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# The origins and demise of bantu school boards and school committees in the urban areas: with particular reference to Soweto 1953 - 1979

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TITLE: THE ORIGINS AND DEMISE OF BANTU SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOL COMMITTEES IN THE URBAN AREAS: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO SOWETO 1953 - 1979

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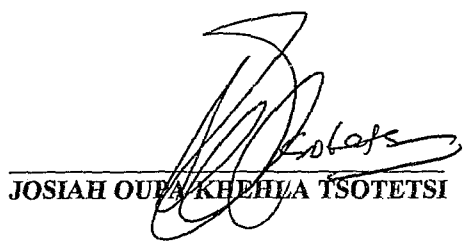
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

SUPERVISOR: SUE KRIGE

Johannesburg, March 1999

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this Research Report Dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other University.



**JOSIAH OUPA KHEHLA TSOTETSI**

5 day of 3 1999.

**DEDICATION**

**To the memory of my late brother - Ponono Aaron Tsotetsi (1947 - 1996)**

**AND**

**To my mother - Renia Maliqhwa Tsotetsi (1926 - 1966)**

**who both loved historical narrative and folk tales.**

## SELECTED LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress. |
| ATASA | African Teachers' Association of South Africa. |
| BAD | Bantu Affairs Department. |
| BCM | Black Consciousness Movement. |
| BEJ | Bantu Education Journal. |
| BPA | Black People's Convention. |
| CATA | Cape African Teachers' Association. |
| CYL | Congress of Youth League. |
| DBE | Department of Bantu Education. |
| FCSB | Federal Council of School Boards. |
| JCC | Johannesburg City Council. |
| MIHS | Morris Isaacson High School. |
| NCAW | The National Council of African Women. |
| NEAD | Non European Affairs Department. |
| NEC | National Executive Committee. |
| NP | National Party. |
| NUSAS | National Union of South African Students. |
| PTSA | Parent-Teacher-Student Association. |
| RDM | Rand Daily Mail. |
| SACP | South African Communist Party. |
| SAIRR | South African Institute of Race Relations. |
| SASM | South African Students' Movement. |

| | |
|---|---|
| SASO | South African Students' Organisation. |
| SCM | Students' Christian Movement. |
| SOWETO | South Western Townships. |
| SPCC | Soweto Parents Crisis Committee. |
| SSRC | Soweto Students' Representative Council. |
| TAC | Teachers' Action Committee. |
| TATA | Transvaal African Teachers' Association. |
| TFCSB | Transvaal Federal Council of School Boards. |
| TUATA | Transvaal United African Teachers' Association. |
| UBC | Urban Bantu Council. |
| WRAB | West Rand Administration Board. |
| ZWSB | Zulu West School Board. |

## PREFACE

My heartfelt gratitude and personal high esteem go to Mrs S.C. Krige of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, who supervised my Masters degree, and to whom I am deeply indebted for her guidance, patience and inspiration without which I surely would not have been able to develop and successfully complete this research report.

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The assistance, co-operation and diligence afforded me by Mr Morris Meshack Ngwenya, a senior clerk at Senaoane Secondary School in Soweto, who sacrificed most of his leisure time and evenings in typing and proof-reading the draft research proposal, cannot be underestimated.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my family for their unwavering encouragement and support throughout the trying period of my studies and research. My wife, Deliwe Tsotetsi and our three daughters, Kgopotso, Karabo and Thato who stoically endured inconvenience and hardship in their commitment to the realisation of this dissertation.

I am indebted to you all for assisting me to complete this research undertaking - indeed it has been a collective commitment!

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an effort in educational history, which attempts to recover and reconstruct the history of School Boards and School Committees in the urban areas with a view to assessing both their origin and impact on Soweto schooling during the period 1953 - 1979. Many scholars might have been able to account for the history of Bantu Education, its significance and its impact on African people in the townships. However the history of the School Boards have been sidelined for long and completely hidden from historical and institutional discourse. Whereas very little has been written about the structures of school governance, which for three decades shaped and influenced the education of urban African people (except an isolated case by Mkhize {1989} who researched the origin of School Boards in the Vosloorus Township of the East Rand), none have tried to account for the Soweto School Boards and School Committees, yet the name itself is known throughout the world as a symbol of the heroic struggle of its people against the apartheid system, including its schooling.

This research argues that the history of African townships regarding education, cannot be understood outside the framework of Soweto itself and certainly not with regards the history of Soweto School Boards. It is therefore endeavoured, within this dissertation, to put on the agenda of academic discourse and investigation, the otherwise marginalised structure of school governance of one of the largest African townships in South Africa.

The beginning chapter examines the process of formulation and implementation of the Nationalist Party education policy towards the African people in Soweto and elsewhere, with a view to establishing how this contributed towards the creation of School Boards and School Committees. This brings to the fore a view that, whereas the Eiselen Commission of 1949-1951 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 might have served as the foundation of the 'Bantu' School Board system, the Tomlinson Commission of 1955 sought to functionalise these institutions within the broad framework of the policy of 'separate development'.

Part of this research work attempts to show the advocacy and support the School Board system had, especially in its early years and points to ethnic, religious and cultural justifications which emerged from a diverse spectrum of opinion within the African Community of Soweto itself.

The investigation does not sideline the actions carried out by members of School Boards - especially against teachers - but attempts to evidence the achievements and help provided by these bodies to teachers and pupils; often at the risk of confrontation with the DBE.

Further examination shows that there was a link between criticism and reservation the Soweto teachers and pupils had against the School Boards and School Committees and their resistance of Bantu Education as a whole. Despite the School Boards' attempts to capitalise on the controversial 'Medium of Instruction' issue against the DBE and its

attempts to gain the confidence, and sympathy, of the Soweto people, their demise was finally, through the Education and Training Act of 1979, ensured and consigned to history.

**KEY WORDS**
Education, History, South Africa
African Education, Bantu Education, Bantu Affairs Department, Bantu Education Journal, Black Consciousness Movement, Department of Education and Training, Eiselen Report, School Boards, School Committees, School Governance, Soweto, Transvaal United African Teachers' Association, Uprising June 1976.

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# INTRODUCTION

The system of Bantu Education that was in existence for the greater part of the National Party's rule in South Africa has now been replaced by a non-racial educational dispensation that is part of the new democratic government. Along with this transformation has come a new representative system of school governance in which parents, educators and pupils, in the case of Secondary Schools, are joint stake-holders. In contrast to the Bantu School Boards and School Committees, the composition and powers of these democratically elected school governing bodies are statutorily stipulated in the South African Schools Act of 1996 and Government Gazettes related to Provincial and National Ministry of Education; yet it is generally observed and feared by many educators and educationists, in Soweto especially, that these institutions are still not fully effective.

It is the objective of this study to examine the origin of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in the African urban areas and the subsequent role these structures played in Soweto towards implementation of the system of Bantu Education until their final demise under the reforms of the Education and Training Act of 1979.

This writing of history of the Soweto School Boards and School Committees should, on the other hand, be viewed as a matter closely bound to the reconstruction of the new South Africa itself. It is part of the beginning of an exercise in defining a new identity of South African school governance and transformation towards a democratic order. It is on this score that the memory of what informs us about the educational controlling structures of the past needs to be captured, especially in the light of the historical importance of Soweto itself and the role it played in the transformation of the education of the disadvantaged African people of South Africa.

There has already been much research conducted on the system of Bantu Education and its adverse impact on the people of Soweto, yet very little has been said, or written, about the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto which sought to functionalise the very system of Bantu Education by trying to co-opt the support of teachers and the community. Subsequent literature review will show that although insight may be gained from the study of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees by Hyslop and Mkhize, the latter focusing on the role these bodies played in the East Rand township of Vosloorus, there is a need to study Soweto itself.

Finally, this research also endeavours to argue that although the Soweto Bantu School Board structure might have potentially provided some valuable experience for its lay African members, it later became a highly contentious subject, that wittingly or not, precipitated both its own demise as well as that of the very discredited policy of Bantu Education they sought to enforce.

## PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### (a) Literature on the Origin and Nature of Bantu Education

Understanding of the Bantu School Board structure would partly demand a brief background of the origin and nature of Bantu Education itself. Many authors tend to link the origin of Bantu Education to the Eiselen Commission, which Huddleston prefers to describe as " the logical corollary of the entire apartheid policy ir South Africa"[1]. Fleisch writes on the Eiselen Commission and goes into some depth in examining, not the institutional process of the Commission itself, bur rather the inner logic of the text of the report. On closer inspection he arrives at the conclusion that this Commission was, in fact, far more "scientific" and "expert", as none of its members were amateurs, but experienced administrators in "Native Education" or university trained experts[2]. He further contends that although the Eiselen Report itself made links between education and work, it nonetheless did not advocate the vocationalisation of African Primary schooling curriculum, nor did it lay undue stress on specialised technical or industrial programs at the Secondary School levels. In his later publication of 1998, Brahm Fleisch highlights a number of other perspectives on the origins of Bantu Education. The Liberal English perspective of the early 1950s tended to see Bantu Education as an outgrowth of the Afrikaner frontier mentality which was strictly aimed at discrimination and indoctrination. A new generation of South African revisionists in the late 1970s who held an Althusserian Marxist perspective, saw the Eiselen Commission as an outcome of the logic of capital accumulation and particular class interests and argued that there was, as a result, a functional compatibility between capitalism and the intentions of Bantu Education which was designed to pacify the newly urbanised proletariat[3]. There was at that time, asserts Fleisch, feelings of general insecurity generated by global fears of new conflicts and economic crises and by the massive urban changes, which brought unprecedented numbers of African people to towns. What may have been learned from this international study of the School Board system is the fact that some of the attributes of the British and American models of school governance may have had an influence on the nature of the School Boards and School Committees created by the National Party Government for the urban African people, including Soweto. This partly explains why the advocates of Bantu School Boards and School Committees, who included Dr Verwoerd, sought to justify such a local establishment on international grounds as being modern and progressive. It should be noted that although the School Boards, in an international perspective, might have had their own strengths and flaws, in no way were they comparable.

In contrast, Hyslop looks at social and economic factors and relates them to the concept of hegemony. He attributes the origin of Bantu Education to the urban and social crises of the 1940s and 1950s - the failure and internal conflicts of the existing mission educational system[4]. These were the circumstances, in Hyslop's view, that impelled the National Government towards adopting relatively pragmatic policies aimed at addressing urgent problems of social control and

labour reproduction in the urban areas. In other w[illegible] Bantu Education was a response to, or a form of, resolution to try correct the urban crises of the previous decade. There is no doubt that Hyslop, in particular, draws his interpretation on the work of Antonio Gramsci and conceptualises reproduction quite broadly. These understandings enhance our insight into the very origin of the Bantu School Board system itself, which was part of Bantu Education. On the strength of such understanding, contemporary scholars such as Mkhize are also convinced that the Bantu school Board system was, from the very beginning, intended to fulfill a political role of co-opting teachers and parents, not only into accepting the system of Bantu Education, but also of collaborating with the ideological hegemony of the ruling National Party.

It may, however, be observed that whilst Fleisch looks at the global, especially the United States' influence in relation to Bantu Education., Hyslop focuses on the social and economic factors. Cynthia Kros' approach focuses on the ideological roots of Bantu Education. She implicitly demonstrates that Bantu Education was also dependent for its initial on racist assumptions that it was justifiable to provide Africans with a cheaper education than Whites[5].

**(b) Literature on Bantu School Boards and School Committees**

Literature on our own School Boards under Bantu Education is limited to works by Hyslop and Mkhize. Hyslop shows that the purpose behind these School Boards was more political than educational. He traces their origin to the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953 which was itself preceded by the Eiselen Commission. He refers to the membership of these structures and provides a convincing argument that the State freely manipulated such bodies by insisting on appointment two-thirds of the parents, who included a Chairman and his Vice-Chairman, while the other remaining one- third elected parents had first to be ratified by the State itself. Hyslop further provided insight into resistance that was waged against the Bantu School Board structure during these successive periods. The role radicalised teacher bodies and political organisations in the mid 1950s highlighted, while the period 1960-1972 is referred to as the period of acquiescence and less visible mobilisation against these structures. The role of the 1976 Soweto upheavals is placed at the centre of events that brought about the downfall of the School Boards and School Committees.

These findings are corroborated by Mkhize who deals in a more focused way with origin, function and collapse of the Bantu School Boards on the East Rand Township or Vosloorus. Mkhize goes further to look at the role of the Transvaal United African Teachers Association, a body formed in 1957 to represent African Teachers in the former province of Transvaal and the reasons why it could not defend its teachers against harassment by these structures of school governance. This makes him conclude that TUATA failed to face such a challenge, primarily because it was conservative and rather more concerned with a busy social programme of choral music competitions, drama and tours and secondly, because

some of its most vocal members were quickly promoted to become principals and inspectors.

**(c) International Literature on Local School Governance**

The origins and establishment of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees cannot be narrowly understood in terms of local conditions and events only, but also in terms of comparative study of how such bodies were established or functioned in other well-developed countries. Such a study helps to create a framework, on the basis of which it may become possible to make an evaluation of just how different or close to the norm our system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees was. The South African literature on School Boards completely lacks a comparative perspective that might help to provide such insight.

It is not easy to establish the exact date on which School Boards emerged in countries such as England and America, because of their varying history of constitutional development and educational transformations; a subject that warrants a study on its own. There is no doubt that parental participation in school governance is commensurate, at least in the Western world, with democratic processes and decentralisation, characteristic of the early 20th century changes.

In dealing with the importance of School Boards and school governing structures, Kogan prefers to see them as a system of checks and balances which ought to ensure that schools become more accountable to the elected representatives of the community and parents[6]. Mann also takes this view. He believes that School Boards are a bridge between schools and the community and serves as both the focus and the agent of power in society[7]. This position appears to have been different in South Africa where the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were more accountable to the National Party State than to serve as a bridge between school and community.

Cistone, who insists that these bodies are a political fact, challenges Kogan and Mann's perception on School Boards. She argues that political and educational systems are interdependent and unavoidably serve each other. This is explained by the fact that a political system[8] would depend on the education system to impart some essential knowledge to society or its citizens while the same education system may perform other important functions that are central to the continuity of a particular political system. Cistone's observation could not be far from the reality which prevailed in Soweto, where the School Boards and School Committees were allegedly elected by parents, whereas they were a creation of a higher unit of the National Party Government, namely the Bantu Education Department.

Pitman believes that Cistone's argument that School Boards are of necessity a political fact, is too one-sided and therefore concludes that it is possible that

education can be clean, pure altruism and that it may be kept apart from the sordidness of political clutter[9]. This view is shared by many observers and critics in Soweto who believe, as it will later be shown, that there should have been no need for School Boards and School Committees to be used towards fulfilling the State's ideological purposes.

Gittel, in her examination of the School Board system in New York City, provides a useful observation. In her view, the creation of School Boards is the recognition of the inadequacy of a system which is too over centralised to respond aptly to local needs. It may be argued that Gittel's understanding does not correspond with the South African scenario, where the Bantu School Boards and School Committees under the National Party Government, were established primarily for ideological considerations. On the other hand she also observes that sometimes the establishment of these bodies does not necessarily always lead to change in educational policy, a position similar to our own situation where the creation of Bantu School Boards in townships such as Soweto did not imply a change in the Bantu Education policy. On the basis of these observations, Gittel argues that local School Boards in New York City were meant to have no real say in school policy or authority to resolve local problems, besides holding hearings on narrow local issues[10]. She observes that because there was a lack of community input in these bodies, it was not unexpected that they dismally failed to deliver a satisfactory product and service, resulting in some parents becoming disillusioned and frustrated to the extent that they started embarking on a campaign to take control of their own schools. Equally significant is Gittel's observation of the membership of the local School Boards in New York City. She established that in the upper middle class districts of NewYork, a School Board member would be a White male of Jewish or Catholic faith who was professionally qualified, his own children attending private schools and who had lived in the area concerned for at least nine years while in the other, less affluent, districts of New York, a typical local School Board member would be an average female who had graduated from High School and whose own children attended public schools. This was a far cry from our Bantu School Boards and School Committees where the majority of the members were government nominated males.

Educational control and administration in England is largely decentralised in keeping with the English spirit of self-determination[11]. At local level, education is controlled by two bodies - the Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) whose task it is to control and administer funds received from the State, to maintain school buildings, build new schools, appoint and pay teachers as well as appoint their own inspectors. They also have power in drawing up the curricula. The second educational structure which controls education at a local level in England, is the school governing bodies which, according to Corner, serves to providing a link between the LEAs and individual schools. These bodies are responsible for the general direction and governance of the particular schools. Regarding the membership of the school governing bodies in England, Corner makes an

interesting observation, "parents, teachers, members of the LEA and others with interest in education can be chosen as members of the governing bodies"[12]. What may have been learned from this international study of the School Board system is the fact that some of the attributes of the British and American models of school governance may have had an influence on the nature of the School Boards and School Committees created by the National Party Government for the urban, African people, including Soweto. This partly explains why the advocates of Bantu school Boards and School Committees who included Dr Verwoerd, sought to justify such a local establishment on international grounds as being modern and progressive.

Although much of secondary literature that has been reviewed provides a wealth of background and basis for political debate on School Boards and School Committees in general, questions and gaps remain unfilled. For example, whereas an in-depth account is given for the origins of the system of Bantu Education itself, no serious endeavour emerges from both Hyslop and Mkhize to show in which way political events such as the Eiselen Commission, the Bantu Education Act and the Tomlinson Commission, connected to the establishment of the Bantu School Board structure in the African townships. There is a clear lack of chronological treatment of the actions of the School Board in favour of a thematic approach and this appears to be visible in Hyslop's otherwise informed examination. No works of any significance have been carried out on the School Boards in Soweto itself and the studies by Carr - **Soweto: Its Creation, Life and Decline** and Bonner and Segal's - ***Soweto: a History*** *are more of a general* nature. School Boards, in the context of Soweto, are merely cited as passing examples.

It is also not clear who the members of these bodies were, what actions they embarked upon in order to implement the system of Bantu Education and what defence or advocacy was advanced in their favour as an educational controlling structure. Although it emerges that the Bantu school Boards, especially in Soweto, had on occasion come into conflict with the Department of Bantu Education, it is not clear how this contributed towards their demise, neither is any endeavour made to establish the collective impact of all the factors which equally played a role. The tendency is to accentuate one particular factor, namely, the role of the 1976 students and/or political influence of the Black Consciousness Movement, as the primary factor which led to the collapse of the Bantu School Board structure in places such as Soweto.

## PART TWO: METHODOLOGY

Limitations and gaps which could not be explored through secondary sources entailed that this study of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto during the period 1955-1979, turn into a search for different categories of primary sources in order to answer some of the questions. Firstly, governmental documents including the Eiselen Commission Report of 1951, the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Tomlinson Commission Report of 1955 and the Education and Training Act of 1979 needed to be studied closely in order to establish their meaning and relevance to the system of Bantu School Boards. It clearly emerged that, whereas the earlier three events jointly provided for the establishing of Bantu School Boards and School Committees, the Education and Training Act enforced their collapse.

The problem remained that these documents did not refer directly to the Bantu School Boards, nor were they always lucid on such matters, as their terminology was mainly legalistic. Added to these were documents on parliamentary speeches of cabinet Ministers such as H.F. Verwoerd, most of which can be found in **Hansard** and government publications. Such speeches had to be read in their political context and the implications they might have had for the Bantu School Board system.

Use of the **Bantu Education Journal** that served as the propaganda mouthpiece of government policy, especially among teachers, proved useful. It was this medium which advocated for Bantu School Boards and defended their performance in the African community. The problem of the **Bantu Education Journal** lies in its overt propaganda and the researcher has to "read between the lines". Opposition journals such as the **Fighting Talk** and the **Torch** deal mainly with the resistance to the Bantu Education policy and, to a lesser extent, the School Boards but are nonetheless, informative. Their reading helped to reconstruct some actions that were taken by these bodies against teachers, such as dismissals.

