

## THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In South Africa, like all other capitalist societies, workers are forced to work for wages to buy things they need to survive. The land, factories, and mines etc are privately owned by the capitalists. Because the capitalists own the land, factories and mines they control the wealth that is produced. With this wealth, actual ownership of several newspapers, investment in radios and television, the capitalists can try and influence how people think. The capitalists also use their wealth to influence the state itself.

In South Africa, because of apartheid, black workers do not have any political rights. The capitalists are able to use their political rights and the wealth they control to influence how the government behaves.

Workers standing on their own are weak against their employers because the employers do not need any one particular worker. But the employers cannot do without all their workers. Machines without workers are useless. So if all workers can organise themselves to act together to act collectively as it is called then the balance of power changes.

Capitalism needs the labour of workers to survive. So organised workers can be the most powerful weapon against capitalism. But the capitalists in South Africa are very powerful. They have a good friend in the apartheid state. To challenge the power of the capitalists workers need to be well organised. But to build this strength, we need unity. We also need discipline and clear direction. The first step in making a union strong is for the union to have a very large membership. But the members cannot be sleeping members. They must understand the broader aims and objectives of the union and how the union fits into the wider struggle in South Africa. They must also have the skills and knowledge to be able to participate actively in all the activities of the union.

Democratic practices within organisations of the workers increase the strength of these organisations and make them more effective. Democratic organisations are also necessary for building democratic societies because they make it possible for the masses of the people to participate in decisions about their lives.

In capitalist societies it is the capitalists who control the wealth that is produced. Capitalists are rich and workers struggle to survive. Capitalism has also resulted in an unequal distribution of knowledge and skills.

The apartheid education system has helped to reproduce the apartheid system. In general white students are prepared in schools and universities to take up better jobs in the economy such as engineers, managers and supervisors. They are encouraged to see themselves as better than the black majority and are given the kind of education which keeps the apartheid system going.

On the other hand most black people do not complete more than 4 years schooling and are not even properly literate. Even people who have completed their Higher Primary education have not had an opportunity to develop the kind of knowledge and skills which would make it possible for them to really understand the nature of South African society, its history, and to participate actively at all levels of the struggle against apartheid.

The government has tried to control what people learn by deciding what to put into syllabuses and more importantly what to leave out. The syllabuses, exams, tests, methods of teaching and overcrowding in the schools do not encourage the development of critical, logical, analytical, and problem-solving skills. Collective learning for the benefit of the community is not practised in any of the present educational systems.

In a situation where black people do not have basic democratic rights, workers are exploited by capitalism, and the whole system in South Africa is maintained by a powerful repressive state, education on its own cannot give people control over their lives. But educational programmes that are part of the process of organising workers can strengthen these organisations by making it possible for more workers to acquire the kind of background knowledge, information and skills they need to participate actively in all the activities of the union. Education can strengthen the union because it develops the abilities, skills, understanding and collective unity of workers.

But our approach to education must be different from the approach of capitalist education. The present education system helps to prepare people for their class positions. It is part of the racist, capitalist system in South Africa. Upper class people have more and better education than working class people. The schools teach people to behave in ways that will make it easier for them to perform well in their jobs at a later stage. For example, behaving well, being on time, listening to people in positions of power, order and neatness, politeness, having good manners, paying attention etc. Most teachers behave like banks - they deposit lots of points into the students and the students are supposed to learn these points off by heart and give them back to the teacher in the same way just like depositing money into a bank and then withdrawing it later. Students are not taught how to think critically. Working class children are taught basic skills like reading and writing, but very few children from working class backgrounds have a chance to have a general academic education. The state also controls what people will learn and students only pass if their exam answers are what the teachers want.

The struggles in the schools and in the community about education show that people do not just accept this system of education. But, we in NUMSA still need to educate people against capitalist ideology because people need to understand how the ideas of the capitalists, which are put across in many different ways, have influenced what they think, how they behave, and what they hope for.

The aims of NUMSA'S education are different from capitalist education. We aim to develop the abilities, skills, understanding and collective unity of workers. By making it possible for more workers to take part actively in the struggle, we can strengthen other attempts to build a democratic workers organisation. Education can achieve these aims by helping to raise people's awareness of the structures of apartheid society and economic exploitation and the kind of organisation needed to change the present system. Education can also help develop a clearer understanding of the kind of society we want to have in South Africa in the future. Through education more workers can develop the political, general, and technical skills that are necessary to reorganise production and society in a fully democratic way.

Our education is based on the following basic principles:

**1. Good teaching respects the knowledge that people already have and uses it to teach them more.**

So the starting point of our courses must be the issues and problems of the workers' everyday lives. The critical analysis of this experience is at the centre of a socialist approach to education.

