CONTROVERSY IN THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLACK PEOPLE OF MOKWALLO TOWNSHIP, VREDEFORT DISTRICT DURING THE YEARS OF APARTHEID AND SEGREGATION, 1920-1980

Elize van Eeden and M. K. Motumi
(Department of History, University of Christian Higher Education, Potchefstroom)

THUTO YA BATHO BA BATSHO MOTSENG WA MOKWALLO (SETEREKE SA VREDEFORT) LE LEANO LA MMUSO LEMONG TSA KGETHOLLO LE NTSHETSOPELE KA KAROHANO

Kakaretso
Sepheo Kgolo ka phatlalatso ena ke ho lokodisa tshitisa e tlisitsweng ke dikgohlano pakeng tsa dikereke tse fapaneg ntshetsopeleng ya thuto ya baBatsho motseng wa Mokwallo. Phatlalatso e tla boela e totobatsa tshwaetso ya mmuso wa nako eo, haholo ntlha kemo le leano la ona mabapi le thuto ya batho ba batsho. Ho tea mohlala, tshimolohong, thuto ya ba basweu e nele boikarabelo ba mmuso ka botlalo, athe thuto ya ba batsho jwalo ka motseng wa Mokwallo e simolotswe ke boitelo ba Kereke ya Wesele. Se bang pepeneneng ka phatlalatso ena, ke hore, ho ja mmuso o tlohile o tsheheditse thuto ya ba batsho motseng wa Mokwallo tshimolohong; mme le sekolo sa Mokwallo sa seke sa aparelwa ke dikgohlano pakeng tsa dikereke tse fapaneng ho fihlela lemong tsa bo 1950's, thuto ya ba batsho motseng wa Mokwallo mohlomong e ka be ntlafetse ho feta kamoo re e bonang ele kateng kajeno.

1. Introduction

Mokwallo is the name of both the black people's township and a primary school for black children near the town of Vredefort. This town is situated in the northern part of the present Free State Province, formerly the Orange Free State, about 15 km south of Parys and 76 km north of Kroonstad.[1] Vredefort was laid out on the farm Vischgat, which belonged to Jacobus Johannes Scheepers in 1876, and was proclaimed a town in 1881 and obtained its municipal status in 1890.[2]

[1] D.J. Potgieter, (ed.), *Standard Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, vol. 11 (1975), p. 293.

[2] E. Raper, *Dictionary of Southern African place names*, 2nd edition (1989), p. 572.

Part of the farm Vischgat in the north-western part of the town of Vredefort was known as "Klein-Vredefort".[3] It was this area that was used for livestock grazing and also as a settlement area for the few black families working for Scheepers. It was also this portion, "Klein-Vredefort", which in later years developed into the present township for the black people of Mokwallo.[4]

Very little is known about the history of the origins of the first black people in the vicinity of Vredefort, despite the world-wide interest of geologists in the area's outstanding geological features, especially the well-known "Vredefort-koepel".[5]

The main aim with this article will not be to reflect the origins of the black people of Vredefort or the development of the Mokwallo township, but to trace aspects of controversial nature in the provision and development of education for the black people of Mokwallo during the years of Apartheid[6] and segregation,[7] namely 1920 to 1980.

Important role players in the discussion are the missionary enterprise and missionary societies, the Government, both national and the provincial administration.

2. Missionary enterprise and the government in providing for Mokwallo's education

2.1 Wesleyans paving the way before 1920

Black people's education in the present Free State Province, indeed in all provinces of the new South Africa, owes its origin to the evangelisation work of Christian missionaries.[8] These devoted men not only offered their services as teachers, inspectors and examiners for free, they were also responsible for the erection, maintenance and replacement of their

---

[3] Vredefort library, "Vredefort Driekwart-eeufees, 25-26 April 1957", p. 6.

[4] M. Motshumi, memoirs, grandson of first families of Driestad, 28 June 1996.

[5] L. Reinold and G. Levin (com.), *The Vredefort structure, South Africa: A bibliography relating to its geology and evolution* (1991).

[6] "Apartheid - Afrikaans word meaning "apartness". Name given by the Afrikaner National Party in South Africa after 1948 to the policies governing relations between the white and black people of this country" - definition from *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, vol. 1 (1974), p. 439. "Apartheid can also be considered as the social, economic, political and sexual segregation of the persons on the basis of race" - E.P Dvorin, *Racial separation in South Africa* (1952).

