

# *SCHOOL BOYCOTTS 1984:*

## *The Crisis in African Education*

Monica Bot

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## ***The Crisis in African Education***



By Indicator SA Researcher Monica Bot

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## 1 The Boycott Phenomenon

The 1985 school year for Africans opened with serious pupil boycotts in the Eastern Cape, Pretoria, the East Rand and Pietermaritzburg. By early March, some 70 000 pupils were involved. Despite last minute efforts up until December of 1984 by the Department of Education and Training (DET) to resolve festering problems, 1985 has once again seen the near collapse of African education in certain parts of the country.

While schools in some of the areas in which boycotting was most marked in 1984 have with a few exceptions returned to near normality, as in the Vaal Triangle and Atteridgeville/Saulsville areas, the early months of 1985 have shown that the momentum of the boycotts is still very powerful and serious in its implications. There have been complete stayaways in 17 schools in Cradock, Uitenhage and Fort Beaufort, with high absenteeism in nearby schools in the Eastern Cape. Six schools had to be closed in Imbali near Pietermaritzburg, seven in Cradock and one each in Mamelodi (near Pretoria) and KwaThema on the East Rand.

### A Brief Look at Events in 1984

The potential scope and damage of African school boycotts was dramatically illustrated by the mounting school unrest during 1984.

Boycotts in support of educational demands resulted in the closure of six secondary schools in Atteridgeville/Saulsville near Pretoria in May. In Cradock in the Eastern Cape, initial boycotts in support of the reinstatement of a teacher at one school spread rapidly to seven schools.

In August 1984, the coloured and Indian elections for the new tricameral parliament stimulated further unrest, and at least 30 000 African pupils boycotted school.

Early in September, the announcement of intended rent increases in the Vaal Triangle and East Rand area to augment the finances of the township councils caused a major school boycott. Initially, some 140 000 African pupils boycotted school, growing to 220 000 pupils in October. Seventy seven deaths were reported during September in the Vaal Triangle alone, at least six of whom were pupils.

After two months of unrest, the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) called a meeting of community organisations and trade unions. This resulted in the call for a stayaway on 5 and 6 November in support of several demands, including those of pupils, as well as in protest against the government's handling of township grievances.

The call for the November worker stayaway met with widespread support from pupils and from workers. An estimated 50 to 90 percent of workers stayed away from work. Most schools in Soweto, Pretoria, East Rand and Vaal Triangle were empty (for a more detailed account, see Appendix A - A chronology of events 1984).

## The Issues

In each specific boycott, both last year and this year, the issues and grievances raised in the early stages have centred mainly around educational issues: excessive corporal punishment, sexual abuse of pupils by teachers, the age limit restriction and lack of democratic representation. The concessions offered by the Minister of DET are in fact an indication of official recognition that real and widespread educational grievances exist.

From August 1984 onwards, however, issues not directly related to education started to be more and more prominently articulated as part of the boycott action. As already noted, the boycotts formed part of the widespread mobilisation of protest against the government's new constitutional dispensation. During the November 1984 stayaway, the grievances and demands of pupils combined both educational and wider political and community issues, calling for:

- democratically elected student representative councils (SRCs)
- the scrapping of age limit regulations
- the release of all pupils detained during the unrest
- the extension of the academic year by postponing final exam dates
- the withdrawal of police and the military from the townships
- a drop in rents
- the resignation of community councillors.

This coincidence of political and educational grievances has increasingly become a distinctive feature of unrest in African schools since 1976. Other noticeable developments during 1984 include the high degree of organisation by student movements, their widespread support, their ability to mobilise large numbers of pupils and their involvement in the mobilisation of the wider community.

Earlier claims by the government and DET spokesmen that 'outsiders' have been responsible for pressurising or intimidating pupils to boycott schools 'for their own political ends' are clearly inadequate. These simplistic allegations cannot explain the involvement of extremely large numbers of pupils, especially during the second half of 1984.

Assessments of the causes have to be more comprehensive and multi-faceted. Thus far it is clear that the issues are not really any nearer to resolution than they were in 1984, and this year's events point to a continuation of the costly conflict.

## Some Consequences and Implications

The boycotts of 1984 continued until final examinations started in the Vaal Triangle, East Rand, Pretoria and Eastern Cape areas and have had serious implications for all pupils involved.

### Loss of Education

The majority of East Rand, Vaal Triangle, Atteridgeville and Cradock secondary school pupils have lost a large part of their school year. Despite the promise of compensatory classes, no information has been available about whether they have actually been given or how much use has been made of them, let alone of their effectiveness. The latter aspect is especially questionable in view of the shortage of (qualified) teachers and facilities.

Provisions have also been made for matriculants who attended classes until November to (re)write their final exams in May of this year - after an effective break with formal schooling of five months. Preparing themselves for these exams will be even more difficult for those pupils who have taken a job, and some might not be in a practical position to write exams at all.

The various possibilities open to pupils involved in last year's unrest are all equally unpleasant:

- If pupils repeat the previous year, it will put a tremendous unanticipated strain on an already overloaded school system. Parents will also face the additional financial burden of an extra year of schooling costs.
- If pupils move into the next standard, they will obviously be very poorly prepared for a new curriculum. This puts a tremendous load both on the pupils involved and on the teachers who will attempt to compensate by incorporating elements of the previous year's curriculum.
- A number of pupils will probably not return to school, adding to the mass of under-educated, unemployed African youth in the townships.

### Damages to Educational Facilities

Numerous schoolbuildings and facilities have been more or less extensively damaged during the unrest. According to the Sowetan, more than 30 schools were damaged in the East Rand area alone, seven of them extensively (15/1/85). DET has announced that the present economic climate in the country does not allow the department to undertake repairs (Sow ibid).

Furthermore, the Department's Chief Public Relations Officer Mr J Schoeman was quoted as saying that 'if the community can afford it, it could step in and help', which elicited angry responses from several community organisations who feel that DET is responsible for the boycotts and therefore also for the repairs (Sow 18/1/85).

Repairs, therefore, will undoubtedly not be undertaken in the immediate future, as the present economic climate is making it more and more difficult for the communities to contribute towards these repairs. As a result, a large number of pupils will be taught under inadequate conditions.

#### Increasing Unemployment

While the need for properly educated people is growing, the demand for uneducated labour, especially in the present downturn of the economy, is decreasing. The future is dismal for those pupils who do not complete standard 10 or 8. Prof Jill Nattrass has pointed out that people who are unable to find jobs feel rejected by the society in which they live and that, furthermore, increasing unemployment is accompanied by rising levels of alienation which tend to spill over into social unrest and disruption (Indicator SA Vol2 No1, 1984).

#### Exodus of Youth

Another possibility is that a certain number of disaffected youths might well leave the country, as they did in 1976/77, and find their way to military training camps. Growth in guerilla activity in 1977 was seen to be the natural result of this. In June 1978, Brigadier C F Zietsman estimated that 4 000 black South Africans were undergoing guerilla training (Lodge, 1983).

#### Possible Implications for Industrial Relations

For those who eventually become employees, their participation in boycotts is more than likely to have an influence on their basic attitude towards labour action. Little is known about the current effects on labour of earlier boycotts, so it is difficult to say whether these pupils are likely to take a more apathetic or a more militant stance in industrial relations. It will largely depend upon whether they personally feel that the boycott strategy has been successful in gaining concessions or not. If so, they might feel that boycotts or strikes are the only sure way of securing collective advances. If, on the other hand, they have become disillusioned by the loss of a large part of the school year and did not identify closely with the demands of pupil leaders, they might become very wary of taking part in any strikes and other labour disputes.



#### Boycotts: Future Causes

The increasing interaction between different sectors of the African community and the willingness of pupil organisations to speak up about issues not directly related to their own situation has established a trend for school boycotts to occur around issues not immediately linked to education. This is exemplified by a statement made by Cosas president Lulu Johnson in October 1984: 'Before they are students ... the students are members of their community. Students are affected by rent hikes because it affects the amount of money their families have for their schooling ... The schools and the community are inseparable' (FM 12/10/84).

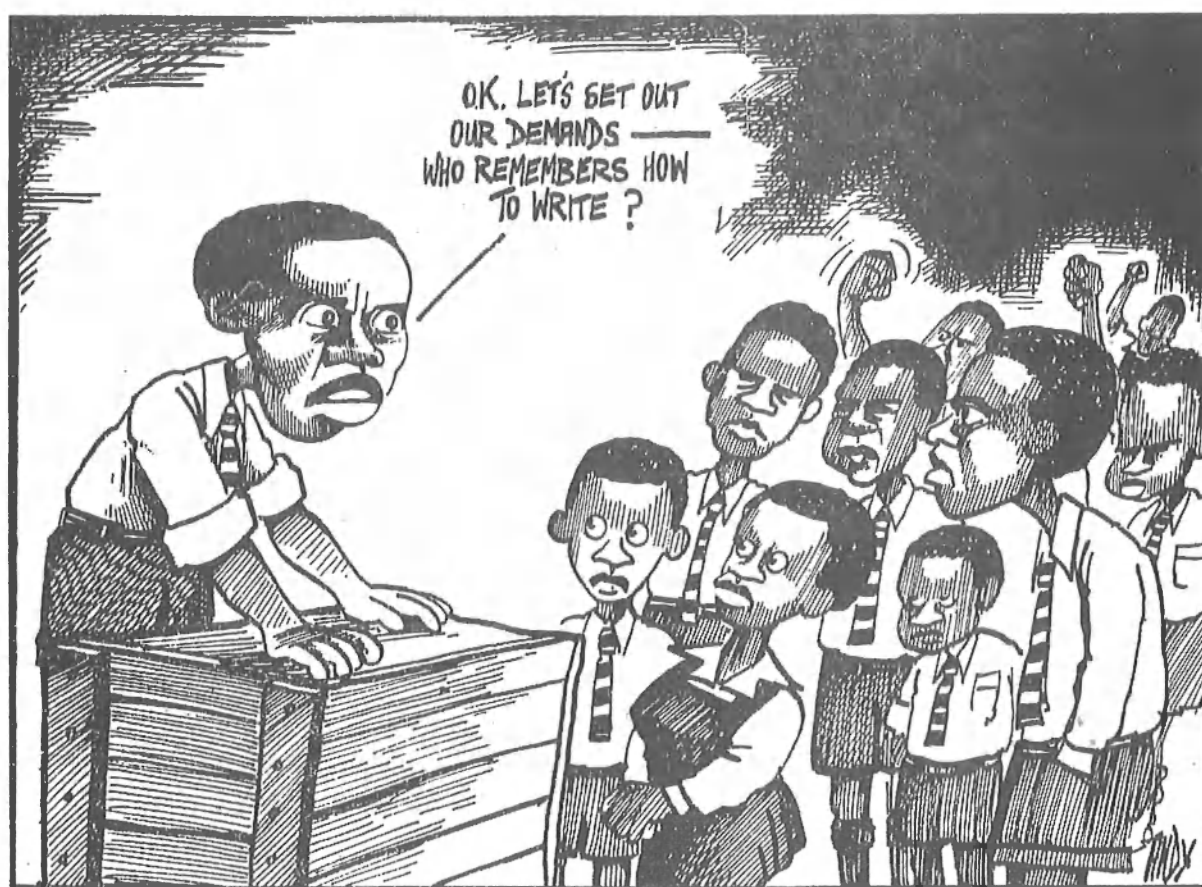
Furthermore, as became clear last year, the long term goal of pupil leadership is fundamental political change, so school boycotts must almost inevitably incorporate wider political aims.

The close interaction between specific educational demands and broader political grievances makes it difficult, if not impossible, to establish their relative weight in the causes of boycotts. Even during the first half of 1984, when demands centred around education, it was clear that on their own these educational issues were inadequate to explain the extent of mobilisation that occurred.

Focussing upon events in Atteridgeville/Saulsville as a case study illustrates some of the points mentioned earlier, and furthermore shows that the major parties involved - pupils and authorities - have widely different perceptions of the causes of and factors contributing to the unrest.

