**WJ Boshoff VF Plus**

Today we debate the delivery of post-school education and training by the South African state. My contribution will be in English, as I want to engage with the honourable minister in a sincere discussion.

The dominant view of the state is in a certain sense totalitarian. The state claims all political expression for itself and recognise only the individual and itself as legitimate political entities. The role of parties and political movements is to facilitate this relation, not to question it. Whether in its liberal or socialist guise, this is the state’s assertion.

Politocracy has been put forward as an alternative to the totalitarian state. It explains the state as a symphony of politically meaningful units, some smaller, some bigger, some distinct, some overlapping, sometimes competing, but always complementing each other.

The centralising state claims education as its terrain, always encroaching on other role players. It has the advantage of the state budget in doing so. The state claims to care, but too much care becomes smothering.

Over the centuries universities were intellectual communities, often funded by the state, but mostly critical of it. Own sources of income guaranteed a degree of independence, as did the loyal community of students, lecturers, bursary holders, alumni, who all celebrated the unique character of a specific institution. Universities as such, but also individual universities, acquired political meaning of their own.

The centralising state prefers something else. In South Africa the first step was to amalgamate universities, so that no specific institutional culture remains. Then campuses are spread over hundreds of kilometres. Then it is insisted that the staff of each campus should reflect the whole country’s demography.

Then new universities can be created, like those mentioned by the honourable minister today, over which the state exerts its dominance from the very start. All this aim to establish the state and its premises, as politically neutral. These institutions are not designed to question the *status quo*, but to entrench it. Training takes place according to the dictates of the state and economy.

Technical colleges typically have less of a loyal community around it, than universities. Therefore, amalgamation and geographical spread is sufficient to stop a politically significant community from forming around such institutions. Currently, even an ordinary school with its School Governing Body constitutes a community of some political significance, but a TVET college is not a community, it is a set of classes and workshops.

Yet, these depoliticised institutions do not work. Or when it does, it is despite the state’s sterilisation process – not as a result thereof. Universities like Pretoria, where I studied, may reflect little of the institution I used to know, but its colours still move me. The caring, smothering state has not yet absorbed the momentum.

That is why institutions like Sol-Tech and Akademia can do what the department would find impossible with the same budget. It is the expression of communities rallying around “their” places of learning, which are also places of training, and also places of education, ultimately places of meaning to a whole community whether they have direct links to it, or not.

The alternative is an unsustainable student grant scheme, universities in and out of administration, students who burn the facilities, TVET colleges which just never seem to get it right, in short, a huge, clumsy edifice where real education, training and meaning is more like a by-product than the actual thing. But at least, it serves the state.

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