

The principal in the eye of the political storm : perceptions of school violence in the rural areas of KwaZulu with specific reference to Ndwedwe.

By

MELUSI DOMINIC ZWANE

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
1. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 The State and African Education	11
1.2 African Education under the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KZDEC)	15
1.3 Focusing on the Ndwedwe Circuit in respect of the political context	17
1.4 The political structure and the school	20
1.5 Theorising the structure - agency relationship	28
2. RESEARCH DESIGN	31
2.1 The statement of the problem	31
2.2 Research objectives	31
2.3 Methodology of investigation	32
2.3.1 The unit of analysis	32
2.3.2 Sampling procedure	32
2.3.3 The limitations of the study	34
3. RESEARCH FINDINGS	35
3.1 Questions and responses	35

3.2	Additional informal interviews	
4.	CONCLUSION	44
4.1	Principals' perceptions of the school unrest	44
4.2	Recommendations	48
5.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

ABSTRACT

Though the political unrest in African schools has been broadly viewed as arising from the power struggle between the state and the liberation forces, in rural areas the question of violence should also be looked into in the context of the emergence of conflicting views between Inkatha and the African National Congress (ANC). Political contradictions have emerged for various reasons. One of the reasons has been the desire to preserve the traditional political system, the tribal authority system. The liberation forces view the present forms of traditional political structures as parts of apartheid political organs, in that, since the introduction of the Bantu Authority system in the early 1950s and later on the formation of homeland governments in the early 1970s, they have been performing the functions assigned to them by the state. However, despite the reality that traditional political structures are functional to the state, they, at the same time, remain the authentic and legitimate political organs representing the aspirations of a significant fraction of rural communities. What needs to be taken seriously into consideration in analysing the rural political situation is the fact that the apartheid policy was ingeniously designed and predicated upon a tradition which was still held in esteem when it was subordinated by the colonising nations. This tradition was then enshrined in the apartheid programme, or, put differently, apartheid was camouflaged by it. Therefore

it is a simplistic view to over emphasise the functional role of the traditional political system. The desire to preserve the present form of political system could be attributed either to the success of the policy of separate development or the fear for the annihilation of traditional structures in the new political dispensation or both. This study looks at the political dynamics and how it has precipitated violent confrontation among the oppressed people. It focuses on how schools in rural areas of KwaZulu have been affected. Principals were asked to express their views on their perceptions of violence. The conclusion drawn from respondents is that pupils are defiant because parents and teachers have been unable to fight for the rights of their children. For example they have been unable to provide them with adequate education. The author ends by recommending that parents and teachers should take up their rightful places in society. That is they should take upon themselves the responsibility of providing adequate education for the children.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa
DET	Department of Education and Training
DFR	Durban Functional Region
KZDEC	KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture
KZLA	KwaZulu Legislative Assembly
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NATU	Natal African Teachers' Union
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PTC	Primary Teachers' Certificate
PTD	Primary Teachers' Diploma
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
UDF	United Democratic Front

1. INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented pupils' protest that occurred in rural areas of KwaZulu between 1989 and 1990 and the subsequent violence that ensued, placed principals in the centre of political conflict. Although the resultant conflict was between the supporters of Inkatha (the KwaZulu state political party) and the African National Congress (ANC), the pupils' uprising was fundamentally an integral part of the national mass action directed against apartheid in general. The mass action campaign was organized by anti-apartheid organisations. Prominent among these were the African National Congress, represented by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). It has been the standing policy of the ANC and the other leftist organisations to refrain from participating in government structures as a way of refusing its recognition. The ANC has also regarded homeland governments as part of the state machinery in so far as they carry out programmes perceived by the ANC as oppressive. For example, it has been claimed that the state has used the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KZDEC) to provide tribal education in KwaZulu.

On the other hand, Inkatha regards itself as a black liberation movement in that it is also opposed to apartheid. However, Inkatha is opposed to a revolutionary action as an appropriate strategy for change, hence its rejection of mass

protests. On the contrary it holds the position that black liberation could be realized if the liberation forces participated in state initiated programmes. It argues that the policy of participation would afford the liberation movements the opportunity to advance their political course.

Government initiated programmes have been based on the notorious policy of separate development. These programmes include the homeland government system and the more recent Black Local Authority system. On the one hand, the substance and viability of the participatory position needs to be judged against the success it was able to make in advancing the course for liberation. On the other hand the mass action option needs to be judged against its impact on education.

In pursuit of the policy of liberation through participation, Inkatha has used resources provided by the state through the Department of Education and Culture (KZDEC) to build political support for Zulu nationalism (Booth, 1988, p.74) (perhaps instead of advancing the frontiers of national liberation from the apartheid domination in accordance with the non-participation option). Booth seems to suggest that Inkatha has developed an interest which is different from that of other political organisations. Therefore as a result of political and strategical differences between Inkatha and the ANC, the conflict has tended to centre around hegemonic issues. That is, each party wanted to have access to and control over certain public institutions such as schools where

party ideology could be disseminated. Consequently, schools became terrains where the struggle for political control was contested. However, the contestation was already biased in favour of Inkatha, the ruling party. Therefore in order for the ANC to be in a position to entrench its hegemony in schools, it first of all had to endeavour to overcome and offset, as far as possible, the common understanding of the political relations between the state and the KwaZulu government. The overcoming of common sense would entail the use of political reorientation programmes which could be implemented through the schools.

On the question of viewing education as an important tool for promoting political ideology, the ANC holds the view that "in a process of liberation education should be used by the liberation forces to serve the cause of the liberation" (E.C.L.S.A., 1988, p.96). The question that flows naturally from such thinking is how education as an important tool of the ruling government can be made an instrument of liberation. The second question that the liberation forces would have to grapple with is the proper understanding of the nature of the state. Obviously, the South African state does not only comprise the White parliament and its bureaucratic structures, but it also comprises the extended administrative structures such as homeland governments and the Black Local Authority organs. Having said that, it is equally significant to note that homeland governments are not only state apparatuses, they are also authentic and legitimate political institutions,

at least in the eyes of traditionally oriented rural communities, in that they were predicated upon traditional political structures, the tribal authorities.