## 2 Atteridgeville/Saulsville — A Case Study

Following continued boycotts which had started towards the end of January 1984, six secondary schools in Atteridgeville/Saulsville were closed by DET in May. The discussion of the issues involved is based on press reports and interviews conducted in July 1984, after the schools' closure, with two Cosas representatives (the national president and the national organiser, who is also an Atteridgeville pupil), the principal of an Atteridgeville secondary school and two DET officials. In each instance, the pupils' viewpoint is presented first, followed by the authorities' response.



### Excessive Corporal Punishment

Pupils at one school demanded that a certain teacher be 'brought to book' for excessive physical punishment of a student. Subsequently, they alleged that although DET made statements about improvements, teachers did not abide by the regulations.

DET, either through its regional director or its public relations department, pointed out that teachers abusing DET regulations about corporal punishment would be reprimanded, but that they needed pupils to come forward with complaints to facilitate an investigation. This did not happen, unfortunately. According to officials, teachers in Atteridgeville were instructed not to apply corporal punishment at all from February onwards.

Two statements that support the more frequently heard claims regarding the abuse of corporal punishment are the Director of DET's statement that 'I'm not going to say the allegations are not true. We can't control corporal punishment properly' (RDM 26/4/84); and an investigation conducted by the Health Workers Association, which reported that Sowetan clinics have had to treat nine pupils daily who have been severely assaulted by teachers (RDM 17/7/84).

Interestingly enough, a survey conducted by Markinor towards the end of 1984 among 800 white and 800 black women found that, in the respondents' eyes, teachers are enforcing discipline correctly. Of black women, 59 percent thought discipline was too lax in schools, and less than half (44%) of respondents thought that teachers are too quick to punish children. Furthermore, there was almost universal agreement among all women that stealing, cheating on tests, damaging school property, telling lies or being rude and disrespectful to a teacher are punishable offences (form of punishment not specified). In addition, a high proportion of black respondents believed that bullying and fighting, not doing homework and chewing gum also fall into this category (People & Marketing, March 1985).

### Poor Marking of Scripts

In January 1984, 19 unmarked scripts of standard (std) 6 pupils were found by pupils at Saulridge High School, which they gave to the branch executive of Cosas. According to the national president of Cosas, Lulu Johnson, seventeen of the scripts were sent to DET, and two to staff at school. Furthermore, he alleged, all these pupils had been failed, even though the scripts were never actually marked.

DET Chief of Public Relations Mr J A Schoeman, on the other hand, said that certain scripts, 16 in all, had disappeared from the classroom where the teacher was marking them in December 1983, which was immediately reported by the teacher concerned. They subsequently reappeared again in January. Of the pupils concerned, he said, only one had failed, a pupil who had done poorly in most subjects.

More generally, each year speculation abounds that matriculation results are 'fixed' and doubts are expressed about whether the African certificates are of an equal standard as those of whites.

## The Age Limit Restriction

This restriction states that pupils over 16 years old cannot enroll at primary school, those over 18 years old cannot enroll for stds 6,7 or 8 and pupils over 20 years old cannot enroll for stds 9 and 10.

On 31 January 1984, pupils at Hofmeyer High School started boycotting for the readmission of 50 pupils who had not been allowed to register because they were over the age limit. A general suspicion exists among pupils that this restriction is used by the authorities to keep out 'ringleaders'.

Hofmeyer was the only Atteridgeville high school where, due to space problems, the age limit had resulted in the exclusion of 50 pupils. The regional director later instructed the principal to accommodate them if he could, which he then did. What perhaps was not pointed out sufficiently in the press at that time was that, according to DET, it had instructed principals to apply this restriction 'with the greatest degree of sympathy and understanding of problems'. In other words, pupils who showed progress in their work would not be restricted by the age limit.

This lenient application of age limits is borne out by the fact that 11 739 pupils of 20 years of age, 4 569 of 21 years and 2 591 of 22 years and over were in schools under the administration of DET in 1983 (Annual Report of the DET, 1983). Mr B J du Plessis, then Minister of DET said in parliament that in 1984, 8 503 pupils were enrolled who were over 20 years old but that '.... persons older than 20 years who wish to return to school after an interruption of a year or more or such persons who already have failed twice in succession, are normally not re-admitted to ordinary schools but referred to centres for adult education.' Furthermore, he said that for all schools administered by DET, only 242 pupils were refused on the grounds of being too old in 1983, and 319 in 1984 (Hansard May 1984, Questions: Col 1433/6).

## Sexual Harassment

This issue was raised in two specific instances in Atteridgeville: in early January, angry male pupils at three high schools accused certain teachers of having sex with female pupils; and towards the end of March pupils boycotted one school because authorities refused to expel a teacher and his alleged schoolgirl lover.

This issue actually precipitated the first boycott, and had its origins in events towards the end of 1983 when approximately 40 pupils were arrested during the holidays after attacking certain teachers whom they accused of sexual harassment. When the school re-opened in January 1984, these teachers did not want to have the pupils concerned re-admitted.

However, after the pupils started boycotting the school, the regional director instructed the principal to readmit them.

Once again, DET pointed out that they need definite complaints in order to investigate, but no one came forward. Seven similar cases were being investigated by the Department at the time.

Part of the problem is the often small and sometimes non-existent age gap between pupils and teachers. Du Plessis pointed out in parliament that the '.... median (age) of matriculants in our schools is 19 years and 10 months. Half of the teachers in this department today - there are more than 40 000 of them - are below the age of 30 years' (Hansard May 1984: col 6282/3). According to the Sowetan (25/9/84), authorities will attach a new clause to application forms in future to prohibit intimate fraternisation, with immediate dismissal for those who defy the rule.

### Shortage of Textbooks

Without reference to a specific incident, the adequate supply of textbooks was listed as one of the pupils' demands.

Schoeman agrees that this is a problem, partly caused by the fact that the number of pupils accepted at a school sometimes exceeds the number of books that have been ordered by the principal. Furthermore, he said that the department is at the mercy of the supplier and that delivery can be a problem, especially with regard to schools in remote areas.

### Lack of Democratic Representation

This is felt to be the main issue, according to all parties concerned. The pupils' dissatisfaction with the present 'prefect' system arises from the fact that it is common practice that these pupil prefects are appointed by teachers, and/or that they fail to present the pupils' grievances to the administration.

Pupils feel that democratically elected SRCs would facilitate problem solving within the schools, and that these councils could be used as a platform from which to address all other issues.

There was some confusion about the role the SRCs would play, however. According to DET and the principal, some pupils apparently envisaged these SRCs as having direct access to the minister, assisting the principal in running the school and having a direct say in the appointment, transfer and dismissal of teachers. Such aspects of pupil demands were considered to be unreasonable.

In parliament, however, P G Soal of the PFP (Progressive Federal Party) said that the pupils' requests with regard to the duties of SRCs were quite reasonable. He based this statement on a list of what pupils considered to be the duties of SRCs, which had been drawn up by 500 pupils at a meeting on 6 May 1984 in Atteridgeville. 'Amongst other things they talk about representing students at school, to articulate grievances and aspirations of students, to create a good working relationship among students, staff and parents and to help students understand and expand their knowledge of school affairs. These are all reasonable requests' (Hansard May 1984: col 6322). The press also reported that pupils said that 'no responsible student leader would ever demand that their SRC be involved in staff changes' (RDM 21/7/84). Furthermore, the proposed SRC constitution as drawn up by Cosas makes no mention of such a demand (see accompanying box).

**• AIMS OF REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS IN SCHOOLS •**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING: OBJECTIVES OF PUPIL  
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS**

- To act as representatives of their fellow students
- To serve as a channel for communication between pupils themselves, pupils and staff, and pupils and the principal
- To assist in maintaining order in the school in accordance with the appropriate school rules
- To set a positive example of discipline, loyalty, respect, punctuality, academic thoroughness, morality, cooperation and participation in school activities
- Its duty would be to promote good relations among pupils themselves, between pupils and staff, the school and the community, the school and parents, and to promote responsibility, 'studentship' and leadership.

**COSAS:  
A CONSTITUTION FOR STUDENT  
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCILS**

- To assist staff to instill responsibility, determination, far-sightedness and dignity into the students
  - To activate students in all matters affecting them concerning the school, education and development
  - To represent the student body wherever necessary
  - To promote student development from the grassroots level
- The constitution further provides for executive, entertainment, sport, education, disciplinary, welfare and debating committees; and provides for the SRCs to encourage the establishment of and close ties with Christian movements.

Because the boycotts continued in spite of the fact that all educational demands other than the request for SRCs had been responded to, the authorities came to suspect that the other demands were used to build a case for the SRCs. Furthermore, as early as 12 February 1984, du Plessis stated that adjustments could be made to the prefect system if pupils were dissatisfied with it.

On 11 May, he announced a new representative system consisting of a democratically elected pupils' council for every school and, in addition to that, a liaison committee for every secondary school.

As described on 6 August 1984, this committee would consist of six pupils, two staffmembers, two school committee members, two representatives from the parent teacher association and the local school inspector. They are to meet at least four times a year to discuss any local problems/issues, and any unresolved problems should be taken to the circuit office or, if necessary, to the director general or the minister.

The pupil representative councils (PRCs) were denounced straight away in May, however. A statement in a national student newspaper gave reasons: 'Students have rejected government proposals as an attempt to impose puppet bodies in schools and to crush the nationwide demand for Student Representative Councils'. In the same issue, a Cosas spokesperson says that DET 'did not meet student demands ... We will not stop fighting until our Student Representative Councils are recognised...' (SN Vol5 No2, May/June 1984).

### Differing Perceptions

The different perceptions of the authorities and pupils of the issues becomes even more apparent when looking at some of the totally opposing statements made during the above-mentioned interviews with the Cosas representatives, DET officials and the principal.

P (pupil): 'We showed our willingness to negotiate by returning to school several times, and sending delegations to the principal.'

O (official): 'The pupils should have used the proper channels for their demands, such as the prefects, so that schooling could have gone on.'

P: 'We continued the boycotts because the authorities refused our demands.'

O: 'Successful negotiation means, to black students, getting the other party to give in.'

P: 'We see the government as responsible for the closure of schools.'

O: 'DET bent over backwards to solve problems.'

P: 'The level of morale was high in Atteridgeville.'

O: 'The average pupil didn't know what it was about - the vast "silent majority".'

P: 'We knew about the school closure, that it was coming.'  
O: 'Only on the very last day did pupils realise the minister was serious about the school closure. That's why they're now petitioning for re-opening.'

Without denying the general validity of the pupils' grievances, the impression gained from the authorities' attempts to respond quickly to most demands is that the issues that played a role in the Atteridgeville boycotts, whether taken separately or combined, did not merit the course of events which followed: continuing boycotts which resulted in the closure of the six schools. It would appear as if specific issues were used as a focus for more general grievances that have existed for some time. As A J Gilbert concludes, after an investigation of unrest in KwaZulu; 'complaints are not simply complaints about a bad education system but are accentuated by particular practices at each school. .... It seems then that complaints on a general level provide the fuel for a fire; the actual practices at each specific school and the number of pupils who find that practice unsatisfactory provide the sparks to ignite the fuel' (Gilbert, 1982: p26).

#### August/November 1984: Growing Unrest and Concessions

During the second half of the year broader grievances and protests about the tri-cameral parliamentary elections and rent increases played a direct role in sparking off unrest countrywide. During those months several meetings were held by pupils and parents, and the recurring demands can be summed up as follows:

- withdrawal of police and army from townships
- release of pupils detained or arrested during the unrest
- scrapping of the age limit regulation
- extension of the academic school year by postponing final exam dates
- democratically elected SRCs.

In response to a situation of protracted and growing unrest in African schools, the new Minister of Education and Training, Dr Gerrit Viljoen announced a number of educational reforms and concessions on 9 October 1984. He announced that:

- African communities, through school committees and other bodies, would be involved in the nomination and appointment of members of the Council for Education and Training - a body involved in decision- and policy-making on African education
- A new representative structure for secondary schools, composed of PRCs and liaison committees, would be instituted



- The age limit restriction would not be applied to pupils who would be over age in the following year, because of the current unrest
- Internal examinations for stds 6-9 had been postponed to January 1985
- The six Atteridgeville schools closed in May would be reopened on October 11, and extra lessons would be given during extended school hours to make up for lost time ('Operation Catch-Up').

