

EDUCATION STRUGGLES:

Teachers and school committees in Natal/KwaZulu

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INTRODUCTION

With the effective banning of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) on 24 February this year, the government made clear its view that organised teachers posed a political threat. However, it has been suggested that the February crackdown was largely an electoral ploy to win support from the far right. The government action came at a time when repression under the state of emergency had to a large extent immobilized progressive forces. Under these circumstances we cannot accept at face value the state's view that organised teachers necessarily had or have a revolutionary potential.

There is no question that some teachers were, and continue to be, politically active in organisations committed (at least) to the removal of apartheid. During its heyday (1984-5), NEUSA, the major non-racial teachers' organisation, succeeded in attracting young teachers with its call for a democratic education and its affiliation to the UDF. On a more impressive scale, the NECC which was not exclusively or even primarily a teachers' organisation admittedly, also succeeded in keeping education in the political limelight. These two organisations particularly, but others as well (eg Western Cape Teachers Union (WECTU)), convinced both the state and the political opponents to its left, that teachers were capable of concerted, militant, anti-apartheid action. The Cape Teachers' Association has just recently committed itself to the Freedom Charter. However, it would be a mistake to generalise from this.

On balance, but with some regional variation, teachers did not live up to the expectations of political activists. This paper concentrates on one major region, Natal/Kwazulu. In Natal/Kwazulu, the task of mobilizing and organising teachers proved very difficult and little headway was made. This paper examines the reasons for this failure. It argues on the one hand that state reforms have given teachers a particular stake in the status quo which Inkatha's populist appeal rather than the UDF's anti-apartheid stance seems best likely to preserve. Secondly, this paper tries to evaluate the consequences of the tactical decision to shun 'state structures' and create 'alternative structures'. In particular, the position of School Committees (SCs) within the regional politics of education is assessed.

AFRICAN TEACHERS IN NATAL AND KWAZULU

Teachers under the control of the Department of Education and Training (DET) or Kwazulu's (henceforth KZ) Department of Education and Culture (DEC) experience many of the conditions common to black teachers elsewhere in South Africa. But in important ways their situations differ. The most obvious difference lies in the presence of Inkatha and its impact on the politics of the region. The force of Zulu nationalism and the organisational power of Inkatha are major, and apparently insuperable, obstacles to openly competitive political organisation for teachers. This was, and remains, especially important in the urban belt running from Durban through Pinetown, Mpumalanga (Hammarisdale) to Pietermaritzburg where radical teacher organisations might have been expected to gain support as in the Eastern Cape. In all these places, organisations operating on an anti-Inkatha ticket have found themselves literally fighting for their lives. Such a climate may prove favourable for defence committees, but it is unhealthy for teacher organisation. In addition the KZ government is able to hinder the development of organisation. KZ may not have accepted independence from Pretoria, but it still has many of the resources of an 'independent' homeland. This means, for example, that the KZ police, who have taken over much urban policing from the SAP, function to strengthen Inkatha's position by suppressing rivals. As Maré and Hamilton (1987) have remarked, the overlap between KZ and Inkatha makes it exceedingly difficult for opponents, especially those within the KZ civil service (like teachers) to challenge or even criticize Inkatha or the KZ government. To do so is to risk the denial of promotion or transfer to outlying areas. Having indicated the importance of the Inkatha factor it is still necessary to emphasize that an understanding of teacher politics in KZ/Natal as elsewhere cannot be obtained via an investigation of political factors alone. The economics of education is equally significant.

Since the 1976 Soweto student uprising, a major challenge to state power and legitimacy has come from black students. Part of the state's response to this has been to pour money into black education. At least two basic motives are involved: to produce skilled personnel for industry and the burgeoning bureaucracy, and to take the sting out of education grievances by materially improving education. The 1984 General Education Affairs Act in fact made equal opportunities for education a national policy (*Educamus*, 32, 8, Sept 1986: 3).

A hurdle standing in the way of such a goal was the enormous gulf in qualifications between black and white teachers. Dr Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of Education and Training, said in his 1987 parliamentary budget speech that equal education rested on equal standards and this depended 'upon the average level of training undergone by the teachers in the communities concerned' (*Educamus*, 33, 8, September 1987: 8). Teacher upgrading has

thus come to enjoy considerable emphasis, particularly since de Lange and the government's white paper on education (1983). The HSRC (1981), Buthelezi Commission (1982) and Indaba (1986) reports have all referred to the 'desperate need to upgrade the qualifications of the existing black teaching corps' (Jarvis, 1984: 160).

