988

Before I describe the key features of Cosatu's pedagogy, I give a brief overview of Cosatu's stated approach to non-formal worker education. In order to describe its approach, I ask the questions: Why did it do education work?, Who was it provided by and for?, What did it cover?, Where did it take place? and How was it done?<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.1.1 *Why did it do education work?*

The stated purpose of education work was to build the organisation of Cosatu, and to fight for the socialist transformation of society (Erwin, 1986:3,6; Cosatu, 1987b:17,18). This echoed Cosatu's political emphasis on building worker organisation and fighting for socialism (see Chapter 5). As will be made evident in this chapter, the principles expressed in its political policy are woven into, and elaborated on, in its educational policy.

### 6.1.2 *Who was it provided by and for?*

Cosatu stated that education should reach the mass of workers. Workers were seen as both educators and learners. There was, however, a particular focus on educating shop stewards, and 'grassroots leadership' (Cosatu, 1987b:14,33,36; 1989c:6).

### 6.1.3 *What did it cover?*

Cosatu intended its education to cover Cosatu policy issues and broader economic and political matters (Cosatu, 1987b:8). It was proposed that courses be run on these subjects as well as on 'topical' issues, the international working class, the history of the South African struggle, legal education, educator and leadership training, health and safety, the Living Wage Campaign and 'women' (Cosatu, 1987b:14-16).

It was also stated that education should teach: a collective outlook; non-racism; non-sexism; internationalism; literacy; skills for building organisation and for socially useful production; working class consciousness of oppression and exploitation; worker democracy, control, participation, leadership and confidence; and working class control of society and production (Cosatu, 1987b:17-19,25-27; 1988b:15). Affiliates were expected to train their own organisers and shop stewards with regard to their organisational duties – with Cosatu assisting only on request (Cosatu, 1987b: 8).

### 6.1.4 *Where did it take place?*

It was argued that education could take place anywhere, at any time. There was, however, an emphasis on setting up official education structures as the location for organising educational activities (Erwin, 1986:6; Cosatu, 1987b:7,29,30).

### 6.1.5 *How was it done?*

Cosatu's education structures were seen as the primary means to ensure education took place. There were national, regional and local education committees, which were attended by representatives from the affiliates of Cosatu. These were the National Education Committee (Nedcom), the Regional Education Committee (Redcom), and the Local Education Committee (Ledcom). Nedcom was accountable to Cosatu's Central Executive Committee (CEC), Redcom to the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and Ledcom to the local shop steward councils (see Appendix J for a detailed diagrammatic representation of these structures, how they were constituted, and their lines of accountability). There was a national education officer appointed by the CEC. Three other education office-bearers were elected at the national education conferences, which were to be held once every two years (interview Erwin, 2002; Cosatu, 1987b:33). Linked to but not restricted to the education structures were the structures dealing with women, culture, and media (Cosatu, 1987b:20-30). Hence, I deal with these as aspects of Cosatu's education work. The building up of media resources was one of the central aims of the education programme (Cosatu, 1987b:8). Education was to happen in the form of conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops, debates, international study tours, adult education classes, study groups, and 'siyalala's' (Cosatu, 1987b:18,19). Delegates from the affiliates would attend these events organised by Cosatu education structures on a local, regional or national level.

Cosatu advocated methodological principles that promoted respect for workers' knowledge and their experience. It believed educators should facilitate the collective and participatory sharing of knowledge amongst workers. Consistent with its political principle of workers' control, it argued that the process and content of education should be under the democratic control of workers. It believed that education should be tied to practical and 'useful' activity, including building organisation and equipping workers for the socialist transformation of society (Erwin, 1986:3,6; Cosatu, 1987b:5,17,18,25,33).

Cosatu did not clearly specify its educational techniques, however it appears that it primarily advocated group discussion and debates, facilitated by an educator (see Cosatu, 1987b).

## 6.2 Key features of Cosatu's pedagogy

Cosatu had a political, class analysis of education. Integral to this was its critique of capitalist education and its argument that education should contribute to socialist transformation. It believed that it was the education work of the present that could build the vision and the actual foundation for a socialist future. To achieve this it argued for the need to develop an 'alternative education'. This alternative was based on progressive political principles, and can be described as having the following inter-related, yet distinguishable, key features:

- Democratic worker control within all aspects of education.
- A belief that education should be a collective process and should involve 'the mass' of the workers.
- A collective and inclusive approach to learning.
- Respect for workers, their knowledge and their experience. Linked with this was the assertion that there should be a reciprocal relationship between learner and educator.
- Education was linked to doing and to 'useful' activity.
- A belief that education could take place 'anywhere' and 'anytime', including in informal contexts.
- A belief that education should fight women's oppression and racism (and all forms of oppression and exploitation).

Many of the principles underlying Cosatu's approach to education echo the political principles of Cosatu and the workers' movement that were outlined in Chapter 5.

Cosatu's political perspective contained a class analysis, a criticism of capitalism, an assertion of working class independence, and a commitment to struggle for the socialist

transformation of society. These positions are reflected and developed in its policy on worker education.

### **6.2.1 A class analysis of education**

Cosatu had a class analysis of education. There was an awareness that there were two distinct and conflicting classes (the working class and the bourgeoisie), and an understanding that education was a tool (or 'a weapon') that could be used in the interests of either class. It was argued that education was controlled by, and promoted the ideology and interests of, the ruling class (Erwin, 1986:3,4; Mohlomi, 1986:9,10). Mohlomi argued: "Since the advent of class-divided society, education, like everything, fell into the hands of the ruling class...Education has from the slave system, through to the feudal system, been used to justify those in power" (Mohlomi, 1986:9).

There was a class analysis of culture and media with examples given of how the ruling class used both as an instrument of domination and division (Cosatu, 1987b:20,26). There was also a consciousness that there were "differences between the kind of education offered to the children of the working class and education given to the children of the bourgeois class" (Mohlomi, 1986:10).

Cosatu believed that class analysis and class-consciousness should be included in the content and method of its education. The topics of class theory and working class struggles were included in Cosatu's proposed courses. It was also stated that education "should create a working class consciousness" (Cosatu, 1987b:5,17). One of the ways to build class-consciousness was by developing and sharing awareness of how workers were oppressed and exploited. It was stated that "education must assist in the process of liberation through exposing the structures that exploit and oppress people in all aspects of their lives - in schools, work and in the home" (Cosatu, 1987b:18). It was argued that culture in Cosatu should "attempt to resurface, consolidate and popularise our worker experiences of exploitation and oppression in the hands of the capitalists..." (Cosatu,

1987b:26). Cosatu's class-consciousness permeated its pedagogy. It included a critique of capitalist education as well as the assertion of an alternative worker education.

## 6.2.2 Criticism of capitalist education and Bantu education

### *Critique of capitalist education*

Cosatu described, analysed and criticised the ways in which capitalism used education to perpetuate oppressive and exploitative capitalist ideology, politics and economics. Its primary understanding of capitalism's use of education was that it promoted the *ideology* and *values* of capitalism (Cosatu, 1987b:17). Some of Cosatu's critique of education referred specifically to formal state education offered in schools. However the critiques it gave of schooling were part of its general critique of capitalist education, which applied to tertiary education (technical and academic), adult education, education by employers at work, education in the trade unions, worker education and education done through the media.

Cosatu resolutions noted that the education system in South Africa was designed to reinforce the values, ideas and practices of the ruling class; foster divisions, inequality and anti-democratic values; and maintain the working class in ideological bondage (Cosatu, 1987a:35; 1987b:32). Cosatu was critical of these ruling class values, which they identified as racism, sexism, individualism, careerism, competitiveness and elitism. This was illustrated in the report of a commission on 'Peoples' Education' at the 1987 Education Conference<sup>2</sup>. It stated:

1. Education is used as a weapon to further the ideology of capitalism.
2. It is used as a weapon to reproduce the present values and defend them.
3. It discourages the development of people as a whole and ensures that the working class has no power.
4. It is used as a weapon of control.
5. It is used to promote sexism and racialism.
6. It is used to perpetuate capitalism using racialism as a reinforcement which divides the working class so that it will not be effective in the fight against capitalism.
7. It distorts religion to further the aims of capitalism (Cosatu, 1987b:17).

This same commission stated that: "Apartheid/capitalist education which discriminates against workers, black people and women also promotes wrong ideas of individualism and competition. Private schools promote ideas and practices of the middle class and capitalism such as elitism, individualism and careerism" (Cosatu, 1987b:17).

Within the Education Conference reports, there was also a critique of capitalist media. It was argued that the commercial bourgeois media was owned and controlled by the ruling class, was produced in its interests, and promoted its values (Cosatu, 1987b:20).

### *Critique of Bantu education*

Cosatu education documents described and critiqued the South African schooling system. In particular they criticised 'Bantu education', which was the inferior, separate and different education the state offered to African scholars and students. They describe many of the material problems faced by students, teachers and parents (including sexual harassment, under-resourcing, overcrowding, and state repression). They used the term 'education crisis' in a way that referred both to the problems of a defective educational system and to the large-scale resistance to it by scholars and students (and some teachers and parents)(Erwin, 1986:5; Cosatu, 1987b:5; 1989c:19-21).

Cosatu stated its support for the students' struggle for democratic Student Representative Councils and an alternative education system. The rejection of Bantu education was equated with the rejection of capitalist education (Cosatu, 1987b:5; Erwin, 1986:5).

Naidoo stated that: "The present education crisis in our country is the clearest demonstration of the rejection of the capitalist education system. Millions of youth fed on Bantu education have shown their rejection of an education system that seeks to keep people in ideological bondage and enslave the working class to the cheap labour system" (Cosatu, 1987b:5).

Cosatu also located the state's policy on education within the broader political approach of the ruling class. For example, Erntzen argues that the emergence of the de Lange commission (on the educational system) went hand in hand with the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions (on labour and influx control respectively). He argues that all were designed to maintain control under the guise of reform, and that they "represented a part of the strategy adopted by the state and 'big business' to co-opt an emergent black middle class and to increase control over the working class" (Erntzen, 1986:20).

Although it did give some attention to critiquing the material and political conditions of education, Cosatu's primary criticism was of the ideology of state capitalist schooling. It was argued that this schooling prepared black workers to be 'better objects of exploitation' (Mohlomi, 1986:10; Erwin, 1986:9); and that it did this through hiding the power of collective struggle, promoting individualism, an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism, dictatorial practice, and denigrating worker identity (Erwin, 1986:9; Cosatu, 1987b:5; Mohlomi, 1986:10). Erwin argued that: "The present education system prepares you to be a willing participant in your own exploitation" (Erwin, 1986:9). He outlined four ways in which the system did this. Firstly he critiqued the way in which history was taught. He argued that there was an emphasis on dates, powerful leaders and major battles, yet the history of the struggles of the workers was not taught. He argued that: "The real purpose of teaching history in this way is to hide the power of organisation - to hide the success of struggle. Capitalists fear that if people are taught these things then they will be inspired and encouraged to themselves organise collectively against oppression and exploitation" (Erwin, 1986:9).

Erwin's second point was that capitalist education promoted individualism. He argued that

people were taught to think of themselves and deal with their problems by themselves. In this way the bosses can successfully disorganise the workers by promising them promotion and higher wages...It is clear that not all workers can be promoted to higher positions - the gateway to success is a very narrow one, but because education has taught us individualism, we all try and get through that gate to the great benefit of the capitalists and their profits (Erwin, 1986:9).

Thirdly he argued that the current education system promoted an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism. It did not ask the questions: "How did people lose control over the land and the means of production? Is it correct that production should be for profit and not to meet peoples needs?" He argued that the education system makes people accept capitalism and be fearful and suspicious of socialism (Erwin, 1986:9).

Erwin's fourth point was that the education system was a significant force in teaching people anti-democratic values and principles. He argued that:

When our children go to school it is the first time that they become part of a large organisation. But this organisation only teaches them how a dictatorship works - the headmaster, teacher and prefects have all the power and use the stick and punishment to ensure discipline and control rather than participation. From their very youngest years people get no experience in how to come together and collectively decide and organise. They are taught to wait for instructions and listen to people in authority. It is clear how useful this is to the capitalists when those same people come to work for them (Erwin, 1986:9).

Cosatu's analysis noted that Bantu education was designed to ensure most black students became workers by 'enslaving them to the cheap labour system' (Cosatu, 1987b:5). It *also* noted that education was designed to ensure that they attached *little value* to the status of workers. Mohlomi stated: "How often do you hear our teachers saying 'You must learn so that you don't become a street sweeper in future'? This gives an idea to children that street sweepers are lowly people for whom one has no regard and the important people are doctors, lawyers etc" (Mohlomi, 1986:10).

### **6.2.3 The purpose of education should be the socialist transformation of society**

A consistent thread that ran through the assertions of Cosatu was that education was seen as an important weapon in the struggle of the working class for the transformation and liberation of society. This liberated society was commonly defined as socialism. This theme is implicit to many of the key features, but is also stated explicitly.

It was argued that: "Education is our spear in the struggle for socialism" (Erwin, 1986:3) and "Education is vital for the liberation of the working class" (Cosatu, 1987a:36). At the

First National Education Conference the general secretary of Cosatu asserted the need to “give utmost attention to building a socialist future” (Cosatu, 1987b:4). Cosatu resolved to ensure that the “education programme politicises, mobilises and organises the working class so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and in its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited” (Cosatu, 1987a:36; 1987b:33).

Socialism is a system in which the economy is organised to meet the needs of the working class and not the needs of capital. Cosatu asserted that education should serve the working class and ‘society as a whole’ (sometimes referred to as ‘the people’, ‘the vast majority’ or ‘the masses’) (Cosatu, 1987a:36; 1987b:17,32). Cosatu’s proposed education courses included the subjects of political policy, the economy, the international working class movement and socialism (Cosatu, 1987b:14-16).

Cosatu argued that education in the present could build the vision and the actual foundation for a new (socialist) future. In 1985, Erwin wrote a paper that discussed the need to “build tomorrow today”. It is here that he spoke of unions as laboratories for democracy, which would train workers to take control of their own lives. He noted that the nationalist political movement aimed to replace the white government with a non-racial one, and argued that worker organisations needed to do more than replace the leaders. They needed to build worker democracy in the present (cited in Friedman, 1987:498-502). There are a number of assertions that the educational activities of the present should prepare workers for ‘the future’ (Cosatu, 1987a:36; 1987b:33). Education was intended to be “the weapon in our hands to shape the mass struggles of our class of the present” and also to “mould the future of our class” (Cosatu, 1987b:6) This future was understood as socialist (Erwin, 1986; Cosatu, 1987b).

Consistent with its socialist perspective, Cosatu resolved that education should “develop an understanding among the working class that their struggle forms part of the world struggle against oppression and exploitation” (Cosatu, 1987b:33). Cosatu proposed to develop this understanding by including study of the international working class

movement within its education programme, as well as by facilitating international study tours (Cosatu, 1987b:14; 1989c:24-27).

#### 6.2.4 Developing an alternative education

In opposition to Bantu and capitalist education, and as a means of achieving socialist transformation, Cosatu began to define and develop an 'alternative' worker education. This supported and interacted with student struggles for democratic student representative councils and for an alternative 'peoples' education' (Cosatu, 1987b:5). Cosatu noted that these demands for an *alternative* education were an advance on previous demands of the progressive movement, which although opposing Bantu education, did not go much beyond demanding *equal access* to white education (Cosatu, 1989c:20)<sup>3</sup>.

Cosatu documents made it clear that permanent solutions to the education problems and a true alternative education could only be developed under socialism by the working class (Mohlomi, 1986:11; Erntzen, 1986:13). However, it still asserted the need to struggle for improvements in education in the short-term, and the need to develop a new progressive approach to education (Mohlomi, 1986:11). Erwin argued that: "To build a real People's Education workers must give guidance so as to make sure that we do not end up with a new education system that remains trapped within capitalist ideology" (Erwin, 1986:5).

Cosatu's assertion of the need to build an *alternative* education in the *present* was similar to its political perspective that an *alternative society* should be constructed in the present, in order to lay the foundation for a *future* socialist society. The educational principles that it asserted as important in the construction of an alternative education, were related to the principles asserted in its political policy, namely worker control, worker democracy, non-racism and non-sexism. The rest of this chapter describes the key elements of the proposed alternative education that was expressed in Cosatu's policy.

### 6.2.5 Democratic worker control within all aspects of education

Worker democracy and worker control were principles that permeated both the reason for, and the way of doing education. It was asserted that there should be worker control of education, and also that education should 'teach' worker control. Workers' control of education included their control over education structures, as well as the content of what was taught. What was to be 'taught' covered democratic worker control of the trade union, as well as worker control of the economy and society as a whole.

#### *Worker control of education*

Cosatu documents noted that because education had been "under the control of classes...other than the working class...workers have been made to feel that they cannot decide for themselves" (Erntzen, 1986:13). Hence, they asserted the importance of workers deciding and having control over every aspect of education. The education advocated was to be democratically structured. Cosatu stated that: "It should be education which is controlled by people. It should not be hierarchical or dictatorial", and that "the education curriculum/content should be planned by both the educator and the people to be educated" (Cosatu, 1987b:17,18). There was also an assertion of the need for worker control over the production, content and sharing of media, as well as worker control of their culture and creativity (Cosatu, 1987b:20). The cultural commission stated that: "Working class culture, coming from us as organised workers, has to do with workers controlling their own cultural power and creativity and using these gains and experiences for the benefit of our unions, federation and national democratic struggle" (Cosatu, 1987b:25).

Cosatu's official education structures were advocated as the means by which workers could control their education (see Appendix J). It was these structures that were to be 'accountable' to workers through Cosatu's system of 'representatives', 'consultation' and 'mandates', thus I will repeat some details about them here. Cosatu set out to establish

National, Regional and Local Education Committees (Nedcom, Redcom, and Ledcom respectively), which were accountable to the national, regional and local Cosatu structures: CEC, REC, and locals (see Appendix I). It was proposed that they be made up in the following manner. Nedcom was to consist of the regional secretaries; two representatives from each affiliate (one of whom must be a worker); plus two representatives each from media and the culture department. Redcom was to be attended by the regional secretary, one representative from each local education committee and two delegates per affiliate – one of whom must be a worker. The constitution of the Ledcom was to be left up to the Cosatu locals to decide (Cosatu, 1987b:29,30).

The Central Executive Committee (CEC) was to appoint an education officer and a newspaper editor. Education officials were to be elected at the education conference (to be held every two years). The Nedcom chair was to be an ex-officio member of the CEC (in other words they attended the CEC but could not vote on decisions)(Cosatu, 1987b:33).

Media, Culture and Women were all subjects integrated into the Education Conference, and were linked to education structures. Media was to be the responsibility of Cosatu structures on various levels. Cultural Units were to be formed by Cosatu locals; the Regional Cultural Committee was to consist of the chairs of each local cultural unit; and the National Cultural Committee would be made up of the chairs of each regional committee (Cosatu, 1987b:30). The Education Programme was to set up a subcommittee to ensure the 1985 resolutions about women were implemented. It was also proposed that locals should establish women's forums. One representative from each local and two from each affiliate were to plan a National Women's Conference (to be held in 1988) (Cosatu, 1987b:30,33-35).

The need to 'decentralise' education structures was frequently repeated in Cosatu reports and proposals (Cosatu, 1987b:8,9,12,20). The reason for doing this, and how to go about it, were not clearly stated. It appears there was some opinion that the Education Department was top-heavy, too concentrated on the national level, with skills and

resources in the hands of only a few (Cosatu, 1987b:20,21). The 1987 Education Conference report proposed that education structures be decentralised by building up regional and local structures (Cosatu, 1987b:8; 1989c:18,19). The media commission emphasised the need to build local and regional worker-controlled media units because “this will ensure our media is based on workers and cannot be easily destroyed” (Cosatu, 1987b:20). The other references to ‘decentralisation’ do not directly link it with worker control.

*Education to teach democratic worker control of the trade union*

Education was intended to facilitate, through its method and its content, worker democracy within the trade union. This included training workers in organisational skills as well as encouraging participation and debate amongst workers. Cosatu stated: “Our main task is to build strong democratic organisation. We must develop the kind of skills amongst the working class that make it possible for all the members to participate actively in all levels of their organisations” (Cosatu, 1988:15). It set out to train affiliate members and shop stewards in a range of organisational skills to facilitate the effective functioning of democratic structures (for example, meeting procedure and training shop stewards in their duties). Value was placed on teaching organisational practice that was accountable, representative and acting on the mandates of the workers (Cosatu, 1987b:14,15, 20, 29).

There was an emphasis on open discussion, participation and debate. Political differences and debate were seen as creative and healthy for democratic practice (Baskin, 1994:242).

At the 1987 Education Conference, Naidoo asserted that:

In our approach to education, we remain committed to the principle of worker control...From the outset, Cosatu has stressed that all the federation structures should encourage the fullest debate amongst members...Even through difficult times we remain committed to creating forums for debate and discussion. This has helped to limit polarisation and has drawn workers and worker leaders together, creating an atmosphere in which potentially opposing groups could build unbreakable unity around militant working class principles...We must continue to be guided by the code of democratic conduct raised in our discussion paper, November 1986. In it we called for discipline to accept the decision of the

majority and commitment to implement these decisions. Unless we are guided by these important principles our debates are reduced to the sterile irrelevance of discussions amongst self-centred individuals and cliques (Cosatu, 1987b:5).

*Education to teach democratic worker control of society*

Education in the union was intended not only to build worker control of the unions, but also to ensure workers played the leading role in the political struggle and in the transformation of society. Education was intended to build worker leaders within the union (see Cosatu, 1987b:15), but was mainly directed at assisting the entire working class in playing a leading role. Cosatu resolved "to ensure that the Education Programme politicises, mobilises and organises the *working class* so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and in its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited" (Cosatu, 1987b:32,33; my italics).

The democracy taught and built in the unions was intended to empower workers to take on their broader role in the struggle, and prepare them for their future role in a new socialist society. Erwin argued that the unions' chief role was to "train workers to take their own decisions and resist anyone – government, employees, political activists and even their own leaders – who tried to decide for them" (cited in Friedman, 1987:500). Cosatu resolved that the Education Programme should "develop an understanding and capacity to wage our struggle by democratic means that will allow maximum participation, and decision-making power for workers both now and in the future society we wish to build" (Cosatu, 1987b:33).

It was not just unions, but all forms of mass organisation that were seen as 'schools of democracy'. Cosatu stated:

Mass organisations have the potential to be important schools for democratic participation and for developing ideas for the future. Wherever people are - in the factory, schools, farms, rural settlements, communities – they are coming together for certain social activities...Our aim must be to use any form of organisation as a school for developing stronger democratic practices and grassroots leadership (Cosatu, 1988:15).

Cosatu also argued that education should prepare workers to take economic control of the future society: “Education can take many forms. One of the most important of these is to educate and train workers so that they are fully capable of running the mines and factories. Worker control requires that we do this. If we cannot we will leave the economy and power in the hands of the monopolies that now exploit us” (Erwin, 1986:8,9; see also Cosatu, 1987b:20,21).

#### **6.2.6 Education for the mass of workers**

Cosatu believed that education should reach, involve and serve the interests of all workers. Its notion of ‘all’ referred, at different times, to: all the participants in the educational programmes; all the membership of the federation; all the working class; and occasionally, all the workers of the world (Cosatu, 1987a:36; 1987b:14,33). It fought for education to be available to everyone. This was evident in its support of the Freedom Charter slogan: “The doors of culture and learning shall be opened” and its demand for free, compulsory, non-racist and non-sexist education (Cosatu, 1987b:5; 1989c:22).

Cosatu aimed to facilitate the participation of all who attended educational events by the application of progressive and democratic educational principles (Cosatu, 1987b:17,18). It proposed to reach all the membership of its affiliates through decentralising its structures, and by building worker participation and democracy as described in the preceding section (Cosatu, 1987b:8,9,12,20). To reach the mass of workers (which included but went beyond its own affiliates’ membership) it aimed to set up adult education and literacy classes, night schools, study circles and ‘siyalala’s’ (Cosatu 1987b:18,19).

Although Cosatu stated the need to reach the mass of workers, there was a particular focus on educating shop stewards, and ‘grassroots leadership.’ It was also understood that through the systems of democracy and accountability, shop stewards would report back to their constituency, and hence reach the broader membership of Cosatu’s affiliates

(Cosatu, 1987b:14,33,36; 1989c:6). According to Erwin, this was a continuation of Fosatu's policy of building strong shop-floor structures with their own worker leadership. This was intended to ensure unions could survive state repression (rather than be destroyed by the arrest of high-level leadership)(Erwin, interview, 2002).

### **6.2.7 Collective and inclusive approach to learning**

As well as its 'target' of education being all workers, Cosatu also believed that the process of educating, as well as the content of what was taught, should promote a collective and inclusive perspective. It was asserted that "education should discourage individualism and promote a collective outlook" (Cosatu, 1987b:17). There was a strong belief that education took place through the *sharing* within a *worker collective*. Naidoo stated that: "We are committed...to bringing worker leaders together to share ideas and experiences, thus extracting maximum value from the collective experience and understanding of the working class" (Cosatu, 1987b:5).

### **6.2.8 Respect for workers, their knowledge and their experience**

As was illustrated in the preceding quote, Cosatu believed that workers and their experiences were a central source of knowledge. Value was placed on their collective experience, and on sharing their knowledge within a collective. Cosatu asserted that education should enhance 'the self esteem of the working class', and build confidence through democratic participation (Cosatu, 1987b:17; 1988b:15).

It was asserted that Cosatu should "always respect the knowledge people already have" (Erwin, 1986:6). This was further illustrated by its argument for a reciprocal relationship between educator and learner. It was argued that the educator's role was to facilitate the sharing of knowledge. Erwin advised: "Do not make the mistake that in education the teacher has the knowledge and the pupil is blank. In fact both teacher and pupil have knowledge. We must mix this knowledge through discussion. It is this mixture of knowledge that makes new knowledge and advances our understanding" (Erwin, 1986:6).

Naidoo stated that: “We reject the idea of educators lecturing workers...The task of educators is not to make high powered political interventions. Their role is to facilitate and co-ordinate” (Cosatu, 1987b:5). Cosatu also advocated that activists should share their skills with workers, thus ensuring that they need not depend on ‘experts and technicians’ (Erwin, cited in Friedman, 1987:500). The approach to learning as the sharing of knowledge between equals is expressed in the students’ slogan which was also used by Cosatu: “Each one teach one” (Cooper, 1996:3).

### 6.2.9 Education was linked with ‘useful’ activity

The respect given to the knowledge and experience of workers indicated a belief that workers learned through their experience and activities. The idea of organisations as ‘schools’ or ‘laboratories’ of democracy reflected an understanding that people learned through their experience of collective organisation and struggle.

There was also a belief that the *purpose* of learning should be action. Knowledge was valued when it related to ‘useful’ activity. In the context of South African struggle, this activity was that which contributed to the building of worker organisation, and the struggle for socialism in all its facets. Some examples of education for worker organisation, democracy and socialism have already been given.

The link between education and *organisation* was emphasised. Erwin went so far as to state: “Education must be the same thing as organisation” (Erwin, 1986:3). He argued that “education cannot and must not be separated from organisation. Only through this link will education be used to solve the problems that people face. It will be a step toward liberation and not a means of instruction and control” (Erwin, 1986:6). He stated that “...a successful education programme will give us the clear minds and wisdom to build and lead organisation” (Erwin, 1986:8).

There was an intention to build the organisation of Cosatu in particular, thus it was proposed that there should be education on Cosatu policies, principles, structures and campaigns (Cosatu 1987b:14). Other proposed courses for membership that Cosatu considered 'useful' were: political economy, political policy, the international working class, history of the South African struggle, legal education, educator and leadership training, health and safety, the Living Wage Campaign and 'women'. Basic shop steward training was to be done by affiliates but Cosatu would assist if requested (Cosatu, 1987b:14-16).

Cosatu also linked education with the activity of *production* and *skills development*. However, it gave progressive definitions to these terms. It resolved "to develop the human potential to the fullest and to create and transform skills and abilities so that they are accessible to the oppressed and exploited" (Cosatu, 1987b:33). It argued that education "should be relevant to the actual needs of society and geared towards the development of skills" (Cosatu, 1987b:18). It was also argued that education "should provide people with skills that are useful to production" (Cosatu, 1987b:17). However it was clarified that: "Education must be linked with production but this must be in a creative liberating way (under capitalism education is also linked to production, but in such a way as to entrench exploitation). This is an important part of the struggle for socialism" (Cosatu, 1987b:18, original parentheses). Capitalist divisions of labour were challenged by Cosatu's assertion that education "should destroy the division between mental and manual labour" (Cosatu, 1987b:17). Within all these perceptions of the relationship between learning and useful action, was the idea that an activity is useful if it furthers the interests of the worker collective, or society as a whole.

#### **6.2.10 Education can take place 'anywhere at any time'**

Cosatu argued that education could happen in a broad range of times, forms and places. Erwin stated that "education can take place anywhere, at any time and involves people of all ages. We must break the idea that education takes place in schools and is for our

children. Any meeting, any strike, any wage negotiation and any lunch break can be used as places where education takes place” (Erwin, 1986:6,8).

Cosatu’s assertions that education took place within organisation and through the experience of the workers, indicated that it valued not only non-formal, but also *informal* education.

### **6.2.11 Education to fight women’s oppression**

There is a clear consciousness of women’s oppression in Cosatu’s documents. At its 1985 and 1987 congresses, it made detailed resolutions noting some of the problems women workers face, and resolved to fight against them in a range of ways (see section 5.4.5). Cosatu gave the Education Department a central role in ensuring this took place within the federation. There was a decision to organise a National Women’s Conference to be held in 1988 (Cosatu, 1987b:23,24; 1987c:33,34).

Cosatu committed itself to "actively promote within its education programme, a greater understanding of specific discriminations suffered by women workers and ways in which these can be overcome" (Cosatu, 1987c:35). Cosatu resolved "to establish a worker controlled sub-committee within its education programme to monitor progress made in implementing this resolution and to make representations to the education committee" (Cosatu, 1987c:33). When proposing courses it was asserted that: “It is essential that a course on women be run by the federation. All our courses should give a balanced picture by focussing on women” (Cosatu, 1987b:15).

The principle of non-sexism, or assertions that education should address sexism and meet women’s needs, was reiterated in education documents (Cosatu, 1987b:17,18,33; 1989c:22). Worker democracy, control, participation, and the involvement of *all* workers were features of Cosatu’s pedagogy that supported the principle of non-sexism, and the equal involvement of women.

### 6.3 Conclusion

From 1985-1988, Cosatu's approach to trade unionism was highly political. Its education policy was also highly politicised. Education was located in a political and economic context of class struggle, and was seen as a tool that could be used to transform society. As Erwin recollected of that period: unionists and educators were Marxists, and Cosatu's approach to education was based on Marxist principles and politics (Erwin, interview 2002).

