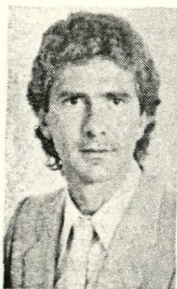


# A pedagogic justification for the inclusion of the military reality in education

By Johan Jacobs



The purpose of this article is contained in the title. The major stimulus is to respond to typically 'liberal' pronouncements made about this theme as exemplified in the article by Cohen & Swart (1987). The content of the aforesaid article is largely based on a dissertation by Gavin Evans (1983). The analysis of this highly complex and controversial feature of society is not only simplistic and superficial but also exceptionally

biased. Typically these pronouncements are based on specific political presuppositions which are not stated at the onset and draw on sources representing only one paradigm.

Consequently in the case of Cohen & Swart their concern, although appearing sincere as well as raising relevant issues and highlighting aberrations in the present education system, finally posits a false and alarmistic image. This response is not intended to be a comprehensive treatise but to respond issue for issue, in attempting to sensitize readers to the inaccuracies and misconceptions perpetrated.

It is common practice to warn against the existence of the war psychosis and the perpetuation of the military in civilian society (Cohen & Swart 1987: 17, Evans 1983: Black Sash [s.a.]). The purpose is not to deny the reflection of the military but to view it in context. The prevalence of the war psychosis is disturbing but more pertinently, it is the war which is to be deplored. In these articles much is made of the war psychosis but no in-depth analysis of the form and cause/s of the war is to be detected. Two plausible explanations for this silence may exist. Firstly, the authors are of the opinion that a war psychosis exists but fail to acknowledge the war. To deny the existence of the war would be folly, it manifests itself daily on the borders and internally, often taking the life of civilians irrespective of age, gender, religion and race. It is a war acknowledged by the SADF and the military wing of the ANC (Umkhonto we Sizwe) and PAC (Poquo) (*vide* and Seschaba edition) as well as the international audience.

Secondly, by not explicitly reflecting on the war, an absolute confidence that it and the accompany psychosis is the sole making of the pariah SA government is intimated. Neither the authors nor those of their reading list are, however, renowned experts on the political/military situation in Southern Africa and hence such implied surety with reference to the locus of causality of the current war is an indictment against the credibility of their argument. Perusal in this sphere will reveal arguments ranging from USSR expansionism to the destabilization and exploitation of Southern Africa by a belligerent racist regime. Between these polarities many variables are identified (*viz.* strategic importance, decolonialization, black nationalism, internal policies etc.). Hence many theorists opt for a theory combining exogeneous and endogeneous forces augmented by numerous complex variables (*vide* Jacobs 1985: 25-34).

The role of the military in society and education is not only forthcoming from one source as is often implied (*vide* Cohen & Swart 1987: Christie 1986: 134-168). The role of the state through such activities as national service and cadets is accepted. Scrutiny of the Security Force budget reveals that it

makes up  $\pm 25\%$  of the budget and 8% of the GNP. It might even be true that the existence and composition of the National Security Management System and the State Security Council and Joint Management Centres have paved the way for a 'quiet coup' (Davis & Laurence 1987: 1-2) and must be seen as an indication of the degree of militarization of the RSA by the current order. Consequently activities such as cadets must therefore be monitored according to pedagogic criteria.

However, such realities as the existence of the military wings of the ANC and PAC, guerilla insurrection, the End Conscription Campaign, People's Education are an indication of the militarization of society by a source diametrically opposed to the State which is seldom acknowledged. Similarly the involvement of pupils in such activities as stone throwing, arson and 'necklacing' demands stringent pedagogic scrutiny.

The role of the military through other social structures must not only be perceived as being adverse. The role of the military in such projects as conservation, health, disaster contingency as well as education must be met with accolade. The SADF has been involved in the amelioration of educational provision in the primary, secondary and tertiary fields. Their contribution to the literacy and elementary education of members of the PF and family has done much to enhance the quality of life of these individuals (SADF 1987). Mention of this does not exclude the positive role of anti-state organizations such as the ECC and Education Crisis Committee etc.

