

‘Much to Praise, Much to Blame in Troubled Times’: A History of Educational Performance at Selected Schools in Pietermaritzburg from the Early 1980s to the Mid 1990s.

Nhlanhla Alfred Mkhulisi

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Masters Degree in History in the Faculty of Human Sciences (School of Human and Social Studies), University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
December 2000

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgments	i
Map 1	ii
Map 2	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
Schools in Crisis: A Broad Historical Overview	5
1.1. Blacks Schools Under Apartheid	6
1.2. Inadequate Educational Resources in Township Schools	8
1.3. The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling	10
1.4. Natal and Pietermaritzburg Politics and Schools in the 1980s	13
1.5. Transition and Changing Policies in Education	18
Chapter 2	
MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni: Exploring Factors Impacting on Effective Learning at the Two Schools	25
2.1. MehlokaZulu (Case Study One)	
2.1.1. The Issue of Infrastructure at MehlokaZulu	26
2.1.2. The Impact of Political Violence on Student Teacher Relations at MehlokaZulu	27
2.1.3. Teacher- Student Motivation and Morale	34
2.1.4 Further Issues to Consider	36
2.2. Siqongweni (Case Study Two)	
2.2.1. The Issue of Infrastructure	37
2.2.2. Political Violence and Siqongweni High School	39
2.2.3. Low Morale and Demotivation Amongst Students and Teachers in the 1990s	44
Chapter 3	
‘Secure Cocoon’: A History of Educational Performance at Sukuma Since the Early 1980s	48
3.1 Resources and Infrastructure at Sukuma	49
3.2 Political Instability and Sukuma	50
3.3. Student- Teacher Profiles at Sukuma	52
3.4. The Curriculum at Sukuma	53
3.5. Political Transition and Sukuma	55
Conclusion	58
Bibliography	64

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Tim Nuttall, for the best supervision. If it was not for his constructive criticism and insights on the subject, this work would have remained an insurmountable task. The staff of Historical Studies is greatly acknowledged, particularly Jabulani Sithole for suggesting relevant sources of information.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

There are a number of people whom I consulted during this research. It will be impossible to enumerate them all. I can single out the following individuals for the warmth they have shown me. These are M. McMaster, an ex-teacher at Sukuma, Q.W. Ngcobo, the principal at Sukuma, T.A. Tshabalala, the principal at MehlokaZulu and R. Mkhize, the deputy principal at Siqongweni.

Friends were supportive in various ways, these include Sinothi Thabethe, Zwe Hulane, Thami Mshengu, Nkanyiso Mveli, Sonto Moleme, Babongile and Fana Lembethe, Musa Chamane and Lindokuhle Zikhali.

Last but not least my thanks goes to my family for the unwavering support and contribution to my academic endeavours.

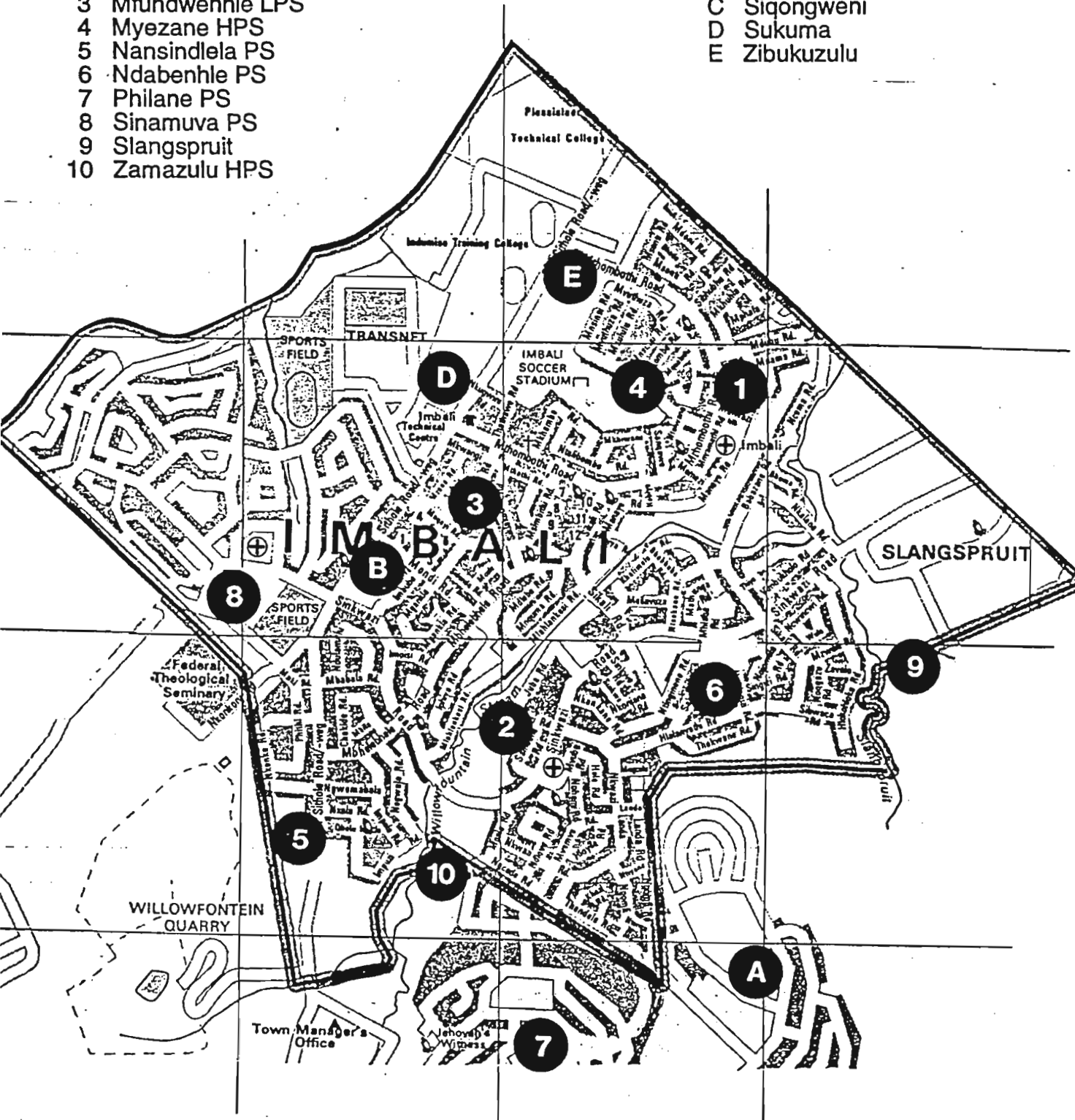
Schools in Imbali

Primary schools

- 1 Funulwazi LPS
- 2 Lungisile PS
- 3 Mfundwenhle LPS
- 4 Myezane HPS
- 5 Nansindlela PS
- 6 Ndabenhle PS
- 7 Philane PS
- 8 Sinamuva PS
- 9 Slangspruit
- 10 Zamazulu HPS

Secondary Schools

- A Fundukuhle
- B Mehlokazulu
- C Siqongweni
- D Sukuma
- E Zibukuzulu



Introduction

This essay attempts to explore a history of educational performance at three schools in Imbali from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s. When I talk about educational performance I refer to various aspects such as good matriculation results and many other activities that take place beyond the confines of a classroom. Matriculation results alone cannot be relied upon to measure teaching and education in schools that is why I will also look at other less quantitative aspects in this essay because matric statistics on pass rates are incomplete. There are less quantitative aspects such as a school's involvement, for instance, in sports and in different projects that aim to develop students academically and socially. All these aspects form part of educational performance. The main problem to be addressed is the variation through time in educational performance of three schools located in Imbali township. The basis of reasoning in exploring this problem is that these variations since the early 1980s were shaped by a combination of external and internal factors. External factors consisted of the policy content of apartheid education, and the social, economic and political situation in the Imbali township. Internal factors consisted of the nature of leadership, administration and the culture of learning within each school.

The first chapter outlines a broad historical overview of education for black people in South Africa during the apartheid era. It outlines the nature of the apartheid education system that negatively affected many black schools. The first issue that was central in the apartheid education system was to separate racial groups. Education was one of the symbolic aspects of racial inequality in South Africa. The Bantu education system, as it became known, was introduced in 1953 for black people, and it was going to be rejected. Many black South Africans under the Bantu education system were taught in schools that lacked fundamental attributes for good education. For instance, the physical infrastructure was inadequate and many students were taught by ill-trained teachers. According to Department of Education statistics, 85% of African teachers nationwide in 1983 were under-qualified.¹ They taught students in overcrowded classrooms. Overcrowding had a negative effect on matriculation results because teachers could

¹ Department of Education and Training, Annual Report (Pretoria, Department of Education and Training, January 1984), p. 12.

not give maximum attention to all students. Glasser points out that:

We are far too complacent about school failure everywhere, no one will deny that education faces its most serious challenge in the centre of our major cities. Confronted by overcrowded and dilapidated schools, children segregated by race and many discouraged if not defeated teachers, we have a difficult task improving education here.²

As a result of the highly unsatisfactory conditions at schools, students responded by resorting to violent methods, particularly in the early 1980s, attempting to draw the government's attention to their needs. Violence was inevitable, particularly, from 1983 onwards when the radical youth movements affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF) appeared on the political scene. Schools in the townships were greatly affected by political violence because young people at schools were the ones who became prominent in political acts in the 1980s. One of the fundamental impacts that violence had on schooling was the widening gap between students and teachers. Students commonly perceived their teachers as 'agents' of the apartheid system. This perception was influenced by the fact that most teachers did not participate actively in anti-apartheid campaigns that were mainly driven by students. Politically, many students and teachers were divided, particularly in the province of Natal. Schooling in the mid 1980s and the early 1990s took place in an atmosphere of fear because teachers and students did not trust each other.

Political violence further distorted the already shaky educational system in the townships. School children were arrested, sjambokked, detained and suspended when they raised their grievances.³ The years from 1985 onwards were characterized by massive involvement of schools in politically related conflicts. The Congress of South African Students Organization (COSAS) aligned itself with the UDF and demanded quick changes to the education system. The UDF and COSAS' role in the townships showed an unbroken chain of resistance to Bantu Education. Clashes with the police and Inkatha members sometimes took place inside the school premises.

²W. Glasser, Schools Without Failure (London, Kogan Page, 1969), p.xiii.

³R. Hadebe, 'Pietermaritzburg University and the School Crisis' a lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 11 February 1987.

In Natal clashes between students were also pervasive because students differed politically. All political groups were contending for political domination in the province.

Due to political upheavals within school institutions, matriculation results were negatively affected. For example the overall national matric pass rate for Africans was 48% in 1984, whereas the white pass rate was 98%.⁴ These are some of the indicators that the atmosphere in which black schools operated in the 1980s was not good. It seemed obvious that the 1980s was a period of political turmoil in the townships. Political violence continued in many townships in South Africa until the early 1990s when political parties began to negotiate about the birth of a 'New' South Africa.

The period of political transition in 1994 brought high hopes from people believing that all the problems that black schools had experienced since the official implementation of apartheid laws were going to be erased. The first giant step that was applauded was to introduce a single education department for all races in 1994. The creation of a single department was indicative that South Africa had moved from her discriminatory policies that ran along racial lines. The government introduced some new policies. For example, the new constitution of the Republic of South Africa stated that corporal punishment was no longer allowed in schools. While many people applauded the abolition of corporal punishment, some people felt unhappy because they believed that students, if not punished, were encouraged to be irresponsible and undisciplined. It seemed obvious that the mid 1990s were still shrouded with uncertainty particularly in black educational circles after the disaster of apartheid and political violence. The declining matric pass rates in many schools indicated uncertainty in schools.

The essay will take a case study approach in its attempt to investigate why one school in Imbali township was able to succeed whereas two schools performed less well. The investigation concentrates on MehlokaZulu, Siqongweni and Sukuma schools. The first case studies that the

⁴Department of Education And Training, Annual Report (Pretoria, Department of Education and Training, January 1984), p. 14

essay explores in chapter two is a history of MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni high schools. These two schools seemed to have common identifiable features. First, they were heavily affected by political violence in the 1980s. They have suffered from a lack of motivated teachers and students, particularly due to the impact violence had on their day- to- day life. As a result their matriculation results were not satisfactory. Schooling took place in atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The essay will show how these schools operated since the early 1980s by looking at some of the less quantitative aspects that have shaped educational performance.

The third chapter looks at a history of Sukuma Comprehensive school because there seemed to be a different story for that institution. First, the school had better educational facilities. Second, the school was almost left untouched by the political violence that engulfed Imbali from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. Third, the staff and students at Sukuma seemed to be motivated because their matric pass rates were satisfactory. It was not only matriculation pass rates that showed satisfactory educational performance at Sukuma, there were many activities that indicated that the school system was more healthier than that of Siqongweni and MehlokaZulu. However, this does not mean that Sukuma existed without problems. The important point that I am making in this essay is that Sukuma seemed to symbolize good educational performance during the troubled political period when compared to the other two schools.

This research relies heavily on the information gathered from interviews with people who were part of the community of the three schools. These people include teachers and students. These people were useful in sharing their experiences, particularly teachers. However, there were problems associated with oral testimonies. First, the interviewees sometimes felt uncomfortable to go into detail about the causes of the lack of effective learning in their schools because they did not want to offend some of the teachers who seemed to be demotivated in their profession. Exploring a history of the three schools, in this essay, will make us understand there was much to praise and much to blame during the troubled times.

Chapter 1

Schools in Crisis: A Broad Historical Overview

This chapter outlines the historical contexts in which township schools operated during the apartheid period and through the period of political transition in the 1990s. It discusses major 'external factors' that impacted on schools' effective teaching and learning. It aims to set the scene for the following chapters which will be case studies. First, I will outline a broad overview of the nature of apartheid education in South Africa because what happened in schools in the 1980s was a direct response to the apartheid education system. Second, I will look broadly at the issue of the physical infrastructure in township schools since the early 1980s because many people, particularly in black educational circles, believed that the unequal distribution of resources, as a result of apartheid discriminatory policies, contributed to poor educational performance.

Third, I will explore the impact of political violence on schooling. While inadequate educational facilities contributed to poor educational performance, particularly in township schools, political violence exacerbated the situation because school children sometimes spent their time outside the classrooms being involved inevitably in political acts that did not help them a great deal, I argue, in terms of getting adequate time to prepare for the examinations. My argument does not deny the fact that students' involvement in political acts helped to challenge the existing apartheid political system but, on many occasions, such involvement also contributed to a huge loss of time and lives for many young people. A legitimate struggle turned to 'factional' confrontations within the communities that were at the receiving end of the political system because there were complex hidden political agendas during the 1980s and the early 1990s.