The educational principles evident in Cosatu's policy strongly coincided with the politics of the workers' movement, and with the political policy that was being espoused by Cosatu at the time. In Chapter 5, I noted that the dominant politics of the workers' movement, and the policy of Cosatu, advocated socialism, international worker solidarity, worker independence, worker democracy, worker control, non-racism and non-sexism. All of these principles were expressed and developed within Cosatu's educational policy. Given this overlap, together with Cosatu's assertions that education structures and programmes were accountable to Cosatu's structures and political decisions, it is evident that the educational policy of Cosatu *was related to* the politics of Cosatu at that time. It is likely that the education programme and policy of Cosatu, being just a *component* of Cosatu, was shaped by the broader politics of the federation. However, the educational policy was itself also influencing and contributing to this broader politics. The arguments and policy on education deepened, developed, and proposed means of actualising the political principles advocated within Cosatu.

In the activities of the workers' movement, and the political policy of Cosatu, there was overt resistance and opposition to apartheid and capitalism. The pedagogy was also *oppositional*, in that it opposed capitalist exploitation and oppression and the values that capitalist education created and perpetuated. Thus it opposed divisions, inequality, racism, sexism, individualism, careerism, competitiveness, elitism and anti-democratic values. It opposed the values that prepared workers to be willing participants in their own

exploitation, which capitalist education achieved by hiding the power of collective struggle, an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism, dictatorial practice, and denigrating worker identity.

However, these things were opposed because they were seen as *destructive*, and because Cosatu wished to transform society. It wanted to transform capitalism into a socialist system, free of exploitation and oppression, which served the needs of the workers and people as a whole, rather than the needs of capital. Education was seen as a tool in this struggle for socialism.

Cosatu was fighting for a socialist future, but it was also *constructing an alternative* in the present. In line with its political perspective, Cosatu argued that an alternative *education* should be built in the present. Although it stated that a 'true' alternative education could only be built under socialism, it believed short-term improvements and an alternative progressive approach to education should be struggled for. This approach included the beliefs that workers should control their education, and education should facilitate worker control of their organisation and of society; education should reach and involve all workers and be collective and inclusive; and education should fight all forms of oppression and exploitation and women's oppression in particular. Cosatu argued that workers, their knowledge and their experience should be respected, and educators should facilitate the sharing of knowledge. It believed that workers learned through activity, and that education was linked to action and organisation, as well as to skills-training and production to meet the needs of society. It also argued that education could take place in a diverse range of contexts, including in informal settings.

Cosatu's educational beliefs and principles were about constructing an alternative education. However its aims were broader than just an approach to education. Each of its principles were intended as building blocks, to begin construction in the present of an alternative society: one which was controlled by workers, for the benefit of all working people.

## NOTES: CHAPTER 6

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<sup>1</sup> This approach is similar to that of Hopkins' method of describing and analysing worker education (see Vally, 1994:9).

<sup>2</sup> Although Cosatu was critical of the 'non-specific' nature of the term 'Peoples' Education', it used it in support of the struggles of the youth, who were using this term in their demands for an alternative progressive education system (Erwin, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Although my period of study in this Chapter is 1985-1988, I sometimes use the Cosatu 1989c document as a reference since it is a report which at times refers to policy and practice of the *preceding* period.

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## CHAPTER 7: THE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE OF COSATU

The previous chapter dealt with the key features of Cosatu's approach to education in its *policy*. This section looks at some aspects of Cosatu's *practice* of non-formal education. I first provide an overview of what was happening in practice. I then raise questions related to the implementation of the principles and stated approaches that were asserted in its policy. As part of this assessment, I also give some description of the informal learning that was being practiced.

My research on the practice of Cosatu is not thorough enough to provide conclusive and generalisable evidence of what was actually implemented. However there is enough evidence to raise questions and to illustrate some aspects of the practice. Some picture of this practice is useful for locating and understanding Cosatu's educational policy.

### 7.1 An overview of non-formal education within official Cosatu structures

#### 7.1.1 *Education structures and meetings*

The national documents mainly reflect the activities of the National Education Committee (Nedcom), however they also reflect some of the activities of the Regional and Local Education Committees (Redcom and Ledcom). These structures were guided by the mandates of the Central Executive Committee (CEC), the Regional Executive Committee (REC) and the Shop Steward Locals respectively (see Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c). In theory the REC was to be guided by the CEC, and similarly Redcom shaped by decisions at Nedcom. However, interviews in the Western Cape Region indicated that during these years the national structures 'left them to get on with their own thing' (Henwood, interview, 2002). In fact it seemed that in the Western Cape the activities of Redcom were shaped largely by the requests of the locals, since the REC and Redcom made efforts to find out from them what their educational needs and requests were (Henwood, interview, 2002).

Resolutions on education were taken at the 1985 and the 1987 Cosatu national congresses. These formed the basis for discussions held at Cosatu's First National Education Conference in 1987. At this conference the outgoing education officer, Erwin, gave his report on education. Khetsi Lehoko was the newly-appointed education officer. The other three education officials were elected at the conference, and were all men. There were commissions (discussion groups) which came up with proposals on education, women, media and culture. In 1988 a National Women's Conference was held (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c).

### *7.1.2 Who was education done by and for?*

Nedcom organised national and sometimes regional seminars and workshops, which were attended by delegates from the affiliates. Cosatu noted that a relatively small layer of officials and worker leaders participated in the workshops. Delegates were, however, expected to represent their affiliates at these workshops and to take what they learned back to their affiliates and to regional Cosatu structures. It was in this way that Cosatu national education intended to reach the broader membership. Cosatu had also proposed other methods of doing mass education (outlined in section 6.2.6, for example, adult education classes, and worker study groups) which, with the exception of establishing a worker newspaper, it had failed to implement. Women were underrepresented at educational events. Cosatu's educators were also generally male, national officials (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c:8, appendix on mass education).

### *7.1.3 What was covered?*

The reports indicate that most of the topics of education that Cosatu had proposed, were covered. Namely, Cosatu policy issues, broader economic and political matters, the international working class, history of the South African struggle, legal education, educator and leadership training, health and safety, and 'women'. Cosatu also did education related to the Living Wage and the anti-LRA Campaigns. The national

seminars tended to focus on broader topical issues, with the regions dealing more with campaign-related, and organisational skills training (Cosatu, 1989c; Vally, 1994).

#### *7.1.4 How and where did education take place?*

Education took place in the form of national and regional seminars, conferences, meetings, workshops, debates, and international study tours (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c). Cosatu structures, including the cultural, education and media departments, were responsible for and supported a significant amount of media related to worker struggle and the other topics outlined above. Cosatu's cultural department, although 'struggling to keep up', gave support to the prolific worker cultural groups and their activities (Cosatu, 1989c:24-27).

Education was organised through the education committees. Cosatu's national reports indicate that Nedcom and all the education structures failed to function effectively (or sometimes at all) and that the women's subcommittees were not set up. Cosatu also noted that it had failed to 'decentralise' education. Interviews suggest however that Cosatu education was happening regularly in the Western Cape. This was organised by the Western Cape REC and Redcom, with the REC secretary (Henwood) taking primary responsibility (Ndongeni, Henwood, Jansen, Moyana et al, interviews, 2002).

Although they had clear information on the problems of Nedcom, it is not clear on what basis Cosatu national reports were able to assess the 'failure' of regional and local structures. It is possible that the national structures were not communicating effectively with the regional and local structures. This is suggested by the fact that Cosatu's noted that it had not received reports from (seemingly active) local education structures (Cosatu, 1987b:9); and by the information given by Henwood that their region was generally left to get on with their 'own thing', without much intervention from national structures (Henwood, interview, 2002, cited in 7.1.1).

## 7.2 To what extent was Cosatu implementing its educational policy?

Cooper (1998b:144-148), Grossman (1999;2000a) and Cooper et al (2002) describe aspects of the ‘tradition’ of the workers’ movement. They note that the tradition included: an understanding that politics, education and organisation were connected; a spirit of collectivism; attempts to tackle sexism; a belief in the knowledge and expertise of workers; workers’ confidence and pride in sharing their knowledge with others; a challenge to elitism and gender, racial and hierarchical divisions of labour; a deeply inclusive spirit; a political bias (towards the working class); workers’ control and independence; a reciprocal relationship between educators and learners; the valuing of different kinds of knowledge; an emphasis on building worker leaders and educators; a link between education and useful practical activity – particularly building organisation; the practice of education taking place in many informal and non-formal sites; and the phenomenon of workers not only producing knowledge but questing for new knowledge.

The features of the educational tradition of the workers’ movement described above are very similar to key features of Cosatu’s espoused pedagogy (see section 6.2). This suggests that the principles outlined in Cosatu’s policy on education *were* being implemented in the *workers’ movement*. However I will be assessing the implementation of Cosatu’s policy not in the broader workers’ movement, but more specifically in the non-formal education activities of Cosatu.

The key features I described in Chapter 6, were all espoused in official Cosatu documents. These documents included speeches and reports presented as accessible ‘educational’ booklets, which were directed at educators and workers (see Cosatu, 1986d; 1987b, Appendix F). Thus they were made available to the membership of Cosatu, and were themselves ‘acts of education’. The documents were not just espoused theory, they were communicated to the membership, and were thus practical ‘teachings’. Thus by asserting in an ‘educational’ form (such as booklets and speeches), principles such as worker control and non-sexism in education, Cosatu was also contributing to the *practice*

of these principles. In this sense, Cosatu was practicing what its policy espoused. However an exploration of practice requires a deeper examination than this.

Most of the people I interviewed (2002) believe that in the Western Cape there were serious attempts to implement the policy outlined by Cosatu, but note that there were difficulties with aspects of the implementation. Erwin's interview, however, paints an uncritical picture of effective implementation of all aspects of the espoused policy. His present-day memory does not register even the criticisms that he had made in his national reports during the 1980's (see for example 1987b). What follows is a preliminary investigation of the implementation of some aspects of Cosatu's policy.

### *7.2.1 Implementing worker control and democracy*

Worker control and democracy were core features of Cosatu's espoused alternative education. It could be argued that these were necessary for the implementation of all its other features. Cosatu argued that workers should control the education process, that education should build worker control and democracy inside the organisation, and that it should equip workers to take political and economic control.

The interviews I did reflect some difference of opinion, and suggest that there was an unevenness in the implementation of worker control in education. They also suggest that implementation varied from the regional to the national levels of Cosatu. Many interviewees feel that there was a significant level of worker control of education in the Western Cape (Henwood, Ndongeni, Caesar, Moyana et al, Silimela and Febana). Some of these same people suggest that there was not the same level of worker control on a national level (Caesar, Henwood). Erwin, however believes there was implementation of democracy at both national and regional level, and Theron feels that there was implementation at neither level (interviews, 2002).

There were different understandings and applications of democracy. In the Western Cape the REC and Redcom aimed to build its programme on the directives and needs of the

shop steward locals. However, in 1988 the Central Executive Committee, which had previously let the Western Cape region 'do its own thing' implemented its 'democratic' constitutional right to direct what happened in this region. According to Henwood, they appointed a regional education officer, in spite of objections from the Regional Executive Committee about the selected individual. This education officer then adopted an educational approach that was more about delivery of a national 'line', with the 'presenting of position papers', than about seeking direction from the shop steward locals (Henwood, interview, 2002).

Cosatu argued that workers *did* have control of the process of education. The 1987 Education Conference was cited as an example of advancing the principle of workers' control over education.

It (the 1987 Education Conference) was the first opportunity for workers to come together to define a programme of education that addresses their organisational needs and their aspirations. It was an attempt to democratise education in content and organisation. This advanced a fundamental principle of involving those who are 'taught' in determining what they want to learn (Cosatu, 1989c:1, my brackets).

Although it is indeed true that the conference was itself an act of worker representatives defining what and how they wished to learn; some aspects of the events at and surrounding this conference raise questions as to the nature and effectiveness of the worker democracy.

The resolutions on education were not taken at this education conference, although the layout of the Conference report does suggest this (see Appendix F). These resolutions were taken at the 1987 National Congress. Although workers did develop some significant proposals at the Conference, it was at the *Congress* that workers more fundamentally 'defined a programme of education'. The Education Officer was appointed by the CEC (and not elected by this Conference or the Congress), and had ex-officio status on the CEC (hence no direct decision making power). Thus although there was rigorous discussion on education by the Education Conference delegates, its function seemed to be more related to worker delegates *discussing* rather than *controlling* the

education programme. The education office bearers were all male (see Cosatu, 1987b:31), suggesting a weakness in the democratic practice.

Although the grassroots membership may not have had full democratic control over the education process, it was elected representatives of the working class that controlled what workers learned. Education was not determined by government or employers. Thus, in this respect, the principle of worker control was implemented.

However, it is questionable whether the education resolutions and decisions made at the Congress and the Conference were in fact implemented. In 1989 Cosatu stated "...as we all know, we have not been successful in carrying out the programme as planned" (Cosatu, 1989c:1).

It was through the education structures that workers were expected to exercise their control, and through its programmes that Cosatu was to implement its intentions. However, it appeared that the programme and the structures were not functioning effectively (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c:4; Baskin, 1991:396). The reports of the national education officers to the 1987 and the 1989 conferences noted the following problems: the education structures were not functioning effectively on national, regional or local levels; the structures were over-centralised; attendance was poor and discontinuous; delegates unprepared and unmandated; worker representation was particularly low; and the planned educational activities and the resolutions on women were ineffectually implemented (Cosatu, 1987b:7-13; 1989c:2,3,6,8). The 1989 report also noted the weakness of cultural structures, and the problem that Cosatu was not able to establish local and regional co-ordinating committees in the areas where there were structures. It stated: "Culture cannot be able to grow significantly in the event where educational and constitutional structures do not exist or are weak" (Cosatu, 1989c:32).

An aggressively pushed 'solution' to the problems and failure of the structures was decentralisation— that is the building of local and regional education structures (Cosatu, 1987b:12,20; see section 6.2.5). Cosatu was vague about what this meant, and how it was

to be done. However they were clear that they were ineffective in carrying it out. It stated: “although we have committed ourselves to decentralise our activities, seminars still remain concentrated at a national level. Not enough activity is taking place on a regional and local level...programmes are not able to reach a broader layer of our membership” (Cosatu, 1989c:3).

Within the federation, Cosatu’s National Education Department did contribute to building worker democracy, by organising debates. It facilitated broad political debates, some of which specifically addressed the subject of worker democracy (see, for example, discussion papers on socialism and democracy ,Cosatu, 1986b,c). However, Vally’s assertions that the debates did not happen broadly or effectively, and that non-dominant opinions were not well tolerated, suggest that education structures had some difficulty in building worker democracy in the organisation (Vally, 1994:56).

Much of Cosatu’s training was political education, and thus assisted with empowering worker leaders to take greater political control. Cosatu had also asserted that education should equip workers to take control of the economy (see section 6.2.5), but there was no evidence of the proposed ‘skills training’ for ‘socialist production’ (see Cosatu, 1989c).

A deeper examination of the implementation of worker control and democracy should go further than addressing the technical aspects of this, such as the number of worker delegates attending meetings of educational structures or the number of women in leadership positions. Although representation is a significant aspect of worker control, the implementation of worker control cannot be reduced to this. Worker control requires that workers are actually driving a process. It requires that the experience, activity and spirit of the worker collective are at the core of the life of the organisation. An evaluation of this in Cosatu is beyond the scope of this thesis, but is a subject that I hope may be addressed in future research.

### 7.2.2 *Did Cosatu education involve the mass of workers?*

Although Cosatu's pedagogy asserted the need to reach and involve the mass of workers in education, formal programs were run with only a small section of predominantly male officials and leadership. With the exception of Cosatu News, initiated in 1987, which was intended to reach ordinary workers, Cosatu's education proposals to reach the rank and file and 'the masses' were not successful. The 1989 Education Conference evaluation report (reflecting on previous years) noted that

we have not been able to reach broad and wide layers of our membership. Our approach and structure of our programmes is not designed to go beyond grassroots leadership. The total number of participants who went through our training is relatively insignificant when compared to the size of our federation...Our education sessions must begin to assume a mass character (Cosatu, 1989c:6).

It is not clear how this critique related to Cosatu's proposals for grassroots leadership to reach the broader membership by reporting back to their democratic structures (see sections 6.1.2 and 6.2.6). It is unclear if they were saying that this approach itself or its implementation had failed.

It appears that a broader range of workers were reached by the media produced by Cosatu's Education Department, and even more so by that which came from the Media and Cultural Departments (see Cosatu, 1989c:30). Up until 1987 most of the resources and publications produced by the Education Department were directed at educators and not at workers (Cosatu, 1987b:12; 1989c:29). The media produced by the other departments, however, were directed at a broader audience. The media from all the departments combined included a broad range of accessible resources in the form of books, booklets, pamphlets, posters as well as audio-visual materials (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c). This diverse range of communications could also have been understood by the many workers who had a low level of literacy.

However, although the media was accessible – it may not have been accessed by workers. Cosatu noted a number of problems that the Media Department faced with effectively

distributing its media (Cosatu, 1987b:21,22,33; 1989c:33,34). It also appeared that the intentions to translate media into the first languages of workers was not effectively implemented (Cosatu, 1989c:29). Thus many members may not have been able to understand the media, even if it was distributed to them, and even if they could read.

Although Cosatu may not have reached 'the mass' of workers, all the people I interviewed who were workers at the time, had attended, or received feedback from other workers who had attended, Cosatu workshops. Workers interviewed mainly participated in education events within their own union. This was a place where they received information from representatives who had attended Cosatu educational events.

Since Cosatu was a federation of affiliates, the effectiveness of its education programme would also be affected by its relationship to, and the functioning (or non-functioning) of, education programmes within the individual unions. Henwood (interview, 2002) notes that in the Western Cape it was difficult for Cosatu to access the ordinary membership of the unions, as the leadership of the affiliates would form a protective 'shell' against Cosatu. He found, however, that a request for members or shop stewards to attend educational *workshops*, rather than political *meetings*, met with an easier response from the leadership. Because of this the REC tended to frequently have workshops which also served as political meetings. This example indicates the reality of some of the blurring between the practice of informal and non-formal education.

Cosatu and Vally noted that most of the affiliates were unable to develop systematic education programmes. With the rapid growth of Cosatu members, many shop stewards and officials needed training. This was meant to be done by affiliates – but was implemented very unevenly. It appears that less than half of the shop stewards received any formal training, and that there was hardly any education directed at the rank and file (Vally, 1994:69,70; Baskin, 1991:244, Cosatu, 1989c:2,34,35). Thus it appeared that neither Cosatu's nor the affiliates' education programmes were effectively reaching the mass of Cosatu's membership. A question for further research and debate however, is: how can or should a federation do this effectively? Should they, for example, be

facilitating education within each of the affiliates, or training trainers who will further train others, or developing methods that easily reach large numbers of workers (such as use of video's or 'travelling road shows')?

### 7.2.3 *Implementing respect for workers' knowledge and experience*

It is difficult to concretely measure 'respect'. However, some ideas on the subject can be explored via the subjective opinions of participants, the methodologies and forms used for education, as well as the apparent relationship between educator and learner.

In the Western Cape, many of the workers interviewed feel that they were respected at regional Cosatu educational events (see Moyana et al, interview, 2002). However women and domestic workers feel that they were less respected than men. This was evident in their under-representation at educational events, and in the way they were treated at these events. For example, many women note cases of sexual harassment in organisational and educational events (see Caesar, Silimela, Febana, Mbebe, interviews, 2002). Caesar also states that when she stood up to say something people would not listen, but when a man said the same thing, they would applaud him. However, women and domestic workers did feel that some people in the Cosatu Western Cape region tried hard to help them, and they note that their own strength and confidence grew. Silimela, for example, speaks of sometimes attending workshops where she would feel "very out and a bit *dom* (stupid)" and then feeling stronger, until she could "shout and fix up things" (Silemela, interview, 2002; my italics and brackets).

Henwood argues that in the Western Cape, Cosatu strongly attempted to base education upon the experience, knowledge, and issues faced by the workers. He also believes Cosatu encouraged the independence and confidence of workers through structures such as the Local Shop Stewards Councils. When workers came to the Cosatu REC, wanting advice or 'education', he would often refer them to the locals, as he believed that workers learned and 'taught' through sharing their experiences and knowledge. When organising education events it appeared that the Western Cape Cosatu region placed great value on

workers sharing their experience. For example, one of the educational events Henwood describes involved organising the Sarmcol Workers' Collective<sup>1</sup> to travel down and perform their play, and discuss it with other workers. Henwood thinks the experience was powerful for the workers because they could learn and discuss directly with other workers who had similar struggles and problems (Henwood, interview, 2002).

In relation to the regions' progressive intentions he notes, however, that: "We never realised the methods that we thought were the best" (Henwood, interview, 2002). Jansen argues that in spite of egalitarian intentions, the educators were viewed by workers (and sometimes by educators themselves) as superior to workers, and that they received almost 'god-like' respect from 'learners' (Jansen, interview, 2002). This suggests that the espoused principle of a reciprocal relationship between learner and educator was not effectively implemented.

Henwood argues that the national leadership of Cosatu, including those dealing with education, did not really have respect for workers. As I noted (in section 5.6.5) he argues that the reason leaders didn't silence revolutionary politics, was not because of their actual support for the revolutionary activity of the workers, but because of the social pressure of the workers. He states:

But what the Cosatu leadership was doing in their daily lives politically and organisationally was not about building the political independence of these workers, or really respecting workers, and really beginning with the existing experiences and consciousness of workers; but it was about foisting on them what they thought was more important (interview, 2002).

The question of whether the educators were 'foisting' or 'facilitating' can be discussed in relation to the methodologies and styles, and the participation of the workers. Henwood feels that the national Cosatu education workshops were more about delivering information to learners than about building their capacity. However, he notes that they did provide some space, even if a lot of it was outside of the organised workshops, for worker leaders to share their experiences (interview, 2002). Caesar feels that the national educators drew less on the experiences of workers than the regional educators did. However, even on the regional level, in many of the affiliate unions, officials, leaders and

educators 'treated workers as if they were stupid.' She says, however, there was an unusual group of educators active in the region at that time (including Henwood, Jansen and Cooper) that really wanted workers to understand, and helped workers to learn from each other (Caesar, interview, 2002).

Silimela and Febena (interview, 2002) note that sometimes men and those who were 'more educated with schooling' dominated the workshops. They note that domestic workers were 'scared and shy to ask', because they had less schooling, and were scared that they would say 'wrong things' or 'speak in broken English'. They note that workshops would sometimes come up with very big words, which were difficult to understand. They also would sometimes 'go into groups' where they felt more comfortable. Caesar (interview, 2002) notes that on a regional level, education was focussed on issues 'on the ground', people could speak in their first language, and many workers participated. But national workshops were on a 'different level', 'higher politically', and difficult to cope with or understand. They were only in English, with no translations.

The methods that workers came up with themselves appeared to be very creative and empowering to other workers. Caesar describes the anti-LRA education that the Local Shop Stewards Council organised. They would do guerrilla theatre on the rush hour trains as a way of facilitating discussion amongst workers. Silimela and Febana also describe some of the activities of their drama group, including plays performed at the 1987 Cosatu National Congress (interviews, 2002).

There is mention in the documents and interviews of a range of accessible and participatory techniques (including plays, group discussions and videos)(see interviews, 2002; Cosatu, 1989c). These gave some indication that there was also space made for workers to share their experiences. Interviews reflect experience of lively worker participation and control of education events, as well as lengthy top-down lectures by leadership. This variety is also reflected in the research done by Cooper and Qotole (1996:53-56). They interviewed a union educator who was critical of a long-standing

conservative tradition within Cosatu that had a “strongly didactic approach to education which sometimes led to workshops becoming a ‘dog and pony show’ of skilled experts”. He believed that this tradition co-existed alongside “popular methodologies” (Cooper and Qotole, 1996:56).

However, information on methodologies only makes full sense if analysed in its political context. For example, participation alone is not indicative of control, and at times long lectures may have been appropriate as a means of communicating information, and were not necessarily undermining to workers.

#### 7.2.4 *Linking education to ‘useful’ activity*

The topics outlined in the overview indicate that much of Cosatu’s training was geared towards developing organisational and leadership skills, and to support campaigns. Even the theory covered in seminars was ‘practical’ in that it equipped worker leaders to accomplish actual political tasks. The interviews conducted reflect a close relationship between organisation and education. In fact many people struggled to distinguish between education and organisation. Education was an organisational event, and organisation was educational. The differentiation may only have been made by calling an event a ‘meeting’ or a ‘workshop.’

#### 7.2.5 *Did education take place ‘anywhere and anytime’?*

Cosatu’s assertion that education could happen ‘anywhere and anytime’, is open to interpretation (see section 6.2.10). It could refer to an understanding that *non-formal education*, facilitated by an educator, could take place in a range of settings. Or it could be interpreted as acknowledgement of the vast amount of *informal learning* that was taking place through worker organisation and struggle.

Erwin’s statement referred to a range of locations and events which could “be *used* as places where education takes place” (Erwin, 1986:6, see section 6.2.10, my italics). This

implies he was referring to non-formal rather than informal education. Linda Cooper (seminar, September 2002) recalls that in the Western Cape, the non-formal union education done by labour service organisations (such as ILRIG and TULEC) often did take place in a range of unusual settings. She speaks for example of addressing workers from the top of a ladder during a strike, and videos being run by portable generators in tents where workers were blockading a workplace. She observes, however, that Cosatu's education was 'more managed', and did not often reach ordinary workers.

The valuing of *informal* education by Cosatu is evident in its view of organisations and unions as 'schools of struggle' (see sections 6.2.5 and 6.2.9). This referred to workers learning through everyday experience. I will describe, and give illustrative examples of, some of the informal learning that *was taking place* within Cosatu and the workers' movement.

The level of workers' struggle was high, and their forms of struggle diverse (see Chapter 5). As I argued in Chapter 4, times of collective worker struggle are times of accelerated learning. Therefore it can be argued that there was a high level and diverse range of informal learning taking place (see Cooper et al, 2002:120-121; Baskin, 1991:75,266).

As Grossman notes:

There was immense intellectual turmoil as struggle opened up all issues to progressive inspection and challenge and demanded the tolerance to make this possible, subject only to the dogma that mass struggle was necessary to destroy the system. Workers searched memory, each other, history, the world, political texts for ideas and knowledge, bringing everything into their intellectual embrace. The history of mass resistance, suppressed and stolen from popular memory, was rediscovered, re-appropriated and re-remembered by the millions who had made parts of it (Grossman, 1996:6).

Examples of workers' informal learning are evident in cultural activities, collective struggles (such as strikes), and workplace learning. These are all learning contexts that impacted on a huge number of workers. Most workers had some experience of a workplace, many had participated in strikes, and cultural groups were prolific.

By 1989 there were over 300 cultural groups linked with the federation, which performed at rallies, meetings and conferences. At the 2nd Cosatu Congress in 1987, for example, there were poetry readings, worker choirs, plays and art exhibitions (Baskin, 1991:246). This is in addition to the cultural acts of singing, dancing and toyi-toying, which were a part of every workers' gathering. Cosatu reports noted that: "There lies a vast amount of cultural creativity amongst Cosatu members in the form of songs, plays, poetry and other art forms" (Cosatu, 1987b:25); and that "...the last few years have been marked by a cultural explosion in the factories and the oppressed communities all over" (Cosatu, 1989c:29).

The content expressed by the cultural groups was as diverse as the workers and the situations they were responding to, however they appeared to contain the common themes of a collective critique of oppression they faced, as well as celebration of their own emerging power. Cooper argues that

while worker plays expressed themes of the alienation of workers in factory conditions and their bitter experiences of racism, poverty and arbitrary dismissals, they also celebrated the emergence of worker self-organisation and action, and numerous plays were produced by groups of workers on strike with the express purpose of winning support for their strike action from other workers and from the wider community (Cooper, 1998b:147).

Cultural activities were an intensely educational event for the 'performers' as well as for the 'audience'. In drama groups for example, there were many stages of learning and teaching (see von Kotze, 1984; 1988).<sup>2</sup>

Another area of workers' informal knowledge was that gained by their experience in their workplace. The specifics of workplace learning would vary according to the differences in the workplace, and in the profession in particular. But there were types of informally learned knowledge that workers developed which can be generalised to cover the learning of workers in all occupations. For example: the *skills* that allow them to *perform the functions* of their job; an *understanding of their exploitation*; the knowledge and skills that allow them to *survive* the circumstances of their employ; and the knowledge of how to *organise and collectively change* their work and social conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Grossman argues that workers in the 1980's developed a vast amount of workplace related knowledge. He also argues that there was an approach to workplace learning founded upon a progressive socialist tradition. The workers' and educators' approach to workplace learning in the 1970's and 1980's was one driven by a desire to build worker control, and to improve life for all, rather than on that which improves bourgeois production or facilitates career advancement for individuals (Grossman 1999:5-7).

Another major area of informal learning, was workers' collective struggle. A group of dismissed hotel workers, reflecting on their process of struggle noted that: "We are learning. We are finding there are many things we can do. We are sharing our strength with each other and getting support from outside. We are learning many things and spreading our message" (Dismissed Workers' Collective, 1989:15).

The Printpak strike organised by PPWAWU (Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union) in the Transvaal in 1985 provides a good example of the numerous aspects of learning related to the many activities and processes potentially involved in collective strike action.

Printpak workers first took control of the change rooms...they divided them into areas for sleeping, washing and recreation. A group of workers responsible for publicity, listed their demands on posters made out of old cardboard. Others working in shifts, patrolled the factory premises and perimeter. Every worker was part of a subcommittee with defined responsibilities. Some dealt with the vital question of food supplies or handled negotiations with management. Others maintained discipline, ensuring no alcohol came onto the premises, and issued passes for entry and exit from the plant. An education committee arranged discussions during the evenings. Workers from neighbouring factories kept a watch for the police and donated food parcels to the strikers (Baskin, 1991:84).

The strike thus developed the skills of the workers related to the particular subcommittee they were assigned to (for example, poster making or negotiations), as well as developing a general consciousness of worker control. There were specific, organised, 'education discussions', but it was the whole process that was more profoundly educative. Workers were learning control of their organisation, their workplace and their lives. They were developing confidence in their own knowledge and skills.

The lessons being taught and learned in the workers' movement contributed to training workers to collectively control their own lives. As Friedman states: "The workers' movement aimed to create an entirely new society in which workers, rural poor and all citizens would have the power to control their own lives – and this meant it had to train its members to wield that power" (Friedman, 1987:498).