The ubiquitous manifestation of the military in society also emanates from 'neutral' sources. Contemporary music, literature and theatre are but some of the areas in which man is actively reflecting on this force of vast magnitude which implies numerous ramifications. In true free enterprise fashion it has even been identified and exploited by the commercial sector through so-called 'troopie' paraphernalia.

Given the current warfare mode (Jacobs 1985: 13-14) the existence and dimension of the military will be reflected in society. It is thus understandable that education cannot be oblivious to this force. "As a result of its close interwovenness with man's life-world, the education system is affected and influenced by forces, demands, conditions and circumstances that are present in the life-world." (van Schalkwyk 1982:15). This reflection is thus clearly seen in White and Black education systems albeit in different guises. The issue at stake for the educationist is not primarily to bemoan this reality but to ensure that the reflection of the military in education is pedagogically normative. The task of the teacher is to accompany the child to lead a meaningful life even if this life includes a protracted war situation.

The cadet movement is regarded as one of the clearest manifestations of the militarization in White Education (Evans 1983). "Official SADF-assisted cadet training began in 1976 and is now compulsory for White schools" (Black Sash [s.a.]). It must, however, be pointed out for the sake of accuracy that the present cadet system is not an invention of the present government. It is a tradition which originated in England and the local cadet system which started in the last quarter of the 19th Century is moulded on the British system

(Viljoen 1985 : 39-41). The RSA is not unique in having a cadet system. Numerous countries, (some in war situations, some not,) have strong cadet traditions, Israel and England being examples of each situation respectively. The USA has numerous military schools and academies. Most cadet systems involve members of both genders. The cadet system has been active since its early inception, in fact cadets were involved in frontier wars (Viljoen 1985:41). There has always been a link between cadets in the RSA and the defence force which is similar to the pattern adhered to in foreign countries. The current cadet dispensation was not the outcome of unilateral decisions by the defence force but is the product of numerous study committees representing officials from both the military and education sectors (Jacobs 1985:124-129). Although the present cadet system cannot be unconditionally supported on pedagogic grounds there appears to be no ground to reject pure military activities such as marching, bisley and band work as inherently non-educational. The lack of specialization (in military fields of study) in our system could be viewed as an inadequacy.

Cadets is not compulsory for individual pupils (RSA 1957) and even though it is an official component of the curriculum many schools do not have active cadet detachments for ideological and logistical reasons. (vide Smit 1979)

To imply that the reflection of the military is at the least pedagogically unjustified and the worst sinister, is insidious. It is the mandate of the school to take serious cognizance of all the features of the societal structure and guide the educand in earnest for his needs as an imminent adult. It must be stressed that when arguing for the inclusion of reality of war in the school it is not seen as playing a propedeutic role for participation in the defence force (i.e. as a socializing agent) but that the school acknowledges the reality and in the nature of educative teaching (vide van Schalkwyk 1982:72-74) prepares the child for this reality. Preparation is not synonymous with unquestioning participation and acceptance. The present cadet system, however, works on the assumption of unconditional acceptance of the status quo and is slanted in favour of pure military activities at the expense of general educational issues related to the military activity. The need for guidance in such activities is expressed by pupils themselves (Walder 1980). The reflection of war related matters in the curriculum does not have to be in contradiction to 'liberal' education nor does any reflection of patriotism/nationalism need to lead to ethnocentrism and intolerance. So much greater the challenge to facilitate divergent and creative thinking on issues such as dialogue, reform and alternative strategies within a climate of military activity.

To regard all White schools as 'fertile ground' (Cohen & Swart 1987:17) with reference to the military is showing lack of awareness of the existence and role of such variable as location, language, gender and ideology with respect to views and participation in these matters (vide Smit 1979). It can be contended that the present cadet system is not highly successful, especially in many urban English schools as manifested in low motivation and participation as well as deactivation. On a broader scale draft dodging and the activities of the ECC undermine the so-called fertile-ground theory.