[7] "Segregation - enforced separation of different racial groups, especially black and white people of South Africa during the years of Pass Laws and Influx Control. Each one is divided in its own area." - *Collins English Language Dictionary* (1987), p. 1310.

[8] M.W. Kgware, "Bantu education in the Orange Free State, 1900-1953" (M.Ed dissertation, University of the North, 1955), p. 43.

school buildings. These schools were not segregated and white children who needed education also attended the same schools. Segregation was only limited to dormitories and eating facilities.[9] Selective segregation was introduced in 1884 in the former province of Natal with the establishment of government-aided schools for whites, and civilisation was used as a criterion of selection.[10]

The evangelisation of the inhabitants of the area between the Vaal and Rhenoster rivers was quenched in 1894 when Reverend Kingstone Derry established the first Wesleyan Mission Station on the banks of the Vaal River near the present town of Parys.[11] This was supplemented by the establishment of the first Wesleyan Mission schools for black people in this area, and Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School is one example.[12] Due to a lack of proper record-keeping by the local black people and in general in South Africa, the exact date of the establishment of the Vredefort Mission School is not known.

However, the records of the Vredefort Municipality reveal that the Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School was already functioning in 1903.[13] The first and only teacher at that time at this school was Samuel Sebego Parkie, who was in fact a lay preacher of the Wesleyan Church in Vredefort. The Wesleyan Church hall, made of corrugated iron, was used both for church services on Sundays and educational purposes for school pupils during the week. It was solely the task and responsibility of the Wesleyan Mission to appoint and pay the teacher, provide and maintain the building, buy and repair school furniture and also the provision of the educational needs of the black pupils of Mokwallo township.[14]

Although General Hertzog's School Act of 1908 made provision for free and compulsory education for white children and institutionalised racial separation in education in the Orange River Colony, no administrative changes were made in connection with the black mission schools.[15]

---

[9] M. Cross, *Resistance and transformation* (1992), p. 123.

[10] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 124.

[11] Interview with Reverend M. Barnard, Parys Methodist Church, 24 June 1996.

[12] Parys Wesleyan Mission, Parys: Wesleyan Church accounts, 1904-1912, November 1904.

[13] Free State Archives Depot (hereafter FAD), Vredefort Municipality: Minutes of the Council, 1881-1910, 3 December 1903.

[14] Parys Wesleyan Mission, Parys: Wesleyan Church accounts, 1904-1912, November 1904.

[15] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 126; E.G. Pells, *European, Coloured and Native Education in South Africa, 1652-1938)* (1938), p. 89.

Limited financial resources was cited by the Government as a reason for not extending its supervision of the black people's mission schools.[16] This poor financial assistance affected the educational provisioning of all black people's education in the mission schools, including the Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School. It was only after South Africa became a Union in 1910, that the missionaries and the provincial administrations gradually became partners in the enterprise of black people's education.[17]

2.2 National and Provincial Governments' role in providing for black people's education before 1920

No specific provision existed prior to the Anglo-Boer War (South African War) of 1899-1902 in the Free State preventing African children from attending the same schools as white or children of mixed race.[18] However, the Education Ordinance of February 1903 made provision for the education of African children as a separate matter. It represented the first attempt to formulate the preliminary and provisional principles that guided African schools before the definition of a general "Native Policy". The principle of racially separate schools was implicitly incorporated in this province.

More significant moves towards a policy of comprehensive segregation were introduced by Hertzog's School Act of 1908, which made provision for compulsory education for white children and institutionalised racial separation in education.[19] Colour bars were imposed in the schools for white children in the whole country, and African children were denied the right to free and compulsory education on the grounds that they were still unfit for it. White children were drawn into a form of mass schooling, while black children were not fully incorporated, a feature reflecting the segregationist strategy which dictated the early twentieth century educational development in South Africa.[20] With these measures, children of both skilled and unskilled white workers were placed on a fundamentally different footing from that of either coloured or black children.[21] That is why the pupils of Mokwallo township, like other black children in this country, were neither provided with a proper school building until 1945, nor were their teachers paid by the Government. The general Government policy favoured the growing number of white settlers, giving them

[16] Kgware, "Bantu education in OFS", p. 53.

[17] Kgware, "Bantu education in OFS", p. 54.