The field of informal learning of the workers' movement is under-researched and under-documented. Nevertheless it was a significant and powerful tradition, based upon workers' lived experience and expression, and steeped in the political tradition of collective struggle. It would have impacted on the official educational practice of Cosatu and its education structures. The examples I have given, together with the overviews on the educational tradition of the workers' movement (see section 7.2), suggest that in the realm of informal education, the progressive principles of Cosatu's policy (see section 6.2) were being practiced. However, beyond its broad statements on the struggle as a 'school of education', Cosatu did not comment on the strength or depth of the informal education that was taking place amongst its members. Nor did it appear to be building consciously upon the learning that was already taking place. Its critique, for example, of the 'weakness of cultural structures' (section 7.2.1) belies the fact of the strength of numerous cultural groups. Cosatu appears to have placed great emphasis on the functioning of its own official structures rather than on the educational activities of the workers. The relationship between worker *learning* and union and federation *education* is a subject requiring further research, exploration and debate.

#### 7.2.6 *Challenging women's oppression?*

Most of the aspects of Cosatu's pedagogy could not be truly implemented without the full involvement of women. Socialism could not provide freedom for the working class while half the working class remain oppressed. Worker democracy, control and participation in education could not be implemented without the active and equal participation of women workers. Respect for workers holds little meaning when women workers are disrespected.

There was some progress in addressing gender issues in education. There were some seminars run on women, and at the 1987 Education Conference there was a commission on women. The 1987 Women's Commission was itself an educational event. Workers collectively identified and discussed problems women face, and made some recommendations as to how to address them. The process was educative for those involved in the commission, but also for the rest of the conference they reported back to, and to the membership who received reports from the conference delegates or Cosatu's booklet report on this conference. The recommendations from the Education Conference included a proposal to hold a National Women's Conference, which took place in 1988 (Cosatu, 1987b; 1989c).

The 1988 Women's Conference, the preparation for it, and the after-effects did promote much debate and education around gender issues. There were an increased number of 'women's' meetings, seminars and media in preparation for, and after, the event (Cosatu, 1988a:4; 1989c:4-16).

Interviews with Silimela, Febana, Mbebe and Caesar describe examples of the problems women continued to face in the unions, as well as the strength women were building through their education and involvement in struggle. Informal learning and teaching on gender issues continued to take place through struggle and at Cosatu events. An example of this was SADWU's play at the 1987 National Congress:

We did that play about how the men comrades always want to sleep with us. They don't take us seriously. They just want our telephone numbers. I stood up and told them 'No way, Hose. I am a worker just like you. You must listen to what I say. My body is mine, I'll share it with who I like'. Hey, they liked that play. We told them something. We were very strong on that day (Ekitchini Collective, nd:45).

Although there was implementation (of addressing gender issues in education) in the above-mentioned areas there were significant proposals and resolutions on gender issues that Cosatu failed to implement. This was acknowledged and criticised within Cosatu (Cosatu, 1987b:4,24; 1988a; 1989c:6-14). Cosatu had agreed that a women's subcommittee should be set up within the education structures to take responsibility for

ensuring the proposals were implemented (see section 6.2.11). However, as the education structures were not functioning, the subcommittee was not set up. Few regions had set up women's structures, and established Women's Forum's had no representation on regional or national education structures. Women remained underrepresented in education events and structures, as leadership, educators and participants. All the education office bearers elected at the 1987 Education Conference were men. I found no evidence of Cosatu attempting to ensure women's representation at training events (for example, a gender quota or childcare facilities at educational events). The stated intention to 'focus on women in all Cosatu's courses' was not reflected in the seminar outlines. There were few real changes in the sexist behaviour and activities within Cosatu (Cosatu, 1987b:24,30,31;1989c:6-14; Baskin, 1991:369-384; 1994:41-44).

These failures in addressing gender issues cannot be reduced to weaknesses of the education structures and events. Much of the problem lay in the failure of Cosatu as a whole to implement recommendations that *arose out of* the education that *did* take place. This can be attributed to the 'non-functioning' of the education structures; the power of sexist attitudes and practice in the union as well as outside of it; and also to the lack of a clear integrated political theory and programme, locating gender issues in the context of working class struggle (see section 3.1). In my opinion, this theoretical 'failure' was a broader political and organisational issue. However, it does also reflect on a failure within the Education Department, since it was responsible for taking on 'women's issues', and for facilitating broader political debates. It did facilitate the latter but without any integration of gender issues. These problems may have contributed to gender issues not being integrated into the mainstream of Cosatu activity.

### **7.3 Accounting for contradictions and unevenness in implementation**

#### *7.3.1 Difficulties faced by educators*

Erwin (interview, 2002), although reluctant to admit to any failure of implementation of Cosatu's espoused pedagogy, does state that a factor that may have impeded

implementation was the level of skill of the educator. Cooper and Qotole (1996:53-56) elaborate on this, noting that many educators are ill-equipped and fall back on the teaching methods of their own (poor) schooling, such as “ ‘talking at’ the workers in a class-room style” (Cooper and Qotole, 1996:56).

Drawing on interviews with educators, Cooper and Qotole note a number of factors that contribute to the gap between ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory in use’. These include: different approaches to education and organising within the federation, practical difficulties in reaching a large membership, shortage of time and resources, lack of confidence, and lack of skill required for workers to pass on what they have learnt, as well as the ‘centralising tendencies’ of unions (Cooper and Qotole, 1996:53-59). Cooper and Qotole state that: “The trade union educator is therefore caught between a stated commitment to participatory and empowering educational methodologies on the one hand, and a whole set of factors - practical, historical and structural - which tend to work against such an educational approach” (Cooper and Qotole, 1996:57).

### 7.3.2 *Objective conditions*

A commonly held perspective, expressed by historians and by Cosatu officials, was that Cosatu genuinely ‘intended’ to put what it espoused into practice, but was ‘realistically’ unable to do so fully because of objective conditions. Cosatu was a fledgling and fast growing organisation. It was struggling to organise a huge numbers of workers under conditions of extreme repression (Baskin, 1991; Vally, 1994; Cosatu, 1989a). Grossman (1996:6) argues that the progressive tradition of workers was uneven and limited, and that this was to be understood in the undermining context of patriarchal, racist capitalism, and the related dominant values (see section 5.2). This same argument could be applied to understanding the failure to implement progressive education practice. In other words, the limitations may have been a result of the surrounding oppressive and exploitative conditions and influences.

### 7.3.3 *Political tensions within the federation*

The practice of education could also have been shaped by the politics of the leadership, educators, and the structures they influenced. Although Cosatu had a dominant espoused position of progressive socialist politics, there were different and contested aspects to this. I have noted that there were different approaches to worker leadership, democracy and political struggle (see 3.2 and 5.5). There were also some problems in the implementation of independent socialist politics, worker democracy, non-sexism and support for workers' struggle (strikes in particular) (see 5.6). These contradictions and difficulties with political implementation could have manifested in the practice of education.

Henwood's description of the politics and practice of the national leadership (see section 7.2.3) implies progressive practice may have happened *in spite of* the national leadership (interview, 2002). This suggests that some of the practice that undermined or contradicted the implementation of progressive principles may have been because of the actual conservative (or reformist) approach of national leadership.

The progressive rhetoric could be understood as a result of the social pressure (or 'forcing through') of the workers' movement. The progressive principles were being practiced in this movement, and were impacting on the practice of Cosatu's official non-formal education. However, a question remaining unresolved is whether Cosatu's National Education Department and national education leadership were actively contributing to progressive implementation.

Some historians and activists argue that those active in the Education Department were generally more 'left' than the dominant leadership (Baskin, 1991:244; Henwood, interview, 2002). This would suggest that they *would* attempt to implement progressive principles. It was argued, however, that when it came to practice, the educational activities were 'blocked' by other regional and national leadership who had different politics (Baskin, 1991:244; Grossman, December seminar, 2001).

It is also possible that the tension between Cosatu's function as an *institution* on the one hand, and as a *movement* on the other (see 3.2), may have been reflected in its education practice. An institution may tend to further bureaucratic and 'top-down' aims, including better lines of communication down to, and control over, the workers, as well as practical training to increase organisational efficiency. Within the institution, leaders can become entrenched in powerful positions. This could be reflected in training that took the form of 'delivery' of 'the line', and training to build technical organisational skills. On the other hand the broader 'workers' movement' that Cosatu was part of may have embodied an educational approach that emphasised collective workers' control and the sharing of experience.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

My assessment of the reports and interviews suggest to me that there was unevenness, contradiction and variety in the implementation of the various aspects of Cosatu's policy, and that there were differences of opinions on the subject. Future research would need to explore regional and national variations, and issues such as the possibility that workers from different sectors may have had different experiences of education.<sup>4</sup> The information suggests, however, that the progressive approach to education as outlined in the key features of Cosatu's policy (see section 6.2) were in general *dominant* within the implementation of Cosatu's educational practice. This perspective is consistent with research done by Vally (1994), and Cooper and Qotole (1996) who describe the implementation of principles such as workers' control and the valuing and sharing of collective worker experience.

The implementation of these progressive principles may have been a result of the progressive traditions that arose out of the informal learning and the political activity of the workers' movement, impacting on the non-formal educational practice of Cosatu. In the realm of informal learning through struggle, workers were constructing a progressive alternative in practice. In the same way that the politics of the workers' movement

‘forced its way through’ to the politics and policy of Cosatu; the practice of the informal learning of workers may have ‘forced its way through’ into the practice and policy of non-formal education in Cosatu.

There were, however, limitations, restrictions, problems and obstacles in the implementation of the progressive principles. I have raised questions about Cosatu’s effectiveness in implementing many of the principles espoused in its policy. Differing opinions were (and are) given as to the nature and cause of these limitations.

There are some apparent parallels and links between the implementation of the political practice, and the implementation of the educational practice. For example, there was similar progress and difficulty in the implementation of the principles of workers’ control and non-sexism in both the political and the educational practice. Political tensions have also been used to account for some aspects of the educational practice (see 5.6.5 and 7.3.3). This suggests that the strengths and the difficulties of education were shaped by its political context. However the dynamics of this relationship in the instance of Cosatu requires further research and exploration. My findings and discussion on Cosatu’s educational practice are largely suggestive, but they do assist in providing the context within which to analyse the policy on education.

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 7

<sup>1</sup> See Von Kotze (1988) for more information on the Sarmcol Workers’ Collective

<sup>2</sup> Von Kotze’s writing illustrates how ‘workshop plays’ were educational in the process of making the play, as well as in the process of showing the play to others. Workers were brought together, they shared their problems, learned about and developed an understanding of each other and their experiences. The making and presenting of the play was itself an act of standing and fighting together. Workers acted out solutions to their problems, overcame fears and built their self-confidence. Many of the worker actors became worker leaders (Von Kotze, 1984;1988).

<sup>3</sup> Examples of knowledge which can be categorised in these ways, can be located within numerous worker interviews, stories and histories. See, for example, the experiences of domestic workers in Ekitchini Collective, 1987; Grossman, 2001; Silimela and Febana, interview, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> The domestic workers interviewed, for example, appeared to have had more experiences of feeling alienated at Cosatu educational events (Febana and Silimela, interview, 2002). Grossman’s writings also mention some of the specific difficulties faced by domestic workers within Cosatu (Grossman, 1999:3).



## CHAPTER 8: COSATU POLITICS AND EDUCATION 1989-1992

In this chapter, I first describe the political context, then the approach to worker education expressed in Cosatu policy in the second period under consideration: 1989-1992. I also integrate some information on Cosatu's educational practice.

### **8.1 Political context**<sup>1</sup>

#### **8.1.1 Negotiated settlement and broad alliances**

McKinley and Grossman note that 1989 marked the beginning of a period politically different from the preceding years. Grossman notes the differences in the labour movement (Grossman, 1996:6). McKinley describes the ANC's shift in tactics from 'ungovernability' to 'negotiated settlement'. The ANC and SACP aggressively pursued a negotiations strategy (McKinley 1997:83-102). The state implemented a series of major reforms. This included the unbanning of organisations, the release of Mandela, the lifting of restrictions and the beginning of open negotiations with all political parties. Accompanying the state's 'reforms' was a torrent of state-supported violence against the working class in general, and the progressive movement in particular (McKinley, 1997:103-117,125-126).

Grossman argues that the union leadership faced a choice of whether to directly challenge, or to accommodate to, reformist pressures. They chose the latter. Cosatu formally allied itself with the ANC and SACP in 1990, and the leadership of Cosatu embraced the political orientation of these parties (Grossman, 1996:7). Ginsberg notes that Cosatu made the journey from a "position of leader of mass mobilisation in opposition to the apartheid government to a partner in an alliance with the ANC and the SACP in a negotiated transition to democracy" (Ginsberg, 1997:125). Following the ANC/SACP strategy, the politics of a broad anti-apartheid front (asserted in 1988) were

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<sup>1</sup> Since I am addressing both the political context and the approach to education of this period in one chapter, I use a slightly different heading format to that employed in previous chapters, in order to clarify the distinction.

reiterated and affirmed as a dominant strategy within Cosatu (see, for example, Cosatu, 1989a:4).

### 8.1.2 A 'social contract', and the acceptance of the parameters of capitalism

Ginsberg (1997:126) notes that Cosatu's political shift was accompanied by institutional changes in the way the federation related to business and government, as Cosatu began to participate in tripartite forums.

Cosatu began to advocate a 'new' approach to trade unionism. By 1992 this was promoted and described by some unions as 'strategic unionism' (see Von Holdt, 1993). This approach advocated a *social contract* between business, labour and government, which was termed a 'reconstruction pact'. ANC strategists argued that "there need not necessarily be a conflict between the interests of maintaining profitability and the demands of labour for a living wage" (Tito Mboweni, cited in SACCAWU, 1992). Cosatu argued that there was a need to develop high employment, high wages and high productivity (Cosatu, 1990b:28-36).

Although this approach was critiqued within the labour movement<sup>1</sup>, it effectively became the dominant approach amongst Cosatu leadership. Those who did not embrace the approach of strategic unionism were accused of being 'old-fashioned', 'unrealistic' and 'unpragmatic' (Saccawu, 1992:3). This 'new era' of politics was described as a shift from *resistance to reconstruction*. It was argued that the previous period was merely oppositional and as the likelihood of a transfer of power came closer, the time had come for 'constructive engagement' (see for example, Cosatu, 1991c:1; Von Holdt, 2000).

Grossman argues that the 'social contract' approach

became embodied in a set of agreements and structures - notably initially the Laboria Minute, and the National Economic Negotiating Forum. An important common thread through the different agreements was *shared* responsibility. Justified and popularised as winning a share of control and participation in decisions previously taken by capital alone, it translated into a shared commitment to secure the economic stability, non-disruption and increased

productivity seen as essential in creating an ‘investment-friendly environment’. It became shared responsibility in promoting the defence and extension of capitalist profits (Grossman, 1996:8-9, original italics).

Cosatu documents continued to mention socialism, and the need to end apartheid and capitalist exploitation (Cosatu, 1989a:3; 1990b:29). However, socialism was increasingly presented as if synonymous with ‘economic reconstruction’. And reconstruction came to be interpreted as reconstruction within the capitalist framework (see for example, Cosatu, 1990b:32-36; 1991a;1991b:12-15).

Cooper notes that although there were competing positions on economic policy within Cosatu, neither of the dominant positions “questioned the necessity of South Africa’s re-incorporation into the global economy, despite the labour movement’s stated commitment to the struggle for socialism. Rather they have sought to shift the *terms* on which South Africa is to be reincorporated into the global economy” (Cooper, 1998a:4).

Henwood reflected that there was a possibility that

...an independent and critical voice was lost at a pivotal point with the Cosatu leadership agreeing to the Laboria minute and thereby sidelining the anti-VAT demands of a much broader (beyond the trade unions) workers' movement. It was here that the reformism of the trade union movement found common grounds with the NDS stage one objective<sup>2</sup>. It was the anti-LRA victory that was sufficient gain for the workers, and provided the confidence for the trade union leadership to assert its control and begin limiting its interpretation of Cosatu's role and visions in the struggle against apartheid primarily and capitalism secondly [email correspondence, 2002 (Appendix D)].

From 1989-1992, Cosatu continued with some of the campaigns it had initiated in the earlier years, namely the Living Wage Campaign and the Anti-LRA Campaign; and it initiated the Workers’ Charter Campaign, the Anti-privatisation Campaign and the Anti-VAT Campaign. There were still significant strikes and a high level of worker participation in campaigns and political mass action (see Baskin, 1991; Cosatu, 1989a;1991e). However, this activity was increasingly directed by the leadership to serve the function of a pressure to aid the negotiations process (Grossman, 1996:7,9). The changing political climate in general, and Cosatu’s political shifts, had a marked impact

on the organisational activity the federation engaged in. Grossman argues that there were changes in the issues taken up by Cosatu, the activities it embarked on, its way of mobilising, the alliances it formed, and its approach to leadership and worker accountability.

In 1989, the carefully organised march, rally and demonstration of the Defiance Campaign replaced the mass mobilisation of the streets. Cosatu policy of a united front of mass organisations with a record of struggle was subsumed beneath moves towards a popular frontist Conference for a Democratic Future. The agenda was turned away from day-to-day issues, which had been made prominent through mass struggle, towards aspects of social apartheid, carefully selected to win the support of prominent dignitaries and also employers. A loose structure of leadership, under the banner of the Mass Democratic Movement, directly under the control of the Congress Alliance leadership and increasingly distant from and unaccountable to any rank- and- file structures, was constituted. The conditions which could secure the involvement of dignitaries, often with no history of struggle, superseded the views of workers in determining what would be done. The stay-away in defiance became the stay-away with permission, then the stay-away *only* if there was permission, then the work-stoppage without disruption, then *opposition* to work stoppages which caused disruption (Grossman, 1996:7-8, original italics).

### 8.1.3 A decrease in worker control and democracy

Worker control and democracy diminished significantly in these years. This was acknowledged and lamented by many unionists (see for example Keet, 1992; Marie, 1992). There was some criticism within the unions that mass action was ‘turned on and off like a tap’ (see Vally, 1994). A few critics make the link between the decrease in democracy and the prevailing ‘social contract’ politics (see, for example, Horwitz, 1992), however, many commentators do not do this (see, for example, Baskin, 1991).

Cosatu itself was critical of the “distance of the ANC leadership from their mass base and the lack of consultation with the unions”. However, this “criticism dissipated during 1992 when Cosatu was given seats on ANC and SACP working groups in the negotiations. This meant greater involvement of key leaders, but the issues of distance and lack of accountability were replicated and compounded *inside* Cosatu” (Grossman, 1996:8, original italics).

Rank and file members, and some union leaders in these organisations were at times openly critical of their leadership. An input paper at the 1991 Cosatu Education Conference argued that “the present political juncture, stemming from the declining militancy due to state and capitalist repression and the reformist path pursued by our leadership is not particularly conducive for enhancing workers control of their organisation, and even less its essence, control by the producers over the means of production” (Cosatu, 1991g:8).

Other examples of internal resistance, and comments from workers themselves, although scarce, are detectable in some of Cosatu’s official documents. A union delegate at a Cosatu economic policy workshop noted that “the leadership is now talking a totally different language from what the masses on the ground are saying...the leadership moves in one direction - with business, - and the people moving the other way” (Cosatu, 1990c:4).

Workers interviewed in 2002 also comment on the distance that grew between the leadership and the workers in the early nineties. Many feel that this began with the unbanning of the organisations (in 1990), worsened with the democratic elections (in 1994), and was still prevalent currently (2002). Workers state that:

Our leaders have flown away (Moyana).  
 They have forgotten us (Ncime).  
 They used us as a step-ladder to get up there (Mbebe).  
 In those days (earlier in the 1980’s) they were listening because there was pressuring...Now they are high up (Silimela, my brackets).  
 They have kicked the ladder down so we cannot go up (Febana).  
 But I don’t want to climb up there after them...We are still on the ground here, most of us...When they fall they will fall a long way and hurt themselves (Silimela).

Ndongeni states: “Today we do not have leadership, we have ‘instructors’. Leadership acts on mandates and comes back to the workers. The instructors just impose policies.”

#### **8.1.4 Summary**

The politics of the 1989-1992 period can be noted as different from that of the 1985-1988 period. The democratic movement and Cosatu were presented with new opportunities for negotiations with the state and business. Cosatu supported the ANC/SACP's negotiations strategy, as well as these organisations' political strategy of a broad (cross-class) anti-apartheid alliance. It increasingly adopted a new 'social contract' politics, and its leadership entered into discussions and agreements with the state and business. These approaches can be contrasted with its earlier policies of working class independence and its stated antagonism to the ruling class. In the 1989-1992 period there were still assertions (as there were in the earlier period) of the need to build socialism and to meet the needs of the working class. However there was simultaneously an explicit and implicit understanding of this as 'economic reconstruction' that was to take place within the parameters of capital's needs. There was a noted decrease in worker democracy, and a growing gap between leadership and membership.

### **8.2 Cosatu's approach to education 1989-1992**

The period 1989-1992 marked a 'new era' of Cosatu education. I give an overview of Cosatu's approach to education during this period, followed by a description of key features of its approach. I look primarily at the espoused policy of Cosatu, but also integrate some information on educational practice.

#### **8.2.1 Overview of Cosatu's approach to education 1989-1992**

Cosatu held an education conference in 1989 and one in 1991. In 1992, it identified that a 'new' approach to education had been marked by the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Education Conference held in 1991 [Cosatu, 1992f:2 (Appendix G)]. Although this is when many changes were institutionalised in Cosatu, the development of a 'different' approach was evident from 1989 (see Cosatu, 1989c; Vally, 1994; Baskin, 1991).

Cosatu's education programme was divided into 'Systematic Education' (internal to the federation) and 'Policy Research' (to develop policy proposals for a new national education system). A Cosatu diagram outlined the "Key elements of our programme" as the following:

**Systematic Education Activity**

1. Staff development and training
2. Shop steward training
3. Leadership skills
4. Women
5. Educators training
6. Adult education
7. Membership mass education

**Policy Research Activity**

8. Macro education policy development
9. Research and policy development
10. Worker colleges

(Cosatu Education Unit, 1991 cited in Vally, 1994:63).

This illustrated the different aspects of its proposed programme. Points 1 to 7 were similar to those proposed in the 1985-1988 period; whereas points 8 to 10 were new developments. However, most of Cosatu's policy and practice were taken up by two elements of the proposed programme: Staff Development and Training and the development of policy proposals on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)(Vally, 1994:64; see Cosatu documents 1989-1992).

There was an increasing tendency for the policy and practice of internal education to focus on national seminars, to be directed at staff and leadership, and to equip them with 'specialist skills' which would allow them to become experts in a field. The understanding was that this would equip them to perform their union tasks better and to contribute to developing policy. The educators thus had to be 'experts' themselves. They were generally non-African male intellectuals (see Cosatu, 1989c;1991h). This marked a shift from the stated focus of the 1985-1988 period, which was on mass membership, shop stewards and grassroots leadership.

There was still some education reaching a broader section of membership linked with the campaigns for a Living Wage, the Workers' Charter, and the Education Charter, and against the LRA and VAT. However the campaigns, and the education related to them, came to be less about a collective political process of workers discussing, drawing up, and fighting to enforce demands, and more directed towards the development of proposals (usually by 'experts') which were to be the subject of negotiations with capital and the state (see Cosatu, 1989a,b,c;1991e).

In Cosatu's approach to internal education, there was an increasing emphasis on 'skills training', 'specialist expertise', and 'capacity building'. Education was to be 'efficient' 'centralised', 'institutionalised', measured by 'end-point competencies' and awarded by 'certificates'. Training was to be conducted through progressive 'modules' in a 'professional' manner. It was to allow for 'career' development of educators and trade unionists [Cosatu, 1992b; 1992f (Appendix G)]. This approach to internal education was also evident in Cosatu's ABET proposals (Cosatu, 1992d). It contrasts with the dominant approach of the 1985-1988 period, which emphasised education to build the collective organisation of the working class for the purpose of social transformation.

Research and policy development was a new focus within Cosatu's Education Department. Cosatu was involved in developing policy in numerous areas, in order to contribute to debates and negotiations about the policies of the future democratic government. The Education Department focussed on the development of National Education Policy (ABET in particular), and also played a role in facilitating the processes of policy development on other topics (for example, the economy)(see Cosatu 1990c).

The guidelines to ABET were based on proposals developed in the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in 1989, and were put forward by the CEC and then adopted at Cosatu's 1991 Congress (Cooper, 1998b; Cosatu, 1991c). They were developed further through Cosatu's Participatory Research Project (PRP). Cooper argues that: "COSATU's education and training proposals have been strongly influenced by the Australian and New Zealand models of competency based education and training, but

have been adapted with the aim of winning substantial gains for black workers and increasing labour's bargaining power" (Cooper, 1998b:149). The stated motivations behind Cosatu's education policy were: to establish unity, equity and democracy in the education system; to provide workplace skills training in order to facilitate the development, security and mobility of workers' careers; to equip workers to have more control over workplace production; and to meet the needs of 'the economy' (Cosatu, 1992d).

Cosatu's proposed guidelines for ABET were:

- 1) There must be one national system of Adult Basic Education and Training, with national standards for each level. The system should be certificated by a state national qualification structure.
- 2) ABET must provide general basic education.
- 3) ABET should link up with other educational and training opportunities, and job creation projects. It should parallel with formal schooling, allowing for life-long learning, and be guided by career-paths for workers. [The idea of career-pathing for ordinary workers was advocated in the slogan "*from street sweeper to engineer*" (NUMSA slogan, 1989).]
- 4) Workers must have paid time off for ABET.
- 5) The knowledge and skills workers already have must be recognised.
- 6) Trade unions must be involved in the planning and running of ABET programmes.
- 7) Employers and state must provide resources for ABET programmes.
- 8) ABET classes must be open to the wider community (some documents refer specifically to youth, unemployed and women).
- 9) There must be a nationally recognised system of training and paying ABET educators. This should support the advancing of career paths for trainers [summary of ABET proposals in Cosatu, 1991c(Appendix H);1991f].

There was a resolution on women workers and training made at the 1991 Congress. It stated that the particular problems women faced must be addressed, that there was a need to recognise and pay for women's skills, train women for jobs traditionally held by men,

and establish career paths for traditional women's work. It argued that in order to facilitate women's participation in training there should be provision of childcare, equal training facilities for men and women and non-sexist documentation (Cosatu, 1991f).

Cosatu and some historians heralded the 1989-1992 period as one in which education began to happen more 'efficiently and effectively' (Vally, 1994; Baskin, 1991). This assessment was largely based on the fact that the national structure (Nedcom) was meeting with more consistency, and Cosatu was implementing more of its intended plans. This success was attributed in part to the increased employment of education officials (on an affiliate and federation level). Cooper (1998b) and Grossman (1999) express some criticisms of the changes that began to manifest in this period. These different interpretations of the nature of, and reasons for, the changes and continuities in Cosatu's approach to education will be explored in Chapter 9.

### **8.2.2 Key features of Cosatu's policy on worker education 1989-1992**

Although Cosatu's 1989-1992 policy on internal education was distinguishable from its proposed ABET guidelines, it had a similar approach to both aspects of its education work. Thus my description of the key features of its approach to worker education does not address these areas separately. What were the key features of Cosatu's approach?

#### *8.2.2.1 Unity, equality and democracy*

In the 1989-1992 period Cosatu noted that apartheid education and training was undemocratic, racially divided and extremely unequal both at schools and in the workplace (Bird 1992:25)<sup>3</sup>. Cosatu argued that a new education system should be unified, equal and democratically controlled. It also argued that the education system should contribute to the building of a democratic society, by providing people with skills to equip them to participate fully in decision-making structures (Cosatu, 1992d). Cosatu resolved to "reaffirm a commitment to work for a single non-racial and non-sexist education system geared to meet the needs and aspirations of society as a whole" (Cosatu

PRP,1992b:7). The ABET principles stressed the need for one unified, national system of education (Cosatu, 1991c; 1992d). Specific ABET proposals were made on women workers which gave substance to the stated intention of 'non-sexism' (Cosatu PRP, 1992b:6). The ABET policy intended to help make up for the poor schooling most black adult workers had received. Adult basic education was seen as a necessary foundation for further workplace skills training (Cosatu,1991c;1992d).

The 1985-1988 education policy had also concerned itself with unity, equality and democracy in the national education system. However, the policy of the previous years was proposing an alternative 'people's education,' whereas the policy of the later period was more about ensuring equity and greater access within the existing system.

#### 8.2.2.2 *Meeting the needs of 'the economy'*

Consistent with its assertions in the 1985-1988 period, Cosatu continued to state the need to "Educate for Democracy and Socialism" (see Cosatu, 1991h). However this coexisted with a strong assertion that education should meet the needs of 'the economy'. It increasingly presented the economy in neutral terms. The capitalist economy was referred to by Cosatu as 'our' economy. Education was seen as contributing to the 'restructuring' and building of the economy. Education began to be addressed in Cosatu's documents under the heading of "Human Resources" (see Cosatu, 1990b;1991b).

Cosatu argued that the state "should undertake a programme to skill, educate and train workers to participate at all levels of an enterprise. This training programme will relate directly to the needs of the labour market" (Cosatu, 1990b:28). It stated that:

Our economy needs massive growth to provide jobs and improve standards of living...there is a serious shortage of skilled workers...we need the skills to run industries, to shape and develop economic policies, to build a democratic society and enhance job creation...training should be linked to economic planning and form an integral part of our attempts to restructure the economy" (Cosatu PRP,1992b:7).

Bird notes that NUMSA's model for educational research and policy making (on which Cosatu's guidelines were based) "was consciously designed to mirror the innovative work design being pursued by management at the time, modeled on the Japanese work system, in which the lines between management and worker are blurred" (Ginsberg, 1997:137).

These quotes suggest that Cosatu's approach to ABET was designed to meet the current demands of management and the capitalist market, unlike earlier policy which aimed to transform society to socialism.

#### 8.2.2.3 *Less political, more neutral and technical*

In contrast to the earlier highly politicised conception of education, from 1989 education was increasingly depoliticised. This is not to say that education ceased to have a political function, but that it was less acknowledged as such. Education was often presented as neutral, rather than expressing class relations. The ABET principles advocated 'general' education, in a national standardised system, with the involvement of state, employers and trade unions (Cosatu 1991c). Although the link between education, socialism and democracy was still mentioned (see Cosatu, 1989c:4;1991h), the political role of education was increasingly subsumed beneath an assertion of the need for 'technical' education. This was prevalent in the training within the federation as well as within ABET proposed policy. The references to the political purpose of education decreased year by year, and where it was linked to the 'transformation' of society, it could be argued that the transformation envisaged was not socialism but a 'restructured' capitalism (see Cosatu, 1989c;1990b;1991f).

It was stated that: "While in the past the energy and anger of workers were largely the basis for successful trade unionism, now we require greater technical competence" (Cosatu, 1991g:34). Cosatu's emphasis on skills training, institutionalised and modular education, and certification were all consistent with a technical and mechanistic approach to education (see Cosatu 1992b:76).