The next section looks at the political formations on a broader national scale with the view to locating and identifying the root causes of school unrest. It looks at political relations between the state and its subsidiary structures such as homeland governments vis-a-vis the revolutionary forces, and how these relationships have influenced the white government's policy on African education.

1.1 The State and African Education

In the introductory section it was pointed out that the conflict between Inkatha and the ANC was caused by the fight over the control of schools as political ideological centres. It was observed that Inkatha had been placed in an advantageous position by its co-operative approach in dealing with the state. The state as represented by the Nationalist Party government has an interest in the maintenance of white domination. Its monopoly over African Education was one of the measures it adopted to achieve and sustain domination. In 1953, Dr Verwoerd expressed this desire clearly when he said that, "When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them." (Christie, P., 1988, p.12) African education was subsequently taken away from the

control of missionary institutions. In 1953 the Bantu Education Act was introduced. The results of the effective implementation of the Act and the resultant low education standards have ever since been a matter of immense concern amongst blacks. Among other issues that generated concern was the substantial reduction of government per capita expenditure in African education. In the year 1953-1954 the government spent R17-00 on the education of an African child but spent R40-00 and R128-00 on "Coloured", Indian and White children respectively. During the 1982-1983 period, the government's per capita spending was as follows: R146-00 for an African child, R711-00 for an Indian and R1 211-00 for a White child (Blignaut (ed.) 1981 and SAIRR survey, as cited by Perold, H. and Butler, D., 1988, p.96)

The uneven subsidisation of education meant that Africans could not have easy access to tertiary and technological levels of education because they could not afford the expenses involved. Therefore they were virtually prevented from acquiring skills that would enable them to compete fairly well with other race groups for high income job opportunities. Therefore the acquisition of high quality education and the corresponding access to lucrative jobs remained the privilege of the Whites and to a lesser extent of Indians and "Coloureds." As a result of the preferential treatment of Whites in terms of monopoly over economic and political power, Whites were able to dominate other race groups. The Whites' monopoly over economic resources is "the essential purpose for

which the system of apartheid exists". (Mzala, 1988, p.94)
This domination set the scene for the African struggle for liberation.

Notwithstanding the state repression through education, African resistance to the racist education system dates back further than the 1954 uprisings when teachers and students lodged protests against Bantu Education (Perold, H. and Butler, D. 1988) The dissatisfaction with Bantu Education culminated in the Soweto uprisings on June 16, 1976 when Soweto students took to the streets to protest against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction on a fifty-fifty basis with English. Keenan has attributed the 1976 upsurge in resistance to the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) (Cobbett W. and Cohen R. (eds), 1988). It should, however, be pointed out that the issue of Afrikaans was only the final straw. The state's violent reaction to the protesters ignited the already tense political and economic situation.

Subsequent protests organised by political parties spread to other parts of the country, including those parts which had not been affected by the Afrikaans issue. Political parties such as the ANC and its allies had exploited the destabilised school situation to recruit students who fled the country. It also embarked on a programme of political reorientation of student recruits. The use of pupils in politics was made possible by the fact that they were also affected by the exploitative political relations as reflected in apartheid education.

The political opposition led by the ANC sought to create, as a matter of strategy, antagonistic relations between the government and the oppressed people. The ANC embarked on a revolutionary strategy which aimed at making the country ungovernable. Mass action or put differently, civil disobedience, a revolutionary strategy, was adopted. People serving in government structures were called upon to defy authority. That measure led to the creation of a legitimacy crisis.

The state, endeavouring to avoid losing credibility and legitimacy locally and abroad with regard to the manner in which it had handled its opposition, embarked on a programme of reform. The reform package included the empowerment of Africans to manage their own affairs. That is, the government decentralized some of its functions and put them under the management of Black Local Authorities and homeland governments. Through black empowerment the government sought to create a cushion between itself and the revolutionary masses. The local authorities were to serve as a cushion that would absorb and face people's dissatisfaction. For instance, Dr Gerrit Viljoen, the then Minister of Education who masterminded the state reform policy, was reported to have remarked: "African education should be controlled by an African Minister so that the Department of Education and Training is no longer seen as a White department" (Friedman S. 1988, p.46). Probably the envisaged inclusion of African

individuals in the department was aimed only at increasing the acceptability of the department by Africans for in practice the authorities would take final decisions "to prevent people from becoming alienated from the system" (Ibid.) Since that move was, in essence, not aimed at eliminating educational disparities, individuals who were serving in the discredited department to implement oppressive programmes on behalf of the government were bound to face the wrath of the affected people. The next section discusses the extent to which homeland governments with specific reference to KwaZulu, benefited from the 'empowerment' and from its relationship with the Zulu Monarch, and how it handled students' uprisings.

1.2 African Education under the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KZDEC)

Long before the advent of the 1976 students' protests, the introduction of the Bantu Authority system had already "empowered" tribal chiefs to administer and provide social services to their respective populations. The current homeland government system was subsequently founded upon the notion of empowerment for self-determination. However, it appears as if the decentralization of services by the government was accelerated after the 1976 events. For instance the Transkei received independence on October 26, 1976. It was followed by Bophuthatswana on 6 December, 1977. KwaZulu was raised to self-governing status in February 1977. Education was transferred from the Department of Education and Training to

the KZDEC in the same year. The political significance of the transfer was that it afforded the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and Inkatha, in particular, the opportunity to instill in the school children its "participative philosophy of liberation" (Booth D. 1988, p. 74). Booth also notes that the KZDEC's control over education has provided "a perfect vehicle by which Inkatha could manipulate Zulu culture to build political support" (Ibid). The significance of the implied politicisation of the school milieu by Inkatha was that it enabled it to harness Zulu traditional sentiments. Due to the absence of the urban-styled political activism in rural areas, which is characterised by strikes and mass protests, it could be inferred that the political thinking of the majority of the people was in the main still being influenced by traditional ideals, such as that liberation from white domination was to be realised through the political activities of the traditional political formations. The KwaZulu government which was founded upon this tradition had come to represent the living reality of that ideal. Therefore Inkatha's ethnic approach to liberation differed from the ANC's holistic approach, as it were (holistic in the sense that it drew its membership from all population groups). Inkatha was then able to secure more support in KwaZulu than elsewhere. The ability of Inkatha to secure support is mainly derived from intrinsic relationships it has established with the traditional political structures, the tribal authorities and the Zulu Monarch.