[18] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 126.

[19] T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa, a modern history*, 3rd edition (1987); B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (eds.) *South Africa in the twentieth century* (1993), p. 54.

[20] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 134.

[21] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 127.

generous treatment in the matters of educational facilities, while black education was left entirely in the hands of the missionary societies.[22]

The appointment of an organising inspector of Native Education in the name of Reverend W.E. Clark, was a turning point in the state policy toward black education in the Orange River Colony (present Free State Province).[23] Clark advised the Government to prescribe and to subsidise African education in order to control its institutions by means of a system of inspection and quarterly grants. Besides that, he introduced a three years teacher's course for African teachers with Std. III (Grade 5) as entrance requirement. The ultimate goals of Government intervention in black people's education appeared to have been the productivity of subservient African labour for white-owned farms and industry.

The South African Act of 1909 placed white education under the provincial administrations, while all matters concerning blacks, including their education, were transferred to the Union Government under the Ministry of Native Affairs.[24] This was one of the controversial acts, because it enabled a process of reorganisation and revision of the system of black and coloured schools to be carried out, which led to the consolidation of segregationist structures in education. Basically, black education had to adjust and conform to the social and economic roles which black people had to perform. In order to retain the co-operation of the missionaries with regard to the education of black people, the Union Government appointed a Native Affairs Commission in 1921 which amongst others recommended the creation of Native Advisory Boards.[25]

This was followed by the promulgation of a Native Education Act on the lines of the Natives Bill of 1923, which institutionalised social segregation in the urban areas. Finally, racial discrimination in the field of education also influenced the funding of black people's education in this country.[26]

Traditionally, funds for black people's education in this country, with Mokwallo as an example, came from school fees paid by the pupils' parents, together with contributions from missionary societies. It was only in 1923 that the Union Government assumed responsibility for grants in aid of black people's education in South Africa. However, these

---

[22] Compare with Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 327.

[23] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 133.

[24] Liebenberg and Spies, *South Africa in 20th century*, p. 47.

[25] Liebenberg and Spies, *South Africa in 20th century*, p. 158; C.T. Loram, *The education of the South African native* (1917), p. 264.

[26] F. Chr. Coetzee, (ed.), *Onderwys in Suid-Afrika, 1652-1960* (1975), p. 448; H. Kenny, *Architect of Apartheid* (1980), p. 117.

grants still came from revenue derived from direct taxation of black people.[27] Thus, black people were not only compulsorily submitted to an inferior form of education designed to fit them into subordinate positions in the racially organised division of labour and to make them conform to the developing forms of domination, but they, unlike the whites, also had to pay for it.

However, there were also some positive educational developments by 1920 in the province, which also benefited the black people of Mokwallo. Owing to the provincial subsidies, the Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School was able to appoint a qualified teacher in 1923, namely Leslie Mokoena.[28] Due to the increasing number of pupils, the school's teaching staff was also increased from two to four teachers in 1924.

2.3 Interdenominational endeavours, 1920-1953

Since the 1920s, South Africa also experienced a high rate of urbanisation of black people due to the economic upswing like the rest of world.[29] This phenomenon of rural depopulation compared to overpopulation, was accompanied by maladjustments, which included overcrowding, a shortage of housing and a cry for more schools.[30] It seems as if the town of Vredefort was also affected likewise. In order to address the increased educational needs of the black people of Mokwallo township, all the mission societies amalgamated with the Wesleyans in 1926.[31] The amalgamation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), Church of England (Anglican), the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (N.G.K.) and the Wesleyan Church, set the stage for the development and expansion of mission education for the black people of Mokwallo.

The amalgamation of the missionary societies in 1926 to educate the black people of Mokwallo also caused the name of the school to be changed. The Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School was renamed the Vredefort United Native Mission School.[32] Since the

---

[27] Cross, *Resistance,* p. 134.

[28] FAD, NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Inspection reports, 1929-1953, Report, 28 October 1929.

[29] E.G. Malherbe, *Education in South Africa, vol 2, 1923-1975* (1977), p. 542; Pells, *European, Coloured and Native education*, p. 132.

[30] Compare with W. Beinart, *Twentieth century South Africa* (1994), p. 72; Liebenberg and Spies, *South Africa in 20th century,* pp. 177-179.

