

Bantu Education Act, 1953

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Act to provide for the transfer of the administration and control of native education from the several provincial administrations to the Government of the Union, and for matters incidental thereto.

Citation	Act No. 47 of 1953
Enacted by	Parliament of South Africa
Date of Royal Assent	5 October 1953
Date commenced	1 January 1954
Date repealed	1 January 1980
Administered by	Minister of Native Affairs
Repealing legislation	
Education and Training Act, 1979	
Status: Repealed	

The **Bantu Education Act, 1953** (Act No. 47 of 1953; later renamed the **Black Education Act, 1953**) was a segregation law which legalised several aspects of the apartheid system. Its major provision was enforcing racially separated educational facilities. Even universities were made "tribal", and all but three missionary schools chose to close down when the government no longer would help support their schools. Very few authorities continued using their own finances to support education for native Africans. In 1959, this type of education was extended to "non white" universities and colleges with the Extension of University Education Act, and the internationally prestigious University College of Fort Hare was taken over by the government and degraded to being part of the Bantu education system.^[1] It is often argued that the policy of Bantu (African) education was aimed to direct black or non-white youth to the unskilled labour market, although Hendrik Verwoerd, at the time Minister of Native Affairs, claimed that the aim was to solve South Africa's "ethnic problems" by creating complementary economic and political units for different ethnic groups.

The national authorities of the time is often said to have viewed education as having a rather pivotal position in their goal of eventually separating South Africa from the Bantustans entirely. The Minister of Native Affairs at the time, Hendrik Verwoerd, stated that:

"There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?"

The introduction of Bantu Education led to a substantial increase of government funding to the learning institutions of black Africans, but it did not keep up with population increase.^[2] The law forced institutions under the direct control of the state. The National Party now had the power to employ and train teachers as they saw fit. Black teachers' salaries in 1953 were extremely low and resulted in a dramatic drop of trainee teachers. Only one third of the black teachers were qualified.

The schools reserved for the country's white children were of Western standards and the education was both mandatory and free. 30% of the black schools did not have electricity, 25% no running water and less than half had plumbing. The education for Blacks, Indians and Coloureds was not free. In the 70s, the per capita governmental spending on black education was one-tenth of the spending on white.

In 1976, the *Afrikaans Medium Decree* of 1974, which forced all black schools to use both Afrikaans and English as languages of instruction beginning with the last year of primary school, led to the Soweto Uprising in which more than 575 people died, at least 134 of them under the age of eighteen.^[3]

The act was repealed in 1979 by the Education and Training Act, 1979, which continued the system of racially-segregated education. Segregation became unconstitutional after the introduction of the Interim Constitution in 1994, and most sections of the Education and Training Act were repealed by the South African Schools Act, 1996.

References

[1] Timeline of the University: 1959 (<http://www.ufh.ac.za/timeline.html#>). Official website of University of Fort Hare. Accessed 2007-12-03.

[2] Giliomee H, 2009. *A Note on Bantu Education 1953-1970* South African Journal of Economics, March 2009.

[3] Afrikaans Medium Decree (<http://africanhistory.about.com/library/bl/blsaJune16decree.htm>)

<http://nmmu.ac.za/documents/mward/Bantu%20Education%20Act%201953.pdf>

External links

- Article on apartheid and education that mentions the Bantu Act (<http://www.socsci.kun.nl/ped/whp/histeduc/apartheid.html>) (in Dutch)
- Text of the act (<http://nmmu.ac.za/documents/mward/Bantu Education Act 1953.pdf>)

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