Political violence brought about many changes within school institutions, for example, the remarkable change was the creation of a huge gap between students of different political backgrounds, particularly in the province of KwaZulu- Natal when Inkatha and UDF supporters began to struggle for political domination. Schools were inevitably drawn into these conflicts because political struggles were mainly driven by young people at schools. Linked to the phenomenon of political violence was the growing gap between teachers and

students. Teachers on the one hand, were seen by students as submissive and bowing under the influence of the apartheid education system. On the other hand, many students were 'radicalized' particularly after the incidents in Soweto in 1976. Fourth, the new democratic government introduced new policies in education hoping that the bitter experiences of the apartheid era were going to be easily erased. I will explore how the new policies have impacted on township schools because they were the ones that have experienced different forms of crises.

1.1. **Black Schools under Apartheid**

The issue of racial discrimination in South Africa was felt in many spheres of life but education strongly revealed racial and social inequality. Many of the problems that were experienced in the 1980s originated from previous historical developments. Christie and Collins point out that:

In 1949 the Nationalist Government set up a commission on Native education under the chairmanship of Dr. W.W. M. Eiselen. It argued that Black education should be an integral part of a careful planned policy of segregated socio- economic development for the black people.¹

Eiselen's commission gave birth to the Bantu Education Act in 1953. All black schools, including those that were previously run by missionaries, were brought under the Native Affairs Department.² The government spent far more money on white education than it did on black education. The unequal distribution of resources and educational opportunities was also emphasised in the famous speech of Dr. Verwoerd in parliament in 1953. He argued :

'When I have control of Native education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with the Europeans is not for them.

¹P. Christie and C. Collins, 'Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Representation', in P. Kallaway (ed), Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984), p. 161.

²Ibid., p.162.

People who believe in equality are not desirable'...³

From the 1950s onwards, the government of the day was not willing to encourage a stabilized educational system for all people. This was going to be a major cause of discontent in black communities. Bantu Education was a tool to provide South Africa 's ruling classes with cheap, docile labour. Bantu Education served economic, ideological and political function of maintaining, reinforcing and producing social relations under apartheid. The dissatisfaction of black students under the apartheid education system reached a boiling point in 1976. The incident that is often used as a reference point in the history of South Africa is the Soweto uprisings. The 1976/1977 Soweto uprisings were a watershed for students in political activism. History was made when students denied Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools. Sonn points out that:

M.C. Botha and Andries Treunicht were in charge of black education when school children in their thousands took to the streets in resistance to the enforced Afrikaans at school. Police shot many students and as they bit the dust the world witnessed and became starkly aware of the resistance of the black youth to Bantu Education and apartheid. It is fair to say that this action in 1976 was a watershed event in a variety of ways . One being that students have now become aware of their power and their ability to resist.⁴

Subsequently, this event made students resort to violent acts to show that the problem was not only the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction but the whole system of apartheid. They felt that apartheid policies were a stumbling block to progress for them as black people. Mathonsi puts this clearly:

The uprising which eventually claimed more than 100 victims spread nationwide, and very shortly involved not just pupils but their parents and workers as well. The focus of students' demands changed from rejection of Afrikaans to rejection of Bantu Education as a system.⁵

³Quoted in N. Mathonsi, Black Matriculation Results: A Mechanism for Social Control (Johannesburg, Sotaville, 1988), p. 12.

⁴F. Sonn , Education and the Mass Democratic Struggle (Cape Town, Union of Teachers of South Africa, 1989), p.3.

⁵Mathonsi, Black Matriculation Results, p.13.

The government responded by closing and banning student organizations that had proliferated in the late 1960s and 1970s that were in the forefront in instilling radical ideas against apartheid. Some of the organizations included the South African Student Organization (SASO) that was established by Steve Biko and others in 1969 and the South African Student Movement (SASM). These organizations were officially banned on 19 October 1977.⁶ However, this did not hinder the active involvement of students in political acts because Biko himself was quoted as saying:

‘The hostile attitude of the government in banning organizations did not mean that all political activity was banned. The task of the blacks was to take the offensive and organize themselves regardless of the government action as it happened in 1977.’⁷

In 1979 new black student organizations including the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Student Organization (AZASO) were launched consecutively. These student movements were going to revive the political struggles together with the United Democratic Front in the 1980s. They were going to instill some radical ideas in student politics. One of the major causes of discontent was the issue of inadequate learning facilities in black schools that shaped educational performance and also exacerbated violence.

1.2 Inadequate Educational Resources in Township Schools

There were inadequate educational resources in township schools. The apartheid political regime created a wide gap between black schools and white schools particularly when one attempted to compare the facilities. On the one hand, the basic attributes of a good school like libraries, laboratories, qualified teachers and good pass rates, particularly at matriculation level, were mainly enjoyed in whites schools only. On the other hand, many black schools lacked most of these basic features which were essential for good educational performance. As a result of the inequality in education, it was not amazing to hear comments like the following:

⁶B. Hirson, Year of Fire, Year of Ash (London, Zed Press, 1979), p.47.

⁷Mathonsi, Black Matriculation Results, p. 13.

‘My kids know that they are disadvantaged as compared with white kids. You only have to assemble outside in the winter to know that. You only have to sit in overcrowded classrooms with broken windows to know that. You do not need agitators to tell you that you are not equal to white kids.’⁸

This comment was made by one of the teachers whom Christie interviewed in her research on black education in the 1980s. A comment like this was common in black townships because of the unequal distribution of resources.

As a result of the growing spirit of resistance from the black communities after the Soweto uprisings, the government tried to come with new educational reform strategies. These strategies were aimed at attending to some of the demands that were made by the youth, particularly the school students. Students’ main concerns which included their dissatisfaction with the conditions in which they found themselves in their schools. In response to these issues the government appointed Professor De Lange to investigate these problems in black schools in order to devise strategies to deal with them.

De Lange’s committee found that there were many problems that needed urgent attention in black schools. First, these schools were overcrowded and many students were being taught by underqualified teachers. These conditions contributed to high failure rates particularly at matriculation level and after matriculating many students were unable to go to tertiary institutions and to find jobs. High failure rates in black schools were also caused by the fact that results were manipulated in order to artificially control the output of black matriculants. According to the Department of Education Statistics, 85% of the total of African teachers were underqualified in 1980, whereas, there were only 3% in white educational circles.⁹ These problems made De Lange and his committee propose that the government had to create a single education department for all races. However, the government refused to create a single department, instead, the Department of Education and Training (DET) was introduced for blacks. The government argued that the DET would bring about the

⁸ Quoted in P. Christie, The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985), p.127.

⁹ SAIRR Survey of Race Relations (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1982), pp.481-491.

‘upliftment’ of black people because a new curriculum that was going to include vocational training was going to be introduced.

One of the recommendations made by the De Lange Committee which symbolised a great shift from the notorious Bantu Education Act of 1953 was that the government had to raise the budget for black schools. The Department of Education and Training budget rose in 1981 from R27 million to R250 million.¹⁰ The De Lange report urged the government to train teachers in order to ensure that they were adequately prepared and motivated in their profession. These recommendations were made but they were not attended to immediately by the government. The recommendation made by De Lange that the government had to create a single education department was ignored. Unrest in schools continued because the students were still dissatisfied. Improvement of facilities was going to be a slow process. The outbreak of political violence was going to hinder the improvement of facilities in black townships and it was going to result in the breaking down of the culture of teaching and learning, particularly from 1983 onwards. Student- teacher relations were also going to be greatly hampered.

1.3 The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling

The failure to attend immediately to problems in black schools instilled radical ideas amongst students. This also created a gap between teachers and students. Students became rebellious not only against the government but their teachers as well. They were displeased with their teachers whom they saw as part of the apartheid system.¹¹ When teachers attempted to control students through corporal punishment they were mainly accused by radical students of violating their ‘rights.’ On the other hand, many teachers believed that punishing students was in fact helping them to be ‘decent’ members of society. Some believed that if a teacher spared the rod he spoiled the child.¹²

¹⁰ Kallaway, Apartheid and Education ,p.26.

¹¹ M. Hart & J.Gultig, ‘The World is Full of Blood’: Youth, Schooling and Conflict in Pietermaritzburg Perspectives in Education Vol.11. No 2 (1990),p3.

¹² Author’s interview with Rey Mavuso, ex teacher at Fundokuhle, 25 July 2000.

External factors affecting schools, such as political violence and crime, intensified in many townships in the early 1980s. These factors had a great impact on the functioning of schools. They intensified particularly from 1983 onwards. Organizations that had openly opposed the apartheid system such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) were in exile. However, this did not mean that the struggle within the townships faded because the United Democratic Front (UDF) was established in 1983 by those who were anti-apartheid.¹³ The important thing about this movement was that it got its huge support from schools because young people became widely radicalized. COSAS allied itself with the UDF.¹⁴ The heightened social upheavals beginning in 1983 and the formation of the UDF corresponded with the heightened resistance in black schools.

Scholars of education mentioned a number of things that contributed to heightened social upheavals in school education. For example, in 1984 the government initiated the Tricameral parliament which further separated the races of this country. The whites fell under the House of Assembly, whereas the Indians fell under the House of Delegates and the Coloureds fell under the House of Representatives. The Africans were excluded from the new constitution because they were still expected to practise their political 'rights' in the ethnically based Bantustans.

The new Tricameral system was rejected by anti-apartheid forces particularly the UDF which mobilized a large number of school children. This rejection showed that school children were now deeply involved in political acts. The effects of such involvement greatly affected those who were at matriculation level because the upheavals took place in September 1984 and the examinations were due to be written in October. Mthombathi recorded a violent incident that occurred after the introduction of the Tricameral system. He pointed out that:

¹³S. McDonald, 'A Guide to Black Politics in South Africa', in H. Hitcher (ed.) South Africa: Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988),p.47.

¹⁴J. Hyslop, 'The Specificity of Struggle in South African Education' (Unpublished Paper presented to the Kenton- at Woodstock Education Conference, Cape Town, October 1988),p.193.

The fury of the violence occurred in the Vaal Triangle on 3 September 1984, the day Prime Minister P.W. Botha was sworn in as the country's first executive state president. As guns roared the salute in Cape Town other guns performed a different function in the townships of the Vaal Triangle. More than ten people died on the first day of the uprising.¹⁵

Township schools were heavily affected by political violence, particularly the matriculants. Mathonsi illustrates this by quoting the statistics of 1984 where the overall pass rate of Africans was 48, 3% and only 9,8 % of these students achieved matriculation exemption. On the other hand, the overall pass rate of White matriculants was 98% in the same year. He continues to argue that:

The problem of the high matric failure rate in the African community is rooted in the economic and political structures of South Africa. It is therefore senseless to talk of improving the system in any way when the 'system' itself has spawned this rot. No real change in education or in the African matric results can take place until the society which it serves demands it.¹⁶

Violence was used by students as a means to bring about radical changes in education from 1985 onwards. This was a direct result of social and political upheavals in South Africa as a whole. The problems that were being experienced by the black majority in South Africa at large instilled a culture of boycotting classrooms and organizing strikes. An incident that marked the disruption of classes in the country as a whole was the 1985 students' boycott of classes that was organized by COSAS, complaining against the inadequate textbooks. The Department of Education and Training had promised in the early months of 1984 that it would provide textbooks for schools. However, this promise was not fulfilled until May 1985. When students boycotted classes, teachers, particularly principals, found themselves in trouble because students dragooned them to explain the reasons that had caused such delays. Principals were in trouble because their offices were stoned and vandalised on such an enormous scale.¹⁷ Christie argues that teachers were seen by students as agents of apartheid

¹⁵B.Mthombathi, 'Introduction' in F. Meer (ed) Resistance in the Townships (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989),p.14.

¹⁶Mathonsi, p.43.

¹⁷Authors interview with Rey Mavuso, 31 July 2000.

education.¹⁸

1.4 Natal and Pietermaritzburg Politics and Schools in the 1980s

The townships were besieged by political violence in black communities, in particular, because people differed politically. In Natal political violence was rife between the UDF and Inkatha supporters because they did not see eye to eye. On the one hand, Inkatha was perceived by the UDF as a conservative movement perpetrating violence in the townships because Inkatha supporters were regarded as ‘agents’ of apartheid. On the other hand, the UDF was perceived by Inkatha supporters and the government as a radical movement. Inkatha-supporting students as well as UDF -supporting students were affected alike because schools were disrupted. Bhebhe argues:

Violence showed growing division within black communities. Terms like ‘collaborators’ and ‘sellouts’ were used by anti-apartheid activists to label those who in one way or another supported government policy, while the latter labelled the anti-apartheid activists as ‘radicals’. The violence of the 1980s can be seen as conflicts between ‘collaborators’ and ‘radicals’.¹⁹

In South African history and in black educational circles the year 1985 was accompanied by enormous social and political problems. Many people still remember that the police were deployed in the townships and began to arrest those who were in the forefront against apartheid policies. These arrests were also closely related with mysterious killings particularly of those who were known to be actively involved in anti-apartheid activities. For example, Victoria Mxenge, a Durban human rights lawyer, was assassinated in August 1985 and her death sparked off great social upheavals in Durban townships and in the country as whole. The Umlazi and KwaMashu townships were declared ‘ungovernable’ by the youth. Mxenge’s assassination created such great anger among the students because she had stood courageously against the DET when it withheld students’ matriculation results in 1983-1984.

¹⁸P. Christie, The Struggle for Education in South Africa: A People’s College Book (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985), p.127.

¹⁹N. Bhebhe, ‘Mobilization, Conflict and Repression: the United Democratic Front and the Political Struggles in Pietermaritzburg Region, 1983-1991’ (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1996), pp. 3-4.

The turning point in the political history of Pietermaritzburg was the year 1984. This year was a watershed for political violence particularly in Imbali and Sobantu when the residents began to reject the councillors that were appointed by the government as a result of the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system in 1983.²⁰ These people were the ones who were helping the government in making sure that people paid for the services which were provided.

Coincidentally, these people were usually drawn from Inkatha and this cemented the belief amongst anti-apartheid forces that Inkatha supporters were in one way or another working as agents of the apartheid government. School children in Imbali and Sobantu joined the marchers and demonstrators against rent increases. In August 1984 some of the school children were arrested when they barricaded the roads threatening government officials.

In Imbali rent boycotts burst into political violence between Inkatha and UDF supporters in 1985. At schools some of the teachers became targets of political conflicts. For example at Zibukezulu high school the late Reggie Hadebe and Thami Mseleku (who is now the present director general of education) were chased away by Inkatha vigilantes accusing them of instilling radical ideas among students.²¹ As a result of political turmoil some schools lost good teachers and this added to the internal crises when students were being taught in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.²² One of the schools in Elandskop lost 9 teachers at the beginning of 1985 as a result of insecurity and fear.²³ Mike Hart, who was a researcher in Sobantu in the mid 1980s, points out that teachers were vulnerable because students came to school with weapons, including guns.

