

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**IDEOLOGY
CHALLENGED:**

**ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF
ST COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL
(1941-1990)**

**AND THEIR APPLICATION TO
AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN
THE HIGH-SCHOOL CLASSROOM**

**A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of M.Phil. in History Education**

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March 1998

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ABSTRACT

In a number of senses, this dissertation represents something of a *challenge* to orthodoxy. In the first instance, it breaks with the traditional triumphalist approach to South African school-history writing by attempting to place the history of St Columba's High School within its socio-political context. It examines the nature of its unique ethos, and attempts to trace the complex interaction between this ethos and the external societal pressures it was subject to, especially those generated by the protracted South African political crisis beginning in 1976. In doing so, its historical research component relies, unlike some earlier, pioneering South African works in this field (which might be termed the social history of education) largely upon primary sources, especially oral evidence.

In the second place, it investigates the challenge from *below*, especially on the part of students, to the "official ideology" (or ethos) of St Columba's that developed from the watershed year of 1976, specifically in the areas of governance, discipline, student representation, politics, and the teaching of history. It finds that, though the traditional authoritarian, hierarchical ethos remained largely intact by the end of the 1980s, it had been modified by pressures on the ground, and that the challenge to achieve a more liberal, participatory dispensation at St Columba's was set to continue into the 1990s, spearheaded now by a committed cohort of teachers.

Thirdly, it employs the popular-history technique of oral history both as an appropriate technique for exploring the challenge from below to the official ideology of St Columba's, and as an unorthodox *pedagogical strategy* in the senior-secondary classroom for deepening students' understanding of the nature of history, improving their attitude towards its study, and developing in them, at least at a rudimentary level, some of the skills of the historian. It describes the implementation of an oral history project in the senior high-school classroom, and concludes that this is a most efficacious way of achieving the desired ends and, indeed, other positive results not anticipated.

DEDICATION

**I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my late parents, Hubert Manuel Fernandez (1916-1973)
and Winifred Sarah Fernandez (1915-1983), for having instilled in me
a love of learning.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alwun, Cara, and Giovanni, for the untold sacrifices they have made to enable me to research and write this dissertation in relative peace.

My supervisors, Bill Nasson and (formerly) Howard Phillips, on the historical side, and Rob Siebörger, on the pedagogical side, for their expertise, constructive criticism, encouragement, and patience.

My friends and colleagues on the course, and fellow-institutional historians, Cedric van Dyk and Roger Goodwin, for their continued interest, support, and friendship.

My collaborators, the Std 9 History class of 1995 at St Columba's, and, especially, my fellow-researchers, the Std 9 History class of 1996 at St Columba's, without whom this dissertation could not have been written:

Liam Bailey, Paul Brown, Milton Davidson, Eric Gum, Paul Maarman, Wesley Pereira, Nathalia Redman, Theodore Schilder, Giovanni Smuts, and Denver Twigg.

Clive Glaser and Leslie Witz for their contributions to the St Columba's Oral History Project.

Mohamed Adhikari for his valuable views on certain aspects of the history of coloured education.

John Valentine for his generous and invaluable assistance in the reproduction of the poster display.

Iqbal Tayob and Gwen van der Schyff for their continued interest and friendship.

Our many interviewees, for their time, energies, and memories.

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INTRODUCTION

Hitherto, philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it.

Karl Marx

The title of this dissertation, “Ideology Challenged”, is appropriate in a number of senses. In the first instance, this work intends to represent something of a challenge to the traditional approach to the writing of school histories in South Africa, and elsewhere.¹ Such histories have been characterised by:

1. a focus upon the Great Men and Women who have, supposedly, made the institution what it is, and an uncritical and deferential approach to school leadership;
2. the achievements (and achievers) of the institution – in the academic, sporting, and cultural spheres (the supposedly less able being largely forgotten);
3. buildings, fields, facilities, fundraising, development;
4. “Whiggishness” – a celebration of the progress and excellence of the institution; its self-promotion;²
5. the production of a chronicle rather than a history (history as “one damn thing after another”), without significant interpretation or analysis;
6. a top-down perspective, with little interest being shown in the views and perspectives of the “groundlings”: teachers-in-the-ranks, parents, pupils;

¹ Typical local examples of the genre are J.MacIntyre, *White Stoep on the Highway* (Cape Town: Rustenburg School for Girls, 1994) and J.D.Linnegar, *SACS - 150 Years* (Cape Town: South African College Schools, 1979). Encyclopaedic compendia, with similar biases, are P.Hawthorne et al, *Historic Schools of South Africa – an Ethos of Excellence* (Cape Town: Pachyderm Press, 1993), and M.A.Peacock, *Some Famous Schools in South Africa, Vol.1* (Cape Town: Longmans Southern Africa, 1972).

² In fairness, it must be acknowledged that these “histories” have been rather limited in intention, aiming to celebrate and promote the institutions in question, especially in some vintage year. To this end,

7. a sense of the institution as a closed world, nothing disturbing its even tenor;³
8. reliance upon a limited range of largely “in-house” sources – minute books, log books, school magazines, etc. - with recourse to the odd secondary source. Archival sources, oral evidence (except the purely anecdotal), and educational historiography have been generally disregarded.

Corresponding omissions have included:

1. the failure to place the school within its social, economic, and political context;
2. the failure to show any significant response or reaction within the institution to major external developments, for example, segregation, the introduction of apartheid, the 1976 uprising, the national-democratic rebellion of the latter half of the 1980s;
3. the failure to address possible areas of conflict, for example, within the staff, and between staff and students, the school and its community, the school and the authorities;
4. the failure to address issues of governance and management style;
5. the lack of a people’s perspective, that of “ordinary” teachers, parents, and pupils;
6. the absence of a comparative perspective: How typical or representative was the institution? How valid are generalisations made from its history?

The 1960s and 1970s saw the development in the United States and Britain of “revisionist” and “radicalist” approaches to educational history, in reaction against the traditionalist or “pietist” approach, as outlined above.⁴ Revisionism is usually dated from the contention of the American scholar, Bernard Bailyn, in 1960 that, as education is “the

nostalgia is nourished and the solidarity of the institution’s graduates is reinforced.

³ McIntyre, for example, in reviewing the tempestuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s, observes approvingly that “a school such as Rustenburg [Girls’ High] is “largely protected from disturbing influences outside”. (J. McIntyre, *White Stoep on the Highway*, p.45.)

⁴ W.J. Urban, “Historiography”, in H.E. Mitzel et al (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Educational Research*, Vol. 2 (New York: Free Press, 1982), pp.791-792; H. Silver, “Historiography of Education”, in T. Hüsen & T.N. Postlethwaite, *The International Encyclopaedia of Education*, Vol. 5 (Kiddington, Oxford: Elsevier Science, 2nd ed., 1994), pp.2610-2613.

entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations”,⁵ it is to be studied “in its elaborate, intricate involvements with the rest of society”.⁶ In Britain, the educational historian, Brian Simon, recognised in 1966 that, “Education is a social function”, hence socially, economically and politically conditioned. However, he acknowledged too that “established institutions do take on a life and develop an ethos of their own”.⁷ It is exactly this complex interaction between the norms and values of a particular institution and the external societal pressures which it is subject to that constitutes the focus of the present historical case study.

From the 1970s, the “radicalist” strain in educational historiography argued that education in capitalist countries has served to maintain and reproduce the capitalist order, by “tranquillising”, conditioning, and controlling the working class as a labour force.⁸

No doubt influenced by these international currents of thought, at least two historians tried, in the late 1980s, to break the mould of traditional school-history writing in South Africa. Nazeema Mohamed, in her account of the first twenty years in the history of Langa High School,⁹ attempted to place its founding in the socio-economic and political context of the time, whilst subscribing to the “radical” view that its firm establishment could, essentially, be accounted for by reference to the capitalist aims of labour reproduction and control during the Second World War, when rapid industrial development demanded a better-educated and -conditioned labour force.¹⁰ She did address some areas of conflict, for example, over differing responses and reactions to the imposition of Bantu Education from 1953,¹¹ and raised new questions over issues of age, gender, and class differences, and issues of social breakdown, for example, the frequency

⁵ Quoted in H. Silver, “Historiography of Education”, p.2611.

⁶ Quoted in J.E. Talbot, “The History of Education”, in P. Gordon and R. Szreter (eds), *History of Education: the Making of a Discipline* (London: Woburn Press, 1989), p.143.

⁷ B. Simon, “The History of Education”, in P. Gordon and R. Szreter (eds), *History of Education: the Making of a Discipline* (London: Woburn Press, 1989), pp.55-56, 68.

⁸ M.B. Katz, quoted in H. Silver, “Historiography of Education”, p.2612.

⁹ N. Mohamed, “Langa High School: the Struggle for Existence. The First Twenty Years in the History of Langa High School”, unpublished B. A. (Hons) (History) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1989.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.86-88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.102-115.

of teenage pregnancies.¹² She made some use of archival sources and statistics, and conducted a number of oral interviews with ex-teachers and ex-students.

J.S.Mohlamme, in his outline history of Pimville School in Soweto,¹³ similarly attempted to place its founding and fortunes within the broader socio-political context of the time, and employed some archival sources and statistics.

However, a close study of both works reveals significant weaknesses. Both were polemical, barely concealing, in Mohamed's case, a political agenda¹⁴, whilst in Mohlamme's case, the agenda was openly acknowledged:

The aim of this study was partly to reconstruct the history of the Pimville Primary School and partly to highlight the serious problems in the education system of the African that need to be urgently addressed if meaningful change, especially in the field of education, has [sic] to take place in this country.¹⁵

Both still displayed a heavy reliance upon secondary sources, lacked a comparative dimension, and used oral evidence rather uncritically. Both works lacked also a sense of the lived life of a school, perhaps a reflection of the fact that neither were school teachers, and hence did not know schools from the inside. Both provided promising material – Mohamed maps and photographs, Mohlamme a series of documentary appendices – but then did not use them interpretively.

Despite these reservations, however, these works did represent pioneering attempts at revisionist school histories within the South African context. Mohamed, in particular, posed new and important questions and entered new realms of analysis. The present work places itself squarely within the same tradition, which might be termed the social history

¹² Ibid., pp.66-68, 81-86. However, her interpretations can be simplistic. For example, she suggests that the characterisation by I.D.Mkize, the Principal, of teenage pregnancies as "moral lapses which had taken a heavy toll on the girls", makes them, in his supposed view, "entirely responsible for their condition". (Ibid., pp.81, 86.)

¹³ J.S.Mohlamme, *The Early Development of Education in Soweto as seen in the story of Pimville School* (Braamfontein: Skotaville, c.1990).

¹⁴ Manifestly socialist and feminist.

¹⁵ J.S.Mohlamme, *The Early Development of Education in Soweto*, p.34.

of education, aiming to present an institution within its socio-political context, whilst recognising its unique ethos, and attempting to trace and explicate the subtle and complex interaction between the two. It hopes also to avoid some of the more evident weaknesses of its models.

The second sense in which the title of this dissertation is appropriate becomes apparent on a reading of its historical component (Part One). Chapter 1 provides a background to the founding of St Columba's High School by reference to its unique identity as a *Catholic* school for *coloured* boys, in the process exhibiting the dualistic nature of both Catholic and state approaches towards the provision of education for whites and blacks in South Africa. Chapter 2 describes the “official” founding ideology (in the sense of world-view) of St Columba's High School with regard to the chosen themes of governance, discipline, student representation, political position, and the teaching of history. Chapters 3-5 attempt to describe, account for, and interpret the series of *challenges* – whether explicit or implicit – that aspects of this ideology had to confront between the watershed year of 1976 and the year of the Christian Brothers’ partial withdrawal from St Columba's, 1990, and to gauge the extent to which that ideology was modified in the face of these challenges.

The title of this dissertation has yet another application, which relates to its pedagogical component (Part Two). From the mid-1980s, as will emerge below, history was taught at St Columba's in a “*counter-ideological*” manner, in the sense that, in the tradition of “People’s Education”, it challenged apartheid practice both in terms of content and method. The syllabus was expanded to include aspects of the history of the dispossessed, oppressed, and exploited communities. Teaching methodology was characterised by questioning, argument, discussion and debate; students were encouraged “to challenge and be challenged”; and the official syllabus, texts, and examinations were subjected to critical scrutiny.¹⁶

¹⁶ See below, pp.60-62.

In the light of this counter-ideological tradition in the teaching of history at St Columba's, it seemed entirely appropriate that the pedagogical aspect of this dissertation should be characterised by a "history-from-below" approach. This orientation led, in turn, to a focus on oral history as a popular-history technique for exploring the *challenge from below* to the "official ideology" of St Columba's High School. Oral history in the classroom is a great leveller: it sets up the high-school student as a "proto-historian" and canvasses the testimony of "commoners" on matters of great import, in this instance the very ethos of their institution, and how they came to challenge – and perhaps even *change* – some aspects of that institution.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

When undertaking the historical research reported in Part One of this dissertation, I found, to my initial dismay, that there was a paucity of documentary sources readily available, owing, in the first instance, to the absence of a culture of preserving records at St Columba's, but also to the refusal of the Provincial Superior of the Christian Brothers in South Africa¹ to allow access to key records housed in the archives of the South African Province of the order at Boksburg. There is a tradition of secrecy in Catholic religious orders, which persists to this day.

In reply to my application to peruse, *inter alia*, the minutes of the Provincial Council of the Christian Brothers in South Africa, the Provincial told me that the Canon Law of the Catholic Church required the *destruction* of any record of a personal nature which might reflect negatively upon any member of the order.² In the end, access was allowed only to the "Athlone file", which did include the most useful Athlone House Annals, but consisted for the rest of some other, largely innocuous, documents, which might well, I suspected, have been subject to pre-selection. I found also, on approaching a number of Christian Brothers for interviews, that they were, in the main, most reluctant to accede to my request. I was able to obtain only one *written* submission from a former Principal of St Columba's High School.³

In contrast, the Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town, Lawrence Henry, himself a St Columba's old boy, was quite willing to allow access to the Archdiocesan Archives, where I was able to locate some significant documentation. I had, moreover, managed to accumulate, in more than ten years of teaching at St Columba's, a valuable personal collection of documents.

¹ At that time, Br Donald Kennedy.

² This was not, at any rate, the kind of record I was looking for. What I was interested in was the formulation of official Christian Brothers' policy, for example towards the state authorities and with regard to developments (especially political) at St Columba's.

Both by choice and, to some degree, of necessity, I turned my attention to the vast, untapped store of oral evidence locked in the memories of St Columba's old boys, ex-teachers, and former parents. This suited, par excellence, my counter-ideological purpose in writing the history of certain aspects of St Columba's High School "from below", as well as my pedagogical purpose in testing and evaluating the aptness of oral history as a *popular-history* classroom methodology.

Of course, in studying the history of any school, even one where there is a tradition of preserving records, it will be found that much valuable evidence will not be written, for example, teacher, student, parent, and community perspectives. Thus, there will always be a significant place for oral history in researching the history of an institution such as a school.

³ Br Donal Madden, Principal, 1973-1979.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF ETHNIC TERMS

Whatever one's political position, there can be no real doubt that the use of ethnic terms in the South African context, especially in historical and sociological studies, retains some analytical and explanatory value. I have opted for the following usage:

- *white* to refer to those, generally of colonial extraction, who were members of the enfranchised ruling group;
- *Indian* to refer to those of Indian extraction (a capital letter used for a proper noun/adjective);
- *African* to refer to black, Bantu-speaking South Africans (also a proper noun/adjective);
- *black* as a collective term to include Africans, Indians, and coloureds;
- *coloured* to refer to that group of people who were identified as such by the ruling white group, and identified themselves as such.¹

1 Lewis, Adhikari, and Molteno all agree that, although the categorisation "coloured" was white-imposed, it came to be adopted by a large group of people to distinguish themselves from whites and Bantu-speaking Africans. (G.Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A history of South African 'Coloured' politics* (Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Philip, 1987), p.4; M.Adhikari, " 'Let us live for our children': The Teachers' League of South Africa, 1913-1940 (Cape Town: UCT Press & Buchu Books, 1993), pp.9-10; F.Molteno, *1980: Students Struggle for their Schools* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1987), p.5.

PART ONE

HISTORY IN PRACTICE:

ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF ST COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL (1941-1990)

CHAPTER ONE

CATHOLIC AND COLOURED EDUCATION AT THE CAPE

St Columba's High School's uniqueness in the Western Cape derived from its dual nature as a *Catholic* high school for *coloured* boys. As a Catholic school, St Columba's was one of many similar schools throughout the world, with a specific intention and character. The ethos of the Catholic school, more specifically that of the Christian Brothers' Congregation, which founded and continued to own the school, will therefore be outlined below. As a school specifically for coloured boys, St Columba's founding will be located also within the context of coloured education, especially secondary education, at the Cape.

1. DUALISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

With the appointment of Patrick Raymund Griffith as Vicar Apostolic of the newly created Vicariate of the Cape of Good Hope in 1837, the formal history of the Catholic Church in South Africa began. From the outset it was clear that a dualistic approach to its ministry would be adopted: a settler church for whites; a mission church for the rest - *when resources permitted*. Bishop Griffith devoted himself in the first instance to the small white Catholic population and to those who had lapsed from the faith, "those who ought to be papists", as he recorded in his diary.¹ In 1879 James David Ricards, Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern Districts of the Cape, wrote that papal instructions to him and his predecessors had been: "Attend first to the wants of the children of the household of the

¹ Quoted in W.E.Brown, *The Catholic Church in South Africa* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), p.28.

faith. When the wants of this portion of your flock have been provided for, turn your attention to the native population".² If such an instruction were indeed issued, it would have been an oral one given by Pope Pius IX in private audience, and W.E.Brown, a pioneer historian of the Catholic Church in South Africa, argued that it was, in effect, a "matter of emphasis", not of principle. He recorded, perhaps revealingly, however, that "Bishop Griffith did turn his attention *occasionally* to the native population".³ [My emphasis.]

