

Unmasking the realization of quality education in South Africa: Eminent lessons from China

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Abstract

The attainment of quality education improves the quality of lives of the citizens. Moreover, it enables citizens to exercise other constitutional rights that nature their livelihood. This to note, the right to education as encapsulated in section 29 of the 1996 Constitution remain fundamental and worth protection. Against this backdrop, realizing quality education in South Africa remains a perennial discomfort to the educational sector. This calls for the adoption of valuable lessons from other jurisdiction in an attempt to fulfilled and realize this fundamental right. This view is buttressed by section 39 of the 1996 Constitution which promotes the reflection of international law as well as foreign law by the judiciary, tribunal or forum when construing any right in the Bill of Rights. This section provides the courts with the opportunity to consider international and foreign laws and apply it as and when a need arises and where appropriate. It provides that “when interpreting the Bill of Rights, a court, tribunal or forum must consider international law and may consider foreign law” (Constitution, 1996). Hence the necessity to draw lessons from other countries to realize quality education in South Africa.

Keywords: China, quality education, realization, lessons, South Africa

Introduction and rationale

The paper employed the legal comparative method to find resolutions in particular to explore possible and the most feasible means to achieve effective realization of the right to quality education. In this paper, the development of legal rules is examined which includes the interaction between laws and proposed solutions to existing laws based on the comparative and extensive review of relevant literature, laws, statutes, and national and international instruments. China was used as comparator country and valuable lessons from these country are drawn and applied to improve and strengthen South African laws and educational

approaches. The reasons for using this country are that it has the best practices for providing and delivering quality education to its learners which lessons are introduced from the elementary educational level. These practices include equity in allocation of educational resources, provision of free transportation for learners to and from their schools and fee-free education.

Moreover, China applauds itself for being a country that trains its youth relevant aptitudes that serve national interest. For instance, in China each year university admissions for various disciplines are allocated in proportion to what skills the country requires most at that point in time. For example, if China needs more engineers then there will be more university admissions for engineering than other disciplines. These countries have laws, policies and legislation such as the Basic Education Act, the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1986) as amended, aimed at driving quality education.

Though the challenge may relate to uprooting an educational system from one country to another (Samuel, 2013), South Africa can draw valuable lessons and immensely benefit from international (Goodman and Jinks, 2013) comparative experiences (Legrand, 1977). In addition, this paper accentuates the benefits of taking initiatives to improve educational institutions and their practices thus where necessary follow precedents from other countries. It is for this reason that this study uses international developments as a point of reference in relation to the South African educational system. Beneath, the paper single out and discusses China as a comparator country and uses it as a point of reference for it is known to be having the best educational system.

The South African educational system

A child's school life duration and attendance in South Africa

In South Africa, schooling is compulsory for children aged seven to fifteen years or attendance in grade one to grade nine, whichever happens first and it is a parent's responsibility to make certain that the child they are in charge of attends elementary education until the said child completes that education (SASA, 1996: sec 3 (1)). However, according to the Department of Basic Education, the full duration of a child's school life and attendance is thirteen years or from grade zero also known as the reception year or grade R to grade twelve which is also commonly known as matric (DBE, 2018). The South African elementary education consists of the following phases: the foundation phase, which incorporates the reception year to grade three, intermediate phase which incorporates grades four to six, senior phase which

incorporates grades seven to nine, then further education and training (FET), which incorporates grades ten to twelve or matric (DBE, 2018).

This paper emphasizes that to realize quality education throughout the duration and attendance of basic education, learners should not be limited to learning only the normal elementary literacy, numeracy and other simple life skills necessary for doing menial work such as reading and writing including some arithmetic skill. Learners also need to be exposed to vocational education with practical training which provides them with skills, occupational competencies and the necessary attributes to be employable and create self-employment owing to the United Nations (UN) definition of the phrase “elementary education”. This prepares learners for the world of work from the inception of their educational life and adequately equips them with the necessary skills and competencies required for the labour market. The focus is on quality and standard of the provided education as opposed to the access since that would have already been realised (Sefoka, 2021).