The year 1985 was a period of great political upheavals in different spheres of life for black people. Workers, particularly those who were heavily victimized by apartheid policies gathered together to form a huge labour union called the Congress of South African Trade

²⁰B. Nzimande, 'The Children of War': The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling in Natal (Durban, University of Natal Education Projects, 1991), p.6.

²¹Author's interview with Mike Hart, 20 April 2000.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

Union (COSATU).²⁴ Like elsewhere in the country Pietermaritzburg townships were affected by this political development because COSATU was a huge union which affiliated to the UDF which, in turn, had huge support from student organizations such as COSAS. A strike that heavily involved students occurred in Howick at Sarmcol.²⁵ Schools in Imbali, Sobantu and Mpophomeni townships were disrupted on a large scale because students were organized to give support to this massive strike.

As a result of the social and political instability in schools, the government responded by banning COSAS in 1985 because this movement was perceived as the one which constituted radical ideas against the state.²⁶ Those parents who were concerned about their children's education gathered together and formed what were known as Parents, Students, Teachers Associations (PSTAs).²⁷ These associations aimed at ensuring that schools were not disrupted by political activities and they believed that active involvement of parents was a first step towards a stabilized educational system.²⁸ This was a great initiative, in my view, because parents and teachers, in particular, believed that it was better for students to attend classes even though they were dissatisfied because in the end they were expected to have some form of formal education in the world that demanded education.

This initiative did not, however, resolve the problems at schools because the intensification of political violence in Pietermaritzburg seemed to overshadow any initiatives. Imbali, Edendale, Ashdown and Sobantu plunged into political turmoil as a result of the clash between the

²⁴A. Sitas, 'The New Tribalism: Hostels and Violence' Journal of Southern African Studies Vol. 22. (1996), p.243.

²⁵S. Mkhize, 'Mass Mobilization and Resistance: A Study of Selected Stayaways and Protest Marches in Pietermaritzburg, 1985-1989' (Unpublished Honours Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1995), p.25.

²⁶C. Bundy, 'Action Comrades, Action: The Politics of Youth Student Resistance in the Western Cape', in W. James (ed) The Angry Divide (Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Phillip, 1989), p.212.

²⁷M. Hart and J. Gultig, 'The World is Full of Blood", p. 3.

²⁸Ibid.

police, Inkatha and UDF. Troops were deployed in the townships and the government declared a state of emergency on 12 June 1986. The declaration of the state of emergency resulted in absolute pandemonium in the townships and the schools were the most heavily affected because young people at schools were the ones who were in the forefront of these activities. It was in this context that the National Education Crises Committee (NECC) was formed in 1986.²⁹ This committee had branches in the other provinces as well. It aimed at encouraging students to go back to classes despite the problems that were still prevailing.

The NECC argued that there was nothing wrong in resisting apartheid but it was important that when apartheid was over students should be in a position to earn a living. The slogan changed from 'Liberation Now, Education Later' to 'People's Education for People's Power.' The NECC emerged in response to the acute crises in education which culminated in 1986 when black schooling almost came to a virtual standstill.³⁰ Many parents emphasised the importance of going back to school.³¹ They argued that students should support disciplined structures such as PSTAs and the NECC which were encouraging students to use the limited resources that they had and to stop using violence against their 'own' people.

In 1987 political violence reached new heights in Pietermaritzburg because of the existing political differences within black communities. The whites- only elections in May exacerbated the situation because those who were against apartheid policies openly rejected the elections by staying away from their jobs and students also boycotted their classes. A UDF-COSATU campaign against the whites- only election secured a two- day stayaway and over 80% of Pietermaritzburg's black residents did not go to work.³² Inkatha warlords were terrorizing the

²⁹P.Zulu, 'Resistance in the Townships' in F. Meer.(ed) Resistance in the Township (Cape Town, Madiba Publications, 1989),p.7

³⁰B. Soobrayan, 'People's Education for People's Power'(Unpublished paper present at an Idasa Seminar held at University of Natal, Durban, Education Project Unit , 16 December 1989).

³¹Human Awareness Programme, The Changing Face of South African Education (Johannesburg, HAP, 1991),p.23.

³²J. Aitchison, 'Numbering the Dead: Patterns of Violence in the Natal Midlands'(Unpublished paper presented at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 18

communities on an enormous scale.³³

In 1989 political changes occurred when F.W. De Klerk took over from P.W. Botha who suffered a stroke. De Klerk, who saw that there were enormous crises that needed to be resolved before political conflict would subside, embarked on encouraging the release of political prisoners and he encouraged political negotiations to take place in South Africa for the first time. It was a great surprise to anti-apartheid forces when De Klerk officially announced on 2 February 1990 that political parties like the ANC, SACP, and PAC were unbanned.

Ironically, this should have brought about peace and stability in the townships but it seemed to have fuelled political hatred in Pietermaritzburg because political rivals Inkatha and the ANC supporters were once again locked fiercely in a battle from March 25- April 31. This period was called the 'Seven Days War' because it took only a week to produce large numbers of displaced people, deaths and vandalized schools and burnt houses. Schools operated in this context. Hart still recalls that the University of Natal took the initiative of opening some of its classes to accommodate school pupils that were victims of political violence.³⁴

The impact that this war had on education was enormous. The most heavily affected schools were in the Vulindlela District. The Natal Witness reported that teachers marched to the Department of Education and Training offices demanding safe conditions at schools.³⁵ At KwaPata high school, one of the high schools in Edendale, a student named Thamsanqa Zondi was shot dead inside the school premises. Political violence also exacerbated various forms of crimes because people were committing crimes in the name of politics. For example, Polly Mkhize, a young girl from ZibukeZulu, was attacked and stabbed to death by a group of

April 1988).

³³T. Nuttall, et al, Comrade lost A Life to Inspire Us (Pietermaritzburg, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian and Social Awareness, 1992), p.20.

³⁴Author's interview with Hart, 20 April 2000

³⁵Natal Witness 03 May 1990.

drunken boys in 1990. These boys accused Polly of being a 'police informer'. Priscilla Ngubo was also shot dead at ZibukeZulu high school.³⁶ All these incidents were not connected with politics but were carried out by those who saw the opportunity to use politics to fulfil their own hidden agendas.

The schools continued to become victims of violence because South Africa was in a stage of transition. Political negotiations were taking place at Kempton park in the years 1991-1992 when the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was held. Schools in Pietermaritzburg townships continued to be besieged by political violence mingled with criminal violence.

Due to the political negotiations that were taking place at Kempton Park, the violent political tide of the 1980s was subsiding but incidents of criminal violence were reported which in turn disrupted the functioning of schools. At ZibukeZulu high school in Imbali Stage 1 Sam Ndawo was shot in 1993 while he and his fellow students were waiting for a teacher to start a class.³⁷ The principal, Sipho Ntombela, was quoted by the Natal Witness saying 'I have no experience of teaching under a peaceful and normal situation. Parents must stop their children to come to school armed with guns.'³⁸ Such incidents of violence and fear at schools contributed to bad educational performances in a number of schools because the relationships between teachers and students had completely broken down. For instance at Sobantu High school the matriculation results went down from 36% in 1990 to 19, 6% in 1991. These were indicators that political violence had a bad effect on schools during the 1980s and the early 1990s.

1.5 Transition And Changing Policies in Education

When South Africans were preparing for the first democratic elections in April 1994 many people had high hopes, particularly in black educational circles, that the disruption of schooling and inadequate resources were going to be resolved immediately. However, that was

³⁶Natal Witness, 10 January 1990.

³⁷Ibid. 20 February 1993.

³⁸Natal Witness, 27 August 1993.

not going to be the case because apartheid education and political violence proved to have a lasting effect. King puts it clearly that:

By the early 1990s there was the perception that the culture of teaching and learning had broken down in many black, and especially urban, sectors of society and it was hoped that radical changes to the education system would restore it and revitalize the whole field after the disaster of apartheid education.³⁹

The National Party government was accused of all the ills that characterized black schools before 1994. These ills included inadequate educational needs, the intensification of political violence and its impact on schooling, and high matriculation failure rates. The government of the ANC took over the administration of the country with a strong enthusiasm for ‘correcting’ the ‘wrongs’ that were experienced by black people in education during apartheid. The ANC argued that:

Apartheid education and its aftermath of resistance has destroyed the culture of learning within large sections of our communities leading in the worst affected areas to virtual breakdown of schooling and conditions of anarchy in relations between students, teachers, principals, and the education authorities.⁴⁰

The first decisive step that was taken by the ANC government in its attempt to address the problems in education was to create a single education department for all races. All schools that were controlled by the government were now going to be examined by a single examination board. All nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa were given the powers to administer their departments of education. Even though this move was applauded by many people for marking a great shift from the past, the fact remained that many students, particularly those in the townships were not adequately fit to sit for the same papers with their white counterparts. The reason being that most of the black students’ schooling had taken part

³⁹K. King, ‘Policy Coherence in Education, Training & Enterprise Development in South Africa: The implementation Challenge of New Policies’ in W. Morrow & K. King (eds) Vision and Reality: Changing Education and Training in South Africa (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1998), p.xiii.

⁴⁰ANC, A Policy Framework for Education And Training (Johannesburg, Education Department, 1994), p.2.

in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. On the other hand, many former white schools offered well secured teaching and learning environments. This gap was evident in 1995 during the final examinations. For instance, Nyonithwele High School in Edendale scored a 12% pass rate, whereas, Alexandra High School in the Pelham suburb scored a 100% pass rate.

The new constitution of the Republic of South Africa put it that everyone had the basic right to education and that education was to be transformed and democratized in accordance with the democratic values of human dignity. However, when all South Africans won equal citizenship, their past was not erased . This meant that some students continued to attend schools which were well developed and resourced, while many others were still being taught in schools which were comparable with the worst- affected in Africa.⁴¹ Those schools which were highly reputed for good performance during the apartheid era continued to do so in a democratic South Africa, whereas those which were not doing well seemed to find it very difficult to improve. Kotter puts this succinctly:

The excitement of the struggle was replaced by the reality of poverty and hopelessness. Without a tradition of school learning...formal education had for many become meaningless. The culture of teaching and learning was absent for so long that the energy of many young people had already been channelled in less noble directions.⁴²

The problem of the lack of basic educational facilities continued to trouble black schools. Hartley made a gallant effort in her research to illustrate this point in 1996. She found that only 55% of schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal had adequate textbooks, whereas 43 % (predominantly African schools) did not have adequate textbooks.⁴³ The remaining 2% was for those schools that did not have textbooks at all. They were all African schools.

According to Hartley, 68% of schools in KwaZulu Natal were without computers. Only 22%,

⁴¹F. Pretorius, et al, Outcomes Based Education in South Africa (Johannesburg, Hodder& Stoughton, 1998), p.4.

⁴² D, Kotter, 'The State of Schooling in South Africa', p.54.

⁴³A, Hartley, et al, The Conditions of Primary and Secondary Education in KwaZulu-Natal 1995/ 1996 (Pretoria, Human Science Research Council, 1998),pp. 108-109.

mainly former white schools, had computers. On this very same issue of facilities, Hart a researcher in Sobantu township argued that in Sobantu High School most of the notes were still written on the board because teachers did not have access to computers where they worked. Schools that were adequately provided with desks and chairs in 1996 formed 56% of the total in the province of KwaZulu- Natal. Those that were inadequately provided formed 38%. The remaining 9% was formed by those that had none of these facilities.⁴⁴

Another controversial issue that has contributed to uncertainty about the role of teachers was the government's decision to end corporal punishment in schools. Many teachers protested against this move, arguing that the government was introducing this new policy without considering the realities and contexts in which teachers and students operated from day- to day. One of the teachers argued that after the end of corporal punishment children were 'officially' given permission to come to school without wearing school uniforms because they knew they could not be punished.⁴⁵ Above all some students did not do their homework because they knew teachers could not punish them. Some teachers, however, argued that the end to corporal punishment was a good thing because it promoted a good relationship between teachers and students. They argued that students were being encouraged to take responsibility without being threatened by teachers.

The new policies that the government introduced particularly in 1996 showed a remarkable attempt to move from the past experiences but they came with disadvantages as well. First of all, the matriculation results did not improve in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Since 1996 the provincial overall pass rates were going down because many schools, particularly those in the townships, still failed to produce good results.⁴⁶ The Department of Education and Culture publicized the provincial pass rates since 1996 in order to illustrate the declining standards. The result for KwaZulu -Natal were as follows:

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Mike Hart, 20 April 2000.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with R. Mkhize, 16 October 2000

⁴⁶ Department of Education and Culture, Annual Report (Pretoria, DEC, 1995), p.87.

1995	69%
1996	61.8%
1997	53.7%
1998	50.3%
1999	50%

One of the aspect of the changes since 1994 was the government’s new policy of redeploying teachers to different schools. It was felt that many schools particularly those in remote rural areas still lacked adequate teachers. Redeployment of teachers contributed to crises because many teachers were not satisfied and they argued that there had been a lack of consultation by the department to enable them to voice their ideas about the matter. Ironically, these changes in policy also reflected some of the problems that were being experienced during the apartheid regime because the state was too authoritative and did not effectively consult teachers about changes. Dovey’s argument in 1977 that teachers were labouring in the education system (apartheid education) and they were no longer free to exercise self-satisfaction was still relevant in the mid 1990s. Teachers could not confront authority and they submitted to their powerlessness.⁴⁷ As a result a large number of teachers were demotivated in their profession.

Teachers responded in various ways to government policies. The most effective way of voicing their grievances was to go on strike. In 1997 teachers under the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) threatened to go on strike at a time when the matriculants were due to write their final exams. The SADTU consisted of a large number of teachers that taught in African schools. When they went on strike the very same students that had been struggling during the apartheid years were also affected negatively. There were also crises within school institutions. Lessons did not start on time. Goodenough wrote:

In many previously disadvantaged communities lessons fail to start on the first day of schooling. You see students wandering in the streets. I can be completely out of track but I would have thought that starting school an hour earlier would result in pupils having to be at school at least at 7am, so that by 8' o clock classes are already

⁴⁷K. Dovey, ‘Blue Print for Alienation: Education in South Africa’ (a lecture delivered at the University of Natal, 03 October 1977).

underway.⁴⁸

Many schools in black communities did not do well in 1999. For instance, there were 17 schools that attained a 0% pass rate in KwaZulu- Natal. All these schools were in African communities. Approximately 60 high schools out of 1 335 attained a 100% matric pass rate in Kwazulu Natal. The dissatisfaction of teachers with new education policies resulted in bad educational performance. For instance in Pietermaritzburg only 10 schools achieved a 100% matric pass rate in matriculation in 1999. Amongst these schools there was only one black school, Emzaweni High School.⁴⁹

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to highlight the social and political history in which township schools operated since the early 1980s. History shows that many schools in the townships have suffered from a lack of resources and this has had a great impact on their educational performance. The impact of external factors such as political violence exacerbated the crises because schools in the 1980s turned into 'sites of struggle' rather than educational arenas. Nevertheless, there was still something to praise during the volatile political times, for example, those people who were concerned with education attempted to bring the culture of learning and teaching back into vogue when they formed the National Education Crises Committee to counteract students' actions and their slogan 'Liberation Now, Education Later.' This committee argued that violence was not a proper solution because it was important for students to attend classes despite receiving the 'inferior' education under apartheid. The committee adopted a new slogan: 'People's Education for People's Power' in the mid 1980s.