Some documents related to TUATA were accessed at the UNISA Documentation Centre. Included amongst them are letters of complaint, a circular issued by the Chief of Bantu Affairs Commissioner concerning the employment of African teachers in Johannesburg. Departmental Circular No. 29 of 1962 concerns itself with new conditions of service of teachers at "Bantu" community schools and a number of memoranda communicated to various governmental Officials. These all contributed in establishing the possible relationship that existed between TUATA and the Bantu School Boards.

The research study involved the piecing together of informative paper clippings from the Johannesburg City Library about the actions of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. In this regard, **The Sunday Times** (African edition), **The Rand Daily Mail, The Star** and the **Bantu World** proved highly useful. Switzer and Switzer argue that **Bantu World** can be regarded as a barometer for the feelings and perceptions of the African people in the urban areas, especially Soweto.

Such a study of the origin and the demise of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto would not have been meaningful without the immense contributions and information provided by

various people in Soweto who observed these structures first hand. Interviews were held with former principals, inspectors, teachers and members of these bodies and pupils who were involved in opposing the system of Bantu Education and the School Board structure in Soweto.

It was very difficult to establish the whereabouts of logbooks, minutes, correspondence, circulars,etc. that the various Bantu schools might have had. Moving from pillar to post did not yield any results. Excuses given included the burning of buildings by members when the Boards were closed in 1979. No archives could be found where documents might be located. Not even a visit to the Educational Regional Offices in Braamfontein and Commissioner street could provide a clue, yet, the experiences, information and input received from the people themselves, coupled with personal knowledge and observation, has led toward the successful completion of this thesis.

Reference to the outline of this Thesis shows that a historical or chronological approach has been applied. The brief background of Soweto and the control of African education prior to 1953 precedes discussions. The main thrust of the opening chapter is an endeavour to capture the political events under National Party rule that led to the foundation of the Bantu School Board structure. An attempt is also made to differentiate between the School Board and the School Committee and to explain their compositions and functions. Furthermore, this Thesis examines the advocacy, criticism and actions of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto during the period 1955-1960. The same themes are pursued during the period 1960-1972. It was during this period of acquiescence that individual teachers in Soweto were subjected to intimidation and abuse by the Bantu School Board structure, yet examples also emerge of a tense relationship between the Boards and the State. The concluding chapter seeks to argue that the factors leading to the collapse of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto were intertwined and occurred during the period 1972-1979.

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[12] Ibid: p.130.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOL COMMITTEES WITH REFERENCE TO SOWETO 1951-1955

### Introduction

This chapter examines the origin of the idea of "Bantu" School Boards and School Committees for the African urban areas such as Soweto, during the early period of the Nationalist Party rule. It focuses on the powers and functions of these bodies over teachers and schools. Such a study first demands a brief background of Soweto itself as the area of investigation and a brief background of control of African Education before the establishment of the Bantu Education System in 1953.

In dealing with the origin of the Bantu School Board structure, it will be argued that both the Eiselen Commission of 1949-1951 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 served to lay the foundation for the creation of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto, and that the Tomlinson Commission of 1955 sought to elaborate the function of these bodies within the broad framework of the Nationalist Party policy of Apartheid. The chapter concludes by highlighting the distinction between School Boards and School Committees in terms of their relationship, composition and functions. Such an examination will show that the government interfered with what was supposed to be a democratic process of African parental involvement in education by ensuring that these bodies were ethnically classified and two-thirds of its members consisted of the government's own appointees; an occurrence which strengthened the view or argument that, through these bodies, the government sought to eventually incorporate the African parents into the broader 'Apartheid' social hegemony.

### Part One: Background

*A Brief History of Soweto*

Many Soweto leaders have argued that the path through Africa runs through Soweto and that this township is a microcosm and the soul of Black South Africa itself.

> "The very word, Soweto, means many things to many people. To some people outside South Africa, the name Soweto symbolises the struggle of the Black people for freedom from the unjust system of Apartheid, while to South Africans themselves it signifies the country's main Black metropolis and the leading centre of Black Urban culture"[13].

The name was given it in 1963 as an abbreviated version of South Western Townships. Many people felt that it was a short, unbiased and easily pronounced name.

Soweto has a long history that, according to Carr may date back to 1906 when Klipspruit farm was recognised as an informal settlement area for African urban migrant workers.

Orlando East is regarded as one of the oldest townships in Soweto. It was created in 1928 by the Johannesburg City Council and named after Edwin Orlando Leake who sat on Council committees in charge of the administration of African affairs[14]. Many of those who moved to Orlando from employers' backyards or from informal settlements around Johannesburg were relatively wealthy Africans who could afford the extra transport costs to Johannesburg. With wartime industrialisation and increased African urbanisation, by the 1940s Orlando and its surrounds had become overcrowded. James Sofasonke Mpanza played an important role in the expansion of Orlando and the housing of more African people in shanties around Orlando East and the nearby Orlando West. The latter had been established after the Second World War on tracts of privately owned vacant farms west of Orlando East. Most of the Soweto townships were built under the National Party rule in the 1950s and the 1960s as part of a social engineering scheme of forced removals. By 1956, the Soweto townships of Tladi, Zondi, Dhlamini, Chiawelo and Senaoane had been created for the various ethnic groups. Townships such as Phiri, Naledi and Jabulane were built in 1957. By 1958 there were already well over 22 ethnically divided townships in Soweto[15]. Soweto is an area where there has been a sharp divide between the dreams and vision of the young and old, progressive and conservative, activist and collaborator. The South African policy makers, including the National Party, had never understood Soweto's diverse community and imposed their own divisions on the population with little regard for social reality. The creation of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were certainly part of the lack of such understanding.

*The Education of Africans before 1953*

From the late 19th century, education in South Africa was segregated according to race. African education in South Africa, even after the establishment of the Union in 1910, was largely controlled by various Mission Societies who had used education to convert indigenous people to Christianity. In so doing they destroyed the peoples' culture and replaced it with Western values. Mayeke argues that mission education in South Africa was used as a weapon for the subjugation of Africans[16].

On the issue of the control of African Education, the provincial councils provided financial grants which covered teachers' salaries. Matters such as the erection and maintenance of school buildings, as well as provision of equipment, remained the sole responsibility of the Mission Societies who had to obtain funds from their overseas parent mission bodies and, to a lesser extent, from their minimal school fees. This, however, did not imply that the Missions had complete control over African education. The Provincial Education Departments continued to exercise control of African education by inspection, examinations and drawing up of curricula and certification of teachers.

Debate about the control of African education goes back to the period of the establishment of the Union itself. Krige notes that according to the agreement of the Union in 1910, all education was to be controlled by the provinces for five years only, however this remained the case until 1953. Within such a provision , White, Coloured and Indian Education was to be provided by Provincial Government Schools, while the African education remained the preserve of the Missions. There were those who favoured central

control of African education by the Union Education Department, or as part of the "Native Policy", under the Native Affairs Department (NAD). Those who argued for provincial control believed that education was not a racial matter and African education should be administered side by side with White education without being substantially different from it.

Soon after the Union it began to emerge that a section of African people were opposed to the control of African education by the Missions. African teachers in the Cape and Transvaal, in particular, began to demand State control and more African control at local School Committee levels. They argued that the amount of taxes they paid entitled them to free, State controlled education. Teachers organisations such as the Transvaal Native Teachers Association were unhappy about the divisional nature of denominationalism as well as the autocratic nature of the mission control, especially when it came to appointment and dismissal of teachers on moral grounds. Also, the lack of parental and teachers representation in management committees were a sore issue. In evidence presented before the Cape Commission in 1919, some members of the Cape Native Teachers Association wanted the whole Mission School System to be done away with and replaced entirely by the undenominational public schooling. The Report of the Cape Commission itself, points out Krige, condemned the missionary sectarianism and lack of contact with parents and confirmed that there was a desire by African teachers for the formation of local School Committees in combined control with Superintendents[17].

Feelings among the urban African people for their schools to be administered in the same way as those for Whites also came into the open during the resistance campaign which was organised by the "Bantu Parents Association Conference" in Natal in 1939. The parents rejected the misconception that they had little or no desire to participate in the education of their children. They made it clear that the time had come to consult African parents directly on all matters that affected the education of their children[18].

It is evident that the debate about the control of African education before the National Party came into power in 1948, is a long and detailed matter which may warrant a research on its own. The authors of Bantu Education and the subsequent system of school used this desire of the African people for control of their education to justify closing down the Mission Schools and establishing in their place a system of Bantu Education to which the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto was directly attached.

## Part Two: The Origins of the System of Bantu School Boards and School Committees

*The Eiselen Commission 1949-1951*

There was a direct connection between the recommendations of the Commission on Native Education in South Africa of 1949-1951 and the subsequent establishment of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in 1955. One of the most important considerations which the National Party Government embarked upon within a few months

of its electoral victory in October 1948 as part of its reconstruction of African education and endeavours to create separate education spheres which could help the social engineering process, was the appointment of the Eiselen Commission in January 1949. The commission was tasked to inquire into the development of a singular "Native" education policy. It consisted of seven members, three of whom had German PhDs in either social work, theology or education and one an American doctorate in education. It is evident that the Commission was heavily weighted with academic "experts" even if they were not all specialists in "Native Education". The Commission was chaired by Professor Werner Eiselen, a German trained anthropologist of missionary parents who had worked for ten years as Chief Inspector on Native education in the Transvaal[19]. Professor Eiselen was regarded within the Afrikaner community and the National Party Government as "the most eminent, qualified and knowledgeable person on Native Education"[20]. Cynthia Kros is of the opinion that Eiselen was probably the most important of all the "Apartheid" ideologues[21]. It is noteworthy that no Africans or Missionary Societies were represented in the Eiselen Commission that was to decide the educational destiny of the African people in South Africa nor did representatives of mining and industrial capital feature at all in the Commission.

The main terms of reference of the Commission was for it to formulate the principles and the aim of "education for Natives as an independent race, whose past, present and inherent racial qualities, aptitude and needs under the ever changing social condition could be taken into consideration"[22].

Of the list of well over five hundred witnesses who testified before the Commission, some distinguished African academics and political leaders led evidence which rejected separate education and advocated for equal treatment for all in a single education system. Such members included members of the South African Communist Party such as Moses Kotane and ANC members such as Mrs K. Zuma and Professor Z.K. Matthews[23]. The Eiselen Commission had, in its released Report of 1951, recognised that those Africans who had given evidence before it had ostensibly showed an extreme dislike and aversion to any form of education specifically designed for the Bantu[24]. This feeling was also expressed by Dr D.G.S. M'timkulu, a leading African educationist who clearly stated that Africans were not prepared to accept laws, policies and institutions that sought to relegate them into a perpetual position of subordination in the land of their birth. Africans, said Dr M'timkulu, wanted integration into the democratic structures and institutions of this country[25].

The final report of the Eiselen Commission, released in 1951, recommended that there should be active participation of the "Bantu" not only within the educational machinery, but also in local government and in the management of schools in order that these institutions could be developed to reach their full social significance[26]. The Commission had not been specific about the nature of the structures of the school governance which had to be created, but did explain the rationale for the creation of such bodies. It is pointed out that this related to the necessity "to build up a new attitude to education, so that people will realise that it is a means to spiritual development, social progress, increase

of national income and the enrichment of cultural life"[27]. A possible interpretation would be that such bodies would help bring about changed attitudes and understanding of the system of Bantu Education amongst the urban African people. Kros and Hyslop also espouse this view. They argue that the Commission exploited the African peoples' dissatisfaction with the mission control of their education to push for their involvement in education as long as this was not to compromise the White man's dominance and superiority in all South African
spheres of life[28].

*The Bantu Education Act of 1953*

One of the most controversial measures passed by the National Party Government in 1953 to implement recommendations of the Eiselen Commission and to establish a separate system of education for Africans, was the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act (No.47 of 1953), which was spearheaded by the ultra conservative, then Minister of Native Affairs, Dr H.F. Verwoerd. The Act empowered the National Party State, through NAD, to assume control of African education by taking over the existing buildings of Mission Schools. In addition, the Act also provided the Minister with powers to establish three types of schools - the government Bantu Schools that included teacher training, the State-aided schools that included the Mine, Farm, Mission and Factory Schools and the Bantu Community Schools defined as "any Bantu School established, maintained and controlled by any Bantu regional, local, domestic council, Board or other body recognised by the Minister"[29]. It was for these latter type of schools that the government intended a system of School Board and School Committees. "Bantu" community schools were predominant in all African townships, one such being Soweto.

The Bantu Education Act allowed the Minister to exercise discretionary powers in determining the subsidisation of the Bantu community schools from a pool of taxes paid by the "Bantu" themselves: a confirmation that such a separate education system was designed to be inferior especially if one takes into consideration the possible limited scope of such a source. The Minister could also suspend, reduce or withdraw such assistance at any time if, in his view, such a step was necessary. This could have reached adverse implications for the intended Bantu School Boards and School Committees, whose fate was to rest on the sole discretion of the Minister. This limitation also created a possibility and opportunity that the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto could in future be imposed upon by the Department of Bantu Education which was established in 1958. Originally, "Bantu" education was controlled by the Native Administration Department (NAD). Hyslop believes this was an attempt to create a hegemonic order in education, whereby Africans would be incorporated into the 'Apartheid' system in which they would provide Whites with cheap labour.

Also clearly laid down by the Act (1953) was the stipulation that no person could establish, conduct or maintain a "Bantu" school unless such a school was first registered, but the Minister could refuse or cancel the registration if, in his discretion, he deemed its continued existence not to be in the interests of Bantu people (Article 12.(1)). The same provisions of the Act also provided the Minister with powers that he could, "with due

regard to the principle of providing for active participation by the Bantu People in the control and management of Bantu schools, establish regional, local and domestic councils, Boards or other bodies as he may deem expedient"[30]. This was clearly in line with the Eiselen Commission's recommendation for the active participation of the Bantu within the educational machinery at local government in the management of the schools.

Such provision was further elucidated by Article 12(2) that spelt out that the exact constitution, duties, privileges and powers and functions of such envisaged Boards and committees would be prescribed by regulations which were to be published, in a government paper, at a later stage. It is clear that as much as the Act dealt mainly with the restructuring and creation of separate systems of education for Africans, it is also treated as a matter of urgency and priority the establishment of the School Boards and School Committees, which would put such a separate education system into practice. This view was clear in Dr Verwoerd's speech in the Senate in 1954 in which he stated, "the local control of schools, under the supervision of the State, was to be entrusted to Bantu organisations which have to learn to render for the community a service hitherto rendered by the Mission Churches for a section of community only"[31]. Hyslop maintains that as the Mission Schools were unable to maintain themselves financially, there was already a rising tide of Africans who were undermining the hegemony which the Missions had exercised over the minds of the African Elite, hence Verwoerd sought to use this weakness of the Mission Institutions to justify the government's own created structures for the African people.

It may be correctly concluded that both articles 12(1) and 12(2) of the Bantu Education Act created a legal framework within which the existence of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees became a reality.

*The Tomlinson Commission of 1955*

The creation of the Bantu School Boards and committees at the beginning of 1955 coincided with the government's appointment of the Tomlinson Commission. It is transparent that where the Native Education Commission of 1940-1951 and the Bantu Education Act might have laid the foundation for the establishment of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees, the Tomlinson Commission sought not only to entrench and functionalise the National Party Government's ideology of separate development of different African ethnic groups in South Africa, but also to redefine the role and position of School Boards and School Committees within such a framework. In his 1950 address to the Ciskeian General Council, Dr Eiselen presented both the Commission on Native Education and the Tomlinson Commission almost as a joint venture, both of them being assigned, he explained, the task to prepare a plan for Bantu development[32].

It is clear that whatever the government's rationale was for creating these Bantu School Boards and School Committees might have been, it would not have been contrary to its own Commission's definition of the policy of "separate development" as a prerequisite for the sound national development of the Bantu communities in their own territories, in which they could have had the opportunities to exercise their own affairs. In fact, the

Tomlinson Commission whose recommendations were welcomed by the government was quite forthright that the stated policy was the only means by which the Europeans were to ensure their unfetted future existence and increasing race tensions or clashes avoided, "so the Europeans could be able to fully meet their responsibility as the guardians of the Bantu population"[33]. This view which was to have a direct consequence for the role School Boards and School Committees in African townships, like Soweto, were to play. Such possibility was confirmed by the Commission's unequivocal declaration of support of the findings of both the Native Education Commission (1949-1951) and the Bantu Education Act (1953), albeit with some express reservations and challenge for more thoughts on the education of Bantus within their determined boundaries and areas.

One of the most significant recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission of 1955, which the National Party Government was quick to accept and directly implement, was the view that the key principle to the provision of "real" education lay in the active engagement of the "Bantu" people in it. In such context, the Commission envisaged, schools would be there to serve the "Bantu" community, while the "Bantu" themselves would be glorified to feel that these "Bantu" community schools were an important means of raising them. The Commission further advised the National Party Government that it would be preferable if the "Bantu" community was to be harnessed in such a way that it took the initiative itself and regarded these schools as its own while through its natural and accepted leaders, developed a plan for education which they could comprehend. That these developments had some direct implications for the new Bantu School Boards and School Committees which had just come into existence, was further corroborated by the Commission's observation and insistence, namely that, "the active participation of the Bantu is required within the educational machinery, in local government and in management of schools in order that these institutions may be developed to reach their full social significance"[34]. This statement links with what had already been recommended by the Eiselen Commission of 1951.

Paradoxically, although the government was set to remove the control of the African education from the Provincial and Missionary Institutions, the Tomlinson Commission expressed the view that in order to make such a transference viable, the "Bantu" churches, in particular, should be encouraged by the government to take active steps for the sound religious development of such Bantu community schools which by implication were to be governed by the "Bantu" community itself.

The Commission went as far as insisting that the representatives of such religious or "Bantu" churches should be provided for - "To serve on School Committees where they can do all sorts of social and enlightenment work"[35].

The Tomlinson Commission went further than both the Eiselen Commission and the Bantu Education Act in seeking to relate these institutions to the State ideology of "separate development". The Eiselen Commission, the Bantu Education Act and the Tomlinson Commission were interwoven in as far as they illustrate that the creation of the Bantu

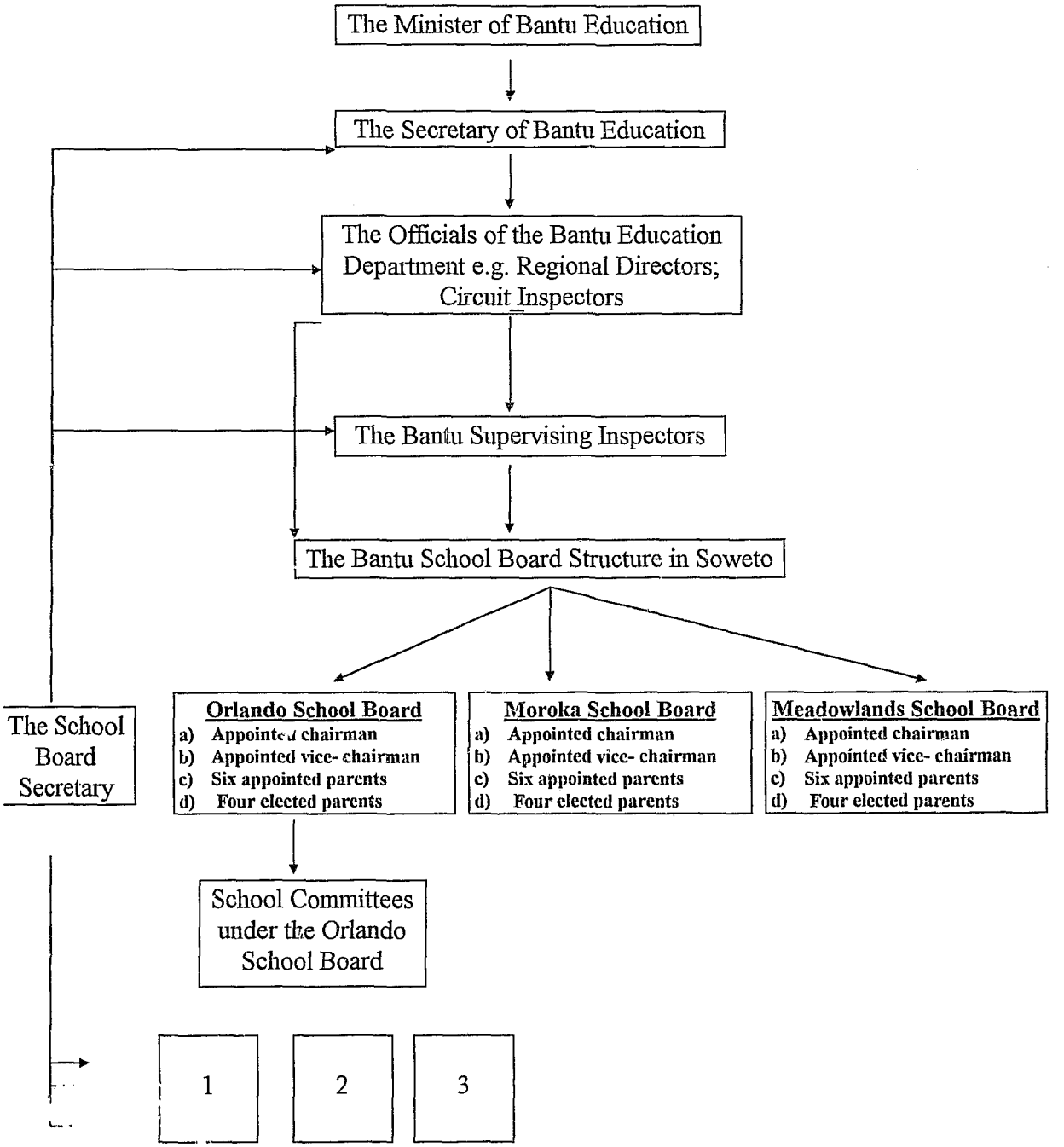
School Boards and School Committees in the African urban areas, Soweto included, was part of a larger policy of the National Party Government.

