

Chapter Twelve

EDUCATION FOR BLACKS

HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION for blacks in South Africa is offered at 5 universities which came into existence as a result of the Extension of University Education Act (No. 45 of 1959) to provide education for blacks along ethnic lines.

Originally Colleges of the University of South Africa, all these universities were granted 'autonomy' as from 1970 in terms of several Acts passed in 1969.

Thus we have:

The University of Fort Hare Act, No. 40 of 1969

The University of Zululand Act, No. 43 of 1969

The University of the North Act, No. 47 of 1969

The University of Durban-Westville Act, No. 49 of 1969

The University of the Western Cape Act, No. 50 of 1969

Growth pattern

A limited yardstick by which to measure the growth pattern of these Universities is to look at the intake figures over a period of 5 years, i.e. the number of students registered for the first time with each University since 1968 (1).

STUDENTS REGISTERED

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
University of Fort Hare	107	189	229	248	326
University of Zululand	126	176	293	250	280
University of the North	247	244	305	365	445
University of Durban-Westville	318	503	403	430	702
University of the Western Cape	268	325	403	381	450

STUDENTS ACTUALLY ENROLLED

	1970	1971	1972
University of Fort Hare	613	777	948
University of Zululand	599	701	838
University of the North	810	901	1 146
University of Durban-Westville	1 654	1 707	2 041
University of the Western Cape	936	975	1 219

At the beginning of 1972, the University of Durban-Westville was moved from the old site at Salisbury Island to its new site at Westville. Facilities at the new site are such that it can accommodate many more students than at the old site.

In the meantime the other universities are going on extensive building programmes to accommodate the growing demands placed on them by larger application lists. In addition the universities are adding new faculties to the existing list in order to be fully-fledged. At present, none of the universities offer courses in Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering. Some but not all offer courses in Agriculture and Pharmacy.

Where enrolment is limited at, or courses are not offered by a specific university to which a particular race group is assigned, the student concerned may, with the permission of the relevant Minister, study at a university otherwise set aside for white. In many cases this is granted to Coloureds and Indians for Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering. In very few cases this has been granted to Africans for Engineering and Dentistry.

The Natal Medical School, which is run as a faculty of the University of Natal offers the degrees M.B. and Ch.B. but not dentistry to blacks. This is the only university campus in the country where blacks still study side by side. At the beginning of 1972, enrolment figures at the Medical School were as follows (2):

	Africans	Indians	Coloured	Total
Preliminary year	30	26	4	60
1st year	33	33	10	76
2nd year	43	42	8	93
3rd year	16	38	7	61
4th year	19	44	8	71
5th year	22	29	1	52
6th year	18	33	3	54
Totals	181	245	41	467

Results

In 1972, the following number of degrees and diplomas was awarded to blacks at the various universities (3):

University	Degrees	Diploma
Fort Hare	112	53
Zululand	74	93
North	92	78
Durban-Westville, Western Cape and White Universities**		
(a) Coloureds	40	9
(b) Asians	189	40
(c) Africans	100	38

**Including the University of South Africa.

Teaching Staff

The following schedule is a breakdown of the teaching staff at the various universities (4):

See Table on Page 173

Criticism of educational system

More than the other institutions, the 'non-white' universities have been subject to the greatest criticism from black students studying under their wings. The major points around which the criticism revolves are the following:

that the universities, by virtue of their links with the Departments of Bantu, Indian and Coloured Education, are intended to 'educate' blacks for a subservient role in society;

	Professors		Senior Lecturers		Lecturers		Junior Lecturers		Total
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	
Fort Hare 1972 Calendar	2	28	2	33	9	29	4	1	108
North 1972 Latest information	5	26	3	33	21	33	6	-	127
Western Cape 1971/72 Calendar	-	17	1	24	3	26	-	-	70
Zululand 1971 Calendar	1	17	2	40	6	16	-	-	82
Westville 1971 Calendar	1	23	5	46	24	56	12	10	177
	9	111	12	176	63	160	21	11	563

too much control rests in the hands of whites even in institutions supposedly meant for blacks;

curricula for blacks needing education towards development, self-reliance and a re-discovery of identity cannot be faithfully drawn up on a white model by unsympathetic whites.

