

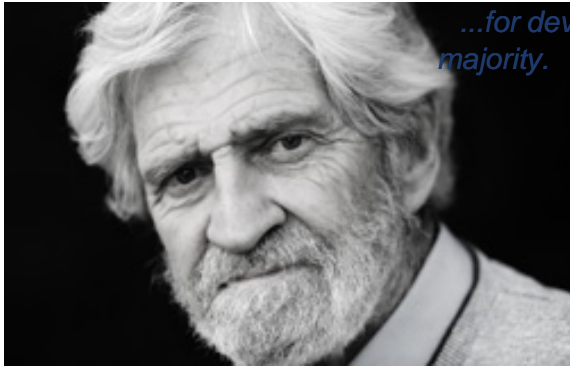


# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

Patrick van Rensburg (South Africa)

(1981)



*...for developing replicable educational models for the third world majority.*

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Patrick van Rensburg resigned his post as South African Vice-Consul in the Belgian Congo in 1957, in protest against the apartheid policies of the South African government. He subsequently joined the Liberal Party of South Africa and became closely involved - during a private trip to Britain - with the campaign to boycott South African goods, which preceded the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Returning to South Africa his passport was confiscated and after the Sharpeville shootings he was forced to flee the country.

After a brief spell in Britain, where he wrote and published *Guilty Land*, van Rensburg took up residence in Bechuanaland, now Botswana, of which he became a citizen in 1973. There he founded the Swaneng Hill School, and, following its success, two other schools in association with the Botswana government, as well as the Swaneng Consumers Cooperative and the Brigades Movement. His experience with the schools and Brigades through the 1970s led to his establishment of the Foundation for Education with Production (FEP) in 1980.

Van Rensburg's education approach was radically different from usual practice. The school was seen as a centre of development and thereby of better learning. The curriculum included practical subjects like agriculture, building, carpentry, metalwork, technical drawing and typing. New academic subject matter was introduced in Development Studies, and all students were encouraged to apply the knowledge and skills they were acquiring in socially useful productive work. In an effort to bring schools within the reach of ordinary people, costs were lowered by the Brigades, which were self-help education and training organisations producing goods and services both for themselves and for public sale to help finance teaching and training.

In building on these early experiences, FEP sought to create a new blend of theory and practice in education, to be spread internationally. The Foundation devised and held workshops on various aspects of the concept and practice of education with production. It organised conferences - mainly in Southern Africa but also as far afield as the Caribbean - that involved Ministries of Education, liberation movements, non-governmental organisations, teachers' institutions and the 'world of work'. FEP publishes a journal and occasional papers and has engaged in and promoted research.

The Foundation now concentrates on (a) identifying appropriate production and socially useful activities to link to education, and (b) identifying a related body of curriculum content and aims, in such subjects as Cultural Studies, Development Studies, Environmental and Social Studies, Language in Use, Applied Mathematics and Applied Science and Technology. Arrangements to examine these subjects have been concluded with reputable certification institutions, while FEP has also published textbooks and trained teachers in the subjects offered.

In the mid-1980s, van Rensburg revived a newspaper and turned it into what has become today a successful and widely read national weekly, Mmegi (The Reporter). Since 1990, he has been able to return to South Africa, where he has been active in propagating the concept and practice of education with production in several forms. All these activities are rooted in FEP's core perception of its approach to education, training and production as a cornerstone of community development.

### Quotation

*The more we can involve the ordinary people, who themselves then understand the processes and are able to continue with them, the greater chance we have of making sure that we create alternatives which will feed people, which will clothe people, which will house people, which will ensure their good health. All these strands of development in which they are involved are essentially the educational process.*

Patrick van Rensburg

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