The view of the role of the state in education needs examining. Evans (1983:49) does not differentiate between government and state and consequently his intention is not clear (vide Stone 1979). To imply that there should not be a connection between education and the state is ludicrous, in that there is no known education system in which the state

does not play a major role if not sole role for the provision of education. The state, due to its non-judicial function, cannot stand aloof to the content of education of future citizenry (Van Schalkwyk 1982:93-96) 124-125). In its juridical role it acts as legislator and executor of the aims of the community through education (Van Schalkwyk 1982:73-96, 122-124). Comparative educationists accept that the state may not dominate or transgress on the function of the other social structures involved in education (vide Stone 1979)

The role of the SADF in education does not necessarily have to be unconditionally rejected (vide Evans 1983). An education system is not a mono-type structure but is an interwoven system consisting of educationally qualified, educationally interested and nodal structures (Van Schalkwyk 1982:78-80, 88, 107). This premise is accepted by writers of the format of Archer and Bereday. Bertrand Russel refers to it as multi-lateral involvement, due to the differentiation level of society the school finds its purpose and function in society at large (vide Van Schalkwyk 1982:81). Based on the same principle which sanctions the involvement of non-educationally qualified structures such as the family, the church and the vocational sector; due to the reciprocal need of both school and defence structures, a sound argument can be advocated for the involvement of the defence social structure in education with reference to the military (vide Jacobs 1985:83-88). It is imperative that certain principles be adhered to to ensure the actualization of a normative education system. The interwovenness activated must be pedagogically qualified and the sovereignty in own sphere of each social structure must be respected (Van Schalkwyk 1982:112-116). To guarantee this, nodal structures are created acting as links between the various social structures. In the case of the local system the Standing Inter-departmental Cadet Committee (SIC) acts as nodal structure (Jacobs 1985:153-157). The present dispensation cannot be totally regarded as normative when evaluated against pedagogic criteria (vide Jacobs 1985:135-160). In all matters such as cadets and teacher call-up, interaction between the education and defence social structure is necessarily given certain parameters.

The recent dismissal of teachers opting to be classified as conscientious objectors, a legal act (TEN 1987:22), can only be interpreted as a decision based on military expediency rather than educational considerations and is consequently anti-normative.

The stated objectives of cadets (vide Viljoen 1985) which include two major areas namely the creation of a positive disposition towards cadets and national service as well as providing skills to ease the transition, is usually dismissed as propaganda and as an indication of the collaboration between education and defence. To dismiss the encouragement of sacrifices for a particular system as non-educational is incorrect because the transmission of values must be acknowledged as an educational pursuit. To evaluate the present system without reference to the walthangchauung of the Afrikaner would be as serious a flaw as trying to grasp the aspirations of Peoples Education without reference to Black ideology. Instilling a positive attitude towards matters national cannot be rejected yet must be approached with caution. It can only be inferred that for said authors these goals are unacceptable as they do not reflect their own personal political philosophy. The goals reflecting dialogue and reform as listed by the Black Sash (s.a.) are laudable and should be given greater recognition in our present system.

The major defence to be employed for the inclusion of the military reality is grounded on in-depth reflection of the impli-

cations the military reality holds for inhabitants of the RSA. The military experience is not contained to the military realm but has permeated every aspect of civilian life. Spheres of influence include inter alia: the physical, psychological, ideological, moral and spiritual (*vide Nel 1983, Jacobs 1985: 59-62*). Specifically for potential national servicemen and those with whom they have relationships, numerous implications can be identified. A defence force and a system of conscription is not unique to the RSA as many protagonists imply does hold certain positive formative benefits as one of the most definitive studies of the Vietnam War (Card 1983) and the two local papers by Nel (1983) and Bauer (1980) reveal. The present national service system has become so extensive (Jacobs 1985:48-59) that it holds implications for tens of thousands of White males and so by extension those with whom they have relational connections. Implications with reference to the physical, cognitive, affective, volitional, moral and spiritual aspects of man's being within this reality must be recognized. Issues such as conscription, further studies, career accommodation, new life-world induction, family relationships, sexual relationships, moral and spiritual action are but a few of the areas in which the military reality holds implications (*vide Jacobs 1985:62-72*) on which they have to make decisions and act accordingly. To deny accompanying the educand with reference to these aspects of being would be tantamount to ignoring the agogic role of the educator.