**Part Three: The Establishment of the Bantu School Board Structure**

Although the Bantu Education Act was promulgated in 1954, it was only in 1955 that the system of Bantu Education was put into practice. On 14 January 1955, regulations were published in gazettes and all official publications for the establishment of School Boards and School Committees in the "Bantu" urban areas, including Soweto. By the end of 1955, there were already well over 500 Bantu School Boards and 6000 ethnic School Committees in the African urban areas, including Soweto. Mr E. Siah, a member of the Senaoane Secondary School Governing Body and one of the residents who witnessed the establishment of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto, states that these bodies mushroomed almost sporadically like different ethnic townships in Soweto itself. The were established without any training or induction of parent members who joined them[36].

An illustration of the Relationship of School Boards and School Committees to the Broader Bantu Education Structures/...

**An illustration of the Relationship of School Boards and School Committees to the Broader Bantu Education Structures**



*The Structure and Function of the Bantu School Boards*

The government stipulations and regulations, as published in 1955 under the authority of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) which was then still in charge of "Bantu" education, provided that a School Board could be established in any "Bantu" area where there were a number of community schools. This was not yet the beginning of ethnic division, but the grouping of School Boards, especially in Soweto, according to area; such as was the case with Orlando School Board, Pimville School Board and Moroka School Board. The regulations further empowered the Minister of Native Affairs or Secretary that he could, in his personal capacity, directly appoint six "Bantu" parents onto a local School Board. It is not clear how he was to ensure an appropriated appointment as there were no interviews made to select a short list of potential members or any norms and criteria revealed of how a Chairman and his Vice were determined. Parents who represented different School Committees that formed a School Board could elect, among themselves, only four members to represent their bodies in the School Board concerned. The elected parents were, in turn, first to be approved by the Minister or Secretary of Bantu Education The provisions made it certain that; "no serving teacher or wives of educationist Officials qualified to be members of such a parent body"[37]. This ruled out teacher representation in such an important structure of school governance while ensuring that unelected African parents became numerically dominant.

It is apparent that in demarcation of School Board areas, the government ensured that ideological principles were taken into consideration. These included, inter-alia, "the retention of homogeneity within ethnic groups with regard to language and tribal identity, grouping of people with common interests in a given area and linking the establishment of School Boards to the creation of Bantu Authorities"[38]. This, it may be argued, was the beginning, though not openly as was the case in the early 1970s, of the division of School Boards in Soweto, to reinforce the principle of ethnology.

On paper, The Bantu School Boards in the urban areas, such as Soweto, had wide powers and theoretically some accountable functions to carry out in the interest of the community and schooling. However, in practice this was a different matter. The diagram shows that these bodies could be freely and directly interfered with by the Officials of the Bantu Education Department such as Regional Directors and Circuit Inspectors all of whom were White males. The Assistant/Supervising Bantu Inspectors also kept a close watch on their daily activities to ensure that these School Boards executed directives from the Department promptly and without any right to veto them; a view also propounded by Hyslop.

A School Board was deemed to control all the Bantu community schools within the area of its jurisdiction. It was the function of a Bantu School Board to erect and maintain school buildings and school equipment. It was also within the powers of a Bantu School Board to employ, transfer or dismiss a teacher, but subject to the approval of the Department[39]. This is an example of how the Officials of the Department, could, if they so wished, approve or order a dismissal of a teacher under the jurisdiction of a School Board.

Another task of a Bantu School Board was to levy and collect fund contributions from parents and together with monies allocated to it by the Department, to control and spend it judiciously. Hyslop argues that was a means of squeezing African communities financially to subsidise the kind of cheap mass education the government was aiming at[40]. It was also within the powers and functions of the Bantu School Board to investigate complaints against a teacher by members of the community, parents or inspectors and to institute whatever disciplinary action it deemed necessary, albeit subject first to the approval of the Department. Members of Bantu School Boards were also expected to submit recommendations to the Department with regard to modifications of syllabi of schools under their control. Added to these functions, a Bantu School Board could also exercise any other task as the Minister could entrust upon or prescribe from time to time.

*The Function of a School Board Secretary*

The Government regulations provided that any Bantu school that employed more than forty one teachers in its area could have a full time secretary while those with less than 41 teachers could employ part-time secretaries. A School Board Secretary was an employee of his Board and was paid by the Department of Bantu Education. Most of the School Board secretaries in Soweto were elderly, experienced, literate African males who might be a priest, former NAD employee or retired teacher. He worked for seven hours per day and remained on duty during all school vacations. The duties of a School Board Secretary included that he keep his office clean and orderly as part of his condition of service, a job he most likely had to himself as the majority of Boards could not afford employment and payment of office cleaners because of their limited funds[41].

Part of his duty was to deep a logbook in which he recorded the daily particulars of tasks performed. These included visits to schools, often without invitation and knowledge of the local School Committee, and entries of School Board meetings. It was also the responsibility of a secretary to execute the resolutions of the Board promptly, to dispose correspondence, to render school returns and statistics to the Department in respect of teachers, pupils' enrollment, teachers' resignations, termination of service and teachers' applications for leave. He also had to requisition for and allocate school furniture and to receive and dispatch salary cheques to schools. It was with regard to the latter that a School Board Secretary could withhold, delay and/or return a teacher's cheque to Pretoria for whatever reasons he might personally consider valid. The School Board Secretary also served as an accountant. He had to draw up annual estimates, prepare statements, bank school funds and pay school accounts. This was over and above the fact that he had to draw up agendas for Board meetings, give notices of meetings, keep minutes, translate documents written in Afrikaans for the members of the Board. He also had to collect and collate inspection reports of schools and submit these to the School Board for discussion. This created possibilities for corruption by the Secretary or the Board itself, as well as a chance to victimise teachers.

As a Public Relations or Liaison Officer of the School Board, he had to establish meaningful relationships with different institutions. The diagram in Section One shows that the School Board Secretary was expected to liaise with the Officials and Inspectors of

the Department of Bantu Education, whom he regarded as professional guides on educational matters. The Department's regulations also stipulated that a School Board Secretary served as a link between School Boards and the School Committees as well as between his School Board and the Department. He served as administrative link between the School Board and the immediate community and brought to the attention of his School Board any representations made by parents or social institutions, for example, churches.

An examination of the duties of the School Board Secretary clearly shows that he had the potential to be very powerful. He epitomised the School Board itself and comparatively yielded more influence and power than the Chairman of the School Board. The diagram shows that such a Secretary had powers to liaise directly with the Secretary of Bantu Education, Circuit Inspectors, local School Committees and the individual schools.

*The Structure and Function of the Bantu School Committees*
Below the School Boards were a plethora of School Committees representing different ethnic schools. The illustration in Section One shows that each Bantu School Board, for example, the Orlando School Board, had a number of School Committees under its jurisdiction commensurate with the number of schools it controlled. They functioned in a similar way to School Boards. In theory, the members of School Committees had to constitute their area or ethnic School Board. It was also expected that parents and guardians of the pupils in the Bantu community schools democratically elect members to their School Committees. In practice, it was the Secretary of Bantu Education himself or an appointee of the National Party Government and the White Commissioner of Bantu Affairs in the area who jointly had the power to directly appoint into a School Committee six suitable African parents of their choice to represent, inter-alia, religious interests of other groups. Parents of children within the school had no say in such appointments nor did these authorities solicit their recommendations. The parents themselves, could, according to provisions, only elect four additional members, but even these had first to be approved by the Minister or Secretary of Bantu Education. This clearly indicates that the entire system was less focused toward democracy and education, but rather intended to serve an ideological role.

The main flaw in the composition of these bodies arises from the fact that appointees, who were not directly responsible to the parents of local pupils, dominated them. It made a mockery of the government's claim that it had wanted African parental participation in the education system.

With reference to their role, the Department of Bantu Education pointed out that the Bantu committees had not only a direct and significant say in the education of their children, but also had gradually learned to accept responsibility and to act according to laws and regulations[42]. This confidence might have also been based on the understanding of the following responsibilities that the Bantu School Committees had to carry out.

A School Committee's task was to bring to the notice of the Bantu School Board any matter concerning the welfare and efficiency of the community school. Such a committee

also had powers to exclude any pupil from school on grounds of misconduct, lack of cleanliness, owing of school funds or any other reason. Concerning teachers, it was the function of a School Committee to inquire into any written complaint connected with the school and its teaching staff, but this did not entitle a teacher to lay such charges in return. A School Committee had the power to oblige a teacher attend its meetings for the purpose of giving information or to be questioned and if such a teacher was an assistant teacher, it was expected that his/her principal also attend such a meeting[43]. Members of School Committees had the power to act in an advisory capacity in all matters relating to the appointment of teachers. Some old teachers interviewed who had served under the system of School Committees, like Mr Sidney Matlala of Mmila Primary School, point out that it was not unusual for some members of these School Committees to openly boast that they had enough licence to employ and fire teachers overnight.

Another function of the School Committee was to recommend expenditure from school funds and to submit records of balance sheets to the Bantu School Board. Added to these tasks, a School Committee was also expected to exercise supervision over school buildings and to attend to matters such as repairs and fencing of their schools. A School Committee had the responsibility to convene a general meeting of parents and pupils in March of every year to read out the balance sheet of school funds while the principal of the school would present a general report of the condition and problems of the school[44].

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the origins and establishment of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in the urban areas, including Soweto. Such a study entailed, firstly, a cursory look at the background history of Soweto itself as the area of investigation, as well as the nature of control of African education under the Provincial and Missionary Educational System prior to 1953. It was established that such control excluded both teachers and African parents from decision-making structures.

At theoretical level, it was shown that the Eiselen Commission and the Bantu Education Act formulated the foundations for the establishment of School Boards and School Committees in Soweto, whilst the Tomlinson Commission sought to practically install these institutions within the framework of the policy of 'Apartheid'. In dealing with the constitution of School Boards and School Committees, the analysis pointed to some limitations and contradictions. It argued that whilst the government was wanting to convince the world that it was giving the African parents participation and decision-making in their own education system, it ensured, at the same time, that both structures were dominated by the majority of its own appointees.

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# CHAPTER TWO

## THE SCHOOL BOARD SYSTEM IN SOWETO 1953-1960

### Introduction

The focus of investigation in this chapter is the system of School Boards and School Committees in Soweto during the early years of 1953-1960. The demarcation seeks to suggest that, although the School Boards might have started in 1955, they were already part of the Bantu Education Act that was promulgated in 1953; this opening the way for their establishment. Late 1960 is taken as a cut-off period of government's experimentation and tolerance of radicalisation in education.

It is part of the objective of this chapter to study the wide range of advocacy and justification which was used during this period to defend and support the School Board system in Soweto. Such advocacy will be compared against some actions which were known to have been carried out by these institutions in Soweto in the early years. The study also brings to light some critiques of the Soweto School Board system in its early years of 1955-1960.

It will be concluded that, despite criticism and reservations, School Boards and School Committees in Soweto, during the early years, enjoyed a high level of support; though this might not have been the confirmation of their legitimacy as a structure working under the system of Bantu Education.

### Part One: The Period 1953-1960

The period 1953-1960 may be regarded as the early testing years of the newly established system of Bantu Education under National Party rule. Moss and Obery characterise this as a period during which the principle of providing active participation for African parents in the control and management of African Community schools was realised through the establishment of ethnically defined Bantu School Boards and School Committees. This was a period of optimism as far as the State was concerned[45].

Glassier brands this as a period during which the DBE was concerned with aligning African schooling with White labour market by cramming as many youths as possible into the first four years of schooling, as the White industrial employers were crying out for more semi-skilled African workers[46]. According to Hyslop, the conditions that had prevailed in education before this period had constituted major obstacles to social stability, partly because the system of education itself was not extensive enough to reach the mass of African urban youth, who were becoming uncontrollable, roaming the streets and indulging in crime. Hyslop concurs with Glaser by pointing out that the African urban workforce was, at the beginning of this period, not providing the numbers of workers with education required for semi-skilled labour. While it could be accepted that this was a

period of an attempt to restructure the education system through the introduction of the policy of Bantu Education with the emphasis on dealing with the educational structures of urban areas, of which the Soweto Bantu School Board Structure was an integral part, Hyslop is correct in pointing out that this was also a period of struggle between the dominant groups, namely the National Party Government and its attempt to create a new hegemony and to develop opposition and counter hegemonic alternatives in education[47]. The period between the mid and late 1950s was characterised by the struggle for African support between the government, which sought to implement its 'Apartheid' education policy and the African groups, which included teachers and extra-parliamentary parties, who were opposed to such a policy.

**Part Two: Advocacy and support for the School Board System**

In the forefront of defence and justification for the system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees were the top officials of the National Party Government itself. Included among these was Dr H.F. Verwoerd, who served as the Minister of Native Affairs in the early 1950s. It was in his speech that he made before the Senate of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa on 7 June 1954 that he stated "where possible the various types of schools now in existence must be controlled by Whites, in co-operation with bodies composed of Bantu members"[48]. This can be viewed as an indication that such ethnically designed bodies were expected to play a secondary function, while real power and control of African community schools remained with the Department of Native Affairs and later the Department of Bantu Education.. Dr Verwoerd's argument for a system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees was not something new. This had already been mooted by the Eiselen Commission and endorsed by the Bantu Education Act. The only difference lay in the fact that Dr Verwoerd was more specific about the purpose these bodies were to fulfil.

The support for the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto was also strengthened by the government's own publications. Among these were the annual reports of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, in which government openly boasted that, "Natives in Western Areas are generally very keen on education and in this area as a whole it is fairly well served with schools. Education seems to be one sphere in which they practise self- help"[49]. This was a reference to Soweto where the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were beginning to make an impact by building schools and attracting more parents into supporting these structures. According to Mr E. Siah, who keenly followed the activities of School Boards in Soweto, it had always been the government's rationale that schools should be divided ethnically and, for the same argument, that School Boards and School Committees were to be seen as good so long as they helped to serve their own people in the different "Bantu" locations of Soweto.

Support for the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto in the late 1950s also came from the newly established Department of Bantu Education which was established in 1958. Words of support were heard from different Officials including the White Regional

Directors, White Circuit Inspectors and "Bantu" supervisors. An example of such advocacy for the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto came to light at the Crafts' Exhibition, an occasion that was organised by the Moroka Site and Service School Board in 1958. Although the guests appeared to support the same concept, it was interesting that all the White guests were separately introduced by Dr C.H.J. Schutte, the local Circuit Inspector while the African dignitaries were introduced by Mr M.T.C. Morati, the local "Bantu" school Supervisor. It was on this occasion that the Regional Director of Bantu Education, Mr D.A.M. Prozesky defended the system of Bantu School Boards in Soweto by emphasising the great contribution that the parents were making in the education of their children. He also stated that bodies such as the Moroka School Board were demonstrating accountability and efficiency by being able to spend more than R10 000 of the State's funds each year towards paying their Bantu teachers' salaries[50]. An impression was created that the Soweto School Boards had the say on the payment of teachers' salaries and the government was merely obliging.

On the other hand, the Department's officials, who defended the system of School Boards in Soweto, also expressed cultural reasons for the system. Mr Prozesky argued that these School Boards were, "a new type of lekgotla" - a Sotho word for 'Assembly'. By this he implied that the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto were to serve as a place of deliberation wherein, not only school affairs were to be discussed, but also other matters that related to the welfare of the Soweto African Community. This, undoubtedly, helped expose what some Officials of the Department of Bantu Education perceived as an appropriate role for the bodies, namely, institutions that, as Hyslop argues, would work almost like those controlled by some "Bantu" chiefs in the reserves or some homelands. Also placing the role and autonomy of these bodies in context, Mr Prozesky confirmed what must have been the government's understanding as well, that the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were not only expected to be responsible to the local Soweto Bantu community, but primarily also to the State itself - a good example of how such a system of authority in the so-called "lekgotla"[51] hierarchy was expected to function.

An even more assertive defence and advocacy of the Bantu School Boards structure in Soweto came from a certain Mr J.P. Stegmann, a local Circuit Inspector. He argued that as far as the government and the Department of Bantu Education were concerned, these bodies had accepted their task in a responsible manner and had already performed their duties with great zeal and devotion, despite the fact that the entire School Board system was still an innovation[52]. This justification was based on the thinking that, although the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto might have had no previous experience to draw from, they had since their inception in 1955, already acquainted themselves well and in the process, gained valuable experience. This view was endorsed by the then Acting Secretary of Bantu Education, Mr J.H. van Dyk, who in a speech he made in Soweto in 1960, stated that the School Boards wished to dispel the ignorance and the lack of sympathy that still prevailed amongst some of the sections of the Bantu population to realise that education and the acquisition of knowledge was impossible without a father and a mother, for disrupted homes resulted in lawless children[53]. These were not the local Bantu School Board's sentiments, but the concerns of Van Dyk and the

Department. They wanted to argue that in order for children's schooling to be able to run smoothly and orderly in Soweto, there was an urgent need to support the Bantu School Board structure and to forge closer ties between parents, teachers and their School Boards and committees.

Support for the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto in the late 1950s also came, as may be expected, from the "Bantu" sub-inspectors who, because of discrimination and racial practices, occupied inferior positions within the Department of Bantu Education. One such argument came from Mr T. Phathudi in a speech he made in 1955 in Randfontein, before his imminent promotion into senior assistant "Bantu" inspector and transference to the Johannesburg circuit. Mr Phathudi told his audience of parents that they should accept and support the School Boards and School Committees, because they, "are the eye and the ear of the parents and the parents will become owners of the schools and the government will aid them"[54]. Such utterances coming from such a highly regarded educationist within the African community must have assured many parents of the government's goodwill and the possibility that through such structures they were going to autonomously control their community schools. This argument partly explains the reason why many parents were attracted to joining the Soweto School Board structures in Mohlakeng and Soweto. Dr S.K. Matseke, one of the old educationists in Soweto and who served under Mr Phathudi as a sub-inspector, argued that although the Bantu School Boards system in Soweto might have had its own limitations, it was on the whole a useful structure that helped fill the leadership vacuum and instilled order and discipline in the Soweto schools in the early 1960s. Another retired Assistant Inspector, Mr M.T.C. Morati, who was traced to the Standerton African Township of Sakhile after having spent over a decade in Soweto, also shares this perception. He points out that the Soweto School Boards were not a political party, but a genuine effort by concerned parents who, having been deprived themselves, wished to see their children educated under any circumstances. It is wrong, he says, to judge the relevance and the role of those early bodies of school governance according to our post 1976 attitudes and perceptions. The fact is that nobody was able to come up with militant alternatives at the time when the National Government had immense power to dictate terms[55].