[31] Vredefort Amalgamated School Committee, Parys: Minutes of the School Committee, 1926-1937, Minutes, 16 April 1926.

[32] Parys Wesleyan Mission, Parys: Wesleyan Church accounts, 1904-1912.

Wesleyan section were the pioneers of the United Native School, they also provided the largest number of pupils to the school. Because of this, they wanted to dictate terms to other partners. For example, they proposed a twelve member school committee with six Wesleyan representatives and two members for each of the other three denominations. It was not easily accepted by other role players and they warned that this proposal by the Wesleyan representatives was not in the interest and spirit of amalgamation. Minutes noted it as one of the first controversies in the provision of education for black people of Mokwallo under different missionaries.[33]

Without doubt this rivalry inhibited the education in Mokwallo, because instead of the missions working together towards the improvement of the education of the black people of Mokwallo, most of their time was taken up to solve their interdenominational differences.

Controversy among the different denominations in charge of black education in Mokwallo continued over the appointment of teachers at Vredefort United Native School. Once again the Wesleyan section was accused of appointing too many teachers belonging to their denomination at the expense of the AME, NGK and Anglicans. This antagonism was so serious that it nearly led to the break-up of the amalgamation, had it not been for the intervention by the Inspector of Native Education of the Orange Free State Province.[34]

The climax of the missionary controversies in the provision of education for the black people of Mokwallo took place in 1932, especially between the AME and Wesleyan ministers. The Wesleyan minister, Reverend D.J. Pululu, accused Reverend A. Tiger of the AME Church of interfering with the school principal's duties.[35] This accusation was viewed in a very serious light by the AME minister, because the school principal was not only a member of the Wesleyan congregation, but in fact the son-in-law of the Wesleyan minister.[36]

Apart from these above-mentioned interdenominational controversies in the provision of education, there were also positive developments that took place. A growth in the educational desire of the black community around Vredefort since 1926 was noticed. The number of pupils increased from about two hundred pupils and three teachers in 1926 to

---

[33] Vredefort Amalgamated School Committee, Parys: Minutes of School Committee, 1926-1937, Minutes, 28 December 1926.

[34] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Report on the withdrawal of the Wesleyan section, 16 May 1932.

[35] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Report on the withdrawal of the Wesleyan section, 21 April 1932.

[36] Vredefort Amalgamated School Committee, Parys: Minutes of School Committee, 19226-1937, Minutes, 16 September 1932.

510 pupils and nine teachers by 1950.[37] At that stage Vredefort Native School pupils' accommodation was still the sole responsibility of the different missions. Ironically, and very controversially at this stage was the Chris van Niekerk School in Vredefort for white children which was flourishing and already provided with an infrastructure in 1898.[38] In the meantime the Vredefort Native School struggled to cope with its own primitive infrastructure.[39] The main reason for this was that Government, only at a much later stage, assisted Mokwallo financially. The next section reflects the Government's role.

2.4 The government's role in black education from 1921-1945

According to Act no. 41 of 1925, the Union Government was vested with the power of direct taxation of black people and provided for a special account, the Native Development Account.[40] A part of this fund was to be devoted to the maintenance, extension and improvement of the educational facilities for black people. As a spontaneous outcome of development in the education of black people in South Africa, the Government introduced annual inspections in Bantu state-aided mission schools from 1926. The Vredefort United Native School received its first inspection on 28 October 1929 from Mr H.F.G. Kuschke, who was the Chief Inspector of Native Education (CINE) in the Orange Free State.[41]

The Union Government's segregationist policy in the education of different racial groups in South Africa was also experienced by the black pupils of Vredefort Native School in 1929. In his inspection report, Kuschke, in the spirit of the Government's separation policy, suggested to the Vredefort School Committee the establishment of a separate school for the only twenty four "coloured" children who were attending the Vredefort Native School. The coloured children constituted only 9,6% of the total population of Vredefort Native School pupils, but a separate school for coloured children was eventually established in Vredefort.[42]

---

[37] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from Rev. D. Breet - Secretary of Native Education, 19 March 1945.

[38] Hoërskool Chris van Niekerk, Vredefort, "Eeufeesblad, 1883-1983" (27 August 1983), p. 25.

[39] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from Rev. D. Breet - Secretary of Native Education, 19 March 1945.

[40] Cross, *Resistance*, p. 124; Pells, *European, Coloured and Native education*, p. 132.