The South African education under democracy

After the 1994 transition to democracy, a transformation of systems such as the social welfare and educational system took place in South Africa (Ferguson, 2007). The central objective of this transition was to eliminate all forms of racial segregation, promulgate good policies and programmes, and deliver quality social services to all South Africans (Schneider, 2003). In the educational arena, the key objectives of educational policies and programmes were to redress the past imbalances such as educational segregation between Blacks and Whites perpetrated by apartheid and colonialism, to develop and promote equity and provide quality education (Constitution, 1996: sec 29 (2) (c)). An interim Constitution guided the transition to democracy which led to the promulgation of the final Constitution. The final Constitution ensured that everyone in South Africa had equal protection inclusive of legal benefits and equality before the law (Constitution, sec9 (1) & (2)). It is therefore imperative to outline the laws, policies, programmes and approaches adopted by the first constitutionally elected government regarding the provision of education in South Africa.

In perpetuation of the objectives of the autonomous government, some appreciation in promoting the right to education were adopted from the pre-democratic government policies and committee documents such as the Freedom Charter and the National Education Co-

ordinating Committee (NECC) because of their relevance (Sefoka, 2021). These instruments highlighted the significance of having a fee-free, compulsory and quality equal education in South Africa. The instruments were relevant as they promoted the provision of equal, free and compulsory education in line with the 1996 Constitution. Therefore, relevant to this paper, it is important to pinpoint what these instruments provide in relation to the Constitution.

In 1955, the Freedom Charter recognized the right of access to elementary education (Freedom Charter, 1955). The African National Congress (ANC)'s Freedom Charter (adopted from the Congress of the People) stipulates that "the doors of learning shall be opened to all. The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace. Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children" (Freedom Charter, 1955). In 1989, the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) adopted a declaration pronouncing that "education is a basic human right. Schooling should be free and compulsory for all children" (NECC, 1989). The ANC Freedom Charter and the NECC declaration advocated for the provision of free and compulsory education for all children wherein financial incapacity should not hinder learners to achieve their educational wishes and aspiration. They also advocated for an equal education for everyone regardless of race, colour or background. This type of all-inclusive education not only instils confidence in learners, but also equips them with the relevant skills which make them more competent and productive in their respective chosen fields of work.

The 1996 Constitution also espoused the right to education. It affords everyone the right to elementary education which includes adult elementary education. It also affords everyone the right to further education, makes it necessary for the state to make further education accessible and available. In pursuance of the provision of the right to elementary education and where feasible, the Constitution affords every person the right to receive basic education in their language of choice in public schools. In ensuring actual access, execution and fulfilment of this right, the state is obligated to consider all other educational possibilities including one standard educational institution. In doing so, the state must consider fairness, feasibility and the need to redress the past inequalities caused by the apartheid segregative laws and practices (Constitution, 1996: sec 29 (1) (a) and (b); (2) (a), (b) and (c)).

Despite the right to education for all as enshrined in the democratic Constitution of 1996, the government is still struggling to deliver adequately quality education to all which renders the

right unrealized (South African Human Rights Commission, 1998-1999: chap 3 pag 79 par 1). This is because, the existing laws and policies such as, the Skills Development Act, Further Education and Training Act, the Continuing Education and Training Act, the Green Paper on Further Education and Training of 1998, and the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2012, aimed at accelerating the delivery and providing quality education are being poorly implemented. The implementation of these laws has been proven to be very poor and needs to be strengthened for the right to be realized to enable learners and graduates to acquire relevant and competitive skills thus become employable, able to work with minimal supervision or no supervision at all, become entrepreneurs and employers of labour themselves. Poor implementation of these laws and policies derives from the absence of a forum or body tasked with the responsibility of enforcing these laws. However, a review of the bodies within the South African education system reveals that there are several bodies responsible for enforcing these laws. These include: (1) the Department of Basic Education (DBE); (2) the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET); (3) Quality Councils (created by amendments): Umalusi; (4) SETAs, etc. Therefore, it is imperative to establish an independent body tasked with the responsibility to ensure that all the educational laws and policies are enforced and that the body regularly reports to the government on compliance and progress. This will contribute to a reduction of unskilled labour, increase the numbers and improve the quality of skilled workers required by industries and other sectors thereby contributing to the overall development and growth of the economy (Sefoka, 2021).