In Natal/Kwazulu the importance of teacher upgrading is possibly even more critical than elsewhere in the country. The 1984 matric pass rate was the lowest in the country - 6.2% with less than 30% of these getting a senior certificate. Apart from reflecting badly on KZ government claims of progress, it is also a source of alarm because in the past student classroom grievances have led to unrest (Hartshorne, 1986: 20-21; Maré, 1988; *KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 486). The number of school-going children has soared in recent times. The Buthelezi Commission further noted that 'the existing inequalities in available education are a major source of discontent and therefore of political instability in the area. It recognises that the comparative peace in schools during recent times has been due to policies followed by Inkatha, but does not accept that if the inequalities remain, successful persuasion against revolt can be repeated' (quoted in Jarvis, 1984: 71). In 1986 there were 1 230 460 scholars at KZ schools compared with 841 253 in 1979 (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1986: 15-16; SAIRR, Information Sheet 5/80: 6). This has occurred at a time of degeneration in the rural economy which has brought in its wake serious social upheavals, evident for example in intensified faction fighting and the struggle for urban space. Under such circumstances it becomes all the more important for teachers to be competent.

The state is concerned both about the quantitative shortage of teachers and the qualitative lack of well-trained teachers. This situation in the 1970s forced schools to reject children who wanted to enrol and led to the perpetuation of the much criticised platoon and double-session forms of education. In the 1980s, as schools in KZ and Natal began to become breeding grounds for student militants, worries were expressed. KZ education was 'not meeting the needs and aspirations of large numbers of parents and pupils' was how the Buthelezi Commission put it in 1982 (SAIRR Information Sheet, 2/82: 3).

EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING

Under such circumstances it becomes all the more important for teachers to be competent. Plans to improve education (including the quantity and quality of teachers) and thus pre-empt 'revolt' were being considered. Such considerations remain a central part of the Indaba education proposals (Hartshorne, 1987: 57-60).

Insofar as teachers are part of the middle class, the restructuring of education also makes a contribution to efforts to increase the size of the

African middle class. This class has increased substantially in recent times (Crankshaw, 1986). Since the hopes of reformist capital remain tied up with the black middle class, it should be expected that teachers will be assisted in the hope of securing their political allegiance.

The restructuring of KZ schooling is intended to meet popular demands based on the idea that education provides social mobility and a chance to extricate oneself from rural stagnation and poverty. Dhlomo has indicated the direction of government thinking by talking of the need for free and compulsory education. The ability to meet the massive financial commitment this would entail (Corbett, 1988: 11) will probably determine how far this plan gets, but, significantly, Dhlomo has assured parents and taxpayers that, unlike in white education where parents are expected to shoulder more of the costs of education, the KZ government will gradually reduce the financial burden shouldered by the communities (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 481-484).¹

The DET has also taken measures to remove the 'valid' causes of student grievances. It embarked on a spending spree which saw the budget increase fourfold from 1983/4 to 1987/8 when it reached R1 487 million (*Educamus*, 33, 8, Sept 1987: 8) This trend continued in 1988 with a 10% rise to R1 640 million (*Daily News*, 17.03.88).

A major portion of the education budgets are spent on teacher salaries. The DET's 1986 budget allocated about 80% to salaries (DET Annual Report, 1986: 78). In KZ a whopping 91.39% of the 1984/5 budget was spent on salaries. In the 1986/7 budget the proportion dropped to 71.39%, although in absolute terms R90- m more was spent on salaries than in the previous year (KZ DEC Policy Speech, 1987: 42).

The generous funding available for education has been a spur to teachers pursuing promotion. Not only are they assisted (with leave and financial grants) to improve their qualifications but there is a near automatic pay rise once this has been achieved. Jarvis points out that teaching differs from 'unskilled and semi- skilled occupations which offer little if any meaningful promotional opportunity' (Jarvis, 1984: 133). In education many openings for professional advancement exist. Dhlomo himself experienced the fruits of this becoming principal of Kwa Shaka Secondary School, Umlazi, at the age of 30 with a BA Hons degree (KCAV 158 & 166, p1). KZ's DEC obviously thinks promotion is an important consideration in improving education and winning the loyalty of teachers for in 1986 it initiated a 'system of achievement awards for teachers ... (which provided) for teaching staff evaluation and payment of one salary notch in recognition of good work and satisfactory conduct' (DEC Policy Speech, 1986: 25).

What I have argued here is that teachers have been targeted by the state (KZ and central) as a group that should be drawn fully into the professional realm and capable of providing an acceptable service, where political

linkages with workers, progressive community organisations or students will become less likely and where conversely, support for the status quo will in future be counted upon.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

The present level of underqualification among African teachers varies, depending on one's figures and definition.² In 1986 the DET estimated that in South Africa 94.6% were underqualified based on matric plus 3 years as a 'minimum requirement for accreditation' (*Educamus*, 32, 8, September 1986: 3). The 1986 figures for KZ education reveal that 5 528 teachers had no professional qualification and 9 869 did not have a matric certificate. This meant that 13 649 either lacked a professional qualification or matric which represented 54.55% of all African KZ teachers (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1986: 17). Yet despite the increase in teacher numbers (up by 692 from 1985) the proportion of underqualified teachers has dropped by 4% in one year (1985- 1986) (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1985: 23). It has dropped further from the figure of 64.44% in 1979 (SAIRR information sheet 5/80:11). This accords with national trends (Gaydon, 1987:31).