Today Inkatha has a good working relationship with the Zulu Monarch. This relationship had improved markedly from what it used to be in the early '70's (Mzala, 1988). The Monarch has made public pronouncements endorsing Inkatha's political stand and has made appeals to the Zulu nation to respect the leadership of the KZLA, particularly that of the Chief Minister and the president of Inkatha. Inkatha has benefited from the royal patronage in that it has taken advantage of the traditional loyalty of the rural masses. Secondly, out of 119 members of KZLA, 65 are tribal chiefs (Booth D. 1988, p. 75). Amakhosi are 'ipso facto' Inkatha chairmen in their respective political areas. It could also be inferred (from Inkatha's relationship with the KZLA) that invariably Inkatha members occupy high positions in the civil service. Hence Inkatha is the only provider of basic services and privileges to the rural population. For instance, it has been alleged that the Department of Works, which is responsible for the maintenance of roads, suspended this service to areas in which ANC support predominates. The allocation of land is administered by amakhosi, some of whom are members of parliament. Therefore rural schools which are situated within the jurisdiction of tribal authorities are virtually controlled by Inkatha.

1.3 Focusing on the Ndwedwe Circuit in Respect of the Political Context

In spite of Ndwedwe's close proximity to the Durban Functional Region (DFR), rural characteristics are evident. 18 tribal

chiefs (amakhosi) are settled there with their communities. (Sunday Tribune, October 14, 1990, p. 20.) The roads are of gravel and are in very bad condition. As a result some schools are inaccessible by road transport, particularly during the rainy seasons. Ndwedwe is one of 25 circuits under KDEC. There are 140 schools in the circuit, 33 of which are secondary schools. Up until the outbreak of violence at the beginning of 1990, Ndwedwe had been a relatively peaceful area when compared with the neighbouring KwaMashu circuit for example. In the recent past, it had served as a place of refuge for students and teachers who had been forced to flee their strife-torn areas.

There is a lack of basic school infrastructure. There are insufficient schools to accommodate the rapidly increasing school population. The increase is caused mainly by the influx of families from rural areas to the periphery of the city of Durban (for example many pupils come from Inanda informal settlements). The children of these families do not get accommodation in their new settlement areas. While their parents travel to town in search of employment, the children travel to rural areas in search of school accommodation. The increase in the school population in the circuit is further aggravated by the flow of fugitive pupils from areas where violence had become endemic. The call for all youth of school-going age to go back to school almost choked up the already over-utilised school facilities.

The stifling of the education process as a result of political strategies by other political groups was treated with contempt by Inkatha and the entire KwaZulu government. Inkatha was opposed to pupils' protests on the ground that the pupils were destabilizing the "orderly and peaceful" rural communities. The destabilisation was an act which was perhaps unjustifiable given the fact that the ANC had never attempted to mobilise political support there. Therefore the use of coercion was unacceptable. The disruption in schools was linked to the ANC's strategy of ungovernability. The uprising came at a time when Inkatha's predominance was taken for granted. Hence the support by parents' of pupils' demands for a free education and the upgrading of educational facilities. Women ululated in solidarity with the toyi-toying youth who were marching from school to school instructing principals not to collect school fees. The parents' support cannot however be interpreted simplistically as a backlash against Inkatha's political position. Parents did not view the protest as something directed towards either Inkatha or the KwaZulu government, but towards the white government whose overriding desire to dominate Africans had engendered the apartheid system of education. Inkatha has always maintained a public image of being a liberation movement against the apartheid government and this is the perspective people hold of Inkatha. Before commenting on how the revolutionary forces led by the ANC made inroads into rural areas of KwaZulu it is significant to first look at the KwaZulu political formation and its relationship with school authority structures. This is done

with the view to establish the link between politics and education, and how that link determined the trend of violence.

1.4 The Political Structure and the School.

The school's public image should reflect the aspirations of the community it serves. However a school usually reflects the aspirations of the controlling authority. The tribal authority, the school committee, the circuit inspector and the principal represent this authority. Secondly, the relationship amongst these authority structures represent the unity of politics and education. A Tribal Authority is headed by the tribal chief (inkosi) who is a member of the KZLA and branch chairman of Inkatha. Although the tribal authority is not directly involved in the day to day school matters, it is, however, responsible for the allocation of land on which new schools are to be erected. As a controlling political authority in the area with a direct link to the homeland government through the chief, it forms part of the state apparatus. The chief also represents the authority of Inkatha. It could be taken for granted that a tribal authority is a legitimate traditional authority representing tribal sentiments. In that regard it pays allegiance to the Zulu King, the symbolic unity of the nation.

The members of the school committee are elected by school parents to a three year term of office. The committee does not only represent the educational and political interests of

parents but those of the entire community as well. Although it does not have administrative and professional expertise to supervise learning activities, it wields a lot of power. On the advice of the principal, it takes final decisions on all serious matters that affect the school. For instance it has authority to expel pupils found guilty of serious offenses, such as the carrying of dangerous weapons, like knives. It also can make recommendations to the department through the local circuit office for the expulsion or transfer of a teacher or principal found guilty of misconduct. It also decides on the amount of school fees to be paid annually. Usually some of the members of a school committee are also members of the tribal authority. For that reason political decisions taken at cabinet level are able to filter down to the school through the school committee and principal to teachers and pupils.