Religious bodies, especially within the Afrikaner mainstream churches, also sought to defend and justify the School Board structure on biblical grounds. They saw this as a necessary separate creation by the government for the upliftment of the "Bantu" people in the urban areas. In 1957, Professor L.J. du Plessis of the Gereformeerde Kerk saw the whole policy of Apartheid itself as resting on the basic principles of "Western Civilisation" as practised by many Western nations and was in complete accordance with both the scriptures and Christianity. Referring to the system of Bantu Education and, by implication, its School Boards and School Committees, the Gereformeerde church argued that it was not inferior, but on the contrary, "as it is now planned, it is something to envy and naturally, the complete realisation will take years and will need the full co-operation of the Bantu community"[56]. The School Boards and School Committees could also play the role of building the foundation of the natural culture of the "Bantu" in accordance with their ethnic and tribal differences, while ensuring, as some Afrikaner academics of the time

argued, their assimilation of Western Christian values in the same way a country like Japan was able to blend its cultural values with Western civilisation[57]. The government and its sympathisers used arguments based on religious, cultural and ethnic considerations to justify and defend the Bantu School Boards and School Committee systems in the urban areas as well as in Soweto. The creation of these ethnically demarcated bodies was part of the ethnic zoning of Soweto itself, intended to serve the interests and political visions of the ruling National Party. As Verwoerd emphatically pointed out, "those who belong naturally together want to live near one another and the policy of ethnic grouping will lead to the development of an intensified community spirit"[58]. For Soweto such thinking meant that there would be a School Board for each ethnic group and a number of ethnic School Committees in the same township or location falling under the authority of different Bantu School Boards and different parts of Soweto.

The segregationist practice and proliferation of Bantu School Boards and School Committees all over Soweto on cultural and ethnic basis were also advocated by the National Party controlled press. Black people, including those in Soweto, were portrayed as having an instinctive tendency to want to live with their own group, hence the need for their own schools and School Board leaders. This was spelt out by the editorial of one of the Afrikaans papers. **Die Beeld** of June 1957 commented that the advantages of ethnic grouping were psychological and factual and this also preserved for the "Bantu" that which the White people prized for themselves in their own community, namely formal tradition, respect for natural leaders, preservation of mother tongue and mutual loyalties.

The Soweto School Boards and School Committees also received support from their own government appointed members. These members went about publicly thanking the government for establishing such bodies. In the opening of the offices of one of the School Boards, a certain Mr E.Motau was reported to have stated that credit must be given to, "ons baas, Mr J. de Jager for the much valued advice and for the example of industry and energy he set for us"[59]. This pattern of child-like sentiments and praise for a White Circuit Inspector or Official of the Department of Bantu Education also emerged from an address given by Reverend Ntoame, the Chairman of the Moroka Site School Board in 1958, in which he said that his Board wished to "thank our father, Mr Prozesky, the Regional Director of Bantu Education, a man who always answers our SOS as well as our grandfather Mr van Dyk, the Acting Secretary, who I hope will be even more sympathetic than our father"[60]. This was a clear indication of the level of timidity and inferiority suffered by such African figures that were directly appointed by the government into these bodies. This portrays the almost helpless position in which these structures of school governance were placed and the paternalistic role that was played by the National Party Government over them. It could also be that such attitudes and utterances were the expression of courtesy and modesty on the part of these members of the Moroka School Board in Soweto. Mr Mthonjeni, who was a member of the Moroka School Board in Soweto in the late 1950s and early 1960s supported the old system of Bantu School Boards in Soweto and argued that these bodies were more organised, focused and constructive than the present ineffective school governing bodies in Soweto whose

members were more politically informed but less concerned with effective teaching and learning in schools[61].

It has also been noted that the School Board structure in Soweto, in the early years, also attracted the support of some political figures and members of the ANC such as Paul Mosaka and Dr Nkomo. As Hyslop points out, they believed that they could join this system in order to change it from within, while others even went to the extent of regarding the Soweto School Board structure as their means of earning bread[62]. Some elderly teachers in Soweto, like Mrs B.N. Makhalemele, whose father was one of the educated members of the Meadowlands School Board, expressed mixed feelings. She argued that the earlier Soweto School Boards she knew were not as rotten and corrupt as those that came later in the 1960s and 1970s. Members of these Boards may not all have been learned, yet they insisted on a teacher being exemplary, neat and hard working. It was because of such attributes that a teacher remained a respectable member of the community in Soweto. The Government might have had its own intentions, yet it also depended on how each School Board or its members were committed to their ideals and programmes of what they wanted to achieve[63].

**Part Three: The Soweto School Board Structure in Action for the years 1953-1960**

It is a daunting and difficult task to try and periodise the study of the actions of School Boards and School Committees in a chronological order, primarily because of the overlapping of events and actions, some of which occurred repeatedly over difference phases. It therefore becomes more useful to examine these actions in relation to the categories, in which they occurred, although it should be noted that these categories were not restricted to periods. The actions of the Bantu School Board structure will be analysed in the context of their relationship with the State, teachers, community and School Committees and among the School Boards themselves. This could extend into the next chapter or period.

With reference to actions in relation to the State it needs to be established whether the Bantu School Boards played an ideological role as perceived and whether the relationships between the two bodies had always been smooth and cordial as has been argued. It has to be established which practices and actions were carried out against the individual teachers in Soweto and whether there was, paradoxically, a sounder relationship between these institution and teacher bodies. An examination of the actions of the Boards will also have to focus on their treatment of School Committees and to establish whether these two bodies had always neatly blended together as the government had hoped to intertwine them. It also has to be established whether all actions of the School Board structure lacked positive and meaningful attributes. Part of the answers to these probing questions may not all be forthcoming from the initial era 1953-1960 and may begin to emerge in the period 1960-1975.

*The Bantu School Board's Actions in Relation to the State*

The actions of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto in the late 1950s and early 1960s show that these bodies wittingly or not became involved in helping to implement unpopular government regulations against teachers and allowed themselves to play an ideological function. It must be pointed out that such relation to the State was characteristic of the Bantu School Boards in the African townships in general with some examples pertinent to Soweto itself as the largest and sometimes most difficult area to control by the state.

*Implementation of Government Regulations*

The School Boards and School Committees in Soweto were often zealous and unquestioning in helping to implement the government conditions of service for teachers in the late 1950s. The School Boards and School Committees had not been consulted first in the formulation of such conditions and regulations in spite of their being regarded as the employers of teachers by the State. Mr I. Moketa, who was Secretary of the Orlando School Boards, states that such new regulations for teachers' service were first published in January 1957 and contained in a handbook known as "Bantu Education". Teachers in Soweto had no access to such a document, as it was only for circulation among the Secretaries of School Boards who took it upon themselves to disseminate such information to school principals. It is equally doubtful whether the majority of members of the School Boards and School Committees could themselves, save the secretaries, be able to read, interpret and understand these regulations. Mr I. Moteka confirms that it was his sole responsibility to translate and interpret these regulations for the members of the Board. These regulations also became published in the editions of the 1956 **Bantu Education Journal.** This was a government mouthpiece intended for teacher readership and stipulated, inter-alia, that a teacher was an employee of the local School Board. Such a teacher had no automatic right for security, permanent employment or any claim to salary increment[64]. It is sensible to deduce here that even in the case of Soweto, a teacher's fate remained at the sole discretion of the employer, namely the Department and the Bantu School Boards and School Committees. Many elderly teachers interviewed in Soweto attested to this reality[65].

Noteworthy here is that these regulations did not apply to White teachers and teachers of other races, but only to African teachers under the jurisdiction of the School Boards. White teachers, who taught in some Soweto schools such as the George Tabor Industrial School in Dube, were exempted from such conditions of service. The excuse was that all White teachers in Soweto were 'on loan' to the Department of Bantu Education to provide expertise that the "Bantu" teachers did not have[66].

The Department Circular No. 29 of 1962, which appeared two years later and not during the period under discussion, also helps to show us how the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto found themselves fulfilling the task of implementing government regulations. It stipulated that a teacher who was already in the employ of a Bantu community school when these regulations came into existence, was to continue his/her service at the same school, provided that such teacher was first to inform the Bantu School Board, in writing, of his/her intention to accept the new conditions of service

within three months, failing which, he/she would be assumed to have voluntarily terminated his/her service. This was an overly deliberate scheme on the part of the government to force African teachers to recognise and bind themselves to the authority of these Bantu School Boards. Many School Boards in Soweto immediately convened their own meetings in which the newly published conditions of service for teachers were accepted without any discussion with the teachers affected.

These Boards bravely went ahead and wrote to all their teachers already in government subsidised posts advising them of developments and offering them a choice of re-employment under their jurisdiction. Copies of teachers' Letters of Acceptance were hurriedly dispatched to the Secretary of Bantu Education. These regulations and new conditions of service gave Bantu School Boards the authority to transfer a teacher even if such transfer would mean a reduction in salary[67].

On the matter of helping apply government regulations, the Soweto School Boards also took visible action to help bring into effect rules of misconduct and discipline against some teachers. No code of conduct was administered by a professional Teacher Body; such as would have been the case with the Medical and Dental Council. There were also some contradictions in the definition and understanding of what constituted misconduct. According to government regulations, it was quite within the parameters of the law that School Boards could dismiss a teacher on account of misconduct. The standard definition of misconduct was given as inclusive of conviction of crime deemed to render the individual teacher unsuitable for teaching[68]. The same regulations provided that a teacher could be charged with misconduct for insubordination, discourtesy to members of the public and/or making any negative remarks to the press about the policies of the government, or criticising any Government Official, Department, or member of a School Board. (Article 46{1}1).

Not all Bantu School Boards in Soweto were equally committed in carrying out these rules. This was particularly the case where members of the Boards were circumspect such as the Orlando and Moroka School Boards. Mr I. Moteka observes that where members of the School Board were not highly literate, rules were implemented rigidly and such School Boards did not hesitate to take a teacher to task for not following government regulations.

*Playing an Ideological Function*

School Boards allowed themselves to serve as political instruments that helped to implement the National Party policies and racial ideology. It can be shown here that the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto used influx control, adhered to a racial funding policy, conducted political purging of teachers and applied the government's ethnic policy. More examples with regards these actions became even more demonstrable during the succeeding phases of the Bantu School Boards' existence.

The Department of Bantu Administration and Development had issued circulars to School Boards in Soweto that stipulated a teacher's entry into Johannesburg to take up a teaching

position would henceforth be subject to the prior acquisition of an influx permit under Section 10(1)(d)of Act NO.25 of 1945. The Soweto School Boards were strongly warned against the illegal practise of employing teachers whose presence in the prescribed area was unlawful.

The Bantu schools ideological role in Soweto may also be seen as linked to carrying out the State's discriminatory spending on education. These bodies had no resources of their own to build the needed Primary Schools in Soweto, as the government policy required them to do, nor were they properly funded by the State to be able to undertake such projects. Financing for African schools in Soweto, as in other urban areas, was limited to the amount necessary to provide maintenance of the stem of Bantu Education and this was derived from the limited taxes paid by the very impoverished communities themselves. It is known that some School Boards in Soweto in the late 1950s , such as the Orlando School Board, had had to discontinue their government subsidised feeding schemes under the illusion that money saved could be diverted to helping improve amenities, but at least they were made aware that such savings would be added to the School Boards' costs of hiring teachers[69]. Hyslop(1989) points out that, whereas in theory these Bantu School Boards might have appeared to exercise discretion with regards the funding of the education of their children, in practise this was not so, as the State was committed to racial funding. Matters were further aggravated by the fact that these Bantu School Boards and School Committees were not allowed by the government to raise funds from outside donors and could be forced to return such donations, unless prior approval had been obtained.

Besides helping to implement the government's racial funding policy, the School Board structure in Soweto in the early period carried out actions that made them become instruments of the State's purging of politically dissident teachers. In the 1950s African teachers in Soweto were political activists and linked to the ANC and later to the PAC , albeit that they may not have visibly supported the schools boycott campaign of 1955/6. Orlando High School had many known teachers who included Ezekiel Mphahlele, Robert Sobukwe and others. They had campaigned against the introduction of Bantu Education in 1955 and consequently targeted for dismissal by the State. Such political vigilance was left to the Bantu School Boards once they came into existence. Another example of an educator who was sacked in the 1950s for political activities was Mr V.K. Ntshona. He was a member of the Unity Movement and was sacked by the Moroka-Jabavu School Board, under Reverend Sekano Ntoane, for supposed neglect of his duties. He applied to another school in Soweto were he was taken on in a temporary capacity, only to be finally turned down by the local School Board as well, on grounds of his political activities. This decision was taken after the Special Branch had visited the Board concerned. Subsequent attempts to obtain Mr Ntshona other teaching posts in Soweto were deliberately thwarted by the Native Affairs Department (NAD) that advised the School Boards in Soweto that it would no longer provide a subsidy for any post held by Mr Ntshona[70]. The Soweto School Boards that could not afford the paying of teachers' salaries on their own because of lack of funds, had no alternative but to comply by excluding him from all their schools. Mr Ntshona was not a case in isolation. Teachers who were suspected of advocating the

policies of the ANC or PAC and/or were known to have sympathies for such political bodies, were watched closely by Security policy in collaboration with some suspected police informers within the Soweto Bantu School Board structure. This purge also focused on the members of these Boards themselves. Mr Mthonjeni, who served under the Moroka School Board in the late 1950s and early 1960s argues that there was some political surveillance of members of School Boards in Soweto by the State Security Police, as well as possible leakage of information to these agents by individual members, for whatever reasons, but that this feature or practice was relatively limited in the 1950s.

**Part Four: Critiques of the School Board System in its Early Years 1955-1960**

Initially, the approach used by most critics was to lump together the system of Bantu education and the School Boards as unwanted. Such a scathing attack was led by the **Bantu World** in March, 1955. This newspaper, based and produced in Johannesburg, targeted African readership and had very high circulation in Soweto where sometimes as many as ten people in a family would share a copy. The **Bantu World**, which was supportive of the African opposition groups to Apartheid, lamented that the underlying principle of the whole system of School Boards was, overtly, more political than educational.

The limits of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto were not only from outside itself but also within the Department of Bantu Education. In the late 1950s some Officials of the Department started to acknowledge that there was malpractice within these structures, including some of those bodies in Soweto. Addressing the general conference of the Transversal African Teachers' Association, Mr Prozesky, the Regional Director of Bantu Education, admitted that some secretaries of these School Boards, including those in Soweto, were, undoubtedly, motivated by personal disputes and past grievances and tended to abuse their power to the extent of influencing the Boards to dismiss some teachers without any real valid reasons[71], a concern also alluded to by the Under Secretary of Native Affairs in 1956 when he announced that more European administrative organisers were to be appointed in the various regions under the Department of Bantu Education, "to advise and guide the School Boards, because of their inherent weaknesses"[72]. It is possible that such an argument might have also been aimed at justifying more Departmental or government control over these bodies.

Concerns about the limitations of the system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in general also expressed by the National Council of African Women, in which women representatives from Soweto played an important role, were voiced in their conference held in Natal in 1957, A statement was issued arguing that although they appreciated that it was not only the highly educated African people who might possess integrity and administrative ability, it was nonetheless, essential that members of such School Boards possess some educational qualifications, even if it might be some form of literacy, a view that directly implicated the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in the late 1950s. The NCAW also objected that the members of School Boards and

School Committees were not elected by popular vote, a perception that the government meddled with the membership of the Boards by appointing people who had no support from within their own communities, nor had any known track records. The criticisms had a direct bearing on the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto that, as Mr E. Siah puts it, could attract questionable figures and/or be misused for their own ends by people who had no educational background.

Writers such as Glaser also hold that School Boards in Soweto had a reputation for arbitrariness and corruption, eager to first entrench their limited powers whilst tending to be obsequious and politically cautious bodies[73], an observation that these bodies were politically manipulated by the ruling National Party, rather than by the educationally competent to govern African schooling in Soweto. It was on the basis of such concerns and criticisms that the Council of the South African Institute of Race Relations resolved in its meeting held in January 1958 that members of the School Boards, including those in Soweto, should preferably be duly elected by popular vote at open meetings and not be nomination by the Government Officials. The Council further called for the Bantu School Boards and School Committees to be granted some autonomy and power of co-opting additional members who could serve on an advisory capacity. Some such members could be of any race or show some expertise in some key- fields that might have relevance in education[74].

The School Board institutions in Soweto, during the period prior to 1960, were also critical of themselves. At a meeting of School Boards held in the Western Township, a press statement was issued in which these School Boards publicly acknowledged that since they had taken over from the Missions and Superintendents, there had been a feeling of unease among the African teachers, who feared intimidation by the Boards and felt insecure in their service to such an extent that some sought employment elsewhere in order to avoid serving under them. (Hyslop; 1990) The Bantu School Boards also committed themselves to doing all they could to serve their teachers with honesty and as a result made an undertaking that, "we as Africans ought to safeguard the service of our brother teachers. He must feel at home, for only then could he give of his best"[75]. At one such forum a plea and direct instruction was made to all the School Committees in Soweto and other urban areas to be more sympathetic towards teachers and to know that their duty was not to fire teachers, but to help and guide them. This is one of the issues that will be examined in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

It has emerged that the period 1953-1960 was the period during which active participation of African parents in education was realised for the first time under National Party rule. This was a period of optimism insofar as the State was concerned.

Three issues concerning the establishment of Bantu School Boards in Soweto in the early period, were identified and examined. These pertained to views expressed in defence of this system, the nature of actions that the Soweto School Boards carried out and finally

the criticism of the Bantu School Board system. It was shown that there could be some overlapping between the early period (1953-1960) and subsequent phases insofar as the themes mentioned are concerned.

In dealing with support for the Bantu School Board system, research revealed that such advocacy went beyond the racial barrier line. Whereas the government and religious bodies used ethnic, cultural and biblical justifications for this system, there were many African people in Soweto who, for different reasons, supported and defended the system as well. It has been established that some members of the ANC even preferred to serve with these Bantu School Boards and School Committees in order to try and undermine or change them from within.

Reference to actions taken by the Bantu School Board structure reveal that these bodies were used by the State for idealogical reasons. The Boards allowed themselves to implement influx control and apply ethnic policy, racial funding, prescribed DBE rules and purged teachers politically.

The main criticism against the Bantu School Boards in Soweto has been that their members were government appointed, albeit that they did not have a strong standing in the community.
The period 1953-1960 revealed what the Bantu school baords in Soweto were about and what they endured, yet this early period was too limited and preliminary for much in-depth insight to be gained into these bodies.

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[45] South African Review, No.4 p.20.
[46] C.L. Glaser, "Youth, Culture and Politics in Soweto 1958-1976" (unpublished PhD), Darwin College, Cambridge, 1994, p.106.
[47] J. Hyslop, "Social Conflicts", p.69.
[48] H.F. Verwoerd, Bantu Education Policy for Immediate Future, Information Service of the Department of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 1954, p.9.
[49] Report of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development 1958-1959, published by Authority, Pretoria, p.22.
[50] Bantu Education Journal, Vol.5, February, 1958, p.28.
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[56] L.J. du Plessis, Apartheid, Yes or No, Transvaal, 1959, p.6.
[57] Ibid: p.6.
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[61] Interview, Mr. J. Mthonjeni, former member of the Moroka School Board 1958-1970, Soweto, 11/10/98.
[62] J. Hyslop, "Social Conflicts", p.69.
[63] Interview, Mrs B.N. Makhalemele, teacher under Meadowlands School Board and Orlando School Board, 1959-1979, Soweto, 06/09/98.
[64] Fighting Talk, Vol.15, No.3, April 1965, p.7.
[65] Interview, Mrs L. Motlhabi, former principal of Ditawana Primary School in Orlando, 14/06/98
[66] Interview, Dr S.K. Matseke, retired Chief Inspector, Johannesburg Region, and Soweto Educationist.
[67] Government Notice R1289, 17th August, 1962, Minister of Bantu Education, Pretoria, (Reg.8(1))
[68] A Survey of Race Relations 1954-1955, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, p.182.
[69] Interview, Mr I. Moteka, former Secretary of Meyerton Bantu School Board and Orlando School Board 1958-1971, Walkerville, 12/05/98
[70] Torch, 30th July 1957, as quoted in Hyslop 1990: p.70.
[71] A Survey of Race Relations 1955-1956, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, p.26.
[72] Ibid: p.26.
[73] Glaser, "Youth, Culture and Politics", p.116.
[74] M. Horrel, A Decade of Bantu Education, S.A.I.R.R., Johannesburg, 1974, p.46.
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# CHAPTER THREE

## THE BANTU SCHOOL BOARD SYSTEM IN SOWETO 1960-1972

### Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the same structures of school governance in Soweto 1960–1972 with a view to gaining further insight into how they carried out their activities. Such a study first entails a clear understanding of the periodisation and how this impacted on the nature of the activities of the Boards themselves. It provides a brief background of the political economy of Bantu Education during this period of "Grand Apartheid", as well as the state of schooling in Soweto, as this had direct implications on the function of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto.