Education officials are anxious to continue upgrading teacher qualifications. Towards this end a variety of measures have been introduced to accelerate the rate at which teachers are obtaining academic and professional qualifications (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, Vol 13, 1978: 490; Minister of DEC's policy speech, 1985: 8).

Central government has been particularly active in its program of upgrading and certification. Continuity training colleges have been established. Vista University (not active in KZ/Natal) has specialised in secondary teachers' certificates and its intake has risen from 300 (1982) to 11 000 (1986) (*Educamus*, 32, 8, Sept 1986: 4). Project Alpha, involving computer assisted in-service training for teachers, began in 1986 with 780 teachers and is designed in the short term to take 7 200 teachers a year. The 1987-8 DET budget for teacher training was 81.73% up on the previous year's figures, allowing for the building of six new teachers' centres (*Educamus* 33, 8, Sept 1987: 3).

The concentration by educational authorities on upgrading has been welcomed by teachers. Many correctly see it as a path to promotion and higher salaries and in a 1983 study of the Qadi area, north of Durban, Brian Jarvis found that 87% of African primary school teachers were furthering their studies and 35% of high school teachers were similarly engaged (Jarvis, 1984: 115- 116). In a recent paper, Peter de Vries argued that the weight of education reform fell heavily on the shoulders of the underqualified teacher. He/she was forced to obtain some sort of certification or face the sack (de Vries, 1987). De Vries shows that some underqualified teachers did face hardship, but in the end it is difficult to accept that education reform in its

teacher-upgrade aspect is coercive. Many black matriculants found themselves becoming teachers either because they could not afford to attend a university or college or because they could get no other work. In other words it was work that was quite easy to get given their education even if it was not always very secure or lucrative. Underqualified teachers who were in protected jobs now are being exposed to 'market pressures' but the rewards - salary increases especially - appear to lessen the gall of enforced learning.

PAY AND PERKS

There is a difference of opinion regarding the quality of teacher remuneration. The issue of pay (and pay comparable to whites) is a crucial one. Teachers have frequently complained about their low pay (Jarvis, 1984: 119) and the irregularity with which their salaries reach them (particularly in KZ). Low wages may well encourage teachers to identify downwards with the working class whereas high salaries may encourage teachers to regard themselves as professionals and take political steps accordingly.

Hard information on the structure of teacher earnings is difficult to come by. Both KZ education and the DET describe such information as 'sensitive' and refuse to release it unless 'the proper channels' have been followed, and maybe not even then. Consequently this paper relies on bits and pieces of information gleaned from diverse sources.

A teacher interviewed expressed the view that teacher salaries in the early 1980s were often lower than those of labourers and there is evidence to support this (KCAV, 158 & 166, 3-4; Jarvis, 1984:12). Things, however, have changed. As from 1 December 1986 DET granted salary parity 'for all persons with equivalent qualifications and experience' (*Educamus*, 33, 8, Sept 1987: 9).

In 1988 teachers with matric or less and who lack 'apposite' training receive a minimum starting salary of R5 442 pa. Those without matric, but who have 'apposite' teacher training start with salaries of between R5 442 - R8 604 pa (RSA, 1987: 16-18 & 41). Matriculants with a three year Teacher Training qualification earn a starting salary of R13 473. Annual increments are also paid, in addition to which cost of living increases have been made regularly in recent years.

The pay increase for teachers with qualifications has greatly encouraged the pursuit of qualification. The bureaucratic bungling of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which in some cases saw graduates being paid the same as those with just matric, to a large extent has been ironed out (KCAV 139, p12). In addition there are now housing subsidies available. Unofficial estimates on the percentage of teachers utilising this perk (valued at between R200 and R300/month) varied from 5% to 16% (Interviews and unofficial estimates by government officials). The only firm figure came from the DET in Natal

which stated that 26.9% of its full-time teachers were or would be getting the subsidy. Indications are that black teachers are increasingly making use of these subsidies. To encourage this, the DET's official magazine, *Educamus*, ran articles in 1986 and 1987 on how to claim the subsidy (*Educamus*, 32, 8, Sept 1986: 22-3; *Educamus*, 33, 10, November 1987: 30).

