

# Bantu Education in Action

A fact paper presented to National Conference by MRS. JOY ROBERTS  
of Natal Midlands Region

**E**ARLY IN AUGUST, when opening four African schools at Cradock, the Deputy Minister of Bantu Education, Mr. Blaar Coetzee, made two statements. He said

- (a) that South Africa was doing as much for African education as the African could absorb, and
- (b) that if the Government did more for African education than it was doing at present, this would be a waste of time and energy.

The Minister's statement drew immediate comment from a number of educationists and others who have studied Bantu Education. Their remarks, and a little research, reveal the following two important facts:

## Per Capita expenditure on education:

In 1963-64 the per capita expenditure per African child was R13.37, about one-tenth of what is spent on the education of each White child (the first figure was provided by the Minister of Bantu Education himself, in a letter to the S.A. Institute of Race Relations). The 1967-68 Bantu Education and Transvaal Provincial Budgets revealed (according to figures published in the Rand Daily Mail on August 9th) that during this budgetary year, in the Transvaal alone, three times as much will be spent on the education of 400,000 White children as will be spent in the whole of the Republic on the education of 2,000,000 African children.

## Salary Scales:

Recently published Bantu Education salary scales provide for teachers with a Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate to start at R28.00 per month, and to earn, after 12 years, R70.00 per month. A University graduate with a teaching diploma starts at R75.00 a month and, nearly twenty years later, can reach a scale of R180 per month. This is the scale on which a White teacher, with the same qualification, starts in the Natal Education Department. An African with his doctorate and a teaching diploma starts at R115 per month and ends at R210. His White counterpart starts at R220 and ends at R362.

## The Position at Edendale:

The above figures give some indication of two general areas in the whole Bantu Education system where there is scope for great financial improvement. In order to show how Bantu Education is working in a particular community, an investigation has been made into the situation in the area controlled by the Edendale School Board, near Pietermaritzburg, and the adjoining Imbali Municipal Township.

Edendale, where most of the schools with which we are concerned are situated, is a 'released' area, i.e. one in which Africans may buy freehold; it covers 16 square miles, has a population in excess of 35,000, and is served by nine schools, all controlled by the Edendale School Board. This Board also controls a school at Hollingwood and one at Ockert's Kraal. These, too, were previously areas in which Africans bought in freehold, but both have now been declared White and African families are being moved from them, many to Imbali, the Pietermaritzburg Municipality's new township. Imbali was opened in 1966 and its population consists largely of people previously resident in such places as Ockert's Kraal and Hollingwood, and in Edendale itself, which it adjoins. In the table which follows, the figures for Imbali school (1,206 pupils and 12 subsidised teaching posts) have been included with those for the Edendale School Board schools for 1967. The reason is between 1965 and 1967 figures for the Edendale School Board schools show a decline which was almost certainly due to movement of children from the areas served by these schools and into Imbali.

The following, then, are some figures relating to the Edendale Board's eleven schools for 1960 and 1965 and for these, plus Imbali, for 1967.

	1960	1965	1967
Total number of pupils	5,362	8,473	9,147
Number of teachers subsidised by Department	114	114	128
Number of teachers paid by School Board	2	14	18
A pupil/teacher ratio of over	46	66	62
Pupil/teacher ratio per subsidised teacher	48.5	74.3	71.4

There has been a sharp deterioration in the pupil/teacher ratio since 1960, although there was a slight improvement, as the result of the new posts at Imbali, between 1965 and 1967.

The Imbali school has been built since 1965. The only new school to be built between 1960 and 1965 was the Edendale Secondary School, the only secondary school in the area. This school goes up to J.C. and has approximately 580 pupils. There is no High School in Edendale, nor anywhere else in the whole Pietermaritzburg area, although the Edendale Vocational School provides technical training in a number of fields for boys from throughout Natal. This school falls directly under the Department and is not controlled by the School Board.

### Teachers' Qualifications:

Academic and Teaching qualifications of the Edendale Board's teachers are not high. Out of 146 teachers, only five have degrees and only three of these have passed their U.E.D. A further nine teachers have a Matric certificate, forty-three have J.C. or higher, but have not passed Matric. Seventy-seven have not passed their J.C. Seven of the 134 teachers have teaching qualifications above the Higher Primary level. Of the remainder, 59 have the very lowest qualification required. The Imbali School only goes up to Standard II so it is unlikely that teachers there have higher qualifications than those under the Edendale Board.

### Finance:

The table above reveals that, in 1967, 18 out of 128 of its teachers were paid by the School Board out of funds raised by it. In order to meet these expenses and others (building fund, school maintenance fund, etc.) children falling under the Edendale School Board are required to pay certain sums to their schools in January and July. The amount varies from school to school. The highest total annual payment is R4.25 required by the Edendale Secondary School. Pupils at Caluza Higher Primary must pay a total of R2.75 per annum, while the least required is 65c per annum for children in their first years of school at Hollingwood and Ockert's Kraal. Schools providing school meals make additional charges for these. Plessislaer and Esinathing schools hire extra premises for classrooms and the School Board must find the rent for these.

Individual children bear the main financial burden of providing their own books (exercise and text). In late 1965, the Natal Region of the Institute of Race Relations (N.R. 123/1965) estimated that this would cost a child in Standard I R2.00 per annum, rising to R10.50 in his J.C. year.

As already stated, there is no school in the Pietermaritzburg area at which a child may take Matric. In fact, every school in Natal which offers Matric is a boarding school. There are no Matric day schools. The S.A. Institute of Race Relations estimated that the two-year Matric course cost a child's parents R187.00 in 1965.\*

### Conclusions:

In addition to the 9,147 children who were at school in the Edendale School Board area and at Imbali in mid-1967, there were an unknown number of children who did not attend school at all. It is also a complaint of the School Board that there is a steady decline in the numbers at school between the beginning and end of the school year. Free compulsory education is obviously the only answer to these two problems. Other serious shortcomings revealed by the above survey are:

1. There are not nearly enough teachers. In White schools the pupil/teacher ratio is 23, at Edendale for a subsidised teacher it is 3 times this number. Until the teaching profession is made more attractive, through higher pay and better conditions of service, it is unlikely that the position will improve.
2. In general the qualifications of teachers are far too low.
3. Buildings are inadequate. Apart from overcrowding in particular class-rooms, schools which have to hire church halls obviously need more class-rooms.
4. It is disgraceful that the Pietermaritzburg area has no high schools. A high school catering for day scholars as well as boarders should be an urgent priority at Edendale. The twisted ideological arguments which consign all High Schools to "homelands" do not apply to Edendale, which is a released area.

If the situation at Edendale is typical of the Republic as a whole, then it is obvious that Mr. Blaar Coetzee's Department is doing a great deal less for African education than "the African could absorb", and that there is a great deal more that it could do without wasting either time or energy. Mr. Coetzee will only have something to be proud of when he has provided good, free and compulsory education for all the children for whom he is responsible. His first step should be to accept this as his target and to abandon at once the curious idea that while it is ethnically all right for White children to get free schooling and text books, it is ethnically all wrong for Black children to do so.

\* There is now a Matric day school at Umhlazi.