The transition period in politics came with great expectations because many people thought that there would be quick changes but this was not going to be the case. Nevertheless we can appreciate that a step forward in education was taken, for example, when the government started to create a single education department in 1994. However this did not mean that there

⁴⁸The Daily News, 24 July 2000.

⁴⁹Department of Education and Culture, Ranking of All Schools According to Specified Pass Rates Intervals (Durban, DEC, 2000), p. 18.

were going to be quick positive changes because the new policies were met with mixed feelings from different people. This chapter aimed to set the scene for the following chapters which will be case studies trying to show in detail how different schools in the same area have operated since the early 1980s to the mid 1990s. Here we will see that there was much to praise and much to blame in troubled times.

Chapter Two

MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni: Exploring Factors Impacting on Effective Learning at the Two Schools

This chapter explores a brief history of MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni since the early 1980s. There are number of reasons for writing a history of these two schools. First, they are situated in Imbali township and therefore they seem to have a common history because they were affected heavily by political violence during the 1980s. Secondly, the schools have not enjoyed effective management and close cooperation between teachers, parents and students since the early 1980s. I have also chosen these schools because they and Sukuma Comprehensive school are the old high schools in Imbali that fit the time frame of this research into educational performance from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s. In this chapter I will analyze factors that impacted on the educational performance of MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni and in the following chapter I will be exploring a brief history of the very different case of Sukuma. I will first explore a history of MehlokaZulu.

2.1. MehlokaZulu (Case Study One)

The following table indicates some of the matriculation pass rates at MehlokaZulu.¹

Although I was not able to get all the statistics nevertheless these available figures show that the school has not enjoyed satisfactory educational performance because of the various factors that I will explore.

Year	Pass Rate	Year	Pass Rate
1988	32%	1996	81.11%
1989	36%	1997	57%
1991	45%	1998	18.38%
1992	69%	1999	35%

¹Principal's Annual Reports (November, 2000)

The following kinds of factors are important to consider. First, I will highlight the issue of infrastructure at MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni because these schools have existed without adequate basic learning facilities. The issue of infrastructure will be discussed because many teachers from both schools pointed to the problem of the lack of physical resources as one the major factors that contributed to the decline of the culture of teaching and learning and to poor educational performance.

Second, I consider student- teacher relations because many people lamented the decline of respect between teachers and students, particularly when political violence erupted in the 1980s. Third, linked to the decline of respect between teachers and students, the breaking down of morale, motivation and management of the schools by the staff members. Last, I will explore some of the important issues that cropped up after 1994 and which shaped the educational performance at MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni.

2.1.1 The issue of Infrastructure at MehlokaZulu

MehlokaZulu started functioning in 1975.² The school was built at the corner of F.J. Sithole and Sinkwazi roads. It consisted of a few classrooms that accommodated approximately 900 students. Overcrowded classrooms were a common sight at MehlokaZulu because the teacher- student ratio was 1: 50.³ Classrooms were not big enough to accommodate a large number of students. There were no laboratories. Science students had to struggle to theorize all the lessons because they could not practice what was being taught in the classrooms.⁴

Over the years the school had to struggle, for example, to print examination papers for lower grades because the school lacked physical facilities like typing and photocopying

²Author's interview with Zeph Mthembu, 19 July 2000.

³Author's conversation with Mduduzi Mthunzi, 31 October 2000.

⁴Author's interview with T.A. Tshabalala, 06 September 2000.

machines. When preparing for examinations teachers at MehlokaZulu had to go to town to type the examination papers or to Sukuma Comprehensive school. During lesson times MehlokaZulu students had to rely heavily on the notes that teachers wrote on the board. This issue proved to be one of the contributing factors to poor teaching and learning because students tended to memorize long passages without understanding their actual meaning. New classrooms were only made available at MehlokaZulu in 1993 after a long decade of political turmoil.⁵ MehlokaZulu stood out in the 1980s as the school that lacked basic adequate facilities. T.A. Tshabalala, the principal at MehlokaZulu, argues that it was true that the school lacked some of the basic facilities like a library and a laboratory but it was not true that the lack of such facilities was the sole cause of the disruption of classes in the early 1980s.⁶ In his view the issue of facilities was a problem but the most important factor that impacted heavily on educational performance was the outbreak of political violence in Imbali from the early 1980s onwards.⁷

2.1.2 The Impact of Political Violence on Student-Teacher Relations at MehlokaZulu.

According to Tshabalala political violence caused havoc amongst students and it also created a huge rift between teachers and students at MehlokaZulu. Teachers did not play a huge role in student politics. They were the victims of the political system too. They were not simply instruments of apartheid. It was true that some of them were incompetent in governing the school. The lack of effective governance of the school was one of the factors that angered students and which resulted in a huge rift between them and teachers.

At MehlokaZulu there was a problem of abusing authority and the mismanagement of funds by some teachers. In May 1980 about 900 students at the school boycotted lessons

⁵Author's interview with Bongani Ntshaba,

⁶Author's interview with T.A.. Tshabalala, 6 September 2000.

⁷Ibid.

in protest over expensive school uniforms and a R10 levy for fencing the school premises. They compelled Hector Khuzwayo, the principal, to explain where their money was going to be used because the fence was paid for by the Department of Education and Training (DET).⁸ This incident showed that students were no longer passive because they rejected being manipulated but this did not mean that they were lacking respect. They liked 'good' teachers.⁹ For instance, on 9 June 1981 approximately 100 students staged a one-day boycott of classes in support of a teacher who threatened to resign his post over a pay dispute.¹⁰ The refusal of students to pay a R10 levy and a one-day boycott of classes in support of a teacher who threatened to resign revealed that students began to distrust the principal's style of management. This distrust was going to grow particularly when students became actively involved in political acts.

Due to the growing instability within the school premises in 1980, the school committee decided to call an urgent meeting to discuss the problems of class boycotts. Nivard Dlamini, a member of the school committee and of Inkatha, suggested that the school needed strong security to monitor students' 'unethical behaviour.'¹¹ Dlamini proposed that the school needed a group of men to monitor the day- to -day life of the school. He suggested that the Inkatha Youth Brigade (IYB) was the best option because the DET did not have adequate funds to hire security guards. Many people, including students and teachers, disapproved of Dlamini's proposal, arguing that the school was being politicized along party political lines. They argued that non-Inkatha people would feel alienated at school. Dlamini's proposal failed but it signalled that the school was going to be involved in political turmoil because it served the students of different political persuasions. Teacher- student relations were going to be greatly affected.

⁸Natal Witness, 8 May 1980.

⁹ Author's interview with Patrick Zikode, 15 May 2000.

¹⁰Natal Witness, 10 January 1981.

¹¹Ibid.

There was a growing perception amongst radical students that teachers were apartheid instruments.¹² This was because many teachers did not become actively involved in struggles against the apartheid education system. Those who were actively involved were few because most teachers wanted to secure their jobs and feared dismissal. It was difficult for them to oppose apartheid directly because the government of the time had all the powers to terminate their jobs when they resisted. Teachers could not control their students at MehlokaZulu because they were afraid to confront authority therefore they submitted to their powerlessness. On the one hand, teachers tended to be passive when it came to direct involvement in political acts. On the other hand, students were actively involved at MehlokaZulu because they could be easily organized and they also believed in imminent victory against the apartheid system. It was not amazing to see students from MehlokaZulu High School in the forefront of political acts because the school consisted of a large number of radicalized students. These radicalized students were plotting to overthrow the school committee that was dominated by Inkatha councillors.

It was at this point in time that teachers were seen as indirectly sharing the same political ideas with Inkatha supporters. Inkatha was seen as a conservative movement in Imbali that blocked any form of progress. The majority of students at MehlokaZulu shared the same political sentiments with the UDF because they belonged to the newly formed branch of the Congress of Students Organization (COSAS) in Imbali.¹³

Since 1984 MehlokaZulu high school became vulnerable to external problems associated with political violence and crime. The main reason for this was the fact that the school was situated in an area that eventually became a 'political battlefield' between Inkatha and UDF supporters.¹⁴ MehlokaZulu was at the corner of Sinkwazi and F. J. Sithole

¹²Christie, The Right to Learn, p. 127.

¹³Author's interview with Cassius Lubisi, 11 April, 1999

¹⁴Author's interview with T.A Tshabalala, 6 September 2000.

roads. Inkatha supporters dominated Sinkwazi road because prominent members of this political group like Abdul Awetta and Jerome Mncwabe resided along this road. On the other hand, F. J. Sithole road was mainly dominated by young people who were UDF supporters. This group of young men often gathered at the shopping complex in Imbali Stage One. The second point to mention was the fact that MehlokaZulu high school consisted of students who belonged to different political groupings. The school acted as a centre of conflict between the two groups.

Although Inkatha -supporting students were few at the school, internal conflicts arose as a result of outsiders intruding into the school. For example, prominent UDF supporters, including the late Sikhumbuzo Ngwenya, mobilized the students from MehlokaZulu on 24 August 1984 to resist the installation of Patrick Pakkies as mayor in Imbali. Pakkies was going to be installed by the Minister of Cooperation and Development, Dr. Piet Koornhof, but this event took an ugly turn when students from MehlokaZulu crowded the streets threatening the minister and disturbing the occasion. Police were called and arrested prominent ‘agitators’ and many students were sjambokked . This incident, though it involved many students from other township schools, touched heavily on MehlokaZulu’s academic life because MehlokaZulu students were the ones who started the ball rolling.¹⁵ The school was now identified by conservatives as a ‘radical’ school that reared Amaqabane (the term used by the UDF supporters) rather than students.¹⁶

Political instability took the form of strikes and school boycotts in the mid 1980s. For example, many students responded to a national school boycott called by the Congress of South Africa Students in July 1985. High school students, in particular, in Imbali including MehlokaZulu protested on 19 July 1985 against the inadequate textbooks, demanded the election of Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and the end to

¹⁵ Author’s interview with Rey Mavuso, 25 July 2000.

¹⁶ Author’s interview with Nelly Zuma, 12 July, 2000.

corporal punishment.¹⁷ The protest over textbooks turned violent because students refused to disperse when the police ordered them to do so. They began to throw stones at police vehicles and some of them were arrested by the police. Students from MehlokaZulu staged a long sit-in without attending classes, they protested against the arrest of their fellow students. This long sit-in also symbolized that there was some form of unity amongst students who shared the same political sentiments. They were organized against the political system and, at the same time, this created a huge rift between them and teachers. Teachers' role in Imbali was ambiguous because they operated in a deeply divided society.

Due to the growing incidents of class boycotts, effective teaching and learning were being disrupted. The culture of teaching and learning was declining, too, at MehlokaZulu. The school committee which was dominated by Inkatha supporters responded by calling a meeting on 20 October 1985 at MehlokaZulu to form a vigilante group and to 'protect' their children who were due to write the examinations at the end of the year. At this time Inkatha was not making suggestions, in fact, they were informing parents and teachers that they were going to create a group that was 'authorized' to intervene in the school affairs whenever it saw fit to do so. The creation of a vigilante group widened the rift between teachers and students of different political persuasions because the school was now going to be patrolled frequently by Inkatha members. Teachers who were part of the meeting were blamed by radical students for allowing such demands.

The beginning of March 1986 was a major turning point at MehlokaZulu because Inkatha and UDF supporting students began to be involved in an open 'political warfare'. Imbali was dominated by conservative Inkatha councillors who wanted to crush any form of radical resistance from students. For example, Inkatha people attacked Sikhumbuzo Ngwenya in 1985 at home because he was associated with students from MehlokaZulu in

¹⁷ Zulu, 'Resistance in the Townships', p.26.

opposition to the proposed deployment of the Inkatha Youth Brigade at MehlokaZulu. Inkatha also attacked Robert Duma who was the leader of the Imbali Civic Association (ICA) which was formed at the beginning of 1985.¹⁸ It served as a direct opposition to Inkatha councillors because it encouraged students and the community at large to be actively involved in matters that touched the administration of the township. The attacks on Duma and Ngwenya spilled onto the school premises. Inkatha stormed into the school armed with knives and guns, seeking students who were fueling radical ideas at the school. Joe Zuma who was at MehlokaZulu in March 1986 witnessed a terrible incident when teachers were forced at gunpoint to identify those students who were active members of COSAS. The vigilante group stormed into the classrooms and many students had no alternative but to escape through the windows because everyone was a suspect.¹⁹ Many students got themselves injured because windows were broken and school uniforms were torn. Vigilantes were looking for people like Mbongeni Mthembu who was a prominent member of COSAS as well as a staunch supporter of the UDF.²⁰ Although Inkatha did not kill anyone inside the school premises, this incident was enough to cause havoc because the classes were disturbed and everyone was afraid to come to school on the following day.

Mbongeni Mthembu was murdered by Inkatha strongmen outside the school in May 1986. The assassination of Mthembu led to the vigorous resistance of MehlokaZulu students against these strongmen. On the day of Mthembu's funeral students marched down Sinkwazi road threatening to petrol-bomb Abdul Awetta's home. This did not help at all because Inkatha members were equally prepared for this. They opened fire on the crowd of students and this resulted in the deaths of two students from ZamaZulu Primary

¹⁸M, Butler, et al, Imbali: A Centre for Adult Education Study (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1993).p.92

¹⁹Author's interview with Joe Zuma, 20 July 2000.

²⁰Ibid.

school and one student from MehlokaZulu.²¹

Despite the direct conflict at MehlokaZulu, the disruption of schooling was also largely exacerbated by external forces including a major protest organized by the UDF, COSATU and COSAS in their opposition to the whites- only election from 5-7 May 1987. This protest march had an impact on schooling at MehlokaZulu because the school was the place where a mass political constituency of UDF students was based. MehlokaZulu staff and students joined in the stayaway. Over 80% of people in Imbali and Edendale responded to the call of the stayaway.²² These political demonstrations were unavoidable in a politically divided community of Imbali, and they contributed to the disruption of schooling at MehlokaZulu.