In 1995, the Department of Education introduced a blueprint policy called the White Paper on Education and Training which provides guidelines on how the South African educational system must be organised and delivered to all the people of South Africa (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995). The White Paper provides that:

Education and training remains the fundamental human right. The state is compelled to develop and to safeguard these rights in order to afford each person a chance to advance their abilities and to have a positive impact into the society without discrimination on the basis of age, gender, class or race (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: Chap 4 pag 21 par 1). It further affords parents and caregivers an absolute right to choose the best education for their children or those they are responsible for, particularly those of school going age. Parents and caregivers are accountable for their children's education and the education of those they are responsible for and they have the right to be consulted by the state regarding educational issues including the form that the educational system

should take and its governance (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: Chap 4 pag 21 par 3).

The then Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu remarked on the preamble of the policy that “it is indispensable for South Africa to form an educational system that the people shall recognise as it serves their interest and desires. Such an educational system must be fair and impartial, diversified, respect teaching and learning and do its utmost best to achieve academic excellence. The people it serves must care for it and as such own it. Finally, that all the resources attached to the provision of this educational system be used as effectively as possible” (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: pag 3 par 11).

This means as a country, there is a need to have education and training of high quality and standard which equips every learner with the requisite knowledge and skills at an earliest stage without any form of discrimination. This paper emphasizes the significance of prioritising education and training and posits that a national forum be established to foster effective enforcement of laws and policies aimed at reconstruction and development of education and training. This study asserts that quality education be identified, realized and used as a value added principle to drive the national policies responsible for reconstruction and development of education and training.

In 1996, the Constitution explicitly guaranteed the right to education and mandated the state to provide basic essential services such as building classrooms, electrifying schools, provide clean running water and stationery to realize the right to education (Constitution, 1996: sec 29). This notwithstanding, the reality is that inadequate supply of educational infrastructure and other educational resources has been a major impediment to the enjoyment and realization of the right to quality education as enshrined in the 1996 Constitution.

China

The People's Republic of China (hereinafter China) is a country situated in East Asia. It is the world's highest populated republic with a residents of about 1.408 billion as of 2024. As of 2024, China's population was equated to 17.39 per cent of the total world population (Worldometer, 2020). Covering almost 9.6 billion square kilometers, it is one of the world's largest countries in terms of area (Worldometer, 2020).

China has twenty-three provinces, five independent regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang) and four direct-controlled municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Tianjin). China was declared a republic in 1949 and from that time, it has been a single-party state with dominantly organized political and fiscal arrangements and resources for manufacturing, owned and run by the state (Education system China, 2010).

An overview of China's educational system

Like any other country, China's educational system consist of basic and higher education. In China basic education comprises of a three year pre-school education, six years primary education, three year lower secondary (also referred to as junior high school) and three year upper secondary (also referred to as senior high school) education (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006). At upper secondary education level, there is a progressively large sector of vocational-technical education which comprises of about fifty per cent of the total learner intakes at upper secondary level. Moreover, the higher education consists of two to three years of college mostly comprising of education of vocational-technical nature, four-year university or college offering bachelors' degrees and some other forms of higher education and training. Post-graduate programs include master's degrees which take two to three years and doctoral degree programs which take three years (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006). There is a single Ministry of Education (MOE) under the State Council as the central educational authority responsible for overall planning and policy-making in the educational sector. Management of elementary education largely dispersed to provincial or municipal and county governments and or stakeholders. Higher education is controlled and overseen at the national, provincial or municipal levels (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006).