How do teacher earnings compare with those of other wage earners? In relation to workers in COSATU unions, the comparison may not yet be too favourable. In 1987 metalworkers received R650.79/month, food sector workers R475.43/month and commercial and catering sector workers R502.70/month (*Financial Mail*, 11 December, 1987). On the basis of this information it would seem that at the low end of the teacher salary scale, teachers are still earning little more, and in some cases less, than workers. This may have to do with the sexual composition of the teaching profession where women make up over half of the number employed in KZ schools - in 1986 68.66% of teachers were women (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1986: 18). At the top end, however, it appears as though qualified teachers are being moved into higher salary positions quite rapidly. This seems to have little to do with organised teacher pressure, as with COSATU workers, and more to do with state plans for social engineering.

Yet, even assuming the lowest salaries we discover that teachers would find themselves in households earning above average in urban areas and far above average in rural areas. If we were to consider that more than half of all teachers are women who could hope for the household income to be boosted by a male wage-earner, then we begin to get an idea of the relative affluence of many teachers.

The position of women should not pass without comment. African women find it exceedingly difficult to get employment and when they succeed, the jobs they enter are frequently badly paid - eg in textile factories and domestic employment. Teaching on the other hand is a profession that allows easy access for women at rates of remuneration on a par with men (since the DET implemented a policy in November 1987 to eradicate sexual wage disparities). The result is, as Andrew Donaldson puts it, that 'contrary to the education profiles in almost any other part of the world, females (particularly as teachers) proceed more rapidly and reach higher levels of education in the South African periphery' (Donaldson, 1983: 13).

The status of teachers is another factor which might tend to mute possible militancy in their ranks. Jarvis found that black teachers enjoyed high status in spite of their low salaries (Jarvis, 1984: 112). This may be truer of teachers in the rural areas than in the urban areas but if one is to judge by the 17 503 students who applied for acceptance at KZ Teacher Training Colleges in 1987, it would appear that jobs in the teaching profession are highly valued.

Teachers are also lured to the profession by the prospect of job security. Qualified African teachers (as opposed to white or Indian), are secure in

their posts. The present shortage of trained teachers (5 400 in South Africa's primary and secondary schools in 1988 (*Daily News*, 22.03.88)) is a powerful guarantor of their indispensability. Even politically defiant teachers enjoy a measure of job protection. In September 1986 Lamontville High School was closed. Of the staff who sided with the students during the boycotts that precipitated the closure, only five temporary teachers were dismissed. The 20 remaining permanent staff could not be sacked and were instead transferred to distant areas (*Natal Mercury*, 1.10.86; *Daily News*, 6.10.86).

CONDITIONS IN THE CLASSROOMS

High teacher:student ratios have for long been a scourge in black education. In 1979 the ratio was 1:59 in KZ (KCAV 158 & 166, p3). This had fallen in 1985 to 1:53 (higher primary schools) and 1:36 (secondary schools) (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1985: 7 & 9). In DET schools (1986) the ratios were 1:41 and 1:33 (*Educamus*, 32, 8, Sept 1986: 3). As Ken Hartshorne has commented, this means that in KZ/Natal, 'the least qualified teachers have the heaviest load to carry' (Hartshorne, 1987: 60). In addition, since teacher satisfaction, pupil performance and healthy pupil-teacher relations all rest heavily on the size of classes, this remains a source of concern to the respective education authorities and a grievance to teachers (Jarvis, 1984: 110).

While pupil:teacher ratios are improving the position of teachers in other respects is being eroded. Recent studies have shown that teachers are being converted, via a process of deskilling, into technicians or managers (Buckland, 1984; Shalem, 1986). The heaviest burden of deskilling in KZ/Natal appears to have fallen on Indian teachers in schools under the control of the House of Delegates. Teachers have been subjected to a system of panel inspections by inspectors, the effects of which are to deprive them of their autonomy, place them under the control of mid-level bureaucrats, and slowly to convert them into bureaucrats themselves (teachers comment that they spend as much time filling out forms and registers as they do in teaching because it is in terms of their paper-work that they are primarily judged) (*Sunday Tribune Herald*, 13.09.87). It is not clear to what extent similar developments are occurring in DET or KZ schools, but a revealing article in *Educamus* gives a hint. Its title was 'Mr Principal, you are a professional manager' (33, 2, February 1987: 5-9). To ensure that principals actually become professional managers, a DET course in 1985 sent 13 600 principals and senior staff to a course for 'management development and performance improvement' (*Educamus*, 32, 8, September 1986: 3). A similar course for Circuit Inspectors and principals was held in KZ in 1986 (*KZ DEC Annual Report*, 1986: 3). Yael Shalem sums up the results of education reform: 'Control and decision-making over the production of education

knowledge (has been) transferred higher up in the hierarchy, vested in the hands of the upper echelons in the service-class' (Shalem, 1986: 15).

As teachers are being converted into technicians, they are also, in KZ education, being forced to vacate the professionally demarcated terrain of political neutrality. In two notable examples, black teachers in KZ schools have been squashed into a politically compliant mould by threat of official action against them. In 1979 an 'Inkatha syllabus' was inserted into the school curricula (Maré, 1988, forthcoming; Mdluli, 1987). Teachers who were reluctant to teach the subject were, according to Dhlomo, guilty of misconduct and liable therefore to disciplinary measures including loss of job (KCAV 158 & 166, p9).