The school principal as a government employee is accountable to the Department of Education and Culture through the circuit inspector. He is expected to carry out instructions given by the department without questioning their substance and perhaps relevance to the school. However, the principal is the nerve centre of the school communication network. He wields immense power in terms of determining the parameters within which the school policy is derived. In the final analysis the school is the microcosm reflective of the principal's world view, which may or may not have been influenced by the immediate social environment, depending on the level of his consciousness about

the social dynamics on a local and national or international scale. In this position he may reinterpret, moderate and sometimes ignore any idea which he deems not to serve the interest of the community he wants to create. As the most important executive official of the department, he is an 'ex officio' executive member of Inkatha as well.

Having presented an elaborate account of the relationship between politics and education, it could be inferred that, to a large extent, the former determines the latter. I shall now turn to the question of the politics of revolution vis-a-vis the politics of conformity as epitomized by conflict between the comrades (militant youth) and Inkatha.

Notwithstanding the supposed predominance of Inkatha in rural areas, the pupils' protests were received with mixed feelings by the community. On the one hand the pupils' political activities seemed to be the spill-over of violence that had become endemic in the neighbouring townships of KwaMashu and Ntuzuma. As such protests were rightly understood in the context of the current national revolution against apartheid. In fact since the 1976 Soweto riots there has never been effective stability in African schools countrywide.

It has been pointed out that the teaching of Inkatha ideology in schools had created a political situation in which political activities of other political groups were unacceptable. The question arises: why did those elderly

members of the community who had initially seemed to have supported pupils' protest became sceptical and disappointed about pupils' activities? The answer to this question could be sought in the ANC's conceptualization of the South African state and the subsequent choice of the agent of revolution.

The ANC in exile was fully conscious of the fact that the thinking of the majority of adult Africans had over the years been immensely influenced by apartheid hegemony. People had come to accept their life situations as given. That is, they accepted their domination by the white South Africans as a natural condition. Even those who were conscious of the negative effect of apartheid ideology on the thinking of Africans, could themselves do very little to help the situation for the state had an efficient mechanism of suppressing its opponents. The acceptance of the given situation by rural communities had been made even more possible by Inkatha's (the only liberation movement until then) acceptance of the status quo - the unconditional participation in the state created structure, the KZLA.

As a result of the awareness of the subtle oppression, the ANC embarked on a programme of political orientation of the oppressed masses. Through the awareness programme it sought to stimulate an awareness of the exploitative nature of their taken-for-granted political condition. There was also an awareness of the fact that the white government, through the policy of black empowerment to manage their own affairs, had

succeeded in harnessing African ideological and political institutions such as schools and tribal authorities to implement apartheid policies. Thus there were those amongst the oppressed who were thought of as collaborating with the system. The collaborators were identified as those who had been put in the positions of authority by the system. Therefore the struggle for liberation was to be waged on two levels: at a national level against the state and on a local level against certain individual members of community and community based government institutions. In a school situation teachers, particularly principals, were perceived as collaborators. It was believed that the pupils were oppressed because teachers cooperated with the state to implement syllabi and curricula designed for domination. The pupils were subsequently thought of as appropriate agents of revolution in education.

The ANC has given the following reason for the choice of its agents of change:

It is easier to orientate a student than his teacher who may have already acquired in his personality traits, attitudes and styles reflective of our colonized land (E.C.L.S.A., 1981, p.97).

Political orientation was later on extended to teachers with the exclusion of principals. The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) which is partly responsible for the politicisation of teachers has also tended to influence teachers against principals. It has told teachers that

instead of approaching the principal who then contacts the circuit office, a teacher who does not receive a (salary) cheque or has any other grievance will have to lodge his complaint with the representative of the teachers (WIP Nov./Dec. No.70/71, 1990, p.35).

The implication of the politicisation of pupils and teachers was that both came to view principals only as representatives of the system. As a consequence, pressure for change was brought to bear on the principals. For instance, principals were expected to submit a memorandum of pupils' demands to the Department. In other areas like the KwaMashu circuit teachers held meetings in which pupils' demands were discussed and articulated, and memoranda of demands were drawn up for transmission to the Secretary for Education and Culture at Ulundi via the office of the circuit inspector.

Notwithstanding the legitimacy of the demands, Inkatha's interpretation of events was different. As far as it was concerned, these revolutionary activities were simply aimed at overthrowing Inkatha in its own constituency. It was therefore in the interest of Inkatha to stave off the revolution. In fact since the 1976 students' uprising the history of Inkatha has shown that Inkatha's reaction to students' revolutionary activities has been uncompromising.

Inkatha's reaction to pupils' violent approach included the creation of liaison committees in areas it had declared unrest

areas. These included "the electoral divisions of Mpumalanga, Umlazi, Ntuzuma and Vulindlela" (Dhlomo O. 1989, p. 1). By the beginning of 1990 the unrest had spread to Ndwedwe. As a result a liaison committee was also established there. In terms of the departmental circular each circuit committee was to be formed by the following KwaZulu government officials: a local member of the Legislative Assembly, a branch chairman of Inkatha (in rural areas this position is held by the local tribal chief), the local magistrate, the station commander (KwaZulu Police), the circuit inspector and principals of affected schools. The document also warned teachers against joining teachers' unions other than the Natal Teachers Union (NATU) ("Other Unions" probably refers to SADTU). The inclusion of principals in the liaison committees of Inkatha put them in a situation where they were seen by the militant pupils as collaborators.