This strong resentment of 'racist education' was the direct cause of the May/June student revolts which rocked South Africa and led to the declaration of a virtual 'state of emergency' over certain parts of the country in June and July. The detailed account of what happened is given below.

May-June Students' Revolt

During the months of May and June, black students went on a protest which, in extent and scope, far outweighed any previous protest ever staged by black students on South African campuses.

The protest dates back to the graduation ceremony of the University of the North on 29 April, when Mr Onkgopotse Ramothibi Tiro delivered a talk on behalf of the 1972 graduands. Mr Tiro, a former SRC President at the University and, at that time, studying for the University Education Diploma, delivered a scathing attack on the educational system designed for blacks, relating his talk particularly to the University of the North.

In his speech Mr Tiro made the following points:

that what was needed was real education for all South Africans and not the compartmentalised 'education' for Coloureds, for 'Bantus' and for Indians;

that even in institutions set aside for blacks by the system, control still rested in white hands and blacks were not consulted regarding decisions in respect of curricula or even the medium of instruction; the Advisory Council to the university is not elected by parents but appointed by the system. In addition it is made up to a large extent of people with no University experience and who do not understand the system of 'Bantu' Education.

White students from other universities are given vacation jobs at the university in preference to poor black students from the same university.

Black parents were relegated to the back of the hall and even locked out whilst whites were seated in front on an occasion to mark achievement by black students.

To those who wholeheartedly support the policy of Apartheid I say: Do you think that the white minority can willingly commit political suicide by creating numerous states which might turn out to be hostile in future? We black graduates, by virtue of our age and academic standing, are being called upon to greater responsibilities in the liberation of our people. Our so-called leaders have become bolts of the same machine which is crushing us ... of what use will be your education if you can't help your country in her hour of need? If your education is not linked with the entire continent of Africa, it is meaningless ...

'Let the Lord be praised for the day shall come when all men shall be free to breathe the air of freedom and when that day shall come, no man, no matter how many tanks he has, will reverse the course of events ...'

The account of the events which followed this address by Mr Tiro has been assembled from press reports, from the SASO newsletter and from interviews with student leaders throughout the country. University authorities did not reply to requests for specific information and one put the condition that their account would be given only if it would be published unaltered. This condition was regarded by us as unrealistic.

Following Mr Tiro's address, which was given on 29 April, a staff meeting was called on Monday to discuss the address. It appears a deadlock was reached and the matter was referred to the Disciplinary Committee. That Wednesday, Mr Tiro was expelled and escorted out of campus.

Student reaction to the expulsion was quick. Mr Mokoena, the SRC President, on inquiry was told of the expulsion at about lunch time on Wednesday whereupon he and his SRC decided to call a mass meeting of the student body on the issue. That evening that student body decided to boycott all lectures until Mr Tiro was recalled. A resolution to this effect was delivered to the administration the following day by a procession of students. After delivering the resolution, the students continued with their sit-in whilst waiting for the administration's response.

That afternoon, the administration responded by bringing in buses and issuing students with 'declaration' forms. Those who wanted to stay on the campus were required to sign the declaration and resume orderly behaviour; the others would then have to board the buses and leave. The students ignored these. Later on in the day the University authorities cut off essential services like water etc. and closed the kitchen. The students

congregated in the hall till midnight, whereupon they went to their respective sleeping quarters.

The following day students continued their boycott until the afternoon when, having heard that the University was officially closed, they had to leave. It was stipulated that all of them would have to re-apply.

First phase of response from other campuses

The first University campus to express solidarity with the University of the North was the Western Cape. Here students decided to go on a symbolic boycott of lectures on Tuesday 9 May.