Part of the discussion argues that there was still a support of the School Board system during the period 1960–1972 in spite of the State's authoritarian and crude racist approach to urban African education. Another area of focus this chapter endeavours to bring to the surface is the nature of actions that were carried out by the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto during the delimited period. It was also during this period that further actions were taken by these structures, especially in relation to teachers, pupils, the State, and other bodies. The nature of concerns and criticism people had about the activities of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto during the period 1960–1972 is explored, as well as forms of resistance that started to build up.

These discussions might lead to a possible conclusion that, although the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto during the period 1960–1972 were highly conservative and authoritarian, they continued to remain part of the State's ideological machinery that did not always appear to succeed in co–opting parents and teachers into the State's hegemonic order.

### Part One: The Political Economy Of Grand Apartheid And The State Of Schooling In Soweto 1960–1972

The period that came after the Sharpeville episode and the subsequent crushing of the radical opposition movements by the "Apartheid" regime, is referred to by Hyslop as the "zenith of Bantu Education" or the period in which Bantu Education was pursued in its "purest" form. The education and political resistance that characterised the 1950s took on a generally lower profile and thus allowed a tightening of governmental control over the entire society during this period. Tom Lodge argues that this was a period when police were granted unlimited powers of arrest and detention as well as increasingly lavish budgets through which they were able to recruit an army of informers, whose activities promoted a climate of fear and distrust, effectively paralyzing any political initiative amongst Africans[76]. This view is shared by Glaser who points out that Soweto residents remained politically docile during this period as there was widespread fear of the Security

Police. Hence few teachers an l students were prepared to risk a political stand[77]. Conservative School Boards and Teachers' Associations reinforced the political approach and atmosphere in schools. It was during this period 1960–1972 that the State achieved what Hyslop describes as "the acquiescence of the mass of the population" by attaining a large degree of institutional incorporation of people into the new education order. At the same time education was used as a tool of the government's execution of its "Apartheid" policy to drive off people into the rural or Bantustan areas[78].

It is within this context important to understand the political economy of the "Grand Apartheid" policy during the period 1960–1972 and to show how the system of School Boards and School Committees in Soweto was used to achieve its end.

During the period 1962- 1971, the government's political and economic strategy centered on the Bantustan system. The National Party Government's purpose was to discourage African urbanisation and settlement by driving as many African people back to their respective ethnic homelands as possible, in order to ensure that the economic privileges and political supremacy of the White people in the urban areas was not overwhelmed or jeopardized by the African majority. Education was to be used as a mechanism for this purpose. Hyslop concludes that secondary urban education was to be systematically strangled in order to drive the African people into the rural areas.

This thinking is also shared by Mr I. Moteka, who served as the Secretary of the Orlando School Board during this period and later as an inspector of Schools in Soweto. An interview with him revealed that while Primary Schooling in Soweto was allowed to expand roughly in accordance with the demands of the migrant labour market, urban African Secondary Schooling was deliberately stifled. The government was committed to funding the building of Lower Primary Schools in Soweto. The School Boards in Soweto tried to undertake the building of Higher Primary Schools on a rand for rand basis with the government when it was clear that these bodies had no sufficient funds and Boards were prohibited from raising funds from the corporate sphere[79].

The implication of this policy was that African pupils in Soweto who wanted to study further were forced to go to rural areas and Boarding Schools. At the same time the DBE expected the School Boards and Headmasters to indirectly police the influx control of pupils. According to Mr S. Mkhalipe, a retired inspector, and former Secretary of a School Board, pupils from families that did not qualify for urban residential rights were not permitted to register at the Department's schools in the townships[80]. Pupils were expected to produce a registration card that Glaser says was called a "Pink Card" in Soweto. This document certified that the child was on the official house permit of his or her parents. By 1964 out of 309 African Schools nation wide, only 72 were located in urban areas[81].

Soweto schooling during the period 1960–1972 was consistent with the national pattern of the time. According to Mrs M.B. Nkosi of Emaweni Primary School in Senaone, it was experiencing a rapid expansion of Primary Schooling while Secondary Schooling was

being frozen. Sekano Ntoana Secondary School built in early 1962, just before the Bantustan policy came into operation, was the last Secondary School to be established for the remainder of the decade[82].

Despite the rising demand for Secondary School education in Soweto in keeping with its increasing population, the government fixed the quota of such post Primary Schools to eight. These included Madibane, Orlando, Meadowlands, Orlando West, Morris Isaacson, Sekano Ntonane, Musi and Naledi High Schools. By that period there were only 54 higher Primary Schools built by area School Boards, that served as feeder schools to these High Schools. By 1970 the teacher:pupil ratio was equivalent to 1:55 and overcrowded schools had to spill over into nearby church halls. Added to these problems, the government policy then followed through by creating a shortage of teacher posts in Soweto because of under funding. The levels of teacher qualifications was also astonishingly low with less than one-eighth of practicing teachers holding matric certificates and the remaining two-thirds having only primary teaching diplomas with Std 6 or Junior Certificates[83].

To ensure that this Bantustan driven approach remained in pl... id the Soweto School Boards, School Committees and principals did not go wrong. Dr SK Matseke (then a senior Inspector of Schools in Soweto) noted that the Department exercised tight centralised control over schools via a network of school inspectors who ensured that everybody complied with the Department's regulations and policies.

There is no doubt that all these developments during the period 1960–1972 contributed towards the shaping and determining the way the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto went about carrying out their tasks and responsibilities.

## Part Two: The Consolidation Of Bantu Education And The System Of Bantu School Boards And School Committees In Soweto 1960–1972

*Support for the Bantu School Board System in Soweto 1960–1972*

The period 1960–1972 was a period during which both the system of Bantu education and the Bantu School Boards structure in general, as well as in Soweto, consolidated themselves and the arguments in support of the Bantu School Boards structure in particular, would relate to this position. It is shown here that the justification for this system took a different direction from that espoused during mid 1950s to late 1950s.

The **Bantu Education Journal** (BEJ) spent more time during this given period defending the School Board structure in the African urban areas, with implications for the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. It was committed to defending government policies on education as well as trying to win support for the system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees especially in areas such as Soweto where there were many such bodies and where the number of teachers was higher than anywhere else. The BEJ's main premise and defence, as espoused in its December 1970 edition, was that

there was nothing wrong with Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto as there were in other African locations. It pushed the argument that even if the majority of members of these bodies were nominated by the government, they were, nonetheless, still all Black people who had some proven interest in the education of their children and who were already making a valuable contribution in the control and advancement of African education. Subsequent editorials further remarked that "our School Boards differ from those of other departments of education in that they have far reaching executive powers that imposed upon them a very serious responsibility[84]." Arrogating itself of the right to speak on behalf of the Soweto community and other African locations, the editorial of the BEJ also advanced a justification based on an argument that members of these bodies were, undoubtedly, elected by the communities themselves on the basis of such members' qualities and experiences. These qualities, it was argued, included personality traits such as wisdom, leadership, integrity, respectability, sincerity and so forth, but it also acknowledged that these members' academic achievements were not so exceptional. The BEJ also argued that there were especially highly qualified persons who served in these bodies and that it would be unfair to create the wrong impression that the members on the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were totally incompetent.

This argument about the qualifications of some members of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees is confirmed by Mr I. Moteka, who states that members of the Orlando School Board during the period 1960 – 1967 were men and women of high probity. These, he argues, included men such as the Reverend Mooki, the Chairman, who was a Minister and former trained teacher, Mr Ramp, the Vice-Chairman, who was trained at the Witwatersrand University and renowned Soweto business man, Mr Bekwa was also on the Orlando School Board in the 1960s. He was a Senior Officer with the Bantu Administration Department. Mr Kgoele was a senior clerk at the Baragwanath Hospital, Mr Chikane was a former teacher, Chief Mdingi, a senior member of the Xhosa Chieftanship. There was also a woman , Mrs Maleba, a social worker with the Johannesburg City Council who served on this Board. Mr I. Moteka explains that although he cannot vouch that all the members of the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto in the 1960s could boast of a good literacy level, Orlando East was the first township in Soweto and had the then "cream of the crop", compared to the rest of the township. Added to this, the Orlando School Board was not a tool to be easily used by the Department, but an honest body that tried to make the best of African schooling in Soweto under the circumstances[85].

Some educationers and principals who served under the School Boards in Soweto during the period 1960–1972 hold that these bodies were useful. Mrs M.B. Nkosi, a retired former Principal of Emaweni Primary School in Senaoane who had once served under the Moroka School Board is of the view that this Board in particular, was able to instil a sense of duty and commitment amongst the teachers in schools. Teachers were treated with respect and conducted themselves professionally, placing the interests of children first, unlike the contemporary unionised and disrespectful teachers who have thrown teaching, especially in Soweto, into disarray[86].

*TUATA and the Consolidation of the Bantu School Board Structure in Soweto 1960-1972*

The question of whether Teachers' Organisations in Soweto such as TUATA, supported or opposed the School Board system is a debatable matter with different angles. Hartshorne points out that his Teachers' Organisations were, during the period 1960–1972, highly conservative and more involved in a busy social programme, that involved activities such as music competitions, tours, drama, and ballroom dancing rather than visibly protecting its teachers[87]. Critics argue that TUATA, in Soweto, was in subtle alliance with Bantu School Boards and School Committees. This could be explained by the fact that TUATA functioned within the same framework of rules that were imposed by the Department of Bantu Education. Mr Sidney Matlala, the Principal of Mmila Primary School in Tladi Location and an old member of TUATA, acknowledges that sometimes TUATA failed teachers by not visibly confronting the School Boards where the rights and welfare of its members were at stake or threatened. This observation is shared by Mkhize who states that members of TUATA were happily recommended by School Boards for promotions as principals or assistant inspectors. Some utterances made by TUATA leadership in Soweto appear to give credence to this thinking. In 1966 when Dr Verwoerd died, TUATA described him in its publication **TUATA** as " an extraordinary man, a logician, a political tactician of repute, an academic of outstanding merit, a commander of men who has left a vacuum in the life of this country that will take a long time to fill[88]."

The perceived co-operation between TUATA and the School Boards in Soweto was not always simplistic. In its 1965 conference this Teachers' Organisation had expressed reservations and concerns about the actions of some of the School Boards, Soweto included, who had dismissed and transferred teachers without due consultation with local School Committees first. The Boards were charged with failing to establish adequate liaison with School Committees and of overlooking the fact that these committees were more closely attached to the schools and therefore in a better position than the Boards to take account of the schools' interests[89]. A deduction is that TUATA in Soweto might have been concerned about the Boards' treatment of School Committees rather than with the treatment of its own members, who were opposed to the continued existence of both the Bantu School Boards and School Committees. This could be an explanation as to why a group of dissident teachers in Soweto, threatened to resign and form their own relevant Teachers' Union, that hit out at TUATA being a useless body[90]. TUATA had also criticised the Boards for acting as sole trustees of school funds used to purchase school equipment.[91]

Overall it would appear that whereas the Bantu School Boards structure in Soweto perpetrated unfair labour practice against teachers as individuals, paradoxically it seemed to have established a reasonable relationship with the teacher bodies that was supposed to intervene on their behalf as professionals. There is no doubt that TUATA's tone and language of protest against the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto was always too modest, courteous and carefully measured to be accepted by the more radical element of its membership. The Bantu School Boards and School Committees

might have been able to consolidate their grip over teachers in Soweto during the period of acquiescence, partly because of the naive and apologetic approach of this body[92] . The perception endures among some educators in Soweto that the very fact that no teachers were represented in School Boards and School Committees points to the fact that TUATA was satisfied and therefore subtly supportive and tolerant of these structures.

Support and defence of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto, during the period 1960–1972 came from the members of these very structures, in the same way as it was during the period 1955 – 1960. Mr G.M. Nkabinde who served in different School Committees in Soweto, as well as the Zulu West Bantu School Board, believes that his particular Board was clean and better and effectively delivered good service to the people of Soweto under the given circumstances and in the absence of any alternatives.

**Part Three: The Soweto School Board Structure In Action: 1960-1972**

The actions of the Bantu School Boards structure in Soweto during the period 1960-1970/72 need not be periodised in a chronological order, but examined in the context of their relationship with teachers, the State, the pupils, School Committees and among the very School Boards themselves.

*Actions in Relation to Teachers*

Much of the animosity that existed between individual teachers and Bantu School Boards in Soweto was according to Hyslop fuelled by the way in which teachers, formerly a prestigious social group, were placed under the control of bodies often consisting of persons less educated than themselves, thereby creating a class tension between two social groups within the community of Soweto. It was perhaps in this regard that the Bantu School Boards might have served as an obstacle against the government's intended ideological incorporation of teachers into Verwoerd's social framework.

As individuals, teachers in Soweto were caught up between the bullying of School Boards on the one hand and the abuse of racist Department Officials on the other. Theirs was clearly a hapless situation, hence many of them unhappily accepted the status quo during the acquiescence period; however, this did not amount to any form of allegiance. As Hyslop argues there were by 1964, under the Moroka School Board alone, already 100 teachers out of a total of 600 who were directly paid by the Board, but this did not make things easier for them The actions of the Bantu School Boards towards teachers in Soweto took many forms, some examples of which are cited.

Dismissal was one of the main actions used by the Bantu School Boards in Soweto to get rid of unwanted or undesirable teachers. It was not unusual, attests Mrs P. Motloung who taught under the Soweto West Bantu School Board in the early 1970s, for a Chairman or Secretary to boast openly that they could hire and fire teachers who were even more learned then themselves. Mrs Motloung further states that some teachers who were dismissed were committed and diligent teachers whose class work was beyond criticism.

Teachers interviewed in Soweto confirm Mrs Motloung's observation and the fact that it was not uncommon for the DBE itself to instruct a local School Board to terminate the services of a particular teacher on the pretext that they were not fit for Bantu Education. If the Board was uncooperative, the Department could use alternative methods such as the withdrawal of the State's subsidy for the post occupied by the teacher and/or declare the post redundant. Without these funds, the Board's only recourse was to dismiss the teacher.

There was a case of a Mr J.S. Lekala (from Mamelodi in Pretoria seeking to teach in Soweto) who applied to TUATA for the sum of R200 towards his lawyer's charges, because he and his wife were summarily dismissed from the service by the Bantu Education Department in February 1963. No reasons were provided for dismissal, as the Department was not, according to the rules, obliged to[93]. As in many other cases of teacher dismissals in Soweto, a teacher was unprotected and could be dismissed without representation. There was no Labour Relations Act to ensure protection against unfair labour practice or to safeguard the rights of teachers. It was of no consequence to most of the School Boards to have a person loose his job at the slightest suspicion or provocation, especially when it felt the person's political activities encroached on his teaching; an occurrence that TUATA did not confront straight on.

It was not unusual for members of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees who were politically suspect themselves to be arbitrarily removed from their positions, an occurrence not difficult to understand in the light of the nature of the period and suppression of political mobilisation by the government. A case in point was that of Mr Henry Tshabalala, a former treason trialist who was known to the researcher himself and who used to relate his personal frustrations to him. Mr Tshabalala who later became a member of the Zulu West Bantu School Board, was earlier removed from at least two School Committees and a School Board in Soweto on the basis of all sorts of excuses, including the argument that parents themselves complained to the Department about his activities.[94]

Alongside with the retrenchments, was the mass transference of teachers from one school to another, especially in order to fulfil the ethnic divide of the government's policy. Sometimes teachers, says Mr Mthonjeni of the Moroka School Board, were given only 48 hours notice and sent far from Soweto on the instruction of the Department. A transferred teacher was not protected because such transference could also be treated as a break of service, the occurrence of which could effect a teacher's salary scale. In addition, the State had no obligation to pay any expenses incurred by the teacher in moving, nor any obligation to make any other provision for such teacher[95]. An example was the case of Mr B.B.R. Shilubane who stayed in Zones Meadowlands and had been appointed as a teacher by the Moroka Site and Service School Board in 1960. He organised classes for Tsonga and Venda children at Thaba Tshehla and Atamelang Primary Schools in Natedi. In 1961 the Moroka School Board transferred him from Natedi to Chiawelo. In 1962 he was transferred to Ndondo Primary School in Rockville. Later that year, he found himself at Tiakeni Primary School in Chiawelo, where he taught under Mrs R. Mageza.

Interestingly, in the same year, 1962, they were again transferred, this time with his principal, Mrs Mageza, to Hitekani by the Moroka School Board's Reverend Ntoame. Mr Shilubane's case shows that the Boards in Soweto could do as they pleased with a teacher, for reasons known only to them, while a Teachers' Organisation such as TUATA would repeatedly fail to take any action to protect its teachers from this particular School Board.

Evidence also shows that it was not unusual for the Bantu School Boards in Soweto to be embroiled in teachers' personal and private matters, as well as to shame themselves with corrupt practices and nepotism. The Moroka School Board was once involved in a matter that involved a conflict of personalities between Mr Mabale, the Principal of Hitekani Primary School in Chiawelo and his long serving teacher, Mr B. Shilubane. In 1965 the two men clashed over a question of punctuality. The principal expected Mr Shilubane to catch the 4:11am train from Merafe Station in Soweto to Phefeni station in order to get to school before 7:30am. When he protested, he was called in and interviewed by the Secretary of the School Board, who was the cousin of the principal. He was threatened with dismissal for undermining the principal. Other members of the Board and teachers using the same means of transport as Mr Shilubane and who usually arrived much later than him, were never questioned[96].

Examples are also cited of teachers in Soweto against whom action was taken on unproved sexual misbehaviour against pupils. Hyslop cites an interesting case of a girl's father who wrote to the School Board to dispute charges of sexual harassment of his daughter by a teacher. The teacher concerned was, however, still summoned to the Board's offices and forced to sign a letter of Admission of Guilt. The occurrence resulted in a scuffle between the teacher and the secretary. The matter was taken to court and dismissed, with costs, against the School Board.[97]

Spoken evidence also alleges cases where some teachers could buy posts for their wives and relatives from some members of the Boards, albeit particular names may not be given for fear of libellous actions.

One of the old and now retired principals in Soweto, Mrs B. Masilela, points to known incidents involving some School Principals and members of School Boards who used to steal and cash salary cheques of non-existent or terminated teachers at a shop in Kliptown, known as Takolia

The Bantu School Board structure in Soweto during the years 1960–1972 was gender insensitive. Women were not advanced rapidly to senior positions. They were paid less and could be dismissed by male dominated local School Boards if found to be pregnant without being married. A pregnant teacher was bound to take six months leave, after which she could re-apply as a beginner teacher[98]. In addition, both the male principal, the School Board Secretary and/or Chairman could advise female teachers on formal dress, length of their stockings and their make up. It is also a common criticism made by some teachers such as Mrs B. Makhalemele who served under Meadowlands School Board, that women were sometimes abused by some members. Such an allegation was made once,

she points out, against the local Chairman, who was an Induna and also an Inyanga. He was known to be guilty of sexual harassment.

*Corruption*

There were also incidents of corruption involving some of the members of these bodies. The main grievance was that they easily interfered with teachers' personal, private and domestic matters. The system made it possible for just about any member of the community to lodge an unsubstantiated complaint. This encouraged, as many teachers point out, the School Boards to move into swift action against a teacher, often without a suitable hearing, that could amount to his suspension, transference or dismissal. Most principals, admits Mr S. Mtshali, exploited this loophole to have the Boards rid themselves of any character with whom they might have clashed.