#### 8.2.2.4 *Education to develop experts and the careers of individuals*

In contrast to its earlier emphasis on education as a tool for the collective advancement of the working class, as part of the struggle for a transformed society, Cosatu began to see education as a tool to promote the advancement of individuals within the existing capitalist system. Individual advancement does not necessarily conflict with collective advancement, however Cosatu's approach appeared to prioritise the former at the expense of the latter. This was manifest in its focus on 'career development'. Cosatu's new approach aimed to support the career development of trade-unionists, educators and workers. There was a strong focus on 'Staff Development and Training (SDT)', which aimed to build the skills and career paths of staff in order to improve their effectiveness as trade unionists and as an attempt to slow down their exodus from the unions (see Cosatu, 1991g:2-6; Keet, 1992). Cosatu asserted that education should be 'professional' in its design and delivery. Education was intended to assist with building a 'well-managed', 'professional' organisation, and also to developing the 'professions' (or careers) of the trainees (Cosatu, 1992b:76;1992f).

At Cosatu's 1989 and 1991 education conferences it was asserted that "education must be carried out at different times and in many different ways and places where our members are" (Cosatu, 1989c: appendix on mass education; SACCAWU, 1991). However, this approach was subsumed beneath the more dominant perspective that 'professional' education should take place in a 'modular', 'progressive' and 'institutionalised' fashion. Basic, intermediate and advanced training was run with the intention that participants would 'progress' in their knowledge, and that this would assist their career development. The idea was that the same individuals could continue to attend courses, advancing their knowledge further and further (Cosatu, 1992b:76;1992f).

In contrast with the valuing of the knowledge of 'ordinary' workers and of the worker collective, evident in the 1985-1988 period, there was new emphasis on drawing on and building 'experts' in various fields. Modular and progressive courses, as well as

'specialist' courses were designed not only to support career development, but to develop 'experts' in a field. Specialist courses were run by those who were experts in that field (or profession). It was predominantly the staff and the leadership who were the targets of this training. They were increasingly those with a higher level of formal education, and were predominantly male (Baskin, 1994; Cooper et al, 2002).

Cosatu's training for educators (even that not limited to staff) prioritised building the capacity of individuals. In Cosatu's CEP (Centralised Education Programme) it stressed that it wanted consistent members at consecutive educator training workshops in order to build their skills. There are reports however, that Cosatu locals insisted on sending changing participants, arguing that they wanted to expose as many of their worker educators as possible to these methods (Cosatu, 1991g:47). This suggests that some workers were resisting the new emphasis on individual training, and continuing to focus on education as a tool to advance the collective.

The ABET proposals were aimed at improving workers access to education, which was to lead to the acquisition of 'flexible, transferable' skills. This was intended to facilitate access to career paths, leading to greater job opportunities, security and satisfaction (Cooper, 1998a:2). The proposals also asserted that there should be a nationally recognised system of training and paying educators, that should allow them to advance along career paths (Cosatu, 1991c:2).

Related to Cosatu's emphasis on career-development was a new emphasis on the need for formal 'certificates' to be presented to individuals and facilitators on completion of an education event. Cosatu (1992b:72) noted: "There seems to be great importance attached to certificates of attendance currently issued to participants. There also seems to be a trend emerging that is arguing for the certificates to indicate competencies". Certification was seen as a way of recognising and measuring peoples' achievements or skills. It was understood that this could assist with advancement of their careers. Certification and measuring of competency required placing people (presumably the 'experts') in a position to issue certificates and judge the participants. This can be contrasted with how

knowledge was valued and affirmed in the policy of the 1985-1988 years. In those years it was the worker collective that attributed 'value', and what was valued was that which was 'useful' to the collective advancement of the working class as a whole. The emphasis on certification was also significant in that it marked a shift away from non-formal and informal education, and towards formal education.

#### 8.2.2.5 *Recognition of prior learning*

Cosatu's ABET proposals asserted that "the knowledge and skills workers already have must be recognised" (Cosatu, 1991c:1). The principle of RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) indicated continuity with the principles asserted in the 1985-1988 period, in that it was an acknowledgement that workers gain valuable knowledge by informal and non-formal learning. However it was stated that the purpose of this was that "workers should not have to repeat parts of the course that they know. They should be able to start courses where they need to" (Cosatu, 1991c:1). Thus knowledge was seen as being of value where it overlapped with formal course content, and was recognised in order to avoid the unnecessary reiteration of information already 'known' by the worker. This is not the same as the earlier approach, which recognised that workers had knowledge that they could 'teach' by sharing it with other workers.

#### 8.2.2.6 *Worker control*

Cosatu argued that its new ABET policy could give workers more control in the workplace. Cooper's analysis of Cosatu's arguments reveal that the proposals were aimed at 'winning substantial gains for black workers and increasing labour's bargaining power'. She noted that Cosatu's ABET proposals argued that

a highly-skilled and motivated workforce should be given substantially more power on the shop-floor. Proposals for worker education and training were linked to demands for new forms of participatory work organisation and a flattening of management hierarchies, thereby attempting to advance workers' long-standing struggles for greater control over their own labour (Cooper, 1998a:2).

This aim of increasing worker control within the workplace can be distinguished, however, from the 1985-1988 aim of taking control of the economy.

In 1985-1988 policy, worker control of education was a core principle. The need for worker control over education was still asserted in 1989, but was mentioned and integrated less and less over the years. At the 1989 Education Conference it was stated that there was the need to “firmly root our education activities in the hands of our members, to maximise participation and develop programmes that are responsive to the needs of our membership” (Cosatu, 1989c:19). However, sometimes worker control was substituted with ‘the need for consultation’, or the need to ‘consider’ workers, who were expected to ‘implement’ rather than make decisions. For example, Cosatu stated that: “Our resolutions must be discussed at the grassroots level and the feelings of those who are supposed to implement them must be considered” (Cosatu, 1989c:4).

Within Cosatu, there were increasing examples of this more top-down style over the years. A regional education report stated “the 1991 Conference came up with a coherent 3 year programme. It is for regions to interpret and implement. Our 1992 regional education programme has not been discussed and adopted by a single affiliate” (Cosatu, 1992b:17). Delegates to the 1991 Education Conference did not have an opportunity to discuss documents with their membership beforehand. The delegates only received discussion documents the night before (Saccawu, 1991:2). These examples suggest that decisions were being made on a central, national level, with regions and affiliates expected to implement them.

Increasingly, worker control of education was not mentioned as a principle at all. It appears it was also not effectively practiced through the education structures or events. There was a low level of attendance at regional education meetings and events in most regions, which suggests that the participation necessary for worker control was largely absent (see Cosatu 1992b:18-59).

In the 1985-1988 period, education was aimed at building worker control of their organisations. In the 1989-1992 period, there was a minority position expressed within the documents that was critical of the lack of worker control in the federation and argued that education was a means of asserting this control, and of building socialism. An input paper at the 1991 Education Conference argued that one of the reasons that workers didn't challenge leaders, even leaders acting against their interests, was that workers lacked knowledge and information (Cosatu, 1991g:8-9). In this, and in other documents, it was argued there was a need for education to build 'worker cadres' (Cosatu, 1991g:8-9;1992f:1). Although building individual cadres is not incompatible with building the strength of the working class collective, they are distinguishable aims. In the 1985-1988 period, the building of worker leadership was linked to assertions of advancing the organisations of the working class as a whole. From 1989-1992, however, this link was not made.

In the policy of 1985-1988, Cosatu linked worker control with decentralisation. In 1989, Cosatu continued to assert the need to decentralise education activities, by building up regional and local structures (Cosatu, 1989c:2,3,8,18,19). In most regions, however, (with the notable exception of the Eastern Cape) regional reports noted that the regional education structures remained weak and alienated from organised workers, and had poor working relationships with the affiliates (Cosatu, 1992b:18-59). One Redcom report noted "this sickness of non-attendance of affiliates to meetings" (ibid:39). From 1990 Cosatu began to assert the need to centralise education. For example, a 1991 paper argued for centralised, uniform and simultaneous training (see Cosatu, 1991g:48).

#### 8.2.2.7 *Staff prioritised over workers?*

Cosatu policy in the 1989-1992 period continued to mention the need for shop steward and membership training. However this was addressed in a rather cursory fashion, with little detail on how this was to be implemented (Cosatu, 1989c: appendix on mass education; Cosatu, 1991 cited in Vally, 1994:63). Much of their policy relating to internal education, however, was concerned with the training of staff. This is a shift from the

1985-1988 period where the stated emphasis was on training grassroots leadership and membership.

In its practice too, Cosatu prioritised staff training over training of rank-and-file members.<sup>4</sup> A Staff Development and Training (SDT) unit was set up in 1989 and detailed training proposals were made and implemented from 1990 to 1992, predominantly through residential Summer and Winter Schools (Cosatu, 1992b:63-76). The prioritising of staff training over shop steward and 'local' training was indicated in Cosatu's activities (and lack of activities), as well as its allocation of funds. Although there were a few examples of Cosatu education taking place on a local level, there was a general neglect of local and membership training. Regions who had made attempts to do training on this level complained of a lack of funds to support this (Cosatu, 1992b:12,20). A regional report noted that: "Locals are not taking this lightly...After all we may not talk of education if we neglect locals" (ibid:34). Cosatu's education bias towards staff added to the exclusion of women, since they were underrepresented in these positions. There was however the publishing of a magazine, "The Shopsteward" in 1992, which was aimed at shop stewards and membership, showing that these constituencies were not totally excluded. There are also reports of unions sending their shop stewards to workshops that Cosatu was running for staff (Cosatu, 1992b:18-59;1992f:2)<sup>5</sup>.

In the practice of the 1989-1992 period, there were apparent similarities to the 1985-1988 period, in that the mass of the affiliates' members were ineffectively reached. What was different in the later period, however, is that there was little self-criticism of this failure.

#### 8.2.2.8 *Research, policy and charters*

The content of Cosatu's policy needs to be understood in relation to the process of the national policy-making. The Education Department facilitated national research and policy development as well as aspects of the charter campaigns. There were policy workshops on the economy, and on education and training. There was an Education Campaign and a Workers' Charter Campaign. Both of these were educational and

consultative processes initiated with the view to shaping the future, and gaining power in the negotiating process. The policy workshops were directed by national leadership. The charter campaigns were intended to involve membership (Vally, 1994). The Education Charter Campaign was “an attempt to amplify the clause in the Freedom Charter that stated: ‘The doors of culture and learning shall be opened for all’ ”. Cosatu stated that this campaign failed because it “was frustrated by state attacks” (Cosatu, 1989c:21).

The proposal for the Workers’ Charter Campaign, which was rejected at the 1987 National Congress, was adopted at the 1989 National Congress, and developed further at the 1989 Education Conference. The campaign intended to involve the mass of workers in South Africa, develop a ‘fighting’ document of workers’ demands, unite the working class, facilitate discussion and build the political consciousness of workers. The process was to culminate in a non-sectarian Workers’ Charter Congress (including Cosatu, Nactu and unaffiliated unions) – where the Charter would be adopted (Vally, 1994:60-61).

Workers’ demands were stated and collated through questionnaires; local, regional and affiliate workshops; factory meetings; and ‘human chains’. A Workers’ Charter was drawn up at a conference, and adopted at Cosatu’s 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 1991. However the intended Congress with Nactu and other formations never took place (Vally, 1994:60,61). Never-the-less the Workers’ Charter Campaign, with the support of the Education Department, succeeded in involving a large number of workers in drawing up their demands for the future.

The policy workshops and the charter campaigns had parallel subject matter. Thus the Workers’ Charter could have shaped the economic debate, and the Education Charter, the education policy debate. However – Cosatu did not make the demands of the charters the basis of the policy. Policy discussions appeared to be based on proposals put forward by ‘experts’, and not demands drawn up by workers’ charters. An example of this can be noted by comparing documents on the Workers’ Charter (such as Cosatu, 1992i), with those on economic policy (such as Cosatu, 1991b).

These problems, evident in the development of Cosatu's policy from 1989-1992 seem to have been reflected in Cosatu's practice as well. At the opening of an economy workshop in 1990, the National Education Secretary, Khetsi Lehoko, noted the limitations of the economic policy development process thus far. He commented that discussion had largely been at a national level, without the mass participation of the members. He noted the need to link economic policy with members' needs and struggles on the ground. He also reminded the workshop that the form of the economy is determined by power, and not by research and debate (cited in Vally, 1994:62).

Similarly, in the development of ABET policy, there was a notable lack of participation and interest from regions and affiliates. Regional reports of attempted ABET discussions and workshops note low attendance, and lack of enthusiasm and seriousness from affiliates (Cosatu PRP, 1992a:1; 1992b:25,106). Nedcom argued a need to 'push' and 'popularise' ABET issues (Cosatu, 1992b:9). This suggests that the process of ABET policy development did not have a strong level of worker interest, involvement or control, and was largely driven from above.

This information suggests that, correlating with the decreasing emphasis on worker control in Cosatu policy, was an actual decrease in worker control over education and policy development. Information and decisions were increasingly relayed from the top, down. Cooper et al (2002), note that research was in the hands of 'experts' who used abstract and complex terms, inaccessible to ordinary union members. This is in contrast to the 1985-1988 period, in which policy emphasised the need for worker control of education, and in which practice indicated serious attempts at, and instances of, implementation of this principle.

There was some acknowledgement within Cosatu of the lack of worker involvement in research and policy development, and there were attempts to counter this. For example at the 1991 Education Conference it was asserted that "research should strengthen workers' struggles and not focus on sophisticated technical discussions which disempower workers and build a new bureaucracy of technocrats" (Saccawu, 1991:2).

The Participatory Research Project (PRP) was proposed and set up with the stated intention of addressing some of these problems.

#### 8.2.2.9 *Participatory Research Project*

Vally argued that the direct involvement of workers in doing the PRP research was a conscious departure from previous research work, which relied on academic 'experts' (Vally, 1994:67). The PRP was set up in 1991 by Cosatu. Its stated aims included:

1. To enhance the capacity of affiliates to address these issues (namely ABET policy) by providing elected worker participants (or organisers if the affiliates so decide) with the opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of these complex issues.
2. To facilitate the process of such participants leading debate around policy questions in their own affiliates.
3. To ensure a coordinated approach within Cosatu to the development of detailed policy proposals based on principles adopted at the Fourth Congress.
4. To ensure that the research process fully addresses the problems that members face and that policy alternatives are acceptable to the members (Cosatu PRP, 1992b, first brackets are my own).

Although Vally is uncritical of the PRP, and presents its principles as 'articulated by worker leaders' (Vally, 1994:67), I would like to make some preliminary critical observations on the PRP process. I would argue that there was a tension intrinsic to the PRP process in relation to the 'democratic' and 'participatory' nature of the project. Following my arguments in the previous sections related to weaknesses in the implementation of worker control, it is questionable whether workers had been fully involved in debating and determining the ABET guidelines. Nevertheless these guidelines were adopted at the 1991 Fourth National Congress. The PRP now had the brief to facilitate broader debate around policy questions. However, the policy guidelines had already been established. The PRP was set up to develop in a 'participatory' fashion these guidelines which, it could be argued, were not themselves drawn up in a participatory fashion. This context, and the stated aims of the PRP (above), indicate that the participation of workers was required to establish only the *details* of the policy, and not the fundamentals of it (see, for example, questionnaires in Cosatu PRP, 1992a: 19-35)

As I have outlined earlier, the ABET proposals (which were the basis of the PRP work) contained many presumptions about the approach to education (such as career-pathing, meeting the needs of ‘the economy’, and so on). The very name of the project: “PRP on *Human Resource Development*” (Cosatu PRP, 1992a, my italics), indicated its predetermined political and economic perspective, that education and training were to be viewed from the management perspective of ‘human resources’. The assumptions behind the ABET proposals, and the PRP’s approach to developing them, are comparable to the ‘service model’ approach to trade union education, which, as London argues, treats workers as individuals who have to increase their skills, or ‘human capital’ in order to succeed (London, 1990:119, cited in section 3.4).

Vally (1994) argues that the PRP was a shift away from experts controlling research, and indeed the PRP did involve a greater number of workers in the research process. Further research would need to examine whether workers were in control of the process, and if worker participation was more than some shop stewards becoming trainees and assistant researchers, in a project controlled by ‘experts’. It would need to assess if rank and file workers participated beyond answering questionnaires.

#### 8.2.2.10 *Addressing ‘women’s issues’*

In this period Cosatu policy continued to assert the importance of addressing women’s issues via the Education Department. Cosatu also continued to note that this was not effectively done. The education and federation leadership and structures, continued to be dominated by men, and by employed officials. Most of the training around ‘women’s issues’ was directed at women with little participation from men, even though men were the primary practitioners of sexist behaviour. It appears gender issues were rarely integrated into sessions run by the Education Department. However the Nedcom Women’s Subcommittee, and the women’s structures within the regions did succeed to some extent in addressing and integrating ‘women’s issues’ within Cosatu (see Cosatu, 1989c;1991e;1991g:9,42-45;1992c:28-50; Baskin, 1994).

The Nedcom Women's Subcommittee aimed to involve women in Cosatu campaigns, integrate 'women's issues' into existing campaigns and initiate campaigns that affected women in particular. Although the subcommittee noted failure on the first point and limited success with the latter two, there are examples of their implementation. The Cosatu code of conduct had a clause on sexual harassment; the Women's Charter Campaign had a focus on women workers; and Cosatu had a national day of action on childcare – which included demonstrations in many workplaces (Cosatu, 1991g:42-45;1992c:28-50).

Men and women workers continued to learn (informally) about gender issues through struggle. For example, through struggling side by side with women on parental rights issues, male workers learned about women's oppression. A shop steward stated: "Before the parental rights negotiations, I didn't realise the problems that women face. But during those negotiations, I started to see those problems and I also realised that I was part of the problem. I began to realise that as long as women were tied to the kitchen sink, they cannot be free. And until women are free, we will only have half freedom" (Lacom, 1991:21).

By 1992 most of the regions had set up women's structures (under the umbrella of Nedcom) and regional and national women's meetings and workshops were held even where the other education structures were dysfunctional. Although these women's structures and events reached those women who attended, they did not appear to reach a broader base of women. It was also noted that the women's structures had failed to do their intended organisational and leadership skills training for women (Cosatu, 1991g:42-45;1992c:28-50).

The 1991 National Congress included specific demands on women's workplace training, and undertook to do research on a range of gender related topics. The Congress resolutions on education and training asserted that women's skills should be recognised and paid for – and that they should receive equal wages for skills of equal value (Cosatu,

1991f). The issue of what was of 'value' and who was to determine this was not addressed however.

In 1992 a National Women's Workshop was held, with the somewhat broad and vague intentions to 'develop women educationally' and 'make women understand policy' (Cosatu, 1992a:8). At this workshop two lengthy inputs were given by Cosatu (male) leadership on Cosatu international relations and political policy. Neither inputs addressed gender issues and there was no indication of discussion by workshop participants. The workshop also came up with detailed gender-related additions to the 'inadequate' Cosatu Economic Policy Document (Cosatu, 1992c:35-47,50).

### **8.2.3 Summary of Cosatu's policy on worker education 1989-1992**

It has been noted that a 'new' approach to education began to emerge in Cosatu policy in the 1989-1992 period. There was a focus on research and policy development, and detailed guidelines on ABET were drawn up. Cosatu's approach to internal training as well as to ABET policy stated the need for unity, equality and democracy, and meeting the needs of 'the economy.' It motivated that education should be technical, professional, modular and institutionalised. It promoted the knowledge of experts, certification and career-pathing, and argued for the 'recognition of prior learning'. Its assertion of socialism was diminished and amended. Worker control of education was asserted less, and was replaced by a less frequent assertion of the need for worker 'consultation'. The policy reflected an intention to centralise education activities, and to focus on staff and leadership training.

Although my research on the practice of this policy is limited, Cosatu's national documents indicate that the approach in Cosatu's policy was also reflected in its practice. There are reports that the regional and national education structures were alienated from affiliates and locals, and evidence suggests that ordinary members were minimally involved in controlling or attending Cosatu education. There was some limited progress however in the educational activities of women's structures.

During my description of this period (1989-1992), I have noted some of the changes and continuities with the policy (and, to a lesser extent, practice) of the previous period (1985-1988). Although there was some continuity, it is the changes that were more striking. I will discuss and elaborate on these in Chapter 9.

### 8.3 Conclusion

The principles and beliefs contained in Cosatu's approach to education from 1989-1992 had similarities with its political perspectives. Both educational and political policy asserted worker control and socialism less. This was replaced by an assertion of the need for some level of worker consultation. The evidence also suggests that worker control was practiced less in Cosatu's education and politics.

In line with its 'social contract' politics, Cosatu's approach to national education policy suggested that education was to be developed and implemented in consultations between labour, business and government. Cosatu politics and education were both more concerned with *restructuring* the *existing capitalist* economy and education, rather than *opposing* it and building an *alternative* to it. This can be contrasted with the educational and political policy of the 1985-1988 period – which was aimed at constructing a socialist alternative, to be developed by an independent working class movement.

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 8

<sup>1</sup> See SACCAWU, 1992; Jansen, 1993, and a number of articles in SALB, 1990-1992. Criticisms and resistance are also mentioned in Grossman, 1996:8; and McKinley, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> NDS refers to the 'National Democratic Struggle', and stage one is the achieving of national democracy with stage two, being socialism.

<sup>3</sup> Most black workers had poor formal schooling (under the policy of 'Bantu education') and were given less skilled jobs (under apartheid job reservation policy). Where they did do skilled work it was mostly unrecognised, undervalued and underpaid. For black women workers this was even more the case (Bird 1992:25).

<sup>4</sup> Ginsberg notes that in the case of NUMSA, with the union's involvement in policy research, the training of worker leadership increasingly fell by the wayside. There was a decline in shop steward education and an almost complete disappearance of membership education (Ginsberg, 1997:141).

<sup>5</sup> There are also examples of SACHED doing some shop steward training with Cosatu's regional support (Cosatu, 1992b:18-59).



## CHAPTER 9: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I summarise my research findings. I note some of the significant changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on education from 1985-1992, by comparing the key features of the earlier period (1985-1988) with those of the later (1989-1992). Drawing on the theoretical definitions given in Chapters 2 and 3, I suggest some broad characterisations of the different approaches manifest in the policy. I then propose some possible reasons for the changes and continuities. I link my findings to the theoretical arguments and debates raised in the literature, and suggest issues for future research.

### 9.1 Summary of findings

In Chapter 5, I outlined the political context of 1985-1988. I noted that there was a high level of worker activity and militancy; and that the dominant politics of the workers' movement, and the policy of Cosatu, advocated socialism, international worker solidarity, worker independence, worker democracy, worker control, non-racism and non-sexism. I argued that there were however some changes, contradictions and conflicts within the political positions and the practice of Cosatu. I suggested that the progressive political policy of Cosatu was the result of the social pressure of the workers movement 'forcing through' into the politics of the federation.

In Chapter 6, I argued that Cosatu's policy on worker education was highly politicised, and contained a socialist perspective. This included a class analysis, a critique of capitalist education, and an argument that education should contribute to socialist transformation.

I argued that it was 'oppositional', in that it opposed the values and practice of capitalist education including: divisions, inequality, racism, sexism, individualism, careerism, competitiveness, elitism, authoritarianism and the denigration of worker identity. Cosatu argued that capitalist education prepared workers to be willing participants in their own exploitation.

I argued that Cosatu's policy was not 'merely opposing', since it was driven by the desire to build a progressive *alternative*. Cosatu argued for the need to develop an 'alternative education', which would contribute to the *transformation* of society to socialism. This alternative was based on progressive political principles, and was described as having the following key features:

- Democratic worker control within all aspects of education.
- A belief that education should be a collective process involving *all* workers.
- A collective and inclusive approach to learning.
- Respect for workers, their knowledge and their experience. Linked with this was the assertion that there should be a reciprocal relationship between learner and educator.
- Education was linked to 'doing' and to 'useful' activity.
- A belief that education could take place 'anywhere' and 'anytime', including in informal contexts.
- A belief that education should fight women's oppression and racism (and all forms of oppression and exploitation).

I noted that the principles in the education policy echoed the principles evident in the political policy of Cosatu and in the activities of the workers' movement.

In Chapter 7, I argued that there were examples of the features outlined in the policy, which manifested in the non-formal practice of Cosatu education, as well as in the informal learning activities of the workers' movement. I argued, however, that the implementation was uneven and varied, and faced obstacles and limitations. I explored some possible explanations for these limitations.

In Chapter 8, I noted that the political context of the 1989–1992 period was markedly different from the 1985–1988 period. In the later period, the ANC and the apartheid state were laying the ground for a negotiated settlement to a non-racial democracy. There were shifts in the political policy and practice of Cosatu. It increasingly adopted a new 'social contract' politics. Cosatu asserted socialism less, and advocated the 'reconstruction'

(rather than the destruction) of the capitalist economy. There was a decrease of worker democracy and control within Cosatu.

I examined Cosatu's policy on worker education and noted the assertion of a 'new' approach to education. There was a focus on research and policy development, and detailed guidelines on ABET were drawn up. Cosatu's approach to internal training as well as to ABET policy stated the need for unity, equality and democracy, and meeting the needs of 'the economy'. It motivated that education should be technical, professional, modular and institutionalised. Its proposals were geared towards developing the career paths of individual trade union officials and workers. It elevated the knowledge of experts, supported certification and argued for the 'recognition of prior learning'. Cosatu policy less frequently made the assertion that education was a tool to build socialism. It was also less frequently asserted that there should be worker control of education. Instead there was some assertion of the need for worker 'participation' in education and in the development of policy.

I noted that positions contained in Cosatu's policy were also reflected in what I was able to observe about its practice. I argued that there were similarities between the political and educational approaches of Cosatu in the 1989-1992 period. Both were concerned with restructuring the existing capitalist system, rather than opposing it and constructing a socialist alternative. I noted that the political and educational policy of the 1989-1992 period contained a few similarities and some significant differences with the 1985-1992 period.

## **9.2 Changes and continuities 1985-1992**

I have periodised my research findings into the periods 1985-1988, and 1989-1992. This choice of time periodisation reflects the major changes and continuities in Cosatu's policy on worker education. There was a significant *change between* the earlier and later periods. There was also sufficient *continuity within* the 1985-1988 period and within the 1989-1992 period to group these years together.

However, the continuity and changes refer to the approaches that were *dominant* at that time. I have focussed on the *prevalent features* rather than the changes and differences *within* each period. In truth, there was ongoing *development* of perspectives within Cosatu's approach. The features outlined in the earlier period became less dominant, and those of the later period became more dominant *over time*. Hence, although the dominant features of the 1985-1988 period were distinguishable from those outlined in the 1989-1992 period, the change was not as sudden or as total as my periodisation suggests. There were aspects of the earlier features that continued into the later period. There were also different approaches to education *within* Cosatu, which coexisted or conflicted with each other, during both time periods.

In what follows, I focus on the changes and continuities *between* the *dominant* approaches of the two periods. I will do this by comparing the key features of the earlier (1985-1988) period with those of the later (1989-1992) period. At times, I starkly contrast different features or approaches. I highlight and describe conceptually and politically opposing educational principles. However, in the reality of the development of Cosatu's policy these concepts may have been intertwined and blurred. The qualifications I made with regard to my periodisation (above) also apply to the distinctions I make between the key features. I am starkly contrasting the *dominant* perspectives of the key features.

### 9.2.1 *The political purpose of education*

In both the earlier and later periods, Cosatu saw a political purpose to education. It also concerned itself with the broader issue of national schooling and education systems, and linked these to the issue of worker education.

During 1985-1988 the content of the education (as well as its purpose) was clearly political. However during 1989-1992, although political education continued, the general content of union education, as well as the content evident in policy proposals, indicated an emphasis on technical and politically-neutral education.<sup>1</sup>

In the earlier period, the purpose of education was socialist transformation, and an end to all oppression and exploitation. In the later, although socialism was still mentioned, what was emphasised was education and training to meet the needs of the labour market and to 'reconstruct' 'our' economy.

The earlier and the later approaches to worker education were intended to assist with building a non-sexist, non-racial democracy. The 1989-1992 policy noted that women, blacks and workers had been educationally disadvantaged under apartheid, and aimed to create conditions more favourable for them to advance their training and careers. It asserted the need for 'equity, unity and democracy' in education. However, there was an implicit assumption that this could be established under an improved non-racial *capitalist* or 'mixed economy' system. Thus the 1989-1992 approach had the dual goals of meeting the training needs of the capitalist economy and of improving educational opportunities for 'disadvantaged' workers.

In the earlier period education was viewed as a weapon to be used in class conflict, whereas in the later, it was seen as something that could be developed together with business and the state. The assertion of the independence of working class education was replaced by an argument that workers or trade unions must be one of the parties to have 'a say' in the development of national education policy.

### 9.2.2 *Building an alternative education or equal access to the dominant education?*

The policy of the 1985-1998 period strongly criticised the purpose, form and content of apartheid and capitalist education. It advocated the building of a progressive *alternative* education. During 1989-1992 Cosatu continued to critique the current education, and drew up guidelines for an alternative. However, its criticism and proposals were largely related to the issue of *ensuring access* to the current education system, and less about the nature of the system itself. Its demand for a unified, equal education system appears to

have been a *reversion* to the demands of equal access to white education that *preceded* the demands for an alternative education in the mid-eighties.

### 9.2.3 *Education for worker control, or for worker consultation?*

In the policy of the earlier period worker control was asserted both as a means and a purpose of education. Thus worker control of education was emphasised, and education was intended to build collective worker control of worker organisations and struggle, and to prepare them for controlling the future (socialist) society. During 1989-1992, there was still some assertion of the need for worker control. However, the references to worker control were significantly less, and there was a shifting perception and application of what was understood by 'worker control'. This was expressed in assertions that workers should be 'considered' or 'consulted' about education by the decision-makers (who were increasingly the professional 'experts'). The socialist understanding of education to build worker control of the means of production, was increasingly replaced by the idea of education facilitating greater worker participation in decision-making in the (capitalist) workplace. In practice, in the political context of 'the social contract', this may have meant that worker control was sacrificed in order to secure the agreement of capital.

In contrast to the emphasis on decentralised worker control of education during 1985-1988, from 1989-1992 there was an increasing emphasis on more centralised training, the prioritising of staff training over other membership, and a reliance on experts in the field of education, research and policy making. There was a minority position that was critical of the diminishing worker control, and saw education as a potential means of reasserting this control.

### 9.2.4 *Education for all, or for a few?*

In the earlier as well as the later period, Cosatu concerned itself not just with internal union education, but with the entire education system. It asserted the need for free and compulsory schooling, and for education to be accessible to 'all'.

