

SACBC STATEMENT ON THE CLOSURE OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (24/6/91)

It was with dismay that the Catholic Institute of education and the SACBC noted the announcement by Minister Piet Clase on Monday, 10 June, that 5 white Colleges of Education would be closed. There are several principles, which increase our concern:

1. The closure was announced as being in accordance with one of the recommendations in the educational Renewal Strategy – a document released a few days earlier. However, since it was also made equally clear that this document was ‘by no means the final word on the matter’, that it was a discussion document released for comment and response by other interested stakeholders, a decision using this document for its justification raises serious doubt about what is meant by ‘discussion’.
- 1.1 The closure of colleges of education on the grounds that there is an ‘oversupply of teachers’ points to the racial framework within which decisions are being made by those in authority, despite the recent appeal of major Apartheid legislation.

A few months ago it was officially stated that there were over 400 empty places at white colleges and that about 78 000 potential students had been turned away from Black Colleges. Yet the announcement to close five of these colleges has been made only weeks after granting governing councils power to admit black students.

One would expect that the training of teachers would be national priority in the following context:

- 82% of Black people are under the age of 35.
- 60% of Black people are at school going age.
- It is estimated that approximately 6 million people between the ages of 6 and 16 are not at school.
- The national averages of pupil teacher ratios are 50:1 in the Department of Education and Training and 19:1 for schools in the House of Assembly.
- It is estimated that only 30% of teachers in DET schools are qualified.

- 1.2 Perhaps another actor pointing to the racial framework in which decisions are being made is that it is government policy that empty white institutions remain within the House of Assembly to be used for other education needs as a priority. Should they not be needed for any other educational purpose, they can be sold at market value to other Departments of Education. The policy has not been changed despite the government’s commitment to a single education department.