China's compulsory education persists for nine years. This consists of primary school attendance for at least six years at times preceded by a few years of preschool. Preschool education is not compulsory and therefore most of the preschools are under private ownership. However, the state is taking a more active role by encouraging the enrolment of children into preschool before taking them to primary school. Same as in South Africa, compulsory education in China comprises six years of primary school and three years of lower or junior high school (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006). After completion of the compulsory education, learners proceed to senior secondary or high school normally provided for by three different types of schools namely, general senior school, specialized (also referred to as technical) and vocational (also referred to as professional) schools.

Specialized and vocational schools offer subject or work specific education and training. Graduates from these schools normally acquire occupation-specific skills required to enter the labour market. However, it is also possible for a graduate from a specialized school to take the national university entrance examination and go into a vocational university although it is rare in practice (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006). Higher education is provided for by institutions of higher learning including universities and colleges (general, technical and vocational) and entry into these institutions is highly competitive. The right to grant bachelors' degrees is bestowed on the individual universities. However, this right is also being granted to specialized institutions such as medical and agricultural schools including educators' training schools. These universities and some of the specialized institutions also have the right to grant Masters' and Doctoral degrees. The colleges mostly provide non-university, post-secondary education and the graduates receive diploma qualifications (Nanzhao and Muju, 2006).

Education in China remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China. The Ministry of Education is the stakeholder of the State Council whose duty is to oversee educational matters across the country (Education in China: A snapshot, 2016). State Council is the main managerial authority in China headed by the Premier. The Council is responsible for executing the policies, regulations including the laws implemented by the National People's Congress (Education in China: A snapshot, 2016). At the country or the national level, there are bureaus responsible for education whereas at the provincial level, there are departments, or commissions of education responsible for educational matters. The departments or commissions of education or the universities under the Ministry's management implement educational guidelines and policies designed by the Ministry of Education locally.

At times, local educational authorities and departments of education formulate policies and documents corresponding with the national policies but comprising of the local regulations and strategies for specific implementation. This means that as local government implements policies it can add more practical adjustments and guidelines. As a result, the policies and documents designed by the central or the national government aim to set general goals rather than dictate specific approaches. Thus, when these plans and approaches reach schools and or educational institutions they already include practical guidelines (Education in China: A snapshot, 2016).

The right and the promotion of quality education in China

Good quality education has always been highly cherished in China. According to Huimin and Xiang the Chinese people believe that quality education ensures not only future development of individuals but also promotes the Chinese including the country's prosperity (Huimin and Xiang, 2016). The Chinese government values the acquisition or attainment of quality education. It believes that quality education forms the foundation of national development and modernization. Like South Africa, China has numerous educational laws and regulations. These educational laws and regulations represent the most effective operative ways of navigating and monitoring applications throughout a large and complex (educational) system (Education in China: A snapshot, 2016).

Thus, the Chinese government uses educational laws and policies to promote and care for the right to have access to education including educational institutions and to guarantee the realization of education of high quality and standard. These laws and regulations often drafted by the Ministry of Education are then submitted to the National People's Congress for final approval. Once the laws are approved, the State Council promulgates or passes them and the National People's Congress validates the local policies, regulations and application strategies at the respective levels (Education in China: A snapshot, 2016). Some of the important educational laws, and their ostensible contributions are discussed hereunder:

Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1986) as amended (CEL)

For example, the law on compulsory education enacted in 1986 was a breakthrough law for China. According to this law, "every school-age child with the Chinese nationality have the right to receive compulsory education and their parents have the responsibility to enroll their children in schools and to ensure that those children attend and complete nine years of compulsory education". Article 4 of the Compulsory Education Law of 1986 provides that "the State, the community, schools and more importantly families shall in accordance with the law safeguard the right to compulsory education of school-age children" (Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1986: Art 4). This law was formulated in accord with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the actual conditions persisting in China for the purpose of upholding rudimentary education and building of a collective society that is culturally, ideologically and materially developed.