There can be no doubt, however, that the dichotomy between settler and mission church became, over a century, entrenched within the Catholic Church in South Africa.

W.E.Brown, writing of the period immediately after Union, described white Catholic political attitudes thus: "Racial superiority, even in religion, was accepted by the great majority of [the whites of] the new Union of South Africa, and Catholics would grow up in that climate of opinion without any clear and repeated challenge of the principle".⁴

Archbishop Denis Hurley, writing as late as 1989, acknowledged the continuity of such attitudes even after the Second World War: "Though great changes had already taken place in the East, in Africa white superiority and the right to rule over other races was taken for granted and the gospel was preached within the parameters of white domination. Within this context, a dualistic church had been accepted, a fairly affluent church for white settlers and a poorer missionary church for others".⁵

Such an attitude was not, however, exclusive to the Catholic Church, but had become common to Christian denominations in South Africa. A prominent Protestant Christian scholar wrote thus of the Christian churches in general: "The conflict between 'settler'

² Quoted in W.E.Brown, *The Catholic Church in South Africa*, p.194.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.194-197. Brown argues that the Church, after the depredations of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, had to woo back the faithful before embarking on major missionary endeavours, which would be possible only with their financial support.

⁴ W.E.Brown, p.316.

⁵ Quoted in G.Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid: the response of the Catholic Church in South Africa to the first decade of Nationalist Party rule, 1948-1957* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1989), p.viii.

church and 'mission' church became a dominant issue for church and society at the Cape during the nineteenth century".⁶ Such dualism persisted even into the 1990s.

2. CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

For the devout Catholic, the primary aim of existence is salvation, eternal life in union with God. The primary aim of education is to prepare humankind for this end.⁷ But education has secondary aims too, in recognition of the individual's membership of society, his/her duty to work for the common good, and the universal need to respond to a particular vocation within society.⁸ Of course, education of the young is also a most powerful agent for the entrenchment and propagation of religious faith, and the Church has always insisted that it is the duty of Catholic parents, wherever at all possible, to send their children to Catholic schools.

From the earliest days, therefore, the Catholic Church in South Africa turned its attention to education. At the end of 1838, less than a year after his arrival at the Cape, Bishop Griffith opened the first Catholic school in Cape Town.⁹ However, it was only with the importation of religious teaching orders, notably the Irish Dominican nuns in 1863 and the French Marist Brothers in 1867, that Catholic education at the Cape could be said to have made any significant progress.¹⁰ In the latter year, five Marist Brothers arrived in Cape Town, and set up two schools: a primary mission school for poorer white boys, St Aloysius, and a private, fee-paying secondary school for more well-to-do white boys, St

⁶ J.W.de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p.2.

De Gruchy quotes Charles Brownlee, a mid-nineteenth-century missionary, telling of how he had to convince an audience that it was not true "that Christian Natives are not such good servants as the wild heathen". (Ibid.)

⁷ J.D.Redden & F.A.Ryan, *A Catholic Philosophy of Education* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1942), expressed it thus: "... the primary aim of all education is identical with the purpose for which man was created: to know God and to enjoy eternal happiness with Him in heaven". (p.41.)

⁸ Pius XI, *The Christian Education of Youth* (New York: The America Press, 1936), p.32.

⁹ W.E.Brown, pp.31-32.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.68-70.

Joseph's Academy.¹¹ Significantly, no provision was made by the Marist Brothers for the education of children of colour.¹²

The Congregation of the Christian Brothers of Ireland made a later appearance on the scene. It had been founded by Edmund Rice (1762-1844), who in 1802 had opened his first school to minister to the educational needs of poor Irish Catholic boys, at that time subject to the harsh deprivations of the Penal Laws imposed by the British authorities after their conquest of Ireland in 1689.¹³ In 1808 Rice and his companions pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and in 1820 papal approbation of the new religious society was issued.¹⁴ As might be expected in the light of the vow of obedience, the structure of governance of the Christian Brothers' Congregation was, and has continued to be, strictly hierarchical. This hierarchy will be outlined in the next chapter.¹⁵

By Rice's death in 1844, the Christian Brothers had spread throughout Ireland, to England, Gibraltar, and Australia. In later years, schools and educational establishments were founded in many other parts of the world, including the United States, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South America.¹⁶ In South Africa, the Christian Brothers made their first appearance in Kimberley, their first three representatives arriving there in August 1897 to set up a school at the request of the local bishop in order to minister to the needs of the local white Catholic population.¹⁷ The Christian Brothers soon spread their

¹¹ L.J.Paola (ed.), *Marist Centenary Digest, 1867-1967* (Durban: S.A.Federation of Marist Old Boys' Associations, c.1967), pp.52-53.

¹² It was only nearly a hundred years later, in 1961, that the Marist Brothers opened St Owen's, Retreat, their first (and only) secondary school for coloured boys. (Ibid., p.74.)

¹³ These had, inter alia, forbidden Catholics to keep schools or, even, supposing they could afford this, send their children to be educated abroad. {M. & C.C. O'Brien, *A Concise History of Ireland* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p.77.}

¹⁴ J.C.O'Neill, "The Historical Development and Organisation of Christian Brothers' Education in South Africa" (Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1971), pp.1-9.

¹⁵ See below pp.28-29.

¹⁶ J.C.O'Neill, "The Historical Development and Organisation of Christian Brothers' Education in South Africa", pp.5-10.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.11.

educational work to other developing towns, and during the next hundred years established the following educational institutions in Southern Africa:

Christian Brothers' College (CBC) Kimberley	1897
CBC Pretoria	1922
St Boniface, Kimberley (for Africans)	1934
CBC Cape Town	1935
CBC Boksburg	1935
St Agnes, Woodstock (for poorer whites)	1936
CBC Bloemfontein	1940
St Columba's High School, Athlone (for coloureds)	1941
Christian Brothers' Novitiate, Stellenbosch ¹⁸	1949
St Bernard's, Botshabela (for Africans)	1951
CBC Bulawayo	1954
CBC Welkom	1957
CBC Springs	1964
Mariasdal High School, Tweespruit (for Africans)	1971
Embakwe Senior School, Zimbabwe (for Africans)	1981
Sacred Heart Junior School, Flagstaff (for Africans)	1987
Immaculata High School, Soweto (for Africans)	1992
Mankwe Christian College of Education, Mogwase (for Africans)	1992 ¹⁹

Except where otherwise indicated, these schools were founded for whites. The priority given by the Christian Brothers to schools for whites during their first seventy years in the

¹⁸ For the training of Brothers.

¹⁹ J.C.O'Neill, "The Historical Development and Organisation of Christian Brothers' Education in South Africa", pp.12-45; Congregation of the Christian Brothers, *Christian Brothers in Africa – 100 Years* (N.p.: Congregation of the Christian Brothers, 1996), passim.

sub-continent, in accordance with the traditional dualism of the Catholic Church (and other Christian churches) in South Africa, is clear. Noteworthy too is the reservation of the honorific “Christian Brothers’ College” for schools for relatively well-to-do whites, in this case indicating a social-class distinction which, in the South African context, usually corresponded with racial categories.²⁰

In general, Catholic schooling in South Africa expanded fairly rapidly, and by 1951 there were nearly 200 schools for whites (with 40 000 pupils), 144 schools for coloureds and Indians (with 24 000 pupils), and 800 Catholic schools for Africans (with 110 000 pupils).²¹ An analysis of these figures must, of course, take into account the percentage of the different groups in terms of the total Catholic population. In 1951 Africans comprised roughly 67% of the Catholic population, whites 21%, coloureds 11%, and Indians 1%.²² The figures for the number of schools given above are roughly proportionate, 63% of pupils being African, 23% white, and 14% coloured and Indian. It must, of course, be remembered that, as a rule, facilities at most white schools were greatly superior to those at schools for other population groups.

The dualism of Catholic education in South Africa demonstrated above was, of course, a reflection of the corresponding dualism based on colour increasingly applied to the education of all South Africans. An examination of coloured education from the mid-nineteenth century will serve to confirm this.

²⁰ St Agnes, Woodstock, for relatively poor whites, was designated simply a “school”, and, later, when it was extended to include Stds 6-8, “Christian Brothers’ Secondary School, Woodstock”.

²¹ B. Flanagan, “Education Policy and Practice”, in A. Prior (ed.), *Catholics in Apartheid Society* (Cape Town & London: David Philip, 1982), p. 86.

²² G. Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, Appendix 2a, p. 138.

3. COLOURED EDUCATION AT THE CAPE

In the early decades of colonisation at the Cape, a fairly casual attitude was taken to segregation in the schools. Thus, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, white and slave children often attended the same schools.²³ Most schooling at the Cape in the first half of the nineteenth century was provided by mission societies, whose schools enjoyed a small government subsidy from 1841, a condition of which was that they be open to all.²⁴

From 1865, with the passing of the Education Act by the Cape Parliament, a concerted effort was made to set up public, undenominational schools, which would receive a state subsidy on a pound-for-pound basis.²⁵ This meant that parents of children at these schools would have to pay fees; however, it also meant that such schools would be in receipt of more funds than mission schools, which received only small subsidies.²⁶ The poverty of most coloured parents meant that, in practice, undenominational schools became predominantly white, whilst mission schools became predominantly black.

A. INTENSIFIED SEGREGATION, c.1870-c.1919

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the industrial revolution sparked off by the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior, segregation in all spheres of society intensified. One imperative was the need for the state to ensure a plentiful and continuous supply of cheap, unskilled and semi-skilled labour for the mines and industry. On the other hand, a significant number of skilled and literate workers were also required, positions

²³ M.Horrell, *The Education of the Coloured Community in South Africa, 1652-1970* (Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 1970), pp.3-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²⁶ G.Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: a history of South African 'Coloured' politics* (Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Philip, 1987), p.31.

which whites sought to secure for themselves. Taken together, these labour demands prescribed, from the point of view of the white rulers, a dualistic educational system: an improved and compulsory education system for whites; a rudimentary system for blacks, which provided at least some with basic literacy and numeracy.²⁷ Coloureds were seen by the white rulers as occupying a socio-economic middle ground between skilled white workers and unskilled Africans, in accordance with contemporary notions of Social Darwinism.²⁸ This position they came increasingly to accept for themselves.²⁹

It is against this background that moves towards intensified segregation in the schools culminated in 1905 in the passing of the School Board Act by the Cape Parliament. This declared the state's intention to provide for the compulsory education of *white* children up to Std IV or fourteen years of age.³⁰ The School Board Act was clearly discriminatory in intent and effect, serving to entrench racial segregation in Cape education in order to consolidate white supremacy.³¹

Segregation and discrimination continued apace in the years after Union. In 1911-1912 the Cape Supreme Court, in the case of *Moller vs the Keimoes School Committee*, upheld the

²⁷ M. Adhikari, *"Let us live for our children": the Teachers' League of South Africa, 1913-1940* (Cape Town: UCT Press & Buchu Books, 1993), pp.11-13, 22.

²⁸ There were, of course, other factors which encouraged segregationism, most notably the growing influence in the late nineteenth century of pseudo-scientific Social Darwinism, the belief that races were fixed in a hierarchy according to pigmentation, with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom, those lower down on the evolutionary scale needing special protection - hence separation - to ensure their survival. This attitude led ultimately, in the 1920s, to a kind of paternalistic "liberal" segregationism. Segregationism in South Africa, though assuming a unique form, was, of course, predicated upon traditional white supremacism. {See N. Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: conquest, segregation, and apartheid* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp.65-79.}

²⁹ M. Adhikari, *"Let us live for our children"*, pp.13-14.

³⁰ G. Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, p.33.

³¹ That it succeeded in this intention is borne out by statistics for the ten years after 1905. The number of white children at Cape mission schools declined between 1891 and 1912 from an estimated 5 000 to fewer than 200, whilst between 1905 and 1912 the number of white undenominational schools nearly doubled from 815 to 1 560. By contrast, by 1912 there were only three undenominational schools for blacks in the Cape Division, where coloureds constituted more than half the population. By 1915 the state spent more than six times more on white pupils than on black. (Lewis, p.34; Adhikari, pp.20-21.)

principle of strict racial segregation in schools.³² In 1912 the Cape School Board spent its *entire* grant of £60 000 on white education. In 1913 coloureds were excluded from white teacher-training colleges.³³ In 1917 compulsory education for whites was extended to 15 years of age or Std V, and in 1919 to 16 or Std VI.³⁴ Education for children of colour remained *non-compulsory*.

B. INTENSIFIED COLOURED DEMAND FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION, c.1900-c.1933

Despite (or, perhaps, because of) the perceived attitude of officialdom, coloured parents in the early years of the twentieth century began stepping up the demand for *secondary* education for their children. Education was seen, especially by the coloured élite, as the chief means to social and economic advancement (for it was the passport to the franchise), hence to an escape from hard manual labour for the coloured people.³⁵ Thus, the second of the (coloured) African Political Organisation's five founding aims was, "To obtain better and higher education for our children", and this was to remain a perennial focus of its agitation.³⁶

In 1910 coloured parents persuaded the authorities to establish the first undenominational "second-class" school for coloureds in Cape Town, the Chapel Street Public School, later to become the Trafalgar High School.³⁷ However, the priorities of the white education

³² Lewis, pp.33, 67-68; Adhikari, p.34, pp.44-45, note 127.

See E.L.Maurice, "The Development of Policy in regard to the Education of Coloured Pupils at the Cape, 1880-1940" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1966), pp.305-321, for a detailed discussion of how the separation of white and coloured pupils in the schools was achieved.

³³ Adhikari, pp.33-35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73, note 36.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.25-26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; Lewis, p.20.

³⁷ Second-class schools were equipped to give instruction up to and including Std 7. In 1901 the first, and only other, second-class school for coloureds in the country had been initiated in Kimberley. (Maurice, pp.411-412.)

authorities remained essentially unchanged. When in 1914 coloured leaders complained of conditions at the Chapel Street school, described by Dr Abdurahman, leader of the African People's Organisation, as "a miserable hovel" and "a monument to the selfishness and neglect of the authorities", they were baldly informed by the Administrator of the Cape, Sir Frederick de Waal, that funds for proper buildings for the Chapel Street and Kimberley schools would be provided only after the provision of accommodation for *all* white children.³⁸ Indeed, during and after the First World War, the provision of secondary education for whites became, for the Superintendent-General of Education of the Cape, "the pivot of the whole educational question".³⁹

The early 1920s saw an intensified demand for secondary education among coloured people for the reasons suggested above. In 1920 Trafalgar School made provision for education up to Std VIII, and was declared a secondary school by the Cape School Board.⁴⁰ In that same year, the Inspector of Schools for the Cape Division, reported that sometimes there were as many as several hundred coloured families in an area clamouring for facilities beyond those provided by the mission schools, these parents being quite willing, and able, to pay for secondary education, and feeling "acutely the disabilities imposed upon their children". In Wynberg in the Cape Peninsula, for example, insistent requests were made by "a large and respectable class of Coloured people" for the education of their children, whilst there were similar requests also from Port Elizabeth and, by the mid-twenties, even from Namaqualand. In 1925 the Paterson Secondary School was founded in Port Elizabeth, and, in the same year, Trafalgar was recognised as a fully-fledged high school, the first for coloured pupils in the Cape. Until 1933 it was the *only* coloured school offering secondary education to Senior Certificate (S.C.) level.⁴¹

³⁸ Lewis, p.69; Adhikari, p.29; Maurice, pp.411, 413.

³⁹ Maurice, p.414.

⁴⁰ S.V.Jacobs, "The Development of Post-Primary Education for the Coloured Child in the Cape Province from 1900 onward" (Unpublished B.Ed.dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1946), p.10.

⁴¹ Maurice, pp.416, 424-425; Jacobs, p.9.

C. THE 1930s – CONFLICTING TENDENCIES

One effect of the Coalition and Fusion of the National and South African Parties between 1933 and 1934 was the intensifying of the segregationist policies followed by the Pact Government, a tendency compounded by the international upsurge of racism signalled by the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe. In consequence, there was a veritable flood of discriminatory measures on the part of the United Party government in the latter half of the 1930s.⁴²

These developments necessarily had a negative impact upon coloured education. Most significantly, the subsidy for coloured pupils, fixed in the mid-1920s, remained unchanged throughout the 1930s. This effectively stymied any substantial improvement in the conditions of coloured education. The late thirties saw also intensified “witch hunts” to flush light-skinned coloureds out of white schools.⁴³

Paradoxically, the introduction in 1926 by the Cape Education Department of an advanced teacher-training course, with Junior Certificate as the entrance qualification, increased the demand for secondary schooling amongst coloureds. Where these more advanced courses were offered, the church authorities were allowed to provide secondary facilities to Junior Certificate (J.C.) in departments attached to their training schools. By 1935, apart from the four undenominational secondary schools (Trafalgar, William Pescod in Kimberley, Paterson in Port Elizabeth, and Livingstone in Claremont, the latter three all having been granted high-school status from the beginning of 1934),⁴⁴ seven of the ten schools offering courses to J.C. for coloured students were in departments at church-run training colleges.⁴⁵

⁴² Lewis, pp.62-64.