Teachers in the urban areas are in a very difficult position relative to their students. Politically, if they support Inkatha they will find themselves condemned by the school's Comrades. If they support the UDF they will clash with the KZ government. Teachers also have to contend with a youth alienated from the social vision of the state and openly hostile to traditional foci of authority, including the family and teachers (Hassim and Metelerkamp, 1988: 6-7). This has engendered tension even when teachers and students have the same political predilections. Where they are at opposite political poles the situation becomes very ugly. Students appear to want to control the schools, yet reject education values. It is not uncommon for students to demand to see test papers before the test is written and to answer questions 'collectively' during examinations. As education stands at the moment both practices constitute cheating. There is little faith in the content of education but there is recognition of the power of educational certification. A good example of this occurred at the beginning of 1987 when 100 KwaMashu students promoted themselves to Standard 9 after failing Standard 8 the previous year (*Sunday Tribune*, 22.02.87).

In some cases students and teachers have hammered out workable educational and political arrangements but these have frequently rested on cohesive community and student organisation which of late have begun to crumble under the repressive weight of the state of emergency.

TEACHERS AND POLITICS

It is somewhat paradoxical that, on the one hand teaching appears to be an attractive proposition for work seekers and, on the other, that there are numerous grievances among teachers. Some commentators and political activists, noting the existence of such grievances, have considered that teachers belong either within the ranks of populist opposition to apartheid or are workers whose logical political home is a trade union. Whatever the nuances, the assumption is that teachers either are objectively in social positions which are threatened by the changing social order or are in positions that give them good reason to work for the destruction of the status

quo. Shalem, however, is much more cautious in her assessment - 'The semi-autonomous characteristic of the teaching labour process (shown to be perceived as such by teachers as well) and the role of credentials in cases of recruitment and promotion are separating teaching from working class places in the social division of labour' (Shalem, 1986: 34).

It is true that teachers have had grievances and sometimes these are expressed forcefully and publicly. I do not think however that it is necessarily correct to construe these as a sign of imminent proletarianisation or mass discontent. Such grievances as lack of facilities (even basic ones like chalk and maps); exhausting nature of work; large classes; bureaucratic frustration; political alienation; poor pay, are being addressed by the process of education reform: facilities are being improved (albeit slowly); fatiguing double session and platoon systems are being phased out; teacher:student ratios are improving; there is less bureaucratic inefficiency; and better pay. This is not to deny that many KwaZulu teachers resent the pledge of loyalty, the *ubuntu-botho* curriculum (Mdluli, 1988), and increasing bureaucratic control, but on balance teachers are prepared to tolerate these negative features.

Instances of teacher defiance based on these grievances were quite numerous in KZ schools in the late 1970s. Their disenchantment took the form of 'having no respect for authority', 'being absent from work or drunk' (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 507-8 & 529).³

In 1978 KZLA members described teachers as 'riff-raff' with 'no national pride' (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 528-9). Since then, however, teachers appear to have become far less troublesome. In fact it is now not uncommon for teachers to be fervent supporters of Inkatha. In November 1983, for example, 250 Umzumbe teachers passed a resolution stating that 'we teachers accept as our responsibility to teach our pupils to respect our government and our nation and to guide them as future leaders of the nation' (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1983: 467). It is not clear what the exact causes of this transition are. NATU's organisational power and the material improvements in teachers' conditions described above obviously have played some part. The development of political and educational conservatism by Inkatha and education authorities must also have made a contribution. *Educamus*, for example, frequently contains articles by teachers stressing the virtues of discipline (a refrain not uncommon in Inkatha meetings), authority and respect (*Educamus*, 32, 4, April 1986; 33, 6, June 1987; KCAV 357, p1-2). Whatever the reasons it is now possible for the KZ government to blame 'educational unrest' on 'outside agitators' rather than on the KZ teaching corps (Teague, 1983: 63).

The shift in the political position of teachers has limited the recruiting opportunities for radical organisation as it emerges in the early 1980s. The response overall was disappointing. The NECC's publicity secretary, Eric

Molobi stated, that teacher 'laxity' was a problem (*Weekly Mail*, 23- 29.10.87). NEUSA's president, Curtis Nkondo explained the failure to attract substantial support as a result of teachers having 'internalised the oppressor ... they have been made to believe that they should not participate in politics' (*State of the Nation*, April 1987).

On at least one occasion in SA history, teachers have played a leading role in a nationalist movement. Dan O'Meara has shown that Afrikaans-speaking teachers, discriminated against in an English-dominated civil service, were amongst the first recruits for a Broederbond-led Afrikaner Nationalism which captured power in 1948 (O'Meara, 1982). African teachers in fact were at the helm of ANC and NEUM organised resistance to the Bantu Education Act in the mid-1950s, but with less spectacular results (Hyslop, 1987a).