Moreover, the Act provides that "in relation to the provision of compulsory education, the state policies and regulations supporting quality elementary education must be implemented to

improve the quality of instruction and to enable every school-age child to achieve all-round development morally, intellectually and physically so as to lay a robust foundation for improving the qualities of the entire nation and for cultivating a well-educated and self-disciplined builders of socialism with high ideals and moral integrity” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986: Art 3). This law provides further that “all school-going age children shall attend and complete the compulsory education at no cost and in support of general school attendance by the poor learners the state shall establish a financial aid system” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986: Art 11). This means that there shall be no tuition fees for all learners receiving compulsory education.

This law was also formulated with the purpose of guaranteeing and enforcing the application of compulsory education policy and augmenting the quality of the Chinese nation (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986: Art 1). This law provided among others that “the state council and the local people’s governments at the county level and above shall reasonably allocate the educational resources, improve the conditions of weak schools, take measures to ensure implementation of the compulsory educational policies and guarantee that school-age children from families with financial difficulties receive compulsory education” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986: Art 6). This law depicts that “in this country there should be a body which supervises compliance with educational laws and regulations in the educational work teaching quality and development which body shall issue supervisory reports to the general public” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 1986: Art 8).

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (1982) as amended in 2004

The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China provides that “the state develops educational facilities of various types in order to wipe out illiteracy and provide scientific, technical and professional education for workers, peasants, state functionaries and other working people” (Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1982: Art 19). It also encourages people to become educated and acquire relevant skills through self-study. This Constitution provides that “it is the state’s obligation to provide necessary vocational training to citizens before they are employed” (Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1982: Art 42).

China’s success story through Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The Chinese TVET, an all-inclusive educational system introduced by the government aimed to meet the needs of Chinese citizens at different levels. To meet China's industrialization drive challenges, the state frequently takes legislative initiatives and measures to restructure China's TVET system. For example, the Vocational Education Law of 1996 provides the structure for the application and enforcement of vocational education and training systems. Through this educational law, China ensured a strong collaboration between vocational institutions and the society, enterprises and villages and the country to become market-oriented through approaches such as learning and practice, learning while working and putting more emphasis on practical and vocational competencies and skills rather than theoretical learning (Skills Development in India, 2015).

Article 3 of the Vocational Education Law of 1996 provides that "vocational education constitutes an important component of the nation's educational undertakings as well as an important avenue for promoting economic and social development and employment". It further provides that "the State undertakes the development of vocational education, promotes its reform so as to improve its quality and institute and perfect the system of vocational education that suits the needs of the socialist market economy and the need of social progress" (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 3).

China's vocational education informed by the country's skills development model turned into a highly successful story and improved rapidly. In China, fifty-nine per cent of the people entering the labour market are skilled and from that percentage, thirty nine per cent hold vocational trained skills. The skills development model in China, empowered the transformation of many of China's secondary schools into skills-training institutions and effectively encouraged internships and placements for the vocationally trained persons (Skills Development in India, 2015). The vocational education system in China consist of education in vocational schools and vocational training. Education in vocational schools is more theory based, and administered by the Ministry of Education with a nominal emphasis on vocational training. Likewise, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) administers vocational training concentrating on post-school, pre-employment and on-the-job practical training as well as training and re-training for those out of school or out of work (Skills Development in India, 2015).

Salient features of China's vocational education

China has school-education as well as vocational training offering hands-on training to learners. Legislation such as the 1996 Vocational Education Law guarantees and emphasizes active industry involvement in vocational education and training. Article 5 of the Vocational Education Law provides that “citizens shall have the right to receive vocational education according to law” (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 5). As per the policy directive, every student ought to spend at least one year on occupation or workplace training during the upper secondary programme. Consequently, this makes industry participation a significant and integrated characteristic of the entire TVET system. It is also important to emphasize that in China the government is not the only body responsible to provide vocational education.

