The consequences of manipulating Freedom of Choice

Compiled by Tony Stone/Photo: Six Sigma



The South African Constitution (Bill of Rights, Chapter 2) guarantees Freedom of Choice through several key provisions, including freedom of trade/occupation (Section 22), political choices (Section 19), and freedom of expression, belief, and opinion (Section 15, 16). These rights enable citizens to make voluntary decisions regarding their livelihood, beliefs, and personal lives, provided they do not infringe on the rights of others.

Your Freedom of Choice grants you, as a citizen, the right to freely make political choices, including forming political parties, campaigning, and voting in secret. As to you, as an individual, every citizen has the right to choose their trade, occupation, or profession freely but the constitution does not guarantee your employment in the vocation of your choice. Again, on the personal level, you are free to follow your of conscience, chosen religion, thoughts, beliefs and to express your opinions. And, in pursuing your freedoms, you are free to associate with any individual or group, speak your mother tongue and adopt whatever culture you regard as a good fit for you personally.

However, these freedoms are balanced by the limitations clause (Section 36), which allows rights to be restricted only if the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society. An example of this is the Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003.

However, it is a well-known fact that the law frequently lends itself to interpretation because legal language is inherently susceptible to multiple meanings, a phenomenon known as ambiguity. While legislation aims for precision, it often employs wording that is vague, broad, or structurally unclear, necessitating judicial intervention to determine its application.

The African National Congress (ANC) knows this only too well. It has been accused by legal scholars, political analysts, and the judiciary of circumventing or undermining the South African Constitution through several specific mechanisms, one of which is to use legal interpretation and the ambiguity of wording to promulgate laws outside of the SA Constitution.

This is abuse. The vast majority of citizens are ignorant of law. In other words, they do not understand the formal, technical jargon used by lawyers and in legal documents (contracts, wills, leases) that is notoriously difficult for non-lawyers to understand. The ANC, in taking advantage of this fact, and given the quality of the education in South Africa and the consequent failure of citizens to understand the language and its implications is abuse of power.

However, Freedom of Choice does not insulate you against the consequences of your choice. A fundamental principle of personal responsibility that while individuals, acting on their own or as a member of an organisation, have autonomy over their decisions, they are bound by the outcomes.

Every decision made, whether conscious or unconscious, carries a "contract" with a consequence, often described as a "cause-and-effect" relationship. Once a choice is made and acted upon, it often "chooses" the subsequent outcome, which cannot be escaped or, in many cases, undone. Consequences are often seen as natural feedback from reality, rather than a punishment, providing valuable lessons for growth. True freedom is defined as taking ownership of one's choices and their outcomes, rather than having no consequences at all. This means being guided by a set of values, integrity and ethics.

Freedom without responsibility leads to anarchy, as our actions inevitably affect others. Embracing responsibility for consequences helps break the "victim mindset," enabling individuals to take control and learn from mistakes. While individuals have the freedom to make poor decisions, they must bear the resulting consequences, which may involve legal, physical, or social repercussions.

Whether the African National Congress (ANC) takes responsibility or accountability is a subject of intense debate in South African politics, with arguments existing on both sides. Critics frequently argue that the party lacks accountability, particularly regarding corruption and service delivery, while supporters and party officials blame apartheid, and White people.

The average South African, unfortunately lacks independent and analytical thinking. Research suggests that while independent thinking is a valued, sometimes underdeveloped, skill, its prevalence is heavily influenced by systemic factors, particularly the education system, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms.

South Africa's public education system is plagued by extreme inequality, poor infrastructure, and low learner performance, often described as a "two-tier" system. Despite high budget allocation, challenges include overcrowded classrooms, a high dropout rate, and inadequate teacher training in underprivileged schools, with roughly 80% of Grade 4 learners unable to read for meaning.

Socio-demographic characteristics - South Africa

	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	Year on year change	Year on year change
	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand	Percent
Highest level of education of the unemployed	**8 228**	**8 367**	**8 007**	**7 836**	**-155**	**-1,9**
No schooling	56	52	66	52	-13	-19,9
Less than primary completed	321	298	282	280	-25	-8,3
Primary completed	234	234	240	202	-40	-16,5
Secondary not completed	3 381	3 493	3 292	3 195	-217	-6,4
Secondary completed	3 313	3 385	3 294	3 274	71	2,2
Tertiary	856	844	766	769	73	10,4
Other	68	61	68	63	-4	-5,7

***Please note:** The above data excludes the unemployed "Discouraged Workseekers" (of which there are 3,466 million as at Oct-Dec 2025. This gives a total of 11,302 million unemployed.*

Highest level of education of the employed	**16 787**	**16 807**	**17 055**	**17 099**	**21**	**0,1**
No schooling	169	153	154	169	-21	-10,9
Less than primary completed	651	603	635	586	-76	-11,5
Primary completed	466	432	436	443	-48	-9,8
Secondary not completed	4 979	5 087	5 134	5 000	-188	-3,6
Secondary completed	6 167	6 230	6 381	6 439	159	2,5
Tertiary	4 046	4 016	4 007	4 190	195	4,9
Other	310	287	309	272	1	0,4

Data source: Statistics SA

Approximately 40% of South African learners who start Grade 1 drop out before completing matric. While dropout rates are low in primary school, they increase sharply after age 15, with studies indicating nearly 29.3% of 18-year-olds and 46.3% of 19-year-olds are out of school. Major drivers include poverty, poor academic performance, and school failure. Data from as early as 2002 to 2025 indicate a high dropout rate. On average, 450,000 kids drop out every year. That translates over the last 23 years to 4,73 million kids dropping out of school.

Add to this the 30% pass mark and, while a learner can be held back (retained) to repeat a grade if they do not meet the academic requirements, policy stipulates that the learner can only be retained once per phase (e.g., Foundation, Intermediate) to prevent them from spending too long in one phase.

Research also shows that South African classrooms frequently struggle with overcrowding, overburdened curricula, and a lack of resources, which tend to encourage rote learning (parrot fashion) over meaningful learning or conceptual learning and critical analysis.

This reflects in the workforce skills gap where employers often report that while workers possess technical skills, there is a shortage of critical thinking, complex problem-solving, and analytical skills. South Africa ranks relatively low in global skills readiness - 64th position, which places it in a lower position compared to some regional counterparts.

Some scholars argue that cultural norms such as “ubuntu,” emphasizing deference to authority, can inhibit questioning and critical inquiry in classrooms, creating a "compliance-oriented" rather than "inquiry-oriented" learning environment. This is often exploited by the ANC, EFF and MKP with leaders spewing out anti-white political rhetoric rather than truth and nation building. Critics argue it can be used to shame individuals, organisations or obscure systemic issues such as black-on-white racism. Results from international assessments like PIRLS have highlighted deficiencies in reading literacy and reasoning among South African learners, particularly in the areas of critical comprehension.

Within this context it is understandable that the vast majority of South Africans don’t understand legalese or appreciate its implications. They are or will become the victims of the consequences their leaders have imposed on them through their ill-considered choices.

The Law of Cause and Effect is inevitable, as painful as it will be for all. it’s just a matter of time.

--ooo--