[41] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Inspection reports, 1929-1953, Report, 28 October 1929.

[42] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from "Coloured" school principal - Inspector of Native Education, 8 May 1953.

In those years there was a so-called mission-educated elite of black intellectuals who did their share to improve the education of black people in South Africa. One of them was J.B. Marks, who was a teacher at the Vredefort Native School in 1931 and also a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (C.P.S.A.), which happened to be the Government's enemy number one.[43] Marks attended this party's meeting in Johannesburg in September 1931, and on his return to school on Monday he was arrested, expelled from his teaching post at Vredefort and finally banned from teaching in this country.[44] This shows how superior and strong the arm of the Government was in ensuring that black teachers did not become propagandists of ideologies regarded as hostile to the Government.

In the 1930s there was an urgent need for a school building for the black pupils of the Vredefort Native School due to the overcrowding experienced in the different church halls. This matter was referred to the National Government, who by that time had accepted the responsibility of financial assistance in the building of schools for black people. Yet, in the case of the Vredefort Native School building, both officials of the Vredefort Municipality and the Department of Native Education did not agree on the repayment of the loan funds.[45]

As a result, the provision of a school building for the 382 black school pupils and their six teachers at the Vredefort Native School did not materialise. Despite the kind-hearted gesture of all the religious institutions in Mokwallo, the Government turned a blind eye towards the overcrowding problem experienced by the school. The non-provision of a school building for the Vredefort Native School pupils in Mokwallo, which led to serious overcrowding in the late 1930s, was made more controversial due to the fact that the white pupils in the nearby Hoërskool Chris van Niekerk were comfortably accommodated in their permanent school building as early as 1907.[46]

The outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945) brought about its sorrows, but it was also a blessing in the case of the educational provision for the black community of Mokwallo. The improved economic conditions due to the outbreak of the War made it possible for the Government to approve the building of a school for the black pupils of Mokwallo in 1941.[47] This was the first indication in the history of the black people of

---

[43] Davenport, *South Africa,*, p. 288; Liebenberg and Spies, *South Africa in 20th century*, p. 308.

[44] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from Inspector - School manager, 3 September 1931.

[45] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from Vredefort town clerk - Inspector of Native Education, 11 March 1936.

[46] Hoërskool Chris van Niekerk, "Eeufeesblad", p. 25.

[47] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Letter from Secretary of Native Education - school manager, 1 July 1941.

Mokwallo that the Government acknowledged them as permanent residents of this township. The development of the school building for the black people of Mokwallo township started in 1943 and was completed towards the end of 1945.

The provision of a school building for the black people of Vredefort was a milestone in the history of the development of education for the black community of Vredefort district. Although the school building comprised only eight classrooms, not fitted with either electricity or ceilings, and inadequate in both size and quality, the teachers carried out their duties with more pride than before. Infra structural luxuries that would have been useful but were not made available, included a principal's office, a staff room, a library and store rooms.

To bring the education of the black people closer to their communities, the Union Government and provincial administrations set up a Union Advisory Board on Native Education in 1945.[48] There was a noteworthy development in the education of the black people of Mokwallo during this period. The first school building of the Vredefort Native School was completed during this year and the enrolment of school pupils reached 510 pupils with nine teachers.[49] However, there were shortcomings in the education of black people generally in this country as a result of joint control by different partners, the most obvious being that the system of divided control had a prejudicial effect upon black people's education.

3. From Missionary Education to Bantu Education, 1945-1980

3. 1 Positively experienced Government involvement

The National Party victory of 1948 represented a major watershed with regard to race relations in South Africa.[50] One of the most controversial measures passed by the Nationalist Government was the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Most Nationalists viewed the education of the black people under the missionaries as a particularly dangerous situation and were determined to restructure it within the parameters of the new apartheid society.

---

[48] W.M. Kgware, "The present evolution in Bantu Education and its implications for the future", in P.A. Duminy, (ed.), *Trends and challenges in the education of the South African Bantu* (1967), p. 55.

[49] NED, OFS: Vredefort Native School: Inspection reports, 1929-1953.

[50] Liebenberg and Spies, *South Africa in 20th century*, p. 321.