**2. Good teaching helps people to understand better. It does not instruct them in what you the teacher think they should know.**

Educators must draw on the opinions and ideas that people have about their problems and experiences but should share information that might be useful to shop shop stewards in developing their understanding of their situation. This should be done in a way that shop stewards feel that they can discuss the information critically. Shop stewards shouldn't feel that just have to accept what the educator says as being the only correct way of seeing or doing things. Educators are not above shop stewards. They are not like teachers in schools. Everybody on a seminar must co-operate and participate in the process of building new knowledge which will be useful to workers. To ensure that union seminars advance the workers' interests, the seminars are planned and run democratically. Workers in the union control their own education. They elect committees to plan and organise union education.

**3. Good teaching means helping people to learn.**

Workers need to develop the kind of skills that will increase their ability to solve problems on their own, obtain and understand information they need to solve problems and continue learning on their own. Educational courses should be based on problems which workers need and want to solve. Ways of solving the problems should be practised during the course. Workers should participate actively in the course and not just listen. Discovery learning methods, for example, discussing problems in small groups, case studies, role plays and working in groups on projects or problems, are best because they help people to learn more.

**4. Good teaching relates what is taught to ongoing organisational activities and campaigns in the union.**

To be useful education cannot be seen as something separate from organisation. Decisions about education seminars are made by the union's organisational structures. These committees decide what kind of education is needed at different points in time to promote organisational campaigns and build the strength of the union.

**5. Good teaching sees evaluation of courses as part of the learning process itself.**

Before a course starts, the educators and shop stewards should develop goals for the course together. At the end of the course there should be collective evaluation of the course.

**6. Good teaching requires planning and thought about what you are doing.**

Do you agree with these principles? As you think about these principles, think about these questions:

- What seminar have you attended that was good?
- What was good about the seminar?
- What seminar have you attended that was bad?
- What was bad about the seminar?

There are many things that help make a course good. In general courses that are well planned, help people build a knowledge that will allow them to improve and control their lives, and develop their ability to solve problems themselves. If people participate actively in a course they generally learn more. Why is this the case?

Here are some reasons:

- it helps to develop opinion forming skills
- it helps to promote conclusion forming skills
- it helps to develop confidence in people
- it encourages a problem-solving approach
- it encourages people to think about their own experiences as they learn

Can you think of other reasons?

FURTHER READING

## PLANNING

The purpose of all education work within the union movement, and in progressive organisations outside, is simply to build organisation, so that we can achieve our union's aims.

To run successful education programmes we need to organise them on the basis of the following principles:

1. All NUMSA education seminars must be planned by committees at a national, regional, local or factory level. All courses offered are part of broader organisational programmes planned by these committees. NUMSA has decided on this policy so that workers can be involved in the planning process. Workers shouldn't leave the planning to experts.
2. Educators are more directly responsible for the detailed planning and running of seminars. Educators also plan the details of the content of seminars within the guidelines decided by the appropriate union committee. However the educator shouldn't do this planning on his or own. The educator must work with a committee when planning seminars. This committee must approve any plans for a seminar. The educator must report back to the committee after seminars and is accountable to the committee for anything he or she does before, after and during a seminar. NUMSA has adopted this policy to ensure that workers control their own education.
3. The committees are responsible for developing broad guidelines for seminars and deciding on financial and organisational questions like who will attend. Educators are more directly responsible for the practical arrangements for seminars eg arranging venues.

As we have seen educators are responsible for the detailed planning of seminars. To plan seminars properly we need to think about:-

- a. Who is coming on the course
- b. Who will teach
- c. What to teach
- d. How to cover the points in the course
- e. Coordinating and running seminars
- f. What information is useful
- g. Follow-up
- h. Practical arrangements
- i. Budget

a. Who is coming on the course?

Before the course starts it is useful for educators to find out about the shop stewards who will be coming on the course. Why do you think this is important?

Here are some examples of things to find out:-

- are the shop stewards from one factory or many factories
- are the shop stewards from the same local
- the history of organisation in the workplaces that the shop stewards represent
- the general social and political situation in the region where the shop stewards come from
- what previous union courses have they attended
- How involved are they in the union's activities and structures
- how much do they know about the union
- what problems the shop stewards have been having, for example, do they have a tough management, have they got a recognition agreement, is their local weak or strong, is their organiser weak or strong, are there problems with other unions in the workplace, for example UWUSA, are there problems with other organisations in their community, for example, INKATHA
- what things the shop stewards want to discuss in the course

Can you think of other things you need to know about the shop stewards coming on the course before you start planning the course programme?

b. Who will teach?

If you are running a course with a few different educators for different sessions, everybody needs to know exactly what they are expected to teach and when and where, before the course starts. Everybody should know what other educators are going to teach so that people have a picture of the course as a whole. You need to check that all the educators know the way to the place where the seminar is being held. Do any of the educators have a transport problem? If shop stewards are any of the educators, you need to discuss issues like time off, and lost wages.