⁴³ Adhikari, pp.65-66.

⁴⁴ Jacobs, p.17.

⁴⁵ Maurice, pp.418-419, 425.

However, the general poverty of the coloured people was a very real impediment to the secondary education of their children, and financial assistance was therefore a crucial issue. Something of a breakthrough was made with the decision to implement, from 1931, free education to age fifteen for all pupils, including coloureds, in undenominational schools. Church schools would be reimbursed by the state for all fees payable by pupils in the appropriate age group.⁴⁶

This decision, and others relating, for example, to the raising of entrance qualifications for teacher-training courses for coloureds (1936), might seem hard to account for in the light of the intensifying segregationism of these years. Although the latter tendency is undeniable, there is no necessary contradiction. These were years when general mass education was being introduced by the state, which was increasingly imposing its control over this crucial sector of national life. Despite the raising of the level of coloured education that this implies, separate most assuredly did not mean equal. This is made clear by the massive disparities in financing and facilities between coloured education and white education.⁴⁷

Perhaps improvements in coloured education might also be partially explained by reference to the sometimes conflicting views and initiatives of government politicians and the educational authorities. Indeed, Patterson observed as late as 1953 that the “Cape educational authorities, whilst by no means observing strict equality between the various groups, appear to be making a considerable effort to improve matters [relating to coloured primary and secondary education], in the face of perpetually inadequate funds, and indifferent or sometimes hostile European public opinion”.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.421-422.

⁴⁷ The issue of the chronically static state subsidy for coloured education in the 1920s and 1930s has been referred to above. Between 1930 and 1940, roughly five times more was spent, per capita, on white education than on coloured or Indian education. {M.Horrell, *African Education: Some Origins, and Development until 1953* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1963), p.32. }

⁴⁸ S.Patterson, *Colour and Culture in South Africa: a study of the status of the Cape Coloured People within the social structure of the Union of South Africa*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p.101.

A period of rapid expansion in the enrolment at secondary schools ensued. Between 1930 and 1936 the total number of coloured secondary pupils increased from 332 to 1 862. The decision to raise the entrance qualification for training schools to J.C. in 1936 further intensified the demand for secondary schooling. The Superintendent-General of Education reported in 1935 that “an almost unparalleled awakening” to the advantages of educating their children had developed among the coloured people. In 1937 he reported that applications for the establishment of secondary schools were coming in “from all sides”.⁴⁹

However, further progress in the provision of secondary education for coloured pupils was severely restricted by the inadequacy of the Central Government subsidy,⁵⁰ and the unavailability of suitable job opportunities for matriculated coloureds.⁵¹ On the latter point, the Wilcocks Commission of 1937 declared, unambiguously, that, “There are at the present time no particular avenues of employment open for Coloured children who are in possession of a Standard X certificate. It merely opens the door to the university for the few who have the necessary means.”⁵² The Cape Superintendent-General of Education opined, with good reason, in 1935 that the extension of secondary education for coloured pupils, especially to S.C. level, was bound up with “the larger question of the social and economic future of the Coloured people and the avenues of employment open to them”.⁵³ A leading coloured educationist, Stella Jacobs, concluded in 1946 that, “Unless conditions change for the better, nearly three-quarters of all the Coloured children reaching the earning age can look forward to nothing better than the status of unskilled or semi-skilled workers ... The economic position of the average working-class man is such that he is barely able to maintain his children in the primary school. Post-primary education is regarded as a luxury, and on account of the heavy financial demands, especially for school

⁴⁹ Maurice, pp.421-422.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.281-289, 426-428.

⁵¹ Jacobs, pp.16-17, 23-24.

⁵² *Union of South Africa: Report of the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Cape Coloured Population of the Union, U.G.54-1937*, p.193, para.934.

⁵³ Maurice, pp.425-426.

fees and examination fees, many promising pupils do not proceed to the secondary school".⁵⁴

How, then, does one account for the increasing demand for secondary education amongst coloured people? Jacobs argued that, despite economic pressures, there was a traditional commitment to higher education in this community, so that "there should be educated Coloured men and women who could assume a more enlightened leadership amongst the community, and advance its claims for equality of treatment, and equality of opportunity in every sphere of life".⁵⁵ Idealistic as this explanation may seem, it is true, as indicated above, that the coloured élite had always seen education as the key to the advancement of their community, since it was the passport to the franchise, which, it was sincerely hoped and believed, would in time result in concrete social and economic gains for the coloured people as a whole.⁵⁶ Moreover, during the first half of this century there was gradually emerging a coloured petty bourgeoisie, occupying, apart from teaching posts, those of lower-level clerks, nurses, and trade apprentices.⁵⁷ For these positions, some secondary education was required.

⁵⁴ Jacobs, pp.31, 33, 47-58. Jacobs provides a graphic description of the extremely disadvantaged economic and social position of the coloured people in the early 1940s. ("The Development of Post-Primary Education for the Coloured Child", pp.25-39.) An aggravating factor was, of course, the lack of compulsion for coloured children to attend even primary school. (Ibid., p.33.) By 1940, only 9.8% of coloured pupils were receiving "higher education", that is, above Std IV. (Adhikari, p.73, note 37.)

⁵⁵ Jacobs, pp.25-26.

⁵⁶ Adhikari, pp.16-17.

⁵⁷ M. Adhikari, personal communication.

4. CONCLUSION

It is thus clear that by 1940 there was a considerable demand for coloured secondary education, especially in the Western Cape, the historic heartland of the coloured people.⁵⁸ It was hardly surprising, therefore, that successive Catholic Bishops of Cape Town, eager to provide a specifically Catholic secondary education for coloured youth, exerted themselves, from at least the latter half of the 1920s, for the establishment of secondary church schools for coloureds in the Peninsula and its environs.⁵⁹

Thus it was that, after a long and determined campaign, led by Francis Hennemann, Catholic Bishop of Cape Town, St Columba's High School was opened on 31 January 1941 as the first secondary school in the Athlone area and the only school for coloured boys to be run by the Christian Brothers.⁶⁰

Revealing, in the light of what has been argued above about the dualism of the Catholic Church in South Africa, is Bishop Hennemann's speech at the formal opening of the school on 9 February 1941. On that occasion, he declared, "with feeling", that the "returns" would not be financial, "but would consist of the good done among the boys, the

⁵⁸ The 1936 census revealed that there were a total of 65 787 coloured youths between 15 and 19 years of age in the Cape. Of these, only 1 225 were receiving secondary education, less than 2 %. (Jacobs, p.24.) Jacobs' elimination tables show also that about 4.5% of coloured children entering Sub A in 1933 reached Std 8 in 1942 and only 7/10 of 1% reached Std 10 in 1944; for whites the figures were about 40% reaching Std 8 in 1942 and about 20% reaching Std 10 in 1944. (Ibid., pp.21-23.)

⁵⁹ Thus, for example: "... schools for the Coloured (non-Europeans) are certain to be fruitful in conversions both of the boys and ultimately their parents. The greater the delay, the graver will be the actual and potential loss of souls to the Church and all the more formidable will be their conversion in the future". (Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town, Christian Brothers file: Bishop Bernard O'Riley to Superior-General of the Christian Brothers of Ireland, 9 February 1926.) It is interesting to note, too, Bishop Hennemann's growing sense of urgency, and even frustration, at the delay in the founding of a Catholic secondary school for coloured boys in Athlone, which he hoped would pre-empt the opening of a proposed state school at Athlone (later to be Athlone High School, founded in 1947). Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town, Christian Brothers file: F.X.Hennemann to Assistant to Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 26 August 1935; F.X.Hennemann to Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 17 February 1939; F.X.Hennemann to Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 28 February 1940.

⁶⁰ Athlone House Annals, 31 January 1941.

turning out year by year of young men, well educated and imbued with Christian ideals, who, *among their own people*, might set an example and give a vigorous lead”.⁶¹ [My emphasis.] The *Southern Cross*, the official Catholic newspaper, expressed the hope that “this modest beginning [might] mark a new cultural era for the non-European”, and the faith that the Christian Brothers would effect “a general uplifting and elevating of character of the boys who come under their influence”, who would surely emerge as “strong champions of their people [and] loyal citizens of the State”.⁶² The paternalistic note of these sentiments is palpable, as is the acceptance of segregation as the natural order of things.

The next chapter will examine certain aspects of the peculiar ethos or “ideology” which characterised St Columba's High School from its founding.

⁶¹ Quoted in *The Christian Brothers' Educational Record*, 1941, pp.282-284; see also Athlone House Annals, 9 February 1941.

⁶² Quoted in *The Christian Brothers' Educational Record*, 1941, p.282.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUNDING IDEOLOGY OF ST COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL, 1941-c.1955

The term "ideology" is used here, in its most general and neutral sense, to mean the particular set of assumptions, patterns of thought, and value-systems that are characteristic of all individuals, groups, and sections of society.¹ Leatt et al define ideology, at this level, as "an organic system of ideas (usually centred on a basic value) that interprets reality from one specific perspective".² In this sense, a specific religion or religious world-view can be regarded as an ideology. In the present context, the term is used to refer to the world-view of the Christian Brothers' Congregation as practised at St Columba's High School for the first fifty years of its existence. This is not to suggest, of course, that this world-view was not subject to change and adaptation over this period. Indeed, the tracing of such change is an important part of this study.

The Christian Brothers' world-view is, of course, essentially religious, and that implies a certain set of values, which have been referred to in Chapter One.³ But there are other values, usually less explicitly articulated, "a hidden curriculum", which the conduct of Christian Brothers' schools has revealed.⁴ Certain aspects of the latter, as manifested at St Columba's High School in its earliest period from 1941 to the early 1950s, will be pursued below, specifically those which were to come under increasing challenge from the 1970s.

¹ J. Leatt, T. Kneifel, & K. Nürnberger (eds), *Contending Ideologies in South Africa* (Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Philip, 1986), p.273.

² *Ibid.*, p.281.

³ See p.12.

⁴ On the concept of the "hidden curriculum", see, for example, P. Christie, *The Right to Learn: the*

What underlay the ethos of St Columba's High School was the fact that it was regarded by its founders as a "mission school".⁵ This carried with it "colonialist" assumptions of superiority, of having a monopoly on the truth, of performing a service for the "poor coloureds" in their charge by sharing this truth. Such attitudes underlay the "hidden curriculum" of St Columba's: the rigidly authoritarian mode of governance, the insistence on absolute obedience from the boys (and their parents), the dishing out of sometimes harsh (usually physical) punishment to those who had the temerity to disobey (or disagree), the exclusion of all political education as inappropriate to an underdeveloped and subordinate people.⁶ Such attitudes were, doubtless, common amongst missionaries,⁷ and the Christian Brothers, as an order, were not exceptional in this regard. In fairness, however, it must be said that their autocracy has generally been characterised as benevolent, at least with hindsight, by those who were subjected to it.⁸

St Columba's High School was set up to provide a secondary Catholic education for those coloured Catholic boys who were felt to be equal to it, rather than allowing them to fall prey to the evils of non-denominational education, and - the ultimate evil - lapsing from the faith. It was hoped that they would be exemplars of their faith within their community. Very specifically, it was hoped also that it would produce coloured priests and religious⁹ to serve the *coloured* Catholic community.¹⁰ This aim shows the extent to which the

struggle for education in South Africa (Johannesburg: SACHED/Ravan, 2nd ed., 1991), pp.137-170.

⁵ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: J.C.O'Farrell (one of the founders of St Columba's), "St Columba's Mission School, Athlone, Cape, (For Coloured Boys)", undated.

⁶ See Interview No 4 with Vincent Kolbe, *passim*.

⁷ See, for example, P.Christie, *The Right to Learn: the struggle for education in South Africa*, pp.67-70, 78-84.

⁸ This is an impression conveyed overwhelmingly by the interviews conducted with old boys.

⁹ As used by Catholics, the term "religious" refers to priests, religious brothers, and nuns – all those who have taken religious vows.

¹⁰ Christie points out that this was a standard aim at mission schools. (P.Christie, *The Right to Learn*, p.72.) As early as 1926, The Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, Bernard O'Riley, in writing to the Superior-General of the Christian Brothers and requesting the opening of two schools in Cape Town, one for whites and one for coloureds, expressed the hope that the latter undertaking "would then facilitate [religious] vocations". (Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town, Christian Brothers file: B.O'Riley to Superior General, Christian Brothers of Ireland, 9 February 1926.)

Catholic Church of the time accepted segregation as the natural order of things.¹¹

1. GOVERNANCE

The central dynamic of the organisation of Christian Brothers' education has always been commitment to the hierarchical principle. Indeed, the Catholic Church itself has traditionally been organised as a strict hierarchy, with the Pope at the apex, the Bishops - his personal appointees - at the next tier, followed by priests and religious, with the laity at the bottom.

Religious orders, like the Christian Brothers' Congregation, are also organised and governed in a strictly hierarchical way. All members of the Congregation are subject, ultimately, to the Pope, their highest authority. The supreme internal authority is exercised by the Superior General, elected by the General Chapter, which meets periodically and consists of delegates from each Province (that is, region of activity). He acts in consultation with four Assistants, similarly elected. Together they form the General Council. Each Province is similarly governed by a Provincial Council, consisting of a Provincial Superior (more recently styled "Province Leader") and four Consultors, all appointed by the General Council (although *nominees* for these positions are elected by the Brothers of the Province). The Provincial Councils appoint the Principals and staffs of the schools, and the Superiors of the houses, of their Provinces, and supervise and inspect these schools and houses. All Christian Brothers take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to their superiors.¹²

Later, during the early 1960s, both a minor seminary for coloured aspirants to the priesthood, on land adjoining the school, and a Juniorate, at St Columba's, for coloured aspirants to the Christian Brotherhood, were opened.

¹¹ Interview No 4 with Vincent Kolbe. Kolbe remembered how, in the 1940s and 1950s, coloured Catholics would be expected to sit, separately, at the back of the church, and how separate parish youth clubs were maintained for white and coloured youth.

¹² J.C. O'Neill, "The Historical Development and Organization of Christian Brothers' Education in South Africa" (Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1971), pp.69-72, 93-97.

The Christian Brothers organised their schools in a similarly hierarchical way. The Principal, as appointed by the Provincial and his Council, was traditionally an autocrat, answerable only to that Council. He issued edicts to his staff, both religious and lay, who, in turn, exercised, at least in theory, an absolute authority over students. Prefects - senior students with certain disciplinary functions - were appointed by the Principal and staff to help them in the exercise of this authority. "Good discipline", meaning the enforcement of strict obedience to one's superiors in the hierarchy, was thus a traditional virtue of Christian Brothers' schools around the world.¹³

The position of the Principal was clearly of central importance in the day-to-day management of the school. No doubt, this was true of most schools, but applied with added force to a private school where the Principal combined the roles of hirer and firer of lay staff, business manager, and administrator of educational programmes. It applied with even greater force to a private school run by a religious order, such as the Christian Brothers, with a tradition of hierarchical control and strict obedience to one's superiors. The Principal was usually both Head of the school and Superior of the attached Brothers' house.

In the early years of St Columba's there were very few lay staff members to present any serious challenge to the traditional Christian Brothers' mode of control of the school.¹⁴ Indeed, most pre-Vatican II¹⁵ Catholics, raised in the hierarchical tradition, and with an almost superstitious veneration of priests and religious, would have been loth to do so.

¹³ L.B. Angus, *Continuity and Change in Catholic Schooling: an ethnology of a Christian Brothers' College in Australian society* (London, New York, & Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1988), pp.21-24.

¹⁴ Interview No 1 with Henry Burggraaff, pp.10-11.

¹⁵ The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church was held between October 1962 and December 1965, and effected significant changes in the philosophy of the Church, most notably, in a greater openness to dialogue with other Christian churches and other faiths, a new concern for the problems of lay people living in the modern world, and a more explicit commitment to social justice.

This situation would change significantly, especially from the 1970s, with the marked increase in the number and proportion of lay staff employed - some not Catholic at all.¹⁶

2. DISCIPLINE AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

The traditional attitude of the Christian Brothers to discipline, as indicated above, was strictly hierarchical and authoritarian. The Principal in his office, the teacher in his or her classroom, were effective autocrats, answerable only to higher authority. The only involvement of students in disciplinary procedures was via the staff-appointed prefects, who, it was hoped, would help teachers to police the school and ensure adherence to school rules, both on and off the premises.¹⁷

St Columba's became renowned for its very strict discipline from the very beginning. Sanctions against offenders traditionally took a physical form, corporal punishment, usually administered with a leather strap or cane. Walter van der Byl, for example, a pupil at the school in the very early years (1942-1943), recalled:

*If we did anything wrong we got the strap. ... It was a leather strap and Br Hayes had it along his side, and if you did anything wrong, he turned around and drew the strap almost like a gun. ... Br O'Farrell had the habit of punching you on the chest.*¹⁸

Henry Jacobs, a pupil at the school in the early 1950s, concurred:

¹⁶ See Addendum G, "Lay Staff as Percentage of Teaching Staff, 1965-1990".