With this in mind, the newly elected National Party government under Dr. D.F. Malan set up a Commission on Native Education in 1949, headed by Dr. W.W.M. Eiselen.[51] Traditionally it appeared that the National Party had looked with dislike at African education as it had developed under the English-speaking missionaries and the provinces. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the Eiselen report of 1951 recommended the centralisation of black education under the department of Native Affairs. In short, the Eiselen report suggested that the education of black people in South Africa would also have to be adapted to the pattern of apartheid.[52] Most black political and religious organisations greeted the new Bantu Education with attempted boycotts, especially on the Witwatersrand and in the Eastern Cape.

With the advent of Bantu Education in 1954, there was evidence of evolutionary development of the Bantu Education system.[53] First there was the involvement and active participation of black people in the education of their communities with the replacement of missionary control over the education of black people by Bantu School Boards. Another noteworthy feature of the centralisation of Bantu Education especially in the Mokwallo township was the increase in the school-going population since 1955. At that stage there were 650 pupils and thirteen teachers, giving a ratio of one teacher to fifty pupils on average, not very strange when looking at it from a 1990s perspective.[54] Of course, this phenomenal increase in pupil enrolment caused some infrastructure and under staffing problems in the education of the black people of Mokwallo. However, despite the shortcomings, the education of the black people of Mokwallo also experienced some developments, both academically and in pupil enrolment. Yet another feature of the 1950s was the appointment of Bantu inspectors and assistant inspectors of Bantu schools. All these were efforts to involve the black people in their own education.[55]

3.2 Negatively experienced government presence

There were also some dark spots in the education system of black children since 1954. Amongst them, was the fact that the Government reverted to the inelastic way of financing

---

[51] H. Kenny, *Architect of Apartheid*, p. 118; P. Kallaway, (ed.), *Apartheid and education* (1984), p. 160.

[52] J. Grobler, *A decisive clash? A short history of black protest politics in South Africa, 1875-1976* (1988), pp. 103-104.

[53] Malherbe, *Education*, p. 552.

[54] NED, OFS: Vredefort Bantu School: Inspection reports, 1929-1955.

[55] Kgware, "Present evolution in Bantu Education", p. 58.

black education as it was in the 1920s.[56] Contrary to that, the growth of the number of black children at schools in South Africa was so rapid that the financial provision of 1954 proved to be totally inadequate. The problem of overcrowding in black schools country-wide due to a lack of sufficient school buildings, also affected the Vredefort Native School. There were already 650 pupils and thirteen teachers in 1954 at this school, while the school building only had eight classrooms, meant for 380 pupils in 1940.[57] Another drawback of the Bantu Education system was that it paid more attention to primary school education than to secondary school education.

To show its commitment to the lower primary education and economy in general, recruitment of teachers was at first directed at the training of young women for the Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate (L.P.T.C.).[58] This qualification was entirely inadequate, particularly in view of the requirements in the newly drafted syllabus requiring that both English and Afrikaans had to be taught as subjects. Bantu Education was more than just a justified attempt to keep blacks economically backward by providing them with a job-restricting or colour bar economy.[59] It was rather an effort to indoctrinate black children to accept apartheid. It amounted to what Dr. H.F. Verwoerd had publicly and very explicitly referred to in earlier years as education for "hewers of wood and drawers of water".[60]

3.3 Bantu Education unfolds, 1955-1970

From 1955 onwards, the new Department of Bantu Education instructed all the newly elected Bantu School Boards to apply for the change of their schools from "United Native Mission" to "Bantu Schools" in accordance with the new Department of Bantu Education. This new arrangement also affected the Vredefort United Native School, which was also renamed the Vredefort Bantu Community School in 1955.[61] The provision and supply for the first time of instructional media, furniture and other education items by the Department improved and enhanced the development of the education of black people of Mokwallo.

---

[56] N. Hurwitz, "The economics of Bantu education in South Africa", South African Institute of Race Relations (1966), p. 74.

[57] FAD, Bantu Education Department (OFS): Letter from Van Rooyen - Director of Bantu Education, 24 June 1954.

[58] W.G. McConkey, "Bantu education: A critical survey", in *Theoria*, 38 (1972), p. 8.

[59] Kenny, *Architect of Apartheid*, p. 161.

[60] P. Christie and C. Collins, "Bantu education, Apartheid ideology and labour reproduction", in Kallaway, *Apartheid and education*, p. 161; Kenny, *Architect of Apartheid*, p. 122.