Enterprises also actively participate in the provision of vocational education by designing curriculums, training educators, the provision of equipment training in schools and educational institutions and placement of learners for internships and so on. This is stated in Article 6 which provides that “people’s governments at various levels shall incorporate the development of vocational education into their plans for national economic and social development”. It further provides that trade organizations, enterprises and institution shall in accordance with law fulfill their obligations to provide vocational education (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 6). In addition, commerce also gives numerous fiscal inducements to encourage active industry involvement in vocational training for example, the allocation of land at subsidized prices and first and preferential treatment in cases of the awarding of government projects (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 6).

Moreover, the vocational education institutions and their skill development programmes in China are decentralized, run by the local government and village collectives. The local authorities are given a platform to decide on a portion of the curriculums in accord with local needs. For instance, the curricula of vocational schools and related institutions are designed such that one-third includes general academic skills defined nationally by the Ministry of Education, another third are nationally defined content associated with the particular occupation and the remaining third are determined locally at the school level with the help of local enterprises (Skills Development in India, 2015). Article 11 provides that “the administrative departments for education, labour and other relevant departments under the State Council shall within their respective functions and responsibilities defined by the State Council be responsible for the different aspects of vocational education” (Vocational Education

Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 11). It further provides that “local people’s governments at or above the county level shall strengthen leadership, overall coordination, supervision, guidance and assessment of vocational education in areas under their jurisdiction” (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 11).

Regarding the funding and financing mechanisms, the 1996 Vocational Education Law requires that “twenty per cent of the annual education budget should be allocated to vocational education and training”. Article 26 provides that “the State encourage efforts to raise funds in accordance with the law and through multiple avenues for developing vocational education” (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 26). Financing the provision of vocational education is not the sole responsibility of the state but also of enterprises and other private institutions through donations. This means all stakeholders and institutions join hands for the successful provision of quality vocational education. The State encourages enterprises, institutions, non-governmental organizations, other public organizations and individuals to donate towards aiding vocational education and also encourages organizations and individuals abroad to fund or donate towards vocational education (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 35).

In addition, all enterprises are required to utilize 1.5 per cent of their payroll for in-house training and failure to do so requires that an equivalent amount be donated to the State for vocational education and adult training. Likewise, the standard and quality of vocational education in China is not compromised. To ensure that vocational education in China is of good quality and high standard, the government invests huge in providing quality infrastructural amenities for vocational education and training. Moreover, China has strong arrangements to ensure that educators in vocational institutions remain abreast of the requirements of modern industry. By so doing, educators in vocational institutions must spend at least one month in the respective industry each year or at least two months every two years (Skills Development in India, 2015).

Lessons to be learned from China

This paper posits that following the promulgation of the above laws, it is without a shadow of uncertainty that such initiative by China proved to be a significant breakthrough for China’s educational system. For example, the Compulsory Education Law of 1986 in accord with the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China warrants all Chinese nationals of school-age

the right to compulsory elementary education. Of importance is that this law advocates for government and most significantly the community, schools themselves and the families to ensure all children attain compulsory elementary education (Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1986).

The paper postulates that the situation is different in South Africa because in terms of the South African Schools Act (SASA), parents and or guardians hold the responsibility for children to enroll, attend and complete compulsory education (SASA, 1996: sec 3 (1)). Like in China, it ought to be the responsibility of government, communities and everyone responsible for the smooth running of the school or the educational system to ensure that children of school-age attend and complete their compulsory education. Consequently, this study submits that South Africa must adopt this approach based on its success in China. The approach continues to be an accomplishment in China because the responsibility of ensuring attendance and completion of compulsory education is an activity that requires cooperation between the state and all the stakeholders responsible for the protection of education.