In its internal training in both these periods it asserted the need to do training on many levels, including 'mass education'. In the 1985-1988 period it noted that it did not reach sufficient members of its affiliates. However it did target grass-roots worker leadership with the intention that they shared their learning with the rank and file to whom they were accountable. In the 1989-1992 period, it focussed on *staff* training, which was a smaller (and less directly accountable) target group. In this later period Cosatu was less self-critical of its failure to reach 'the masses'.

In the earlier period Cosatu policy promoted a collective outlook and a culture of sharing and inclusivity, in its content, method and purpose. Education was intended to improve the lives of *all*. It critiqued the individualism, careerism, and competitiveness fostered by capitalist education. It was argued that the capitalists and their profits benefited from workers' attempts to get through the 'narrow gateway' to success. The gateway was described as 'narrow' because all workers could not be promoted to higher positions (see Erwin, 1986:9 in section 6.2.2).

During 1989-1992 however, its proposals on certification and career-pathing suggest that it no longer held these critiques. It could be argued that they were in fact *founded upon* the capitalist values critiqued above. The very notion of 'career-pathing' was aimed at furthering the careers of individuals rather than improving the jobs, pay and working conditions of all workers. It reinforced the capitalist ideology that encouraged workers to compete for entry through a small 'gateway of opportunity' in order to rise up and escape from the working class.

Grossman notes that "career-pathing rests on the apparently benign and incontestable argument that people forced into a situation should be allowed to rise out of it" (Grossman, 1999:7), and that "it is incontestable that people who have learnt something should have the right to have it certificated" (Grossman, 1999:8). However he argues that career-pathing and certification need to be understood within their ideological and political context. He notes that previously there were demands that everyone could

advance, through for example, winning a living wage for all. However in the more current context of ‘competitive individualism’ and ‘the ascendancy of the ideology of the market’, he argues that certification is founded not on inclusivity, but exclusivity.

Career-pathing is ‘sold’ as offering a route upward to everyone. Certification is seen as the set of steps along that route. To people who have been oppressed the appeal is obvious. But to put it simply, there is no room for everyone. What is made possible because of a collective struggle, sets individuals against each other in a competitive struggle. Career-pathing is not about advancing everyone. It is about advancing individuals while the basic structure and set of conditions overall remains unchallenged. At most the struggle is reduced to a struggle over who may compete (Grossman, 1999:8).

Erwin’s 1986 position can be contrasted with the perspective expressed in his recent interview (2002). I did not detail this contrast in my findings, because his earlier statements were made as a representative of Cosatu, whereas his current comments are not. However, the opinions he expresses are interesting as they indicate ways in which educators may rationalise the different emphases on collective and individual advancement. In his interview, Erwin proudly gives examples of the success of Cosatu’s education programme by mentioning a number of individuals who, as a result of Cosatu’s education, are currently holding powerful positions and careers in government or education. I questioned him about his emphasis on individual advancement in relation to Cosatu’s earlier assertions that education should contribute to the *collective* advance of the working class. He states that these ideas ‘complemented’ each other. When further questioned, he asserts that “it is not possible that everyone can advance”. He argues that there had not been such a notion in Cosatu previously, but rather an idea that people should be exposed to educational opportunities, and do what they wanted to, at ‘the pace they wanted to’, and what was ‘possible’ (Erwin, interview, 2002). His argument that this approach has always been the policy of Cosatu raises the question of whether his and others’ assertions on ‘collective advancement’ in the 1985-1988 period were merely empty rhetoric; or whether he has recreated history to fit his current perspective.

### 9.2.5 *Knowledge as a resource to be shared or a commodity to be owned?*

Related to the shift from meeting the needs of the collective to the needs of the individual (described above) was a shifting perception of knowledge as a resource to be shared (in the earlier period), to a resource that could be ‘owned’ by individuals (in the later period).

Cooper describes this commodification of knowledge:

The dominant meaning associated with worker experience and knowledge is being transformed from that of a shared resource (a source of knowledge and a guide to action) which can be drawn upon in order to advance the collective interests of the working class, into a notion of ‘experience’ as a commodity which is individually ‘owned’ and can be exchanged for a qualification in order to compete with other workers on the capitalist labour market, and in a struggle for upward mobility and ‘career paths’ (Cooper 1998b:152, original brackets).<sup>2</sup>

### 9.2.6 *Respect the knowledge and experience of workers or professionals?*

In both the earlier and later periods there was the assertion that workers had valuable knowledge arising out of their experience. What changed, however, was which aspects of this knowledge were valued, by whom, and for what purpose.

In the earlier period it was understood that all workers had knowledge. A broad range of individual and collective knowledge was shared with others as a source of further learning. Cosatu critiqued the denigration of ‘ordinary’ workers which was perpetuated by the ideology of capitalist education. Mohlomi argued that teachers gave the idea to children ‘that street sweepers are lowly people for whom one has no regard and the important people are doctors, lawyers etc.’ (Mohlomi, 1986, see section 6.2.2). Grossman (1999:7) argues that there was an awareness that much workers’ knowledge was suppressed and not recognised. What was being fought for was an *alternative* system that would value and acknowledge the work and knowledge of all workers.

In contrast with Mohlomi’s statement above, is the later education and training slogan “from street sweeper to engineer” (NUMSA, 1989), which encapsulates Cosatu’s emphasis on career-pathing. Here what is advocated is the opportunity to ‘rise above’

being an 'ordinary' worker, rather than the valuing of what 'ordinary' workers do. This slogan could only apply to a minority of individual street sweepers (since if all sweepers became engineers, who would clean the streets?).

In the 1989-1992 period the principle of 'recognising workers' skills' was to some extent a continuation of earlier assertions. However, there were significant differences in how this was understood. As Grossman argues:

In the new climate, it (recognition of prior learning) has been turned into something different. It has become the gateway for training for more skilled work. People are not paid more because their experiential learning is recognised. They are not respected and affirmed because of what they **already** know and the **alternatives** that this can promote. Instead their already existing knowledge is accepted as valuable only in the sense that it qualifies them to be given 'really useful' knowledge...(and to) fit into things as they are (Grossman, 1999:7, original bold, my brackets).<sup>3</sup>

The recognition of workers' knowledge in the earlier period was an affirmation of what workers knew, and was part of the building of an alternative (socialist) educational and political system. In the later period however, workers' knowledge was seen as a potential foundation for acquiring formal ('really useful') knowledge in order to advance in the existing capitalist system.

In the 1985-1988 period, workers' knowledge was seen as the basis for educating others. In the 1989-1992 period it was seen as a foundation to further their formal training. In the earlier period, the 'recognition' came from the worker collective (see Grossman, 1999). However in the later period 'recognition' (via standard-setting and certification) was to be given by experts and formal education structures. In the earlier period, it was the workers' collective knowledge of struggle that was emphasised, but in the later period, their individual vocational 'skills' were prioritised. The respect for workers, indicated in the emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between the learner and educator (advocated from 1985-1988), can be contrasted with the respect for 'professionals', 'specialists' and 'experts' that was expressed in the later years.

The shift in what knowledge was valued, and how it was valued, was related to the increasing emphasis placed on formal education.

#### *9.2.7 Education anywhere and anytime, or in formal settings?*

The idea expressed in the earlier period, that education could take place ‘anywhere and anytime’, was reiterated in the later period. However, it was overshadowed by a strong emphasis on learning through progressive, institutionalised modules. The valuing of informal education, and the understanding that non-formal education could take place in a broad range of contexts, were increasingly replaced by value placed on certified, formal education.

#### *9.2.8 Education linked to ‘doing’ and useful knowledge – but useful to whom?*

In the earlier period there was an understanding that workers learned by ‘doing’ – in particular through collective organisation and struggle. In the 1989-1992 period, however, the emphasis was shifting to learning through professionally organised ‘modules’. In the earlier years there was a belief that what was learned must be ‘useful’ – and what was considered useful was that which was linked with and built on worker organisation, and furthered the struggle for the socialist transformation of society. In the later years there was still an emphasis on what was ‘useful’ – however, the meaning of this changed. Although education was still seen as contributing to the transformation of society, this was seen as being achieved by providing greater opportunities for the advancement of individual workers. Education was also seen as being ‘useful’ if it could meet the needs of ‘the economy’, and enhance productivity (and therefore profit). There was an increased emphasis on vocational workplace training, which was ‘useful’ both for productivity and for increasing the mobility of individual workers. In the 1985-1988 period it was also stated that education and skills training should be linked with production, but Cosatu clarified that it was referring to this in the context of a socialist, not a capitalist system.

### 9.2.9 Education to fight women's oppression and racism

In both periods the policy asserted the need for education to address racism and sexism, and there were decisions to set up women's subcommittees within the education structures. Both periods indicated small but significant progress as well as major obstacles in the implementing of resolutions on 'women's issues'. During the later period, however, Cosatu appeared to have made more advances in establishing women's structures, and in integrating gender issues into the mainstream activities of Cosatu. However, because of the general decrease in worker democracy and control in the federation in these later years, the involvement and control of the mass of women workers was reduced.

## 9.3 Characterising the major changes and continuities

In my literature review and theoretical framework, I outlined traditions and models of trade union education (see sections 3.4 and 3.5). Following Fischer (1997), I identified a primary distinction between radical and reformist approaches to worker education. The theoretical definitions made in Chapters 2 and 3 can be drawn on to characterise the approaches to worker education that are evident in Cosatu's policy.

Following Cooper's definitions, the approach that dominated in the 1985-1988 period could be characterised as 'transformational' or 'radical', because it linked education closely to political practice, saw learning as emerging out of collective worker experiences of oppression and exploitation, and viewed the purpose of education as one of empowerment and social transformation (see Cooper, 1998b:143; Fischer, 1997). Cosatu's approach specified that this social transformation was to socialism, and it proposed *alternative* methods of conducting education. In line with London and Aronowitz's descriptions of transformatory education, it emphasised worker empowerment, a 'mutualistic ethic', collective action, democratic and progressive unionism, class conflict and the political independence of the working class (see London, 1990; Aronowitz, 1990). The key features of Cosatu's policy (see section 6.2) were very

similar to the key features I outlined in my own definition of radical education. I argued that radical education expresses a class analysis of education; a critique of capitalist education; and supports workers in their independent process of understanding, organising and taking action to transform society from capitalism to socialism. The principles and practice of radical education assert worker control of learning and teaching, education as a collective process, respect for workers' knowledge and experience, linking education to organisation and struggle, and using education to fight exploitation and oppression (see section 3.5). These perspectives and principles were all evident in the policy of Cosatu in the 1985-1988 period.

The dominant approach to education of the 1989-1992 period could be characterised partly as a 'service' and partly as an 'instrumental' approach (see section 3.4). Instrumental because it was directed towards full-time staff representatives, the curriculum was increasingly technical, and was related to wage negotiations and agreements (see London, 1990). Service, because it aimed to improve the mobility chances of individual members (see Aronowitz, 1990:27). These approaches have both arisen out of the 'reformist' tradition of trade unionism (London, 1990; Cooper, 1998b).

The focus on 'objectives', competencies and 'measurable outcomes' in the 1989-1992 period also suggests that this approach could be categorised within the 'mechanistic' tradition of adult education (see Newman, 1993:46-48).

However, it could also be argued that Cosatu's 1989-1992 approach was 'transformational' because of its emphasis on redress, reconstruction, and the transition to a non-racial, non-sexist democracy. There was also mention of worker democracy, socialism, and recognising workers' knowledge. It could also be motivated that it was similar to the 'union empowerment' model, because it attempted a 'fusion' of the transformative and instrumental approaches (see London, 1990:109).

However, the educational models described by London (1990), Aronowitz (1990) and Newman (1993) are limited in their application to South Africa, both because they are

just models, and because they are based on the specific historical description of the unions in the countries of the authors. Thus, although useful in examining international trends, the South African traditions of union education cannot be reduced to these models. They should be understood in their own political context.

In a Cosatu document, Bird, discussing Cosatu's approach to education of the 1989-1992 period, raised the question: "Is this approach transformative?" and stated: "We have been told by Kraak and others that the education and training put forward by Cosatu is not socialist. This is provocative, because on the one hand it can be readily conceded that it is not the same as previous conceptions and yet on another it is far from clear what a socialist model would be" (sic). She argues that Cosatu's new approach had "the potential to be fundamentally transformative if organisations of civil society are able to move into the spaces created" (Bird, 1992:24).

I would argue that during *both* the 1985-1988 and the 1989-1992 periods, Cosatu's worker education policy aimed to build the function of the trade union organisation and institution, to service its members and to transform society (hence, could arguably contain elements of an 'instrumental', 'service' and 'transformative' model in both periods). However, I would argue that the *dominant* notion of what the function of the trade union was, and what society should be transformed to, *did* change. In the 1985-1988 period, education for building organisation and transformation of society were driven by socialist principles. In the 1989-1992 period, although progressive principles were asserted, the dictates of capitalism, and 'market forces' were accepted as the parameters within which improvements should be struggled for. In the earlier period, Cosatu's policy was advocating an *alternative socialist* approach to education. In the later, it was advocating improvements (largely related to improving black workers' access) to the *existing capitalist* approach to education.

Fischer motivates her distinction between the 'radical' and the 'reformist' traditions by arguing that fundamentally it is possible to distinguish between trade union education programmes dedicated to the transformation of capitalist economic and social relations

and those which are not (Fischer, 1997:10, in section 3.4). Following this distinction, I believe that Cosatu's policy on worker education can be categorised into two broad traditions. The one, *dominant* from 1985-1988 can be characterised as a *radical* (or transformative) approach to education and the other, *dominant* from 1989-1992 could be characterised as *reformist* (encompassing the service and instrumental approaches).

Although it is possible to identify these different, broad, *dominant* trends within Cosatu's policy, the evidence suggests that there were variations, incongruencies, contradictions and nuances within these. As was argued by Cooper (1998b), approaches to education should be understood as an ongoing site of struggle. During both periods under research there would have been a tension between reformist and radical influences on education. Hence, education policy would have reflected not one (radical) trend at one time, and another (reformist) at a later time, but rather the outcome of ongoing struggles between them.

#### 9.4 Possible explanations for changes and continuities

There are a broad range of reasons suggested for the changes and continuities within Cosatu's policy on worker education.

Erwin (interview, 2002) argues that the approach *did not* change, and that the strong tradition of the 1980's was consistent with that of the 1990's. He feels that there was not a structural change, only a natural progression: as the union movement became 'more sophisticated' and resources were better, leadership needed to progress and develop their skills. His perspective is interesting to note in relation to his opinions on political changes that have (or have not) taken place. He states that "anyone who's perspective on politics hasn't changed, is dead". Then he says he is still a Marxist. When asked to explain how he can say that he has and hasn't changed, he says that today there is a "different order of magnitude". He believes his earlier analysis was correct but his ideas on how to address things were "uninformed and naive". He says: "We've realised we've had to adjust,

y'know". Thus there is some contradiction in his perspective on whether changes did take place in both his and Cosatu's approach.

All other commentators did recognise that there was a change in Cosatu's approach to education in the late 1980's and early 1990's. There are, however, different understandings of, and reasons given for, the changes.

Cosatu itself provided reasons for the shifts in its internal training. These are best covered in a 1991 paper on Staff Development and Training, under the heading: "What has changed that demands a new and systematic approach". It states:

The tasks that have to be performed in our unions today by our administrative and organising staff are much more complex than in the 1970's and early 1980's.

- There have been significant **changes in our organising goals**. In the earlier period our concern was to recruit new membership and win basic rights. Today our negotiations tend to centre on more complex wages and working conditions and social benefits issues eg. grading, new technology, job security, skills training, provident funds etc.
- **Negotiations and labour law issues** have become more complex. Management are either better trained in using the law and the skill of negotiating or employ **professional consultants** to assist them...
- Unions have become **very big, national organisations** operating at three geographic levels, many having internal departments. This creates planning and coordination and communication problems and the marginalisation of rank and file staff to the 'lower' levels.
- The growth and size of unions has necessitated a rapid increase in the number of new and inexperienced staff employed. An important consequence of this is that there are fewer experienced staff available to give "on the job" training to new staff.
- The changes in our political situation have thrown up new challenges and demands and increased the organising pace significantly (Cosatu, 1991g:1-2, original emphases).

Cosatu stated that its guidelines on national education policy were driven by the need to contribute to economic reconstruction, as well as the need for redress for those disadvantaged under Bantu education and apartheid workplace discrimination (see Bird, 1992).

Baskin (1991:395-397) and Vally (1994:58-60,62-69) uncritically reiterate and support Cosatu's interpretations. Vally argues that the "trend towards more specialised and modular education programmes...became necessary as the labour movement was forced to address a series of complex issues in a short space of time" (Vally, 1994:58). He also argues that the Centralised Education Programme was an attempt to remedy the general ineffectiveness and incohesion of the existing education programme, the increased pressure for education and training resulting from Cosatu's rapid growth, and the overburdening of educators.

These above interpretations all present the changes as a necessary response to shifting objective conditions (including political circumstances). Other perspectives examine Cosatu's shifts more critically, and suggest or assert that Cosatu had a *choice* in the approach it took to worker education, and that this was related to the *political* choices it made.

Ginsberg (1997:141) in his case study of MAWU/NUMSA, argues that there was a change in education as a result of 'professional intellectuals' turning their attention towards policy making, and away from internal education.

Jansen (interview, 2002) also notes that the unions had a decreasing focus on internal education<sup>4</sup>. He believes that the reasons for the changes in Cosatu's approach to education are *political*. He argues there was a clear ideological shift away from radical socialist perspectives, to the acceptance of a reformist approach through collaboration with the state and capitalism. He explains that the earlier purpose of education was to build worker control and democracy in order to prepare for a better socialist society. Thus, he states, as this political purpose fell away Cosatu no longer felt a need to educate workers.

As I discussed in the literature review, Cooper (1998b) and Grossman (1996;1999) link the changes in approach to worker education to aspects of the political context. They argue that the progressive tradition of education in the 1970's and 1980's was related to,

and grew out of, the progressive political tradition of the workers' movement at that time. They note that the later approaches (from 1989-1998) to education were related to political choices made by Cosatu leadership.

Grossman describes the more recent approaches to worker education as a 'workplace learning industry'. He argues that there is the danger of the earlier progressive tradition being undermined by being subjected to the dictates of the market and its ideology of competitive individualism (Grossman, 1999).

Cooper argues that the principles of the NQF (National Qualifications Framework), which were founded on Cosatu's ABE training proposals, are closely associated with post-Fordist restructuring and globalisation of the world economy. She links Cosatu's 'newer' approach to education with the perspective of its leadership that they 'have no choice' but to integrate into the global capitalist economy. However, she asserts that it would be oversimplistic to reduce Cosatu's perspective to 'neo-liberalism'. She cites Muller (1996) who argues that the South African NQF should be seen as a hybrid model driven by two very different social projects: 'social justice redress and empowerment' (driven by the unions), and market-oriented post-Fordists (Cooper, 1998b: 150).

However, this tension between social projects exists *inside* the union itself, and not just *between* the union movement and capital. As Grossman (1996) notes, the politics of the social contract, and the class collaboration it required, resulted in *unionists* themselves taking responsibility for supporting *capitalist* agendas. Cooper (1996:7) refers to a "struggle between contending discourses within the heart of the labour movement itself". Thus, echoing the argument made in my characterisation of Cosatu's approaches of worker education (section 9.3), there may be dual and contradictory political forces that have shaped Cosatu's policy on worker education.

These latter perspectives, that argue that changes in education are related to political changes, are supported by evidence contained in the findings of this thesis. The *educational* principles contained in the educational policy of the 1985-1988 period (see

Chapter 6) echoed most of the *political* principles of Cosatu and the workers' movement (see Chapter 5), as well as many aspects of the non-formal and informal educational *practice* within Cosatu (see Chapter 7). It was a time that workers were strong and (as Silimela stated) 'forcing through' (interview, 2002). I would argue that this 'forcing through' contributed to ensuring that the principles valued by the workers' movement were the foundation of Cosatu's education policy. The 'social pressure' of the strength of the workers would also have pushed the leadership to say progressive things, or 'at least not to silence them' (see Henwood, interview, 2002).

In the 1989-1992 period, however, the nature of mass struggle changed, and worker democracy was diminished. It has been argued by some that workers increasingly lost control of their leaders (see section 8.1 and Grossman, 1996). It is possible therefore, that the voice of the mass of workers in struggle was no longer 'forcing through' into Cosatu's policy on education. It is likely that the education policy espoused was dominated by the perspective advanced by the leadership, officials and the 'experts' in Cosatu. The politics of this later period was one in which labour was encouraged to accommodate capital, and to attempt to facilitate advancements for workers within the capitalist system. This 'accommodationist' perspective is reflected in Cosatu's acceptance of the existing capitalist education system (rather than the building of an alternative one). Its intent to facilitate advancements for the 'previously disadvantaged' within the capitalist system are expressed by attempts to make education accessible to this grouping, and to facilitate development of (some) career paths.

My descriptions and characterisations indicate that in the 1989-1992 period, Cosatu's approach to education and training reflected many aspects of a 'management' and 'capitalist' approach to education. However, they also contained attempts at 'redress' and 'transformation'. But, I would argue, the nature of the redress and transformation was constrained by Cosatu's acceptance of the parameters of capitalism and capitalist ideology. This infusion of capitalist ideology in Cosatu's policy on worker education coincided with a political era in which Cosatu entered into tripartite social contracts,

adopted an approach of ‘reconstructing’ rather than destroying capitalism, and thus took on shared responsibility for meeting capital’s needs (see Grossman, 1996).

Hence, I would argue that the shift in Cosatu’s policy was strongly influenced by its shift in politics. It was a result not just of its ‘adaptation’ to external conditions, but of the political choice it made to accept the parameters asserted by capital.

In Chapters 5 and 7, I raised questions relating to some gaps between the policy and the *practice* of Cosatu’s politics and education. I noted that there were some suggestions that the leadership of Cosatu may have been reformist rather than revolutionary, but were pushed by the social pressure of the workers’ movement to say and do revolutionary things (see, for example, Henwood, Silimela, interviews, 2002). Hence, it is possible that there may have been continuity in the actual *politics* of the leadership, however, it was only in the late 1980’s that their reformist perspective was able to dominate *policy*. Worker democracy was weaker in the later period, and workers were less able to ‘force through’, and dominate the content of the policy.

Although the above arguments, linking education policy with political context, are not conclusive proof of the reasons behind the changes made in Cosatu’s policy on education, they do indicate that there was a significant relationship between Cosatu’s education policy and its politics. They also suggest areas requiring further research and analysis.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Although there was a process of development (and hence continuity) within Cosatu’s policy on education, there was a marked shift in its approach from the 1985-1988 to the 1989-1992 period. Although elements of different traditions co-existed within Cosatu, the policy of the earlier period was *dominated* by a progressive, radical (or transformative) perspective that was critical of the capitalist approach to education, and was intent on *constructing* a socialist *alternative*. This approach was oppositional, but what it was opposing was the *destructive* ideology and practice of capitalism. The later period was

dominated by a more reformist perspective, which although still asserting the need for transformation, accepted the parameters of capitalist education, and had the aim of contributing to capitalist production.

Cosatu's shift in education policy coincided with new political events and shifts in Cosatu's political approach. Although further research would be necessary to establish conclusive links, I suggest that the change in educational policy was related to a decline in worker democracy, and Cosatu's acceptance of a 'social contract' with capital and the state.

I believe that it is likely that the policy of the earlier period was a result, and an expression of, the progressive tradition of the workers' movement, in a time of growing confidence and combativity of the working class. I believe that the later policy was an expression of the opinions of leadership and officials, expressing policies aimed at 'redress', but in the context of accepting, and working together with, capital.

The findings of this thesis are pertinent to many of the arguments made in the literature (see Chapters 2 and 3), and also give rise to questions and issues requiring further research.

My findings and arguments support the perspective in much of the literature that education is shaped by political context (see sections 2.2, 3.4 and 3.5). What I have mentioned briefly (see section 6.3), but not explored, is the role of education and learning in the shaping of this political context. Cooper argues that forms of education should be analysed "not only as a function of, but also a creator of the labour movement in South Africa" (Cooper, 1996:8). My findings in Chapter 7 suggest that during the 1985-1988 period a significant amount of education and learning took place amongst a wide layer of workers. What remains to be explored is how this contributed to creating the political context (and not just how this was a 'result' of this context).

My characterisations of the approaches to worker education drew on the definitions in the literature of the different traditions of worker education and of the contestation between them (see sections 3.4, 3.5 and 9.3). The theoretical literature notes the tensions existing in trade unions between reformist and revolutionary politics, the union's role as an institution or as part of a workers' movement, and tensions between leadership and membership (see section 3.2). These tensions have been noted to some extent in my political context and analysis. In my characterising of approaches to worker education in Cosatu, I suggest that the approach of the earlier period was more revolutionary (radical), and the later period more reformist. However I also argued that there was an ongoing struggle between the two positions within the union. The relationship between traditions of worker education and these political tensions in the union is another area requiring further investigation and theorisation. Some questions, for example, are: Does the approach to worker education reflect or contribute to the politics of the trade union institution or of the workers' movement? How can an organisation (or institution) build on and coordinate the spontaneous educational activities of the movement without controlling or undermining these activities? How can a centralised national federation ensure that the workers 'on the ground' are in control of education?

My findings on Cosatu policy provide evidence confirming the perspectives on worker education put forward by Cooper (1998a; 1998b). Namely, that the education tradition up until 1988 was progressive, that there was a significant change that could be noted from 1989, and that the later approach to education had new priorities that were more individualistic and promoted career-pathing. My arguments also support the reasons Cooper (1998b) and Grossman (1999) put forward for the changes that have taken place (see sections 2.4 and 9.4).

Following a Marxist perspective, and the approach put forward in some of the literature (see Sitas, 1996; Grossman, 1985) I have attempted (in my context and analysis) to indicate the significance of the struggles of the working class in shaping political and educational events. I have suggested that the 'social pressure' of the progressive tradition built in mass worker struggle has at times 'forced through' onto the level of Cosatu

official policy and positions espoused by leadership. I have argued that this is the likely reason for the progressive policy on worker education in the 1985-1988 period, and suggest that the change to a more 'reformist' approach to education is related to the undermining of the mass struggle and democratic control of the workers.

The shifts in approaches to education in Cosatu appear to correspond to international changes noted in the literature. Namely, there has been a general shift from collective to individual goals and an increasing emphasis on service and instrumental, rather than transformatory approaches to education (see Faulkner, 1998; London, 1990). The different and contradictory approaches evident in Cosatu's policy confirm the point made in the literature that worker education is a site of contestation (see Law, 1994:2).

In the South African historical literature there is a debate between those who viewed the eighties as 'just oppositional' (see, for example, Von Holdt, 2000), and those who saw this period as building a progressive alternative (see, for example, Grossman, 1996). My arguments on Cosatu's policy support the latter perspective, since I motivate that although the education and politics were oppositional, they were opposing a destructive system, and constructing an alternative. There is also a contestation between the perspective that historical changes were a natural and realistic progression (see Adler and Webster, 2000), and the perspective that there was a distinctive change based on a political choice (see Fine and Davis, 1991). My arguments support the latter perspective.

The literature also indicates that there was frequently a 'gap' between progressive educational (and political) policy and its implementation (see section 2.2 and 3.1). The possible reasons suggested for this gap included: ruling class ideology; the authoritarian practice of trade union leadership and bureaucracy; and the influence of the parties the union movement were allied to (see Samoff, 1991). This gap between policy and practice in 1985-1988 was reflected in my findings on Cosatu's politics (see Chapter 5) as well as on education (see Chapter 7). I did make some suggestions as to reasons for this gap in the case of Cosatu from 1985-1988. Further research and analysis could explore these reasons further, and relate them to the reasons suggested in the international literature. In

the 1989-1992 period, I focussed more on policy, with less detailed comments on implementation. I also noted, however, an unevenness in the implementation of what Cosatu espoused. It is interesting to note that in this later period the aspects of the policy that I later characterise as more reformist (such as individual career development) were more effectively implemented than those which were radical (such as collective worker control). The difficulty of implementation of radical education in a capitalist context, as compared to the ease of reformist implementation in this same context, is an issue requiring further theoretical and historical investigation and debate.

I have attempted to avoid a shortcoming evident in much of the literature by integrating gender issues into my study. I feel this issue was still insufficiently addressed, and deeper investigation of the historical and theoretical gender issues, as they relate to worker education, is still required. One of the difficulties in integrating gender issues into a thesis that does not have the subject of gender as its main focus, is that there is little established precedent in the full integration of gender issues into educational literature. This means that even the making of basic theoretical or political points requires extensive explanation, thus infringing on the space allotted for other findings and arguments. Hence it is not only study of gender-specific issues that requires further research and analysis, but also the effective integration of gender issues into all aspects of academic work.

I have not done much in the way of addressing the lack of literature on informal learning, since my focus has been on Cosatu's policy on non-formal and formal education. However, I did provide some contextual information on, and note the significance of, the informal learning that was taking place. I suggested that in the 1985-1988 period, the tradition of workers informal learning may have shaped Cosatu's non-formal education policy and practice. Further investigation of workers' informal learning, and its relationship to non-formal and formal worker education, is a subject requiring more detailed research.

I drew on the literature to provide my own definition of radical education, and used it as a 'template' to evaluate Cosatu's policy on worker education. However, the definition and

description of radical education requires further research and theorisation. The features of radical education are not static. The process of progressive struggle continues to throw up new experiences and questions. Here are a few questions that could be explored further. What is progressive educational ‘methodology’? What has this meant in the South African context, where approaches to education have been informed primarily by political rather than explicitly pedagogical approaches? Can progressive educators practice ‘radical education’ in a time when the level of worker activity is low, and reformist ideology dominates educational theory and practice? What can they do to contribute to sustaining or rebuilding a tradition of radical education?

This thesis has focused on Cosatu’s policy on education. It has only addressed politics and educational practice in a contextualising and secondary fashion. These subjects both require further research and analysis. For example, the reasons for the political changes in Cosatu, and how they related to worker struggle, requires deeper analysis. Although I believe the time period and issues I have researched are relevant to today, there is a need for more detailed research on the education and politics of Cosatu from 1993 to the current time. It would also be important to more fully research workers’ perspectives on political and educational changes in South Africa. There was some pertinent information on these issues within my research data, which I excluded because it was not specific to my research focus (see examples in Appendix C). In order to address the issues facing progressive educators, activists and workers, in South Africa today, these issues need to be more explicitly explored. As Cooper (1998b:154) asserts, “transformative approaches to workers’ education and learning are unlikely to survive or flourish without the re-emergence of self-organisation and action, and a new political direction of the labour movement”.

Workers I interviewed have many critical comments on the current political situation. They also have ideas around learning, self-organisation and action. It is interesting to note that they see the sharing of workers’ knowledge, their generating of new ideas, and education and learning, as tools which can be used in changing the political situation.