On 11 October, Dr Viljoen announced that with immediate effect pupils beyond the age limit could continue school attendance, with the exception of particular individuals barred by DET on educational grounds.

Approximately a week later, a further concession was announced: matriculation pupils at schools disrupted during the previous weeks would be permitted to write their examinations during May and June 1985 as private candidates, provided they informed their principals before 26 October and filled in an application form. None would be readmitted as full time pupils in 1985, but DET would provide special preparatory and finishing classes. Pupils who failed would also be able to submit entries for the May/June exam before 11 January 1985.

In another concession, std 6, 7, 8 and 9 pupils of ten East Rand townships would be allowed to write exams from 7-18 January 1985, subject to the condition that they returned to school before 27 October and attended through to 7 December, including Saturdays.

The call for democratically elected SRCs persisted, however, seemingly because neither parents nor pupils had been consulted during the drafting of the PRC constitution. Cosas had already drawn up its own constitution, which bears certain similarities to the DET version. Cosas, however, states that all SRCs should be encouraged to affiliate to any local or national movements. DET, on the other hand, feels that pupils should stick to strictly educational matters and will not allow PRCs to affiliate to organisations such as Cosas or Azasm, because they do not form part of the official educational structures and both are seen to be political organisations.

Pupils also objected to the fact that the police had not withdrawn from the townships and that many pupils were still detained, including certain leading Cosas and Azapo (Azanian People's Organisation) members. The boycotts continued up until matriculation examinations started, and of the 83 000 African pupils registered to write these examinations 5 000 opted to postpone their exams until May 1985, while 900 pupils boycotted the exam.

As a last major concession, the Deputy Minister of Education and Co-operation, Mr S G de Beer, asked on 5 December that pupils, parents and teachers contribute to a constitution for the SRCs. 'This will be done in order to ensure the widest possible representation and the widest possible acceptance in the setting up of such councils' (RDM 6/12/84).

In addition, Professor T van der Walt, Rector of Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education was appointed to undertake a survey of all possible reasons which could be advanced and which prevented the educational process from returning to normal in the Vaal Triangle. By this time, schools had already closed for the summer holidays, and it is regrettable that these statements were made at such a late date. The concession with regard to the SRC issue, if made a few months earlier, might have had a much greater impact. Possibly an acceptable compromise with regard to the SRC constitution might have been reached before the end of the school year.

What has become increasingly clear during the course of 1984 when looking at the specific issues, the demands of pupils and the response of the authorities, is that there are a number of underlying causes. Before turning to these, however, a brief history of the growth of student movements in South Africa is given to show that events of 1984 were in fact a continuation of trends that developed in the past.

### 3 Student Movements: History and Trends

This brief historical background has been compiled from the following sources: Kane-Berman, 1978; Lodge, 1983; The Eye Vol4 No2, June 1984; SN Vol5 No2 May/June 1984; The Report of the Study Commission on US Policy toward Southern Africa, 1981.

African school boycotts can be traced back to the 1920s, when grievances centred mainly around poor facilities and the poor quality of food. The first organisation which formed itself around these activities was the National Union of African Youth in 1939, which had a small membership.

In 1944, parents persuaded the pupils of Brakpan Mission School to boycott in protest against the dismissal of a politically active school teacher by the Education Department. In the same year, the ANC (African National Congress) Youth League was formed which was aimed at furthering African nationalism. The Youth League established a shanty school in Newclare for children who had been refused admission at local schools through lack of accommodation, and had a night school and literacy campaign in 1949.

In 1952, parents organised a boycott at Orlando High School, Soweto, after three teachers who opposed the Eiselen recommendations were fired. A year later the Bantu Education Act was passed, transferring direct control of education from the provinces to the Native Affairs Department.

In 1954, the ANC announced the launching of a 'Resist Apartheid Campaign', which included the Bantu Education Act among its six campaign issues. The local organisation for the boycott was handed over to the ANC's Women's and Youth Leagues. Over 10 000 pupils boycotted schools in Benoni, Germiston (Katlehong), Brakpan, Alexandra, Johannesburg, Soweto, Sophiatown and eight townships in the eastern Cape. During and after those boycotts the ANC, local parent organisations and the newly formed African Educational Movement were involved in the establishment and improvement of 'alternative education' facilities.

In 1961 the African Students Association was formed, which aimed at organising both university students and high school pupils. Not long after its formation, however, the movement was suppressed by the police. The 1960s were relatively quiet; following suppression of radical opposition and dissent after the Sharpeville shootings in 1960. Frustration simmered beneath the surface, however, and towards the end of the 1960s a new movement centred on 'black consciousness' (BC) started to spread, with its emphasis on black pride and self reliance.

Following the establishment of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) at university level, the South African Students Movement (SASM) was formed in 1972 to organise high school pupils. This was one of the numerous BC organisations that were formed during this period. The main constituency of BC was black youth, school children and students. From March 1973 onwards, however, the government cracked down on these

organisations and seven leaders were banned. The BC movement persisted in various spheres of activity, however.

When the use of Afrikaans was to be enforced as a medium of instruction in secondary schools three years later, SASM called a meeting to discuss the issue. At that meeting, an action committee was established, consisting of SASM's regional committee and two representatives from every secondary school in Soweto, later to be known as the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC). The day, 16 June 1976, was chosen for a peaceful demonstration against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and Bantu education in general. Fifteen to twenty thousand children took part in the demonstration, which ended in confrontation with the authorities and the death of a number of youths during the course of police action.

This day was the start of countrywide unrest which in less than ten days left 140 dead and well over 1 000 people injured. Protest widened beyond educational issues to incorporate the entire system of apartheid. The SSRC enjoyed widespread support, and was virtually the only group to give a measure of organised direction during the unrest. Soon after the start of the unrest, the Black Parents Association was formed which functioned mainly as a conduit to transmit students' grievances to the authorities. During its short existence the SSRC organised three partially successful stayaways, succeeded in having rent increases shelved, and finally destroyed the Urban Bantu Council system. In October 1977, the SSRC, SASM and virtually all other BC organisations were declared unlawful. The clampdown on black student groupings resulted in a substantial exodus of youth to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

In April 1978 Azapo (Azanian People's Organisation), a new BC organisation, was formed at a conference in Roodepoort. Azaso (the Azanian Students Organisation) was an off-shoot of this new group, formed in 1979 in universities and colleges. Originally a supporter of BC, Azaso declared its support for the non-racial Freedom Charter in 1981. In 1979 Cosas, another adherent of the Freedom Charter, was formed with the aim of organising high school pupils. Movements supporting the Freedom Charter, in contrast to the BC movements, believe that whites have a role to play in the struggle for democracy.

In 1980, another countrywide school boycott took place which originated in coloured schools in the Cape. The protest did not reach the proportions of the 1976 events, but pupils did become more involved in worker issues and supported boycotts of several companies. African schools involved in boycotts demanded, inter alia, the removal of national servicemen teachers from African schools, free and compulsory education, the establishment of SRCs and the readmission of over-age Africans barred from schools. DET closed 77 African secondary schools during the unrest. When the schools re-opened in 1981, boycotts continued in African schools in the eastern Cape and Cape Town with demands for the release of detained pupil leaders and the free provision of stationery and library books.

As in 1976, the focus during the 1980 school boycotts shifted beyond the immediate issues to broader demands for democratic education as part of a changed South Africa. Pupils and students, having returned to school after some debate, appeared to realise that boycotts were a potentially effective strategy but that organisation was an essential component. There was a clear division between long and short term demands, with an emphasis on goals which pupils felt they could achieve fairly quickly, after which they could return to school and re-organise. Cosas and Azaso actively campaigned during the time that followed, and together with Nusas began to stress the need for the integration of the student struggle in the broader national struggle for democracy (Saspu Focus Vol3 No2, Nov 1984).

At the 1983 Azaso Congress in Cape Town the call was to 'Organise, Mobilise and Educate' students, as an integral part of overall opposition to apartheid. That same year saw the formation of a new BC movement, Azasm (Azanian Students' Movement), ideologically distinct from other student organisations such as Cosas and Azaso and unassociated with the Freedom Charter. Consequently, a certain degree of rivalry between Cosas and Azasm has emerged.

More than 10 000 pupils participated in school boycotts during 1983, and Cosas again came into conflict with the authorities. Their leaders were detained, and Cosas was banned from operating in the Ciskei and KwaZulu.

By 1984, Cosas had 44 branches in the eastern and western Cape, the Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal. Their theme for that year was 'United Action for Democratic Education', and their programme aimed at establishing strong local organisation at schools.

As in 1980/81, Cosas leadership emphasised the strategic value of boycotts, using them effectively and calling them off at the appropriate time. Furthermore, 1984 has shown a much closer alliance between pupils and parents/workers, as was clearly demonstrated by the massive support for the two-day workstoppage in November. The alliance was established when Cosas met representatives of several Transvaal organisations to discuss the education crisis, and subsequently organised the most successful stayaway held yet. Cosas leadership also reemphasised the division between short, medium and long term demands, singling out demands which could be met within a reasonable time limit. As the Cosas president, Lulu Johnson, stated: 'Through these demands we are laying the basis for the long term demands. The demand for democratic SRCs is part of the process of preparing ourselves and building a future South Africa where representation will be genuine and democratic' (Saspu Focus Vol3 No2, Nov 1984).

During the second half of 1984, Azaso and Cosas announced that they had undertaken to provide leadership on the education charter campaign, together with Nusas and the National Education Union of South Africa.

The aims of the charter are to gather the educational demands of all the people in South Africa into a coherent document, to give direction to the students' struggle and to guide students to work for 'non-racial, free and compulsory education for all in a united and democratic South Africa...' (Saspu Focus Vol3 No2, Nov 1984). (Also see box 'Declaration of the Education Charter Campaign').

This brief historical background illustrates the development of several trends in the student movement:

- The acceptance of boycotts as one strategy within a wider struggle for democracy
- Growing emphasis on black unity and united action, as illustrated by the narrowing of the gap between students, parents and workers
- A split between BC and Freedom Charter adherents (or racial vs non-racial)
- Localised to widespread mobilisation on a national level
- Limited (educational) objectives to increasing involvement in community and political issues.

Returning to the issue of last year's unrest, one may conclude that the events were an outflow of increasing dissatisfaction and militancy that has developed over the years. The next section deals with the more deep-seated factors that gave rise to and will continue to produce unrest in African schools.

#### • DECLARATION OF THE EDUCATION CHARTER CAMPAIGN •

*WE, THE PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA . . .*

*noting:*

- that the separate and inferior system of education for the majority of the people of South Africa entrenches inferior and undemocratic ideas
- that the unequal education which students continue to reject further deepens the present crisis
- that the so-called reforms including the de Lange proposals and the White Paper are measures to ensure the continued survival of apartheid education
- that under this New Constitution apartheid education will still be felt in our classrooms and the cultural life of our people will still be harmed

*believing:*

- that education must be based on the needs and serve the interests of the people
- that education should be accessible to all regardless of colour, creed, sex or age
- that reforms will not bring about a lasting solution to our problems in education
- that our students struggles arise out of real grievances
- that education is not an issue affecting students alone but all sectors of our society
- that there can never be meaningful change in education until there is meaningful change in society

*therefore pledge:*

- to unite as workers, women, youth, students, professionals, sportspeople, and others and fight side by side
- to interlink the struggles in education with the broader struggle for a united, free, democratic and non-racial South Africa
- to engage ourselves actively in a campaign for an Education Charter that will embody the short-term, medium-term and long-term demands for a non-racial, free and compulsory education for all in a united and democratic South Africa based on the will of the people.

SOURCE: SASPU Focus Vol 3 No 2, November 1984

## 4 Underlying Causes

Some of the factors which give rise to the general feeling of discontent are more or less directly related to the quality of African education itself, whereas others are more closely related to dissatisfaction with the wider socio-political situation in South Africa.