¹⁷ The prefect system is ancient, having originated in English universities and public schools in the Middle Ages. Dr Arnold, the renowned Headmaster of Rugby (1828-1842) is credited with having "perfected" the system as a disciplinary mechanism and a school of moral leadership. One writer, E.C.Mack, described the great need of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century for "manly, well-adjusted, honourable boys moulded into unthinking conformity and imbued with a passionate idealising loyalty towards authority, whether school or nation". {Quoted in P.Randall, *Little England on the Veld: the English Private School System in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982), p.42. See also pp.20-21, 30-31.} Would it be too fanciful to regard one of the aims of the Prefect System at Catholic schools as the turning out of just such boys, with the substitution of "Church" for "nation"?

¹⁸ Interview No 0007 with Walter van der Byl, p.3.

There was only one way of dealing with you if you misbehaved ... and that's either on your backside with a strap or across the hands.¹⁹

The strap became, indeed, a pedagogical aid. Jacobs recalled the methods of his English teacher, Br Horan:

If you did not know your verse of poetry, you automatically came to the front and you were whacked. ... That's why I still remember a few pieces of verse today. It was knocked into me.²⁰

Expulsion, the ultimate sanction, was a very real option at St Columba's, as a private school not subject to Departmental regulations in this regard. Paul Faure, for example, recalled: "You either abided by the [disciplinary] system, or you got out".²¹ The calling in of parents, who would have the Riot Act read to them regarding the behaviour of their errant sons, usually preceded so drastic a step as expulsion. Parents, faced with such an ultimatum and holding the Brothers in awe, would not be slow to press their sons into conformity with the norms of St Columba's. The dire threat of expulsion held over the heads of transgressors and their parents was a Damoclean sword indeed, carrying with it as consequences both a social (and quasi-religious) stigma, similar in kind if not degree to excommunication, and a significant setback to their socio-economic aspirations.

What underlay the commitment to so strict a disciplinary style? Strict discipline, including corporal punishment, were, of course, norms of the day in most schools until very recently (the latter half of the 1980s). However, Catholic schools, including Christian Brothers' schools, were especially noted for their strictness. Paul Faure, for example, recalls that, although not a Catholic, he was sent to St Columba's because his grandmother judged it would cure him of his mischievousness.²² Many old boys testify similarly.

¹⁹ Interview No 0004 with Henry Jacobs, p.3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²¹ Interview No 0003 with Paul Faure, p.5.

²² Interview No 0006 with Paul Faure, p.2.

In general terms, Catholics subscribed to the Pauline view that self-discipline is a prerequisite for the truly Christian life. More specifically, the fact that the Christian Brothers were themselves subject to a strict discipline, having taken the vow of obedience to their superiors, no doubt predisposed them to impose such a discipline upon their pupil charges, if not, indeed, the lay staff employed by them. Thirdly, the Christian Brothers, from their beginnings in the Ireland of the Penal Laws, educated their predominantly Catholic pupils for social mobility. This required adherence to bourgeois notions of courtesy and correctness, which had to be inculcated, by coercion if necessary, in working-class youth.²³ One may speculate, further, that the colonialist assumptions of superiority of missionaries such as the Christian Brothers in a situation such as that at St Columba's might predispose them to harsher treatment of the sons of an underdeveloped people.

In the light of the hierarchical principle, student representation, in the true sense, was never regarded as a *right* at St Columba's in the period under examination in this study. Only in extraordinary circumstances, as will emerge, was it temporarily tolerated (in 1985). One device that was used was to claim that prefects were student representatives. However, the "election" of prefects by senior students was subject to staff vetting, the staff reserving the right of veto and the right to appoint even those without electoral support. Moreover, as indicated above, the primary function of prefects was to reinforce the discipline of the school. They, therefore, in general, enjoyed little credibility as student representatives.

²³ L.B.Angus, *Continuity and Change in Catholic Schooling*, pp.21-24, 89-92. See also the Christian Brothers' manual, *Courtesy for Boys and Girls* (Dublin: M.H.Gill & Sons, 1962). In its early years, especially, St Columba's drew its pupils, largely, from poor to very poor communities. (Personal communication, Br J.C.O'Farrell, Staff, 1941-1958. See also the New Enrolment charts (Addenda B-D).

3. POLITICS AND THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

The political position of the Christian Brothers is an interesting one in that, at St Columba's, they were involved in the education of an oppressed group within South African society, whilst themselves being, willy-nilly, members of the privileged group.

Of course, the question of politics in the classroom raises the more fundamental one of Church-State relations, especially vexed in the South African context. Until the late nineteenth century, the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the world was that it was an evil that the Christian was, as far as possible, to hold at a distance - the so-called "ghetto mentality" for which Catholics were well known. The population of the world was divided into two rigid categories: Catholics and non-Catholics, and contact with the latter was to be avoided as far as possible in case religious contamination should occur.²⁴

With Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* (1891), however, the Church began to take greater cognisance of the social problems of the world, especially those arising from the relationship between capital and labour in a modern industrial economy, and implicitly recognised the duty of Christians to strive for social justice. However, the same pontiff had earlier in the encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1885) laid down the principle that the Church was not committed to any particular form of government, provided that justice is safeguarded. This suggests the ambivalence of the Church in its attitude towards the world at large. On the one hand, the Christian must be concerned with social questions; on the other, the Church must not assume a politically partisan position.²⁵

In South Africa, the position of the Church with regard to politics was further complicated

²⁴ Confirmed by personal experience as a pupil in Catholic schools.

²⁵ G. Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid: the response of the Catholic Church in South Africa to the first decade of Nationalist Party rule, 1948-1957* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1989), pp.6-10; D.Hurley, "Catholic Social Teaching and Ideology", in A.Prior (ed.), *Catholics in Apartheid Society* (Cape Town & London: David Philip, 1982), pp.22-26.

by the traditional “anti-romanism” of the dominant Calvinist churches, most notably the various Dutch Reformed churches. Catholicism was seen as foreign, internationalist, and multi-racial, in contrast to the indigenous, nationalist, and ultimately racially exclusive nature of the Dutch Reformed churches. It was thus barely tolerated, being viewed with loathing and suspicion by these churches as the “Roman peril” (*die Roomse gevaar*).²⁶

Hence, it is not surprising that, for many years, the Catholic Church in South Africa, trod warily in its dealings with the state, bearing in mind especially its dependence on foreign clergy, who could simply be denied access to the country if the state saw fit. This dependence certainly applied to the Christian Brothers, who relied heavily on immigrant Irish Brothers for the continuation of their work here. Abraham concludes thus: “In the interests of security and survival the Church adopted an essentially conciliatory or conservative strategy in her relations with the government. She went out of her way to find common cause with the Nationalists [after May 1948] and to counter any assumption of disloyalty to South Africa by means of a policy of moderation and negotiation”.²⁷

Taken together, the Church’s traditional aloofness from the world and the peculiar sensitivity of its position in South Africa led its official representatives to adopt a circumspect pose towards politics. This attitude was reflected in its schools, where politics was kept out of the classroom, and history, as a subject, was conservatively taught, in strict concurrence with the standard, settler-orientated textbooks. Whilst such attitudes were, no doubt, common to the schools of other denominations, the peculiar delicacy of the position of the Catholic Church in South Africa, in view of the especial vehemence with which it was regarded by the dominant Dutch Reformed Churches, and its substantial dependence upon foreign clergy, meant that Catholic schools were especially cautious in the area of political education and the teaching of history.

²⁶ J.W. de Gruchy, “Catholics in a Calvinist Country”, in A.Prior, *Catholics in Apartheid Society*, pp.67- 82.

²⁷ G.Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid*, p.26. See also A.Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*:

A further consideration, as suggested above, was the attitude of superiority of white religious, including the Christian Brothers, towards the coloured people²⁸. They were regarded paternalistically as “the poor coloureds”, in need of spiritual and cultural upliftment, not nearly equal in all respects to white “Europeans”.²⁹ This was unambiguously expressed in the 1952 *Statement on Race Relations* of the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), in essence a *rejection* of that policy: “Justice demands that non-Europeans be permitted to evolve gradually towards a full participation in the political, economic and cultural life of the country. This evolution cannot come about without earnest endeavours on the part of non-Europeans to prepare themselves for the duties connected with the rights they hope to enjoy”.³⁰ But, it was doubtless felt that the “poor coloureds” were not yet ready for *political* education, not yet ready to take an active role in the achievement of their own liberation. Henry Jacobs poignantly recalled:

*St Columba's - I'm talking about my era - we were not politically conscious. We were not socially or community conscious. We were a bunch of innocent boys, not really that much aware of the outside world. We came here, we enjoyed the lessons the Brothers gave us, we enjoyed our soccer and athletics, we enjoyed our annual concerts and perhaps a bazaar. But that was perhaps the extent of our horizon. ... We were not really aware of the developments outside that. We had schools, for instance like Trafalgar and Livingstone; now those boys at that time, there was a political conscience bred into them then already, which we did not experience here. So the result was that there were never any cries from us, never any protest from us, never any questions. Whatever obtained we accepted. We just went about innocent and merrily.*³¹

the story of the rise and fall of apartheid (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1991), pp.153-161.

²⁸ See p.27.

²⁹ Br J.C.O’Farrell, a co-founder of St Columba’s and its second principal (from 1947), wrote thus: “... on 31st January 1941 two Brothers began the grand work among the poor coloureds ... great and deserving work.” Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: “St Columba’s Mission School, Athlone, Cape, (For Coloured Boys)”, undated.

Bishop Hennemann had written in like vein to the Mayor of Cape Town: “As the City of Capetown is most interested in promoting the education of Coloured youth, *in order to make them self-respecting, law-abiding and good citizens ...*” [My emphasis.] Archives of the Archdiocese of Cape Town, Christian Brothers file: F.X.Hennemann to Mayor of Cape Town, 2 March 1937.

³⁰ “1952: SACBC Statement on Race Relations” in A.Prior (ed.), *Catholics in Apartheid Society*, p.169.

³¹ Interview with Henry Jacobs, p.10. That there was indeed political education at secondary schools such as Trafalgar, Livingstone, Harold Cressy, and South Peninsula is borne out by recent research on the influence of the Non-European Unity Movement in schools. See L.Chisholm, “Education, Politics, and Organisation: the educational traditions and legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement,

From its inception, then, St Columba's High School was characterised, in accordance with the hierarchical principle, by an autocratic style of governance and a fierce discipline, enforced largely by means of corporal punishment and the moral authority of the religious; also by the notable omission of any political education - except that enshrined by the authorities in official textbooks and syllabi - a reflection, in part, of the paternalistic attitude adopted towards the "poor coloureds" by the Christian Brothers of Ireland.³²

These attitudes were to be increasingly challenged, both by students and lay staff, under the intensifying pressure of the successive political crises of 1976, 1980, and 1985. Such challenges to the "official ideology" of St Columba's provide the foci of the succeeding chapters.

1943-1986", *Transformation*, 15, 1991, pp.1-24, as well as B.Nasson, "The Unity Movement Tradition: its legacy in historical consciousness", in J.Brown et al (eds), *History from South Africa: alternative visions and practices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp.144-164.

³² One old boy of St Columba's (Vincent Kolbe, 1948-1949) recalled that another (Henry Jacobs, 1951-1954) had believed that he was *Irish*, because of the Brothers' repeated nationalistic references to Ireland (or Hibernia, as some were wont to call it)! (Interview No 4 with Vincent Kolbe, 26 June 1996.)

CHAPTER THREE

IDEOLOGY CHALLENGED – POLITICS AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION, c.1970 - 1990

It is the contention of this dissertation that certain of the key aspects of the founding ideology or “hidden curriculum” of St Columba’s High School came under significant pressure, if not indeed direct attack, from the latter half of the 1970s, specifically from the crucial year of 1976. Prominent among these aspects are those which have been singled out in the previous chapter: official political stance and attitude to involvement in politics, the practice of discipline, and the style of governance. This chapter and succeeding chapters will examine, in some detail, how each of these came under strain during the period from 1976 to 1990 (the year before the Principalship passed to a lay person and the ethos underwent some adaptation), how these pressures were accommodated, and the extent to which St Columba’s was, in consequence, changed.

1. TRADITIONAL POSITION

The bases of the political position of the Catholic Church and the Christian Brothers in South Africa have been sketched in the previous chapter.¹ Whilst it is true that the traditional Catholic position of non-engagement with the world had been qualified to some degree since the encyclical “Rerum Novarum” of Pope Leo XIII in 1891, the peculiar delicacy of its position in South Africa led the Church to adopt an even more circumspect pose than usual towards political engagement.

¹ See pp.33-35.

This delicacy was intensified, in the case of the Christian Brothers, by their dependence on immigrant Irish Brothers, and the fact that they lived in Athlone on government sufferance under a Group Areas permit.² Hence, their “fiercely neutral” political position and their single-minded commitment to education as narrowly conceived (education for spiritual and social “upliftment”).³ Robert van Niekerk (student, 1981-1986) expressed it thus:

On the whole, the Brothers were largely conservative. They were steeped in the Catholic tradition ... which basically meant that you're based to work among the poor, and you uplift the poor through education and through religion ... and that the work ethic ... excluded any overt activities which were against the establishment and also the state.⁴

One must not, of course, forget the essentially paternalistic attitude of the Christian Brothers towards the coloured people. Harold Manus (student, 1972-1976) recalled, without irony, that, “We were of the opinion that they were serious and sincere in wanting to uplift and upgrade a so-called lesser community”.⁵ This accords well with the traditional preoccupation of the Christian Brothers throughout the world with education for social mobility, which derives directly from the aims of the founder, Edmund Rice, to educate the needy Irish Catholic boys of the turn of the nineteenth century, in the interests not only of their spiritual, but also their material, advancement.⁶

Van Niekerk described this aim thus:

The framework within which the school was located ... was this Catholic ethic - the school was a place where you learnt, where you were educated, where you

² See Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file, “Memorandum regarding Christian Brothers at Athlone”, relating to application for exemption from provisions of Group Areas Act, undated; and Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone House Annals, Archbishop of Cape Town to Principal, St Columba's High School, 29 March 1961, regarding obtaining of Group Areas permit for two years.

³ Interview No 0021 with Glen van Harte, pp.1-2.

⁴ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.1.

⁵ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.4.

⁶ L.B.Angus, *Continuity and Change in Catholic Schooling: an ethnography of a Christian Brothers' College in Australian Society* (London: The Falmer Press, 1988), pp.10-12.

*went on to greater things in life ... and ... it was not a place where you ... questioned the establishment, where you questioned the state ...*⁷

A reflection of the Christian Brothers' political position, as outlined above, was the way in which history was taught - straight from the settler-orientated textbooks, without any reference to current political and community struggles.⁸ Patrick O'Connell (staff, 1958-1978) remembered too the stultifying emphasis on a farrago of facts rote-learned "like a mantra".⁹

This approach both to content and methodology was, perhaps, the norm in most schools at the time, but that there were notable exceptions to this rule, at least as far as content is concerned, has been shown by recent research done on Non-European Unity Movement-influenced coloured schools in the Cape Peninsula like Trafalgar, Livingstone, Harold Cressy, and South Peninsula.¹⁰ Politics and current affairs were rarely discussed at St Columba's, because "when you talk about current affairs, then you become politically inclined, which at that point we were not [considered] ready for".¹¹ Glen van Harte (student, 1973-1977) remembered how a coloured teacher, Mr Groener, dealt with mild criticism of apartheid in the mid-1970s. He asked the "offending" students to come outside the classroom and mumbled: "Look, I agree with what you say, but ... not in my class!" In Groener's defence, it must be remembered that teachers at the school were

⁷ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.1-2.

⁸ Interview No 0022 with Giovanni Perez, p.2; Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, pp.10, 5-6.

⁹ Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell, 3 July 1996.

¹⁰ See L.Chisholm, "Education, Politics, and Organisation: the educational traditions and legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-1986", *Transformation*, 15, 1991, pp.1-24. Chisholm comments thus: "Inside the classroom [of Unity-Movement schools in the period 1963-1976], teachers were encouraged ... to make their subject relevant to South African realities. Special emphasis was given to the debunking of racial myths and stereotypes dominant in South African society. ... As they saw it, they were less concerned to teach a particular Unity Movement conception of things, than to develop critical and thinking students". (Ibid., p.12) See also B.Nasson, "The Unity Movement Tradition: its legacy in historical consciousness", in J.Brown et al (eds), *History from South Africa: alternative visions and practices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp.144-164.

¹¹ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.11.

employed and paid by the Christian Brothers, and, from an understandable sense of self-interest, did not “want to rock the boat too much”.¹²

In retrospect, van Harte believed that the school failed students in terms of developing their political awareness:

*We should have been made more conscious of the world outside the school, of the evils of apartheid. We were quite closeted at the school. ... We weren't conscientised. ... That was never part of the way the school saw itself. ... It was a comfortable haven for us to be in. We felt safe, we felt comfortable. You were never confronted with the cruel realities of the world, as students were in the state schools at the time.*¹³

What is striking about this judgement is how closely it parallels that of Henry Jacobs quoted at the end of the previous chapter about a period twenty years before.¹⁴ Until 1976 one has a strong sense of stasis at St Columba's in a number of key areas - notably “official” political position, discipline, governance.

2. 1976 : REBELLION

In August 1976 the nationwide protests and demonstrations that had been sparked off by the Soweto Uprising beginning in mid-June 1976 spread to coloured schools in the Western Cape. Police reacted to demonstrations within school grounds by invading the premises, baton-charging students, and dispersing them with teargas, which, in turn, led to violent reprisals from students and others.¹⁵

The official policy at St Columba's was “classes as usual”. Thus, pressure built up on her students to show solidarity, including threats by students from neighbouring schools to

¹² Interview No 0021 with Glen van Harte, pp.7-8.