The period from 1987 to 1989 reflected that the school was a victim of external factors that directly impacted on teaching and learning. For example, on 22 May 1989 Jabu Ndlovu, who was a trade unionist and prominent UDF member, was assassinated by Inkatha supporters at her home. This incident had an impact on MehlokaZulu because most of the students staged a march in the township demanding the arrest of the assassins. On 11 June 1989 the students of MehlokaZulu joined the workers' stayaway demanding that Inkatha warlords, Jerome Mncwabe and Schizo Zuma be jailed.²³ These events continued to disturb the culture of teaching and learning at the school.

The assassinations of prominent figures in Imbali further aggravated the disruption of schooling at MehlokaZulu. The murder of Rev. Victor Africander on 4 May 1990 led to massive demonstrations, particularly at MehlokaZulu because Africander had been

²¹ Author's interview with Bongani Zaca, 29 September 2000.

²² J. Aitchson, 'Numbering the Dead: The Patterns in the Midlands Violence, a paper presented at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 18 April 1988, p. 14.

²³ J. Fairbain, Flashes in her Soul: The Life of Jabu Ndlovu (Cape Town, Buchu Books, 1991), p.75

closely associated with the school in times of crises. Africander was shot while driving children to the school. Teachers at MehlokaZulu and students marched to the DET offices protesting against insecurity at the school. The prominent Inkatha warlord, Jerome Mnwabe, was also gunned down in the morning of 18 May 1990. On the very same day many residents of Imbali, including students, were seen marching jubilantly 'celebrating' the death of Mncwabe because, in his life, he featured on many occasions associated with the killings of students and non-Inkatha supporters. These assassinations showed the impact that violence had on the lives of people, particularly the school children who were inevitably drawn into the conflicts.

2.1.3 Teacher- Student Motivation and Morale

The problems that faced MehlokaZulu over a decade of political conflict had a great effect on the functioning of the school. It seemed that political violence and the disruption of schooling were factors that led to the decline of the culture of learning and teaching at the school in the 1980s. Despite the decline of political violence, there were many cases of absenteeism on the part of students and teachers that contributed to poor pass rates in the early 1990s. Zinhle Khawula, who was a standard ten student at MehlokaZulu in 1991, pointed out that one teacher clashed with students because he was drunk at school and he could not teach.²⁴ He promised students that he would run classes on Saturdays to make up for the lost time but he did not turn up. The matter was reported to the principal but there were no further steps taken against the teacher.

With the subsidence of political violence in 1992 in Imbali many people believed that students and teachers were going to turn over a new leaf and start afresh. It was believed that the subsidence of political violence was going to bring the culture of teaching and learning into vogue at MehlokaZulu. This was a wish of parents as well as students but the situation was not going to change quickly because, on the one hand, many teachers

²⁴Author's interview with Zinhle Khawula, 21 August 2000.

seemed to have lost the spirit and the love of their profession. On the other hand, students also seemed demotivated. The situation at MehlokaZulu after political violence did not adequately reflect that the political tide had declined. Although Kotter wrote in the late 1990s his argument can be used to describe the situation at MehlokaZulu in the early 1990s. He argues that:

Perhaps the direct mass political action of students and (teachers) during the times of school boycott and other disruptions created more educational havoc than it contributed to political liberation. Although we do not deny that the student struggle was important in forcing the previous regime into retreat and negotiations ...at this stage in the late 1990s more than a generation has passed without the majority of students knowing what school learning involves and what makes the situation worse is that school students are at present being taught by thousands of teachers who have had little experience of what systematic and uninterrupted learning and teaching in schools are about. This is because many of the teachers in the formerly disenfranchised communities attended , as students, schools which were often disrupted due to political instability.²⁵

The Department of Education and Training helped MehlokaZulu by constructing new classrooms in 1993. These classrooms helped a lot in alleviating the problem of overcrowding. However, they did not bring the culture of teaching and learning back into vogue because some of the matriculation students boycotted lessons when these new classrooms were given to standard nine students for use.²⁶ They approached the acting principal, Brian Kwitshane, to change the decision and allow the matriculants to use these classes. Bongani Ntshaba, a student at MehlokaZulu, pointed out that this was a silly thing to do because the new classrooms had nothing different from the old ones. Ntshaba pointed out that this proved the point that the decade of political violence had drilled students to use violence even on matters that did not need to be approached that way. This incident led to the stepping down of Brian Kwitshane when Gasa, the new principal from Amakholwa high school, came to MehlokaZulu in 1996.

²⁵ Kotter, 'The State of Schooling in Southern Africa', p.50.

²⁶ Author's interview with Bongani Ntshaba, 21 August, 2000.

Gasa was a very disciplined man. He re-introduced a system of monthly examinations at MehlokaZulu in order to assess the work done by students and teachers. An incident occurred when one of the girls was found guilty of cheating in an examination room. The girl brought the answers with her into the examination room. Gasa ordered her out of the examination room. This angered other students and they cultivated a myth that Gasa was attempting to abuse the girl sexually. Teachers who witnessed the incident did not back Gasa even though they knew he was innocent. It seemed that they did not want to protect him because he was also strict against their absenteeism and failure to attend to students' needs. Many people's perceptions about MehlokaZulu in the mid 1990s were negative.

However, Gasa tried to raise the school's reputation and one indicator of success was that the school was able to achieve a matric pass rate of 81, 11% in 1996.²⁷ It was a pity that he did not stay at MehlokaZulu for long. Gasa left MehlokaZulu in 1997 as part of the government's policy of redeployment. T.A. Tshabalala took over as the new head of the school. T.A. Tshabalala argued that the attempt to bring equity at schools has been condemned as one of the factors that leads to poor educational performance because teachers are not sure of themselves anymore. They are moved against their will from one place to another. Tshabalala's argument illustrated the point that teachers in the new dispensation still seemed unmotivated as well as students because of new political changes that affect their profession.

2.1.4. Further Issues to consider

Linked to the issue of morale and demotivation amongst students and teachers, Tshabalala pointed out that another contributing factor towards poor educational performance at MehlokaZulu was that parents and the community at large were not actively involved in a day-to-day life of the school. For example, since 1997 there seems to have been a culture of non-payment of school fees at MehlokaZulu. The new policies

²⁷ Annual Report Department of Education and Culture (KwaZulu Natal, Department of Education and Culture, 1996).

of the South African Schools Act (SASA) are often misunderstood because many people think that the payment of school fees is optional²⁸. On the other hand, students themselves are not fully responsible because they do not convey the messages to their parents when the school governing body calls for a meeting at school. When combined all these problems contributed to poor educational performance at MehlokaZulu because the schools' matriculations pass have been falling from year to year.

Those teachers who tried to bring back the culture of learning and teaching into vogue were criticized and disliked. MehlokaZulu illustrated this point better in 1996 when Gasa was accused when trying to instill the discipline that was lacking at MehlokaZulu since the early 1980s. However, the discipline that Gasa tried to instill at MehlokaZulu in 1996 seemed to work because the school's matric pass rate improved dramatically. The improvement of the school's matric pass rate in 1996, I argue, shows that while the infrastructure was important in uplifting the standard of each individual school but the dedication and commitment of teachers and students were the most valuable resources that were needed in improving the standard of education not only at MehlokaZulu but in other schools as well. The following case study explores a history of Siqongweni which almost resembles that of MehlokaZulu.

2.2 **Siqongweni High School Since the 1980s (Case Study Two)**

The following statistics indicate matric pass rates of Siqongweni High school in the 1990s.²⁹ Although I was not able to find the statistics of the 1980s, nevertheless these figures indicate that the school has not performed satisfactorily as a result of a number of issues that I will explore briefly.

²⁸Author's interview with T.A. Tshabalala, 6 September 2000.

²⁹Principal's Annual Reports (November, 2000)

Year	Pass Rate	Year	Pass Rate
1991	37%	1998	19.5%
1992	64%	1999	20%
1993	54%		
1994	51%		

2.2.1 **The Issue of Infrastructure**

In my first chapter I highlighted the problems of inadequate infrastructure in many township schools. Siqongweni high school illustrated this point vividly because when the school started to operate in 1983 it did not have its own buildings and classrooms. While the proper high school was being constructed, students used five classrooms of Philani Lower Primary where teachers used a system of double sessions to accommodate the high school. They taught the young children in the other five classrooms that they had. This system created a space for the high school students to learn.³⁰ The rationale for establishing the school in this unusual manner was because there were only two secondary schools in Imbali at that moment. These were MehlokaZulu and Zibukezulu. The DET felt that there was an urgent need to establish a third high school, particularly in Imbali Stage 13 where there was no high school at all.

However, there were problems in running a high school and a lower primary school together. This was because of the unbearable noise that the young kids were making.³¹ High school students and teachers could not easily concentrate on their work. Teachers were unable to organize their work properly because there were no staff rooms available.³² This illustrates the point that Siqongweni was one of the ill-resourced schools when it began to operate. A new school was being built.

³⁰Author's interview with Mr. B. I. Mbeje, 25 July 2000.

³¹Author's interview with Rey Mavuso, 25 July 2000.

³²Ibid.

Siqongweni high school was completed in Imbali Stage13 in 1983. The infrastructure of this school was better than that of MehlokaZulu. For example, there were more than 50 classrooms at Siqongweni whereas at MehlokaZulu there were less than 25 classrooms. Overcrowding was not reported at Siqongweni. There were approximately 40 teachers who taught approximately 1200 students.

2.2.2 Political Violence and Siqongweni High School

The teaching and learning environment was supposed to be conducive at Siqongweni because the school is situated in an area that was not heavily affected by the political violence that besieged Imbali from 1984 onwards. Imbali Stage 13 in which Siqongweni was situated was given the name Shayamoya (an area where gentle wind blows) because of its peaceful environment.

However, the students of Siqongweni high school were also actively involved in the local students politics as a result of the establishment of the branch of COSAS in Imbali in 1983. Like those students of MehlokaZulu, students at Siqongweni also participated in the Koornhoff incident on 24 August 1984. This was because many students who attended Siqongweni came from all districts in Imbali township. Some came from Imbali Stage One and Two where political violence was rife from 1985 onwards.³³

External pressures that involved Siqongweni students heavily in political acts began in 1985. This year was a watershed for Siqongweni's involvement in politics because the leaders of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) Themba Ngubane and Ni Hadebe organized many students to boycott classes. These two encouraged students to demonstrate against inadequate textbooks, corporal punishment and they demanded the election of Student Representative Councils (SRCs). According to Mkhize, a teacher at Siqongweni, the DET had promised at the end of 1984 that it would deliver free

³³ Author's interview with Mdu Mazibuko, 11 August 2000.

textbooks as part of government's new policy of trying to improve black education. On 20 January 1985 students at Siqongweni boycotted classes when the textbooks were not delivered.³⁴

The principal tried to explain to students that the books were still going to be delivered because the academic year was still young. However, this explanation did not convince the angry students because they threatened to smash the principal's office with stones. The police were called to monitor the situation. As a result of this demonstration, the Imbali Committee of Concern (ICC) was formed by parents in late January 1985 to try to pursue students' grievances.

The DET officials went to Siqongweni and calmed the students promising them that the textbooks were on the way. Students returned to their classrooms hoping that their grievances were going to be attended to but textbooks were still undelivered by August. On 5 August students demonstrated again complaining about inadequate textbooks. This incident coincided with a nationwide school boycott called by COSAS in protest against the assassination of Victoria Mxenge, a human rights lawyer of Durban.³⁵ S. Mlangeni, the principal was faced with a dilemma because many students assumed that S Mlangeni knew the reasons for the delay in the delivery of textbooks.

Students did not only boycott the classes, they vandalized the school property. Many students believed that vandalizing the school property was another way of hitting back against the government system and they thought this was a strategy to demonstrate that they were dissatisfied with the inferior educational system that was characterized by inadequate teaching and learning material.³⁶ Students continued to boycott classes and the

³⁴Natal Witness, 30 January 1985.

³⁵ Mthombothi, 'Introduction', p. 3.

³⁶ Author's interview with T. Ndhlovu, 12 September 2000.

boycott culminated in the arrest of many students who were at the forefront of these demonstrations.

Themba Ngubane was amongst the six students that were taken by the police on 5 August 1985. Class boycotts continued when the students at Siqongweni demanded the release of Ngubane. They did not attend classes and they staged a week long sit-in because the incident of Ngubane's arrest was perceived as something affecting all of them. They shouted the slogan 'An injury to one, is an injury to all'.³⁷ The DET decided to close the school on 7 August 1985. Nicholson, the DET official, was persuaded by parents and teachers to negotiate with. Le Grange, the then Minister of Law and Order, to release Ngubane.³⁸ Ngubane was released after these negotiations and the DET promised to re-open the school on condition that students and parents would submit a written document promising that students would not boycott classes and damage the school property in the future. Parents who formed the school committee had no option but to follow the DET's instructions because many of them were willing to see their children going back to school. The schools was re-opened on 5 September 1985.

Political conflict at Siqongweni was fuelled by the fact that students themselves belonged to different political groupings. The majority of students supported the UDF because many of them were members of COSAS, a student movement that aligned itself with the UDF. Inkatha supporters were few at Siqongweni. After the demonstrations of August Inkatha supporters held a meeting in October at Imbali hall to discuss the disruption of schooling at Siqongweni High School. They formed a vigilante group to 'protect' their children at school.³⁹ The irony in this move was that Inkatha did not acknowledge the fact that the demonstration in August were aimed at pressurizing the Department of

³⁷ Author's interview with Paulos Mkhulisi, 2 October 1999.

³⁸ Natal Witness, 09 August 1985.

³⁹ Author's interview with Mr. Tshabalala, 27 August 1999.

Education and Training to bring textbooks to all students regardless of political affiliations.⁴⁰ This showed a peculiar role of Inkatha in student politics.⁴¹

The creation of an Inkatha vigilante group was rejected by many students because they did not like to see the school bowing under the influence of Inkatha. Hussein Awetta, the son of the prominent Inkatha figure attended Siqongweni. He was accused by students of taking part in the assassination of Mbongeni Mthembu of MehlokaZulu. Many students wanted the principal to expel him from the school because he came to school armed with guns. The principal argued that the matter had to be reported to the police because he had no authority to expel a student without concrete evidence. Due to the principal's reluctance in expelling Awetta, students took the law to their own hands. They stabbed Thami Khambule who was suspected of being a police informer. This young boy did not die but sustained serious wounds and he was rushed to hospital by the police. The principal and teachers who had vehicles were all afraid to help in fear of being labelled as Inkatha supporters. The teachers themselves had no idea of the role they were supposed to play because they were caught in the crossfire of a politically divided school.⁴²

The stabbing of this boy fueled conflict within the school because Inkatha men arrived at school armed with heavy guns seeking people like Ni Hadebe who were reported to have taken part in the stabbing of the young boy. The problem with the arrival of Inkatha strong men was the fact that they did not hesitate to shoot inside the school premises therefore many students were forced to abandon their lessons in fear for their lives. The Department of Education and Training tried to intervene to minimize conflict but things did not work out. They introduced a card system. Students had to carry student

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹G. Mare & G. Hamilton, 'Policing Liberation Politics' (Unpublished paper presented at the University of Natal, Seminar: 'Political Violence in Pietermaritzburg Area', 18 April 1988.)