### Issues related to the Socio-Political Environment

It is clear that one cannot view education in isolation from the wider apartheid-structured society. Although government spokesmen have at times denied that school boycotts are an expression of discontent on a much wider level (see for example a statement made by Minister Viljoen, NM 7/8/84), there seems to be a consensus among many researchers, educationalists, pupils' spokespersons and the press that this is in fact the case.

#### Intimidation and Outside Interference

Focussing once again on Atteridgeville/Saulsville, the authorities have on several occasions either accused 'outsiders' of advising pupils to boycott classes and using the pupils for 'their own political ends', or said that certain pupils have intimidated others into staying away (see for example T van der Merwe, NM 13/4/84, Minister le Grange, RDM 3/5/84 and RDM 20/5/84). How are these claims substantiated?

- In the case of Atteridgeville, claims of UDF involvement were based on the fact that not long before the boycotts started, the UDF held rallies to boycott the community council elections. During the interview conducted with the Atteridgeville principal, he said that during the latter half of 1983 people such as Dr Motlana of the Sowetan Committee of Ten addressed meetings in Atteridgeville/Saulsville concerning the forthcoming town council elections. However, when addressing student gatherings he spoke not so much about the forthcoming elections but, more about the poor quality of the educational system, and pupils were urged to stand up to this and to demand SRCs.

- Authorities are not convinced that Cosas enjoys majority support, as became apparent during the previously mentioned interview with DET officials and the school principal, nor is Cosas seen as representative of the majority of the pupils.

- Furthermore, the whole SRC issue is seen to be connected closely with the programme of Cosas, since it was decided at their annual general meeting in December 1983, not long before the boycotts started, to establish SRCs at every school. A joint SRC was elected for

Atteridgeville and Saulsville to ensure, in the words of the national organiser of Cosas, 'optimal organisation and communication'.

- Various instances are reported in the press of (small) numbers of pupils who disrupt classes in their own school or other schools, 'chasing out the pupils', throwing stones and urging other pupils 'to walk out in solidarity' ( see eg Sow 4/4/84, DN 9/2/84, RDM 4/4/84).
- According to Schoeman, people from the inspectorate of DET spoke to pupils on the streets during the boycotts on several occasions, and heard that many wanted to go back but were too afraid. The press also reported that many pupils said they were 'tired of the boycotts' (Sow 30/3/84), and that at one meeting of various community and youth organisations, pupils were divided about whether to return to school or not (STr 20/5/84).
- At certain meetings, according to the principal interviewed, pupils made it impossible for anyone to argue in favour of ending the boycotts. Teachers, fearing assault, became too afraid to attend these meetings, he said.

#### The Response of Cosas

Cosas representatives, on the other hand, totally discount the allegation of outside interference and intimidation.

- Cosas claims increasing support amongst pupils nationwide. In Atteridgeville/Saulsville alone they claim to have 4 000 registered members. 'Within that membership we have about 300 active members. .... Then we went out to organise students at each school .... so that we can face common problems together' (The Eye June 1984). This was why, according to the Cosas national organiser Tlhabane Mogashoa, there was such a 'high level of morale during the boycotts' and why the pupils continued boycotting: '.... the obvious extent to which demands coincide with student feeling have shown the growing sophistication and appeal of the student movement' (SN May/June 1984).
- Cosas, as well as the local residents' association and youth ' organisation, are affiliated to the UDF. So any UDF involvement is not seen by Cosas as outside interference. A community newsletter, The Eye, reports that the UDF has been involved in efforts to bring about a solution to the school problems in the area, and that according to students, 'No person from outside Atteridgeville and Saulsville told them what to do .... each school decided to boycott on their own when faced with problems at their schools' (The Eye, June 1984).

The youth hear about world developments through the media, which cannot but help to develop their political thinking as they become increasingly aware of their position in a racially structured and unequal society.



They see that blacks have no decisionmaking powers in South Africa. The problem is, as Schlemmer pointed out in an address last year, not only that 'blacks have reduced powers compared to whites... These pupils have an emerging sense that they are an important group', but that 'they don't know what to do with it; they don't have a constructive outlet.'

So, lacking legal channels of expression, it is perhaps not surprising that the schools are used to express discontent and that boycotts are used as a lever with which African pupils can assert themselves.

#### Increasing Political Awareness

Several researchers substantiate the growth of political awareness among pupils:

- In 1972 Edelstein wrote, after conducting a study amongst Sowetan matriculants, that the greatest grievance was inadequate political rights, followed by influx control.
- In 1978 Kane-Berman pointed out that: 'Students are becoming far more aware of history and politics than they were several years ago' and that in 1976 'black youth was in revolt against not only specific aspects of policy, but apartheid in all its manifestations, and therefore the country's political system itself.' Around that time numerous black organisations were formed whose main constituency was youth, who, as he puts it, 'do not have to overcome conditioned subservience'.
- The Cillie Commission (RP55/1980) lists as various contributory factors to the 1976 unrest, black consciousness (p578), influx control (p593), group areas (p596), Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (p598), discrimination (p604) and race relations (p617).
- At a meeting of school inspectors in KwaZulu/Natal last year, to discuss the school unrest, Mr Gasa, the Rector of Esikhaweni College of Education said that, on the basis of interviews held with principals in Atteridgeville, there is consensus that pupils are outspoken about their beliefs, uncompromising, and show a high level of politicisation. Pupils form connections with outside groups, he said, probably because their teachers and parents are generally apolitical.
- An editorial in the RDM states that: 'It is also true that many black children want to be politically involved. They want a better life than their astonishingly patient, often subservient parents have accepted' (RDM 23/7/84).

Gilbert's conclusion seems appropriate that '.... the widespread malaise that exists across all schools suggests that the pupils' response at the time of the unrest was a popular one .... The influence of individuals or groups, therefore, simply helps articulate the problem and politicise an already volatile situation' (Gilbert, 1982: p41).

Organisation was an important factor, but so were issues such as corporal punishment, the marking of scripts and sexual harassment. As Mr Gasa said; 'don't students have their own minds? Dissatisfaction exists,

they're aware of oppression. School problems are not isolated from wider political and social problems. There is more to strikes than meets the eye.'

Where grievances exist, there are bound to be people who are willing to throw their weight behind improvement and who will try to mobilise as many people as possible in order to put pressure on those perceived as being responsible for social ills. In industry this has led to the formation of trade unions, in politics to the formation of opposition parties and in education, to the formation of student movements.

#### The Community's View

Interestingly enough, a survey conducted by the HSRC in June/July 1984 in the Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vereeniging area among 1 478 Africans of 18 years and older, supports this contention:

- 49 percent considered that willing boycotters were in the majority, 33 percent felt that they form a minority, while 18 percent was unsure or did not know.

- Asked who was responsible for the boycotts, the following responses were received:

Various (white) government bodies and -leaders	27.5%
Students, pupils and pupil councillors	25.3%
Teachers	11.1%
School principals	4.7%
School inspectors	1.8%
Various organisations such as Azapo and the ANC	1.5%
Don't know	20.2%
Other persons or groups or answers too vague	7.8%

Furthermore, of the 1 245 respondents that were aware of the Atteridgeville/Saulsville boycotts, 74 percent felt that the authorities could have done more to keep the schools open, 17 percent did not support this opinion and 9 percent was unsure or did not know (Press release; N Rhodie, C P de Kock and M P Couper, HSRC, Pretoria)!

#### High Aspirations vs Future Prospects

African people in South Africa, because they have no political rights and are economically on the lowest rung of the ladder, attach a great importance to education. Education can get one a better job, and is seen as the gateway to equality, at least on a financial level.

The significance attached to education is borne out, for example, by the previously mentioned research conducted by Gilbert (1982), who found that, of pupils surveyed by him;

- 43 percent of males and 56 percent of females said that education is the most important thing in life (p7&9)

- 64 percent see education as worthwhile, as it will 'open new doors'. He concludes that '.... the high educational aspirations create the potential for discontent because they can easily be thwarted by what are very real barriers in the external environment' (p37).

R B Miller (National Republican Party) said in parliament during the education debate: 'In every attitude survey that I have seen...the indication has been that education is the top priority of urban Blacks in South Africa and, I dare say, this will hold good for their rural counterparts as well' (Hansard 1984: Col 6316).

Furthermore, not only do pupils want a better life than their parents, but parents also load their expectations on their children; they want more for them than they have themselves. As Schoeman wrote in the SA Foundation News (June 1984); '.... education occupies an important place in the aspirations of the black parent. It is the key to advancement in a highly technological and competitive society.'

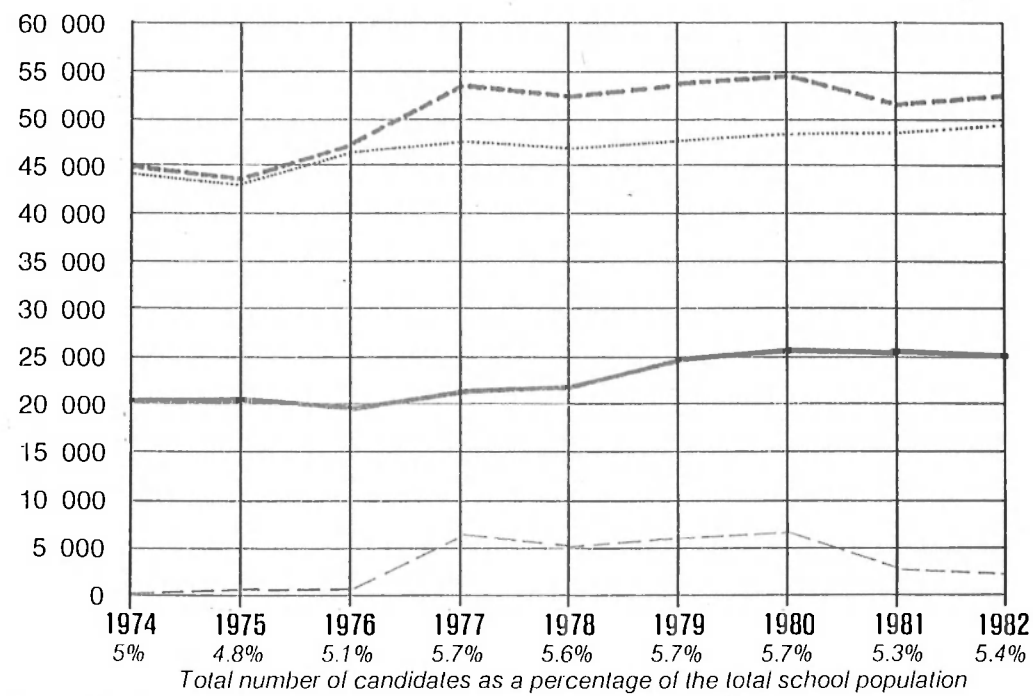
With this in mind, mere 'political agitation' seems an unlikely hypothesis - would pupils be willing to risk their education and, thereby, their future prospects when they could collectively resist attempts at intimidation by a minority?

With these high expectations and aspirations, the increasingly high failure rates at matric level and rising unemployment cannot but generate a tremendous amount of anxiety among school pupils.

Unemployment has risen more in jobs requiring less skill and ipso facto less education, therefore emphasising even more the necessity of good education. Schlemmer recently pointed out that, with an ever increasing number of pupils entering school and more matriculants on the job market, what certificates can buy will inevitably decrease. That pupils realise this is apparent from a survey presented earlier in Indicator SA, where pupils expressed concern about their future prospects of employment and felt that having a matric was often a disadvantage on the job market. A driver's license was said by some to be more valuable (Indicator SA Vol 1 No 3, 1983).

What must also be tremendously frustrating are the frequent media statements about South Africa's increasing need for educated blacks, whereas passrates have been deteriorating (48.3% of all African candidates passed in 1983, excluding Transkei, of which a mere 9.8% obtained exemption for university entrance). The two figures on the next page compare African matriculation pass and failure rates with those of white pupils. Furthermore, African qualifications are seen to be of a lower standard than those of whites, as was confirmed by research conducted for the Buthelezi Commission report. Seventy-six percent of black parent respondents agreed wholly with the statement that education for white children is much better than for black children (Vol 1, 1982: p239). That the standard is in fact not the same is borne out by the need for all sorts of support programmes for African students at university, for example.