¹³ Ibid., pp.17-18.

¹⁴ See p.35.

¹⁵ E.van Heyningen, H.Phillips, & D.Killick, “The Cape of Storms Again: an account of the unrest in the Cape Peninsula, August to September 1976”, History Workshop, Paper 4 (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Centre for Extra-mural Studies, 1977), pp.15-19, 22, 38.

march on St Columba's. On 30 August placard demonstrations did take place on the campus, with the Principal's sanction. These continued the next day, with the addition of a march on the premises.¹⁶ Finally, on 1 September, a day on which a planned rally of coloured students at Alexander Sinton High School in Thornton Road, Athlone, was met by police action,¹⁷ students at St Columba's decided to march off the campus in order to join the rally (roughly a kilometre away), but were dispersed by the police en route. Harold Trupos, a white teacher who on, Br Madden's request, had accompanied the fewer than one hundred students who marched, more out of concern for their physical safety than as a gesture of solidarity with their cause, was beaten about the head and body by policemen armed with truncheons, whilst a boy was shot in the leg.¹⁸ Nevertheless, some St Columba's students did manage to reach the rally and participate therein.¹⁹

Harold Manus described graphically the rebellion of 1976:

In June, July [more correctly, August 1976] we were in the school grounds and we started to hear gunshots. ... Casspirs were riding up these roads. The army was out here and we were in the classes, and we could not handle this thing. Eventually when it got to break, myself and a guy called Hilary Evans ... decided to call the "manne" together and tell them what's happening out there. ... For the first time we had now to confront the Brothers. We did not know how to do it. We battled with that because, after all, these are men who sacrificed [a great deal for us]. We can't afford to just go against their laws and their principles. So we struggled during that breaktime ... but we needed to find an expression. ... We said to them, "Look, we are going to march".²⁰

Manus explained the motives of the march thus:

We needed to demonstrate that we are part of this whole struggle, we have a statement to make, and we have a contribution ... We wanted to let the community know: "Guys, I know you see us as an élitist school, always never involved, but we are involved. Here we are, we're making our statement today."²¹

¹⁶ Athlone House Annals, 30-31 August 1976.

¹⁷ E. van Heyningen et al, "The Cape of Storms Again", pp.18-19.

¹⁸ Athlone House Annals, 1 September 1976; Interview No 12 with Harold Trupos; Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.3.

¹⁹ Interview No 5 with Harold Manus; Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez.

²⁰ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, pp.8-9.

²¹ Interview No 5 with Harold Manus.

Given the context, this was a painful and difficult decision:

We had this hang of a tradition that we had to break with, and that was the painful part for us, because we really didn't want to upset the Brothers, and we also didn't know how our parents will react, because, after all, they are the ones paying ...²²

But, in the end, to Manus and other student leaders only one decision was possible:

"Look, we can't just stand here and march. We're making a statement to ourselves. The time has come to make a statement to everybody." We are now about to move out ... and, I promise you, to a roar of approval. ... We had the whole school behind us.²³

Patrick O'Connell reported that the lay staff too had "mobilised". In response to Br Madden's fevered, and oft-repeated, query, "What are we going to do?" he responded thus:

We have to go with the masses. We can't sit here in isolation. It's impossible.²⁴

But, like Manus, he recalled the difficulty (and danger) of reaching such a decision:

It wasn't easy for us just to go on a march. We were in a Brothers' school, and we were very much under the Brothers' power.²⁵

In the end, only two teachers accompanied the march, Harold Trupos and Patrick O'Connell himself, O'Connell apparently returning to the school before the march was over.²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. Perhaps Manus's memory misleads him here: other evidence suggests that no more than a hundred (roughly one-third) of the boys marched off the premises. (For example, see Interview No 12 with Harold Trupos).

²⁴ Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.3.

Br Madden, then Principal, had delivered an impassioned speech in an effort to restrain students. After recalling the persecution of the Irish, including the fathers of some of the Christian Brothers by the notorious “Black and Tans”,²⁷ he told the students that very little good could come of what they were going to attempt to do, “that the only thing that we could do was to get a good education and to fight the system with a good education ... We must get a good education and we can fight from within the system and [then] break out”. But his mixture of motives is revealed by what followed:

And then he proceeded to tell us about how, ... if we went on the march, that the school would close because they might lose their licence or their permit ... and they would have to move out of here. That was said with tears coming out of his eyes. It was terrible. ²⁸

Br Madden’s own (recent) account tended to confirm this version. He acknowledged that the Brothers “as White people” lived in Athlone by “special concession” (which could be summarily withdrawn). He maintained, moreover, that the Brothers were being “watched” and that their phone was being tapped. He recalled the visit of a “private detective” (presumably, a security policeman), who demanded details of his “passport, nationality, etc.” He asserted his overriding commitment to education, and expressed his disdain for those who, in positions of relative power and influence, “used” young people to achieve “freedom for them[selves]”. He believed they should have had “the guts to say: ‘Are you youngsters prepared to sacrifice education or put it off for a few years in order to give freedom to our people? We will fight with you, not use you. We will sacrifice our jobs and salaries if you sacrifice your education for such a cause.’ ”

Whilst acknowledging the similarity, as oppressed peoples, between the situations of the Irish under the British, and the blacks of South Africa under the apartheid régime, Br Madden maintained that it was through education (Edmund Rice), and the (Pioneer) movement for alcoholic abstinence, that the Irish people were “reclaimed”. He had always been “ ‘against the [apartheid] Government’ and was not unhappy with

²⁷ Ibid., p.2. The “Black and Tans” were notoriously ruthless British auxiliary policemen in Ireland in 1920-1921.

demonstrations. But in this way [he] was unhappy – there was danger to life and the pupils were missing out on education”.²⁹

Despite Br Madden’s impassioned plea, students decided to march off the premises.

Manus remembered:

*It was the first time ever that we broke away from the established way of doing things. ... What we saw ... started to make us realise that there’s no ways we can be indifferent to what is happening out there. ... We were not a special school ... We were part of that same society. And that’s where the whole political game started for us, and from there many other programmes developed.*³⁰

Glen van Harte, one of the students who went on the march, reflected thus:

*That march was important, because to get to a point where you decide to go on a march at a school that never does anything [political] ... is a momentous occasion. Against all odds, hey! Against the odds of the Principal, against the odds of the Brothers, against all those odds. You actually define for the first time the authority of the school ... For the first time ... we said, “To hell with them”. ... That was empowering. ... For the first time in this school there was an outright defiance of the Principal and the teachers. ... For me that’s what ‘76 did at this school. It’s not a major thing in the life of the country. But in the life of the people at the school it was crucially important ...*³¹

Giovanni Perez, then a Std 6 student, remembered that Br Madden’s public ridiculing of the leaders of the march, at a subsequent assembly, rebounded, resulting in “immense resentment” against him amongst students.³²

Manus saw a significance also in terms of the community’s changed perception of St Columba’s:

²⁸ Interview No 0021 with Glen van Harte, p.3.

²⁹ Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, pp.1, 2, 4.

³⁰ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.9.

³¹ Interview No 0021 with Glen van Harte, pp.9-10.

³² Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez. Br Madden, on the other hand, remembers no disrespect towards him, nor “bad or racial remarks” directed at him. (Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.3) In contradiction, perhaps, he remembers Hilary Evans saying to him, “We like you and the Brothers but you are still White men”. (Ibid., p.4.)

We literally saved the school. ... The students were prepared to make [a] statement on behalf of the school. ... "We are prepared to fight [the struggle] with you." ... We were seen too long as an élitist school that was in the area but not of the area.³³

O'Connell concurred:

It focused attention on St Columba's as being one of the schools that was a part of the struggle.³⁴

For the rest of the third term, when there was school, alternative activities, in which students "drove the process" of their own political enlightenment, occurred alongside the formal programme.³⁵

In the macrocosm of South African politics and society, this rebellion was, perhaps, of little consequence, but in the life of St Columba's High School it was of considerable significance. It represented an unequivocal challenge to the ideology of the Christian Brothers. It effectively made the statement that the moral authority of the Brothers was limited, that there were matters which concerned the community of which the students formed part so urgently and so intimately that the Brothers might not pronounce thereon. It proclaimed that there were social and political imperatives so powerful that the authority and the discipline imposed by the school must be defied. Although, in many respects, things did return to "normal" within weeks, St Columba's, and, specifically, the authority of the Christian Brothers, would never be quite the same again.

³³ Interview No 5 with Harold Manus.

³⁴ Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell. With hindsight, even Br Madden agreed: "If the pupils did not take part it would be looked upon as our pupils [regarding themselves as] being superior to the others because they were in a Private school. They would be ostracised and cut off from the community". (Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.3.)

³⁵ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.11; Interview No 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, p.10.

3. 1980 : A TRUCE IN THE STRUGGLE

The political awakening of St Columba's after the 1976 rebellion is reflected in the fact that the school was involved from start to finish in the 1980 schools boycott in coloured and African schools in the Western Cape. The boycott began at the outset of the second school term as a protest against conditions at certain of these schools, the immediate spark being the summary dismissal of sympathetic white teachers at Crystal Senior Secondary School.³⁶ St Columba's students, through their Young Christian Students society, had established contact with students from other Cape Flats high schools, including Crystal, and were thus fully informed of the proposed boycott and its motivation. Indeed, on the very day on which the boycott of classes began, 14 April, St Columba's began awareness programmes in the last period of each school day. Later a fully-fledged boycott of classes developed.³⁷

Student leaders were fortunate in that in 1980, unlike in 1976 and, even more so, in 1985, they had the ear of a Principal largely sympathetic to their cause in the person of the Irish-born Br Tom O'Brien. A number of the other members of staff (mainly lay) were also generally supportive. Moreover, most of those who assumed the direction of the boycott were prefects, who already enjoyed the seal of official approval. They combined with representatives of each class in an "action committee".³⁸ Br O'Brien balked, however, at the introduction of a full-blown Students' Representative Council, which he saw as "overtly political". Nevertheless, he was kept well informed of the intentions of student leaders throughout.³⁹

Br O'Brien seems to have been under conflicting pressures. Giovanni Perez (Head Boy, 1980, and a prominent student leader during the boycott) had the impression that he was

³⁶ F.Moltano, *1980: Students Struggle for their Schools* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1987), pp.26-28, 33, 36, 40.

³⁷ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez; *Athlone House Annals*, 14 April 1980.

³⁸ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez; *Athlone House Annals*, 25 April 1980.

³⁹ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez.

subject to pressures from his superiors, no doubt to contain student action.⁴⁰ This would be unsurprising in view of the Christian Brothers' hierarchical structure and *modus operandi*. Indeed, Perez recalled that he was taken by Br O'Brien to see, in turn, Bishop Stephen Naidoo (himself an old boy of St Columba's) and Owen Cardinal McCann, respectively Catholic Auxiliary Bishop and Archbishop of Cape Town. Whilst Naidoo expressed support, after first establishing that students would not be "used by the communists", McCann's stance was perceived as being intimidatory.⁴¹ However, he subsequently expressed qualified support for awareness programmes, "on a weekly basis".⁴² Perhaps O'Brien was trying to secure the blessing of the local Church hierarchy as a counter-weight to pressures from within his own order to inhibit student protest.

He was subjected also to pressure from parents, and some students, for a return to classes.⁴³ At a meeting between parents and student leaders on 25 May 1980, some of the former "hurled abuse" at "troublemakers" within the student body, whilst, at the end of the meeting, in direct contradiction, other parents privately made financial contributions to the students' cause. Perez remembered, too, that the whole St Columba's community would rally round when students were felt to be under immediate threat, for example, of detention by the police.⁴⁴ Clearly, parents were not always united or consistent in their opposition to the boycott. These differences might well have reflected differing class positions, as was to be the case in 1985.

Although support for the boycott amongst students varied over time, several votes of the whole student body (taken by show of hands) appeared to indicate overwhelming backing. Awareness activities took the form of singing freedom songs, staging protest

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Athlone House Annals, 9 May 1980.

⁴³ Perez recorded the impression that although, after the boycott, most of the students "loved and adored" Br O'Brien, he was "hated by the guys who perceived that he had been too soft, and, as a result, their academic careers were in jeopardy". (Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez, 10 July 1996.)

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Athlone House Annals, 25 May 1980.

It is instructive to learn that the Brothers sheltered Giovanni Perez on the premises for some two months when the Security Police were pursuing him. Perez construed this, however, as support of "a St Columba's boy in trouble" rather than as political support. (Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez.)

theatre, and listening to guest speakers and student leaders. St Columba's students were actively involved in the direction and organisation of the boycott at large, being represented throughout on the overarching "Committee of 81", where they were responsible for finding venues (often Catholic churches and halls), "security" (which meant removing the unruly), and other behind-the-scenes activity, such as scouting exits, entrances, and escape-routes when "commercial disruption" was undertaken at the Kenilworth Centre on Saturday, 24 May 1980.⁴⁵

Perez saw the primary significance of St Columba's involvement in the 1980 boycott in bringing the school much closer to the broader Athlone community, from which it had formally been somewhat distanced, being perceived by some as "superior", élitist, "untouchable". He opined that, "If we had not boycotted, I think the school would have been burnt down", such was the mood within the community at the time. He did not believe, however, that control of the school had changed as a result of the boycott, arguing that, at any time, Br O'Brien could have cracked down and expelled the small leadership core. O'Brien was, however, a "humanist ... who saw injustice and found difficulty in being on the other side". Moreover, he had taken the precaution of securing the (admittedly qualified) support of the Catholic hierarchy in Cape Town for his line.⁴⁶

On the other hand, it could be argued that any attempt on the part of management to repress student political activity, or, indeed, expel student leaders from the school, might well have resulted in a full-blown student revolt, which would have been seen by the Brothers as nothing short of disastrous for the prospects of their continued hegemony at St Columba's.

⁴⁵ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez; Athlone House Annals, 24 May 1980; F.Molteno, 1980: *Students Struggle for their Schools*, pp.94-96.

⁴⁶ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez. See above, p.47.

It is interesting to note, however, that O'Brien did not survive for long as Principal of St Columba's. He effectively resigned in mid-1981 whilst on a holiday in Ireland. The official reason given for this was shingles, but the Athlone House Annals recorded a "nervous breakdown". Giovanni Perez reported rumours that O'Brien's "resignation" (he chose, counter to discipline, to remain in Ireland) was due to criticism from within the local Christian Brothers' establishment as to his mode of handling the boycott; he was perceived as having lost control. (Michael Curry, personal communication; Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez; Athlone House Annals, Br Finnegan's report on "School News", 1981.)

St Columba's full involvement in the 1980 schools boycott demonstrated a growing political awareness and maturity among its student leadership, as well as a realisation on the part of its management at the time that the nascent political activity of its student body had to be accommodated if some semblance of internal order and harmony was to be maintained. It did not, however, appear to change the mode of management or, significantly, the style of discipline practised at the school.⁴⁷

4. 1985 : THE STRUGGLE REJOINED

When Robert van Niekerk came to St Columba's as a Std 6 student in 1981 he did so partly because he believed it to be a "home for critical thinking".⁴⁸ This is, perhaps, an indication of how its image had changed since 1976. But in July 1984 Br Barry Lynch, an "old school", politically conservative Christian Brother, became Principal of St Columba's.⁴⁹ When Br O'Brien had left St Columba's in mid-1981, he had been replaced, permanently, at the beginning of 1982 by Br Joe Bell, who proved an avuncular, if somewhat ineffectual, Principal.⁵⁰ Br Lynch had stood in for him in the second half of 1984 whilst he was on course overseas, and had then had his temporary appointment made permanent on Br Bell's return at the end of 1984.⁵¹ One may reasonably speculate that this was done in view of the confidence of his superiors in Lynch's ability to manage the effects within St Columba's of the unfolding national political crisis in a way which would accord well with traditional Christian Brothers' notions of right governance.⁵²

⁴⁷ See Chapters Four and Five below.

⁴⁸ Interview No 0030 with Robert van Niekerk, p.2.

⁴⁹ Athlone House Annals, July 1984.

⁵⁰ Personal experience.

⁵¹ Athlone House Annals, early 1985.

⁵² Unlike the way his hapless predecessor, Br O'Brien had "managed" the 1980 boycott at St Columba's. The latter half of 1984 had been characterised by anti-tricameralism, culminating in the largely effective boycotting of the first coloured and Indian tricameral elections of August, and the beginning of the Vaal Uprising in early September. See, for example, A. Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of apartheid* (London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1991), pp.329-337.

Br Lynch came to St Columba's with the reputation, amongst his confrères, of being an outstanding Principal.⁵³

He was confronted almost immediately by the local manifestations of the prolonged political crisis, beginning in the Vaal Triangle, which was to lead ultimately to the collapse of the apartheid régime. In July 1985 the first, partial, State of Emergency was declared by the government of P.W.Botha. The scene was set at St Columba's for confrontation between the traditional ideology of the Christian Brothers, revived in the person of Br Lynch, and the activism of a new, more politically aware and articulate generation of students. This conflict was to have two main arenas, the boycott and student representation.