⁴²Author's interview with Mr. R. Mavuso, 25 July 1999.

cards in order to prevent the intrusions into the school by the outsiders. Khwela points out that:

Towards the end of June 1985, the Department of Education and Training announced a 'Master Plan' that it hoped would increase security in the schools and contain the boycotts. The plan required all pupils to carry identity documents that had to be produced to the teachers before they could be allowed into the school premises. The plan was doomed to failure because identity documents were unacceptable as they were seen as another pass system.⁴³

The introduction of this new system was not going to work in a school like Siqongweni because students had already created holes in the school fence in order to escape when there was conflict.⁴⁴ This meant that students were not always using the proper gates when arriving and leaving the school. Due to the intensifying political clashes within the school premises, students' numbers at the school declined because local residents in Imbali began to send their children to different schools away from Imbali. With the opening of Fundokuhle high school in Stage 2 in 1988 many students particularly those who were identified as Inkatha supporters, left Siqongweni for Fundokuhle. This new school was perceived as an Inkatha- dominated school because it was situated in the area that was dominated by Inkatha supporters. Many students in Imbali's schools left their schools to attend classes in areas where political conflicts were not rife. The most famous place for this was the Msinga rural area where many 'student refugees' went. However, the students from Siqongweni were sometimes refused admission at local schools because the school was known as a 'bad' school within and outside Pietermaritzburg.

The dropping numbers of students at Siqongweni did not mean that the school's 'teaching and learning environment returned to normal. In March 1990 the students of Siqongweni attacked Nkosinathi Dladla's kombi because he was allegedly reported to be an Inkatha member and a police informer. Students could no longer be contained by teachers because

⁴³ Khwela, 'The Education Crisis in the Townships', p. 219.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Bheki Phetha, 5 September 2000.

when they attacked Dladla, all lessons were disrupted. In trying to contain students, teachers were similar to people who were trying to hold the oceans with bare hands.⁴⁵ Siqongweni high school only resumed some normality at the beginning of 1992 because political violence subsided in Imbali after the launching of the Imbali Rehabilitation Programme in 1991. The school was able to improve from 37%, a matriculation result in 1991 to 64% in 1992. The political transition in 1994 came with high expectations from many people. They were determined to break away from the problems of the past.

2.2.3. Low Morale and Demotivation Amongst Students and Teachers in the 1990s

Although political violence subsided after the elections in the country, the problems that Siqongweni inherited from the past were still a great stumbling block towards better academic performance. After 1994 the school experienced the problems of unmotivated teachers and students. Mfana Dlamini, a matriculant in 1995, argued that Siqongweni high school suffered heavily from the lack of effective management.⁴⁶ Teaching and learning did not start on the first day of schooling because many teachers come to school to register students instead of teaching. Usually if schools opened on a Wednesday teaching and learning started on the following Monday because teachers were still sorting out the administration issues. Students on the other hand were forced to stand in the long queues waiting to pay their school fees in different places in town.

At Siqongweni students have also been troubled by criminal violence particularly after 1994. For example, school property including chairs and desks were stolen in 1996. The principal appealed to students and parents at a meeting that was called on 22 January 1997 that they should not hesitate to report people to the police when they see them carrying school property.⁴⁷ The school fence was destroyed and this made it easier for

⁴⁵ Author's interview with R. Mavuso, 25 July 2000

⁴⁶ Author's interview with M. Dlamini, 16 August 2000.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with S. Ngcobo, 6 October 2000.

undisciplined students to dodge classes because they could not be easily controlled.

Sipho Ngcobo, the principal, argues that the school cannot achieve outstanding educational performance because many parents still fail to attend meetings organized by the school governing body. Instead they begin to point fingers at teachers. Sonto Moleme argues that

At Siqongweni the problem of ill discipline amongst students, and sometime teachers, is an ongoing process because students fail arrive at school on time. The school suffers from a lack of vision. Students come to school just for the sake of doing so. They do not seem to know the aim of schooling anymore and that is why they fail in numbers at Siqongweni. They should not blame the infrastructure because there are many schools that function without the resources that this school has but still manage to thrive.⁴⁸

In 1999 the school scored a poor matriculation result of just 20%. The department of education introduced a policy that stipulated that the schools that perform badly in matriculation results should write quarterly examinations, particularly the matriculants. The papers were set by the department of education because the department feels that teachers usually fail to finish the syllabus that is why they do not have adequate time to revise. Siqongweni high was required to write.

Conclusion

MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni high schools have experienced a number of problems that have contributed to unsatisfactory academic performance. These include the inadequate educational facilities such as libraries and laboratories, particularly at MehlokaZulu. Political violence from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s has contributed to the breaking down of the culture of teaching and learning in these schools. Linked to this has been a declining close relations between teachers and students. On the one hand, particularly during the heightening of political violence, teachers were sometimes perceived as agents

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Sonto Moleme, 21 September 2000.

of apartheid by those students who embraced 'radical ideas' since the late 1970s. On the other hand, parents and teachers believed that students were not committed to schooling and that was why some parents attempted to form vigilante groups to 'protect' their students against external disturbances. However, this was not a solution because these groups were politically affiliated to Inkatha. The initiatives alienated those teachers and students who did not share the same political sentiments. As a result violence broke out at both institutions. It had a negative effect on school results, for example, MehlokaZulu scored a 32% matric rate in 1988 when the tide of political violence was turning violently in Imbali. Siqongweni, in 1991 scored a 37% rate.

With the decline of political violence and the birth of a 'New' South Africa hopes of improving matric results were high at these schools. However, the period after 1994 did not erase the problems of the past. At these schools it became clear that there has been a lack of commitment from both teachers and students to the culture of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning fails to start on the first day of the academic year particularly at Siqongweni. Crime from the surrounding communities also affected the schools negatively. The educational materials have been stolen and vandalized at Siqongweni on an enormous scale. The chemicals that teachers store for scientific experiments were destroyed from time to time. At the end of the year students sit for examinations without adequately prepared for papers.

The lack of support from the parents has also been mentioned by the teachers as a factor that contributed to poor academic performance. Many parents do not only fail to attend school meetings they also seem not interested in paying school fees help that generate school resources. Parents fail to pay the fee of R150 a year but they buy expensive clothing for their children who come to school without proper school uniforms. These were some of the most important factors that have troubled these schools since the early 1980s. In Tshabalala's words schools cannot improve without the support of the parents

because schools exist in order to serve the best interests and needs of society.⁴⁹ If teachers, parents and students and all the education stakeholders work together there is a room for improvement as we have seen at MehlokaZulu in 1996 when the school attained an 81,11% matric pass rate. According to the new policy of the provincial department of education and culture, schools that achieve lower than 5% matric rate were closed at the beginning of the year 2000. Veven Bessetty argues that

The provincial education department has acted swiftly in cracking the whip over certain schools and has already deregistered 28 senior certificates centres which achieved between 0%- 5% matric rates. Pupils in the school were transferred to neighbouring institutions.⁵⁰

It seems likely that MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni might end up in a difficult situation if teachers and students fail to commit themselves to their work. Walsh points out that:

Schools should never be deemed to be failing if the teaching within them is good. Conversely, poor teaching undoubtedly puts a school at risk of failure. Good progress occurs when there is good teaching, slow progress occurs when there is weak teaching.⁵¹

⁴⁹Author's interview with T.A. Tshabala, 6 September 2000.

⁵⁰Mercury, 15 February 2000.

⁵¹M. Walsh, Building A Successful School (London, Kogan Page, 1999), p.17.

Chapter Three

‘Secure Cocoon’: A History of Educational Performance at Sukuma Since the Early 1980s

This chapter explores a brief history of Sukuma Comprehensive school. Sukuma was established in 1983 in Imbali township. The school differed from all the other schools in Imbali because it had better educational facilities. When talking about better educational facilities, I refer to the basic physical infrastructure that many schools in Imbali lacked. For example, there were no libraries and laboratories in other Imbali schools. Sukuma had these facilities and they were used effectively by teachers and students. The establishment of this school needs to be understood in the aftermath of the national De Lange report which argued for the reform of black education.

During the period of political turmoil in the 1980s in Imbali, Sukuma was almost left untouched by political violence. Teaching and learning continued without the major disturbances that spilled over into schools such as MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni. M. McMaster described Sukuma as a ‘secure cocoon’ because the school maintained its culture of teaching and learning. Sukuma was less involved in political conflicts during the 1980s and this was indicated by the improvement of matric pass rates from year to year. When the political climate changed in South Africa in 1994, Sukuma teachers and students were in a better position to demonstrate that the school was better than other schools in the area.

Success at Sukuma was due to the combination of factors that I will explore briefly. First, I will look at the issue of the physical infrastructure and its impact on the culture of teaching and learning. Second, I will explore why Sukuma became a ‘secure cocoon’ during the troubled political times. Third, I will look at the roles of students and teachers at Sukuma because they were the ones who determined how the school functioned, particularly during the troubled political times. Fourth, I will look at the issue of the curriculum of Sukuma because it shaped the school’s effectiveness over the years. Fifth, I will look at how the school functioned when the political climate changed in 1994.

3.1 **Resources and Infrastructure at Sukuma**

The school came into existence in 1983 when the Department of Education and Training was trying to make some educational reforms in black education. One of the grievances was that there were poor educational facilities in township schools. As a result, many township schools were struggling to improve their academic performance. Sukuma's establishment in Imbali was one of the giant steps that the government and the DET took to redress some of the imbalances of apartheid education system. The government came with a reform strategy to construct better facilities in schools after the recommendation of the De Lange report in 1980 that facilities in black schools should be improved. Butler points out that:

In 1980 the government announced plans for a major new multi-million rand educational facility in Imbali. The facility comprised Indumiso Training College, Plessislaer Technikon and Sukuma Comprehensive school.¹

The De Lange Committee had pressurized the government to consider some of the fundamental problems in the early 1980s that caused discontent amongst black students and that was why such initiatives came into being. Sukuma became the first school in Imbali to have better educational facilities. With its completion the school could be compared with some schools in white educational areas that had better facilities.

One of the main features that made Sukuma different from all other schools in Imbali was that Sukuma was a boarding institution. Sukuma's students were not exposed to external problems, particularly political violence, that troubled Imbali in the 1980s. The boarding facilities made it easier for students to have access to school facilities after school hours. A sizeable library and a laboratory were built. N. Ndlovu, a librarian at Sukuma, pointed out that they encouraged students to use the library not only during school hours but during their leisure time. This facility did not exist in other schools in Imbali. The library facility created a conducive environment for teaching and learning at Sukuma. The school appointed library monitors annually to ensure that

¹ Butler, et al, Imbali, p.91.

the facility was in good shape.² The boarding hostels were important for the school's educational performance because students stayed focused and were able to spend time with their teachers after school hours.³

3.2. Political Instability and Sukuma

Imbali was on the verge of political violence in 1984 when the majority of residents and students rejected the installation of the Inkatha- dominated Council. Sukuma was not involved in incidents associated with political violence because many students at Sukuma did not live at Imbali. They came from remote areas. They did not understand the social politics of Imbali and the reasons of conflict were unknown. Sukuma's non-involvement in politically related conflicts indicated that the school was different from other schools in terms of the culture of teaching and learning.⁴ Many people in Imbali began to view Sukuma as an 'outside entity'.

C.P. Lancaster, a former principal at Sukuma, argued that since January 1983 many staff, students, parents and education department officials were closely associated with the disciplined culture of teaching and learning at the school.⁵ It was not easy for outsiders to 'disturb' the school's commitment to teaching and learning. The former DET inspector B. I. Mbeje argued that incidents associated with political violence hardly touched the school in the 1980s.⁶ The only incident that Mbeje recalls which had an impact on Sukuma were the countrywide class boycotts in May 1985 when black students protested against inadequate textbooks, the need to form Student Representative Councils and the abolition of corporal punishment. Following this incident was the protest against the assassination of Victoria Mxenge in August 1985. School

²Author's conversation with Mrs Ndlovu, 07 August 2000.

³Author's interview with M. Chamane, 07 August 2000

⁴Author's interview with Rey Mavuso, 25 July 2000.

⁵C.P. Lancaster quoted in 'Principal's annual report' (1992), p.4.

⁶Author's interview with B. I. Mbeje, 31 July 2000.

students from other Imbali high schools visited Sukuma urging students to join the Congress of South African Students and the UDF. There were no incidents of violence because the principal and his staff members willingly allowed students to register if they wished.

The heightened social and political upheavals that plagued Imbali from 1984 intensified in 1986. Schools were affected. Surrounding schools like MehlokaZulu, ZibukeZulu and Siqongweni were invaded in March 1986 by Inkatha supporters following the bombing of the house of one of the Inkatha members. They arrived at schools armed with guns threatening students who were active in the UDF-COSAS campaigns. These strongmen did not set foot at Sukuma because many students at Sukuma were not actively involved in local clashes. The intensification of political violence was only felt by Sukuma in June 1986 after the declaration of the state of emergency. Schools were closed on 12 June in Imbali as a result of the clash between the Inkatha and UDF supporters in an area between Sinkwazi and F J. Sithole roads. Students who supported the UDF forced their way into Sukuma aiming to get support from the students. They demanded students to join them. One of the teachers, M. McMaster, survived stones injuries as a result of the anger and the impatience that students were showing. Students only dispersed when the police arrived at the scene McMaster argued that being a white teacher in a black school was difficult because many students, particularly during troubled political times, could easily label a white man as part of the system.⁷

Political violence died down in 1992 corresponding with political negotiations that were taking place at a national level. The years between 1984 and 1992 saw major disturbances caused by external factors that troubled many schools in Imbali but Sukuma was left almost untouched. Sukuma's lesser involvement in politically related conflict was also due to the strong culture of teaching and learning that enabled the school to function normally despite operating in a deeply divided society. The fact that the majority of students from the school were not from Imbali did not involve the school deeply in politically related conflicts.

⁷Ibid.