The Natal Medical School followed suit. At a meeting called on 10 May it was resolved by the student body to go on a 3-day lecture boycott in an attempt to express solidarity with the expelled students at Turfloop and also with their grievances in respect of racist education.

Shortly thereafter, at a meeting of the SASO National Executive held during the SASO National Formation School in Alice, discussions were held by the student leaders on the nature and content of the education system meant for blacks. These discussions culminated in the famous 'Alice Declaration' which sparked off the second phase of boycotts on campuses throughout the country. The declaration stated:

That this Formation School noting:

1. the series of expulsions from various black Universities/ Institutions;
2. the oppressive atmosphere in the black institutions of higher learning as demonstrated by the expulsion of the Turfloop student body;
3. that the 'wait and see' attitude, if adopted by other black institutions, will be a betrayal to the black man's struggle in this country;
4. that the black community is anxiously and eagerly waiting to learn and hear of the stand taken by black students on other campuses who invariably are subjected to the same atrocities and injustices suffered by the Turfloop students; and believing:
 - (a) that this cannot be viewed as an isolated incident;
 - (b) that black students have long suffered under oppression;
 - (c) that this can be escalated into a major confrontation with the authorities.

THEREFORE RESOLVES

that all black students force the institutions/universities to close down by boycotting lectures;

that the date when a simultaneous boycott of all classes be effected be on 1 June when it is expected that all Turfloop students will be returning to University.

Second phase of response

Whereas the first phase was purely an expression of solidarity with Turfloop, the second phase was a result of a combination of the Turfloop events and also some amount of soul-searching by students at large as to their attitudes to their own institutions in which manifestations of adverse control and tuition had been obvious for so long.

Soon after the Alice Declaration, Mr Temba Sono announced the Declaration through the press. The first university to respond was Fort Hare. Fort Hare students rather than heed the specific SASO call decided to call a mass meeting to consider several grievances they had. These were:

unjustifiable expulsion of students there (six students had by then been expelled since the beginning of the year);

the dictatorial attitude of the Rector towards students;

the rector's attempts to split the student body; and

police activities on the campus.

The students made a number of demands on their administration and resolved that they would stay away from lectures until their demands were met. This decision was taken at a meeting of 700 students shortly after the Alice meeting of student leaders. The students here stayed away for 8 days from lectures and the issue was ultimately resolved through the intercession of some black lecturers at the university who managed to forge a compromise between the students and the administration over the major issues. A commission of inquiry was promised by the administration and student representation in this was guaranteed.

In the meantime students at the University of Durban-Westville at a

meeting at the Vedic Hall in Durban on the 28 May decided by an overwhelming majority to go on protest until demands of black students throughout South Africa were met. The students elected an Action Committee to manage their affairs during the boycott period. A mass meeting of parents and students held at Orient Hall, Durban, elected a Parents Committee to handle negotiations between the students and the University authorities.

At the University of Zululand, M.L. Sultan Technical College, Springfield College of Education and the Transvaal College of Education, decisions were taken by the Student bodies to go on protest on the dates prescribed by SASO, i.e. from 1 June.

Meeting of SRC Presidents

On 31 May a meeting was called of all SRC Presidents by the University of Natal, Black Section (Natal Medical School). The meeting was held in Johannesburg and had representatives from all the major institutions of higher learning. The student leaders here decided to formulate a new strategy for protest. The goals of all the protesting campuses were synthesised into a single document 'Minimum Student Demands'. It was resolved that this would act as a guide for the future course of the protests and communication links amongst the various campuses were strengthened through the creation of a structureless alliance called the 'Council of SRC Presidents'. The only official of the Council was the Convenor. The meeting elected Mannie Jacobs of the Action Committee of the University of Durban-Westville as the Convenor.

The 'Minimum Demands' were in fact dealing with basic student issues like definition of education, control measures over students, student participation in University Government etc. It was an amalgamation of demands expressed by students at Bellville (Western Cape), Durban-Westville, Medical School, and Turfloop, and a few additional clauses.