The premise is thus not that the school should serve the interest of the SADF to recruit 'cannon fodder' and thus facilitate the process of militarization but that the educator needs to inform, discuss, debate and guide educands with reference to this force of reality and the implications it holds and so lead them to adequate independent decisions in these areas.

A sensitive issue is the increasing involvement of girls in so-called military related matters. Arguments propounded by such writers as Cohen & Swart (1987), Evans (1983) and Christie (1985) are often erroneous. The involvement of girls in cadets in other countries has already been alluded to. The voluntary involvement of girls in activities such as marching; bisley and band work is as acceptable as the inclusion of choral and oratory activities in their curriculum. That the military realm does hold implications for women in the various roles they are to fulfil in a society involved in a war situation and for which they need guidance, has been stated. Regnard's view that schools encourage girls to become involved in drum majorettes to instil military discipline and support boys, bears no resemblance to reality. Girls need no luring to join drum majorette squads. They clamour to be accepted as it holds great prestige value in a society obsessed by such superficiality.

The percentage involved is low, dual activities are limited. Many institutions have superior drum majorette squads while they have inferior or no cadet squads (the University of the Witwatersrand drum majorettes are current reigning champions). Regnard's implied association between cadets and drum majorettes must be unequivocally dismissed. A more astute interpretation would be to see it as part and parcel of the body beautiful syndrome and the degradation of women to supportive and decorative beings, a situation which can rightly be condemned.

To point out a connection between guidance and the military (Cohen & Swart 1987:17) is pointing out the obvious, to imply the connection as sinister is utter paranoia. Connections between guidance and the military is a sine qua non for educative teaching. Firstly, the guidance teacher's role is by

definition accompaniment towards total adulthood of which it has been argued the military reality is an undeniable feature. Secondly, vocational guidance is a specific aspect of the guidance teacher's role. Generally, aspects such as sequence of academic studies, career choices with reference to national service, need to be considered. Specifically the SADF is a potential training and employing agent and in that light is no different from any other organization in the vocational world and has a right to be represented in career guidance. Those joining the PF make up a minute percentage. Rather than seeing this as militarization it must be seen as essential component of guidance.

Lastly, to view civil defence practices as existing to create a military environment and instil fear of the outside world (Cohen & Swart 1987:17) is most irresponsible. To deny the military reality is foolish, to deny that its physical dimension is not limited to the border and military personnel but is an integral feature of daily civilian life, is imbecilic. If the school authorities take precautionary action to ensure the safety of their property and inhabitants (as they would against natural disasters) it would be an attestation to the priority they place on the well being of the child and nothing to do with the SADF and the state per se. To deny the child this modicum of protection based on an erudite argument of militarization is inflammatory. As the military situation is an unnatural and undesirable situation for the child, so more the need to help him/her interpret and assimilate this predicament.

Militarization with reference to tertiary institutions, due to their unique nature and structure; Black education, because of the fundamentally different implications; and Veld Schools, due to the writer's limited knowledge and experience, will not be dealt with in this article.

The central line of attack is that the school, by involving itself with military matters is perpetuating violence as a sole alternative in society (Cohen & Swart 1987:17, Evans 1983). At a theoretical level the inclusion of military matters and interaction with the defence social structure must be seen as educative teaching and not militarization. The major flaw as reflected in Cohen & Swart's article and the writings of Evans and Regnard is that their point of departure is political and not pedagogic.

Education must not be seen as either the means to prepare for social change or to maintain the existing social order. When the reactionary or revolutionary becomes the sole or major aim of education (*vide Christie 1986:12-16*) the school is being used by forces beyond itself and the reservation of the child which is its ontic function is not achieved.

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