3.3 Student and Teacher profiles at Sukuma

The student and teacher profiles at Sukuma were different to those of the surrounding schools. The main distinction at Sukuma was that the majority of the teachers were white in the early 1980s. It was unusual to have a majority of white teachers in a black school in the 1980s. These teachers worked well with students even though the problems of racial conflict were still heavily felt in South Africa. At Sukuma teachers were dedicated to teaching and they had good relations with students. Q.W. Ngcobo, the current principal, argued that the teachers at Sukuma were dedicated to serve the best interests and needs of students because many of them were able to spend their time with students after school hours.⁸ The fact that Sukuma was a boarding school made it easier for teachers to guide and teach students beyond the confines of the classroom. Teachers at Sukuma were really motivated to teach.

On the other hand, the student community of Sukuma was dedicated to learning. Students who wanted to enrol at Sukuma had to undergo a written test.⁹ After careful selection students were admitted to study at Sukuma. The administrative staff at Sukuma was very careful not to take everyone. The method was advantageous to the school because many students who were selected felt that they had to study hard because they were not allowed to fail a class twice at Sukuma. Those who failed twice could not be admitted again. This system worked well because many students did not want to lose the opportunity of matriculating at Sukuma. Studying at Sukuma made students feel proud of themselves and they did not want to disappoint their parents. They had a sense of where they were going because their teachers had a vision as well. Students knew that they were at the school for the sole purpose of learning. This system, according to McMaster, enabled the school to have students that were willing to learn, because they were not easily influenced by peer groups outside the school.¹⁰ The use of selection criterion was not available at MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni.

⁸Author's interview with Q. W. Ngcobo, 6 September 2000.

⁹Author's interview with Siduduzo Myeza, ex student of Sukuma, 15 October 2000.

¹⁰Ibid.

3.4. The curriculum at Sukuma

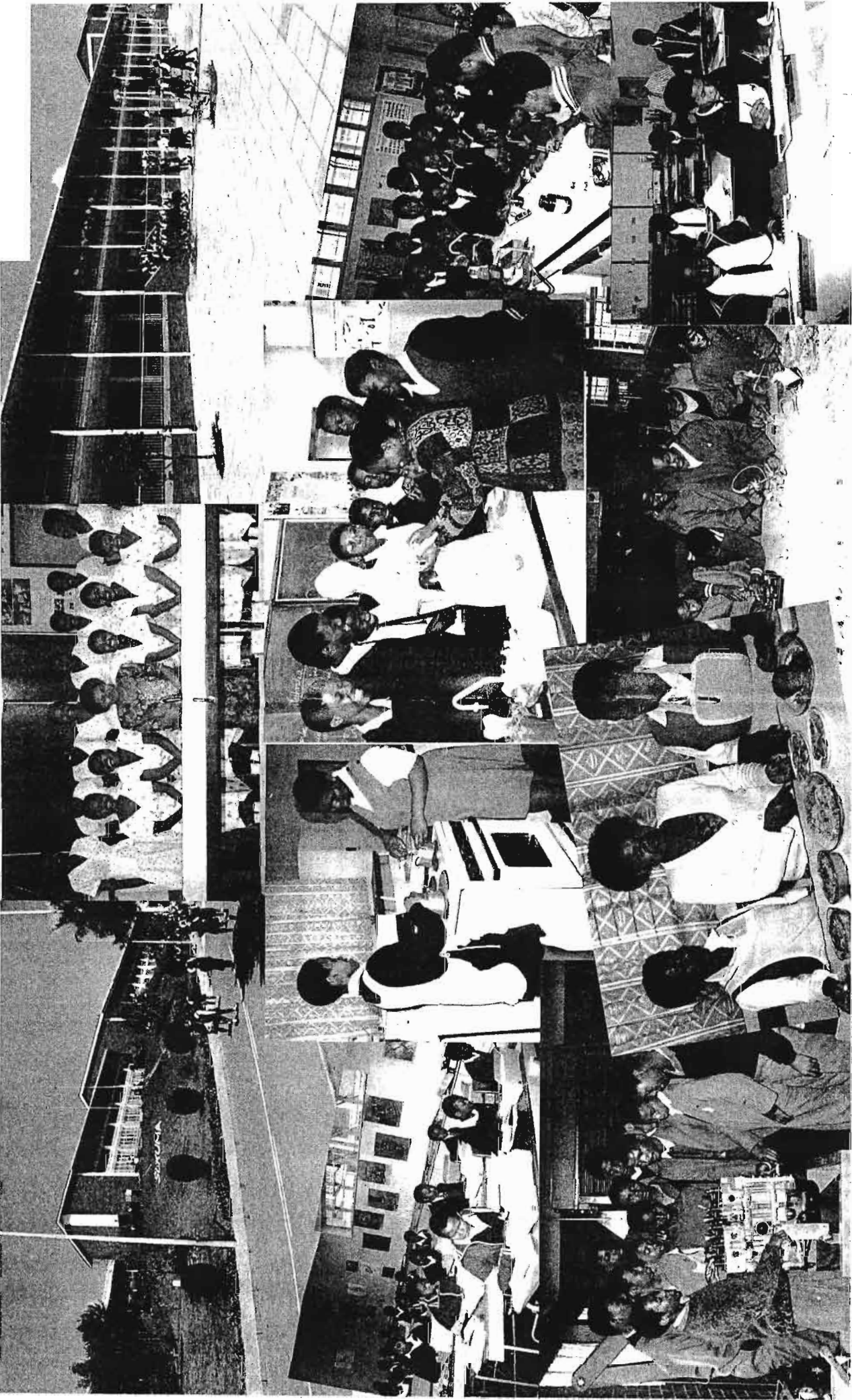
The curriculum of the school was wide consisting of a number of subjects that equipped students with practical skills. For example, the school offered woodwork, plumbing, bricklaying and technical drawing classes. Due to the wide curriculum that the school offered, Sukuma was called a Comprehensive school unlike all the other schools that did not offer these subjects. Vocational training was encouraged at Sukuma because it was felt that there were too many school graduates who were not adequately prepared to meet the challenges of the outside world.

Students participated in a number of activities the formal curriculum. The notable achievement of Sukuma in extra-curricular activities was the establishment of a team of Drum majorettes in 1987. In 1988 this team became the Natal champions. The triumph of the team enabled Sukuma to compete every year against multi-racial schools affiliated to the South African Drummies Association.¹¹ The school also established a traditional dance group in 1988 which won every DET circuit in 1989.

Teachers at Sukuma came with a number of initiatives that helped students. In 1991 C.P. Lancaster, the then principal, arranged the School Driver Education Programme (S.D.E.P). It aimed at helping students to learn to drive motor vehicles while they were still at school. M. Chamane, a teacher as well as an instructor, managed to help 13 students to get their Learner's Licences.¹² G. Fehrsen, a teacher of English, established a debating society at Sukuma in 1991. The aim of this society was to encourage students to express themselves efficiently in English. The debating society of Sukuma won a big competition organized by The Daily News in 1992. The school became the first black school to win the prize and it received R15, 000 that Sukuma donated to one of the poorest schools named Mpolweni Secondary near Greytown. These extra-curricular activities showed the active involvement of teachers and students in different forms of educational endeavours that raised the school's reputation. At the same time the active

¹¹ Author's interview with Dudu Dladla, 25 June 2000.

¹² Author's interview with Mr. Chamane, 7 August 2000.



involvement in extra-curricular activities symbolized that the school was not bogged down by the political violence that destabilized Imbali since the early 1980s. Lancaster pointed out in his farewell speech in 1992 that:

‘Sukuma has always overcome its difficulties and, like the phoenix in its school badge, has risen from the ashes of its own destruction to live yet again. Now, more than ever before, Sukuma is in a position of strength: it has become one of the leading schools in Natal. It has begun to live up to its new motto of ‘Sukuma leads, others follow’ in the same sense that the staff and students of Sukuma are now making a positive contribution to the society that they serve. I often told our students that the true measure of a school’s worth and excellence lay not so much in the quality of its matric results (which are nonetheless extremely important) but rather in the quality of the contribution made by its products to society. Although I am no longer part of Sukuma I am able to observe with deep pride the beginnings of a fine and proud tradition and I hope that the next ten years will see the development and consolidation of this tradition.’¹³

Sukuma’s Matric Pass Rates Since 1983

Year	Pass Rate	Year	Pass Rate
1983	77%	1992	99%
1984	76%	1993	91%
1985	56%	1994	100%
1986	44%	1995	95%
1987	65%	1996	98%
1988	87%	1997	94%
1989	90%	1998	95%
1990	87%	1999	80%
1991	90%		

¹³ C.P. Lancaster’s farewell speech quoted in ‘Principals Annual Report’ (November 1992)

The above table shows matriculation pass rates of Sukuma since 1983. These pass rates indicate that the school had a satisfactory educational performance when compared to MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni. It was only in 1985 and 1986 that the pass rates went down as a result of the disturbance that occurred when local students wanted to get Sukuma's students involved in political campaigns. Otherwise Sukuma was not disturbed too much by political turmoil and that is why the school's matriculation results were far better than those of the other two schools. There is a combination of favourable factors for Sukuma's satisfactory educational performance.

3.5. Political Transition and Sukuma.

The year 1994 saw a major turning point in the history of South Africa in that democratic elections were held for the first time. Expectations from many people were high because they were willing to see the improvement of matriculation results and students' commitment to their studies. The political transition gave Sukuma a new determination to produce an outstanding academic performance at the end of the year. The school obtained a 100% pass rate at matriculation. When the Natal Witness interviewed the principal, he argued that a work ethic was reinforced because the management of the school conducted class visits and assessed teachers' performance.¹⁴ Sukuma finished amongst the top 40 DET schools in the country as a whole.¹⁵ One of Sukuma's students, Vusi Mveli, became the best student in DET schools in Pietermaritzburg because he achieved As in English, Physics and Mathematics. Nationally, he was ranked 33rd amongst DET students.

Despite the lesser experience of political violence since the founding of Sukuma, the beginning of 1995 was accompanied by internal crises. The biggest problem that the school experienced was that some people in the community began to force their way into the school. People who wanted to force their way into the school were young boys seeking access to the girls' hostels. The hostel staff members that looked after the students had to call the police to prevent them from doing so.

¹⁴ Natal Witness, 31 December 1994.

¹⁵ Ibid.

On 19 February 1995 four students from Sukuma joined the drunken boys but they were reported to the principal and the School Governing Body (SGB). The principal and the SGB took a decision that resulted in the suspension of four boys.¹⁶

The parents backed the principal and they argued that students deserved to be suspended because they had misbehaved. Unfortunately, this did not resolve the problem. These four students had a great influence amongst students and the majority of students began to boycott classes on their behalf. Q. W.Ngcobo, the principal, and the parents were firm in their decision and they argued that students should sign forms promising to behave and to abstain from further disruptions. The boycott of classes had lasted almost a week when Sikhumbuzo Ntsele, a student, died. He was caught trying to force his way into girls' Hostel no.7. On 2 March 1995 the Springbok Patrols security guards that were installed at the school to monitor the situation shot him because it was reported that he had first pulled out a gun. He was rushed to hospital but he did not make it because he died on the way. This incident was greatly regretted by teachers and parents because the students at Sukuma were becoming influenced by peer groups outside the school. This incident was the only bad experience that touched the school in the mid 1990s. The death of Sikhumbuzo Ntsele was an embarrassing experience at Sukuma particularly because the school prided itself not only for satisfactory matriculation results but as well as producing good people. Despite this internal crisis the school succeeded in returning to its normal life.

At the beginning of 1996 the principal and his staff members devised a new strategy to serve the community of Imbali. They opened up their computer facilities for local community members to use. When the Natal Witness interviewed the principal, he responded:

‘Schools are a natural resource which can be used to their maximum, if schools are opened up after- hours to communities. Sukuma has about 31 computers and we believe that when communities are jealous over a school’s facilities they can sometimes vandalize the school. If the school is accessible to the community people will not destroy what we

¹⁶Natal Witness, 15 March 1995.

have.¹⁷

The principal's words illustrated the fact that many people outside the school had mixed feelings about Sukuma. Some of the people in the community, especially young boys, often targeted Sukuma because they saw it as an 'outside entity'-a boarding school for outsiders.

Conclusion

Sukuma Comprehensive School was different from all the other schools in Imbali. First, the school had better educational facilities. Secondly, the school was less involved in political conflicts. Third, teachers and students at the school were committed to their work. These factors combined to help Sukuma become an effective school when compared to MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni. However, this is not to say that the school did not face problems. Sukuma shows a good example of an effective school in an area that has been troubled by social, political and economic problems since the early 1980s. In all the years that saw crises in Imbali's schools, Sukuma stands out as the least affected school.

¹⁷Natal Witness, 18 June 1996.

Conclusion

This essay attempted to compare and contrast the culture of teaching and learning of the three schools. The main reason for this essay was to analyze the question of why there seemed to be more differences than similarities in the schools that were established in the same township. In an attempt to answer this question, I explored the question of infrastructure because many people, particularly students in the 1980s, protested vigorously against inadequate educational resources. While it was true that there were inadequate educational resources in many township schools, it was also true that within black communities some schools were better resourced than others. Sukuma had better educational facilities than MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni. The second issue that I discussed was the impact of political violence on the three schools, particularly during the 1980s. I compared and contrasted student-teacher relations in these three schools particularly during troubled political times. Matriculation pass rates are a controversial indicator of educational performance. In my research I was able to gather partial data of the pass rates at two schools. Incomplete as they are, the tables on pass rates point towards educational patterns at the two schools.

All three schools emerged in a political context that was characterized by the injustices of apartheid education. The system of apartheid education reinforced racial separation and inequality. MehlokaZulu, Siqongweni and Sukuma operated in that mist of uncertainty where political violence was intensifying as a result of students' involvement in political activities. In Imbali the UDF and COSAS were major political groups that attracted radical students to challenge the political system that they saw as unjust. Christie emphasized some of the injustices that sparked off the active involvement of students in political conflicts. She argued:

Schooling in apartheid South Africa was never designed to bring population registration groups together. It was designed to keep them separate. Separate schools were part of an overall plan for the social, economic and political development. Schools were part of creating and maintaining an awareness of separateness and difference. In 1983 the government rejected the recommendation made by the De Lange Committee that there should be a single education department for all groups. It reaffirmed its policy that each population registration group should have its own schools and its own education

department.¹

Christie's argument fitted the profile of all these schools precisely because they all fell inevitably under the Department of Education and Training (DET) which administered black education in South African cities from the early 1980 to the early 1990s. Due to the political system of apartheid huge divisions were created between the whites and the blacks. Black schools lacked basic educational facilities. MehlokaZulu high was a good example. In May 1980 class boycotts started at MehlokaZulu when students rejected a R10 levy imposed by the principal to fence the school premises.² The school committee met to resolve the issue but some members of the school committee suggested that the school had to be monitored by the Inkatha Youth Brigade (IYB). This created division within the school governing body which symbolized that the school was moving into a phase of political turmoil because not all people shared the same political sentiments. It seemed that inadequate educational facilities had an impact on people's relations within and outside the school because some radical students began to boycott classes demanding the DET to fence the school.