In the ensuing conflict between the comrades and Inkatha, principals, school committee members and amakhosi were harnessed. School authority structures were undermined by defiant pupils who imposed their will upon schools rendering them less effective in their performance of their duties. School committees became unable to carry out their duties. For example they could no longer authorize the collection of school fees by principals. The non-payment of school fees led to the resignation of unqualified teachers who were paid out of school funds. The inadequate number of qualified teachers had to cope with large class numbers. Class numbers had been

augmented by the mass school attendance called by the back-to-school campaigners. In some schools many committee members resigned out of fear for their lives. In regard to the fate of tribal authority members, Chief Siziba Zama of Wosiyana was reported to have complained that the comrades:

push the chief inside and start giving orders to people. They were trying to make different laws demanding an end to school committees and that privately paid teachers go. This did not appear good to us. Most of our people don't know anything about politics, but you cannot compare the community schools, which we build ourselves with the municipality schools (Sunday Tribune, October 14, 1990, p.20).

The extract summarizes the mood of the political situation that had been created by the militancy and defiant self-assertion of pupils.

The unruly behaviour of pupils engendered discipline problems. Pupils did as they pleased because they were no longer accountable for their actions. This situation was incompatible with the cause of liberation - from wrong attitudes which had been influenced by apartheid ideology. Ironically this situation was created by the 'liberators' - the pupils. The causes of the conflict between the oppressed groups do not only lie in their political differences, but also in the manner in which the problem, the apartheid state, was conceived by the revolutionaries. It could be assumed that

it was the complexity of the problem that created the flaws made at the level of conceptualization.

1.5 Theorizing the Structure-agency Relationship in a Rural Political Context

Explained crudely, the concept of the structure-agency relationship connotes a reciprocal relationship, where the structure is a politically determined social condition which may either impose itself upon the agent, an individual, or be created by him. In the case where an individual is directly involved in the process of creation the implication is that such a social condition will work towards the maximisation of individual's chances through which he can satisfy his desired goals. On the other hand in the case where the condition simply dictates terms to the either passive or active individual (passive in the sense that he is unable to challenge the situation, and active in that he appreciates the problematic condition) the implication is that the individual's ability to attain desired goals is somehow constrained, for the condition will always work to enhance the interests of its determinants. The enhancement is achieved at the expense of the interests of the individual.

Using this exposition in the South African political context as a basis for analysing relations between apartheid, the structure created to serve the interests of the ruling race, the whites, and the Africans who serve in apartheid

institutions, the relationship can be seen as exploitative because even if Africans benefit in a certain way, the extent to which they benefit is determined by a political process in which they do not take part.

If the same basis is used in a micro-political situation where the structure is the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture and the agents are teachers serving in this structure the relationship becomes less exploitative. The element of exploitation remains because the major ideological structure, apartheid, still superimposes itself upon the minor structure of traditionalism. This traditionalism is characterised by the traditional leadership that forms the majority in the KZLA. Amakhosi who are serving in the KZLA represent a tradition which rural communities still hold in esteem and through which, they believe political change could be realised. (Modern democratic practices characterised by direct representation and true accountability have not as yet made significant inroads into rural political life.) Amakhosi have since time immemorial served as the taken-for-granted political mouthpieces of the people. As such the KZLA is rightly viewed as legitimate. Hence the relationship between the micro-structure and the individuals is less exploitative and perhaps more reciprocal because representative individuals, the KwaZulu members of parliament, are significantly independent of the dictates of the superstructure in terms of the principle of empowerment for self determination.

Though apartheid may still have a significant influence on the actions of the KwaZulu MP'S, it, however, does not have absolute power to decide on their actions. The tradition (from which they derive power and legitimacy) also influences their actions. In this regard amakhosi can use the political space provided by their relative autonomy to maximise opportunities for the realisation of desired goals, which is political liberation. Given the fact that amakhosi form part of the school authority structure, it could also be possible that individual teachers serving in the KZDEC sincerely believed in the ability of the KZLA to bring about desired political change which would produce a dispensation favourable to the realisation of its goals.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Statement of the Problem

The unprecedented political conflict which occurred within and outside school premises in rural areas of KwaZulu in 1990 has had adverse effects on schooling. School discipline has collapsed as school authority structures are faced with a legitimacy crisis. The most affected school authority is the school principal, who is unable to execute his or her duties adequately. Nevertheless, his activities are under the surveillance of the department. The questions that constitute the problem of this study are : why has the school principal become a victim of the conflict and how does he perceive the situation?

2.2 Research Objectives

Having stated the nature of the problem that the principals in the rural schools of KwaZulu are faced with, this study seeks to find out how principals perceive the conflict-charged situation in their respective school environments. Secondly it endeavours to gauge the level of political awareness of principals. The study assumes that the higher the level of political consciousness the better the chances for principals to be able to survive the ordeal. The ordeal should be viewed as a process of the unfolding of the political situation. Therefore principals need to have an input into the process in

the form of playing supportive roles in the solving of the problem. Lastly it aims to find out how principals think the conflict could be resolved.

2.3 Methodology of Investigation

2.3.1 The Unit of Analysis

The investigation will focus exclusively on the principals of secondary schools in the Ndwedwe circuit of the Department of Education and Culture - KwaZulu.

2.3.2 Sampling Procedure

There are thirty four (34) secondary schools in Ndwedwe circuit. Ten of these are junior secondary schools and start from Standard Six up to Standard Eight. Twenty four are high schools starting from Standard Six to Standard Ten.

The selection of the research population was prompted by the trend the school violence had followed. Secondary schools were the worst affected by the violence. That was due to the fact that these had older pupils who were more militant and from whom the student leadership was drawn. The questionnaires were distributed to thirty principals

who were queuing for salary cheques. Due to the fact that it was a busy day those who could not finish the completion of the questionnaires were allowed to take them home and return them to the circuit office clerk later on.

Other principals of the lower and higher primary schools were also in the queue. Therefore it can be said that the selection of the sample was incidental as was the distribution of the sample population. Twenty five completed questionnaires were returned. Although it is not easy to find out why some teachers could not complete the questionnaires or return them it could perhaps be speculated that the respondents were afraid to air their views on violence.

The questionnaire included personal particulars of teachers, their perceptions of violence as it affected school discipline and routine programmes, their view on students' perception of principals as government agents and whether it was feasible for them to influence the students to think otherwise. They were also asked to suggest methods through which students' perceptions of them could be changed.