It is also pointed out that promotions were irregular. Mr Mtshali states that he was summoned by a child and told that the Chairman of the Board had come to see him. He instructed him that he was to act as principalat the Luyolo Primary School, but an eye was to be kept on him, as he was uneasy with the way the Chairman's children, who were attending the same school, were being treated. Principals with only J.C. and Higher Primary teaching certificates could be advanced to head Secondary Schools, as it happened with Mr S. Masinga when he was asked to go and head Letare Secondary school in 1972. Mr Veli Kraai, the Chairman of the Soweto West School Board, was reported as receiving Xhosa-speaking teachers from Transkei, as he himself was Xhosa, and placing them in Zulu Schools, where they could not adequately assist children in this language. When complaints were brought forward to his Board, he would simply dismiss them by arguing that they would learn as they went along. Accusations are also made that appointments were given to family friends for the positions of teachers, clerks and cleaners. This emerged from an account given by Mrs G. Khumalo, a former clerk under the Mapetta Tswana School Board.

Teachers and principals in Soweto are also aware of incidents when teachers' salary cheques were fraudulently exchanged at an Indian shop, known as Takolia, in Kliptown. They were mainly cheques of dismissed or deceased teachers, and unsuspecting new teachers, who would deliberately be made confused with the signing of many renewal forms as a result of the delay in salary payments. Quite often they would only be handed over some two or so cheques as it was not usual for them to ask any questions, especially from an institution such as a School Board. Schools Committees had no knowledge as to which of their teachers were not being fully paid, a regular excuse being given that a teacher's cheque had been forwarded to Pretoria[99] .

Those who experienced school life, as pupils under these bodies in the late 1960s and early 1970s also exposed limitations of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto. Mr Xolani Xaba points out later that, as scholars, they were forced by principals, Chairmen of School Committees and some men introduced from School Boards, to contribute towards dead wives or mothers of unknown White school inspectors. In addition they contributed and took part in farewell functions of both Black and White inspectors in the

Johannesburg region while the educational facilities in their school remained squalid. Pupils also had to pay for compulsory school uniforms, whilst most of them had, on a school day, to go without food as the majority of School Boards had closed down feeding schemes, perhaps with the hope of securing some form of savings. Although there had always been many gifted, yet destitute, pupils in Soweto Schools, "these bodies never showed any mercy or paternal feelings to identifying some such children with a view to exempting them from school fees or assisting them, despite the fact that such sentiments were shown towards teachers who were sponsored for training and retiring inspectors who were given generous gifts."[100]

*School Boards and Ethnic Divisions*

Support for the system of Bantu Education and, by extension, the Bantu School Boards and School Committees came from some African academics such as Professor Luthuli, a professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of Zululand in the late 1960s. Making use of ethnic and cultural justification to appease the government's policy makers, Luthuli perceived Africans (therefore Africans in Soweto) as fundamentally different from other cultures and races thus, "accordingly demanded education best suited to their unique needs."[101] His thinking was that there could be no single system of education for the various African people, because education was always people based. Such thinking certainly legitimized the creation and proliferation of ethnic Bantu School Boards and School Committees throughout Soweto. Mr S. Mtshali, a former Headmaster of Luyolo Primary School in Emdeni, argues that this was precisely the ethnic mentality that led to the split of the Soweto West School Board in 1970 and the formation of the Zulu West Bantu Board that was based in Zola township.

Ethnicity was a major weakness of the Bantu School Board's structure in Soweto at the beginning of the 1970s. Most of the members of these bodies were in some way linked with homelands and would always force school children to form Guards of Honour and/or become involved in singing for some of the leaders whenever they came to Soweto. For example, when Chief Lucas Mangope visited Soweto at the invitation of some School Board leaders who were at the same time urban representatives of the Bophuthatswana homeland, Tswana speaking students and schools would be part of the celebration activities. The government hoped that in creating Bantu School Boards and School Committees, it was going to provide the Soweto community with what could be regarded as acceptable and suitable leadership in the same way as it had created the very homeland leaders. Another example of ethnic politics emerged when Mr Josiah Khumalo, a wealthy shop owner in Emdeni convinced the Department in 1971 that the interests of Zulu children were not being looked after under the Soweto West School Board that was headed by Mr V. Kraai (a Xhosa speaking shop owner in Tladi). Mr Khumalo collected books from Zulu children who were taught by Xhosa teachers and showed the discrepancies to the Department. He was, as a result, granted permission to secede and establish a separate Zulu School Board. Zulu children were removed from Ezidlekeni School in Zola (the principal was Mr Sowazi who was Xhosa speaking) to a new school, Isulihle, where Mr S.P. Nkosi (who was Zulu) became principal, albeit that he had no matriculation or qualifications under the new Zulu West School Board.

*Tensions between the State, School Boards and committees*

The Bantu School Boards in Soweto were employers only in theory, because in practise they were overshadowed by the Department of Bantu Education that hired and bullied teachers at will. Mr Oscar, a teacher at Vukayibanube Primary School in Dube, expresses a view that these bodies were but mere puppets of the Department, their principle job being to come out top in dividing schools according to ethnic lines. Hyslop argues that it was ironic that the National Party Government could expect African parental participation without being prepared to give meaningful powers of decision and control to such bodies. This criticism is understandable if one takes into consideration that almost an entire Moroka School Board was disbanded by the Department in 1968, for failing to tow the line and/or carry out orders.

Many principals in Soweto who served under the School Boards in the late 1960s such as Mr S. Mtshali, complain that these Boards undermined, by-passed, failed to inform and treated local School Committees with spite and contempt. A principal could deal directly with the School Board and report to his School Committee later. There was a case of Mr Sylvester Masinga, who was arbitrarily removed from his school, Luyolo Primary School, in Jabulane, to act as principal, without his School Committee being informed.

Such treatment was aggravated by the existence of a subtle difference in the class and education of people who sat in at School Boards and School Committees. It is an observation of many old school principals in Soweto that the majority of School Committee members were relatively less literate than their counterparts in the School Boards. They needed the Principals, when meetings were held, to always read out and interpret documents for them in the vernacular, a position that some educators point out, was deliberately allowed to exist by the Department itself, while Officials supervised the elections of committees freely manipulating them as they pleased, including nominating Chairmen. It was not uncommon, adds Mr Steve Monyemorathu, that some of these School Boards in Soweto, could arbitrarily convene a meeting of principals and sportsmasters of children who had clashed on the sports grounds, without first consulting their respective School Committees[102], an indication of how arrogant these bodies had grown to become.

The actions of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto were not only limited to their relationship with teachers and the State, but also manifested themselves in their relationship with School Committees that equally had vested interest in education. School Boards were supposed to be drawn from delegates of various School Committees, but in practise once such elections had taken place, the School Committees were treated with contempt. The Bantu School Boards did not always lead by example or follow the protocol of communication[103]. School Committees were treated as junior partners and it was not unusual for the Boards to both ignore, as well as overturn some decisions and recommendations of the local School Committees. A case known as, "Row over sacking of a Teacher", was reported, wherein a rift had developed between the Roodepoort Bantu School Board and a School Committee in Dobsonville, Soweto. The School Committee

wrote a letter to the Board in which it expressed shock over the sacking of one of its teachers without its knowledge or any prior notification[104].

Additionally, the Bantu School Boards in Soweto used the local School Committees to extract financial contributions from parents towards subsidising the Bantu Education projects, such as the building of ethnic schools. Mr S. Mtshali, the former Principal of Luyolo Primary School, explained that thirty School Committees under the Zulu West Board charged R2,- per child per year. Ten percent of this went into the School Board's coffers and some other unspecified amounts went towards the Development Fund, that was raised to build School Board offices and pay salaries to teachers in unsubsidised posts.

That the Department treated the Bantu School structure in Soweto with disrespect could also be observed from the fact that, while it was the duty of a School Board, at least on paper, to appoint teachers into the community schools, in practice it was the Department's officials who had the last word in the appointment and dismissal of teachers. This occurrence is also confirmed by Mr G.M. Nkabinde, a former Chairman of Izivuleleni and Isulihle School Committees, who states that the Zulu West School Board, of which he was a member, would not sit on its own if an inspector or Department Official was not there in all meetings to serve as a "guardian" especially on the appointment of teachers. These observations corroborated the argument that "the Department tended to employ only those teachers who had the backing of the school inspectors, even going over the heads of their supposed employers, the School Boards."[105]

Another limitation of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto in the late 1960s towards the 1970s was the fact that some arrogated themselves the prerogative of moving and reshuffling teachers around without any due regard to possible consequences and personal inconvenience. A classic example of such reshuffling occurred in schools that were controlled by the Zulu West Bantu School Board. At Fundani Lower Primary, a well-run school in Emdeni, the principal, Mrs Mkhize, was moved to Thulani Lower Primary School in Zola without any reasons. The principal of the latter school was herself moved to Busisiwe Lower Primary School. The Principal of Busisiwe, Mrs Malanda, was forced to go and head Zifuneleni LP School, a school perceived to be problematic[106]. This devastated Mrs Malanda who developed chronic health problems.

The attitude of the Department towards the Bantu School Boards and Africans in general is highlighted by Hyslop who points out that Mr W.A. Maree the first Minister of Bantu Education, once issued out a circular to White inspectors in which he warned against the shaking of hands with Blacks, including the members of the Bantu School Boards, who kept inviting and glorifying these Bantu Education Department Officials. Such treatment of Bantu School Boards unarguably contributed towards their undermined standing in the community, as well as towards the creation of tension between them and the State.

*The Promotion of Teaching and Learning*

Besides the actions that the Bantu School Boards in Soweto took against teachers during this period, they also performed routine and essential daily functions related to education. For this they must be given credit. Examples of such actions include:
Helping to provide financial assistance to some students, especially those who were being trained to teach. These were monies that the Boards themselves had saved. It is known that Ms Gugu Radebe (who later married Mr Vusi Nsbande, a teacher at Dr B.W. Vilakazi Secondary School in Zola), Mr Lindimuzi Mngoma (son of Professor Mngoma who is renowned in the music world) and Mr Michael Mkhize (a former Principal of Daliwonga High School and later an Inspector of Schools in Soweto) were partly subsidised by the Zulu West School Board towards their teacher training. These teachers trained at the Madadeni College of Education and University of Zululand respectively[107]. Critics may not be aware that many School Boards in Soweto also provided loans to new teachers who had not yet been paid by the Department, especially as it often took no less than three months and sometimes more than six months for a beginner teacher under the DBE to be paid. On the negative side it emerges that such financial help was not equitable and was sometimes executed or given with some measure of nepotism. It could be argued that Professor Mngoma's son could better afford this, than a child of a widow, or than a pensioner or destitute in Soweto could. Whichever way one may read it, the fact remains that such financial assistance was given at the discretion of some School Boards to students.

Secondly, it has been established that the Bantu School Boards in Soweto took it upon themselves without government assistance to electrify some of their Primary Schools that they helped build on the rand for rand basis with the Department. It would be recalled that it was the government policy during this period to only build Lower Primary schools in the Townships while the Higher Primary schools were supposed to be erected by the Bantu School Boards themselves in partnership with the Department and the Secondary Schools were restricted to Bantustans. Mr Nkabinde of the Zulu West Bantu School Board asserts that most Primary schools in the Emdeni Zola and Jabulani Townships were electrified as a result of the efforts of his own School Board - an assertion that is confirmed by Mr S. Mtshali whose school, Luyolo Primary School, benefited from such endeavour.

The Bantu School Boards and School Committees took an interest in extra-curricula activities at their schools. It was the Zulu West School Board that, in the early 1970s, went all out to purchase instruments for drum majorettes, pupils in the Higher Primary Schools of the Zola – Emdeni townships[108]. This School Board also bought soccer and athletics equipment to be used by representative teams under their jurisdiction. This was not necessarily a general trend. There were Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto, according to Mr M. Manne, the former Chairmen of the Naledi High School Committee, that did not bother about such things. More concern was shown with pointing out teachers' flaws and meting out as harsh a punishment as possible.

Although the South African Government sought to limit and desperately reduce the budget of the building of Secondary Schools in the urban areas such as Soweto, Mr I.

Moteka, former School Inspector and Secretary of the Orlando School Board, wants to show that there were instances when such policy could be circumvented by School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. His Board, for example, was able to communicate directly with Mr M.C. Botha, the Minister of Bantu Education and to reach an agreement for the building of the Orlando North Secondary School. This would cater to pupils from the Phumolong, Killerney and Meadowlands areas in Soweto. In addition, these Schools Boards were able to build a number of additional classes. Much as this was, it was not sufficient to cope with the rapid growth of pupils in Secondary schools.

Other routine actions of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto involved helping to maintain effective teaching and learning. These Boards insisted on proper teaching, maintenance of pupil order, wearing of school uniforms, timely arrival etc. and reserved the right of choice to summon both the School principal and a teacher for an explanation if the panel inspection report was not satisfactory[109]. This was another indication of the power that these bodies had over a teacher in Soweto.

*Actions of Resistance against the State*

The Boards responded to their manipulation by the State in many ways. In the first place it was not an accident that the authorities themselves more often adopted an authoritarian and arrogant stance towards Bantu School Boards and School Committees, refusing to listen to their suggestions and unseating those members who would not tow the official line, one such example being the dissolution of the Moroka School Boards by Officials of the Department of Bantu Education in 1968. Three former members of the Board, Mr Patrick Raseroka, Mr M.R. Tawana and Mr Nehemia Mthonyani applied to the Supreme Court to put the dissolution aside and to nullify the subsequent November polls.

The School Board succeeded in winning the case. They had been elected in March 1966 and the Department approved the election, confirming that their term was to expire on 30 June 1969. These members had cited the then Minister of Bantu Education, Mr M.C. Botha, and ten existing members of the Moroka School Board, including their Chairman the Reverend Samuel Sekano Ntoane, Miss June Chabaku and others as respondents[110]. To arrogantly counter these developments, a Johannesburg White Circuit Inspector wrote to the Reverend Sekano Ntoane in November 1968 advising him that the Board should be reconstituted. By way of explanation was that the local School Committees had already reconstituted in terms of new regulations, a clear attempt to use the School Committees as an excuse to disband a School Board that did not fully tow the line.

It is of interest to note that some activists that had not gone underground or into exile during this period 1960–1972 did make an attempt, like Mr Tshabalala, to participate in the Bantu School Board system in Soweto and themselves testified to how the relationship was sometimes uncordial between the School Boards and the State. The existence of such a strained relationship was openly displayed by some members of the School Boards in Soweto. Mrs Constance Ntshona, a School Board member and urban Bantu Councillor, responded to the Department's expulsion of the Zulu speaking pupils from Naledi High School in Soweto, by pointing out that the education of a child was the democratic right

of every parent and that it was unacceptable for the Department to continue to impose its own decisions on Boards as to where the children should be educated and who should educate them. White Schools, said Mrs Ntshona, were not grouped ethnically, but according to language and which subjects were offered[111].

All these examples, that cannot be extensively pursued in this limited context, serve to illustrate that fact that although it cannot be disputed that the Soweto Bantu School Boards were perceived as subservient to Pretoria, and underpinned politically and ideologically by the State's intentions, their own actions towards the State did not always amount to a simplistic cordial relationship. Tensions developed between these two bodies from time to time: a factor that partly contributed towards the State's failure in creating a new hegemonic order as was intended.

## Conclusion

The debate in this chapter focused on the examination of the activities of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto during 1960-1972, a period of "acquiescence" and clamping down of African opposition parties by the National Party Government.

It was shown that during this period of the "zenith of Bantu Education" (Hyslop 1009: 333) that the Bantu School Boards structure consolidated itself in Soweto, especially as this development coincided with the Government's Grand "Apartheid" policy of freezing the expansion of Secondary Schooling in the African urban areas with the aim of driving as many people as possible towards the Bantustans. Reference to factors that helped the Bantu School Boards consolidate their hold over teachers, parents and general schooling in Soweto during the period 1960-1972, brought to light the role played by government propaganda media such as the **Bantu Education Journal** that was circulated amongst teachers. It was argued that TUATA might have unwittingly helped such consolidation of power in the hands of the School Boards in Soweto, by adopting a low, conservative profile while failing to step in visibly to protecting the rights and welfare of its teachers.

The investigation went at length to show the manner in which the Bantu School Boards' structure in Soweto consolidated its power through actions it carried out among its teachers. The case of Mr B.B.R. Shilubane's transference by the Moroka Site and Service School Board was not only an example of unfair labour practice that teachers under the DBE were subjected to, but also bordered on violation of the human right to self dignity. Expression of consolidated power was also shown by the Moroka School Board's actions of defiance and resistance against the State in 1968 when it challenged the wholesale dismissal of its members.

Although some Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto might have played a significant role in promoting teaching and learning by electrifying schools, buying sporting equipment for pupils and providing some financial aid to some students towards teacher training, research evidence shows that these contributions were undermined by some weaknesses. These included ethnicity; difference in class and education between

members of these two structures and the fact that the State started to adopt an authoritarian and arrogant stance by refusing to listen to their suggestions and unseating those members who would not tow the official line. It has to be concluded, therefore, that all these limitations paved the path for the beginning of the gradual, but irretrievable, demise of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto.

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# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE DEMISE OF THE BANTU SCHOOL BOARD STRUCTURE IN SOWETO 1972 - 1979

### Introduction

The focus of discussion in this chapter is the examination of factors that collectively contributed towards the disintegration of the once strongly consolidated system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. The demise of these bodies in Soweto was not as a result of a particular occurrence, namely the student opposition, but that it was the result of immediate and long term factors that impacted on the School Boards and School Committees capacity to sustain meaningful education governance in Soweto.

A point of departure will be a brief explanation of the nature of the period and political economy under which the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto functioned in 1972. The greater part of the study discusses individual events that together eventually weakened the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto after 1972. Attention will be focused on the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto upheavals, with particular emphasis on the radicalisation of the Soweto Student Representative Council and mass resignation of teachers in 1977 and how these brought the pressure to bear on the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. Reference will also made to the Education and Training Act (No. 90 of 1979) that served to close down the system of ethnic school governance in Soweto.

### Part One: The Circumstances Contributing to the Demise of the School Board System In Soweto 1972 - 1979

The period 1972 - 1979 ought to be seen as a period during which African education in South African townships, especially Soweto, was placed in a state of turmoil and disintegration, a period that was marked by increased polarisation between the ruling National Party and the conscientised community of Soweto. Hartshorne refers to this period as a time of irreversible breakdown of the African education environment[112]. Other views are that this was a period during which the student activism, as partly influenced by renewed awareness of the Black Consciousness Movement, took a central stage and protests were no longer simply school based, as in the previous decade, but as part of a broader political struggle[113]. This period was marked by changes in the government's education policy, increased secondary schooling in Soweto, further ethnic division of Soweto schools and the radicalisation of younger teachers. It was also characterised by the tense relationship between the government and the School boards in Soweto over the language issue that exploded into the 1976 Soweto upheavals.

It was during this period that the final collapse of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto came about. Such a collapse was not an outcome of a single event but an

amalgamation of various circumstances and factors that impacted on the bodies of school governance in Soweto. Not all the circumstances were external to the very system itself. The School Boards and School Committees in Soweto contributed towards paralysing their own system of school governance by undermining the state's vision and purpose for which these structures were created.