Ncime says:

We are dancing in the same oppression we were fighting against. What is happening now is really embarrassing, absolutely...As workers we must try to have new ideas, we can have a chance to have a platform where we speak with our own knowledge, to give our understanding and our own ideas...Maybe we need another party for the workers, with new ideas, to feel we really are the workers, instead of sitting down and letting Cosatu fight for wages for us...Workers must stand together and fight for their rights. We must do a workshop to get educated to be more aware of what is happening on the workers' floor, where to go and what to do (Ncime, interview, 2002).

Moyana (interview, 2002) states: "It is us who fought, and the wealth of the country is by the hand of the workers. We must learn to mobilize ourselves like in the old days. There are still some old workers like myself who were there. We did it then. We can still do it."

#### NOTES: CHAPTER 9

<sup>1</sup> This does of course also reflect a political perspective, although it was not overtly acknowledged as political.

<sup>2</sup> Although Cooper is referring to changes that are prevalent in more recent years, they were evident as early as the 1989-1992 period.

<sup>3</sup> The point made in the previous footnote also applies to Grossman's comments.

<sup>4</sup> Although Jansen observes some changes in 1989, he feels that the decline in internal education was most marked after 1994 (Jansen, interview, 2002). Nevertheless his political analysis remains pertinent to understanding the shift in the late 1980's/early 1990's.



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# Appendix A

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/CHECKLIST

(Focus on the practice of Cosatu education: 1985-1988)

Note down: Date; Name of interviewee(s) and current employment; organisational activity  
Check if they are OK with being quoted, taped, tapes to be in TULEC archives; and signal if they want to say anything 'off the record'.

Brief explanation of what I am studying/doing. Any questions for me?

- 1) What were you doing from 1985 to 1988?
- 2) What was happening generally ?(in the unions; politically; with the workers; what were workers fighting for?)
- 3) What education was Cosatu doing? (nationally, regionally, locally)
- 4) Were education structures functioning? (nationally, regionally, locally?) What was the relationship of each of the levels of the structures to each other?
- 5) How would you describe Cosatu's approach to education? What did they 'believe in'? What methodology or techniques did they use?
- 6) Here are some of the key features that Cosatu National education documents stated Cosatu believed in. (refer to 'Chapter 6) With each one can you give me your opinion as to whether they were put into practice. (nationally, regionally, locally?) Explain why you say yes or no (give examples)
  - 1) A belief that the purpose of education should be the socialist transformation of society
  - 2) A class analysis of education
  - 3) A critique of capitalist education
  - 4) An argument for an 'alternative' education
  - 5) Democratic worker control within all aspects of education
  - 6) A belief that Education should be for ALL workers
  - 7) A belief that Education could take place anywhere and anytime
  - 8) A reciprocal relationship between learner and educator
  - 9) Respect for workers, their knowledge and their experience
  - 10) Education was linked to doing and 'useful' activity
  - 11) A belief that Education should fight women's oppression
  - 12) A belief that Education in the present could build the vision and the actual foundation for a new (socialist) future.
- 7) Were workers learning or teaching outside of Cosatu education structures? (eg through experience and struggle; in affiliates?) What and How?
- 8a) Do you think the approach to education changed in Cosatu?
  - b) When?
  - c) How?
  - d) Why?
- 9) Anything else you want to say?

## Appendix B

### INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

The people selected were those who I knew to be active in trade unions during the period under research (1985-1991), and some of the people they referred me to. Seven were men and four were women. They were all based in the Western Cape; and with the exception of Erwin that is where they were active in the 1980's.

Their position in the 1980's were as follows: eight of them were workers; three of whom were elected office-bearers on Cosatu joint Shop Steward Councils and the Regional Executive; two interviewees were employed by their union, and one was appointed on the national level of Cosatu. For nearly all of them, their positions today are not the same as they were then. (See below for the changes)

Thus although the sample was not 'representative' it did reflect a range of perspectives. With the exception of Erwin I did not interview any people on national leadership level, because their perspectives are already reflected in the documents. Many of the national Cosatu leaders (including Erwin) went on to become leaders in the government today, and their perspectives are 'dominant' in politics today. Thus I was making some attempt to gage some of 'the other' perspectives.

These are the interviews I conducted, and what the interviewees were doing in 1985 and are doing today(2002). Some of the interviews (see numbers 1 and 2) I interviewed people together.

- 1) Nono Silimela, Muriel Febana (1985: domestic workers, members of SADWU; 2002: domestic worker, community worker)
- 2) Theo Moyana, Martin Ncime, Nomonde Mbebe (1985: workers- members of Liquor and Catering Union, in 1987: Theo and Martin were part of group of workers dismissed from vineyard hotel after an anti-LRA stay-away, Nomonde worked for General Workers Union Aids service; 2002: Theo and Martin workers (at UCT and Khayelitsha School)- Nehawu members, Nomonde unemployed..
- 3) Lookington Ndongeni 1985: worker at SAB, FAWU member, elected to Cosatu R.E.C; 2002: Organiser for FAWU
- 4) Grace Caesar 1985: worked at amalgamated chemicals, member of PAWU; elected to Joint Shop Stewards council, then to Cosatu REC; 2002: Education administrator at SAMWU.
- 5) Nick Henwood 1985: worker (mechanic)- member of GWU, part of Cosatu unity talks, elected as Secretary of Cosatu REC, was responsible for education in the region; 2002: works for Industrial Health Research Group (UCT)
- 6) Jan Theron 1985: General secretary of FAWU (had been in the union since the 70's); 2002: lawyer, and works at UCT labour law organisation.
- 7) Martin Jansen 1985: PAWU, branch secretary CWU; 2002: education and media at LRS(Labour Research Service)
- 8) Alec Erwin 1987: National Education officer of Cosatu; 2002: Minister of Trade and Industry.

## **Appendix C**

*DRAFT summary of interview responses, to give to interviewees.*

*Not to be quoted*

INTERVIEWS done by Sally Nozizwe Andrew about Cosatu and Cosatu Education 1985-1988  
Masters student UCT; 3, Ivy rd, Gardens, 8001 Ph: 4244445 email: [sally@sn.apc.org](mailto:sally@sn.apc.org).

Many thanks for sharing your time, memories and stories. They were very helpful to me: in my heart, in my politics and for my thesis.

Many of you will not have time to read my thesis. This paper is a summary of a few of the things the interviewee's said.

### **The people I interviewed**

At the end of this paper is a numbered list of all the interviews I did. It has the names of people and what they were doing in 1985, and are doing today (2002) In the paper have put (in brackets) numbers which refer to the interviews to show you from which interview the words I have written came from.

All of the people interviewed were active in the unions in the 80's.

Of the eleven people interviewed eight were workers; three of them were elected office-bearers on Cosatu joint shopsteward councils and the regional executive, two were employed by their union, and one was appointed on the national level of Cosatu.

Apart from one, I did not interview any people on a high up leadership level, because I have copies of their speeches and reports and other Cosatu documents. Many of the Cosatu high-up leaders went on to become leaders in the government today. We get to hear what they think every day on the TV and in the newspapers.

This paper is just a small bit of what people said: there are over 10 hrs of tapes. I have left out a lot of very interesting and powerful stories. If you would like to hear them, the tapes will be at community house at the LRS trade union library or LRS Workers world radio project. If you would like a tape of your own interview, please tell me and I will make you a copy.

The words I have written are a summary and a mixture of what people told me. It is not easy to say: this one said that and another one said this. Some of the words may have come from one person's mouth, but many others said the same thing in other words. So sometimes I may write the 'number' of your interview after some words, and you will think but those were not my words, but then you may remember that you said the same thing in other words. All the words here have come from things people said. I have not made any up.

### **WHAT PEOPLE SAID**

#### **“Those were the strong days”**

The spirit of workers was high. We were cheeky in those days. Those were the strong days. We were all leaders, and we were forcing our way through. We sang a song about us being like a car without brakes – so you must not stand in our way: Suka endleleni.. If the doors are locked we will kick them down. We were motivated and worked hard. Police were shooting and harassing and arresting us. We were not scared. Workers were prepared to die.

The unions were new, but we were getting stronger and the bosses were beginning to listen to us. We were having hard times at work. We were fighting against the problems at work, for a better life, to be happy. We were fighting for a living wage and against the governments Labour Relations Bill. We were teaching and learning worker democracy. Workers were crying out for socialism. There were a lot of strikes and stayaways. We were standing together and talking in one voice. (1,2,3,4,5,8)

## **There were also problems in those day**

### *Political tensions*

There were tensions and fights between leaders and unions with different ideas on the role of the trade union movement. There was agreement that Cosatu should be independent, but also have an alliance with political parties. Some people thought that the trade unions became subordinate to the political organisations (like the UDF) There were also different ideas on union democracy. There were leaders who liked to tell the members what to do, and others who believed that workers should make their own choices. (6) Some of the issues came up in fights between 'workerist' and 'populist' leaders(7)

### *Workers and leaders*

Cosatu was the umbrella body, uniting the workers. It was a good thing. In the western cape the regional executive tried hard to support the workers and their struggles. Many workers felt that the leaders were listening to the grassroots. The workers were strong enough to force their way through the leadership. (1,2,3,4,5) But in some unions and in Cosatu, the leadership was not always listening to the workers. In some unions the leaders were the only ones at the forefront. They looked down at the workers, and spent the union money, flying around, flying around and staying in hotels. Workers thought they were still learning and the officials knew everything so it was hard to stop them. Some people thought the leaders only spoke for socialism and the workers because they were forced to 'say loudly' by the workers, but they did not really believe it. Some said the leaders were fighting for themselves and their politics and sometimes even expelled workers and officials and destroyed democracy in the union. (1,3,5,6,7)

### *Women workers*

Although the women workers were strong and fighting in Cosatu they had a hard time. They were not elected to leadership positions and the men did not take them seriously. They men just wanted them as girlfriends, and there was sexual abuse too. Sometimes a union official would not represent a women's case without her 'having an affair'. But the women stood up and fought this behavior, and they got stronger. (1,2,4)

## **Education in Cosatu**

There were lots of workshops in the Western Cape region and workers were learning a lot. Not many people knew about national workshops. The regional executive decide on what education to do. The affiliates had representation on this REC.(1,4,3,5) They were guided mainly by issues emerging from Xhosa-speaking workers in the townships (5)In the workshops in the regions we learned about our rights, at work and if you are arrested. For unemployed workers there was also workshops on how to set up cooperatives (2) Cosatu did try to support domestic workers but it was very little. In the workshops it seemed they would forget us.(1)We also learned about Cosatu campaigns. We learned about each others experience. The education was there to build the confidence of workers so they could be in control of the unions and the struggle. (1,2,4,7,8)( With the LRA campaign we workers in the joint shopsteward council decided to do education on the trains. We would stand at each end of the carriage and talk loudly to each other and that would bring in the other workers on the train. (4)

In their regional workshops Cosatu used roleplays. Some educators were very patient and would explain everything clearly even if you didn't understand. There was translation. But sometimes they would use big words and workers would be scared and shy to talk. Men were usually dominating the talking. But when they had smaller groups you could feel more comfortable to talk.(1,4,7,8) In the national workshops that a few people attended there was not translation and there were lots of long words. But it was good to share with workers from all over.(4,5)

Although the educators did respect the workers and their experience, and many people thought the educators were learning from the workers(1,2,3,4,5,8), the workers respected and looked up to the educators too much. The educators were 'elevated' not only by their own ego's, but by the

almost worship of the workers. This is partly because most workers had got so little schooling, and most educators had much more 'formal' training. (7)

Cosatu's approach to education was shaped by Marxist politics (6,8)

**Have things changed today?**

Everybody except for the one national leader (8) thought that things had changed for the worse, both in the organisations and in the country. This leader thought that the same strong tradition of the 1980's was alive today. I then asked him if his politics had changed and he said 'anyone who's perspective on politics hasn't changed is dead'. Then he said he will still a Marxist. When I asked him to explain how he can say he has changed and hasn't changed he said that today there is a 'different order of magnitude'. His earlier analysis was correct but his ideas on how to address things were 'uninformed and naive'. He said " We've realised we've had to adjust y'know"

Of the rest of the interviewees, some people thought that the problems in organisations we have today were already there from 1985, but they have got worse.(5,6) But most people thought that there was a change in Cosatu from then to today. They had different ideas about when those changes started. Some said, late 1980's(when Cosatu and the bosses started negotiating), early 1990's (when organisations were unbanned) , many others said that after the voting in 1994 (when we had our first democratic election)there was a big change. They said the struggle has changed but not in the way we wanted it to change.

**Did we get what we were fighting for?**

*Today is eina, eina, eina.*

Although the workers have got some freedom, mostly things are worse. I wish I could say we have got what we were fighting for, but I can't. (1,2).We ended apartheid, but here is still apartheid amongst our people.

Although we were fighting for better wages we were mainly fighting for us to be free, for a better life, to live happily and nice, safe and secure. But today is eina, eina, eina. This government did not meet the promises they made. They are doing things worse than the last government. More people are unemployed. This makes people go to crime. Our children are alcoholics at the age of twelve. Few people have got houses. People are dying of AIDs and our children are still getting bad education.. The women in Cosatu are still not in leadership positions and still face sexual harassment in the unions(1,2,3,4)

Apartheid will never end while there is slavery of the workers. We are still slaves.It is not just us domestic workers who are still slaves-but all the workers. I hear them swearing and grumbling on the busses about how the bosses are treating them(1)

We are dancing in the same oppression as we were fighting against. What is happening now is really embarrassing, absolutely. (2)

*The leaders have flown away*

Our leaders have flown away. Those that lived in the townships have all gone to the suburbs. They have forgotten us. In those days they were listening because there was pressuring. They used us as a step ladder to get up there. Now they are high up. They have kicked the ladder down so we cannot go up. But I don't want to climb up there after them. We are still on the ground here most of us. When they fall they will fall a long way and hurt themselves.(1,2)

Today leaders are fighting for positions. We will see them again only when they come to canvass before the next election.(2)

Today we do not have leadership we have 'instructors'. Leadership acts on mandates and comes back to the workers. The instructors just impose policies. (3)

#### *It is hard to fight inside your own house*

It is hard to fight the government because it is our government. It is easier to fight the enemy than fight in your own house. We are a family. How can you fight your own self? (1, 2, 3) When Madiba said things, even if we did not agree, we said yes, because it is in our culture to respect our elders, and he fought so hard and suffered for all those years. For workers the ANC is their loving organisation, they don't want to let it down. That is the failure of the workers. The government says to us, How can you fight your government? They really have us under control. They are using this as a technique to keep us down.(2)

#### *The spirit of these days is weak*

The spirit of these days is weak. Today things have cooled down, they are not so hot as before. You would think people have got their freedom today.(1)

We are scattered today. In those days we spoke in one voice, everyone backing what you were doing.(2) Today you can go to a meeting but be afraid to talk, because of your own people(3) Today 1000's of workers are being dismissed and Cosatu doesn't do anything. They are talking about money, that this country doesn't have money and owes a lot of debt. I don't know really what went wrong. The Cosatu leadership doesn't want to say anything against the ANC because they are also trying to go into the government(2)

We feel frustrated and demoralised. Most workers just put on their overalls go to work, then come home and watch TV. (3) There is also so much unemployment, workers don't have the energy to struggle. They are not in the mood. The way they are struggling in the organisations in the townships today makes me sick. They take things easy, and they don't care like we used to care.(1)

#### **Is Cosatu's approach to education the same?**

The national leader thought that things today are carrying on Cosatu's strong tradition of education. The leaders who came from Cosatu to the ANC are carrying on the good work in government (8) The workers thought that there was no education in Cosatu today. They did not get invited to workshops anymore (1,2) The unions do not take the education seriously. They just don't do it anymore. Or they do it a little bit, so that the workers can help the officials with their jobs.(7) There is still education done for Cosatu (and Fedusa) by Ditsela (Development Institute for Training Support and Education for Labour) but there has been a big change in the content and the perspective on the content. The education is not about politics, and is 'for anyone' (generic) and not focussed on workers. It is about skills training and accreditation. When we used to do education on Labour Law, it included criticisms; but now they just teach you what it is and how to apply it.

#### **What went wrong?**

The change in education was because of the change in politics. In those days education was to build the strength of the workers. Unions wanted to build worker democracy and control in preparation for socialism. So when the unions stopped fighting for socialism, there was not a need to train the workers anymore. Unions have other priorities like investment companies.(7) There was an ideological shift away from a radical socialist perspective to collaboration with the state and capital.(7) Cosatu supported the ANC and SACP. ANC and SACP leaders wanted Cosatu to make friends with the bosses. The SACP argued that first we must fight apartheid

(stage one) and then fight for socialism (stage two) In 1987, Joe Slovo told one of the Cosatu leaders that he must tell the workers to form an alliance with the bosses who didn't like apartheid (5) There were leaders in Cosatu who did not want socialism (3,5) Many of the top leaders were 'reformists'(5). (They wanted some improvements for workers under capitalism, but they were not fighting to overthrow it.) But the workers were strong, and forcing through(1), they were not much controlled by the leadership (5) Many leaders were saying they were fighting for socialism(3,4,7,8) It is because of workers pressure that they were 'forced to say loudly' (3,5) After the victory of the LRA campaign, the bosses and government wanted to meet with Cosatu. The three parties agreed to the "Laboria minute" thereby sidelining the anti-VAT demands of a much broader(beyond the trade unions) workers movement. It was here that the reformism of the Trade Union movement found common grounds with the National Democratic struggle 'stage one' objective. The anti-LRA victory gave confidence to the leadership to assert their control, and they began to limit Cosatu's struggle to one against apartheid primarily and capitalism secondly.(5) Cosatu leaders who previously had opposing 'workerist' and 'populist' politics, came together in support of the (ANC/SACP) politics of a negotiated settlement with the apartheid government. This could be threatened by mass workers struggle. (7) Workers were not consulted anymore. They lost control of their leaders (1,2) The workers and the leadership who were fighting for workers democracy or socialism began to get sidelined and undermined (3,4,5,6,7) Some were forced out of the organisations, lost their jobs and were at times scared for their lives. A rich layer of worker activists were destroyed (5) When the ANC got unbanned and then came to power many people were excited and relieved to 'hand over' to them the burden of struggle; to have a rest, to sit back and wait to be given what they had fought for. (2, 5)

I was told a story of the struggle of Old Crossroads, and its links with the story of the workers struggle in South Africa.

In the 1970's when the police came armed in the night to destroy the biggest squatter camp of Old crossroads they found armed migrant workers, with sticks, panga's and asega's under their blankets, facing them. And Koornhof took the decision to deal with this another way.

Nxobongwana with the full support of his mass mobilised community, met with Koornhof and his beurocrats. It might have started with tea and biscuits and ended up with braais and suppers and bakkies and dagga and farms and cattle and guns and who-knows what. But as each step happened it wasn't just corruption and seduction by Koornhof that pulled Nxobongwana away. It was the fact that ordinary people went back to their ordinary lives. They couldn't sustain that level of militancy and mobilisation They had left it in the hands of someone they trusted. When they woke up from their lives, their shebeens and family lives and funerals and everything else they had to get on with, they found no longer a representative committee, but a Witdoek regime that had painted numbers on their houses, and deducted revenue, engaging in decisions of their future without their consultation. And they just didn't have the organisation or the cohesion to reassert control. And then they found themselves being called out at night to fight 'an enemy' which was inevitably the UDF youth, or whoever. When people were seriously threatened they mobilised to defend what they had fought for all those years – land and a roof or their own.

Out of that power Nxobongwana was able to negotiate New Crossroads, which had substantial land and plots. But the second 2 phases of land development that was intended did not happen. This story fits with today, because it is a lesson of 'Why did it happen?'

It didn't happen because there was something wrong with Nxobongwana, or with Naidoo or Henwood. It happened because we gave up control of our organisations and decisions affecting our lives. You can end up saying this person was a corrupt idiot or a Stalinist, but he or she became that through a whole lot of different influences, central to which of is: How did we as members of that organisation allow that situation to happen. We can all see what we did or didn't do, and correct it or at least acknowledge it.

## What can we do?

Some people did not feel that they had the energy to struggle again, or that there was any hope for the struggle for socialism, nothing to see as encouragement. But others had ideas of what to do.

They said:

Maybe the ANC was right to give us freedom and now it depends to us. Now we must sit down with them to make our country work better than it is now.

Workers must stand together and fight for their rights. We must do a workshop to get educated to be more aware of what is happening on the workers floor; where to go and what to do. Workers must not sit down and fold their arms and wait for somebody to feed them.

We must learn to mobilize ourselves like in the old days. There are still some old workers like myself who were there. We did it then. We can still do it. We need to motivate the government to be more considerate to the workers issues than themselves. Then the country will go forward We must tell the ANC they are there by the workers. It is us who fought, and the wealth of the country is by the hand of the workers.

I think the politicians must try to give the workers a chance to own the country.

I want to congratulate the students who used to support us, and bring us a lot of information – I'd like to say to them even today they can try to come out with new ideas.

As workers we must try to have new ideas, we can have a chance to have a platform where we speak with our own knowledge, to give our understanding and our own ideas.

Maybe we need another party for the workers , with new ideas, to feel we really are the workers , instead of sitting down and letting Cosatu fight for wages for us . Yes there are wages, but there are many other things which need to be done. In a party the workers must be strong. The party must be there by the workers not the leadership. If leaders don't listen to the workers they must step down. (2)

As a labour organisation we need to find our path back, not around loyalty to our alliance, but loyalty to our workers first. Workers can only depend on ourselves when it comes to our struggles. Each union should have general meetings on a branch and provincial level, where workers on the ground put forward their ideas. This is not happening in the unions.(4)

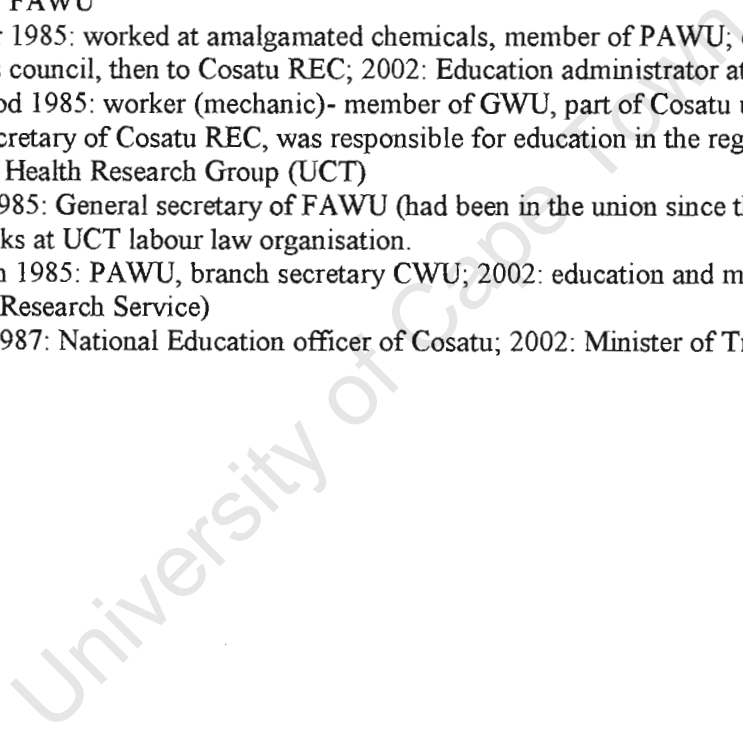
As Cosatu we need to regain our direction and our positions on socialism and have a clear programme. Today we are just marching here and marching there. Putting out fires. Cosatu and SACP Leadership says they are fighting for socialism but in practice that is not really so(3, 4) We must see the situation for what it really is. The confusion is when people think you first need to restore Capitalism in order to fight it; to shake hands with the capitalists before you move onto socialism- in the meanwhile you get absorbed. This is totally wrong. Your direction must be clear.

We must look, reflect on our path, then move on again.(4)

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

These are the people I interviewed, and what they were doing in 1985 and are doing today(2002) Some of the interviews (eg 1 and 2 on the list) I interviewed people together. When I write about what people said , I sometimes put their number in brackets afterwards to show which person/people it was. When people were interviewed together they often spoke together and made sounds of agreement, so I am not separating what each one said.

- 1) Nono Silimela, Muriel Febana (1985: domestic workers, members of SADWU; 2002: domestic worker, community worker)
- 2) Theo Moyana, Martin Ncime, Nomonde Mbebe,(1985: workers- members of Liquor and Catering Union, in 1987: Theo and Martin were part of group of workers dismissed from vineyard hotel after LRA stayaway, Nomonde worked for General workers union Aids service; 2002: Theo and Martin workers (at UCT and Khayelitsha School)- Nehawu members, Nomonde unemployed..
- 3) Lookington Ndongeni 1985: worker at SAB, FAWU member, elected to Cosatu R.E.C; 2002: Organiser for FAWU
- 4) Grace Caesar 1985: worked at amalgamated chemicals, member of PAWU; elected to Joint shopstewards council, then to Cosatu REC; 2002: Education administrator at SAMWU.
- 5) Nick Henwood 1985: worker (mechanic)- member of GWU, part of Cosatu unity talks, elected as Secretary of Cosatu REC, was responsible for education in the region; 2002: works for Industrial Health Research Group (UCT)
- 6) Jan Theron 1985: General secretary of FAWU (had been in the union since the 70's); 2002: lawyer + works at UCT labour law organisation.
- 7) Martin Jansen 1985: PAWU, branch secretary CWU; 2002: education and media at LRS(Labour Research Service)
- 8) Alec Erwin 1987: National Education officer of Cosatu; 2002: Minister of Trade and Industry.



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by brain.sn.apc.org (8.8.8/8.8.8) with ESMTTP id JAA15380  
for <sally@sn.apc.org>; Fri, 31 May 2002 09:02:02 +0200  
Received: from mort by mail2.uct.ac.za with local (Exim 2.01 #3)  
for sally@sn.apc.org  
id 17DgQ7-0001Zo-00; Fri, 31 May 2002 09:01:55 +0200  
Received: by mail2.uct.ac.za (Mort 2.23alpha) id 521  
from IHNICK@PROTEM; Fri May 31 09:01:54 2002  
From: "Henwood, NP, Nick, Mr" <ihnick@protem.uct.ac.za>  
Organization: University of Cape Town  
To: "Sally Andrew" <sally@sn.apc.org>  
Date: Fri, 31 May 2002 09:00:33 +0200  
MIME-Version: 1.0  
Content-type: text/plain; charset=US-ASCII  
Content-transfer-encoding: 7BIT  
Subject: Re: JSS education  
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Message-Id: <E17DgQ7-0001Zo-00@mail2.uct.ac.za>  
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Hullo sally,

Engaging me on the formal policy stuff might require more of a shift, effort and focus than I can muster for your research right now. i will keep the request and questions at hand and hopefully have a look over the next week ????

However, I have a feeling that what I was informing you about, and what the W Cape was undertaking, did on the one hand influence the content of national training policy and activities, and on the other hand provided Regional and Local Office Bearers such as myself and those that I worked with, the scope and opportunities to interpret and implement the kind of training, meetings, activities, reports, documents that we did. I also have a strong sense that all of this unfolded very independently (for some time in the early life of Cosatu) of the affiliate's formal representation and participation in Cosatu. These were the activities in which activists in the affiliates found one another and an experience of unity and common political purpose outside the control of their unions' elected and official leadership. The period of "independent" political growth and leadership of organised worker leaders in the labour movement after 1984 was continued in the union movement (Cosatu) right through into the anti-LRA campaign. I think that an independent and critical voice was lost at a pivotal point with the Cosatu leadership agreeing to the Laboria minute and thereby sidelining the anti-VAT demands of a much broader (beyond the trade unions) workers' movement. It was here that the reformism of the tu movement found common grounds with the NDS stage One objective. It was the anti-Lra victory that was sufficient gain for the workers, and provided the confidence for the tu leadership to assert its control and begin limiting its interpretation of Cosatu's role and visions in the struggle against apartheid primarily and capitalism secondly. But substantiating all of this would require a lot more thought from me. Have you found the Cosatu W Cape news? Have you spoken to other

people I mentioned? nick

> From: "Sally Andrew" <sally@sn.apc.org>  
> To: "Nick" <IHNick@protem.uct.ac.za>  
> Subject: JSS education  
> Date: Wed, 29 May 2002 10:26:05 -0800

> Hi Nick,

>  
> It could be good to hear more about the JSS training with the E.Cape. Tho  
> I learned a lot from you about 'learning' and the context of the learning;  
> I want to also distinguish the formal 'education' within this.- and  
> evaluate it in relation to what Cosatu was saying in their National  
> documents. Below are the questions that I didn't get to ask you. Should you  
> feel inspired to respond to any of them please let me know. Maybe you can  
> write snippets or maybe I can try and find another time to talk to you. If  
> not that's fine too.

>  
> :  
>  
> 1) How would you describe Cosatu's approach to education? (you can  
> distinguish btwn reg/nat/local 'Cosatu') What did they 'believe in' . What  
> methodology or techniques did they use?

>  
> 2) Here are some of the key features that Cosatu National education  
> documents stated Cosatu believed in. (refer to 'Chapter 6' (sent by email a  
> while ago) outlines these in detail) With each one can you give me your  
> opinion as to whether they were put into practice. (nationally,  
> regionally, locally?) Explain why you say yes or no (give examples)

>  
> 2. 1) A belief that the purpose of education should be the socialist  
> transformation of society  
> 2. 2) A class analysis of education  
> 2. 3) A critique of capitalist education  
> 2. 4) An argument for an 'alternative' education  
> 2. 5) Democratic worker control within all aspects of education  
> 2. 6) A belief that Education should be for ALL workers  
> 2. 7) A belief that Education could take place anywhere and anytime  
> 2. 8) A reciprocal relationship between learner and educator  
> 2. 9) Respect for workers, their knowledge and their experience  
> 2. 10) Education was linked to doing and 'useful' activity  
> 2. 11) A belief that Education should fight women's oppression  
> 2. 12) A belief that Education in the present could build the vision and  
> the actual foundation for a new (socialist) future.