A. THE BOYCOTT

The decision of students to boycott classes in solidarity with oppressed communities was taken early at St Columba's, despite the opposition of the Principal and some other staff members, and despite some division among students.⁵⁴ The Athlone House Annals recorded, however, that the boycott was not, at first, total: "Some days the boys boycotted; some they conducted 'awareness programmes'; and on other occasions they came to school [i.e. classes] as usual".⁵⁵

Student leaders of the ilk of Robert van Niekerk were determined that awareness programmes should be substantive:

I felt incredibly strongly about the boycott not being a passive activity, but something that needed to be replaced with hard graft ... such as discussions, bringing in speakers who could be engaged with. And I was bitterly opposed to

⁵³ Personal experience. He had previously been Principal of several CBC's.

⁵⁴ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.3, 4.

⁵⁵ Athlone House Annals, August 1985.

*our students' [just] milling around the school, waving banners, without critical reflection of ... the pedagogical and methodological meaning of that.*⁵⁶

He believed that these aims were largely achieved:

*We had numerous ... activities: discussions, workshops, plays. It was a very vibrant, very dynamic period ... for the short time that it lasted.*⁵⁷

Students, however, were not united in support of the boycott. In general, their attitudes towards the boycott, the issue of student representation, and the broader political struggles taking place outside, were linked to their social-class position. Students coming from working-class backgrounds, experiencing very visible and harsh repression on an almost daily basis during this period, felt the urgent need for an active demonstration of solidarity with their communities. Those from more middle-class backgrounds were, unsurprisingly, less motivated in this regard, being more focused on academic achievement and the pursuit of the career goals they had mapped out for themselves. But van Niekerk remembered a “core of 63-64%” in favour of the boycott.⁵⁸

The attitudes of the communities from which students came towards the school were similarly class based. Members of the more conservative, more middle-class communities generally held the school in very high regard for its “good” discipline, the neatness and courtesy of its students, its excellent academic results, and the perceived quality of its graduates.⁵⁹ On the other hand, members of poorer, more marginalised communities, and the more politically committed in their opposition to the apartheid régime, saw the school as élitist and isolationist, holding itself aloof from the aspirations and struggles of the oppressed.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2, 3-4, 6. Harold Manus saw a similar division among students in 1976. (Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.12.)

It would be reasonable to assume that, as in 1980, support tailed off as the boycott became protracted.

⁵⁹ Interview No 0009 with Antonio Ferdinando, pp.1, 4, 5; Interview No 0005 with Michael Curry, pp.2-4; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.4-8. See Addenda E and F for Junior and Senior Certificate results during this period.

⁶⁰ Interview No 0009 with Antonio Ferdinando, pp.1-2; Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk,

Lay staff, reflecting *their* different backgrounds, were similarly divided over the merits of the boycott. Some were supportive (if not too overtly, in view of the school's repressive and punitive climate); others were in sympathy with the aims, but doubted the efficacy of the tactic; yet others were wholly opposed by reason of their own conservative political positions.⁶¹

The Brothers, under Lynch's direction, remained firmly opposed to the principle of the school boycott, but van Niekerk believes that some came to see the political value of a show of solidarity with their communities by St Columba's students.⁶² No doubt, their motives were mixed. They were naturally concerned to preserve the viability of their continued presence in Athlone, and, more immediately, to secure the school buildings and property and, not least, their own physical safety.

Nevertheless, despite what appeared to be majority support amongst students for the continuation of the boycott, it was eventually overturned at a mass meeting of parents and staff in October 1985 convened by the Principal, where the traditional Christian Brothers' prioritising of education, as conventionally conceived, was reiterated.⁶³ The response adopted to the slogan "Liberation before Education", anathema to the Christian Brothers, was, predictably, "Education for Liberation".⁶⁴

pp.7, 11-12; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, p.6.

This latter attitude resulted in some measure of ongoing hostility towards the school, ostracisation, and even occasional attacks upon its students. The South African Council on Sport (SACOS), for example, waged a protracted campaign against St Columba's for its involvement in sport against other (largely white) Catholic schools, stigmatising this as a breach of its principle of "No normal sport in an abnormal society". This led to the school's being effectively excluded from all competitions organised by the powerful SACOS-affiliated Western Province Senior Schools Sports Union, and to its subsequently being forced to fall back almost entirely on internal and inter-Catholic schools sport. (Athlone House Annals, early 1985; Interview No 0005 with Michael Curry, pp.3-4; Interview No 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, pp.8-9; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.7-8; Interview No 0025 with Damascene Taylor, p.11.)

⁶¹ Personal experience.

⁶² Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.8-9.

⁶³ Athlone House Annals, October 1985; Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.6, 11; personal experience.

⁶⁴ In effect. The term was not formally applied. See Interview No 0025 with Damascene Taylor, p.2. See also reference to Br Madden's speech in 1976, p.43 above.

Formal lessons were resumed, but, when the school was subjected to regular invasions of stone- and stick-wielding students from neighbouring schools, threats to burn it down, and one or two actual fire-bombing attempts, a decision was made, seemingly unilaterally, by the Principal to close the school until the end of the year and continue tuition by correspondence. Students would be promoted on the strength of their year marks and the diligence with which they completed assigned tasks.⁶⁵ Matriculation examinations were to be held at the Christian Brothers' novitiate at Stellenbosch because of security risks at the school.⁶⁶ A few very politically committed students, like Robert van Niekerk, decided, on principle, not to write, but most, under pressure from parents, some teachers, and their personal ambitions, did.⁶⁷ The effect, surely intended, of the decision to close the school and deny students a geographical and emotional focus for their political energies was to defuse the situation politically.⁶⁸

B. STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

The second area of contestation concerned student representation. Although the Brothers regarded the nominated prefects as representative of the students, the latter, by and large, did not.⁶⁹ As indicated above, attitudes towards the need for valid student representation at St Columba's, and towards the broader political struggle being waged abroad, were, in

⁶⁵ Athlone House Annals, October 1985; Interview No 0025 with Damascene Taylor, pp.3-5; Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.6.

See also M. Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades: the 1985 School Boycott and the Vicissitudes of the Athlone Students Action Committee ASAC", unpublished B.A.(Hons)(History) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1995, pp.109-110. Vassen refers also to the "A-Team" or "disruption squad", which "disrupted schools such as St Columbas [sic], Ned Doman, Bridgetown and Athlone High, at the request of students from those schools". (Ibid., pp.74-75.) Van Niekerk maintained that the St Columba's SRC, through its liaison with the Athlone Students Action Committee, moved to end such actions as being counter-productive to its own struggle within the school. (Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.11-12.)

⁶⁶ Athlone House Annals, November 1985.

⁶⁷ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.6-7. Eight out of the 52 matriculants did not write (that is, about 15%), two or three of whom were very weak students. (See St Columba's Std 10 Mark Book for the period.)

⁶⁸ Claude Jagers and Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, p.6. Similar thinking had no doubt motivated the decision of the Minister of Education and Culture in the House of Representatives, Carter Ebrahim, to close Departmental schools on 6 September 1985. (M. Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades", pp.96-97.)

⁶⁹ See pp.66-68 below.

general, linked with the social class of students. Students coming from working-class backgrounds felt the pressing need for solidarity with their communities, hence the need for direct forms of student representation to enable this solidarity to be expressed. Students coming from more middle-class backgrounds were, unsurprisingly, less urgent in this demand.⁷⁰

“After much contestation and organisation ... and much engagement with the Principal and staff” on the part of some students,⁷¹ the demand for a Students’ Representative Council (SRC) was eventually conceded by the Principal during the latter half of 1985, for the first time in St Columba’s history. However, its functions were to be strictly circumscribed:

[The SRC] needed only to reflect on internal activities, and ... only in a very limited way to represent the view[s] of the school in public and other joint-SRC forums.⁷²

Moreover, a laborious process of consultation was laid down before any SRC decision could be implemented, all such decisions having first to be put to the Principal, who would, in turn, submit them to teachers and parents for ratification.⁷³

The “contestation” referred to above is instructive in that it refers not only to contestation with the Principal but also to contestation among students. The tradition of the “Ballie boy” (St Columba’s boy) was very strong. It presupposed gentlemanly conduct within certain generally accepted parameters, and it was highly doubtful to many students whether active political involvement and an SRC fell within those parameters.⁷⁴ Claude Jagers (student, 1983-1987) remembers this attitude thus:

⁷⁰ See p.51 above.

⁷¹ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.7.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Claude Jagers, Interview No 11, p.11.

⁷⁴ Bertram September maintained: “In retrospect, ... what they tried to give us was a very proper, gentleman[ly] kind of education, where ... you tried to take these coloured boys and make young gentlemen – of course they could never be white! – but you can approximate them. ... And I think we should thank God for where that school was, otherwise we would have been sheltered, and we would have stepped out there young little gentlemen – very proper and very pro-status quo. ... They wanted to

*You're first a "Ballie boy", and then you can be whoever you want to be. You can be a political activist if you want to be, but, please, remember that you're first a "Ballie boy".*⁷⁵

Moreover, there was a sense, among boys whose families paid relatively substantial fees in a community where this was not the norm, that the school to some degree *belonged* to them, and that its interests, therefore, should always be looked to. Instructive in this regard is the fact that the boycott was postponed until *after* the annual "Talent Night" variety concert, much loved of the broader St Columba's community.⁷⁶ Thus a lack of faith in the goodwill and sense of responsibility of students vis-à-vis the school hurt the more. "Et tu, Lynch!" exclaimed one interviewee.⁷⁷

Despite the limitations imposed upon it (which were, however, often circumvented in practice),⁷⁸ the SRC, in Robert van Niekerk's, perhaps somewhat partial, view, was relatively effective in educating students politically. It affiliated to the Athlone Students Action Committee (ASAC),⁷⁹ and the school thus achieved a significant accession of political legitimacy within the broader community. Moreover, St Columba's SRC was the only one to have the position of a "political commissar" (van Niekerk himself),⁸⁰ who established links with community movements, distributed literature, organised appropriate awareness programmes, and ensured "that the political line was upheld".⁸¹

*It was a very vibrant, very dynamic period ... for the short while which it lasted. ... The SRC, because of the commitment of some of the students who were involved (very serious-minded students), the support of many of the staff, and the willingness of the students to be involved in something that was challenging and different - I think it was successful.*⁸²

make us, as much as possible, as Europeanised as possible." (Interview No 11, p.5.)

⁷⁵ Claude Jagers. *ibid.*, p.9.

⁷⁶ Personal recollection. "Talent Night" was attended not only by current students and their parents, but also by many old boys, and was something of a gala occasion at St Columba's.

⁷⁷ Clarence Adriaan, *ibid.*, p.10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁷⁹ See M. Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades", *passim*.

⁸⁰ Interview No 9 with Neil Horne.

⁸¹ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.7-8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.8.

Others remember the SRC as an unwieldy body (with about five representatives for each of the ten classes) with two camps dividing along the lines of Tradition vs the Demands of the Time.⁸³ Hence, it became something of a “debating society”, not “a working group”, a “cathartic exercise”:

*The Brothers succeeded in their ploy ... We voiced our opinions, and that was it. We got rid of some pent-up frustration, and that was basically what they had hoped for, and they succeeded in that.*⁸⁴

Van Niekerk, on the other hand, felt that the Brothers gradually came to accept the need, in that political context, for direct representation for St Columba’s students in order to lend legitimacy to their display of solidarity with their broader community. Moreover, he believed that they provided a “kind of umbrella” for awareness activities on campus. He remembered, indeed, “in quite a fond way”, students drawing parallels between the political struggles in South Africa and Ireland in order to court favour with the Brothers, although these arguments “would be viewed quite suspiciously” (by some of the Brothers).⁸⁵

Another student, Bertram September (1983-1987), on the other hand, remembers an elderly visiting Brother from Ireland, Tom O’Dwyer, engaging in an informal discussion with a group of students, in which he, in comparing the Irish and South African situations, said that he could understand the anger that led to the throwing of stones by protesters against the apartheid régime.⁸⁶ Claude Jagers remembers Br Bell making the Irish comparison as well, but with the *opposite* effect:

⁸³ Claude Jagers: You had the tradition on the one side –
Bertram September: You had to be gentlemen in the SRC.
Claude Jagers: ... And you had the society that wanted you to be ... militant.
(Interview No 11, p.12.)

⁸⁴ Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, pp.11-12.

⁸⁵ Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.8-9. Van Niekerk averred that Br Lynch had family members connected to the Irish Republican Army.

⁸⁶ Bertram September, Interview No 11, pp.15-16.

*[Political activism] doesn't work. At the end of the day, you have to look after yourself, get your education, and, once you're settled, you can see to things like that.*⁸⁷

In other words, the traditional "Education for Liberation" argument, which certainly represented the mainline view among the Christian Brothers at Athlone.⁸⁸ Dissidents, like O'Dwyer, would be "phased out".⁸⁹

Robert van Niekerk's, perhaps somewhat sentimental, views notwithstanding, Br Lynch lost no time at the beginning of 1986 in unilaterally disbanding the SRC, despite some lay staff objections.⁹⁰ Most of the executive members of the SRC having left school at the end of 1985, students were, at the beginning of 1986, by the admission of their rump leadership, "generally despondent", "disorganised", and "in no position to resume an indefinite boycott".⁹¹ The roughly three-month absence from school had effectively defused the situation politically.⁹² Moreover, the fact that most matriculants had written the final examinations and that most other students had accepted promotion on the strength of their year marks, when students at some Western Cape schools had decided to repeat the year because of work lost, served further to undermine the spirit of resistance.⁹³ Lynch capitalised on this demoralisation. Perhaps the best symbol of the totality of students' capitulation to the hierarchy was the fact that the SRC Chair of 1985 accepted the prestigious, traditional position of Head Boy (or Head Prefect) in 1986.⁹⁴

The SRC was terminated, in part, because it was seen as importing baleful political influences into the school, but, more fundamentally, because it threatened the hierarchical

⁸⁷ Claude Jagers, *ibid.*, p.16.

⁸⁸ These words echo those of Br Madden in 1976. See above, p.43.

⁸⁹ Br Lynch's expression (personal experience). O'Dwyer returned to Ireland at the end of 1985.

⁹⁰ Personal experience. Vassen has shown that such reaction on the part of school managements was typical at the beginning of 1986. (M.Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades", pp.146-150.)

⁹¹ Mayibuye Centre Archives, University of the Western Cape: "Athlone Students Box", MCH 62-4, Premesh Lalu Collection: St Columba's Report drawn up for National Education Crisis Committee Conference (April 1986).

⁹² Claude Jagers, Interview No 11, p.13.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15. See also M.Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades", pp.120-129, 151-152.

⁹⁴ Gregory Schroeder.

structure of control at the school.⁹⁵ Of course, these two motives were related in that the political influences in question might well result in a more concerted campaign against the authoritarian mode of governance practised at the school.

C. AFTERMATH

It would seem, therefore, that by the beginning of 1986 the incipient rebellion against the Brothers' authoritarian mode of control and conservative political posture had been well and truly routed. The boycott had been unilaterally ended by management, backed by most parents; the SRC had been unilaterally disbanded; the rump of the student leadership was, by its own admission, "despondent", "disorganised", demoralised. It is perhaps significant that no other major challenge by students against management occurred in the period covered by this chapter.

But it is possible to exaggerate the extent of the students' defeat. From 1986 various societies sprang up which continued the process of political education, notably a Historical Society and a Geography Society, under the sponsorship of sympathetic teachers.⁹⁶ Their activities included the inviting of guest speakers, such as Professor Colin Bundy, who spoke on "The South African Crisis", and speakers on "People's Education", "The Church's Role in Politics", and pre-colonial South African history, as well as the showing of "alternative" videos (some banned at the time), for example, *Woza Albert!*⁹⁷ Indeed, it appears that some student leaders felt that the Historical Society might become an alternative focus of political education and mobilisation:

*A lot of the people who joined the Historical Society were the people who wanted to get this whole political ideology on track again. ... The Historical Society might be[come] a hijacked SRC or something, a political movement.*⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.2, 5.

⁹⁶ There had been similar developments at a number of other Athlone schools. (M. Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades", p.147.)

⁹⁷ Personal experience.

⁹⁸ Claude Jagers, Interview No 11, p.4.

However, at least one ex-student felt that the Historical Society “channeled dissent into a more acceptable vehicle”:

It provided an outlet ... whilst at that time politics was more about deconstructing than actively assisting in the whole educational process.⁹⁹

There can be no reasonable doubt, however, that the Christian Brothers lost ground among students because of their *modus operandi* in handling student dissent. The latter could not understand the Brothers’ failure to empathise with them. As one ex-student expressed it: “They became more *white*”.¹⁰⁰ Hence, they would in future be more liable to open challenge, especially as some teachers had encouraged students to recognise that they too had opinions of value, which they had an absolute right, if not a duty, to voice.¹⁰¹

There is, of course, always the problem of continuity in any student movement because of the necessarily temporary nature of the student body, but staff members are, usually, more permanently positioned. That the *modus operandi* of the Principal in his crushing of the student movement at St Columba’s, as well as in his general management style, had long-term effects upon staff morale and attitudes was to be graphically revealed by the 1990 “Survey of Staff Perceptions”, compiled by Sue Nicolson of the Education Faculty of the University of the Western Cape in response to her perception, as a periodic visitor to St Columba’s, of “tremendous tensions and a sense of unresolved conflict among [its] staff members”. Her analysis is a damning indictment of the mode of management at St Columba’s at the time, which it characterises as hierarchical, authoritarian, manipulative, and divisive.¹⁰² The focus of opposition to this style of governance, and the political position that it reflected, shifted, post-1985, from students to some elements of the staff.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Bertram September, *ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁰⁰ Bertram September, *ibid.*, pp.8-9.