The aim of the questionnaire was to allow the respondents to speak their minds on the issues

affecting them directly as well as their schools. Since the researcher is a colleague of the respondents it was hoped that an element of collegial trust would have encouraged respondents to be honest. It is acknowledged that in regard to the size of the area of study, the study cannot be a true representation of all rural schools in KwaZulu. For that reason it cannot serve as a basis for generalisation. Furthermore the responses were supplemented with informal discussions with individual principals who were not part of the sample. The latter served mainly as a checking exercise on views expressed by interviewees and as a further probe. Through informal discussions with ten respondents they were able to interpret their respective situations and give their own perspectives.

2.3.3 The Limitations of the Study

This exploratory undertaking seeks to test the feasibility of conducting an in depth inquiry into the dynamics that have produced the unrest in rural schools. It is however acknowledged that given the complexity and the scope of the problem this study cannot do justice in providing an exhaustive account of the issues identified as having causal effect on school unrest.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Questions and responses

a) " Where is your home? "

TABLE 1

	NO. OF CASES	PERCENTAGE
NDWEDWE	11	44
KWAMASHU	4	16
UMLAZI	8	32
CLERMONT	2	8
OTHER	-	-
	N = 25	100

According to the table a total of forty-four percent or 11 principals lived in Ndwedwe.

b) " The nature of schools "

TABLE 2

SCHOOL	CASES	PERCENTAGE
STATE SCHOOL	1	4
COMMUNITY SCHOOL	24	96
OTHER	-	-
	N = 25	100

The table shows that 96% of the respondents were principals of community schools.

c) "Do you perceive your school area as politically stable or unstable?"

TABLE 3

	CASES	PERCENTAGE
STABLE	11	44
UNSTABLE	14	56
	N = 25	100

The results show that fifty-six percent perceived their respective areas as politically unstable. However, it is significant that 44% responded negatively. What would be interesting to probe in this regard was why some areas had not been affected by the conflict. This could perhaps be attributed to the successful entrenchment of Inkatha ideology.

On this question some respondents were able to give detailed accounts of their perceptions (These were responses to the subsequent question "Give the reasons for your answers") One summarised what most others also expressed:

This year particularly, there has been an unprecedented political activism which involved affiliates of opposed groups. Violence has, however, lately abated though one

cannot read the present calm at face value as, particularly, those students that sought refuge elsewhere have not returned in full.

Another described his area as being dominated by the supporters of "a particular political group". He also noted that although the unrest did cause disturbances in most schools in his area, the call for the establishment of peace committees and "negotiations" brought hope and relief among people. The reference to "negotiations" may mean negotiations either between white government and the ANC and or between warring factions in the area. In general the notions of "negotiations" and "dialogue" were thought to be the panacea for curbing the violence.

d) "Has violence in your area affected the smooth running of the school?"

TABLE 4

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
YES	13	52
NO	6	24
N/A	6	24
	N = 25	100

It was assumed that pupils' violent behaviour towards school authorities had adversely affected school discipline. It was

then asked if this perception was indeed correct. Fifty-two percent responded positively to the question. Twenty-four percent disagreed and twenty-four percent did not respond. The reluctance to respond could be attributed to fear of expressing opinions on such a sensitive subject. For instance the KwaZulu government had, for technical reasons, forbidden the unofficial closing-down of schools in violence-torn areas.

On the question of how violence affected discipline, the respondents expressed their disgust at pupils' "defiance" and "arrogance". One put it like this "Highly active 'pupil-politicians' tend to be defiant and arrogant. They dictate to pupils and teachers alike (and mind you, irrespective of political groupings)".

Another reported that "they get excited over political matters and totally neglected the word from their teachers and principals."

Another said "At the beginning of this year, 1990, pupils started to look down upon the authorities of the school."

Another said "When they attend their meetings they are either misled or manipulated by them. They tend to be unruly and stick to the views instilled in them even if they are contrary to good values of the community."

e) "Pupils regard principals as government representatives or agents"

TABLE 5

	RESPONDENTS	%
YES	21	84
NO	--	--
N/A	4	16
	N = 25	100

Principals have been the main victims of violence. The argument that is often advanced for this claim is that they are thought to be the immediate agents of the oppressive government. The question was then posed. Eighty-four percent agreed with the perception while sixteen percent disagreed. The significance of this eighty-four percent is that the assumption is justified.

f) "Is it possible to change pupils' perception of teachers as government agents?"

TABLE 6

	RESPONDENTS	%
YES	23	92
NO	--	--
N/A	2	8
	N = 25	100

The relationship between principals and pupils deteriorated during the peak of violence. Owing to the inability of political leaders and youth leadership to control the comrades' conduct, it was thought that teachers, particularly principals, were faced with the challenge of normalising the situation so that effective schooling could continue. Ninety-two percent thought that it was possible to make pupils realise that they (principals) are also not immune to apartheid adversities.

However, the respondents expressed mixed views about their ability to change the pupils' attitudes. They said that they were ready to take part in discourses concerning matters of educational interest on condition that they are invited to such discussions. This seemingly positive attitude might be interpreted to mean that teachers feel that given a chance to make a contribution they would prove the pupils wrong in their thinking that they are the agents of oppression. Eight percent could not think of any method that could be used to change pupil's perceptions. On the question of why they were seen as agents of the government or oppression the responses given included the following:

because we collect school funds; because we are obliged to enforce all the prescriptions of the Education Act which were promulgated in a non-representative parliament where blacks were excluded. Resistance is directed at us.

g) "Has political violence affected school discipline?"