Similar to South Africa and in relation to this law, China lets off parents from the responsibilities of paying school fees. This law posits that in support of the provision of general school attendance, the state provides financial assistance to the needy and marginalized whereas compulsory education shall be provided at no cost (Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1986: Art 11). In South Africa, section 39 of the SASA accentuates this assertion by providing that a school fees may only be determined and paid at a public school provided there is a resolution to that effect (SASA, 1996: sec 39(1)). This means that compulsory elementary education must be provided for at no cost.

Similarly, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China of 1982 promotes eradication of illiteracy through the development of educational institutions and facilities such as institutions providing technical and or vocational education (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1982: Art 19). The Constitution prioritizes equipping the entire labour force including farm workers, state employees, and other working personnel with specialized education skills pertinent to their fields. The Constitution does not only prioritize equipping the working force with professional education, but emboldens them to engage in lifetime learning to attain the necessary expertise relevant to their respective occupations (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 1982: Art 42). South Africa must also emulate China in this regard and strive to empower every work force by employing sustainable workers development programs.

To meet its economic development drive and challenges, China reformed its TVET system by adopting statutory initiatives. For instance, promulgating the Vocational Education Law of 1996 as an initiative to bring the vocational education and training close together. This Act advocates for the prioritization of active industry participation, practical and vocational competencies as opposed to theoretical teaching and learning while epitomizing a sustainable collaboration between vocational institutions and enterprises whereas on the other side implementing approaches like learning while working (Skills Development in India, 2015). The Act affords every citizen the right to vocational education in accordance with the applicable laws and policies (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 5). Decisively and as per the policies, every learner must devote at least a period of twelve months on workplaces related to their fields of study for workplace training during their upper secondary schooling.

Of importance is that enterprises actively participate in the provision of vocational education. This is substantiated by the provisions of Article 6 of the Vocational Education Law of 1996 which stipulate that enterprises and trade organizations provide vocational education as a measure of fulfilling their responsibilities (Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1996: Art 6). This means that it is not the sole responsibility of the state to provide vocational education. It is worth noting that South Africa must adopt and implement this approach in as far as the provision of vocational education is concerned. This paper is of the contention that the South African government embolden trade organizations particularly private enterprises to provide vocational education to learners in or around their area of operation. Besides, South Africa can also learn and adopt the practice of ensuring that while taking part in secondary education every learner spends at least a year in workplace training relevant to their studies in order to acquire the necessary competencies.

Furthermore, China teaches its youth skills that serve the national interest. This means that in China, each year admissions allocations into universities are done in accordance with the quantity and quality skills the country demands most at any given point and time. For example, if the country needs a specific discipline, then there will be a substantial increase in the number of enrolments in that discipline compared to other disciplines. Moreover, after the standard national exams at the end of secondary school, students who scores the required grades for admission into universities have more options to study what they aspire as their first preference in universities (Kangai, 2018). Whilst those who only just managed to get the university admission but did not excel may not be able to get into desired study programmes although

given the option of other programmes to select from. Learners who fail to get the university admission score required ordinarily enroll in vocational skills training colleges which teaches them skills relevant to what the country need to ensure placement or employment on completion (Kangai, 2018).

The paper submits that it is important for South Africa to learn and adopt the educational system of China by first establishing the disciplines and skills required before enrolling learners into institutions of higher learning such as universities. This means that like China, South Africa must determine the country's skills requirement before enrolling learners every year. This will circumvent unemployment difficulties upon completion of learners' respective studies and as a result alleviate poverty. Moreover, learners who did not manage to get admission into universities but registered in vocational skills training institutions must choose relevant skills that the country requires to elevate their employment opportunities.

Conclusion

Following the above analysis, the findings of this paper clearly demonstrate that China has a fundamentally well-developed educational system worth embracing. Pursuant to that, China has laws and policies that drive its education programmes to fruition. This country is celebrated for some of its best educational systems and practices as it relates to the provision and delivery of quality education to its citizens. Thusly, this paper concludes that South Africa ought to adopt the educational approaches employed in this country and emulate them to yield better educational outcomes.

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