[61] FAD, Kroonstad Education circuit: Letter from I.J. van Rooyen - Secretary of Bantu Education, 16 March 1956.

Although the Education Department was unable to provide sufficient classroom accommodation at Vredefort Bantu School in the 1960s, at least the existing classrooms were improved and developed so as to be conducive to the education of the black people of Mokwallo.[62] Towards the end of 1959 the Department of Bantu Education, perhaps in an attempt to relieve the problem of overcrowding at that school, established three new farm schools in the Vredefort district. "Al die plaaskinders (behalwe in Std. V en VI) is verwyder om die nuwe plaasskole, Roemryk, Syferfontein en Skikplaas by te woon."[63] Those were the words of Vredefort Bantu School principal, Mr. Masiea, to his staff. This resulted in the dropping of Vredefort Bantu School pupil enrolment from 726 pupils in 1959 to only 535 pupils in 1960.[64] However, this was a relief for the school's problem of overcrowding. In a way the new Department of Bantu Education was considering farm schools as a solution to an overcrowded township school such as the Vredefort Bantu Community School. In 1972 the Vredefort Municipality also gave a helping hand by erecting two additional classrooms at the Vredefort Bantu School.[65]

During the mid-seventies many grievances were developing among black high school pupils and their parents in a number of urban areas against certain educational practices.[66] Highest on the list was the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. These grievances were hardly heeded by the authorities, let alone solved. Polarisation occurred to such an extent that it led to the June 1976 uprisings in the south-western native townships (Soweto) and elsewhere. However, it seems as if the education of the black people of Mokwallo were not seriously affected by the country-wide student uprisings of 1976.[67] Perhaps the absence of a secondary school in the township of Mokwallo, with older pupils who might have been easily influenced by the political turmoil, was a blessing in disguise. The promulgation of the Education and Training Act, 1979 (Act 90 of 1979) was without doubt an outcome of the 1976 school disturbances.[68]

Act 90 initiated a new dispensation for black education in South Africa, signified by the change of the name of the Department Bantu Education to Department of Education and

---

[62] NED, OFS: Vredefort Bantu School: Logbook, 1957-1968, 2 March 1961.

[63] NED, OFS: Vredefort Bantu School: Logbook, 1957-1968, 19 January 1960.

[64] NED, OFS: Vredefort Bantu School: Logbook 1957-1968, 19 January 1960.

[65] Vredefort Municipality: Letter from town clerk - Inspector of Bantu Education, 28 March 1972.

[66] Grobler, *Clash*, p. 169.

[67] K. Motumi, "Black education in Mokwallo: A historical perspective of the period 1920-1980" (MA dissertation, PU for CHE, 1997), p. 52.

[68] A.L. Behr, *Education in South Africa, origins, issues and trends, 1652-1988* (1988), p. 37.

Training (D.E.T.), which seems to have been an effort to promote goodwill. This new act also enabled the black parents to be more involved in the education of their children than during the era of Bantu education. Amongst others, the old Bantu school boards were abolished and replaced by the democratically elected school committees for each school. To acknowledge the newly elected School Committees' powers in the running of their schools, the D.E.T. granted them permission to change the names of their schools if they wanted to. The Vredefort School Committee probably saw this opportunity as recognition by the new department of their role and influence in the education of their children.

The black community of Mokwallo proposed the name of Mokwallo Public School to the department to replace that of Vredefort Bantu School, and from 1 May 1979 this school for the black pupils of Mokwallo township was officially renamed Mokwallo Public School.[69] Another new era for the school began and the education of the black people of Mokwallo took a further step forward. Since the education of black people in South Africa was placed under the control of the D.E.T. in 1979, more progressive developments took place in the education of the black people of Mokwallo. The new department embarked on a massive school building programme in the hope of killing discontent by the provision of amenities.[70] It also started implementing a policy of compulsory education for blacks to bring them into line with other race groups. Mokwallo Public School was also provided with nine additional classrooms in 1980 as a sign of goodwill by the D.E.T.[71]

In 1980 there were widespread disruptions in black schools in South Africa which were politically motivated, and during that year almost no black education took place in the big townships.[72] In the midst of the educational turmoil on national level, the Mokwallo township appeared to have been partially free from those troubles. Perhaps the absence of secondary school education that accommodated older pupils who are more critical of life was one of the reasons why the education of the black children of Mokwallo was not disturbed like in other black townships in the country.