¹⁰¹ Claude Jagers, *ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁰² Personal Collection: S.Nicolson, “A Survey of Staff Members’ Perceptions of St Columba’s School: an analysis and recommendations”, August 1990.

¹⁰³ Indeed, the initiation of the Nicolson investigation might be viewed, in this context, as an opportunistic attempt on the part of certain members of staff to expose the pernicious effects of the management

D. THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

One arena of this struggle was in the teaching of history. As indicated above, this had been taught, traditionally and generally uncritically, from the standard, white-settler-orientated textbooks, with facts being rote-learned and, on occasion, recited parrot-fashion.¹⁰⁴ From the mid-1980s, however, a strikingly new approach was adopted.

As a private school, St Columba's could experiment with syllabus content, which some of its history teachers now did, to include, for example, the iniquities practised in the cause of the mineral revolution (with emphasis upon the exploitation of black workers) and an outline history of black political opposition and its suppression in the twentieth century. Later foci included a critical examination of the political mythology of Afrikaner nationalism, with specific reference to the "Great Trek", notably the (supposed) Dingane-Retief Treaty, the motives for the killing of Retief's party by Dingane's impis, and the (supposed) making and keeping of the "Covenant" by the Boers,¹⁰⁵ as well as the role of the British in the subjugation of the Zulu Kingdom.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps even more significant was the methodology adopted. This was characterised by an emphasis on discussion and debate, and the active encouragement of divergent views.¹⁰⁷

No one ideological slant was upheld:

*The approach was not catechetical. We were challenged to provide our own answers. Skills were imparted. Independent thought was encouraged.*¹⁰⁸

style practised at St Columba's in the hope of influencing the character of the impending new régime. (Br Lynch was to retire at the end of 1990 and to be replaced by a lay Principal.) See pp.78-81 for a full description of the context and findings of the Nicolson Report.

¹⁰⁴ See pp.34, 39.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, L.Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); J.Naidoo, *Tracking Down Historical Myths* (Johannesburg: A.D.Donker, 1989).

¹⁰⁶ See J.Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ Interview No 8 with Russel Brand; Interview No 9 with Neil Horne; Interview No 10 with Ashley van Staden.

¹⁰⁸ Interview No 8 with Russel Brand. See also Interview No 10 with Ashley van Staden.

One student recalled the “opportunity to challenge and be challenged”;¹⁰⁹ another the beneficially interactive nature of the classes;¹¹⁰ a third the presentation of history as contentious, an argument between present and past, as not being about absolute, immutable facts. For him history became “an oasis ... in a very reactionary school”.¹¹¹

History was no longer merely about the memorisation and recitation of “facts”.¹¹² The official syllabuses, texts, and examinations, with their obsession with carefully selected “facts”, were subjected to critical scrutiny.¹¹³ A library of alternative texts was compiled and made available for students’ consultation and study.¹¹⁴ One ex-student believed that his high-school history course at St Columba’s developed in him a sense of “philosophical ... and political appreciation”;¹¹⁵ another a respect for “the need for the truth ... and the use of the reason”.¹¹⁶ One ex-student expressed the view that history at St Columba’s had a personalising effect, giving him a sense of his “own society and its origins”.¹¹⁷ Another felt, similarly, that it had given him a sense of identity, a collective consciousness, without which he “would be adrift in a sea of consumer culture”.¹¹⁸

That such a counter-ideological approach to history attracted the suspicion of the hierarchy at St Columba’s is borne out by the memory of at least one student:

*You always felt ... the Brothers looking into the classroom: “What the hell is going on in here?”*¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁹ Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, p.2.

¹¹⁰ Claude Jagers, *ibid.*, p.2.

¹¹¹ Bertram September, *ibid.*, pp.3, 4.

¹¹² Interview No 10 with Ashley van Staden.

¹¹³ Interview No 8 with Russel Brand; Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, p.2. Note also Robert van Niekerk’s testimony to the critical engagement with the official texts experienced by him in History (and Geography) classes, which exposed “the falsity, empirically and theoretically, of the description of South African society” enshrined in those texts. (Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.5.)

¹¹⁴ Bertram September and Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, pp.1-2.

¹¹⁵ Interview No 9 with Neil Horne.

¹¹⁶ Interview No 8 with Russel Brand.

¹¹⁷ Interview No 10 with Ashley van Staden.

¹¹⁸ Interview No 8 with Russel Brand.

¹¹⁹ Bertram September, Interview No 11, p.4.

It must be acknowledged, though, that the counter-ideological approach to history-teaching at St Columba's which developed in the latter half of the 1980s must have owed much to the spirit and imperatives of the times, in the wake of the national-democratic uprisings from 1984-1985 and, specifically, the rise of the People's Education movement, with its emphasis on the absolute rejection of apartheid education in all its facets, "education for liberation, justice and freedom", education for collectivity, creativity, activity, and empowerment, and the stimulation of critical thinking and analysis.¹²⁰

Some of these aims were clearly being addressed in history teaching at St Columba's High School from the latter half of the 1980s, both in terms of content and methodology. The emphasis on questioning, the presentation of argument, discussion and debate, and the tolerance of dissent was, in effect, a training in the democratic process.¹²¹

Although a skirmish may have been lost, the struggle would clearly continue.

¹²⁰ See G.Kruss, *People's Education: an examination of the concept* (Bellville: Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, 1988), pp.6-8, for an account of the origins of People's Education. For the resolutions of the National Consultative Conference of December 1985, see *People's Education: a collection of articles from December 1985 to May 1987* (Bellville: Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, n.d.), p.29. For a discussion of the principles of People's Education, see G.Kruss, *People's Education: an examination of the concept*, pp.10-19.

¹²¹ See also pp.84-87 below.

CHAPTER 4

IDEOLOGY CHALLENGED – DISCIPLINE, c.1970-1990

1. TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINE

As indicated in Chapter Two above, the style of discipline practised at St Columba's in the early years was characterised by great strictness and the frequent, and, at times, seemingly indiscriminate and irrational, use of corporal punishment. It rested upon the assumptions of members of an order themselves subject to a rigid discipline and a hierarchical mode of governance.¹

A. DETENTION AND CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The gamut of disciplinary measures practised during the 1970s and 1980s remained essentially unchanged: detention, corporal punishment, summoning of parents, expulsion. In the late 1970s, detention often took a constructive form (quite literally), and Harold Manus (1972-1976), for example, claimed to have contributed significantly to the campus in this way, laying concrete paths and slabs after school hours.²

¹ See pp.28-32 above.

Vassen maintains, however, that "a rigid system of hierarchy and authority", including prefects, and the fairly indiscriminate application of corporal punishment, characterised *all* Athlone high schools even in the mid-1980s. (M.Vassen, "Beyond the Barricades: the 1985 Schools Boycott and the Vicissitudes of the Athlone Students Action Committee (ASAC)", unpublished B.A.(Hons)(History) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1995, pp.50-51.) See also at the Centre for African Studies Library, University of Cape Town, for example, the pamphlet, "Corporal Punishment Abuse and Victimisation Rife at Athlone Schools! Principals and Teachers Oppressed or Oppressors?" (Cape Town: Athlone Education Crisis Committee, 1986.)

² Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.5.

But corporal punishment remained the reflex action of crossed teachers. Glen van Harte (1973-1977) claimed, perhaps exaggeratedly, that Br Harkin would “beat us every day just for what we may do in the future”!³ Some Brothers had psychologically interesting pet names for their canes, for example, “Bismarck” and “My Lady”.⁴ Br Finnegan once “woke up” a whole Mathematics class on a very hot afternoon by the liberal application of the cane on the pedagogically untenable principle that if you could not answer a question you ought to be beaten.⁵

These were patent abuses of corporal punishment, but some ex-students suggested that it was not indiscriminately applied in the 1970s.⁶ Michael Curry (1972-1976), for example, claimed that it was a rare thing to be caned.⁷ On the other hand, Harold Manus, an exact contemporary of Curry, reported frequent beatings.⁸ Perhaps the explanation of this discrepancy lies in the differential treatment accorded members of the ‘A’ and ‘B’ classes.⁹

B. ‘A’ AND ‘B’ CLASSES

Since the early 1950s, when numbers first warranted this, there had been two classes at most levels, the ‘A’ and ‘B’ classes.¹⁰ This division was made at Std 6 level on academic grounds, and became entrenched during a student’s career at St Columba’s, there being little subsequent mobility between the classes, even if, for example, a ‘B’ student’s work improved significantly.¹¹ The ‘A’ students were popularly characterised (with some animus) as the “really nice, disciplined students ... smart, very clever boys, who only did

³ Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.4-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁵ Interview No 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, pp.3-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁷ Interview No 0001 with Michael Curry, p.9

⁸ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.7.

⁹ Curry was in the ‘A’ class, Manus in the ‘B’.

¹⁰ See St Columba’s Mark Books.

¹¹ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.19.

the right things". The 'B' students, on the other hand, were the rest, and took a delight in finding ways of breaking the rules and getting away with it.¹² Manus, a member of the 'B' class, remembered the 'A' class students as "the favoured ones", who "shared a lot with [the Brothers]", and that the 'B' classes in his day were not taught much by the Brothers but rather by the lay teachers.¹³ This led to conflict between the classes, and the self-fulfilling prophecy, where people tend to rise (or fall) to expectations, both in terms of performance and behaviour.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, therefore, the division created disciplinary problems in the 'B' class.¹⁵

This arrangement was adapted from 1978, after some opposition by students.¹⁶ A small group had refused to remain in the 'A' class, despite their perceived academic ability, as they preferred doing History to Physical Science (the latter being a compulsory 'A' class subject, the former a compulsory 'B' class subject, timetabled together). As a result, the classes were in future to be named according to the initial of the class teacher's surname. Paul Curry, one of those involved in the original agitation, believed, however, that this was a purely cosmetic change, as effective "streaming" still took place.¹⁷

C. SUMMONING OF PARENTS AND "EXPULSION"

If caning did not work, the Principal fell back on the expedient of calling parents in to discuss the behaviour of their errant son. This was usually highly effective because students would be subjected to significant pressure to "behave" on both the home and

¹² Ibid., pp.2-3

¹³ Interview No 5 with Harold Manus.

¹⁴ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, pp.3-5; Interview No 0036 with Glen van Harte, p.7; Interview No 0027 with Giovanni Perez, pp.7-8.

¹⁵ Interview No 0027 with Giovanni Perez, pp.12-13; Interview No 0036 with Glen van Harte, pp.7-8.

¹⁶ Interview No 0001 with Michael Curry, pp.3-4. See St Columba's Summary Registers of Attendance.

¹⁷ Telephonic conversation with Paul Curry, 19 May 1996. My own experience verifies this. When I commenced teaching at St Columba's in 1984, there was an effective "streaming" policy in place: the more academically able students were directed to choose, from Std 8, Physical Science and Biology, the weaker History and Accounting, Geography being done by all. During the course of that year I helped to bring about a change: from 1985 the choice would be between Physical Science or Accounting, on the one hand, and History or Geography, on the other, with Biology being done by all. This, I believed, would minimise the effects of "streaming". It also raised the status of History as a subject.

school fronts.¹⁸ Patrick O'Connell (staff, 1958-1978) remembered these as rather unequal exchanges. The message conveyed was: "You toe the line where your child is concerned [or else]".¹⁹ A certain status attached to being a student, or having a son or ward as a student, at St Columba's, as well as higher hopes of achieving socio-economic aspirations, both of which most students and parents would naturally be loth to lose. For a Catholic family, moreover, expulsion from a Catholic school at the hands of men of the cloth carried with it a quasi-religious significance, comparable in kind, if not in degree, to excommunication.²⁰

Actual expulsions were rare, however, "expulsion" usually taking the form of a boy being sent away until his parents came in to hear the nature of the complaint against their son, to witness certain commitments being made by him, and sometimes to plead for his reinstatement. It usually operated also as a final warning. As such, it was meant more as a reformatory than as a punitive measure.²¹ Actual expulsions occurred only when the "crime" was "pretty extreme" or the culprit seemingly incorrigible.²²

D. PREFECT SYSTEM

The Prefect System remained firmly in place during the 1970s and 1980s. As indicated above, prefects were staff-appointed students who assisted teachers with the implementation of discipline.²³ They were not directly elected. Senior students would be asked to vote for prefects, but the results were routinely vetted by the Principal and staff to ensure that only "suitable" candidates were appointed as prefects.²⁴ This applied with especial force to the positions of Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy, students who led the

¹⁸ Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.11-12; Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.9; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.2-3; Interview No 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, p.5.

¹⁹ Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell.

²⁰ See p.31 above.

²¹ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.9; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.2-3. Such an attitude no doubt accorded with the Christian principle of trying to reclaim strayed sheep.

²² Interview No 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, p.5; Interview 0001 with Michael Curry, p.8.

²³ See pp.29, 32.

prefect corps and performed certain symbolic functions as officially designated leaders of the student body.²⁵

Manus, not himself made a prefect, believed firmly, and with justice, that the results were “doctored by the establishment”. Nine times out of ten, he claimed, prefects would come from the ‘A’ class; “maybe you would get one from the ‘B’ class, just to make it equal”.²⁶ Damascene Taylor (1984-1989), also not a prefect in his day, maintained that being made a prefect was a “reward for the achievers”, both academically and extra-murally.²⁷ Glen van Harte (Deputy Head Boy in 1977) listed the following qualities looked for, inter alia, in a prefect: loyalty to the school, obedience, moral courage (no doubt, as long as not directed against the establishment), participation in school activities - qualities eminently appropriate to trusty subordinates in a hierarchical order who were to lead by example.²⁸

However, it is abundantly clear that prefects were not regarded by most students as *their* representatives, as the Brothers, optimistically, saw them.²⁹ Van Harte, in retrospect, saw prefects as assisting *teachers* rather than students: “We were substitute teachers. That was our position. We certainly didn’t represent the students.”³⁰ Manus felt that the first loyalty of prefects was to the Principal and staff; they were “the eyes and ears of the Principal”.³¹ Robert van Niekerk, from a later era (1981-1986), and also not a prefect, maintained that those appointed as prefects were those who were perceived “as accepting the management of the school”.³² Nevertheless, prefects did inspire a fair measure of respect by reason of the status they enjoyed, the (delegated) power they exercised, and

²⁴ Personal experience, 1984-1996.

²⁵ Interview No 0028 with Harold Manus, p.13; Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.15-16, 24; Interview No 0025 with Damascene Taylor, p.6.

²⁶ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, pp.9-10.

²⁷ Interview No 0025 with Damascene Taylor, pp.7-8.

²⁸ Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.16-17.

²⁹ Interview No 0022 with Giovanni Perez, p.3.

³⁰ Interview No 0021 with Glen van Harte, pp.11-12; Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.22-23.

³¹ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, pp.10-12.

³² Interview No 0032 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.2-3.

the concomitant fear that this produced in their relatively powerless fellow-students.³³

E. WHY ACCEPTED?

The disciplinary system, therefore, remained essentially in place during the 1970s and 1980s. Why, though, was it accepted, without demur, by students and their parents?

In the first place, the religious character of the school reinforced its discipline: “The fear of God is put into you ... which makes you follow or obey the rules”. Moreover, the Brothers themselves, as men who had devoted their lives to the education of boys, “whose sole life is the school, whose sole life is the students”, inspired a “measure of awe”. They were seen not quite “as human beings”. This almost superstitious veneration of the religious was shared, and nurtured, by parents, who adopted the attitude “Brother is always right”.³⁴

Secondly, the “hierarchical structure” at the school enabled everybody to know “exactly where they stood”.³⁵ This was reinforced by the fact that many students came from homes where the questioning of the decisions of those in authority was actively discouraged. Manus recalled:

*We never knew we had rights those days. We never knew we could ask questions. And we were worried if we asked questions because, in the home, if you asked a question, you'd get one [smack] so fast you wouldn't know what hit you.*³⁶

Therefore, students did not question the methods of discipline practised, including

³³ Interview No 0036 with Glen van Harte, pp.2-3; Interview No 0001 with Michael Curry, pp.8, 12-13; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, p.4.

³⁴ Interview No 0036 with Glen van Harte, pp.1-3, 8-9; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, p.2.

³⁵ Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, p.2.

³⁶ Interview No 0033 with Harold Manus, p.3.

corporal punishment, even when it took extreme and unusual forms.³⁷ In that era, the teacher (more especially a religious) was always right in the eyes of parents,³⁸ an attitude which naturally served to reinforce and protect the very strict discipline meted out by the Brothers and some lay teachers at St Columba's, and, indeed, almost to encourage abuses.³⁹

More positively, however, discipline at St Columba's "was entrenched in tradition".⁴⁰ From Day One, a student became aware that there was a certain "gentlemanly tradition", which every student had an obligation to uphold.⁴¹ To be a prefect at St Columba's was considered by most students to be the acme of achievement and recognition. One ex-student characterised the system as "discipline by co-option".⁴²

2. DISCIPLINE AMENDED

To what extent was there any change in the discipline practised over this period? Manus believed that the rebellion at the school which was occasioned by the political uprising of June 1976 had an impact also upon discipline. When some students decided to involve themselves in actions of political solidarity with their community, prefects had no power to restrain them:

Not even the prefects could hold us back. ... I was [a] student leader then. ... No prefect got the right to tell me that, if we were going to go and march, ... and we were going to go out into the streets, they couldn't stand in our way. ... At that

³⁷ Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.13-14; Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.6. (Manus remembered the hurling of a small handbroom across the classroom by a teacher, which cut open a student's eye.)

³⁸ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, p.7.