TABLE 7

	RESPONDENTS	%
YES	23	92
NO	--	--
N/A	2	8
	N = 25	100

Pupils' unrestrained and violent behaviour has been explained in terms of political radicalism. Political radicalism among pupils is, to a certain extent, thought to be influenced by unsatisfactory provision of basic school facilities and the payment of school fees. As far as the payment of school fees is concerned pupils felt that they are being exploited because in townships schools parents do not contribute large sums of money towards the building of classrooms and other structures, and the buying of school needs such as chalk and office stationery. Pupils and the communities were then told by enlightened comrades that some of the school needs ought to be taken care of by the government. It could be said that this awareness impacted negatively on the integrity of principals. Hence pupils lost confidence in their principals and saw them as exploiters, becoming less respectful to them.

The table shows that ninety-two percent confirmed that school violence has affected school discipline. Eight percent did not respond at all. It is also significant here that there were no "NO" responses.

h) "Is there a relationship between educational issues and broader political issues?".

TABLE 8

	RESPONDENTS	%
YES	21	84
NO	4	16
	N = 25	100

Eighty-four percent responded positively while sixteen percent responded negatively. The majority of the respondents seemed to take the view that there is a strong relationship between educational and political issues.

i) "What is the role of the principal in the changing school environment?"

TABLE 9

	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
TO SERVE COMMUNITY	4	16
TO SERVE DEPARTMENT	8	32
TO PREPARE PUPILS FOR FUTURE	19	76

Some respondents thought that they were responsible for the rendering of services in all three categories above. In other

words they responded to either two or three options. The logic of the general feeling is that the department is rendering service to the community and since pupils are part of the community it serves both the community and pupils.

3.2 Additional Informal Interviews

Pupils' radicalism was, inter alia, understood to be influenced by the gross lack of school infrastructure in rural areas. For instance principals noted that pupils were aware that school facilities in townships were by far much better than those in Ndwedwe in terms of both quality and quantity. Secondly, pupils from towns who sought refuge in Ndwedwe soon learnt that the situation in rural areas, where parents still paid school fees, was worse than that of the townships where very few contributions were made. Furthermore they regarded the payment of school fees as an extra financial burden upon their poor parents. They also noted that there was a general perception that the township pupils brought their 'evil' thinking to the innocent and docile rural comrades. They expressed the view that the demand for a free education was in actual fact in step with the Freedom Charter's adage that: "the doors of education shall be opened to all" (E.C.S.A., 1981).

Elsewhere students' feelings, with regard to unequal educational opportunities were captured by the statement that:

Our parents have got to understand that we will not be educated and trained to become slaves in an apartheid

capitalist society. Together with our parents we must try to work out a new future. A future where there will be no racist or exploitation, no apartheid, no inequality of class or sex (Committee of 81, Cape Town, 1980).

The recognition of parents' role in the process of change is significant. However, it is regrettable that their capability has not been properly utilised. What became clear from the interviews was that principals had a broad understanding of the causes of violence. The black-on-black violence was seen as a phenomenon arising from the attempts to change the oppressive situation.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Principals' perception of the school unrest

Principals perceive the school unrest as a phenomenon arising from the national struggle for liberation against apartheid. They regard themselves as the unfortunate victims of a clash between political organisations which, despite their common problems, have resorted to violence to defend their party interests. The survey has also shown that principals were aware of pupils' perception of them as agents of oppression. These perceptions were thought to be influenced by the nature of their duties.

For instance, principals collect school fees from poor parents; they threaten pupils with expulsion if they fail to

make contributions. It has been a common practice that pupils who cannot afford school fees due to poverty which is mainly caused by the political and economical situation, are forced by principals to leave school. Though the expulsion of pupils is illegal in terms of departmental regulation, the DEC expect principals to collect school fees; and in fact it encourages this practice by sending circulars which remind principals to place orders for financial books well in advance. Expulsion has been an effective way of causing pupils to pay school fees.

To the "enlightened" community members, particularly the school going youth, the maintenance of the existing school buildings and the erection of new structures is the duty of the government, as is the case with township schools. Pupils who have become spokespersons for their parents have accused principals of being insensitive to the plight of their poor parents. Furthermore it is principals' duty to implement racially biased curricula even if they know very well that the contents of these curricula fall far short of equipping children with the necessary skills and knowledge that they may require later on in life. Therefore principals are seen to be failing to use their educational expertise to challenge the oppressive scenario. It is, however, not clear what role principals are expected to play in the struggle for change. Given contradictory interests within communities served by schools, it is inconceivable how principals can play a constructive role, in terms of challenging the system, without being partisan.

The crucial question that arises from thinking about principals as collaborators is, if principals were to resign their positions in protest against oppressive education system, in what significant way could such a move help to solve the political relations from which racist education has been engendered? The history of resistance in education has shown that the state has been successful in crushing black resistance through a military showdown or through appeasement reform programmes such as the empowerment of black local governments to provide for the needs of their populations but with limited resources. Secondly, how could principals' resignation benefit the victims of apartheid education - the pupils? In the light of contradictory interests amongst political parties, it would be sensible to keep the school apolitical. Unfortunately education and politics in South Africa are so intertwined as to be practically inseparable.

In view of the absence of alternative forms of education or education for liberation, and alternative administrative personnel, principals' resignations and boycotts might not be the best solution either. Since it may not be easy to supplant the present educational personnel, it may perhaps be a plausible idea to try to make them agents of change.

Though principals are not bitter about pupils' attitudes towards them, they, nevertheless, do resent the fact that the political reorientation of pupils and teachers have alienated them and have created an antagonistic relationship. The

strained relations between teachers and pupils have made the school environment unsuitable for learning. For example, they go to school when they feel like it and they arrive at any time of the day. They absent themselves and sometimes refuse to do their homework. This behaviour is to the greatest extent encouraged by the knowledge that they are no longer accountable for their behaviour. Teachers as well as parents dare not take disciplinary action because they fear for their lives.

The big challenge facing those who are concerned with education is what needs to be done in order to keep pupils in classrooms and to stabilise the whole situations. It is not in the interest of the public nor of the struggle to see this chaotic situation continuing in schools. It is not enough just to call upon pupils to go back to school and learn. A mechanism that must ensure that discipline is restored should be established.