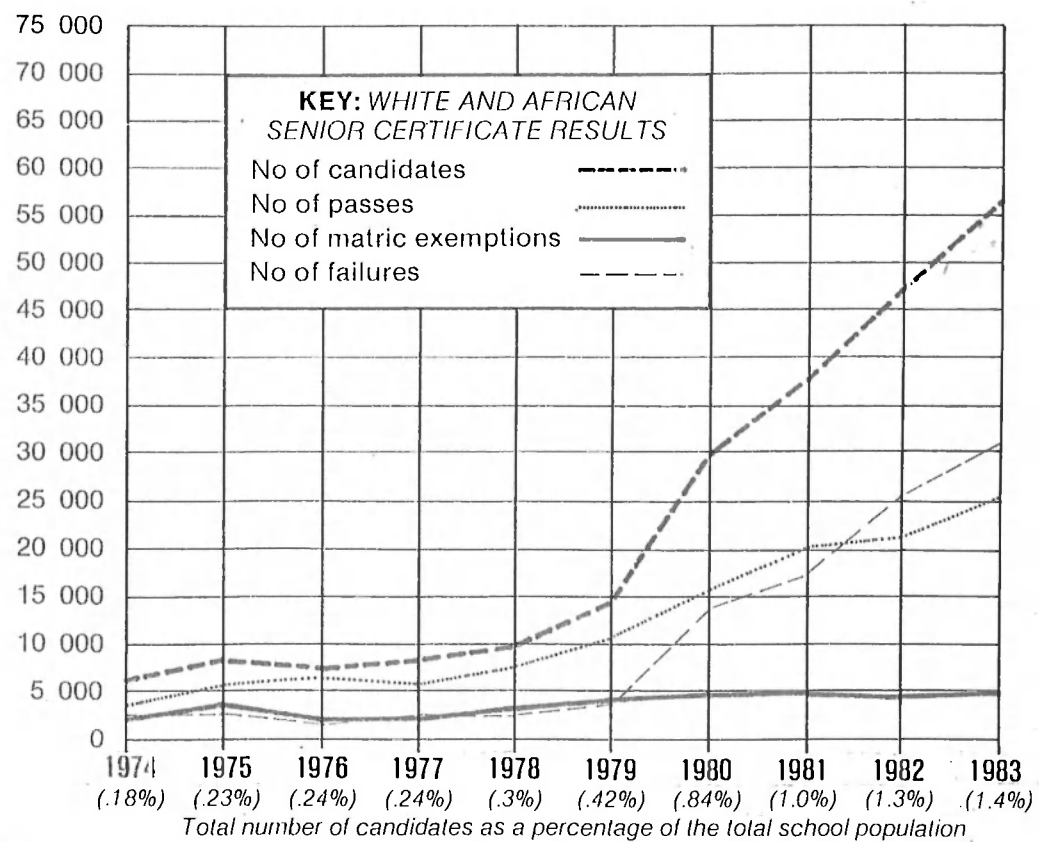
### • WHITE SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS •



SOURCE: SA Statistics 1982, Central Statistical Services, Government Printer, Pretoria 1982.

### • AFRICAN SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS •

(Full time candidates, excluding Transkei from 1976, S W Africa from 1977, Bophuthatswana from 1978, Venda from 1980 and Ciskei from 1982)



SOURCE: Department of Education and Training, Annual Report 1983, Government Printer, Pretoria

### The Generation Gap

In discussing the 1976 boycotts, Kane-Berman includes comments which 'give a glimpse both of the disillusionment of youth with their parents and their parents' awareness thereof'. To quote just one example of this one youth commented that, 'All that our parents do is drink and try to forget the problems facing blacks' (Kane-Berman, 1978: p20).

More recently, Gilbert has related the widening of the generation gap to the rapidity of change, as a consequence of which the pupils' world is in many ways outside the experience of the parent. Although by far the majority of pupils surveyed perceived their parents as showing an interest in what they do and approving of their behaviour (p10), 'Most pupils felt that when it comes to their future or educational matters then their parents could do little to help them and they must act independently' (p37).

In the beginning of August 1984 the editor of *Ilanga*, Obed Kunene, wrote, 'No longer are the elders calling the shots...Lamentably most parents have abdicated their traditional role and can only watch helplessly as the "new generation" does its own thing' (DN 2/8/84).

What contributes to this generation gap is the education gap between pupils and their often illiterate parents. Furthermore, many homes lack fathers, in many cases because the fathers work elsewhere as migrant workers. In this situation it is no wonder that parents do not have a hold over their children similar to the one which middle class parents in other groups have over theirs. Furthermore, they cannot provide an adequate role model for their children, as it becomes increasingly apparent that 'disillusioned' children do not want to become like their 'submissive' parents.

### Early Maturity

Various factors mentioned above make it clear that pupils become worried about their future at a very early stage in life, that is at school. Contributory factors are:

- the frustrations of relatives in the job market that pupils become aware of;
- the lack of bargaining power that Africans have in the Republic of South Africa, which contributes to their feelings of powerlessness, combined with what they describe as;
- submissiveness on their elders' part (see section on generation gap).

These factors have resulted in them increasingly taking on a role of protest, and of organising their peers on a national level, especially since 1976. Indications of this are found in various statements quoted previously by Cosas and Azaso representatives.

Another indication is that they describe themselves as 'students', a term usually only applied to those at university, who are older and expected to show a more sophisticated and complete understanding of the socio-political environment. Furthermore, their insistence on student representative councils, and the role which they envisage they would play in the school (however necessary and valuable that might be in some cases) contrasts starkly with their youthful age and relatively junior educational status.

### Segregation of Education

Because the African education system is separated from the world in which pupils will work, it is difficult for them to estimate exactly what their prospects are of being recognised by the employment system. The above-mentioned perception of inferiority of their education contributes to their uncertainty, and it is possible that pupils who feel the greatest gap between themselves and the requirements of the system will be the most active in fighting for better education and, thereby, for better future prospects. The importance of career guidance cannot be overstressed in this regard.

### Factors Related to Educational Quality

No one will deny that there is an the unbelievable stress on the African educational system due to rapidly increasing numbers of pupils, without the commensurate increase in teachers, buildings and equipment. Table 1 compares the total enrolment figures for all races since 1974.

Table 1				
• TOTAL PUPIL ENROLMENT 1974-1982 •				
	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans
1974 <sup>1</sup>	890 695	616 544	181 337	1 312 273
1975	903 877	636 424	183 659	1 360 534
1976	922 120	660 428	188 264	1 420 896
1977	935 423	686 499	195 591	1 428 115
1978	943 805	722 095	205 190	1 372 619
1979	950 583	743 584	212 851	1 476 033
1980	959 422	752 178	218 498	1 518 922
1981	966 743	756 565	221 833	1 590 664
1982 <sup>2</sup>	975 414	767 340	224 322	1 626 875
SOURCES:				
1 S Bignault, <i>Statistics on Education in South Africa, 1968/79</i> , SAIRR, Johannesburg 1981.				
2 SAIRR, <i>A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1983</i> , Johannesburg 1984.				
All other figures: Central Statistical Services, Government Printer, Pretoria 1982				

### Increasing Numbers

'In 1950, just over 747 000 pupils...36% of school-age black children... were being taught by 18 530 teachers in 5 338 schools. This year, the DET is responsible for more than 1,7 million pupils' (appr 77% of all SA's African children), 'over 40 000 teachers, and more than 7 000 schools. ...the secondary school population has grown by 1500 percent over the past 25 years' (FM 15/6/84).

'The number of pupils in standard 10 increased by 650 percent over the five-year period from 1978 to 1983, whereas the total number of secondary school pupils increased by 73.8 percent during the same period' (P H Pretorius, Hansard 1984: col 6356).

The number of African matriculation candidates increased from 2 300 a year around 1970 to more than 80 000 this year (NM 28/11/84), and this year's number is an increase of 28 percent over last year (including the non-independent homelands).

Schoeman contrasts these third world growth rates with first world expectations and a highly sophisticated economy within which pupils must compete (SA Foundation News, June 1984). He goes on to mention several other factors which add an additional burden in the education of African pupils: the western orientation of South African education, which imposes several cultural demands before success can be achieved at school, the foreign medium of instruction and the generally low levels of socio-economic development in the African community. These factors undoubtedly contribute to the pupils' frustration.

### Financial Expenditure on Education

As Tables 2 and 3 show, financial expenditure also shows a large discrepancy, with the African per capita figure 13.9 percent of the white figure in 1982-83; and although the racial gap has diminished in relative terms, in cash terms the gap has grown from approximately R565 in 1974/75 to R1 166 in 1982/83 and in real money terms has hardly diminished.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>• TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION</b> <b>FROM STATE REVENUE ACCOUNT 1974-1984 •</b>				
	White Education	Coloured Education	Indian Education	African Education
1974/75	R 381 800 000	R 88 600 000	R 39 300 000	R 59 200 000
1975/76	R 451 400 000	R102 900 000	R 43 800 000	R 66 300 000
1976/77	R 586 900 000	R132 800 000	R 55 900 000	R 90 700 000
1977/78	R 623 495 000	R144 173 000	R 60 801 000	R110 382 000
1978/79	R 724 864 000	R179 454 000	R 74 602 000	R144 213 000
1979/80	R 791 200 000	R174 500 000	R 83 200 000	R173 700 000
1980/81	R 957 500 000	R247 100 000	R122 700 000	R261 000 000
1981/82	R1 188 700 000	R294 300 000	R154 600 000	R365 300 000
1982/83*	R2 763 808 000	R390 180 000	R195 376 000	R475 758 000
1983/84*	R2 062 624 000	R450 736 000	R225 052 000	R561 318 000

\*Budgeted amounts

SOURCE: SAIRR. A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1976/1983, Johannesburg

Table 3

• **PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE ON PUPILS OF ALL RACE GROUPS •**  
*(Including capital expenditure)*

	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans
1974/75	R 605	R125,53	R170,94	R 39,53
1975/76	R 644	R139,62	R189,53	R 41,80
1976/77	R 654	R157,59	R219,96	R 48,55
1977/78	R 551	R185,16	R236,13	R 54,08
1978/79	R 724	R225,54	R357,15	R 71,28
1979/80	R1 169	R234,00	R389,66	R 91,29
1980/81	R1 021	R286,08	not available	R176,20
1981/82	R1 221	R418,84	R798,00	R165,23
1982/83*	R1 385	R593,37	R871,87	R192,34

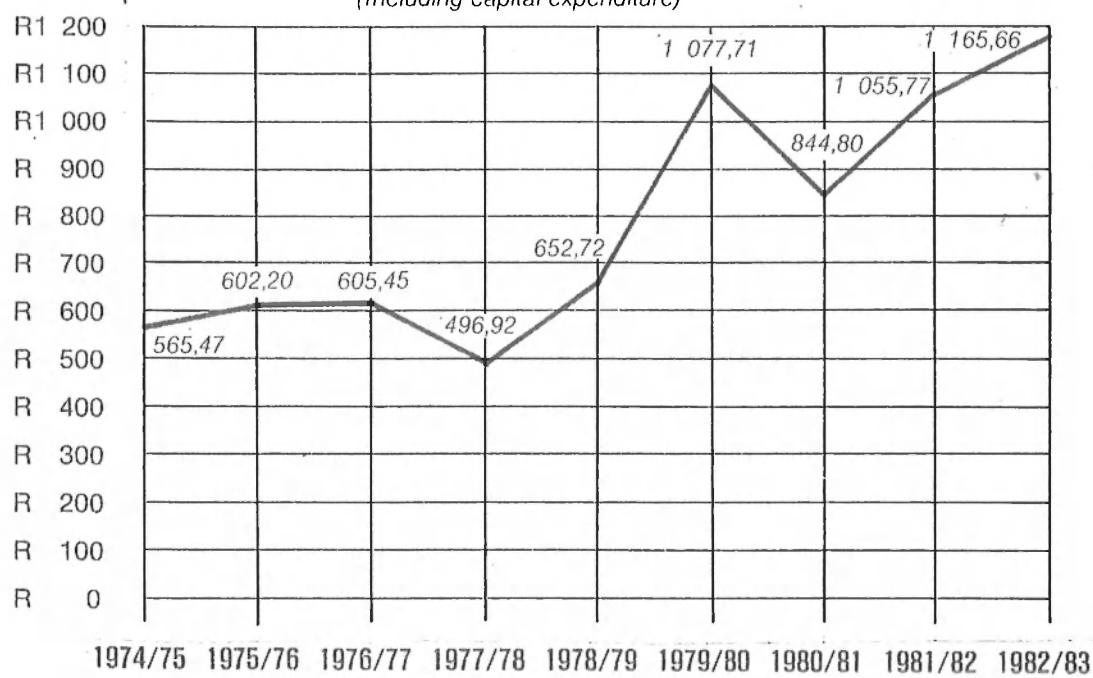
\*Estimate

SOURCE: SAIRR, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1976/1983, Johannesburg

It would certainly be difficult to close this gap, as it would imply that the budget for African education alone in 1982-83 would have to have been increased to some R6,42 billion against a total budget for all education of R3,6 billion (FM 15/6/84).