Following the meeting of the Council of Presidents, the student revolt took a different turn. No longer were campuses individually oriented. In places like Durban and Johannesburg mass meetings of students irrespective of campus of origin were held.

Also discussed at the meeting was the Turfloop situation. Student leaders from Turfloop reported that a call had been made to all students to return to campus on 5 June and to see what further action to take once at campus. A number of students regarded their being sent home as merely 'an interruption of their boycott'.

A meeting held at the YWCA in Dube, Johannesburg, was addressed by all the SRC Presidents who had attended the Council meeting. Here students from Turfloop were told of events on other campuses and they in

turn reported their resolve to continue fighting for what they regarded as right.

On return to Turfloop, students discovered that 22 students had been refused permission to go back to the University. These were mainly SRC and SASO Local Committee members. A quickly prepared petition by the students said that they had noted with concern that several students had been excluded from the University. They demanded re-instatement of the students by 2.30 pm. failing which they would all leave. The Rector, Professor J.L. Boshoff, took the petition and said he had noted it and would investigate but before he could reply more than 500 students angrily left the campus, to be followed in dribs and drabs by others.

On his return to Durban, Mr Mannie Jacobs, Convenor of the Council of Presidents, addressed a large gathering of some 4 000 students at the Natal Medical School. Here the 'Minimum Demands' were adopted as a working document by the students who came from all the Natal black campuses.

Following the return of the Turfloop students to the Rand area and also the arrival of students from other campuses in their area, a large parent-student mass meeting was held in Johannesburg. Here a Parents' Committee was elected and sent to Professor Boshoff to negotiate with him on the basis of the student demands. Professor Boshoff was not responsive to these representations.

In the meantime SASO also sent a delegation to Professor Boshoff to place before him representations on behalf of the students. The only response was a promise by him to place SASO's memorandum before a Senate meeting. Later on SASO was invited by the Commission set up to look into the causes of the revolt to give evidence by way of a memorandum.

In the meantime a deadlock was nearly reached between the parents and student leaders at Durban-Westville. The parents, eager to bring the boycott to a close, called upon students to compromise on their stand and go back to lectures on the grounds that agreement had been reached with the Rector. After a period of accusation and counter-accusations the students decided to go it alone irrespective of what the parents were saying. Concern was expressed by the students that the 'so-called' agreement between parents and rector was a sellout manoeuvred with the full knowledge of the rector. On the other hand the parents were of the opinion that the students should rather walk back to the campus 'with their heads high' after a tactical victory than wait for eventual defeat by the system.

After this, the course of the black student revolts was largely affected by the decision by white student campuses to join the bandwagon. There

was a drop on further publicity on the black student activity whilst newspapers concentrated on the protests by white campuses.

On 2 June police charged a number of white students protesting outside St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town. The publicity showered around the incident virtually drowned the black student revolt. The matter was discussed in Parliament and shortly thereafter a ban was placed on meetings in all areas where institutions for higher learning were situated. The ban was to operate till 8 June.

Results of the revolt

Although minor concessions were made by the universities, the major result of the boycotts was a determination by some students to leave the campuses for good and to strive to create for themselves a better educational environment within which to study free of restrictions by the system. Hence at the SASO Conference in July a defiant declaration called the 'Black Students' Manifesto' was drawn up. Later on in the year in December it was followed by the drawing up of elaborate plans for a 'Free University', a correspondence and tutorship system where students will feel free to make additions to the curricula, calculated to develop a proper social conscience and a commitment to the larger goals of the black people in South Africa.

REFERENCES

1. Information condensed from several different columns of Hansard and also from the various universities.
2. Information supplied by SASO.
3. Figures supplied by the Department of Bantu Education and also from Hansard.
4. Figures partly from SASO Newsletter Vol. 2, No. 1 and from some universities.