It is rather a simplistic view that principals are only agents of oppression. Most of them come from families with poor socio-economic backgrounds. In fact it was through the efforts of their destitute families that they were able to reach educational levels that have earned them positions in the educational hierarchy. For example, it is common knowledge that a large percentage of teachers are not adequately qualified.

On the other hand the KZDEC's tendency to intimidate teachers by threatening them with disciplinary measures if, for example, they become members of SADTU, is perhaps not a viable solution to the crisis in education either. The KZDEC is the largest department in the homelands (the Transkei Department of Education and Culture comes second) (Hartshorne, 1989, p.2). The KZDEC is responsible for at least one million pupils in the region. As such its dependence on the ad hoc budgetary assistance from Pretoria means that demands for adequate education resources cannot be met (Booth, 1988). The logic of this argument is that the KZDEC is insensitive to the imbalances in education when in fact it is the plan of the White government.

4.2 Recommendations

MacNamara has stated that "there is no social, political, or economic problem you can solve without adequate education" (in Christie, 1988, p. 13). This suggests that educational change needs to precede social, political and economic changes. The notion "adequate education" begs the following questions: who should provide it, and how; and what prospects are there for the provision of a viable education in rural areas. The children are engaged in the liberation struggle because they believed that their parents were incapable of changing their oppressive situation. The breakdown in school discipline could be attributable to the fact that children have lost confidence in their parents and teachers. However, it is important to realise that children cannot win the struggle

without the help from their parents and teachers. As a result parents and teachers need to resume their rightful and natural roles: to ensure that children are provided with proper education, an education that will equip them with necessary skills which they can use in future life. It could also be hoped that a uniform education system will not only create equal opportunities and redress disparities that currently exist between race groups but will bridge the gap of imbalance between rural and urban African communities as well. Facilities like classrooms, libraries and laboratories should be made available to all communities irrespective of their geographical, political and economic locations. In rural areas some facilities such as electricity and tap-water are, of course, difficult to provide. However, the provision of television and video sets powered by generators could prove to be a worthwhile venture.

Urgent attention is also needed to redress the adverse effect that school violence has had on the morale of teachers. It has been alleged that some teachers use teaching time to pursue their private studies and acquire certificates. This is achieved at the expense of the children. However one should not lose sight of the harsh reality that such practices have to a great extent been encouraged by pupils' unco-operative and negative attitude towards schooling as well as recent government demands that teachers upgrade their qualifications. After all the difference between the now 'lower quality' Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) and Primary Teachers' Diploma (PTD) may be negligible.

Some pupils have promoted themselves, as much as from standard four to standard nine or standard ten for that matter. Teachers condone this practice passively because they no longer have authority to control it. It has also been alleged that at the beginning of 1991 some prominent local political leaders acting in the name of one of the warring factions instructed some principals to admit certain pupils to matric classes. These pupils did not follow the correct admission procedures. They had no documentary proof, school reports, to show that they qualified to be placed in those classes. It was said that these pupils would act as the "eyes" of the organisation in question.

These practices have reduced education to a mockery. Despite political problems experienced by principals and teachers, to a lesser extent, we are reminded that "the challenges of the educational struggle lies in its contribution to the strengthening and development of the culture of liberation" (Samuel, 1983). Teachers and pupils need to undertake community-based enlightenment projects which aim at empowering parents. This could be difficult to put into practice, because, given the nature of the relationship between education and politics in this country, education cannot be used as a tool for liberation as advocated by Samuel (Ibid.). Whichever way one looks at the problem the reality remains that as long as politics continues to antagonise and frustrate principals who are currently faced with a big discipline

problem, a crisis situation will always remain. Secondly, as long as political relations on a national and a regional level continue to frustrate African education the resolution of educational problems will remain.

The KZDEC itself should not condone the creation of disparities between urban and rural schools. DET schools in Inanda New Town are better than Ndwedwe schools in all aspects of their establishments. The KZDEC's inability to match the standard of the DET, in terms of infrastructure; the failure to improve on the working conditions of teachers (caused mainly by classroom overcrowding) and the tendency to intimidate 'dissidents' do not provide a solution. It is the duty of the KZDEC to meet the challenge.

I further hold the view that had the liberation forces concentrated on political orientation of the current authority structures represented by tribal chiefs, school committees and principals, these people would have perhaps seen the need of supporting the liberation struggle. The support would have depended on the nature of the expected input and roles. If, for example, the formation of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa (CONTRALESA) - an organisation which was meant to conscientise the chiefs politically had preceded the encroachment of the principle of ungovernability in rural areas; and if pupils' peaceful and disciplined demonstrations sought to highlight the plight of schooling in rural areas, the populace, irrespective of political

affiliation, would have supported the move, for people share a common problem which is white domination.

Lastly the element of ethnicity in the current violence amongst Africans has demonstrated clearly the extent to which apartheid has succeeded in entrenching the culture of racism. However, the factor of ethnicity cannot simply be reduced to apartheid, it is a significant factor in South African politics. Unless ethnicity is ingeniously dealt with in one way or the other, the apartheid legacy will continue to play a significant role in determining the country's future political dispensation. The mammoth task of creating a society that is free from apartheid influence cannot be left to politicians alone.

South Africans should realise that political conflict has engendered a culture of intractability which has become second nature to pupils, a culture which is not in keeping with learning. This situation has afforded teachers and principals who are prone to misconduct and acts of irresponsibility a chance to do just that. This drawback cannot be condoned indefinitely. However one cannot conceive of any corrective mechanism that can exclude teachers. The role of teachers, "the front line troops of change" (Hartshorne K. 1989 p.8) remains important. This role should be determined by the social, political and economic needs and aspirations of the South African society as a whole. The overall aim should be the overcoming of practices through which tribal and racist

mentality have been cultivated. Principals have been trapped in the eye of the political storm, the political violence, a place from where there is little they can do to help the situation. The challenge facing educationists and teachers is to transcend the thinking that is determined by politics,

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