How much light do these examples shed on possible teacher political behaviour in the 1980s? Changes in the position of teachers are disposing them to support the status quo rather than to challenge it. This, of course, would not prevent teachers from associating themselves with a nationalist movement like Inkatha which appears dedicated to the protection of privilege, teachers' privilege included. Historically teachers in Africa have also supported anti-colonial, nationalist movements. In South Africa there is reason to expect that some teachers, particularly those in communities imbued with ideas of resistance to racial oppression, will be sympathetic to militant, illegal nationalist movements like the ANC and PAC. While some might argue that this constitutes the basis for a revolutionary alliance between the working class and the African middle class, the experience of independent Africa has been different. As Bill Freund notes, 'the state service contains a significant technocratic element, reproducing itself through education and envisioning itself as a permanent salariat ... (the education technocrats) have acceded to a standard of living enormously more affluent than that of the mass of the population ... (and therefore are) potentially also in a position of confrontation with workers and peasants' (Freund, 1984: 244-5).

Teachers are capable of organising around particular issues: professional issues like the firing of colleagues; and political issues which centre on national or racial oppression. (The latter, importantly, no longer applies in KZ). But they seem less likely to join a working class movement in a struggle for socialism. A more likely path is the use of professionalism 'as an attempt to provide a barrier against the interference of the state ... as well as a means to counteract male dominance and to win equal treatment, pay and control over the day to day work of a largely female labour force' (Shalem, 1986: 38).

Teachers in KZ/Natal have in the recent past not been particularly easy to recruit either by Inkatha or by progressive movements. But insofar as a competition for their loyalty has taken place, it has been won by Inkatha.

NEUSA, the major rival of NATU in the region, had, before its effective banning, few members, a limited political profile, and a very small capacity to intervene on behalf of teachers either professionally or politically.

In 1977 NATU, a part of ATASA, affiliated to Inkatha. The KZ secretary for education at the time immediately advised all teachers to join Inkatha (Maré and Hamilton, 1987: 210). A number of developments served to ensure that teachers remained NATU members. It became compulsory for teachers to join. In the KZLA the Ministers of Interior, and Health and Welfare outlined official thinking on the issue: 'How can teachers help to guide their pupils if they do not actively participate in the Inkatha movement themselves?' If teachers 'cannot work in such a way that (they) fulfill the national goals of our nation, (they) can get out and work for Lever Bros in Durban or somewhere else' (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 524 & 541-2; Maré, 1988 forthcoming). Any temptation to join rival organisations like NEUSA was tempered by the successes of Inkatha and its national cultural liberation campaign in 'liberating' KZ from Bantu Education via the 1978 KwaZulu Education Act (Maré and Hamilton, 1987: 182). Moreover (and importantly), many teachers were hostile to the growing wave of student militancy and did not want to join a movement like NEUSA which, after 1983, as an affiliate of the UDF, was openly supportive of student political action (Interviews; Maré and Hamilton, 1987: 85).

The professional grievances harboured by teachers in the early 1980s and growing revulsion, particularly amongst urban teachers, with Inkatha's tactics, determined that not all teachers came into the NATU and Inkatha fold willingly. To tighten its grip on teachers, Inkatha prohibited teachers from becoming NEUSA members (a rule which was backed up by various forms of intimidation). The Inkatha Youth Brigade was strengthened to limit the corrupting social intercourse between students and teachers in the urban areas.

Inkatha's policy, with a few exceptions such as Lamontville High (Durban), was successful. The resistance of students and teachers at the University of Zululand at Ngoye, Umbumbulu Training College, Ndumiso Teachers Training College and the Pietermaritzburg and Durban township schools has gradually subsided, although it has not disappeared. But the argument of this paper is that coercion is not the sole or even the main explanation for teacher quiescence even though it is frequently treated as such. In the NECC's 1985 report the failure of Natal teachers to sink their energies into oppositional politics was explained in terms of 'a lack of organisational effort among teachers' and 'repression experienced by KZ teachers' (NECC, 1985: 25). The pursuit of job security and professional advancement are in the present circumstances possibly best achieved via NATU and Inkatha.

SCHOOL COMMITTEES

It is unlikely that teachers, as a stratum, will be radicalised. In the absence of this development the goals of people's education or education for the masses will not be achieved unless the schools themselves come under the influence of other powerful radical forces. In an effort to produce precisely such a force, the NECC began in 1985/6 to promote the creation of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs). These bodies are designed, according to the Education Charter presently being formulated, to wrest control of the schools away from state officials and structures currently in charge. The decision to create PTSAs went hand in hand with a commitment (by NEUSA and other progressive education organisations) to boycott School Committees (SCs). At the recent unity talks between progressive teachers, it was agreed that one of the guiding principles of a united, progressive teachers' body would be the rejection of any participation in 'reactionary structures created by the state to perpetuate the status quo'. (*Weekly Mail*, 3, 47, 27 November - 3 December 1987). It will be argued below that this commitment should be challenged.