*The Political Economy of Bantu Education 1972*

In the previous chapter it was shown that the government followed a policy of restricting the expansion or urban secondary schooling during the period 1960-1972, because it sought to achieve its Bantustan ideal. As a result, the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto were used for this purpose. The period around the beginning of 1972 was marked by a change in government policy towards African education and this impacted directly on the functioning of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. The government started to give recognition to continued African existence in the urban areas, such as Soweto, though there was still no break with the overall ideological rationale of "Grand Apartheid" and separate development. As the statement of Mr Blaar Coetsee, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development in 1972 confirmed that as far as the National Party was concerned

> "the Bantu in white areas, whether they were born there or allowed to come here under our control rules, are merely here for the labour they performed and so far as the Bantu were secondarily present in white areas, we will see to it that in every possible respect the necessary liaison existed between them and their peoples in the homelands".[114]

Before 1972, African children in Soweto were to spend 13 years in school and study the old Std. 6 in the primary school phase. Only pupils who obtained a first or second class phase could be allowed into secondary school to do Form One. In 1972, this policy was changed when Std. 6 in the primary school section was abolished and pupils with a third class pass in Std. 5 could also be pushed into the secondary schools. The African child's schooling period was, as a result, reduced to 12 years in keeping with white education. This occurred partly because of the socio-economic conditions that encouraged a relatively acquiescent Soweto life throughout most of the 1960s, shifted significantly during the early 1970s. The economic "miracle" ended, as industrial growth could no longer keep pace with the expanding urban African labour supply. The government was therefore forced to move towards a more pragmatic position on the issues such as the colour bar and petty apartheid[115] .

The issue of significance here is that after 1972, as a result of the government's change in policy, there was a rapid expansion of the Soweto secondary school population within a poorly researched educational system. In 1972, for example, the shortage of secondary schooling in Soweto itself had reached a new peak. There was a huge bottleneck at the point of transition from Std. 6 to Form One, because for ten years the growth of Soweto secondary schools had been suspended, while the primary schools had been established continuously.

The School Boards in Soweto did not hesitate to follow the new policy change. In 1972 when the King Zwelithini Primary School in Emdeni Soweto was being built, Mr Josiah Khumalo, chairman of the Zulu West Bantu School Board, took everybody by surprise when he, almost unilaterally, announced that all children in the area were to attend local secondary schools the following year. Jabulane Junior Secondary School, later known as Letore, was as a result badly flooded with pupils in 1973. Added to this, Mr S. Masinga who had just been removed from Luyolo Primary School to act as principal of this new Secondary school, was himself not properly qualified and/or experienced with the activities of secondary school life[116].

Hyslop contends that by squeezing such large numbers of older pupils into an under-resourced school system, the state was not only creating intensifying discontent against the Bantu School Boards in Soweto, but also generating an environment in which rebellion might occur[117].

*The Soweto School Boards and their Rigid Application of Ethnic Policy 1972 - 1975*
One other factor or event that did not bring lustre to the image of the already beleaguered Bantu School Board structure in Soweto in the early 1970s was the manner in which it went about handling the emotive ethnic division of schools. There is no doubt that pursuing rigid application of this policy in Soweto by the state, in collusion with some Bantu School Boards created chaos and confusion, let alone amongst the parents and pupils, but also amongst the very School Boards themselves.

In 1971-1972, the state had reconstructed the old area School Boards in Soweto and replaced them with a new plethora of ethnic Bantu schools such as the splitting of the old Orlando School Board into the Tswana School Board under Mr David Pooe and Mr Rathebe, the Basotho School Board under Mr J. Mphalele and Mr Kgwele, and the Zulu School Board. Boundaries of old School Boards changed in 1972, as each new ethnic School Board branched out to govern selective schools in different areas of Soweto under its jurisdiction. It is possible that each township in Soweto could have up to three Bantu school Boards in charge of other areas, depending on the ethnic mix of the area concerned[118].

The ethnic dream was first made difficult for these School Boards to achieve, because by 1972 there was still no space for ethnic secondary schools in Soweto. This reality was confirmed by the Bantu Education Department, through its Deputy Secretary, Mr C.C.du Preet, who pointed out that more high schools were only to be built in the homelands, an indication, as Hyslop would argue, that the government was still committed to incorporating African parents into ethnic hegemony. Almost simultaneously, a certain Mr H.I. Juniper, the School's Development officer for the West Rand Administration Board, confirmed that Soweto was largely laid out without any provision for higher schools. In older areas like Orlando and Jabavu the planners made provision for Junior Secondary Schools[119].

Further complicating the problem of space was the state's ruling that Soweto schools must be ethnically grouped. In Soweto, in the early 1970s there were already more than eight ethnic groups and that meant that some areas falling under the jurisdiction of various ethnic Bantu School Boards, required three to four more schools for their different ethnic groups, a development that not only implied a possible duplication of facilities, but that not all ethnic groups could be catered for in their very areas.

It was on this basis that Mr P.M. Mehlape, principal of Madibane High School in Diepkloof, complained that there were no Junior Secondary Schools for the Tsonga and Northern Sotho groups in the area, because of the ethnic zoning of schools under boards. This meant that pupils had to travel long distances to other parts of Soweto in order to get schooling. At Musi High School in Pimville, according to Mr P.G. Vilakazi, his school with only 12 classes had an enrolment of 1222 and could only get by borrowing four classes in the nearby primary school. The principal of a Tswana school in Meadowlands also pointed to overcrowding that was created by ethnic grouping. His Tswana school with only 10 classrooms was forced to run 22 classes daily in double sessions, an experience he found terribly humiliating - to chase eager children away from his school, because they were the wrong ethnicity and because his school could take no more[120].

The issue of ethnic division of schools in Soweto was made more problematic by the fact that, there was, in the first place, no student structure recognised by the Bantu School Boards, nor were students represented in such bodies of school governance except the routine system of school monitors and prefects whose powers were limited to classroom activities only. Many cases and examples of ethnic inconvenience to pupils in Soweto, largely created by the Bantu School Board structure after 1972, may be cited. In some cases reported in **The Star,** February 1974, hundreds of pupils had nothing to do and left idle, either because they had no teachers since the beginning of the school term, or because they had teachers, but no ethnic school buildings for them. These pupils had to leave their original school buildings for some other ethnic groups, as ordered by ethnic local School Boards. Another example given is of a school known as Phuthi in Orlando West that was apparently allocated two schools in error. In other words, two separate schools existed on the same premises, one a Zulu Junior Secondary School without teachers and another Zulu Higher Primary School with Zulu teachers, but without a school building. Certainly, such mismanagement of the government's ethnic policy by the DBE, in cahoots with its zealous ethnic School Boards, had disastrous effects on the African children affected and did nothing for the image of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto.

The plight of pupils was also at stake. At Naledi High School in 1973, where the author taught, a wholesale expulsion of Zulu speaking pupils took place. The Department had forced the Soweto West School Board to take these pupils to Dr B.W. Vilakazi Secondary School under Mr Gqibithole, in the Zola location. Naledi High School was declared a Sotho medium school; despite the fact that most pupils and teachers were Zulu speaking and the medium of instruction was English and Afrikaans. Pupils had

already bought books, paid school fees, bought the uniform and attended classes. The principal, Mr Rudolph Mthimkulu, protested against this ethnic injustice by staying away from school for two weeks[121].

The ethnic order cost Mr T.W. Nkambule, the principal of Orlando High, a number of his good graduate teachers, especially in the fields of Maths and Science, because of better working conditions in the corporate world. By 1973, his school alone had already lost well over ten Science teachers[122].

The application of the government's rigid ethnic policy intensified resentment and resistance of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. An increasing number of people, especially the politicised new generation of secondary school youth, perceived these structures as part of the "Apartheid" puppet bodies, that sought to perpetuate the system of Bantu Education.

*The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and its impact on Soweto schooling and School Boards*

It would be incorrect to perceive the BCM as having been directly or even solely responsible for the growing unpopularity of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto before 1976. However, it cannot be disputed that such a political revival and conscientisation of the African masses in the 1970s further caused resentment of all government created structures, including the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto.

It is not the objective of this discussion to delve into the detailed history and role of the BCM in general, but what is noteworthy is the influence this Movement exerted, especially on students, to wake up and challenge both the system of "Apartheid" and its collaborators. Christie discusses the origin and impact of Black Consciousness in the 1970s and points out that it was spearheaded by SASO in the Black Universities that had broken away from NUSAS[123]. The BCM created a broad support base that included educational groupings, cultural bodies, community groups, theologians, and journalists. In this regard, it was not a single, coherent philosophy, but centrally stood for the rejection of White domination in all its forms and those who collaborated with it[124].

Its basic tenet is well captured by Thoahlane's 1975 summary of the 1974 Black Resistance Convention, in which Black delegates from all walks of life concluded that what was urgent was to move away from the colonial pathology of submitting to white judgement towards recognising the Black peoples' own autonomy and sacrosanct identity. There was, from this Black Resistance Convention, an observation that the South African black community showed signs of lethargy and apparent resignation to being the political football of white politicians[125].

It also emerged that Blacks took strong exception when whites arrogated to themselves the right to decide what was good or bad for the politically dominated class and made laws to this effect without consulting the people affected[126]. The BCM created a

number of structures, such as SASM (South African Students Movement) that was set up in Soweto and had a lot of influence on secondary school pupils, and BPC (Black Peoples Convention), that helped the community on matters such as literacy campaigns, health projects, building of schools, clinics, community centres and home education. It concentrated on educating the African masses to undermine government-recognised bodies and to marginalise them, in the interest of forging solidarity amongst all relevant Black peoples irrespective of social class[127].

It was very difficult for the School Boards and School Committees in Soweto in the mid 1970s to justify their continued existence and convincingly defend the fact that they were not puppet agents of the Department of Education. Sibongile Mthembu, a member of the South African Student Movement (SASM) at Nadeli High School up to 1976, explains that it was not as if they, as students, were focused on the School Boards mainly, nor were they instructed by the BCM and SASM leadership to focus on these bodies only, "but having imbibed the spirit and philosophy of Black Consciousness and encouraged by some of our liberated and conscientised teachers, we were bound to perceive these structures as misleading our parents, especially as they were apologetic and defending of a system of education we all knew was utter rubbish."[128]

One of the teachers who was under the BCM spell in the early 70s, Mr L. Ngakane asserted that the Bantu School Boards were "a meaningless creation that delayed the radicalisation of students and parents. They were not different from Bantustan puppets and we advised students they should both undermine them, as well as influence their parents to marginalise them by not attending their meetings and/or taking their instruction seriously".[129]

*Teachers' Radicalisation and Resistance towards the Bantu School Board* structure in Soweto 1972 1979

The period after 1972 almost caught teachers' bodies like TUATA offguard and unprepared. They remained an unconscientised group who still pursued the channel of apologetic negotiations with an unrepentant BED. Even some community leaders like Mr Mlonzi of the Urban Council in Soweto, once criticised TUATA of failing to protect its members from what he described as the "monstrous hand" of some of the local School Boards. Mr Mlonzi was adamant that these boards freely fired teachers under TUATA's nose without ever feeling obligated to disclose any reasons[130].

There were incidents when the national teachers' body like ATASA, African Teachers Association of South Africa, spoke openly against the School Boards, for example, in Mr H.H. Dlamlenze's speech where he stated that "Black teachers have always been against the School Boards, because the School Board members are largely unprofessional people. We have submitted a memo to this effect, with the suggestion that the boards be replaced by a professional body in which the teachers are also represented."[131] The fact is that ATASA itself lacked a national strategy to deal with the problem. In fact, there existed some tension and estrangement between Black Consciousness activists and bodies like ATASA, with these teachers groups increasingly

loosing the initiative against the system of Bantu Education and the Bantu School Board structure to the younger and radicalised teachers.

TUATA proved unable to respond to the challenge of Black Consciousness and this is acknowledged by some old members of this body like Mr Sydney Matlala, the principal of Mmila Primary School in Tladi Location Soweto. This explains why in 1972, SASO subjected the entire teaching profession to a stern criticism for lack of political urgency and militancy and for the way in which they worked closely with the Bantu Education Department and the system of School Boards and School Committees[132] .

Although it might be argued that these teacher bodies were indifferent to taking the system of Bantu School Boards in Soweto head-on after 1972, the influence of younger and more conscientised teachers like Abraham Tiro, who taught at Morris Isaacson High School and had just been rusticated from Turfloop University. Others, in schools such as Naledi High School, including the author himself, Orlando High School, Sekano Ntoane High School who had emerged from Fort Hare and University of Zululand, started to undermine Teachers bodies like TUATA and ATASA and openly criticised or refused to recognise the Bantu School board structure. As Hyslop points out, these Black Conscious orientated teachers in Soweto schools were fully aware that they were placed in a structurally powerless position by these School Boards, who were readily manipulated by inspectors[133] . It was clear to these teachers that their only hope rested in their alliance with student structures such as the SSRC, who virtually took over all the schools in Soweto, especially after 1977 and started telling the more conservative teachers and principals what to do. There was very little that the School Boards and TUATA could do to reverse the radicalisation and politicisation of this new generation of teachers.

Matters came to a head in 1977 when the majority of secondary school teachers in Soweto resigned en masse from the DBE, as an expression of a long borne frustration against everything within the system of education. Teachers had been mobilised by other educators such as Mr Fanyana Mazibuko and his Head master, Mr L. Mathabathe at Morris Isaacson High School. Some of these educators were later detained by the security police and accused of being troublemakers[134] .

The state's failure to obtain real support from the post 1972 young Soweto teachers for the local School Boards structure was underpinned by its inability to at least articulate an ideology that could have drawn in these radicalised teachers and give them equal partnership in the governance of schools in Soweto alongside the Bantu School Board structure. On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that teachers in Soweto further accelerated these bodies towards becoming dysfunctional.

*Community Opposition to the School Board System in Soweto*

It was shown in earlier chapters how the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were opposed in the mid 1950s by members of communities in Gauteng, Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. Although not comparable to the same scale or proportion, it had

to take the period after 1972 for the resentment of the Soweto community towards Bantu School Board systems to become visible. This became evident in 1974 when about 200 members of the community gathered at the Mofolo Hall in Soweto where they passed resolutions condemning the system of Bantu Education also rejecting the concept of School Boards and committees[135].

Some resolutions to emerge from the meeting were: that representation be made to the DBE to ask for the abolition of the government nominated members of the School Boards and School Committees, so that all members of these bodies could be directly elected by the parents themselves; that parents would like to point out that they strongly condemned the mass victimisation of teachers in Soweto by these School Boards; and that an immediate move be undertaken to disband the Bantu School Boards and to form, in their place, the PTAs ( Parent Teacher association) that would work in close collaboration with teachers and parents[136].

Mkhize argues that it was at this very meeting that Mr L. Mlonzi, a member of the Soweto Urban Bantu Council, launched a scathing attack against the members of School Boards in Soweto, whom he had labelled a bunch of illiterates who knew nothing about teaching and who were only good at exploiting poor teachers by selling posts and failing to appoint principals of schools on merit.

In another incident reported by **Weekend World,** a group of parents led by the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) leader, Gibson Thula, members of the Zulu School Boards in Soweto met in one of the school's small and crowded classrooms to protest about the teaching of Arithmetic, Social studies and Mathematics in Afrikaans in local schools such as Belle, Emthonjeni and Thulasizwe. It became clear to all and sundry that the Bantu School Board structure was useless as it was hopelessly equipped to address this matter effectively[137]. Mr T.J. Makhanya, the major of Soweto, undertook to convene a meeting of all stake holders in Soweto to deal with this matter, but excluded in his reference the Black Consciousness structures and the local students' bodies such as SASM and the SSRC. All these efforts by those who were still sympathetic to the School Board system in Soweto, would still not have been able to sustain a structure of school governance. Many parents and members of the community, were not only starting to doubt, but also to perceive as hopeless the desired changes and/or management of schools in such a fluid and changing school situation. "The community wanted these bodies to go, since not even the Department itself was taking them seriously."[138]

*The Conflict between the Soweto Bantu School Board Structure and the State*
The period between 1972 – 1977 also started to witness the beginning of deterioration of the relationship between the DBE and the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto. There was in this regard, a growing protest from Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto about the various aspects of the Department's policies. This made them become instruments of opposition to the government and to enter into some expressed alliance with some radical structures in the community itself, albeit this might

have been too little too late. For the first time, argues ... e, these School Boards forgot about their positions, ethnicity and petty differences and joined hands with the black organisations to fight a common cause[139]. However, warns Hyslop, this was not to suggest that the Bantu School Boards and School Committees had been miraculously transformed into some popular leadership overnight, but that they were instead, beginning to articulate views that were contrary to State policy[140].

Although many Bantu School Boards and School Committees, as shown earlier, had helped to implement the government's ethnic policy in their schools, this was, in fact, one area in which some of them had a head-on conflict with the State. As reported in the **Rand Daily Mail,** in May 1972, a meeting of Soweto School Committees and parents raised an objection about the anticipated creation of "tribal" schools and many parents threatened to withdraw their children from such schools, though we know that this programme went ahead because of the compliance of some of the School Boards. Also widely reported and confirmed by Mr P. Meso, a teacher and resident of Alexandra, was an incident in Alexandra Township in 1973 where local School Committees opposed the ethnic separation of schools and mobilised to force the local School Boards to withdraw instructions already issued out to school principals to pursue this policy.

Some School Boards in Soweto fell into disfavour with the Department of Bantu Education over the employment of politically active teachers who were rusticated from the "Bantu" Universities. This was the case with the employment of Abraham Tiro in 1972, who was a SASO leader, by the Moroka School Board. The Department insisted that Tiro should be removed, but both the Board and the Morris Isaacson School Committee refused to comply. In 1974 most of the Bantu School Boards in Soweto had become alienated from the DBE. The relationship was further strained to a point of no return by the language issue, which may now be looked at separately.

*The Soweto School Boards and the Language Bombshell 1974 – 1976*

The major crunch in the relationship between the Bantu Education Department and the School Board structure in Soweto occurred over the imposed decision over the compulsory teaching of some subjects in Afrikaans in schools, which was to commence in 1976. The controversy started much earlier than 1976. Initially according to the then Secretary of Bantu Education, Dr H Van Zyl, the criteria for choosing which language was to be used for instruction in local schools was to depend on the language that was dominant in the white area where the Bantu school was situated[141]. The directive was confusing and self contradictory, as it also provided for such a decision or choice of language could also depend on the recommendation of the local Bantu School Boards together with white circuit inspectors and regional directors[142].

After the death of Dr Van Zyl, the new Regional Director for Southern Transvaal, which also included Soweto, Mr C. Ackerman, issued instruction to principals, without first consulting with the Bantu school Boards that as from August 1974 English and

Afrikaans would be taught on a 50/50 basis, with the vernacular to be used only for non-examination subjects. This ruling was rejected out of hand by the Orlando-Diepkloof Zulu School Board. The Minister of Bantu Education who announced that the proposed changes in the language of instruction would only commence in 1976 later put these contradictions into perspective.

The order was that half of all subjects were to be taught in Afrikaans, the others in English, in Std. 5 and Form One. It was also stipulated that Arithmetic, Mathematics and subjects with the highest failure rate in African schools, together with Social Studies, would in future be taught in Afrikaans. No explanation was offered for this intransigence and no explanation given for the need to teach Maths in Afrikaans. The only previous reference to this subject had been Dr. Verwoerd's famous statement, "what is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd"[143].

The whole debate and discontent over the Afrikaans policy had earlier resulted in a meeting of 91 delegates from different schools in the Witwatersrand and Western Transvaal being held in Atteridgeville on 21 December 1974. Hyslop states that although the tone of the meeting was moderate, the opposition against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was strong. Deputation's and memoranda were submitted to the Department over this matter, but in vain. The Bantu School Boards even went to the extent of threatening supreme court injunction and to call a school boycott reminiscent of the mid 1950s education campaign, if this policy was not immediately reversed[144]. The Department responded with its usual arrogance even against its created structure of school governance.

As the opposition grew during the closing months of 1975 and early months of 1976, there were demonstrations in some schools in Soweto against the introduction of lessons in Afrikaans. The widespread opposition brought together different structures, including the Soweto Bantu School Board Structure, which were uniting against something more than an instruction over language. The first vocal protest or recorded opposition, insofar as the Soweto School Boards were concerned, came from Meadowlands Tswana School Board on 2 January, 1976.

Shortly thereafter the entire Meadowlands School Board resigned. At a meeting in which the school circuit inspector was called in to explain the Afrikaans issue and to try and restore the Board, he explained that taxes contributed by Africans were used to pay for their education in the homelands and that, "in urban areas the education of a Black child is being paid for by the white population group, that is English and Afrikaans speaking groups, therefore the Secretary for Bantu Education has the responsibility towards satisfying the English and Afrikaans speaking people."[145] Parents, nonetheless, stood by the decision of the Board. One of the parents, Mrs Elizabeth Mathope told the meeting, "if we allow our children to be taught in Afrikaans all they can become are Ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church...we pay for the education of our children and we should determine their education."[146] When Mr W.C. Ackerman, regional director of

Bantu Education in the Southern Transvaal, was made aware that parents could withdraw their children from all Meadowlands schools as a result of the sacking of the Meadowlands School Board members, he expressed surprise that parents objected to this dismissal when, in fact, the School Board regulations clearly empowered the regional director to dismiss any member of the School Board at any time and for whatever reason he deemed fit[147].