Sukuma and Siqongweni started operating in 1983. It was at this point in time that the issue of infrastructure became a crucial factor in analyzing the schools. For example, Sukuma Comprehensive school emerged as far better resourced school than the other two. The school was well resourced in terms of physical facilities including a sizeable library, laboratory and boarding hostels. On the other hand, MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni did not have these facilities. MehlokaZulu, in particular, had little infrastructure and inadequate classrooms. Overcrowding in classrooms was a common phenomenon.³ The manner in which Siqongweni high school was established vividly showed the problem of infrastructure. At the beginning the school used some classes from a lower primary school to accommodate students. It was only in 1983 that the new

¹Christie, The Right to Learn, p. 127.

²Natal Witness, 08 May 1980

³Author's interview with Brian Kwitshane, 6 September 2000.

school was completed. However, this new school still could not be compared with Sukuma in terms of physical facilities.

It was not amazing that the issue of curriculum differed between MehlokaZulu, Siqongweni and Sukuma. On the one hand, Sukuma offered a variety of subjects including vocational training. Teachers and students specialized in courses such as Motor Mechanic, Woodwork, Electricity and Technical Drawing. On the other hand, Siqongweni and MehlokaZulu only offered general subjects. Students who attended Sukuma had a wide educational scope because their lessons were not restricted to the classrooms environment.

The year 1983 was a turning point in the history of politics in Imbali. The major cause of political conflict was the fact that Imbali residents did not share the same political ideas. Inkatha, on the one hand, was viewed by the radical UDF and COSAS members as a moderate organization against the apartheid government. On the other hand, the UDF and COSAS alliance was seen by Inkatha as a radical movement that was corrupting the youth, particularly the students at schools.

MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni high schools became the centres of political violence because they consisted of a large number of students who were inevitably involved in political skirmishes that began to take place in Imbali from 1984 onwards. Blase argued that:

Schools are complex, unpredictable social organizations that are extremely vulnerable to a host of powerful external and internal forces. They exist in a vortex of government mandates, social and economic pressures and conflicting ideologies associated with school administrators, teachers, students and parents.⁴

The major turning point that marked the involvement of Siqongweni and MehlokaZulu in political conflict was the Koornhoff incident on 24 August 1984. It was easy for the outsiders to

⁴J. Blase, The Politics of Life in Schools: Power, Conflict and Cooperation (London, Sage Publications, 1991), p. 1.

mobilize students from MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni because most of them knew the ins and outs of local politics. On the other hand, it was not an easy task to mobilize students from Sukuma Comprehensive School because many students were not from Imbali and its surroundings. This was the main reason that distinguished Sukuma from MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni. Sukuma was almost left untouched by external pressures and that was the reason McMaster described the school as a 'secure cocoon'.

There were advantages for Sukuma's lesser involvement in political conflicts. First, the school property was not vandalized. Secondly, the school continued to function in an atmosphere that was conducive for learning. On the other hand, MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni experienced the disruption of classes and the schools' properties were vandalized on such an enormous scale in 1986. The incidents of outsiders intruding into the school had negative effects on learning.

The relationship between teachers and students was one of the factors that shaped the educational performance of each individual school. With regard to MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni the relations between teachers and students seemed to crumble in the early 1980s, particularly as a result of political violence. For example, at Siqongweni Sipho Mlangeni, the principal, was confronted by students with stones demanding textbooks in August 1985. Teachers were accused of embracing conservative ideas by radicalized students. At Siqongweni the situation got to horrific extremes when Mlangeni's vehicle was smashed by students who accused him of being an Inkatha supporter. The reason for labelling the principal was because he did not suspend Inkatha -supporting students who possessed dangerous weapons within the school premises. Mkhize argued that they, as teachers, were not sure of the role they had to play anymore because students turned against them. He continued to argue that a teacher was easily labelled as Inkatha or UDF supporter when he attempted to apply discipline which was not in favour of either one of the political groupings.

While MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni seemed to be heavily affected by political violence from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, Sukuma was less affected. The only period that marked the

disturbance at Sukuma was 1986 and the school matric pass rate in 1986 indicated that . The period from 1994 was hailed by everybody in South Africa because many people were positive that the new democratic government would end educational havoc in schools. Sukuma stood out amongst the three schools as better positioned to improve educational performance. This was indicated by a 100% matric pass rate which the school attained in 1994. Despite the declining of political violence, Sukuma had demonstrated even during troubled political times that the school had a strong culture of learning and teaching. On the other hand, MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni seemed to improve in the year 1992 after the decline of political violence. However, the years that followed also showed that there was a lack of commitment from teachers and students to teaching and learning. It seemed therefore that many teachers and students were still demotivated even after the 'end' of apartheid education and political violence.

The commitment of teachers to learning seemed an important requirement, particularly for those schools that were heavily affected by various problems in the past. Gasa demonstrated in 1996 that despite the imbalances and problems that were inherited from the past at MehlokaZulu the commitment of teachers and students were critically important. In that year the school managed to attain a 81, 11% matric pass rate. Sukuma showed that in addition to the better infrastructure a strong culture of teaching and learning between teachers and students was established from the beginning. Wilcox and Gray argue:

Teaching and learning are, of course, at the heart of any school's activities. What particularly distinguishes the more effective ones is their press for achievement. Teachers expect their students to achieve and students, in turn, find themselves stretched and challenged in the classroom. Again there appears to be some mutuality of perceptions between students and teachers. There is an absence of conflict between students and teachers. Frequently, there is some kind of mutual respect and rapport. There are plentiful opportunities for students to make good or vital relationships with one another. These sorts of things do not just exist they are made.⁵

⁵B. Wilcox, and J. Gray, 'Good School, Bad School': Evaluating Performance and Encouraging Improvement (Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1995), p.20.

These three schools demonstrated that there was much to praise and much to blame in troubled times because Sukuma continued to hold onto a strong culture of teaching and learning while MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni seemed to have failed. Despite the impact of political violence in the 1980s and adequate learning facilities, MehlokaZulu and Siqongweni seemed to operate without a strong culture of teaching and learning. Teachers, students, parents and all education stakeholders need to rethink the objective of teaching and learning in township schools. Active involvement from all stakeholders will bring about the restoration of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. Sukuma seems to be on a right route despite the problems that were inherited from the apartheid regime. It is the commitment of Sukuma staff and students that need to be praised. Hartshorne argues that:

Money alone is not going to bring about the construction of secondary schools. The competence and commitment of teachers, the rehabilitation of youth within a 'learning culture' are all matters that people and not money will have to bring about.⁶

⁶K. Hartshorne, Crisis and Challenge : Black Education 1910-1990 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992),p.126.

Bibliography

List of Categories

1) Primary Sources

- i) Newspapers**
- ii) Official Printed Sources**
- iii) Interviews**

2) Later Sources

- i) General Secondary Works**
- ii) Periodicals and Articles in Journals**
- iii) Seminar Papers and Theses**

1) **Primary Sources**

i) **Newspapers**

Daily News, 24 July 2000

Mercury, 29 January 1999

Natal Witness, 8 May 1980

Natal Witness, 10 June 1981

Natal Witness, 9 August 1985.

Natal Witness, 10 January 1990.

Natal Witness, 03 May 1990.

Natal Witness, 20 February 1993.

Natal Witness, 27 August 1993

Natal Witness, 31 December 1994

Natal Witness, 15 March 1995

Natal Witness, 18 June 1996

ii) **Official Printed Sources**

ANC, A Policy Framework for Education and Training, Education Department, Johannesburg, Department of Education, 1994.

Department of Education and Culture, Annual Report KwaZulu Natal (Pretoria, DEC, 1996)

Department of Education and Culture, Annual Report KwaZulu Natal (Pretoria, DEC, 1997).

Department of Education and Culture Annual Report KwaZulu Natal (Pretoria, DEC, 1999).

Department of Education and Culture, Ranking of All Schools According to Specified Pass Rates Intervals (Durban, DEC January 2000).

iii) **Interviews**

Chamane, M. (07 August 2000)

He is a deputy principal at Sukuma.

Dlamini, Mfana (16 August 2000)

He was a student at Siqongweni from 1990 to 1994.

Hart, M. (20 April 1999)

He was a researcher in Sobantu in the 1980s. Currently, he is a lecturer in the School of Language Culture and Communication, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg.

Mavuso Rey, (31 July 2000).

He was a Principal at Siqongweni and Fudokuhle in the late 1980s, but now works in the Department of Education and Culture.

Mbeje, B. I. (25 July 2000)

He was a chief DET inspector from 1984-1993.

McMaster, M. (31 July 2000).

He was a teacher at Sukuma Comprehensive School. He sustained injuries during the clash between the police and students in 1986. He is currently a deputy chief education specialist in the Department of Education and Culture.

Mkhize, R, (5 September 2000)

He is a deputy principal at Siqongweni. He has been at the school ever since 1983. He witnessed the stabbing of a boy within the school premises in 1990.

Mkhulisi, Paulos. (12 September 2000)

A student at Siqongweni from 1987- 1990. He is currently studying for a Bachelor of Science Degree at University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Mthembu, Zeph, (19 July 2000)

He teaches at MehlokaZulu and he has been at the school since 1979.

Myeza, Siduduzo, 20 July 2000.

A former Sukuma student from 1992-1996. He studies at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Ngcobo, Q.W. (7 August 2000)

He has been a principal at Sukuma since 1992.

Tshabalala, T. A. (6 September 2000).

He has been a principal at MehlokaZulu since 1997.

Zikode, Patrick, (15 May 200).

A former student of MehlokaZulu from 1981 -1984.

2) **Later Sources**

i) **General Secondary Works**

Blase, J. The Politics of Life in Schools: Power, Conflict and Cooperation (London, Sage Publications, 1991).

Bundy, C. 'Action Comrades, Action': The Politics of Youth and Student Resistance in the Western Cape' in W. James (ed) The Angry Divide (Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Phillip, 1989).

Butler, M, et al, Imbali: A Centre for Adult Education Study (Pietermaritzburg, Centre for

Education University of Natal, 1993).

Christie, P. The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985)

Christie, P. and Collins, C. 'Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Representation' in P. Kallaway (ed) Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984).

Fairbairn, J. Flashes in her Soul: The Life of Jabu Ndlovu (Cape Town, Buchu Books, 1991).

Glasser, W. Schools Without Failure (London, Kogan Page, 1969).

Goodlad, J. A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future (New York, McGraw Hill, 1984).

Gray, J. and Wilcox, B. (ed) 'Good School, Bad School': Evaluating Performance and Encouraging Improvement (Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1995).

Hartley, A. et al, The Conditions of Primary and Secondary Education in KwaZulu- Natal 1995/1996 (Pretoria, Human Science Research Council, 1998).

Hartshorne, Crisis And Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992).

Hirson, B. Year of Fire, Year of Ash (London, Zed Press, 1979).

Hyslop, J. The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1994-1999 (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1999).

Kentridge, M. An Unofficial War: Inside the Conflict in Pietermaritzburg (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1990)

Khwela, M. 'The Education Crisis in the Townships' in F. Meer (ed) Resistance in the Townships (Cape Town, Madiba Publications, 1989).

King, K. 'Policy Coherence in Education, Training & Enterprise Development in South Africa: The Implementation Challenge of New Policies' in W. Morrow (ed) Vision and Reality: Changing Education and Training in South Africa (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1999).

Kotter, D. 'The State of Schooling in South Africa and the Introduction of the Curriculum 2005' in K. King and W. Morrow (eds) Vision and Reality: Changing Education and Training in South Africa (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1999)

Mathonsi, N. Black Matriculation Results: A Mechanism of Social Control (Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers, 1988).

McDonald, S. 'A Guide to Black Politics in South Africa', in H. Hitcher (ed) South Africa: Transition to What? (New York, Praeger, 1988)

Mthombothi, B. 'Introduction' in F. Meer (ed) Resistance in the Township (Cape Town, Madiba Publications, 1989).

Nuttall, D. L. Assessing Educational Achievement (Philadelphia, The Falmer Press, 1986)

Nuttall, T. A. et al, Comrade Lost A Life to Inspire Us (Pietermaritzburg, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian And Social Awareness, 1992).

Nuttall, T.A. et al, From Apartheid to Democracy: South Africa: 1948-1994 (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1998).

Nzimande, B. 'Children of War': The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling in Natal (Durban, University of Natal Education Projects, 1991).

Pretorius, F. et al, Outcomes Based Education in South Africa (Johannesburg, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998)

SAIRR, Survey of Race Relations (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1982).

Sonn, F. Education and the Mass Democratic Struggle (Cape Town, UTASA, 1989).

Truluck, A. Pietermaritzburg 1990: The Fractured City (Pietermaritzburg, The Black Sash, 1990).

Walsh, M. Building A Successful School (London, Kogan Page, 1999).

Zulu, P. ' Resistance in the Townships' in F. Meer (ed) Resistance in the Townships (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989)

Periodicals and Articles in Periodicals

Hart, M. & Gultig, J. 'The World is Full of Blood: Youth, Schooling and Conflict in Pietermaritzburg, 1987-1989,' Perspectives in Education Vol. 11. No. 2 (1990), pp.1-20

Sitas, A. 'The New Tribalism: Hostels and Violence' Journal Of Southern African Studies Vol. 22 (1996), pp. 235-248.

Seminar Papers and Theses

Aitchson J. 'Numbering the Dead: Patterns of Violence in the Natal Midlands' (Unpublished paper presented at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 18 April 1988.)

Bhebe, N. N, 'Mass Mobilization, Conflict and Repression: the United Democratic Front and the Political Struggles in Pietermaritzburg Region, 1983-1991' (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1996).

Dovey, K. ' Blue Print for Alienation: Education in South Africa', (a lecture delivered at the University of Natal, 03 October 1977.)

Hyslop, J. 'The Specificity of Struggle in South African Education' (Unpublished Paper presented to the Kenton - at Woodstock Education Conference, Cape Town, 1988).

Mare, G. and Hamilton, G. 'Policing Liberation Politics' (Unpublished paper presented at the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, 18 April 1988).

Mkhize, S, 'Mass Mobilization and Resistance: A Study of Selected Stayaways and Protest Marches in Pietermaritzburg, 1985-1989 (Unpublished Honours Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1995).

Soobrayan, B. 'People's Education for People's Power' (Unpublished paper presented at an Idasa Seminar held at University of Natal, Durban, Education Projects, Unit, 16 December 1989).