SCs exist in white, DET and KZ schools. They are generally made up predominantly of elected parents, though the school principal is often ex officio a member as well. In white schools the powers of SCs were expanded in terms of the Natal Education Third Amendment Ordinance of 1985 which came into operation in February, 1986. These SCs have powers to raise school funding which in turn gives them some, limited influence in the actual administration of schools. In KZ, community schools (those funded largely or primarily by parents) were controlled by SCs (SAIRR, Information Sheet 5/80: 3). This level of control is diminishing as KZ's DEC takes over these schools. Although KZ SCs do not have school principals as members, their composition gives much influence to the Circuit Inspector who nominates four of the nine members and selects the chairperson. At community schools, SCs control school funds, are involved in teacher appointments and affairs (though not in a determinate way), and can expel students (Govt Notice R1755, 30 September 1968). Similar, though not identical, powers appear to be enjoyed by SCs at other KZ schools. In DET schools, SCs were reconstituted in 1982 in terms of the Education and Training Act (90 of 1979) and are located at the bottom of an education communications pyramid. In this position circuit inspectors are obliged to consult them, though not to take their advice. In turn these SCs have access to various levels of the education hierarchy up to the minister.

The composition of SCs is important. KZ chiefs, for example, complained in 1978 about the absence of representation. SCs were seen as aloof, having 'nothing whatsoever to do with the tribe'. Despite these complaints, chiefs and tribal authorities have not gained the automatic entry to SCs or control of school funds which they sought (*KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 533). This

may be because SCs came into line, as far as the chiefs were concerned, or because they defended their rights of independence from tribal authority.

Another important element in the evaluation of SCs is their relationship with teachers. In rural areas particularly, teachers resent SCs which dictate to them, ally with school principals against them (teachers), and are sometimes corrupt as well. In urban areas, especially in coherent communities, the relationship is better yet in some places teachers feel that SCs erode their autonomy and in certain instances force them to work harder than they feel is necessary (Interviews; *KZLA Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 527).

Since 1978 or before, Buthelezi and Inkatha have earmarked SCs to play the role of defusing school tensions that surfaced increasingly after 1976 (Mare and Hamilton, 1987: 187; *KZLA, Verbatim Reports*, 1978: 486). In 1984 Buthelezi called on members of the Inkatha Women's Brigade to involve themselves in SCs (Speech, 20 Oct 1984, p26). In 1986 an Inkatha meeting at Kwamashu was concerned to obtain the participation of parents 'to deal with the problem concerning the students' (at this time a school boycott was at issue) (*Ilanga*, 23-25.01.86). In 1986/7 SCs and principals were used by Inkatha to combat school unrest (DEC Policy Speech, 1987: 40). Inkatha's efforts to seize control and use the SCs for its purposes did not go unchallenged. Indeed it may well have been the success of active SCs which were unprepared to toe the Inkatha line which prompted a greater Inkatha effort after 1984.

In the period 1980-5 three Hambanathi SCs enjoyed great community support, worked democratically and effectively to improve the town's education facilities and forged close links with the local civic representatives. Dissatisfaction with the existing SCs (many of which were controlled by Advisory Board members), their corruption, inefficiency and lack of interest, spurred the Hambanathi Women's Action Group (later just called the Action Group) to canvass for the 1980 SC elections. They won all the seats by a landslide and none of the previous incumbents was returned. The SCs immediately introduced a school feeding scheme and made representations about over-crowding which were eventually to culminate in the construction of Mbonisweni Lower and Higher Primary School. The SC also managed to end the double session system in the town. Further vigorous representations succeeded in remedying the teacher shortage.

In the wake of these successes, the Action Group easily won the next SC elections. In 1983 political struggles concerning the incorporation of Hambanathi into KZ began. Local community councillors, JORAC and the inhabitants opposed the pro-incorporation Advisory Board. Violence erupted, a councillor was hacked to death and many others and their supporters evicted, detained or forced to flee. The SC was not involved in these events directly but since there was much overlap between the SCs and the Community Council, the purge effectively killed the SC by mid-1985.

Informants interviewed were unanimous in seeing the activities and achievements of the SC as a triumph. They put this down to the support of a cohesive community, hard work and the ability to stay clear of 'politics' (Interviews).