Although the state budget allocations to the DET have increased from R27m in 1972 to R709m in 1984 (16.9% of the total to be spent on education in 1984), and grew by 51 percent over 1982 (FM 15/6/84), the absolute gap between white and African per capita expenditure nevertheless increased due to growing pupil numbers (see figure).

**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE  
ON WHITE & AFRICAN PUPILS 1974-1983**  
*(Including capital expenditure)*





Dr Viljoen explains this by the fact that 80 percent of any educational project goes to salaries, and because the vast majority of African teachers are underqualified, they therefore earn relatively less than their qualified counterparts. Another reason is that the cost of a high school pupil is virtually double that of a primary school pupil. Due to the drop out rate, a relatively low (although growing) percentage of African pupils progress into high school (SStar 30/9/84). This is borne out by DET's Annual Report; in 1983, 83.7 percent of the total school population was in primary education and the remaining 16.3 percent attended secondary education. However, this should hardly be used as a justification for the discrepancy in per capita expenditure. On the contrary, one would expect that much finance would be expended on African education in order to bring it closer to the level of the other race groups.

Most of the increase in the budget, however, was to be spent on primary education (R277,5 million), while secondary education was to receive R156,4 million and teacher training R24 million (CP 1/4/84). The comparatively low figure for secondary education is disconcerting, since the number of African matriculants is expected to virtually double over the next decade (DN, the Jobber, 27/11/84). The utmost should be done now to prepare for this growing pressure on the secondary school system by increasing and improving facilities and staff. The 1985 budget has set aside a total of R5,04 billion for education, an increase of almost 19 percent over last year's figure. Expenditure on African education has increased by 29 percent, and hopefully the areas mentioned previously will receive more attention.

#### Teacher Quality and Lack of Authority

The increasing number of African pupils has outstripped increase in teachers and, as was reported in a previous Indicator SA article, nearly 30 percent of the teachers are underqualified (Indicator SA Vol 2 No 1).

Underqualified, young and inexperienced as they often are, African teachers have to cope with overcrowded classes and a very poor back-up as regards facilities and equipment. It is not surprising that many teachers do not feel confident in this situation and lack motivation. Furthermore, these teachers also find themselves in an ambivalent position, because not infrequently pupils see them as part of the oppressive system or accuse them of being 'sell-outs'.

Pupils of course are well aware of these issues, and often lack the respect for teachers that is quite normal at a white school, where a power imbalance between staff and pupils is almost taken for granted.

As Mike Hart, Pietermaritzburg chairman of Neusa (National Educational Union of SA) recently said; 'Teachers in black schools are unable to cope with a new generation of socially and politically aware pupils. ...This caused teachers to fall back on increasing authoritarianism and "survival teaching"' (NM 6/7/84). This 'survival teaching' most often consists of an emphasis on rote learning and a repression of creative and independent thinking which, Mr Gasa pointed out, promotes 'boredom and restlessness among the pupils, and then anything can cause unrest'.

Not only teachers, but also many principals find themselves in a difficult position. For instance, they often have not been given powers over who to admit or dismiss and, according to Gasa, are in some cases dismissed or demoted when they undertake something on their own initiative. Another perception of lesser responsibility, accorded to teachers and principals, arises from the fact that they are not allowed to make statements to the press.

This lack of authority that is experienced can result in a delay in reaction to issues at schools, because no one is sure if, and how, they are allowed to respond. Certain issues, if handled promptly and responsibly, could be resolved immediately.

#### Lack of Outlets

At many, if not most African schools there are few organised extra-curricular activities, and what is offered is often unvaried, such as schoolchoirs. The townships usually do not have much to offer either in the way of recreation, so that pupils do not have much chance of expressing themselves. As a result, any organised activity or organisation (be they political or otherwise), operates in what Schlemmer has called a relative 'power vacuum' and an 'activity vacuum' and can exert a tremendous influence, as it is not counterbalanced by other interests.

#### Lack of Communication

A frequently heard complaint concerns the lack of communication between officials, school staff and pupils. At the time of the Atteridgeville boycotts, for example, uncertainty was caused by statements made in the press by the DET about which the schoolstaff apparently was not informed. Pupils said no written documentation came from du Plessis to confirm his report to parliament, nor did it come through the normal channels of the inspectorate or principals. P G Soal's statement in parliament in May substantiates this: 'there still remains a problem, namely that decisions have not filtered through to the citizens of Atteridgeville' (Hansard 1984: col 6323).

On a more general level, communication in schools is also often poor. Teachers and principals are not always easily approachable or likely to respond in an adequate manner to grievances. According to Mr Gasa, some principals and teachers do not involve parents. Staff meetings are in some cases seldom called, or when they are, insignificant issues are discussed. These deficiencies, in combination with the actual and perceived inadequacies of the prefect system, perhaps explain the pupils' demand for democratically elected SRCs.

Partly as a consequence of this there is a lack of trust in positions of authority, not only among pupils but among most Africans. Pupils see that promises are made which are not adhered to, that Africans have

little influence over the content of education, and generally have little decisionmaking powers. To many African people therefore, anything coming from the authorities is unacceptable.

To sum up, the demands of the pupils tie in more or less directly with factors related to the overstressed school system. Pupils perceive their educational system as vastly inferior in quality to the white system, and this gives rise to their one recurrent demand: scrap separate education. A study conducted in September 1983 among African matriculants in the Johannesburg area substantiates this (see table 4).

Table 4	
<b>'IF THERE WERE BOYCOTTS OR DEMONSTRATIONS, WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE THE THREE MAIN THINGS TO CAUSE THEM?'</b>	
<i>(Average of three answers)</i>	
<i>Dissatisfaction with teachers</i>	49%
<i>Excessive corporal punishment</i>	10%
<i>General dissatisfaction</i>	9%
<i>Bad school regulations</i>	8%
<i>Lack of equipment</i>	5%
<i>Embittered/irresponsible students</i>	5%
<i>Dissatisfaction with principal</i>	4%
<i>High school fees</i>	4%
<i>Other</i>	4%
<i>None</i>	2%
n= 151	

More recently, two University of Natal researchers, Dr Alan Simon and Professor Paul Beard, conducted two studies in the Bergville (KwaZulu) school circuit. They found that pupils primarily blame teachers for the high failure rate, then facilities and equipment, followed by self-blame and finally the marking of examination papers (RDM 11/7/84).

In October 1984, five representatives from the African Teachers Association of South Africa met Dr Viljoen. They stressed, among others, the need for 'vigorous and sustained training of black teachers for all positions in the education system', 'expansion of existing colleges of education to cover the areas not catered for at present, improved training for specialist teachers' and 'increased training of pre-primary teachers'. It was reported that Dr Viljoen had promised to expand the in-service training of black teachers and that more colleges of education would be established in the near future (RDM 26/10/84).

Such specific reforms are to be welcomed. One can safely predict, however, that as long as substantial overall improvements both in the educational and in the wider socio-political environment do not occur, the cycles of unrest in African education will escalate.

## 5 Conclusion

The factors involved in school unrest are clearly highly complex and interrelated, and their solution, either on an educational or general policy level, will not be attained in the short term. In order to achieve parity in educational quality for all race groups, for example, at least the following would be imperative:

- improved teacher:pupil ratios (more teachers)
- improved teacher quality (in service upgrading and more teacher training facilities)
- improved facilities and sufficient schools (an extensive school building programme)
- improved school readiness of African pupils (pre-primary education).

All of these challenges need time and money, and matters are not made any easier by the increasing pressure of pupil numbers on the African school system, especially at secondary school level. The De Lange Committee estimated that in order to achieve a balance at a teacher:pupil ratio of 30 in 1990 for all, an expenditure of R4 030m will be required. This would imply that 30 percent of the current total budget (instead of the present 15%) would have to be allocated to education (PACSA Fact Sheet No13). It is imperative, however, that the utmost is done, and is seen to be done, to address these issues.

The same, unfortunately, applies to the issues at a general policy level, be they educational (integration and parity of education), economic (improved employment prospects) or political (dismantling of apartheid). That reforms in the political sphere are decisive in coming to any long-term solution of the school unrest is substantiated by the investigation by Professor Tjaart van der Walt into the causes of the unrest and boycotts in the Vaal Triangle. He concluded that education had not been the root cause of the unrest, but that the problem lay mainly in the field of black local government and administration.

## Alleviating Recommendations

Because these issues will not be resolved in the immediate future, it becomes imperative to consider how to minimise their impact. The scope of the present discussion will limit itself to suggestions aimed at alleviating problems in the educational field. The following suggestions incorporate recommendations made by speakers at a Natal circuit inspectors' meeting and the interviews mentioned previously with Cosas representatives, DET officials and an Atteridgeville school principal.

### Increased Communication within the Schools

All parties involved stress the need for better communication and cooperation; typical quotes from both the officials and the pupils were: 'There is a real need to defuse conflict and improve the relationship between teachers and pupils'; 'there should be mutual understanding and respect between teachers and students'.

A first step would be to identify the problems and the different perceptions in the classroom, debate them, and find possible solutions. Hopefully a realisation should emerge that everyone is striving for the same educational goals. This mutual acceptance of bonafides seems to be sadly lacking at the moment. It would, hopefully, also help to counter the lack of motivation found among pupils, teachers, principals and inspectors alike, who feel that they are up against so much that is outside their sphere of influence, that they are resigned to apathy. A will to act, in spite of present constraints, is essential if the participants are to break out of the vicious cycle of demotivation.

### Decentralisation and Deconcentration

Closely tied in with the above is a need for decreased centralised control and bureaucratisation. Local responsibilities and community involvement should be increased. The DET has fortunately taken steps to improve community involvement. Over and above the representative councils and liaison committees mentioned previously, du Plessis has announced '... a complete democratising process of that channel of communication coming from the committees. It will start with school committees, of which there are more than 2 000. Then there will be councils of chairmen of school committees, of which ... there will be in the vicinity of 300. They will then elect their representatives to serve on the regional committees and from those ... representatives will go to the council' (Hansard 1984: col 6290).

As was stated in the beginning of this analysis, pupils, parents and teachers have been invited to contribute to the formulation of a constitution for the SRCs to ensure their acceptance by the pupils. In addition, Dr Viljoen has stated that the community (through school committees and other bodies) would be involved in the nomination and appointment of the Council for Education - the body involved in decision and policy making on African education.

### Political Education

The political ambivalence found among many teachers could be minimised by providing political education. It is likely that their uncertainty is caused to a large extent by the fact that they are often not sophisticated enough politically to debate issues, so they avoid them.

Debates should be organised for teachers to assist them to develop clear ideas about where they stand. This would enable them to debate more powerfully and confidently with political movements within the pupil community.