>  
>  
> 3a) Do you think the approach to education changed in Cosatu?  
> b) When?  
> c) How?  
> d) Why?  
>  
> 4) Anything else you want to say?  
>

## Appendix E

Personal email correspondence with Jonathan Grossman, 19 August 2002

From: Jonathan Grossman  
Date: 19 August 2002 12:30  
To: Sally Andrew; LINDA COOPER; Linda  
Subject: Re: query: workers movement or cosatu

I use the concept of workers movement to capture what is inside and outside formal organisation - the totality of what is going on in the working class. The progressive tradition was inside formal organisation but at critical moments in conflict with aspects of the dominant politics. At other moments, the weight of the progressive tradition was so great that the dominant politics had to reflect that for the meantime. It was also outside formal organisation in every strike that took place. Sometimes, when the strikers entered the formal meetingg of their organisation, they brought the progressive tradition with them - whether it was inside that organisation or not. They were inside the organisation, so what was brought with them was there also. There are moments when the progressive tradition is very clear in formal policy and structured organisational activities - these tend to be in the Education policy and the policies and practices of COSATU in the E Cape and W Cape. This is because leadership within those structures - for whatever reasons - adopted consciously the politics of the progressive tradition. As soon as the distinctions start to be made, they give too much weight to the formal organised leadership in the movement - such that many people simply reduce one to the other. Instead, I find it useful to start with the movement - and then see how the formal organised leadership compnent of it fitted in - or didn't, or obstructed, or tailed, or claimed to lead, or was pushed forward. How does this sound?

----- Original Message ----- **From:** Sally Andrew < >  
**To:** LINDA COOPER < > ; Linda  
< > ; Jonathan  
< > **Sent:** Sunday, August 18, 2002  
10:56 PM **Subject:** query: workers movement or cosatu  
Dear Linda and Jonathan.

Do your writings on the 'progressive tradition of education' reflect the activities of the official national practice of Cosatu? (or only the tradition of the 'workers movement' )

I have a query in my mind I was wanting to check with you. If you don't have time to read this, respond or feel there isn't an easy email response, thats fine. It is not urgent. I will make my own sense of things and carry the queries into the thesis. You could also just repond to the underlined question above without reading through my explanations below.

You both write about the progressive activities and tradition of worker education (and worker struggle) in the 1980's.

You also make some comments and critiques on the political choices made by Cosatu (and other alliance) leadership, and how this effected that tradition. In your description of the progressive tradition it is not clear to me what the basis of your description is. Is it ILRIG's activity in the western Cape with Cosatu/all unions; and/or Cosatu activities locally/regionally nationally? Is it the activities of the Cosatu 'institution', as well as the 'workers movement' of its membership?

With my research I am focussing on the espoused education of Cosatu (as reflected in national official documents) - however, although I can only do this partially, I assess this in relation to both the practice of the institution of Cosatu, and the learning activities of the workers.

In trying to assess the 'practice' of Cosatu the institution; I am looking for some evidence (in addition to their documents) of National Cosatu's official activities. It appears to me that your writings are more 'evidence' of the learning activities of the workers, not the educational activities of Cosatu. Jonathan's in particular is describing the activities of the workers' (as opposed to the Cosatu institution) However Linda's seems to cut across both. Perhaps however her starting point is the workers approach to learning which then *manifests* in union and Cosatu educational activities. However where there is reference to Cosatu activity, it is not clear to me on what 'level' the practice was taking place.

For example Linda writes statements such as: " in formal programmes priority was placed on methods which encouraged active participation by all participants and delegates had a duty to share their knowledge and experience, and to pass on the knowledge they gained to fellow workers. This is summed up by the slogan 'Each one teach one' and the notion that 'every worker is also an educator' " (Cooper, 1996,p3)

**Is this then evidence of (national) COSATU practice?**

**Are there any distinctions within your 'tradition' that you would like to make?** (affiliates/federation; espoused/practice; local/regional/ national; Cosatu as workers movement or institution?)

I am trying to assess whether *National* Cosatu education structures were implementing, supporting or undermining the workers progressive tradition.(and whether they were implementing their 'espoused pedagogy')

I am noting some lack of support for this tradition. (beyond although probably linked to the leadership choices you mention)

However if I interpreted your writings as indicating official (and national) 'Cosatu' activity, I find more evidence of support.

Thanks for reading this.

Let me know if you have any responses.(I could phone you if you have verbal ones)

Love Sally

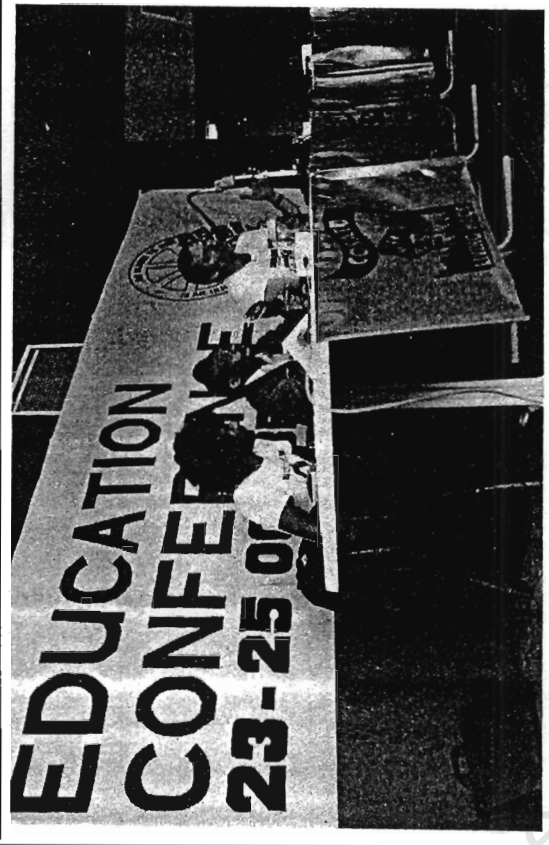
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3. Speech delivered by COSATU General Secretary, Comrade Jay Naidoo
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  - People's Education
  - Media
  - Women
  - Culture
6. Structures
7. New Education Office Bearers
8. Resolution

## Introduction

The education struggle has always had an important place in our liberation struggle. For as long as can be remembered, the oppressed and exploited have been fighting against bantu education and for control over our own education.

As our struggles intensified, so our education demands became clearer. In the late 1980s the demand is for people's education which serves the needs of the oppressed. In the early 1980s the demand was for equal education. The growth of working class organisation in the factories and townships, coupled with the Frelimo and MPLA victories, encouraged deeper discussion of the role of education in the struggle for socialism.

After the historic National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) conference, there came a clear and united call for people's education and for democratising all educational institutions so that students, teachers and parents could build joint control over education.

In 1985 COSATU was launched with the words: "A giant has risen." COSATU has since grown very quickly, challenging the bosses and taking organised workers to the frontline of the struggle. The first National Congress in July 1987 showed that COSATU mergers and campaigns had made the federation much stronger. However, the conference noted that education structures in COSATU and within many affiliates remained weak.

It was decided that an Education Conference be called to give direction and a new push to worker education in the federation. The conference looked at the main areas covered in our resolutions : COSATU Courses, Peoples Education, Media, Women and Culture.

This booklet gives a record of the discussions and strong resolutions taken at the conference, where every union and every region of COSATU was represented. When we read this booklet, we must ask ourselves: Have we implemented the resolutions taken? How much progress has been made? We have a short time left until the next Education Conference (in October 1989) where we will assess what progress has been made.

This booklet is for discussion and debate. It must be a tool that we use to build education in the unions. It must be a weapon for turning our resolutions into reality; our theory into practice; our commitment into struggle.

## Delegations to the Conference

### Affiliates:

ACTWUSA	9
CCAWUSA	13
CAWU	7
CWIU	13
FAWU	13
NEHAWU	11
NUM	11
NUMSA	13
PPWAWU	9
SADWU	11
SAMWU	5
SARHWU	13
T & GWU	12
NUWCC	9

### COSATU:

Regions	18
National Office Bearers	6
Education	2
Media	2
Culture	4
Information	1
Printing	4

### Fraternal Organisations:

NUNW	5
FEDTRAW	4
NOW	4
NWCO	4
UBWO	4

## Speech delivered by COSATU General Secretary, Comrade Jay Naidoo

### 1. Introduction: Review

COSATU has grown in size and in importance since the launch of big industrial unions. Representing a million members now, we are set to grow even faster, consolidating our position as one of the biggest democratic organisations in the country.

However, there are certain aspects of our organisation which do not match the phenomenal growth. It is not that we have not recognised the importance of organising around working class education, culture and women. Our first Congress took powerful resolutions that gave direction on these issues.

However, in the last 22 months of our existence we have seen other basic organisational tasks taking priority. We have worked painstakingly at consolidating the federation in every region, city and dorp. We are still working to consolidate ourselves in every sector. This process has been essential, and rightfully so, because it is on the basis of strong organisational cohesion that real progress can be made in the crucial areas of women, culture and education. However, many real weaknesses still exist. At a regional level we have a major problem of lack of participation by affiliates in structures and campaigns. Much of our leadership fail to take initiative and build discipline and commitment in the Regions. The task of consolidation has not been completed, and we must continue to correct these organisational weaknesses.

We must give the utmost attention to the task of building a socialist future. With its militancy and clarity of purpose, the working class has moved decisively in the frontline of the liberation struggle. However, to carry out the complete and fundamental transformation of society, we need to deepen our working class understanding of all aspects of society. We betray the militant struggle on the ground if we fail to provide the avenue for discussion, reflecting and sharing experiences both on the nature of the struggle and the kind of society we are building.

COSATU has clear policies and principles —these lay the basis for even clearer direction in our struggle for the complete transformation of our society.

## 2. The Education Crisis

The present education crisis in our country is the clearest demonstration of the rejection of the capitalist education system. Millions of youth fed on bantu education have shown their rejection of an education system that seeks to keep people in ideological bondage and enslave the working class to the cheap labour system. This is why COSATU has backed the demands of students for their rights to democratic student representative councils, and an alternative education system that develops the potential of our people and serves the interests of the working class. This is why we meet here today to debate and formulate an education programme that meets the needs of our people. This is what we as the working class understand by the demand of the Freedom Charter, "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened".

## 3. Our Response

In our approach to education, we remain committed to the principle of worker control. Education in COSATU is thus fundamentally different from bourgeois education. We reject the idea of educators lecturing workers. We are committed rather to bringing worker leaders together to share ideas and experiences, thus extracting maximum value from the collective experience and understanding of the working class. The task of the educators is not to make high-powered political interventions. Their role is to facilitate and co-ordinate. From the outset, COSATU has stressed that all the federation structures should encourage the fullest debate among members.

Even through difficult times we remained committed to creating forums for debate and discussion. This has helped to limit polarisation and has drawn workers and worker leaders together, creating an atmosphere in which potentially opposing groups could listen and learn from the other side. In this way we must overcome our differences and forge an unbreakable unity around militant working class principles. We must see the education, culture and women's initiatives as a means of strengthening and deepening working class consciousness.

We must continue in this spirit. We must continue to be guided by the code of democratic conduct raised in our Discussion Paper, November 1986. In it we called for discipline to accept the decision of the majority and commitment to implement these decisions. Unless we are guided by these important principles our debates are reduced to the sterile irrelevance of discussions among self-centred individuals and cliques.

## 4. Attacks on COSATU

COSATU has been under massive attack because we pose a major threat to the present system of racial exploitation. Our Living Wage Campaign was attacked by the bosses and their government who labelled it a "communist plot". Tens of thousands of people were detained and scores murdered. Vigilante attacks on our members are increasing. I have just returned from Pietermaritzburg where incidents such as a 10-year-old witnessing the cold-blooded murder of his mother and sister and the subsequent dismemberment of his sister's body are commonplace.

## 5. Our Response

This raised the key issue of defence which must be understood in political terms. One pillar rests on building a powerful organisation that is grounded on democratic practices. The other is a process of education and rigorous, critical debate. This gives us the capacity to win the majority of people to our view and programme, even those elements who presently oppose us. Unless we understand this we will be drawn into the terrain of spiralling violence which only extends the life of the present apartheid system.

## 6. The Future

COSATU has resolved to develop and strengthen a coherent working class understanding of the demands of the Freedom Charter and to encourage the fullest discussion on socialism and democracy within our structures and among all progressive and democratic forces.

The mass resistance to apartheid and capitalism has led to the consolidation of national, non-racial mass based progressive organisation among the youth, students, women and other democratic sectors that have acted in alliance with COSATU. To achieve the demands of the Freedom Charter, COSATU has committed itself to building and strengthening disciplined alliances with these democratic sectors. To do this and maintain our organisational independence, we have proposed permanent structures be set up at the Local, Regional and National levels with other sectors of the democratic movement which will strengthen our relationship and interaction with these organisations and promote the leading role of the working class in a united front alliance.

The COSATU resolution points out that the united front alliance rests on powerful national, non-racial and democratic organisation emerging among organised workers, youth and students, women, civics and groups in the rural areas.

Representatives to these structures must come from these national sectors with mandates and be fully accountable to their constituencies. There must be full respect for the democratic decision making structures of each sectoral organisation. At the same time rigorous and critical evaluation of the strategies, organisation and campaigns of the democratic movement must take place.

Thus we see our education programme spills over the narrow confines of capitalist education and must become the weapon in our hands to shape the mass struggles of our class of the present and mould the future of our class. It is only with the complete understanding and the active participation of our membership that we can make a major contribution to the struggle to free ourselves from the chains of poverty, racism and exploitation.

**Forward to People's Education !**  
**Forward to a Democratic Future!**  
**Forward with the Working Class!**  
**Aluta Continua!**

# Report by the outgoing Education Secretary, Comrade Alec Irwin

## 1. Introduction

This is not designed to be a comprehensive report on the COSATU education programme from the beginning of 1986 to the present. Its purpose is to provide fairly comprehensive coverage of the COSATU education programme as a background document to the first National Education Conference of COSATU. From the position of Education Secretary I will also draw attention to what I see as certain strengths and weaknesses in the programme as it has functioned so far. Hopefully, this will assist in improving future programmes.

## 2. Formation of COSATU Education Structures

### 2.1. Committees

The COSATU Education Secretary was appointed in February 1986. The National Education Committee (NEC) structure and the structures of the Regional Educational Committee (REC) were decided upon at the CEC meeting in April 1986. The structures decided upon are as follows:

- National Education Committee: one representative from each affiliate.
- Regional Education Committee: one representative from each affiliate in the Region plus one worker representative from each Local.
- Local Education Committee: worker representative from each affiliate in the Local.

The Regional Secretaries were to be responsible for education co-ordination in the regions.

### 2.2 Worker participation in the NEC

There was debate in April 1986 about representation at NEDCOM. A problem faced was that NEDCOM would be nearly as large as the CEC if the 33 affiliates were allowed two delegates per affiliate. This was a real problem in terms of cost. It was therefore felt that there should be one representative from each affiliate. However, would this one person be a worker or an official? There was a long debate and in the end it was decided to leave the decision to each affiliate and to review the decision at a later stage depending on who had attended the meetings. An analysis was done on the attendance at NEDCOM for the five meetings between May 17, 1986 and February 12, 1987. Out of 30 affiliates the following could be said:

- Three affiliates never attended
- Eight affiliates attended one meeting only
- Seventeen affiliates were represented by officials only
- Of these last 17 affiliates three were represented by officials who were Education Officers.

It was fairly clear that attendance at NEDCOM was a problem. This was made worse because of a lack of continuity in representatives. Also, if affiliates must send only one representative then there is a clear tendency to send officials. The CEC did not review the situation although it was reported in mid-1987.

### 2.3 Basic Aims of the Programme

Three broad aims of the programme were set out for the first year. These were to:

- Decentralise education by building up regional and local structures.
- Complement affiliate education by covering COSATU policy issues and broader economic and political matters. Organisers and shop stewards education was to be left to the affiliates, with COSATU assisting affiliates in this if they requested it. Such assistance could be at regional or national level.

- Build up resources that could be used at regional, local and affiliate level.

In 1987 it was felt that these basic aims should be retained. However, there was concern that regional structures were only just developing. In the first half of 1987 it was therefore decided to develop the basic COSATU courses and the political economy seminars. These would be co-ordinated at a national level but carried out in Regions or combined groups of Regions.

It was decided that this programme would be reviewed for the second half of 1987 and either repeated or new courses added.

### 2.4 The Education Department

- This was based in Durban with the Printing Unit. The Education Department consisted of the Education Secretary and the Education Administrator. It worked closely with, and used the resources of the Printing Unit which consisted of two printers, one typist/administrator and a translator.
- The Education Department receives allocation from Head Office as do Regions. The education budget was a separate account within the overall COSATU budget. Signatories to the Education Account were appointed by NEDCOM but did pose problems as one of those appointed no longer participated in NEDCOM. As a temporary measure the National COSATU Treasurer was appointed as a signatory joining the Education Secretary and the Southern Natal Regional Secretary.

## 3. Evaluation of COSATU Education Structure

### 3.1 National

The NEDCOM did not work as well as it should have. This was largely because of poor discontinuous attendance. Representatives often came with no mandate or without considering matters. Also, there was not a clear overall framework within which education was operating. Worker participation by experienced workers was non-existent and the link between Education and other COSATU committees such as

the EXCO and CEC was through the Education Secretary. Education was seldom given much attention at the CEC because of the pressure of other items. It is hoped that the starting of an Education Conference and the election of Office Bearers will correct some of these problems.

### 3.2 Regional

Generally the Regional Education structure and programmes have been weak. In 1986 this was largely due to the fact that Regions only started to function fairly late in the year. In 1987 the reasons seem more related to the other organisational pressures and an inability to establish effective Regional Education Committees. It is not yet clear whether the smaller number of affiliates in the regions will assist in forming more effective Education Committees. The progress made with various courses illustrates the problems. The Discussion Paper produced by the COSATU Executive was to be used by the Regions as a basis for education. However, follow-up was sporadic and short-lived. The COSATU basic course was scheduled to be run by June 1987. Eventually all courses were held, with the exception of Natal. However, this occurred late and in some cases attendance was poor. Planning seminars were held for the political economy seminars in two out of a proposed four cases, but no courses were held.

Other regional education did not take place in some Regions, but the problem seemed to be in sustaining and carrying out a systematic education programme.

### 3.3 Locals

We have no clear overall picture of what was happening in Locals. In certain Locals education activity did not take place. Education at this level would seem to have been relatively active, however, we did not get adequate reports of it and it does not seem to have been well co-ordinated.

### 3.4 Education Secretary

These circumstances posed a difficult choice for the Education Secretary and the education office. Should the Secretary travel actively and try and ensure education takes place? While this might give rise to more activity initially it poses certain problems. It would not build the structures and given the size of COSATU, not all areas could be regularly visited, so more activity to report would mean more lasting activity and more decentralised structures.

The Education Secretary was therefore in a position of responding to requests from various areas. Requests for assistance depended on factors such as whether education was taking place, on whether planners of courses had a working relationship with the Secretary and whether the perceived political views of the Secretary accorded with those planning the courses.

The weakness of the National structure provided insufficient guidance to the Education Secretary. The dilemma that I believe should be considered is that a very active Education Secretary may allow us to report more activity. However, in the longer run it would not build active and decentralised structures and it would probably reduce the number of educators developed regionally and locally. I would argue that we should retain our emphasis on building structures.

## Summary

Our education structures are not as strong as they should be. This reflects weaknesses in our organisational structures. Fewer affiliates at all levels will help us, however. COSATU education depends very heavily on affiliate participation. We have to strengthen education in affiliates if they are to successfully participate in and direct COSATU education.

The resources available for education from COSATU and other sources is now quite considerable and is undoubtedly being under-utilised. Also, education is taking place and the level of activity is growing. However, it is not being well co-ordinated so that we can share our experiences and learn from each other.

There are growing problems in having the education office separated from the Head Office. There are administrative problems, as will be examined below, making the co-ordination of education and organisation increasingly difficult.

## 4. The Education Programme

This section will outline the various aspects of the COSATU education programme. This will not provide a detailed report. It will outline the activity and its aim and give a brief account of what was achieved.

### 4.1 Women

The Inaugural Congress passed a resolution on women. A crucial part of this resolution was that a sub-committee be formed in each region to deal with women's issues and education around the resolution.

No substantial progress has been made in implementing this resolution. The only reported activity was in Northern Natal where the region was involved in assisting in the formation of a women's organisation. Affiliates were asked to submit reports but none were forthcoming. There have been some attempts to organise women within COSATU. However, these efforts have not been co-ordinated within the scope of the women's resolution.

### 4.2 COSATU Courses

#### 4.2.1 Basic course

In 1987 a basic course was started. This combined National co-ordination with Regional courses. It was felt that to conduct National courses would reach to few people. However, a degree of National co-ordination was seen as important. The way of achieving this was a useful one and could work well with stronger Regional structures. Regions were combined so that courses were run for more than one Region. Each Region was asked to nominate educators who would be responsible for co-ordinating the basic course. These seminars worked out the course and its content. This basic framework was then used in the Regional courses. Except for Natal all other Regional courses took place although attendance was poor in Wits.

#### 4.2.2 Political Economy

In April 1986 the CEC decided that an active discussion on the South African

economy should be embarked upon. The Education Department began to gather information on the economy. This was eventually used in the *Political Economy-South Africa in Crisis* book produced by the Education Department. In 1987 it was decided to run seminars on political economy. The approach adopted was similar to that in the basic courses. However, the Education Secretary and the National Union of Mineworkers Education Secretary were to hold seminars in the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Free State. These were held in the Cape and Transvaal and Free State but not in Natal. However, the events of May and June prevented the follow-up seminars being held.

#### 4.2.3 Policy seminars

Seminars were planned around the Discussion Paper and the Metal and Allied Workers Union resolution which were produced in the second half of 1986. A CEC policy seminar was held in November 1986. This material was compiled and circulated to Regions and affiliates. Policy seminars were held in the Western Cape, Highveld, Northern Natal and Northern Transvaal. However, these seminars did not occur in all Regions and were not sustained. A policy seminar for the CEC was also organised in October 1987. The results of this seminar will also be circulated for further discussion. There is no doubt that such policy seminars are useful and should take place regularly. What is also an important development is that certain locals have also conducted such policy-oriented seminars. This has often taken the form of all-night seminars.

#### 4.2.4 Regional Seminars

As covered above, co-ordinated activities have taken place in the Regions. However, generally speaking there is a need to strengthen the Regional Education structures. In addition to those seminars that resulted from NEDCOM initiatives certain regions, notably Highveld, have initiated other education activities. Such initiatives are very important and should take place in all Regions. However, we must strengthen the reporting of such activities so that regions can share their experiences.

#### 4.2.5 Labour Law Courses

It was decided in 1987 that we should co-operate with the Centre of Applied Legal Studies (Natal) and with Clive Thompson (Cape Town) in organising labour law courses. A course was offered by CAL in March. In Natal the Centre of Socio Legal Studies is offering a number of courses which are being used by the unions in Natal.

#### 4.2.6 Activities of the Education Secretary

The Education Secretary was requested to assist in the educational activities of affiliates. Such contact was very important in getting a better understanding of what was happening in affiliates. This is a useful way of sharing experience between affiliates. However, sharing experiences in affiliates could be more usefully co-ordinated.

A seminar was held in November 1986 where affiliates outlined their education programmes. This was a very useful exercise.

#### 4.2.7 Evaluation

The COSATU education courses only really received attention late in 1986. The programme planned for 1987 was basically a sound one. The approach of trying to involve educators from within COSATU affiliates in the different regions was important and worked well in the preparation of the basic course. I would argue that such an approach should be continued as it will develop our education resources more widely.

The problems we faced were more organisational and related to the inability to effectively co-ordinate the affiliates and the resources that existed in affiliates. I would argue such co-ordination is essential if a COSATU education programme is to be built up. This also depends on strengthening the affiliate structures in many cases. We should not expect education miracles from Education Secretaries. The challenge is to build a decentralised education structure and programme of courses.

### 5. Education Resources and Publication

#### 5.1 Resources

Most of the attention of the education office administrator in particular focussed on developing resource material. In doing this the following factors were taken into account:

- Most education would not be based on written material but on seminar-type learning.
- Written material would mainly be used by educators (usually organisers) in preparing seminars and courses.
- In view of size and spread of COSATU different problems would emerge in different areas. Resource material was therefore designed to be used as flexibly as possible.

The main resources produced during the period were the :

- Policy file which gave background information on the Congress Resolutions.
- Resources file which included a range of material to assist in seminars.
- Notes on political organisation.

In addition, the education office prepared various briefings and kept records of Government Gazettes. Other international and local publications were also collected as resources that could be used.

#### 5.2 Resource Centres

Basic resources were collected for each Regional office. These were COSATU material, *De Kok*, *McGregor*, *Weekly Mail*, *New Nation* and *Financial Mail*. The facility could be expanded and NEDCOM had decided to extend it to all functioning local offices. However, funding for this did not come through.

#### 5.3 Publications

In addition to the above the following publications were produced:

*June 16 and the Working Class*

*The Crisis: Speeches by COSATU Office Bearers*

*Education: Speeches by COSATU Office Bearers*

*The Way Forward: Speeches at Union Congresses*

*Political Economy: South Africa in Crisis*

COSATU News will be reported on more fully and discussed in the Media Commission.

## 6. Study Tours

A detailed evaluation of the study tour programme is included in the conference documents so little needs to be said here.

It is recommended that the programme be continued in 1988. If this programme is to be well run it needs to be well co-ordinated. This job has increasingly fallen to the education administrator and this should continue in my view. I also feel, following the seminar organised by Education for the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) in Windhoek, that we should encourage active study tour programmes between Namibia and South Africa.

## 7. 1988 Programme

Certain items have been carried over from 1987 to 1988 and should be considered by the COSATU Course Commission. These are:

- TUC study tour proposal
- CLC study tour proposal
- International Union courses linked to study tours
- Labour law courses
- A possible seminar on new technology

## 8. Concluding Comments

The 2nd Congress resolution on education will hopefully correct some of the present weaknesses in our education programme. We should probably not be too critical of our efforts since COSATU and the other massive problems it has faced has not made things easy. We might have expected too much too soon.

One weakness that has not been covered is that of a poor link between education and the media and information work. This has also been the case in the link between education and policy matters arising in Head Office. In my view these links require the Education Secretary to be based at Head Office. I make this a strong recommendation. In view of the resources and experience accumulated in Durban with the Education Administrator and the Printing Unit I believe they could continue to perform clearly defined tasks within the education programme. Some important foundations have been laid and this conference must build rapidly on these foundations.

# Cosatu Education Courses

There is a need for courses to educate the workers organised by the affiliates of COSATU in order to ensure that we have an informed membership. The following are the proposed courses .

## 1. Political Policy of COSATU

This course should be on the political policy resolutions of COSATU adopted at the Second National Congress. The content of the course should focus on:

- Freedom Charter
- United Front and disciplined alliances
- Socialism and Democracy
- Sanctions
- Disinvestment
- Class Theory

## 2. International Working Class Movement

As members of COSATU we should be clear not only about COSATU and the democratic movement in South Africa alone, we should know more about the working class in the rest of the world.

- The emergence of the international trade union movement
- Case study on working class struggles in various countries.

## 3. Topical Issues

- In order to counter the enemy's propaganda which is giving distorted information, COSATU should provide and gather information and circulate this information to affiliates.
- Assist in policy making.
- Facilitate discussions on topical issues.

## 4. COSATU structures

- Policies
- Principles
- Structures
- Campaigns
- Organisational democracy (should be offered by affiliates with COSATU assisting).

## 5. Basic Shop Steward Courses

- Affiliates to develop and structure their own basic shop steward courses.
- Submit those manuals to COSATU for circulation.
- COSATU to assist if requested.

## 6. Legal Courses

There should be courses on:

- Labour Law - amendment to the Labour Relations Act and its implications
- Security Legislation - such as the State of Emergency
- Affiliates to be directly involved in planning and running of the course. They should not depend on legal advisers but on the strength and unity of the workers.

## 7. Skills Course

- We need courses in computers, teletex, word processing and in new machines. Such courses should be co-ordinated nationally and that training should be done at a Regional level.
- We must have our own educators.
- Leadership-training: how to make speeches and how to conduct meetings, teaching methods etc.

## 8. Specialist Course

- There is a need for a course on new technology. The International Labour Organisation, the Trade Union Congress (Britain) and the Canadian Labour Congress (to pay for experts) offered to assist. Finance from the Workers' Department of the ILO.
- Health and Safety with affiliate specialists - COSATU to co-ordinate.

## 9. Political Economy

The previous efforts be re-activated and developed.

- The development of capitalism and its overlapping into the Third World - its imperialist nature.
- Economics as being both a political and social science. Initially this course will be aimed at or offered to educators and advanced shop stewards. Furthermore, COSATU News should provide or run a column on political economy.

## 10. Living Wage Campaign

We should make an assessment on this campaign and give life to it through propaganda. Organisational requirements and ways of co-ordinating our campaign must be planned. We need to look at solidarity actions to support comrades who are embarking on action. Furthermore, we should involve the community and make sure they understand what is meant by campaigns. By involving the unemployed, domestic and farmworkers and highlighting their plight, the campaign can be revitalised.

## 11. Women

It is essential that a course on women be run by the federation. All our courses should give a balanced picture by focusing on women.

## 12. History of the Struggle in South Africa

There is a dire need for a course on the history of our struggle. This course should include the history of our country from before the arrival of the settlers. It should also focus on other issues such as the wars or frontier wars, the formation of the Union of South Africa and the events from 1960 up to the present.

## 13. Translation

All course material should be translated.

# People's Education

Education as defined by the Commission: education is a lifelong process by society to master and control spiritual and material reality. It is interdependent with other aspects of society and is based on how society is structured.

## A. People's Education

1. It should be education which is controlled by people. It should not be hierarchical or dictatorial.
2. It should enhance society as a whole.
3. It should serve the interests of the masses.
4. It should enhance patriotism and the self-esteem of the working class.
5. It should be relevant to the actual needs of society and geared towards the development of skills.
6. It should use resources optimally for all people and not be run on racial lines.
7. It should discourage individualism and promote a collective outlook.
8. It should promote welfare of the people as a whole.
9. It should create a working class consciousness.
10. It should be used to fight illiteracy among the working class.
11. It should create values that will be relevant in protecting the gains of the working class.
12. It should destroy division between mental and manual labour.
13. It should provide people with skills that are useful to production.
14. It should destroy sexism in school.

## B. Role of Education in the present society

1. Education is used as a weapon to further the ideology of capitalism.
2. It is used as a weapon to reproduce the present values and to defend them.
3. It discourages the development of people as a whole and ensures that the working class has no power
4. It is used as a weapon of control.
5. It is used to promote sexism and racialism.
6. It is used to perpetuate capitalism using racialism as a reinforcement which divides the working class so that it will not be effective in the fight against capitalism.
7. It distorts religion to further the aims of capitalism.