In an interview about the role of the Lamontville High SC in the late 1970s, similar sentiments were expressed. Here too, after SC pressure, a junior secondary school, A J Mwelase, was built. Despite initially opposing plans, the government eventually paid the entire costs. The Lamontville SC's success was, as with Hambanathi, founded on healthy community ties. The SC was not always able to influence decisions: underqualified teachers were employed against the wishes of the SC and a principal, who was likewise underqualified, 'was forced down the throat of the SC and the community'.⁴

The above examples both show that SCs can be successful. This should not be altogether surprising as they are not merely structures of co-option (though they can serve as such). In black schools parents historically have had to pay for and hence have taken an acute interest in education. As Jonathan Hyslop has shown, the establishment of SCs was a concession to popular pressure, designed to win consent, but also structures 'where the conflicts of the wider society emerge' (Hyslop, 1987a: 20).

In the absence generally of competition from progressive forces, the SCs in KZ/Natal have fallen into the hands of Inkatha (Maré and Hamilton, 1987:184). Yet, use of the SCs may be a way forward. Even in the present circumstances some communities are winning control of the SCs and using them in the interests of pupils and a better education. In Calvinia, for example, the SC of the local coloured school took a stand in support of boycotting pupils who demanded that a transferred teacher be reinstated. Although the DET sacked the SC members, this example does show that SCs are not necessarily institutions supportive of the state (*South*, 5-11.11.87). As they stand, SCs are not in a position to engineer people's education, but they are in a position to make some impact and at the very least can monitor developments taking place in schools. However small these powers are, it seems critical that they be taken over wherever possible as soon as possible. The DET already sees SCs as the avenue through which parents are 'involved in the management of schools' (RSA, 1985: 27). The Natal Indaba education proposals see SCs not only as playing a 'major role in selection of staff and deciding curriculums' (Indaba Information Sheet) but also constituting an integral part of the proposed new education department's decentralized structure (Hartshorne, 1987: 59).

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the bulk of KZ/Natal's teaching profession has benefited or stands to benefit materially from the process of education reform presently underway. While this should not be read as unambiguously

providing Inkatha with support, it does have implications for teacher organisation in the region. Unlike the radical teacher organisations, the mainstream teacher organisations in the region (NATU, TASA and NTS) have avoided state repression. In the past this has been somewhat crudely put down to their conservatism alone. They have, however, shown of late that they are willing to participate in processes which will advance their members' financial and professional interests. While this paper has not examined these teacher organisations, it seems clear that they provide some opportunity for effective teacher organisation. They allow for membership participation and, in the case of TASA, this is on a relatively large scale. This paper, therefore, suggests that politically committed teachers should work within these bodies rather than work to construct organisations which are defined by their radical character, have small memberships, little impact and are exceedingly vulnerable. Secondly, I argue that the abdication by progressive bodies from SC participation has been a mistake. SCs have some powers; they also have some immunity from state harassment. The PTSAs presently being promoted by the NECC have at this point no state-recognised power and are highly susceptible to repression (WIP 1986, p18). This is not to argue that the PTSA initiative should be abandoned. It is simply to say that PTSAs should not be seen as a tactic that excludes other options.

NOTES

- This paper was originally given at the Workshop on 'Regionalism and Restructuring in Natal', Natal University, Durban, 28-31 January 1988. It has benefited from the insights of Andrew Donaldson, Alec Erwin, Bill Freund, Shireen Hassim, Gerry Mare, Julian May, Jo Metelkamp, Peter Rutsch, Dave Ryman and Pete Silva. Three teachers and three former School Committee members kindly granted me interviews. At their request, I have not disclosed their identities. The Central Statistics Office and the Inkatha Institute were also helpful in providing material.
1. Mare (1988, forthcoming) suggests that KZ is shifting the financial burden of education to communities. My informants suggest the opposite with KZ making large use of private capital and institutions like the Urban Foundation to reduce the financial strain on impoverished communities.
 2. In 1979 Dhlomo, KZ Minister of Education and culture, said that 2000 teachers were unqualified (KCAV 158 & 166, p3). A 1980 estimate puts at 80% the proportion of black teachers in SA with only a Std 8 or lower while a 1984 study estimates that almost a quarter of KZ teachers are 'underqualified' in terms of the most conservative definition of the term' (Trotter, 1987: 62). According to the DET 78% of black teachers have 'lesser qualifications' than their (white) counterparts (*DET Annual Report*, 1986, p78). The existence of so many under- or un-qualified teachers in schools is possible because 16(2) of the KZ Education Act of 1978 allows the minister to waive qualifi-

cation regulations if he/she thinks that a person will 'render satisfactory service'.

3. The teacher vs tribal authority friction can possibly be seen as the manifestation of a power clash between town and countryside, traditional and modern social hierarchies and power structures.

4. I am indebted for much of this information to the former school committee members and teachers whom I interviewed in mid-January. For further information on the Lamontville High School crisis, see *Neusa Newsletter*, 1985, 1, and 'Memorandum to the Honourable Minister of Education and Training Dr G Viljoen', drawn up by the Lamontville Education Crisis Committee, 1986.

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