For the pupils it is equally important to have political education, on the basis of which they can refine their political ideas and form a more reasoned judgement. If it proves difficult to include political studies in the curriculum, schools could establish political debating groups.

This suggestion may sound very hazardous in the present climate. African pupils are so highly politicised already, however it is naive to assume that political issues can be avoided. The political debate should rather be deepened and made less categorical than it is at the moment on both sides of the conflict.

#### Management Courses for Principals

The principal has a vital influence on how a school functions, both at the level of administration and human relations. A principal whose school is run effectively will not only gain respect from his staff and the pupils, but will also enjoy the authority and confidence to respond to difficulties promptly.

In view of the unrest, these courses should aim to '...assist principals to develop conflict regulation in schools ... conflict management and resolution.' (K M Andrew, Hansard 1984: col 6300/1).

More independence and authority could then be given to principals to deal with issues as they arise. As an added incentive and in recognition of increased capabilities, salaries should be adjusted accordingly.

#### Upgrading of Teachers

Apart from the government's responsibility in this field, principals and inspectors should do their utmost to provide a sound back-up service for teachers. This could be done not only by assisting teachers who are faced with personal or career problems, but also by encouraging them to improve their teaching methods. This is essential not only in order to improve teaching quality, but also to increase teacher confidence in the classroom.

#### Better Facilities

There is a perception among blacks that they always come last, which could be countered by providing facilities that are in some instances better than anything else that can be found.

One has a choice, basically, of whether to offer mediocre education to as many pupils as possible, or to provide quality to a smaller number. It is clear that one cannot place constraints on pupil admissions, but at the same time it should be possible to offer real quality where one can.

In this regard, an idea put forward by Schlemmer in his 1984 presidential address to the SAIRR deserves serious attention. He suggested that in certain major metropolitan areas, various educational authorities could jointly establish academic and technical high schools, and/or adult education centres for African pupils after hours, run jointly by the different authorities. These should be centrally located, would admit pupils strictly on merit, and would almost certainly be of a higher quality because joint financial resources could be mobilised.

Any accusation that one would be creating facilities for a black elite should be countered by pointing out that one basic aim of such quality schools would be to produce the teachers required to upgrade the whole system.

#### Enrichment of the Social and Extra-Curricular Life

Schools and communities should provide more opportunities through which pupils can express themselves. There are several options which do not require large amounts of money but merely the motivation and willingness to give some time after school hours and during weekends.

What one has in mind are essay competitions, debates, excursions, visits to schools of other groups, music and hobbies societies, etc etc. The main aim of such programmes would be to counter the impoverishment and isolation of ghetto education.

#### Educational Policy

As long as there is separate education for the different race groups, suspicions about inherent differences in quality, and, therefore, opposition to it will remain. In this light, it is informative to look briefly at the gaps identified by the de Lange investigation in the African educational management system:

- inadequate consulting mechanisms within a very complex bureaucratic structure
- no over-arching body on a national level to achieve coordination and quality control with regard to all the subsystems
- too little decentralisation of authority as regards decisionmaking.

In addition, the investigation found that there were serious problems with regard to the broad acceptability of the education system in South Africa. This acceptability was found to be related to two factors; the acceptance by the 'users' of the authority which establishes the education system, and the involvement of the 'user' in decisionmaking processes.

The report of the investigation stated that the consequences of inequalities in the provision of education are many and serious, and therefore proposed a single Minister and Department, to provide in the need for a national education policy aimed at 'equal opportunities' and 'equal quality and standards'. They concluded that decisions regarding the national priorities of education (extent of total expenditure, structure of the system with its substructures, canalisation of funds to priorities within that structure) could best be handled by a single ministry (HSRC 1981).

As mentioned earlier, the government has taken steps to democratise and decentralise the educational system on several levels, and the future will tell how adequate these measures have been. However, a great stumbling block remains: the government's present opposition to the creation of a single department of education for all race groups. The new system, as outlined by Dr Viljoen in October last year, consists of a new Department of National Education which will lay down general education policy for all educational departments. The Department will draw up broad standards for general educational matters such as salaries, conditions of service and examination standards for all education departments. Furthermore, advisory bodies representative of all population groups would be established to deal with these aspects (Star 23/10/84).

Professor de Lange recently said that there is no discrimination anymore with regard to the norms in terms of which schools are financed, nor with regard to teacher salaries, and that the increased powers of the Department of National Education increasingly made it resemble an umbrella education department (Rapport 17/2/85).

In conclusion, however, it must be said that even though this new approach is a step in the right direction, it falls short of the one major demand of virtually all African pupils: the establishment of a single department of education for all race groups. One can only hope that the unification of the educational systems is not far off. Even when this occurs, however, the unified department of education will have no more than symbolic value unless it is accompanied by other reforms aimed at minimising, and in the end eliminating, inequalities.

Even changes such as these may not be sufficient. The educational system cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider society, and keeping in mind the inevitable interrelationship between educational, community and political issues, a partially desegregated educational system within the wider segregated society may still generate dissent in an increasingly politicised African school population. Ultimately education, like all other South African institutions, will only gain full legitimacy once the issue of African rights in the central system of decisionmaking is resolved.



## Appendix A: A Chronology of Events 1984

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January 16-30

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A/S (Atteridgeville/Saulsville): - 3 schools  
- cause: educational

Senaoane: - 1 school

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 4.

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February 1-15

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A/S: - 5 schools  
- cause: educational  
- by end of period, classes suspended at 4 schools, all quiet at 5th school  
- 1 pupil killed, 18 injured in violence

Cradock: - 3 schools  
- cause: educational, reinstatement of former acting principal, solidarity  
- by end of period, classes indefinitely suspended

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- cause: educational

Senaoane: - pupils return

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 10

- DET's Minister B du Plessis states that he is willing to adjust the prefect system, that corporal punishment regulations apply equally to all races, that evidence of unmarked exam papers should be brought forward and that the age limit does not apply to pupils who show progress

- Bishop Tutu sends a telegram to du Plessis; other black leaders express their outrage and demand a meeting.

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February 16-29

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A/S: - pupils return to 3 of the schools after having signed a declaration with parents, not to interfere in running of schools.  
Pupils return to the 4th school after 'troublemakers' are readmitted

Cradock: - 4 schools  
- cause: educational and solidarity

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- continuation of boycott

Senaoane: - 1 school  
- cause: educational

Hwiti: - 1 school  
- cause: educational, presence of tv crew

PE (Port Elizabeth) area: - 4 schools  
- cause: educational  
- petrolbomb attacks on 2 other schools

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 12
- Du Plessis states outsiders are intimidating pupils into staging boycotts, and meets with Bishop Tutu
- Bishop Tutu appeals A/S pupils to return to school
- Separate education comes under attack at funeral of A/S boycott victim
- Cosas issues ultimatum to PE regional director to either readmit pupils barred by age regulation, or face action.

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March 1-15

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A/S: - 3 schools  
- unrest and skirmishes, resulting in suspension of classes at 1 school

Cradock: - 4 schools  
- boycotts continue, skirmishes at 2 schools  
- closure threatened unless pupils return

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- boycott continues

PE area: - 6 schools  
- cause: educational  
- police patrol townships  
- 90 pupils formerly barred by age restriction are placed  
- Crisis in Education Committee asks pupils to return

Nigel: - 1 school  
- cause: educational  
- boycott ends after 1 day

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 15.

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March 16-30

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- cause: at 5 schools educational, classes temporarily suspended at 6th school after interruption by boycotting pupils from other schools

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- schools temporarily closed by DET after 100% stayaway persists  
- police disperse appr 2 000 pupils at meeting  
- 3 month ban on meetings

Alexandra: - 1 school

PE area: - 9 schools  
- educational

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 23
- Cosas and Azaso issue statement: pupils demand SRCs, abolition of corporal punishment, qualified teachers, sufficient textbooks and abolishment of age limit law. Pupils also demonstrate against DET's 'unconcerned attitude' and the high failure rate.
- DET states they will not bow to political demands.

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April 1-15

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A/S: - 5 schools  
- classes temporarily suspended, DET threatens with school closure  
- Bishop Tutu appeals to pupils to return

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues as only minimal number of pupils attend

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- boycott continues

Soshanguve: - 1 school  
- cause not known  
- boycott ends after 1 day

PE area: - 9 schools  
- boycott continues

Pietermaritzburg area: - 1 school  
- cause not known

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 24.

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April 16-30

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- classes indefinitely suspended, despite attempts by town council  
to mediate

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues, attendance is minimal

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- boycott continues

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 14 (possibly more).

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May 1-15

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- additional demand: release of arrested colleagues  
- boycott continues after suspension has been conditionally lifted  
by DET

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues, minimal attendance

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- boycott continues

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 14

- Law and Order Minister le Grange says certain individuals and organisations are exploiting school unrest for their own political ends and warns that the government will not allow the situation to develop further
- Du Plessis announces that PRCs (pupil representative councils) will be elected at all secondary schools.

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May 16-31

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A/S: - 6 schools closed  
 - Du Plessis blames 'forces of subversion'

Cradock: - 7 schools  
 - boycott continues, minimal attendance

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 13.

JUNE: WINTER HOLIDAY

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July 1-15

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A/S: - 6 schools closed

Cradock: - 7 schools  
 - boycott continues, minimal attendance (7-33 pupils out of total of 4 500)  
 - additional demand: release of all detainees  
 - DET warns that schools may be closed permanently  
 - ban on meetings continues

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 13.

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July 16-31

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A/S: - 6 schools closed  
 - du Plessis says that, given certain guarantees that pupils will attend, schools will be reopened. Pupils will be able to write exams  
 - pupils say they will return if their SRCs are recognised

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- minimal attendance  
- ban on public meetings continues  
- residents boycott white shops in protest

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- 'sporadic unrest'

Tembisa: - 3 schools  
- cause: educational  
- classes temporarily suspended

Thabong: - 1 school  
- educational  
- classes temporarily suspended

● Total number of schools involved in unrest: 18 (possibly more)

● Du Plessis states there has also been sporadic unrest in Bloemfontein, Graaff-Reinet, Warmbaths and Parys. He also says that PRCs must not affiliate with bodies outside schools.

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#### August 1-15

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- closure continues

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues, minimal attendance

Alexandra: - 1 schools  
- classes suspended

Tembisa: - 4 schools  
- cause: educational  
- classes suspended

Thabong: - 3 schools  
- cause: educational, and protest against suspension of colleagues

Daveyton: - 4 schools  
- cause: educational  
- classes suspended

Wattville: - 1 school  
- cause: educational

Soweto: - 1 school  
- cause: educational

Rockville: - 1 school  
- cause: educational

• Total number of schools involved in unrest: 28

• DET issues statement that grievances have been dealt with and that boycotts have been instigated by outsiders with the help of a few pupils for their own political gain.

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August 16-31

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- closure continues

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues, minimal attendance

Alexandra: - 2 schools  
- classes still suspended at 1 school

Tembisa: - 4 schools  
- boycott continues  
- classes suspended, closure threatened

Thabong: - 3 schools, plus unknown number of primary schools where pupils were sent home after attacks by boycotting pupils  
- classes suspended at 3 schools that are continuing their boycott

Daveyton: - 7+ schools  
- educational  
- classes at 4 schools still suspended  
- closure threatened

Wattville: - 1 school  
- boycott continues  
- additional cause: protest against detention of colleagues  
- closure threatened

Graaff-Reinet: - 3 schools  
- cause: political

Sharpeville: - 1 school  
- cause: rents





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September 1-15

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- A/S: - 6 schools  
- closure continues
- Cradock: - 7 schools  
- boycott continues, minimal attendance
- Queenstown: - 3 schools  
- boycott continues
- Alexandra: - 1 school  
- still suspended indefinitely
- Tembisa: - 4 schools  
- still suspended indefinitely
- Soweto: - 2 schools  
- pupils at 1 school return within this period
- Katlehong: - 6 schools  
- boycott continues
- Daveyton: - 4 schools  
- 23 primary schools: 60% attendance
- Thokoza: - 3 schools
- Wattville: - 2 schools  
- 11 primary schools: 11% attendance
- Thabong: - 3 schools  
- cause: educational  
- class suspension lifted  
- at end of period: 90% attendance at 3 schools
- Mamelodi: - 1 school  
- boycott continues, school temporarily closed
- Soshanguve: - 5 schools  
- schools temporarily closed by DET
- Vosloorus: - 2 schools  
- cause: pupils demand release of colleagues
- Bophelong, Boipatong, Sharpeville, Sebokeng, Evaton:  
- 87 schools  
- cause: rents, political, fear of riots
- Thabong: - 3 schools  
- boycott continues

Warmbaths: - 1 school  
- cause: protest against detention of teachers

Parys: - 1 school  
- classes still suspended

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 152-175
- Total number of pupils involved: 160 000
- 7/9: Schools are closed for holidays one week early in the Vaal Triangle, East Rand and Pretoria area
- Cosas National Executive Committee decides that unless demands are met, more and more pupils will boycott classes. Cosas president hails decision of Fort Beaufort principal to accept SRC in accordance with constitution drawn up by pupils
- Azasm calls on pupils to return to school when they reopen, so that pupils can reorganise themselves
- DET warns that East Rand schools might be closed as well
- At least 77 deaths have occurred in the Vaal Triangle
- DET Director General announces that Atteridgeville matric pupils can sit for exams.