To add to the insult of the Bantu School Boards, Dr A.P. Treurnicht, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and education, was reported in **The World**, May 21, 1976, as saying that a medium of instruction was a professional matter, which should go to the principal, to the inspector, regional director and finally to the Department. Nowhere was there any mention of parents, School Committees and School Boards. This made the editor of **The World**, conclude that the School Boards were toothless institutions that could not bring about any change, as the final decisions always came from the Department.

On the whole, some circuit inspectors made their resentment of School Boards publicly known. The **Bantu Education Journal** editions of 1976 blamed everything to troublemakers who were misleading the Boards. In Soweto alone, 18 members of school Boards were dismissed from their posts by the Department in what many Soweto residents saw as a purge against members who were opposed to the 50/50 policy. Even the formation of the Federal Council of School Boards could not help change the arrogant attitude of the Department towards School Boards[148].

The Federal Council of School Boards was a desperate and reactionary measure by the Gauteng based School Board structures to form a united front with the hope of challenging the DBE and speaking with one voice. It could be described as a loose alliance of Bantu School Boards in the new Witwatersrand region that sought to circumvent White Circuit Inspectors by dealing directly with the Advisory Board for Bantu Education, which was perceived to be sympathetic.

Although it was later mooted in **Weekend World** of March 14, 1976, by some anonymous official of the Department that schools might in future have the right to choose their own medium of instruction, it was clear that there was an irreversible breakdown of the relationship and mutual confidence between the Department and its Bantu School board structure. This did not impair the public image of the Bantu School Board system in Soweto, but also left over the task to fight the Afrikaans injustice and the system of Bantu Education itself, to the Soweto Secondary School pupils.

**Part Two: The Final Downfall Of The Bantu School Board Structure In Soweto: 1977 – 1979**

Whereas numerous factors were earlier cited, and looked at separately, as having collectively contributed towards the gradual disfunctioning and disintegration of the Bantu School Board system in Soweto, there is no doubt that the final blow that brought about the immediate downfall of these bodies was delivered by the student structure itself. In 1979 the Department was all but obsolete.

*The Students' Attack against the School Board Structure in Soweto*
For the Soweto school pupils, points out Hirson, or at least for that section that sought to organise opposition to the system of Bantu Education, the language issue assumed importance because it bound together pupils in the primary and secondary schools on a single issue and offered them a theme around which a campaign could be launched[149]. It was on this score that on 13 December 1976 SASM, a Black Consciousness structure in Soweto secondary schools, initiated the formation of an Action committee, later known as SSRC, to embark on action against both the enforcement of Afrikaans in Soweto schools, as well as the system of Bantu Education itself, inclusive of the School Boards and School Committees.

Mr Sydney Seatlholo, the chairman of the SSRC after Tsietsi Mashinini, acknowledged that signals of tension between the Soweto students and the local Bantu School Board structure dated much earlier than June 1976 or 1977. For example, on 24 May, 1976 students had rejected a call by the Orlando-Diepkloof School Boards to go back to school. On numerous occasions some of these boards were spoken to and warned for harassing progressive teachers and principals, who were sympathetic to the students' cause, points out Mr Seatlholo, former Chairman of the Soweto Students Representative Council for 1976-1977.

In Mkhize's view the failure of the Soweto Bantu School Boards to bring about transformation, especially with regards the 1976 language issue and the humiliating manner in which they were treated by their own creator and master, only served to heighten resistance against them by students. In Soweto, especially after June 1976, there was a general outcry amongst the youth and younger teachers, that it was about time these puppet bodies go and start making way for the more progressive and democratic structures of school governance. It was left over to the SSRC, which consisted of two representatives from each school in Soweto, to drive this process forward.

The Zulu West Bantu School Board in Zola and the Orlando East Sotho School Board were among the first to be served with ultimatums to resign[150]. It is not clear why these were the first to be singled out. Mr H. Tshabalala, formerly a Treason Trialist and the Vice Chairman of the Zulu West Bantu School Board, where teachers and board members were all part of the same system, could not delay or stop the students' onslaught of these bodies. Mr Tshabalala, perhaps unwittingly, further eroded the

credibility of the Boards when he went public and pointed out that he had sufficient evidence to prove that some boards were being asked by principals to get rid of teachers they disliked, a clear confirmation to students that these bodies were corrupt and beyond redemption. Mr Tshabalala also warned the community that an enforced resignation of School Board members would throw the entire Soweto schools into chaos . This was based on the mistaken idea that School Boards were a stabilising factor in Soweto schools, when what the students in fact wanted was the collapse of Bantu Education and its system of School Board and School Committees. The Soweto student leadership after June 1976 was obviously not interested in any debate or discussion, least of all, with conservative parents who were perceived as collaborators of the system that was oppressing the students.

By 1977 the SSRC had already ventured into the political field having met with success beyond the expectations of many people. It had forced the local Urban Bantu Council to suspend the community rental increases. The SSRC had thus reasserted its position as the only effective organised body in the Soweto Township and for the first time had assumed the role of a political organisation[151] .

In July 1977 Mr Trofomo Sono filled the leadership vacuum that was left by Tsietsi Mashinini and Sydney Seatlholo who had gone into exile. The new leader was equally militant and stated that, "if it is death, we must die, if that is how Bantu Education must be scrapped".[152] He maintained that the aim of the SSRC was not to overthrow the government, but, as he put it, to see to it that Bantu Education, and all its apparent appendages, including the Bantu school Boards in Soweto, were driven to hell. His SSRC put it clearly that as far as it was concerned, the Boards were hopelessly useless and students could do without them, as these served only as the agents of the system[153] . It would appear that Mr Sono and the SSRC had further been annoyed by the fact that the principal of Mawila Higher Primary School, Mr Edward Sono (no relation), had been sacked by his local School Board and secondly, that some of these School Boards in Soweto were still arrogantly pursuing an ethic policy, when it was quite clear that they were incapable of forcing the government to build more schools for overcrowded pupils[154] .

At the beginning of July 1977, the Soweto Student Representative Council had issued an ultimatum to members of 26 School Boards in Soweto, demanding their immediate resignation. This coincided with the mass resignation of progressive secondary school teachers in the same year. There is no doubt, says Dr S.K. Matseke, the former Inspector of Schools in Soweto in 1977, that these children were dangerous and meant what they said. The members of School Boards were afraid of them, as they could easily be visited in their homes at night to be reminded that they should resign. This brought pressure to bear on families of members of these Institutions who in turn would persuade them to quit, especially as during that period, houses of disliked and suspected "collaborators" were being petrol bombed. The researcher, personally knows that Mr J.P. Nkosi's house, the Principal of Isulihle Primary School, where the Zulu West Bantu School Board was also based, in Jabulane, was burned down in 1977, resulting in the

death of his wife and children. It is not clear why Mr Nkosi's house was targeted, neither could it be established, without doubt, who the culprits were. The researcher's own house and car were also burnt and partly damaged in 1977 for refusing to resign as the Headmaster of Naledi High School, in spite of the fact that the researcher had himself been part of the mobilisation and influencing of the secondary school youths against both the DBE and the system of Bantu School Boards. It is even possible that these acts could be ascribed to chancers and/or those who were under the command of the State Security Forces.

Shortly after the ultimatum was issued, a number of members of Boards resigned and by the end of July, 1977, about ten School Boards had virtually ceased to function[155], others followed in August. It certainly would not have been easy, given the militancy of students and the radicalisation of teachers, for the Department to find replacements who had resigned to effectively revive some of the already defunct School Boards and School Committees in Soweto. Although most of the SSRC leadership was detained by the Security Police and some went into exile, the Boards remained intimidated and permanently paralysed.

*The Government's Discontinuation of the Bantu School Board System*

Kane-Berman[156] points out that the government had tried to save the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in the urban areas, including Soweto, before 1979. It made an amendment that, henceforth, parents representatives would be elected by the very parents themselves, instead of nominations by the government. Mr I. Moteka, the previous Secretary of the Orlando School Board up to 1971, holds the view that this change was as a result of the ungovernability of most secondary schools in Soweto which the government wished to exempt from the control of the Bantu School Boards. This endeavour was unfortunately belated and futile, as the radical Soweto school youths had already paralysed the Bantu School Boards and School Committees through persuasion and intimidation. Most of the members of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto would not dare defy instructions from the post 1976 militant, secondary school students.

With the passing of the Education and Training Act No.9, 1979, the Bantu Education Department was discontinued and the Bantu School Board system was restructured. Article 7 (1) of the Act empowered the Minister of Education and Training to provide for active involvement by parents and the community in education, by establishing such bodies as he may deem expedient and accord representation on such bodies that may include parent-teachers' associations, domestic committees or any other similar authoritative bodies[157] but the Minister reserved the right to disestablish such bodies and/or withdraw such duties and powers granted to them.

Practically and legally this meant that with effect from 1980 the Bantu school Boards in Soweto no longer existed. Mr Nkabinde, of the Zulu West Bantu Board confirms that the Department notified them in July 1979 to close down and join the newly established bodies. Mr I. Moteka, who was by then an inspector of schools and who recalls the

School Boards being served with notices to fold, corroborates this. They were replaced with the School Committee boards for each secondary school in Soweto, while the School Committees were retained for each Primary school. These bodies are a subject of research themselves, but were unlikely to make an impact in the fast changing political climate in Soweto in the early 1980s. The 1979 Education and Training Act was an endeavour to restructure the system of African school governance, yet this was too little, too late. It was also an endeavour to modernise and transform Bantu education, yet this was not going to be enough to save these structures.

## Conclusion

This chapter focused broadly on the resistance and demise of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto during the period 1972 – 1979. The periodisation itself is indicative of the fact that such a downfall of a dominant structure of school governance in Soweto, was not an overnight occurrence, neither was it biased by the Soweto 1976 militant secondary school youths, as is sometimes mistakenly thought. This research shows that an amalgamation of events and factors both directly and indirectly contributed towards such a development. These were inclusive, it may be argued, of variables both internal and external to the Bantu School Board structure itself.

Reference to the political economy of Bantu Education in 1972 served to explain why secondary schools in Soweto became overcrowded; a phenomenon that threatened the stability of these schools, as well as their governance by the Bantu school Board structure. It was also shown that whilst some Boards appeared to resist application of the government's ethnic policy in Soweto after 1972, others went ahead. This helped to accelerate the downfall of these structures.

The role of the Black Consciousness Movement was highlighted and shown how it conscientised parents, students and teachers to stand against all puppet government bodies, including the Bantu School Boards. However, if they were alone responsible for radicalisation and mobilisation of the masses, remains a matter of dispute that could warrant research and debate of its own.

The role of teachers' bodies like TUATA and ATASA towards School Boards in Soweto was established to have been moderate to make any impact. Yet individual, radicalised young teachers from Universities appeared to have an influence on pupils and parents to further resist and call for the abolition of these government installed bodies of school governance in Soweto.

The Soweto School Boards also joined the fracas and opposed the State's imposed language policy. Finally, it was the SSRC that intimidated the Bantu School Boards in Soweto into resigning. The State also fumbled on and in 1979, through the new Educational Legislation Act, restructured the entire system of school governance in the

African townships with a system of School Committee boards and School Committees which was bound to tear apart under the revolutionary pressure of the early 1980s.

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# CONCLUSION

This research report has attempted to recover and reconstruct the history of Bantu School Boards and School Committees under National Party rule in South Africa 1955-1979, with the particular aim of examining their actions and impact in Soweto. Many South African scholars have indeed, been able to give a satisfactory account of the origins of Bantu Education and its significance on the African communities in places like Soweto. However, very little has been said or researched about the structures of school governance that for three decades helped implement the system of Bantu Education in Soweto itself.

The approach of the study of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto has been to combine both the chronological order and the thematological treatment of matters under investigation.

Chapter One focuses on the origins of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in the urban areas, with Soweto singled out as a microcosm of the whole of Black South Africa. The word Soweto, although understood differently from different perspectives, has come to symbolise the struggle of the African people for freedom against the injustices of apartheid, such as the system of ethnic School Boards and School Committees. Such a study necessitated a brief background into the control of African Education before 1953. This endeavour reveals that African education in South Africa, even after the establishment of the Union in 1910, was controlled between the mission schools and the provincial councils that only provided financial grants, while maintaining control through inspections, examinations and the drawing up of curricula. The missionary education system, it was established, failed to provide full participation for African parents and teachers in the control of education; hence its condemnation by the African middle class and the call for State intervention - albeit not for the same ideological reasons as the National Party government had in mind.

Reference to the origins of Bantu Education shows that many standard accounts of "Apartheid" tend to narrowly trace the beginning of the system of Bantu Education to the Eiselen Commission, 1949-1951 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Yet, Fleisch (1998) in "Perspective", provides a much wider account, ranging from Afrikaner racial mentality to revisionist, capitalist understanding.

It was also within the framework of Chapter One, to debate that, although the Eiselen Commission and the Bantu Education Act might have laid down the foundation for the establishment of School Boards and School Committees, the Tomlinson Commission of 1955 sought to functionalise these within the broad framework of "separate development". The chapter unfolds with the distinction between the School Boards and the School Committees and the different functions these had to carry out. With the aid of an illustration, it is also shown how the system allowed a Secretary of the Board more powers.

Discussions in Chapter Two focus on the early years, 1953-1960 of the Bantu School Boards and School Committees. The period itself is explained as a period during which the principle of providing active participation for African parents in the control and management of African Community Schools was realised, albeit for ideological reasons.

It was during these early years that the concept of Bantu School Boards and School Committees was defended and justified by government publications and officials. Part of the advocacy centred mainly on ethnic and cultural grounds. Mr Prozesky, a DBE official, anticipated that these structures were going to serve as a new type of "Lekgotla", a place of deliverance wherein, not only school affairs, but also other matters related to the Soweto community could be discussed. This would have been a practice similar to the Bantu School Board structures in the Bantustans where Chiefs dominated over such bodies. The School Boards and School Committees were also advocated for, by distinguished African educationists in Soweto such as Mr C. Phathudi, who assured the community that these bodies would serve as, "the eye and ear", not of the government, but of the parents who, in turn, would become the owners of schools as the government would simply oblige by aiding them.

The investigation shows that the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto in the early years was used to implement government regulations against teachers and to play an ideological role by helping implement the government's influx control against pupils and teachers. The School Boards also followed the government's racial funding policy that resulted in the shortage of school amenities in Soweto, as well as being involved in actions of purging teachers politically.

Criticism against the system of Bantu School Boards and School Committees in Soweto was already abounding in the late 1950s. Some officials of the Department acknowledged that there was malpractice within the system and singled out secretaries who were influenced by personal disputes and tended to abuse their powers. Glaser (1994) pointed to a reputation of arbitrariness and corruption on the part of these bodies, while the **Bantu World**, with wide readership in Soweto, lamented the underlying principle of School Boards that were more political than educational. Concerns also emanated from the National Council of African Women, in which various groups of women from Soweto were represented. They objected to the low literacy levels of some members, as well as the government's interference that amounted to parent representation not being elected by popular vote.

Chapter Three carries the investigation into the period 1960-1972, a period when the Soweto community remained politically docile as the police clamped down on liberation movements and Bantu education as followed in its "purest form". It establishes that this was a period during which the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto consolidated itself more firmly than it had in the earlier years.

Under this sense of hope and high expectations, the Bantu School Board structure was strongly advocated for by the government propaganda magazine, the **Bantu Education**

**Journal**, which claimed that our School Boards differed from those of other departments of education in that they had far-reaching executive powers. Also defending the system of Bantu School Boards in Soweto are former members of these bodies: principals such as Mrs M.B. Nkose and African academics such as Professor Luthuli, who defended the system on cultural and ethnic grounds.

It is shown that TUATA remained conservative, preferring the use of cushioned language and memoranda, than visibly intervening to protect its members who were being transferred, dismissed and retrenched by corrupt School Boards, practising nepotism. TUATA only mildly protested against the undermining of School Committees by the Soweto School Boards in the use of school funds.

It also becomes evident that not all was well between the Bantu School Boards in Soweto and the State. An example is given of members of the Moroka School Board, who applied to the Supreme Court to reverse the dissolution of their Board by the State and successfully nullified the subsequent November polls.

Once more, the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto is widely criticised for reshuffling teachers, undermining School Committees, making pupils pay contributions, applying ethnic policy and for being corrupt. It emerges that the demise of this system of school governance in Soweto was due to its failing to achieve a new hegemonic order, as was expected by the government.

The final Chapter of this Research Study examines the circumstances that contributed towards the disintegration of the once consolidated Bantu School Board structure in Soweto during the period 1972-1979. This is defined as the period of student activism that was partly influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement, during which an irreversible breakdown of African education in Soweto took place.

The research establishes that the demise of the Bantu School Board structure in Soweto cannot be ascribed to one particular factor, namely the role of Black Consciousness or student activism, as is often mistakenly thought, but that this was as a result of an amalgamation of events, which were not accomplished overnight. Such factors were grouped into two categories. The earlier, yet strongly contributory events included the government's recognition of urban African permanence, coupled with the expansion of secondary schooling in Soweto. The Soweto School Board's rigid application of the ethnic policy, the direct and indirect influence of Black Consciousness, the radicalisation of the young generation of teachers from Universities and the Soweto School Board's conflict with the State over the language issue. The final countdown against the Bantu School Board system in Soweto was stepped up in 1977, with the SSRC leading the onslaught. The radicalised Students Council, which had made successful political gains in the broader community matters, issued members of the Soweto Bantu School Boards with ultimatums to resign or be forced out of these structures. It is shown that some of these members were privately visited in their homes and intimidated. The final straw over the fate of these bodies came about with the promulgation of the Education and

Training Act of 1979, which resulted in the government's restructuring of the bodies of school governance by the closing down of the School Boards and School Committees.

In can therefore be concluded , that the Bantu School Boards and School Committees were a political creation and their final demise was equally more political than educational. They had not succeeded in co-opting parents and teachers into a new hegemonic order, as hoped for by the National Party government.

Soweto, with its long history of political struggles against the unjust system of Apartheid had, once again, taken the lead in closing the chapter of Bantu School Boards and School Committees - an important educational/historical occurrence, which deserved to be revisited and reconstructed with the express aim of endeavouring to find a more just and non-ethnic system of school governance in South Africa, so as to be in keeping with our newly-found democratic order.

The researcher also acknowledges that the subject of School Boards and School Committees is open to further investigation on particular aspects, which could not be fully exhausted because of the scope of the place itself and the number of School Boards that were in existence over the years in Soweto.

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Mrs Makhalemele, B.N. Former teacher under the Meadowland and Orlando School Boards 1959-1979: 6/9/98

Mrs Masilela, R. Former principal of a Lower Primary School in Mofolo, under the Basotho School Board from the late 1960s to retirement in 1997: 12/11/98

Mr Matlala, S. Former teacher under the Soweto West School Board, Principal of Mmila Primary School and a veteran of TUATA, Soweto: 15/9/98

Dr Matseke, S.K. Renowned Soweto Educationist, former Principal of Orlando West High School and now retired Chief Inspector under the DET, Johannesburg Region: 3/7/97

Mr Meso, P. Taught at Thomas Mofolo Secondary School and Sekano Ntoane High School in the early 1970s and now Deputy Principal at Senoane Secondary School: 14/8/98

Mr Monyemorathu, S. Taught at Morris Isaacson High School in the early 1970s and principal of Seanamarena Secondary School in Soweto: 15/11/98

Mr Morati, M.T.C. Assistant Inspector in Soweto in the 1960s and retired Chief Inspector in Standerton: 2/3/98

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Mr Moteka, I. Former Secretary of Meyerton School Board and Orlando school Board 1959 – 1971 and now retired Inspector of Schools for Soweto: 12/05/98

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