### c. What to teach

In each topic there are many issues that are important. You may not be able to cover all the issues in your course. This is because you will have limited time available.

The important question about What to Teach, is WHO should decide? In general, as our education aims to build organisation, organisational priorities should determine content.

In normal circumstances which committee in your union should decide on the content of courses? For example for local education, the local education committee in consultation with the local office bearers and the local as a whole would make all the decisions.

You can use the shop stewards' suggestions, the information you have gathered about the shop stewards who will be coming on the course, the educators' notes, other background information and your own experiences to decide on priorities for each course that you run.

### . d. How to cover the points in the course

There are many different ways of teaching. You can stand up and give a lecture and ask the shop stewards just to listen and ask questions if they don't understand. You can divide people into small groups and ask them to discuss questions, statements or problems. You can use case studies or role plays. Or you can ask people to do surveys in their workplaces etc. Ideas for different methods of teaching are included at the end of this chapter.

-There is not one right way of teaching but generally as we said earlier people learn more if they participate actively in a course. Why is this the case?

Before deciding on how to cover the points in the course think very carefully about:-

- the aims of each part of the course and the course as a whole
- the information you have gathered about the people attending the course
- the ideas for activities in the educators' notes
- the range of possible activities you can use

#### e. Co-ordinating and running seminars.

When you plan for seminars it is useful to think carefully about these issues.

- \* How you will introduce each session
- \* What exercises you will use
- \* How you will summarise the main points of each part of the seminar
- \* How much time you can allow for the different parts eg introduction, small group discussions, large group discussions, etc.
- \* When you will have breaks for lunch and tea
- \* How you will evaluate the seminar at the end eg, will you have an open discussion or will you ask the participants specific questions about each part of the course in order to get a more detailed evaluation, or will you do both etc.
- \* What arrangements if any you need to make for tea, lunch, finances etc.
- \* How you will handle discipline in the seminar eg, people not attending the seminar or the whole seminar when they are supposed to, cleaning up etc.

#### f. What information is useful?

We have included checklists of the main points you can cover in each topic.

At the end of each topic we have included a list of books and publications which you may find useful to help you prepare for the course.

Your local union office can help you obtain these and any other resources that may be useful.

#### g. Follow-up

This is the most difficult aspect of a seminar. There are different tasks that the shop stewards who attend a seminar and the educator must do.

Shop stewards must:-

- report back to the membership after a seminar. This report back must cover all the important general issues and should focus on the responsibilities of the membership

- report back to a full shop steward committee. This report back must include all the details and should focus on the responsibilities of the shop stewards.

Educators must:-

- fill in attendance registers during the seminar so that people who attend can go on more advanced courses at a later stage.
- discuss ideas for further seminars and activities with the shop stewards at the end of a seminar. These ideas should be included in the report which the educators send to the appropriate union committee.
- submit reports to the appropriate union committee after a seminar. This report must deal with the financial side of the seminar, what was covered in the seminar, and a summary of the evaluation of the seminar, and ideas for follow-up educational activities, and the numbers of people who attended and from which workplaces.

#### h. Practical arrangements

Telexing companies

The job of the educator is to ensure that telexes are sent off by the responsible person in the union. For example if there is a local seminar then the telex must be sent off by the local administrator. If managements request information about the seminars we should try to avoid giving them information on the basis of the principle that union education is independent of management. But if management takes a hard line on this or if we are obliged to give them the information in terms of a recognition agreement, then we should try to say as little as possible and we should use management language. For example we can say that the basic shop stewards training seminar covers labour relations.

Participant schedule

When you have a large number of participants to a seminar, and you have to telex each one, it can become quite difficult to keep a track of all of them. Here is an example of a recording sheet to help you.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Telex No.</u>	<u>Mgt. name</u>	<u>Telex sent</u>	<u>Reply</u>	<u>Paid</u>
-------------	----------------	------------------	------------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------

Time planning

Most managements require two weeks written notice for time off for shop stewards. Given that this is so, how many weeks in advance should planning begin?

## Lost wages

NUMSA has a policy on campaigning for paid leave for union education seminars. Shop stewards should be encouraged to demand this in their workplaces. Before seminars start the educators should find out if any shop stewards will be attending the seminar in terms of training agreements negotiated with management. Educators need to check whether the union will be paying lost wages or not if management doesn't pay. The issue of lost wages must be discussed with all shop stewards who will be attending a seminar before a seminar in order to avoid any misunderstandings when the course starts.

## Transport

This item needs considerable care and planning. It affects the starting time and finishing time of a seminar. It affects who can participate and who cannot. It can also be extremely expensive and needs to be carefully budgetted.