5. Conclusion

It was the Wesleyan Mission's endeavours who single-handedly brought education to the black people of Mokwallo in the 1900s. Their efforts to provide education to the black community of Mokwallo were supplemented in 1923 when the provincial government in the

---

[69] FAD, DET: Vredefort Bantu School: Letter, Inspector of Bantu Education - School committee, 24 April 1979.

[70] Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 460; Grobler, *Clash*, p. 172.

[71] Mokwallo Public School, Vredefort: Logbook, 1969-1978, Report, 13 November 1980.

[72] Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 422.

Orange Free State entered into partnership, whereby the Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School, like all other schools for black children in the province, also received a state subsidy. The controversial nature of this change lies in the fact that others have basically taken decisions regarding the educational future of the black children in Mokwallo instead of including them in the negotiation process. Controversy continued in 1926 when all the missionaries in the township of Mokwallo amalgamated with the Wesleyan Mission in providing education to the black people of Mokwallo. The school's educational development was hampered by, amongst other factors, the interdenominational rivalries for power over the school, the financial backwardness of the Mokwallo community, the absence of qualified teaching staff, and above all, the Government's paternalistic attitude towards the education of black people in South Africa. It appeared to have been perceived as negative. For instance, the Government policy favoured the growing number of white settlers by giving them generous treatment in matters of school facilities, while black children's education, like those of the Mokwallo township, was left entirely in the hands of the missionary societies. (footnote 21).

The impression of the process of providing for the educational needs of the black people of Mokwallo is that the Government system appears to have lacked defined objectives with respect to curricula, administration and financial control of the evolutionary process of the education of black people. This was probably because the main aim of the missionaries' education as the pioneers of education for black people, was to give black people some kind of education primarily with a view to Christianisation.[73]

The education of black people during the mission school era in Mokwallo also excluded the active participation of the black people in the control and management of their children's education. This aspect of exclusion can be seen as a controversial one, because it might be that a general impression existed that black people were satisfied with the direction of their children's education in the years of the missionary enterprise. Perhaps some were indeed, because it was a "new venture" to them. From its inception in 1823 until 1953 when the Bantu Education Act was passed, local control of the education of the black people in the Orange Free State had been in the hands of the missionaries.[74] Bantu schools basically belonged to the missionary bodies that had established them, and the Vredefort Wesleyan Mission School in the township of Mokwallo was no exception.

However, regardless of their weaknesses and shortcomings, it remains certain that the early missionaries definitely laid the foundation for the development of the education of the

[73] J. Katzao, "Education in selected Southern African countries. A historical perspective", in *Education Journal*, 101 (1992), p. 3.

[74] Kgware, "Bantu Education in OFS", p. 62; G.C. Engelbrecht, "Kort oorsig oor die geskiedenis van Bantoe-onderwys in die OVS vanaf 1823-1960", in *Bantu Education Journal* (May 1960), p. 210.

black people of the Mokwallo township. The controversial nature of the educational process until the 1950s was that others basically had taken decisions on the educational future of black pupils in Mokwallo by excluding them from the negotiation process. The positive outcome of this approach when the South African Government took control was that there at least were some form of:

i regular inspections;
ii involvement of black parents;
iii growth in the pupil population; and
iv improvement of infrastructure.

On the debit side, it can be argued that the white government of the day exercised power and made laws that they wanted the peoples to adhere to. Therefore the Government should have taken the responsibility and necessary steps to prevent:

i. Financial inadequacy in schools;
iii. non-compulsory black education;
iv. inadequate school facilities for too many pupils per school;
v. an unnatural and unstable social environment due to oppressive laws that affected pupils; and
vi. teachers with inadequate training to teach instead of using superfluous teacher forces, especially whites, to assist.

Although it should be said that the Mokwallo people were relatively free from political-educational disturbances, their morale was not always positive. Divided control over black education and compulsory apartheid, have, without any doubt, influenced the educational climate and progress negatively. More emphasis on the ideological success than on educational progress made the Mokwallo school a victim of overpopulation, inadequate infrastructure and teachers with a lack of sufficient training to assist an illiterate on his or her road to a literate future. The ANC-government, at present in power of educational change and development in South Africa, should take care not to repeat the mistakes of the past.