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September 16-30

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A/S: - 6 schools  
- closure continues

Cradock: - 7 schools  
- minimal attendance (101 pupils)

Alexandra: - 1 school  
- still suspended

Grahamstown: - 3 schools  
- cause: solidarity with boycotting pupils in Witwatersrand

PE area: - 13 schools  
- cause: 'unrest spreads'  
- more primary schools join stayaway

Parys: - 1 school  
- classes still suspended

Zamdela: - 4 schools  
- 'affected by unrest'

Thabong: - 3 schools  
- at end of period, full attendance at 2 schools

Vaal Triangle (Bophelong, Boipatong, Sharpeville, Evaton, Sebokeng):  
- 87 schools  
- boycotts continue  
- additional demand: release detained colleagues

Tembisa: - 4 schools  
- still suspended

Kgothlang: - 1 school  
- cause: protest against planned bustour, issue resolved

Queenstown: - 3 schools  
- boycott continues

Boycotts continuing at following places: Wattville (1); Thokoza (3);  
Vosloorus (2); Katlehong (6); Duduza; Daveyton (4); Kwatema; Tsakane.

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 150+

- Total number of pupils involved in unrest: 253 000

- Azasm hits out at threat to suspend classes in East Rand schools indefinitely. They urge pupils to return to school 'but under protest', in order 'to reorganise and reevaluate our stand in the present crisis'

- In Soweto pupils resolve at a meeting that they must boycott classes until the next meeting on 10/10, and that exams should be postponed to next year. A confrontation looms, as large numbers vow to resist efforts to disrupt their lessons. Conflict erupts between Azasm and Cosas, regarding the constitution Cosas has drawn up, each accuse each other of hijacking the struggle

Soweto pupils called on not to write exams

- Negotiations between DET and school committees about opening of A/S schools

- Newly formed Sharpeville Students' National Resistance Movement holds first meeting; ask for release of detained pupils

- UDF statement says that current school unrest is part of the broader political crisis that faces South Africa, and that the repeated use of violence against students 'exposes the farce of the government's reform initiatives'

- Vaal Triangle: committee formed by Vaal branch of Cosas to investigate student problems, forge relationships between students, parents and teachers, seek legal aid for arrested, financial aid for burials and trace those who disappeared during unrest. Say pupils will not return until rents go down to R30 a month
- Viljoen announces PRCs and changes to the controversial age limit restriction
- Pupils denounce PRCs as they have not been compiled in collaboration with pupils
- The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference calls for a commission of inquiry to investigate the cause of recent unrest.

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October 1-15

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A/S: - 6 schools reopen, at only 1 school 60% attendance, at other 5 pupils leave again  
 - cause: educational  
 - 7 primary schools: pupils chased out by secondary school pupils, situation back to normal later

E Cape (Cradock, Grahamstown, Fort Beaufort, King William's Town, Port Alfred, Somerset East, Oudtshoorn, Uitenhage, Queenstown, Graaff Reinet, PE, KwaZakhele, New Brighton):  
 - 41 schools  
 - cause: educational and spreading of unrest  
 - classes suspended indefinitely at 1 Oudtshoorn school and schools in Fort Beaufort and King William's Town

Soweto: - 4 schools  
 - cause: educational  
 - poor attendance at most schools later on

E Rand (Alexandra, Daveyton, Wattville, Thokoza, KwaThema, Duduza, Katlehong, Vosloorus, Tsakane, Randfontein):  
 - 118 schools  
 - cause: rent increase/educational/political/spreading of unrest  
 - classes still suspended at 1 Alexandra school  
 - 3 schools still closed in Thokoza  
 - 4 Tembisa schools: classes suspended again  
 - 6 Katlehong schools: still closed  
 - 50-60% attendance at some schools in Thokoza and Wattville

Seshego (Pietersburg):  
 - 2 schools  
 - cause: educational

Thabong: - 3 schools  
- 35-60% attendance

Vaal Triangle (Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, Parys):  
- 87 schools  
- cause: rent increase/political  
- normal attendance at some schools later on  
- Parys: 1 school still suspended indefinitely

Soshanguve (Pretoria):  
- 2 schools  
- cause: disagreement pupils and family about funeral date of colleague

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 269
- Total number of pupils involved in unrest: 220 000
- 3/10: start of 3-day school boycott called by Cosas for educational reasons
- Azaso, Cosas, Nusas and Neusa announce drawing up of Education Charter
- 9/10: Viljoen announces introduction of democratically elected SRCs, opening of A/S schools and 'Operation Catch-up' to help pupils make up for time lost during schools' closure
- Viljoen agrees to meet E Rand Urban Councils Association to discuss current schools boycott and unrest in black townships
- 10/10: Soweto: Cosas and Azasm clash at meeting of parents and pupils to discuss school crisis
- 11/10: Viljoen accuses hostile organisations of trying to spoil effects of new communications structure
- East Rand Black Industrialists and Traders Association meets in effort to resolve school crisis, hit out at age limit
- Tembisa pupils refuse to write end-of-year exams, reject SRC constitution, call for black education minister and compulsory education
- Daveyton pupils resolve to go back to classes but not to resume studies until detained colleagues are released and police withdraws from townships
- Soweto Council decides to request DET not to postpone end-of-year exams
- 3 Grahamstown high schools: pupils decide not to write exams
- At several meetings of pupils and parents SRCs rejected because they have been imposed on them.

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October 16-31

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A/S: - 5 schools  
- boycott continues, 50% attendance by 26/10

E Cape (Cradock, Queenstown, Somerset East, Graaff Reinet, King William's Town, Fort Beaufort, PE, Grahamstown):  
- 59 schools

Vaal Triangle (Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, Parys):  
- 87 schools  
- Sebokeng: 2 200 pupils return later on

Soweto: - 70-100% attendance at schools  
- numerous incidents of violence

E Rand (Katlehong, Thokoza, Daveyton, Wattville, Vosloorus, Tsakane, KwaThema, Duduza, Tembisa, Nigel, Alexandra, Ratanda):  
- 118 schools  
- attendance varies from 0-95%  
- violence in some areas  
- suspension lifted of 1 Alexandra school, boycott continues

Ikageng (Potchefstroom):  
- 3 schools  
- some violence, alleged assault of 2 Cosas members by principal

● Total number of schools involved in unrest: 272+

● Total number of pupils involved in unrest: 206 000

● 16/10: DET gives pupils option to write matric exam as private candidates in May/June 1985. Internal exams for std 6,7,8 & 9 E Rand pupils postponed until January 1985, subject to several conditions. Police protection promised for those who wish to sit for exams

● Soweto: parents committee elected at mass meeting; at other meeting SRCs rejected, several demands made and pupils say they will not write exams

● Katlehong & Wattville: meetings of parents, pupils & officials: latter told that education system is cause of school crisis, PRCs rejected, demand police withdrawal from townships and release of colleagues

● Opposition spokesman on education, Horace van Rensburg, urges pupils to accept government's SRC offer

● 23/10: 'Operation Palmiet': combined police and defense force of 7 000 men search Sebokeng

- Tembisa pupils seek another meeting with DET officials, want all soldiers removed from township
- 27/10: 37 organisations attend meeting called by Cosas, Transvaal Area Stay-Away Committee is formed to organise stayaway in November
- 29/10: matric exams start; of 83 000 registered pupils, 79 000 write, over 70% of remaining 4 000 opt to write in 1985 while 30% boycotts.

Attendance figures:

	Registered	Writing	Write in 1985	Boycotting
E Rand	2 889	595	1 313	980
Vaal Triangle	1 222	124	959	130+
A/S	800	187	560	
Soweto		6 400		
Cradock	?	0		
Queenstown	?	15		
E Cape	'good turnout'			

- Soweto: several attempts by gangs of youths to disrupt pupils writing exams at 4 schools.

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November 1-15

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A/S: - 57 schools  
- cause: stayaway

E Cape (Cradock, Queenstown, Graaff Reinet, Fort Beaufort, PE, Grahamstown, Uitenhage, Port Alfred):  
- 60 schools  
- boycott continues in most schools, others join stayaway

Vaal Triangle (Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, Parys):  
- 87 schools  
- boycott continues

E Rand (Katlhlong, Daveyton, Wattville, Vosloorus, KwaThema, Tsakane, Duduza, Thokoza, Tembisa):  
- 171 schools  
- boycott continues, more join stayaway

Soweto: - 375 schools poor to normal attendance during stayaway

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 375 + unknown number in Soweto

- Total number of pupils involved in unrest: 400 000+

- 5/6 November: stayaway in support of educational, community and political demands meets with wide response from pupils and workers
- E Rand secondary school pupils have until 9/11 to return to school, or they will have to repeat classes next year. Exams will be held on 7/1 for those who return
- Violence continues in E Rand, Vaal Triangle, E Cape and A/S
- DET says that of 74 000 registered matric candidates in E Rand, Vaal Triangle, A/S and E Cape 36% (2 698 pupils) wrote, of remainder 80% (3 760 pupils) had applied to write next year. Of total of 83 000 candidates, just over 900 boycott exams
- 9/11: Soweto Parents Committee led by Bishop M Buthelezi meets Dr J de Beer, Deputy Minister of Education and submit memo with pupils' grievances.

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November 16-30

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Saulsville: - 1 school  
                   - cause: solidarity with arrested colleagues

Vaal Triangle: - 87 schools  
                   - some attendance at 25 Sebokeng schools

E Cape: - 45 schools  
           - boycotts continue

Rest of country: zero to fair to full attendance

- Total number of schools involved in unrest: 133 plus unknown number in E Rand (171?)
- Total number of pupils involved in unrest: 163 000
- E Rand pupils who did not write exams (appr 22 000 pupils) have to reapply before 30/11 if they wish to attend school in 1985
- Soweto Parents Committee submits proposals to government which they feel should be implemented to bring normality back to schools:  
 Several educational demands (resolve SRC impasse, extra tuition etc)  
 A/S, E Rand & Vaal Triangle: extend exams until January;  
 Current township situation is not conducive to studying, fear failure rate will be very high;  
 Unless government dismantles apartheid, similar occurrences of unrest will occur;  
 Names of 26 detained pupils attached, asked for their release so that they can write exams



- Sub A - Std 9 pupils at 45 E Cape schools allowed to write exams in February 1985. DET envisages a January-April cram school to provide matriculants with finishing school facilities
- 26/11: last matric exams
- 30/11: Schools close for summer holidays
- In December, Prof Tjaart van der Walt is asked to investigate black school unrest
- During 1984, 15 Cosas office bearers and 530+ youths have been detained

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### NEWSPAPER KEY

CP	City Press
DN	Daily News
FM	Financial Mail
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
NM	Natal Mercury
RDM	Rand Daily Mail
SN	Saspu National
Sow	Sowetan
SStar	Sunday Star
STr	Sunday Tribune

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