## Booking of a venue

Most venues for seminars are heavily booked. Even one day seminars can be difficult to accomodate. It is therefore advisable to book as far in advance as is possible. Weekend seminars often need to be planned several months in advance. To make the task easier, prepare a list of ALL seminar sites, with telephone numbers for easy reference.

## Preparing hand-outs

All material that will be needed in the seminar has to be prepared in good time. Arrangements for photocopying need to allow for the possibility of the usual machine breaking down at the last minute! Other hand-outs include such things as pens, paper, and reading material.

### i. Budget

How much money is available for a seminar influences many decisions. Can you afford a residential seminar? What about transport - should the seminar be in a union office where workers will be expected to transport themselves or can you afford a residential seminar site where you will have to add the cost of transport? Workers in some regions have developed a cheap form of holding seminars - siyalalas or overnight seminars in union offices.

These questions raise the issue of who decides the answers. In general it is the responsibility of the educator to draw up a budget which must be submitted to the appropriate union committee. All expenditure on seminars must be approved before the seminars are run. After seminars educators must account financially to the appropriate committee in terms of the budgets which they submitted.

Checklist of preparations and planning that needs to be done for a seminar:

**Things to do**

**Things to think about**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Coordinator must confirm venue by telephone a few days in advance  | 1. Who is coming on the course           |
| 2. Coordinator must contact educators by phone and meet them to discuss the programme and material.   | 2. Who will teach                        |
| 3. Contact decision making structures for names of participants.  | 3. What to teach                         |
| 4. Telex management for time-off for participants.  | 4. How to cover the points in the course |
| 5. Arrange transport for participants   | 5. Coordinating and running seminars     |
| 6. Buy stationery:- pens, paper, newsprint, tape to stick up newsprint, markers to write on newsprint/white board/black board; stapler + staples; puncher; files if needed. | 6. What information is useful            |
| 7. Resources: get resources from service organisations or arrange for them to come and sell books at seminar.   | 7. Follow-up                             |
| 8. Organise TV, video, and cassettes; overhead projector if needed, plus transparencies.  | 8. Practical arrangements                |
| 9. Check with educators what material they need (charts etc), and what material they want to put into files.  | 9. Budget                                |
| 10. Confirm:   - participants<br>- educators (transport as well)<br>- venue<br>- transport  |  |
| 11. Check venue - for chairs, black-boards, accomodation etc.   |  |

by pl

## TEACHING RESOURCES

All the activities in this section are for the educators to do.

Activity	Introducing a seminar
aim	To discuss ideas for introducing seminars
task	<p>You have to introduce a basic shop stewards seminar. We have included a list of questions to give you ideas for planning an introduction.</p> <p>(After allowing time for people to think about these questions, ask a few shop stewards to share their ideas with everybody. Use these ideas to develop possible frameworks for introducing seminars.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How would you introduce the seminar</li><li>2. What points would you raise about the<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- content of the seminar</li><li>- running of the seminar</li><li>- teaching methods you will use</li><li>- evaluation of the seminar</li></ul></li><li>3. How would you explain the structure of the whole seminar</li><li>4. Are there points you think you should raise about union policy</li><li>5. How would you find out if the participants have any questions about the seminar, or want to make any changes</li><li>6. What other points do you need to discuss before the seminar starts</li></ol>

## Activity

## Follow-up

aim

to discuss practical ways to follow up shop stewards after a seminar

task

Can you think of successful practical ways to follow up on shop stewards after a seminar, to ensure that they have reported back to others and that they have learned what you set out to teach in the seminar?

Can you think of ways of meeting shop stewards to discuss any work place activities that form part of the basic shop steward training seminar.

Discuss these questions in the large group.

Activity

Educational items on an agenda.

aim

to exchange ideas on how to make  
the most of educational items on  
agendas

task

You have been given 30 minutes to  
speak on the Labour Relations *may day*  
Act at your local meeting.

How would you go about planning  
your talk. How will you  
structure the talk?

In a large group discuss the ideas  
that people have.



Activity	planning a 4 hour session of a seminar
aim	to give people practice in planning a session of a seminar.
task	<p>You are preparing a programme for a course on the role of shop stewards. our aim is to encourage people to think about the various duties of shop stewards. Imagine the course is taking place in Natal and that more of the shop stewards come from newly organised large factories. You have 4 hours for the session on the duties of shop stewards. They have already done a session on "What is a union?"</p> <p>Think about:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What points you consider are important to cover?</li> <li>2. How would you cover the points. Look at the methods summary in the resources section.</li> <li>3. If the shop stewards come from the Eastern Cape, what points do you consider are important to cover?</li> <li>4. If the shop stewards come from garages, what points do you consider are important to cover?</li> </ol>

## Planning a 3 day seminar

task

### TASK

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Morning

Afternoon

Day 1

---

---

Day 2		
Day 3		
Departure		