## C. How do we build people's education and help solve the present education crisis?

1. COSATU should embark on a study of the existing education system in this country
  - 1.1 Apartheid/capitalist education which discriminates against workers, black people

- and women and also promotes wrong ideas of individualism and competition.
- 1.2 Private schools promote ideas and practices of the middle class and capitalism such as elitism, individualism and careerism.
  - 1.3 Alternative education. Here COSATU must explore what this actually means by studying alternatives such as Learn and Teach.
- These programmes must find answers to the current education crisis. However, we must give guidelines for a progressive alternative education model.
- Education must be linked to production but this must be in a creative liberating way (under capitalism, education is also linked to production, but in such a way as to entrench exploitation.) This is an important part of the struggle for socialism.
  - Education must seek to project workers, women and people of all colours in a progressive manner.
  - Education must assist in the process of liberation through exposing the structures that exploit and oppress people in all aspects of their lives - in schools, work and in the home.
  - Education must serve the needs of the workers and their allies (the masses) - education is not neutral.
  - The education curriculum/content should be planned by both the educator and the people to be educated.
  - Encourage adult education classes to combat illiteracy and to promote working class control of society and production.
  - COSATU education structures must develop a basis for organisations to permanently intervene in the education crisis.

## 2. National Education Crisis Committee

Actively develop and build NECC to become a mass-based, democratic, educational organisation. To become mass-based it must consider assisting or strengthening democratic Parent, Teacher and Student Associations. It was felt that local and regional PTSA's should be established on a democratic basis. This would involve representation from our sector: parents (through civics), teachers (through progressive teachers unions), students (through SRC's) and workers (COSATU education structures to elect delegates at each level). The exact workings of such structures is an issue for further debate in COSATU. The goal would be to encourage one single constituency and national organisation for each sector.

- Democratic teachers' union
- Democratic SRC's (one student body) and encourage their co-operation through joint PTSA's
- To consider the information of one movement or close relationship between different areas of culture, sport and education. Here the NECC must talk to the Congress of South African Writers, the South African Council on Sports and other movements.

## 3. The Education Charter

3.1 COSATU must involve itself in the Education Charter Campaign to add the worker's voice and muscle to the programme. We believe that the education crisis does not only affect students, nor is it confined to schools. This is shown by the

growth of adult education classes run by the state and courses in general run by capital.

3.2 We believe that it is correct for programmes to be drawn up for specific constituencies such as workers, women and students.

3.3 The Education Charter Campaign document prepared by the National Co-ordinating Committee should be circulated throughout COSATU's education structures for discussion and debate and a national COSATU response should be formulated. Special seminars should be conducted wherever possible. Other decision-making structures in the federation should also be party to the final COSATU response.

3.4 COSATU must be fully represented on the National Co-ordinating Committee.

#### 4. Literacy Campaigns

4.1 COSATU and other progressive organisations should begin to consider ways of addressing the huge illiteracy problem facing the working class of South Africa which has resulted in a lack of confidence amongst workers. Such a campaign will help to build workers' control and confidence.

4.2 COSATU, assisted by youth and students, should provide resources and night classes.

#### 5. Holidays for People

It is necessary to run education around peoples holidays with our allies in the united front. May 1, June 16, March 21, August 8 (Womens Day) and September 8 (International Literacy Day).

#### 6. Campaigns

Proper consultation between different constituencies must be held before campaigns can be embarked on. This should be co-ordinated through the United Front.

#### 7. Slogans

People's Education for People's Power

## Media

### 1. What is media

Everything used to disseminate information - newspapers, pamphlets, stickers, radio and television.

#### What is the commercial bourgeois media?

- It reflects the aims and interests of the capitalist class rather than those of the working class—media for profit and misinformation.
- It is owned and controlled by the ruling class or government and distorts the truth of our struggle. Bourgeois media promotes the black middle class to act as a buffer against working class struggle and depoliticises our struggle by stressing unimportant things like entertainment and sport.

#### What is alternative media?

- It reflects the problems and struggles of the oppressed and exploited masses at Local, Regional and National levels.
- It is not owned by bosses for profit.
- It confronts political issues and promotes the democratic society we are fighting for and is thereby educational for readers.
- It is sensitive to organisational needs.
- It is controlled by and accountable to oppressed people through their organisation.
- It reports issues important to the working class and helps to build our organisation through propagating our policies.

### 2. Training

- Training in media skills is important at Local and Regional level as these skills are in too few hands in COSATU.
- Production of media needs to be decentralised.
- NEDCOM (National Education Committee), REDCOM (Regional) and LEDCOM (Local) comrades should also be responsible for media and operate as the core around which media units are built at every level in COSATU. These units should be trained in media skills to take responsibility for information and media. This will ensure that our media is based on workers and cannot be easily destroyed and that we are well informed about what is going on in our organisation and in our country.
- Media units will be accountable to their structures. For example, a local must clear stories written by the Local Media Unit.
- Worker photographers should be trained.
- Training should focus on unemployed workers since professional photographers can't get to strike situations and some workers already have cameras.
- There should be a full-time COSATU person responsible for training in media skills in Regions and Locals.

### 3. Distribution

#### 3.1 COSATU's current distribution problems include:

- Seizure of media by police at printers or distribution company.
- Information from unions is needed for proper distribution.
- Union and regional offices do not distribute quickly enough.
- We need to follow up any problems if media does not arrive.
- Distribution to subscribers outside COSATU and internationally is a big administrative task and requires a full-time person.

#### 3.2 What is needed

- Information from unions - addresses, numbers and languages required, otherwise there will be no COSATU News as CEC mandated.
- Printing/production should be decentralised according to different languages/regions, for example, Zulu printed in Natal, Xhosa printed in E. Cape or W. Cape, Afrikaans printed in W. Cape.
- There needs to be better information/communication between affiliates and COSATU.
- Problems with commercial printers so we need to look at developing a printing unit in the Transvaal.

### 4. Repression

- One way to counter seizure of material is for important information to be telexed to regions where it can be photocopied and distributed.
- Regarding new media regulations, COSATU should comply with the law but try other ways to communicate information.
- If COSATU News is banned workers should take action against this and we should then look at other ways, like booklets, to get information out.
- Important information regarding publications should be done face-to-face and not over telephones or telexes.
- Publications should be distributed immediately.

### 5. Languages/translation

- Information and publications should be in Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Sotho and English.
- Training and education material should also be translated.
- Translators should be employed full-time for each language and these comrades should assist with all aspects of media work in their Regions as well as with translation for affiliates.

### 6. Internal Information

Information gathering needs to be decentralised through training of media units/employment of Regional Education Secretaries to improve flow of information. Exchange of minutes should take place between all structures of COSATU.

- Regional information bulletines should be produced in Regions and circulated in COSATU. National perspectives should be covered in COSATU News.



- Information gathered through affiliate structures should be sent to COSATU. Full-time comrades should be employed.
- COSATU should produce more analytical material on specific issues, for example, disinvestments/shares.

# Women

## Problems facing women

### Workplace

- Unequal pay for same work
- Harder work and less pay
- Negative attitude towards women shop stewards, for example, they are undermined by men comrades when giving report-backs and receive less respect than those decisions made by the men comrades.
- Lack of key promotions of women at work. They are not given leadership roles easily.
- Women do not get full credit for the work they have done.
- Sexual harassment - ranging from verbal abuse to sex for the job.
- Pregnancy, rights and childcare facilities.
- Inferiority complex from lack of confidence; lack of political education and lack of upgrading of work skills.
- Women are the first to be retrenched. They are regarded as secondary breadwinners, yet many women are the sole breadwinners.

### Organisation

- Women suffer triple oppression- from the "madam", from their men comrades and racial discrimination. Their men comrades prevent them from attending meetings and from being active in the organisation.
- Sexual harassment (verbal, attitudinal and physical). Women depend on men for transport after meetings or to meetings and men comrades can exploit this.

### Recommendation

To rectify this, the time for holding meetings should be carefully looked into to encourage full participation by women who have child-care and domestic responsibilities. There should be some policy towards encouraging comrades to jointly share the childcare and domestic responsibilities.

### Domestic

- Double shifts are a problem, child-care and domestic responsibilities need to be shared.
- Women are treated as minors (for example, passports, hire purchase and legal contracts) by the law and due to traditional attitudes. There is a need to educate male and female comrades to increase social awareness.

## Church

This is a very strong institution for women but whether it is helping women to overcome their problems needs to be discussed.

### 2. Developments

What has been done by the affiliates and COSATU in terms of structures and achievements since the Womens Resolutions was passed at the first Congress.

### Structures

- Affiliates : generally little has been done in forming women's structures.
- COSATU: Northern Natal region – the women in this Region have formed a regional committee (Empangeni); in the Western Cape attempts have been made but follow-ups still have to be done; in the Southern Natal Region attempts have also been made. Locals - PE Local has had some consultation but no follow-ups; Johannesburg Local formed the Women's Forum. This structure has looked at resolutions that were adopted at the First National Congress and at evictions.

### 3. Achievements

Generally unions have achieved a great deal regarding maternity and parternity agreements with some affiliates achieving 33,3 percent of a worker's wage on confinement plus transport for antenatal attendance and paid study leave.

### 4. Recommendations

The Commission proposed:

- A conference or workshop should be convened to discuss the issue of women.
- Affiliates should discuss proposals to deal with the education problems regarding women at local level and come to the conference with proposals and/or mandated positions.
- The conference should generate a long-term programme of action.
- Noting that there is very little awareness about the problems facing women and the women resolution, NEDCOM should distribute publications, pamphlets, stickers, posters and any kind of propaganda to try and build awareness.



## Culture

### 1. The Basic Purpose of a Cultural Unit

- Culture is a terrain that we as workers can no longer leave in the hands of our enemies to control.
- There lies a vast amount of cultural creativity among COSATU members in the form of songs, plays, poetry and other art forms.
- The ruling class has used culture effectively against the working class and we need to defend ourselves and our interests from domination by other classes.
- Culture, used effectively by COSATU, can help to cement our relationship with our democratic allies in the liberation struggle against oppression and exploitation. We can build links with youth especially.
- Culture in COSATU must be a vehicle to sustain and popularise the working class politics of the majority.
- Cultural activities and structures can only be useful to us as the working class if it is accessible to our general membership and compatible with existing democratic structures in COSATU.
- We can strengthen, promote and defend our organisation using songs, plays, posters and other art forms.
- We can use culture to build unity between workers and COSATU affiliates because it will be a common activity.

### 2. What Do We Mean By Culture?

Culture relates to the behaviour of a particular group of people. It can be described as a social set of beliefs, traditions, history and other behaviour representing a particular

people's identity.

We understand culture to also mean and include art, music, dances, slogans, chants, poetry, story writing, posters, way of behaviour, way of dressing and way of relating with the unseen world (religion).

By 'ruling class' we mean all those cultural acts and institutions designed, controlled and harnessed in a way that conceals the true nature of exploitation and oppression, an undeniable aspect of our society in South Africa.

COSATU must contribute to working class culture and give direction as the organised section of the working class.

### 3. Culture and Tradition

Capitalism has used tradition (for example, traditional dancing) to enhance their position of exploitation and oppression over workers. Working class culture (led by COSATU) must take the good element from tradition and must be on the alert not to fall prey to ethnic or tribal culture as promoted by the capitalists.

We see working class culture to be those cultural acts which enjoy, and rely on the control and support of the majority. Under us, as COSATU cultural activists, we see culture to mean an attempt to resurface, consolidate and popularise our worker experiences of exploitation and oppression in the hands of the capitalists and oppressors in a way that would sustain our worker's struggle and contribute effectively to the broad national democratic struggle.

Working class culture, coming from us as organised workers, has to do with workers controlling their own cultural power and creativity and using these gains and experiences for the benefit of our unions, federation and national democratic struggle.

Working class culture has to do with projecting future glimpses of a new South Africa without exploitation and oppression. Our struggle for the liberation of South Africa is the struggle to free ourselves from the yokes of cultural imperialism, economic and social exploitation. COSATU and the working class struggle as such has become an unchallengeable cultural act.

COSATU must intervene to rescue those cultural activists who have been hoodwinked into that false outlook on culture.

### 3. Basic Principles of the Culture Proposal

- COSATU officials in the Culture Department should be committed to the cultural activities of the working class.
- Affiliates culture representatives should also, if possible, be culturally orientated.
- Worker democracy (mandates, consultations and report-backs) and participation

must be a guide in all COSATU cultural developments and activities.

- Resources (skills and funds) should be intensively directed towards local culture structures for example, shop stewards, Locals and local culture units. The local culture units emerging from shop stewards councils must be important organs of development and creativity. The federations worker leaders, in the area of culture, should emerge from these units.
- All COSATU's culture units and activists must attempt to stay well informed about cultural developments in our country so as to give guidance whenever necessary and to defend the interests of COSATU, the working class and the national democratic struggle. For example, the Cultural Boycott.

#### 5. Local Culture Unit Functions

- Update the Shop Stewards' Local about cultural developments within and outside COSATU and the Local.
- Workers, under the guidance of the Shop Stewards Local, to at all times report and seek mandates whenever it is necessary. To seek ways of promoting and encouraging local talent, by way of local concerts, workshops and speakers within and outside our structures.
- To organise cultural events on behalf of COSATU, unions and the Shop Stewards Local. For example, May Day, COSATU Congress and Culture Days.
- Liaise with other cultural groups who are COSATU's allies.
- Collect and compile cultural information and material coming from workers with the view of popularising it.
- To encourage debate within the federation.

#### 6. Proposed Cultural Activity in Affiliates

Cultural work has to be consolidated at the factory, Local, Regional and National levels of our unions.

#### 7. Factories, Shops, Farms and Mines

- There should be a shop steward sensitive to the cultural and sports potential of the workers and who works to co-ordinate their cultural expression collectively.
- The shop steward must lead a campaign to have a say over what happens during our lunch and rest time and a say over facilities like canteens, halls and sports fields after working hours.
- She / he must plan and encourage cultural and sport events in the factory, shop, farm and mine; plays, slide tape shows, films, oral performances, culture debates, sport events and library facilities.
- Plan, select and recommend to the Shop Stewards Committee (in the mine, shop, factory or farm) the observance of certain celebrations and commemorations on calendar days which mean a lot to that particular mine, shop, factory or farm.
- Work jointly with local COSATU Culture structures (Culture Units) in finding ways of developing and strengthening the talent of worker creators.
- She / he must work with the Shop Stewards Committee in challenging the use of

cultural forms and worker culture activities by management which are to the detriment of workers and their interests.

#### 8. Local Level Affiliates should

- Encourage membership to attend and participate in local culture events like May Day, COSATU Cultural Day and others.
- Branch Secretaries to keep track with local culture development particularly the developments around local culture units by sending a union Culture Representative to all Culture Unit meetings.
- Take an interest in arrangements of culture events that involve all the unions in an area.
- Develop a union cultural wing of choirs, bands, poets, artists and other culture and sports activists.
- Liaise with Local, Regional and National COSATU structures in fighting and challenging any institutions which might be exploiting the working class in that area, such as city councils, local authorities and theatre groups.

#### 9. Regional and National Level

- Co-operation with the Regional and National culture structures of COSATU in finding ways of challenging the cultural machines of exploitation for example, SABC, soccer leagues and theatre groups that exploit the masses.
- Disseminate culture information coming from the Regional and National Culture Units of COSATU and encourage culture debates in union seminars.

#### 10. Sports

COSATU affiliates and culture activists should attempt even now to look at ways of embodying sports as part of our programme through debates, inviting those individuals who have a clear knowledge of how sports could be challenged and channelled towards a realization of working class ideals. We must also attempt to influence progressive sports bodies such as SACOS towards working class control. We must work as organised workers under COSATU towards controlling industrial leagues through shop stewards and Local Cultural Units.

# Structures

## Local Education Committees

It should be left open to COSATU Locals as to who will form Local Education Committees.

It is recommended that it be :

- Affiliates sending one worker representative or the Local deciding or nominating a certain number of shop stewards to sit on the committee.

## Regional Education Committees

These should consist of:

- Two delegates per affiliate, one must be a worker and one a representative from each Local Education Committee, plus the Regional Secretary.

## National Education Committee

It should consist of:

- Elected National Education Office Bearers, and two representatives from each affiliate, of which one must be a worker.
- Regional Secretaries.
- Two representatives from the structures in the cultural department, and two from the Media Department

## Media

Media should be the responsibility of:

- Local COSATU Shop Steward Council
- The REC should take responsibility for media on the Regional Level
- NEDCOM and the CEC will take responsibility for media on a national level •  
Media should be incorporated into cultural structures

## Culture

### Local

- Culture units should be formed by COSATU Local Shop Steward Councils
- It should consist of cultural activists and representatives from affiliates
- The Local will elect Office Bearers who should be accountable to the Local Shop Steward Councils.

## Regional

- Chairperson from each local unit will form the Regional Culture Committee
- This will be linked up to Redcom by having 2 representatives who sit on Redcom

## National

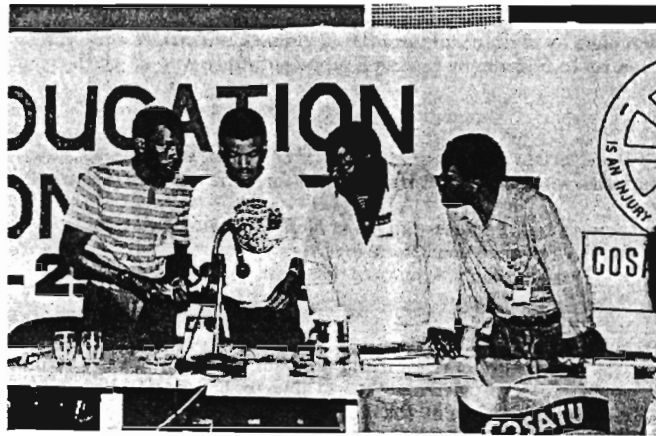
- Regional Chairpersons within the Culture Unit will form the national committee of culture
- They will be represented by 2 representatives at Nedcom, that is a national chairperson and fulltime co-ordinator.

## Women

- Locals should establish forums that will include all women workers in the Local
- A planning committee consisting of two women representatives from each affiliate plus one representative from any active local will plan for the coming Women's Conference and liaise with Nedcom on the planning.

## Resources

- Administrator, typist for Education Secretary
- Research officer
- Translators to be spread in major COSATU centres
- Legal units.



## New Education Office Bearers

Chair: Christopher Seoposengwe  
 Vice Chair: Esion Mashigo  
 Treasurer: David Thate Pule  
 Secretary: Khetsi Lehoko

## Resolution



### This congress noting that:

1. The present education system in South Africa is designed to maintain our people in permanent ideological servitude.
2. The present education system in South Africa is designed to perpetuate and reinforce the values, ideas and practices of the ruling class.
3. The present education system fosters inequality, division and anti-democratic values among the oppressed and exploited masses.
4. That the present education structure in COSATU needs to be restructured.

### Believing that:

1. Education is vital for the liberation of the working class.
2. Education must serve the interests of the vast majority of the people in our country.

### Therefore resolves:

1. To establish a National, Regional and Local education programme for the federation to:
  - a) Ensure that this education programme politicises, mobilises and conscientises the working class so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and

its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited.

b) Develop an understanding and capacity to wage our struggle by democratic means that will allow maximum participation, and decision-making powers for the workers both now and in the future society we wish to build.

c) To develop the human potential to the fullest and to create and transform skills and abilities so that they are accessible to the oppressed and exploited.

d) Develop an understanding among the working class that their struggle forms part of the world struggle against oppression and exploitation.

e) More actively promote the aims of the resolution on women workers passed at the Inaugural Congress of COSATU.

2. To hold an Education Conference once every two years. At this conference the following Office Bearers will be elected: Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer.

The powers of such conference and Office Bearers, and its composition, are to be determined by the CEC.

3. To elect the Education Secretary at the Education Conference.

4. That the chairperson of NEDCOM shall be an ex-officio member of the NEC.

First Draft

## The case for a National Integrated Education and Training System for membership, leadership and staff of the Federation

*First presented to the National Educators Forum - 20 May 1992  
( for NEF comments see page 4 ) and to the June Nedcom*

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This presentation to the National Education Forum is made against the background of the decisions and the objectives of the FEDERATION as outlined in the Education resolutions of the 4th National Congress and the 3rd Education Conference.
- 1.2 The 4th National Congress resolved to constitute and to take forward COSATU education initiatives on the basis of a Centralized Education Programme. Its central guidelines were to develop an approach to union education which is :
- \* rooted in long - term planning of education needs
  - \* co-ordinated and synchronises affiliate and federation education
  - \* modular and progressive
  - \* professional
  - \* self - financing
- 1.3 The federation's education mission statement was concerned to achieve a set objectives which aimed to :
- \* develop leadership and organisational skills
  - \* promote analytical and critical thinking
  - \* empower membership to challenge and change their material conditions
  - \* support the organisational objectives

### 2. DEVELOPING A CADRESHIP FOR THE 90'S AND BEYOND

- 2.1 In order to give effect to the Resolutions, guidelines and the mission of the Federation it is becoming increasingly clear that the Federation must develop a cadre which will take forward the general objectives of COSATU in driving towards worker control in COSATU, the power of the working class and socialism. Such a cadre must be able to develop the thinking and the strategies which are necessary to give effect to the general objectives of COSATU.

- 2.2 The development of such a cadre within COSATU implies:
- \* clarifying and redefining the relations between organizers and shop steward. This is important because of the need to generate a massive shop steward training programme, the emergence of a pool of organizers from within the affiliates and the obvious demand for training.
  - \* Such a redefinition of the relationship will also assist in the recruitment of new organizers by drawing on a pool of resources within the federation itself. The advantage of this would be that new recruits will come from a political and educational culture within the Federation and will understand better the values, aims and objectives of the Federation. In addition it will provide the basis for stability and the continuing development of a cadreship within COSATU.

### 3. TAKING THE PROGRAMME FORWARD - PRACTICAL STEPS

- 3.1 The Resources of the Federation must be brought behind the education programme in a coherent, rational and systematic way. We must carefully assess existing capacities to take education forward in the federation. Our Education and Training System should be institutionalised within the Federation in order to meet the needs of COSATU. Where such resources at this stage are located outside the Federation we would need to engage these in a structured and systematic way which would support the development of such a system. Our strive towards self - sufficiency and professionalism must our engagement of resources.
- 3.2 COSATU's three - year programme has laid the basis for a long term approach in education. Its approach is developmental and is intended to meet the ongoing needs of the Federation in future. This "new" approach meant moving away from a topic-based programme to a component-based programme, eg resolutions of the 1st and 2nd Education Conference as opposed to resolutions of the 3rd Education Conference. This is illustrated as follows:
- 1st Education Conference(1987) focussed on Peoples' Education, Media, Culture etc
  - 2nd Education Conference (1989) focussed on Policies of the National Liberation Movement, International Trade Union Movement etc
  - 3rd Education Conference (1991) identified the key components of our programme as follows:
    - a) Staff Development and Training
    - b) Shop Steward and Leadership Training
    - c) Educators' Training
    - d) Worker Colleges
    - e) Adult Education
    - f) Health, Safety and Environment

Appendix G

42  
Other components included, Women, Mass education, Education and Campaigns and finally Macro-education policy.

It becomes clear that in order to give effect to the Congress guidelines and the Education Mission Statement, what is required for the Federation and its affiliates is the development of a National Intergrated Education and Training System for membership, leadership and staff of the Federation. The basis for such a System has already been set through our current educational work, eg in the SDT programme, which encapsulates the new approach of being modular, progressive and systematic and determines levels of access into such a system as illustrated below:

- \* the winter schools are a "modular" base for the summer school.
- \* the basic and intermediate "modules" progress into the advanced courses
- \* both are a part of an overall system.

3.3. Part of our work in the education programme is to develop a "menu" of courses available to the target group identified above. This means that beyond Advanced training for shop stewards and staff there needs to be further development of the curriculum that would meet our mission of developing leadership and organisational skills. In other words that there is available in terms of such a system a route for progression that might include in the menu shorter courses on the following:

- \* political economy
- \* labour law
- \* gender studies
- \* organisational management
- \* health, safety and the environment
- \* Media and communication
- \* and others as determined by the NEF and NEDCOM from time to time

The courses are the basis of our own system and we need to see how they could be fully developed (institutionalised) within the structures of the federation and will be evaluated at the National Congress every 3 years.

3.4. This programme must be developed and expanded to:-

- support and extend the campaign for Paid Educational Leave
- advance the struggle for the right to learn and to training
- provide the legal basis for our educational right
- systematically develop our policies for future negotiations with the employers and the state amongst other things to demand the establishment of a fund for trade union education. ( After all we also pay taxes)

- 3.4.1 We need to advance and finalize our ideas and a concrete proposal in respect of a National Trade Union School directed and controlled by COSATU.
- 3.4.2 We need to assess and examine the existing Worker Colleges to ensure they relate coherently with our own educational objectives. ( refer attached interim guidelines).
- 3.4.3 We should also urgently study and compare Trade Union institutions and their programmes in other countries as soon as possible. We need to build on our existing knowledge. with a view to answering some specific questions including:
  - what kind of institution is necessary
  - funding and staff
  - what is its general aim
  - how it delivers its programme
  - an evaluation of its weaknesses and strength, etc .
4. Finally in terms of the National Congress resolutions for a Intergrated Education and Training System for the country as a whole, it becomes clear that in our long term vision we cannot separate what education and training system is available to the citizens of the country and members, leadership and staff of COSATU. The point here is that at this stage our programme is meant to offset the effects of Apartheid education and that in our development of a post-apartheid education and training system we need to define the links between trade union education and national education and training.

Issues raised by the National Educators Forum:

- 1) There was unanimous in - principle support for this approach
- 2) The two areas that need further discussion are:
  - a) a critical evaluation of affiliates education systems. It was proposed that a suitable questionnaire be drafted by the Education Dept to facilitate this.
  - b) a briefing on international trade union education systems This will also include the role of worker colleges.
- 3) The kind of administration system that is required to support this system.
- 4) How do we in conducting education programmes now develop the building blocks for the long term system.
- 5) This proposal will be workshopped at the June Nedcom with the aim of addressing the issues raised above and taking the discussion further.

Prepared by the National Educational Department

# Principles for good adult basic education programmes



## Aims

Adult Basic Education programmes should help workers get the skills and knowledge needed to help shape and develop economic policies, run industries, build a democratic society, and strengthen job creation projects.

## Principles

### 1. There must be one national system of Adult Basic Education

- There must be clear national standards for each level of Adult Basic Education which say what skills and general knowledge should be covered
- Workers must get proper certificates
- There must be one national system of qualifications for Adult Basic Education

### 2. Adult Basic Education courses must provide a general basic education

- Courses should help workers develop an understanding of subjects like economics, history, geography, science, politics, maths and English

### 3. Adult Basic Education courses must link up with other educational and training opportunities, and job creation projects

- Adult Basic Education programmes must be recognised by the state

- Adults must not do exactly the same courses as children in schools. But the Adult programmes must link with standards in the schools

- Adult Basic Education programmes must link with clear career paths

### 4. Workers must have the right to paid time off for education and training

- There must be an agreed date for starting the national courses at the first two levels of Adult Basic Education (Level one - mother tongue literacy and basic numeracy and level two - beginners English and basic numeracy)

### 5. The knowledge and skills that workers already have must be recognised

- Workers should not have to repeat parts of the course they know. They should be able to start courses where they need to.

### 6. Trade unions must be involved in the planning and running of Adult Basic Education programmes

- COSATU must negotiate a national system of Adult Basic Education based on these principles
- COSATU and the unions must be involved in the development of suitable learning materials
- The unions must be involved in the selection of teachers
- The unions must be involved in the evaluation of programmes

### 7. The employers and the state must provide the resources for Adult Basic Education programmes

- The state has a duty to play an active role in ending illiteracy

The state and the employers must pay the costs of the programmes

The employers must provide facilities for classes

### 8. Adult Basic Education classes must be open to the wider community

- Unions and management should negotiate how to do this
- Regional Training Centres and state colleges should offer Adult Basic Education courses.

### 9. There must be a nationally recognised system of training and paying Adult Basic Education educators

- There must be career paths for Adult Basic Education educators so that they can advance to further education courses
- Payment of Adult Basic Education educators should be linked to agreed national scales

## What is COSATU doing?

In February the Central Committee endorsed a set of principles for effective Adult Basic Education Programmes. These principles had been discussed at several meetings called by NEDCOM to discuss literacy. Since then the principles have been discussed at several affiliate workshops. They were also discussed at the COSATU Human Resources Workshop on 2/3 May and the COSATU Economics Workshop on 22-24 May. The principles have been amended as a result of all these discussions.

Members through their trade union structures should discuss the principles. The principles will be finalised at the COSATU Congress.

COSATU needs the principles, fully supported by members, to guide its work in the field of Adult Basic Education and to guide the negotiators when they meet the employers.

# STRUCTURE OF COSATU

• **Members:** the workers who form the affiliated unions

• **Unions:** by June each industry will have one union representing the workers

## AFFILIATED INDUSTRIAL UNIONS



MINES METAL FOOD PAPER CONSTRUCTION CHEMICAL CATERING TRANSPORT DOMESTIC MUNICIPAL PUBLIC SECTOR FARM TEXTILE UNEMPLOYED



SHOP STEWARDS COUNCIL



SHOP STEWARDS COUNCIL



SHOP STEWARDS COUNCIL

• All the members of the shopsteward committees in a local meet in a shopsteward council to co-ordinate work in the local

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

• Limited power - assists the General Secretary

• Four additional members of the Central Executive Committee - no more than three members from one region and no more than two members from one affiliated union

• Meets once between meetings of the Central Executive Committee

• Cannot make policy or amend any policy decision of the federation

• President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, General Secretary, Assistant General-Secretary

## CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



• Administers the region between meetings of the Regional Congress  
• Regional Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Regional Secretary



• Manages the affairs of the Federation between meetings of the National Congress

• Meets once every three months

• Two representatives for each affiliated union with under 15 000 members (one must be a worker) and four representatives for unions over 15 000

• Chairperson of each region has speaking but no voting rights

• President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Treasurer, General Secretary of NC hold same position - no voting rights

### REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



• Two delegates from each affiliate with under 8000 members and four delegates from unions with more than 8000 members

### REGIONAL CONGRESS



• Carries out decisions of the NC and the CEC  
• Each affiliate with a branch in the region elects 5 representatives for the first 1 000 members and then one representative for every 250 members

### REGIONAL CONGRESS



• Elects a regional Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, and Regional Secretary

• Subordinate body to the CEC - decisions of the Regional Congress may be confirmed, amended or reversed by the CEC

## NATIONAL CONGRESS

• Highest controlling body of the federation  
• Meets at least once every two years  
• Adopts general and specific policy by means of resolutions  
• Elects the President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, General-Secretary and Assistant General



Secretary

• No official of the federation or its affiliates shall be eligible for the position of President, First Vice-President or Treasurer

• Each affiliate has one delegate per 500 members - workers must be in the majority of the delegation.



There are things said and unsaid.  
There are also things re-said or re-stated.  
Finishing a thesis is something indeed, and doing it ethically...,  
well is that still done?  
So there are also things said and done and that's what life,  
experience, passion, change, disappointments and defeats are made of.

(Nick Henwood, email February, 2003)

University of Cape Town