³⁹ Ibid.; Interview 0014 with Antonio Ferdinando, p.5; Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.3-5.

⁴⁰ Clarence Adriaan, Interview No 11, p.7.

⁴¹ Clarence Adriaan, *ibid.*, p.10. See p.32 above for reference to the Christian Brothers' commitment to education for social mobility.

⁴² "They kind of put the discipline in your head, so you disciplined yourself before they had to discipline you." (Bertram September, Interview No 11, p.7.)

*point, we broke the back of [the disciplinary system], and that's when the changes started.*⁴³

Corporal punishment was “eased off a bit”, he believed, there being a new tacit respect for the potential power of students.⁴⁴

Van Harte, also, in describing a moment when students began to question the legitimacy of corporal punishment, remembered 1976 as “a watershed mark in all our lives for student politics and for student empowerment”.⁴⁵

Giovanni Perez (1976-1980) remembered a changed attitude towards the official discipline of the school, after the “rebellion” of 1976, in that, whilst in the past it would be accepted as part of “your lot in life”, afterwards it would be taken with the “added dimension” that “Br Madden was a white man”, an attitude which had not been there before. Indeed, he recalled an occasion on which students surrounded the principal’s office in protest against Br Madden’s intention to beat one of the student leaders, Hilary Evans.⁴⁶

Patrick O’Connell (staff, 1958-1978) speculated, perhaps a little optimistically, that the new emphasis (of some) on the human rights and dignity of all from 1976 resulted in some “loosening up” in discipline towards the end of his time at the school.⁴⁷

Although the disciplinary system subsequently reasserted itself, the rebellion of 1976 does indeed seem to mark a psychologically important moment when students for the first time realised that they *could* question the status quo, that they could express dissatisfaction with aspects of the régime at the school, and rebel, even if only in a symbolic way, against these. As indicated above, the invidious ‘A’ and ‘B’ class division

⁴³ Interview No 0035 with Harold Manus, pp.14, 16.

⁴⁴ Interview No 5 with Harold Manus.

⁴⁵ Interview No 0029 with Glen van Harte, pp.13-14.

⁴⁶ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez. Br Madden himself, however, remembered no such defiance. (Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.3.)

⁴⁷ Interview No 6 with Patrick O’Connell.

was amended, after opposition by some students, from 1978. Although not necessarily a direct consequence of the 1976 rebellion, such resistance, unprecedented before that date, seems to suggest a more assertive attitude amongst students vis-à-vis the decisions of those in authority, surely in part due to the example of that year.

It appears, moreover, that corporal punishment was less frequently applied in the 1980s than in the preceding decade.⁴⁸ No doubt, this was partly in response to growing Departmental disapproval of the practice in state schools, at a time when the school was trying to secure a state subsidy, but surely partly also to some measure of resistance from the student body and, perhaps, post-1976, a greater acceptance on the part of most of the staff of the essential equality, in terms of human rights and dignity, of all.

Of course, there must also have been a measure of apprehensiveness on the part of management and staff at the recently-displayed power of student protest. Perez remembered a certain nervousness among teachers after the 1980 boycott with regard to the application of corporal punishment “in case it provided a flashpoint for another action”.⁴⁹ Van Niekerk, also, remembered debate among students in 1985 on the legitimacy of corporal punishment, and a threatened walk-out if a particular student was caned.⁵⁰ Others maintained that there was an effective agreement amongst students at the time (at least some of those on the SRC) that they would not allow prefects, “the puppets of the régime schoolwise”, to operate anymore.⁵¹ However, this agreement was effectively undermined when the Chair of the SRC in 1985 accepted the position of Head Prefect in 1986, after the three-month closure of the school had effectively demoralised student resistance to the school’s hierarchy.⁵²

⁴⁸ Interview No 0023 with Damascene Taylor, p.1; personal impression.

⁴⁹ Interview No 7 with Giovanni Perez.

⁵⁰ Interview No 0032 with Robert van Niekerk, p.2.

⁵¹ Demands for the ending of corporal punishment and the scrapping of prefect systems were general in Cape Flats schools during the school boycott and its aftermath. See, for example, the pamphlets, “Majority Vote to Continue School Boycott!!” (Cape Town: Athlone Students Action Committee, 1985), and “Corporal Punishment Abuse & Victimisation Rife at Athlone Schools!” (Cape Town: Athlone Education Crisis Committee, Cape Town, 1986) at Centre for African Studies Library, University of Cape Town.

⁵² Interview No 11 with Clarence Adriaan, Claude Jagers, and Bertram September, p.13. See p.57 above.

After 1985, some students felt both some loss of respect for the Brothers because of the non-empathetic way in which they had handled the boycott, and a new sense of the worth and relevance of their own opinions.⁵³ Hence, they became more willing to challenge the status quo at the school:

*The Brothers were starting to be challenged, and we were more assured of our own role in society. Students were important. The whole ... atmosphere in the country was that the older generation didn't do it [i.e. overthrow the apartheid régime]; we have to do it now. ... The difference came in between us and the Brothers then. Before that you hardly realised that they were white, but after 1985 the difference became more pronounced. Not only a colour thing, but ... they couldn't empathise with us. We couldn't understand: if they were liberal ... how come they didn't understand what was going on, why weren't they more sensitive?*⁵⁴

By the end of the 1980s, therefore, although the discipline at St Columba's was still seen as very firm, it had lost some of its former draconian quality, in some measure in response to Departmental and societal pressures, but also to nascent student resistance to the harsher forms of punishment imposed upon them by the school's management, and, more generally, to the flexing of student political muscle that had been manifested at key moments during this decade. Nevertheless the Prefect System was firmly reinstated at the beginning of 1986 at the same time that the SRC was abolished, and corporal punishment remained a punitive option, although a comparatively rarely used one.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., pp.7-9.

⁵⁴ Bertram September, *ibid.*, p.8.

⁵⁵ Personal experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDEOLOGY CHALLENGED – GOVERNANCE, c.1970-1990

The hierarchical structure of control exercised by the Christian Brothers over St Columba's High School was not essentially challenged until the late 1980s. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Principal remained the sole governor, answerable in the last resort only to his own superiors.¹ The Students' Representative Council (SRC), which briefly saw the light of day in the latter part of 1985, was nipped in the bud, essentially because it “undermined the whole hierarchical structure”.² For the rest of the 1980s, students were not formally represented, except – in theory - via the staff-appointed prefects.³

1. ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents had no formal role in governance during the 1970s and 1980s. They were seen by the Christian Brothers essentially as fundraisers, and there was no serious attempt by the Brothers to involve them in the running of the school “as partners”.⁴ Perhaps the only time

¹ Interview No 0036 with Glen van Harte, p.1; Interview No 0027 with Giovanni Perez, pp.1-2; Interview No 0033 with Harold Manus, p.1; Interview No 0030 with Robert van Niekerk, pp.3-4. Van Niekerk (matric. 1986) describes the Principal, in his day, as the “governor” of the school and his government as “benevolent autocracy”.

² Interview No 0017 with Claude Jagers, pp.2, 5. See above, pp.57-58.

³ See above, p.32. Mukesh Vassen maintains, however, that a similar hierarchy existed at all Athlone schools in the mid-1980s. {M.Vassen, “Beyond the Barricades: the 1985 Schools Boycott and the Vicissitudes of the Athlone Students Action Committee (ASAC)”, unpublished B.A.(Hons)(History) dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1995, pp.50-51. }

⁴ Interview No 0033 with Harold Manus, p.2; Interview 0027 with Giovanni Perez, p.2; Interview No 6 with Patrick O’Connell. Br Madden maintained, however, that he had five regional groups of the

that parents *were* formally consulted about a key decision during the period under review in this chapter was in October 1985 when they were called upon at a mass meeting convened by the Principal to endorse *his* decision to overturn the student boycott of classes and examinations.⁵ This lends credence to the view that parents at St Columba's were called in only to add legitimacy to controversial decisions already taken in principle by management.⁶

2. ROLE OF TEACHERS - AND TEACHER REBELLIONS

Lay teachers, too, in accordance with their relatively lowly place in the hierarchy, played a very limited role in decision-making, acting merely in an advisory and consultative capacity, that is, when the Principal chose to seek their advice.⁷ Patrick O'Connell, a member of staff for some twenty-one years (1958-1978), remembered that lay teachers had no say: "You just did as you were told".⁸ In the late 1970s, they might even be "corrected" in front of their classes by the Principal if he did not approve of their pedagogical methods, graphically confirming the lowliness of their status at the time.⁹

From the 1970s, however, with the increasing number of lay teachers on staff,¹⁰ challenges to the Brothers did occur from time to time on financial and political grounds. Teachers at the school were paid at rates significantly lower than those at government schools, and

Parents' (fundraising) Committee operational during the mid-1970s, and would have consulted them if the political troubles of 1976 at the school had been severe. It is perhaps instructive, however, that he could not remember having done so. (Donal Madden to Mario Fernandez, 16 July 1997, p.1.)

⁵ Interview 0030 with Robert van Niekerk, p.4; Interview 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.6.

⁶ Interview 0033 with Harold Manus, pp.4-5; Interview No 9 with Neil Horne.

⁷ Interview 0033 with Harold Manus, p.2.

⁸ Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell.

⁹ Interview 0027 with Giovanni Perez, p.3. Harold Trupos (staff, 1975-1982), on the other hand, remembered little interference in his classroom teaching. (Interview No 12 with Harold Trupos.)

¹⁰ In 1972 there were 6 religious (5 Brothers and a priest) and 3 lay teachers on staff for 306 students, whilst in 1977 there were 6 religious (5 Brothers and a nun) and 6 lay teachers on staff for 386 students. (Athlone House Annals, 19 January 1972 and 22 February 1977; St Columba's Summary Registers of Attendance.) See Addendum G, "Lay Staff as Percentage of Teaching Staff, 1965-1990".

enjoyed none of their benefits (pension scheme, medical aid, housing subsidy, merit increases, promotion posts), whilst carrying a heavy workload.¹¹ This led to a number of “rebellions”.

In June 1972 an orchestrated attempt on the part of lay staff to secure salary increases failed when their solidarity collapsed.¹² In March 1981, however, a more successful action took place. The Athlone House Annals recorded that the secular staff were *all* out of school “reportedly poisoned by some fish”, amid the “strong suggestion that some planning went into this stay-away - to draw attention to the grievances on salaries”. It drily continued: “Salaries under review”.¹³

On 10 April 1981 eight members of the (largely white) lay staff submitted a memorandum which challenged, “on Christian and political grounds”, “the glaring disparity between Coloured and White Christian Brothers' Colleges” and “the acceptance [by white CBC's] of Government subsidies on the basis of race and the fact that these subsidies are not redistributed”. It went on to query the “long and short term policy for St Columba's” with regard to finance, suggesting that “present policy regarding salaries [would] result in a high turnover of staff, appointment of inferiorly trained teachers and deterioration of the standard of education”. It predicted that “if financial resources [were] drawn only from school-fees and fund-raising efforts, any long-term future for the school [was] untenable”.¹⁴ The foregoing suggests an interesting combination of political and financial motives. That same day, the Provincial Superior addressed the staff on salaries,¹⁵ announcing that they were to be significantly increased.¹⁶

¹¹ Interview No 12 with Harold Trupos.

¹² Athlone House Annals, pp.115-118; Interview No 6 with Patrick O'Connell.

¹³ Athlone House Annals, 18 March 1981.

¹⁴ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: Memorandum dated 10 April 1981.

¹⁵ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: Athlone House Annals, 10 April 1981.

¹⁶ Personal communication, Ms June Pym.

From the mid-1980s, the school, perennially cash-strapped, began earnestly seeking state subsidisation.¹⁷ This was achieved, retrospectively, from April 1986 (perhaps, in some measure, a reward for the perceived loyalty of the management of the school towards the Education Department during the “troubles” of 1985).¹⁸ In this light, a new campaign began amongst staff members for the improvement of their conditions of service. A letter to the Provincial dated 28 March 1988 requested a written contract, with specified procedures for the termination of service (reflecting perceived insecurity of tenure after the summary dismissal of a number of members of staff in recent years)¹⁹, and made requests for specific leave and salary benefits.²⁰ Indeed, in the latter half of 1988, after the award of a state grant-in-aid, school-assisted pension and medical-aid schemes, as well as a housing allowance, *were* introduced.²¹ It was only, however, during the course of 1990 that a written contract was finally proffered.²²

During the course of 1989, some staff members had campaigned for staff meetings to become more open fora, rather than mere briefing sessions, and had secured the concession from the Principal that there would indeed be one such meeting (presumably as a trial). Nine lay staff members listed in writing proposed topics for the meeting, and their preoccupations are instructive. Three asked for greater involvement in policy-making and decision-making (one saying that staff meetings should be “more democratic”); two raised the vexed question of the role of St Columba's in its community, one pointing to its virtual

¹⁷ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: H.C.Smith, Provincial Superior, Christian Brothers in Southern Africa, to C.H.Ebrahim, Minister of Education and Culture in the House of Representatives, 12 March 1987.

¹⁸ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: Executive Director, Department of Education and Culture in the House of Representatives, to the Principal, St Columba's High School, 13 November 1987. During the course of 1988, the 15% grant-in-aid initially awarded by the Department was increased to 45%. (Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: Provincial Superior, Christian Brothers in Southern Africa, to Br B.Lynch, Principal, St Columba's High School, 1 October 1988.)

¹⁹ Personal experience.

²⁰ Personal Collection: Lay Staff, St Columba's High School, to Provincial Superior, Christian Brothers in Southern Africa, 28 March 1988.

²¹ Personal experience.

²² Personal Collection: Minutes of meeting of Provincial Superior, Christian Brothers in Southern Africa, with St Columba's High School staff, 9 August 1990, pp.1-2; and “Contract of Employment for Teachers on the Permanent Staff, Christian Brothers, South Africa.”

isolation at this time from other schools;²³ one called for meaningful links between staff, parents, and students, and another asked for *separate* staff representation (apart from the Principal) in meetings with parents.²⁴ As late as August 1990, during a meeting between members of staff and the Provincial Superior over the proposed contract and other matters, one lay staff member expressed concern over his perception of “management by decree”.²⁵

3. BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The mode of governance of the school had remained essentially unchanged. It was only towards the end of the 1980s that the Christian Brothers moved towards allowing some measure of lay involvement in the management of their schools. This tendency was dictated largely by the decline in the number of Brothers (reflecting the general decline in religious vocations being experienced by the Catholic Church, at least since the 1960s) and, correspondingly, the increasing average age of the Brothers, as well as a widening of the range of ministries considered appropriate within the order.²⁶ There was, moreover, Departmental pressure for the setting up of a duly constituted governing body as a condition of the award and maintenance of the grant-in-aid.²⁷ In the light of these circumstances, the Provincial Council took the seemingly radical decisions to set up a largely lay Board of Governors at St Columba's in 1989, to close the Athlone House community at the end of 1990,²⁸ and to appoint the first lay Principal from January 1991.

²³ See Chapter Three above, footnote 60, pp.51-52.

²⁴ Personal Collection: “Proposed Items for ‘Open’ Staff Meeting”, 1989.

²⁵ Personal Collection: Minutes of meeting of Provincial Superior with St Columba's staff, 9 August 1990, p.4.

²⁶ *Developments 1978-1983: from the Provincials' Reports, Twenty-Sixth General Chapter, Rome 1984* (Rome: Congregation of the Christian Brothers, 1983), pp.4, 22-24, 27.

²⁷ Archives of the Christian Brothers, Athlone file: Executive Director, Department of Education and Culture in the House of Representatives, to Chairman, Christian Brothers Association, 4 January 1988.

²⁸ The Athlone House had been occupied by the Christian Brothers, on the same site as the school, since its building had been completed in March 1953. (See Athlone House Annals, p.7.)

Such decisions were, however, being replicated at other Christian Brothers' schools throughout the country.²⁹

A perusal of the Constitution of the Boards of Governors of Christian Brothers' Colleges in South Africa (first drafted in 1988) reveals, however, that the Christian Brothers were determined to retain ultimate control of their schools. Although the Board's brief was defined as "the control, management, and administration of the school", the Provincial Superior or his nominee was accorded the power of veto of any decision which deviated from the stated Christian Brothers' policy pertaining to schools, as outlined in the "Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Christian Brothers" (Section A of the Constitution). The Provincial retained also an effective veto on the appointment or removal of a Principal.³⁰

A Board was to consist of at least nine members: the Provincial Superior or his nominee, a representative of the local Bishop, the Chairperson of the Parents' Association, a representative of the appropriate Department of Education, four elected members (of whom at least two had to be Old Boys or parents), and the Principal, as well as *such other members as might be nominated by the Provincial Superior*. This last provision makes it eminently clear that the Provincial could always "pack" the Board, if he deemed it necessary to ensure his dominance thereof.³¹

²⁹ Personal Collection: D.V.Kennedy, Provincial Superior of the Christian Brothers in Southern Africa, to the Parents of St Columba's High School, 17 August 1990.

³⁰ Personal Collection: "Constitution of the Boards of Governors, Christian Brothers' Colleges in South Africa, 1988", clauses 15(a)(i) and 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, clause 3. The Constitution of the Board of Governors was later amended to make the Board "executive" as opposed to "consultative", but the essentials, as above, remained in place.

4. THE NICOLSON REPORT, AUGUST 1990

The actual style of management at St Columba's remained authoritarian. In July 1984 Br Barry Lynch, an Irish-born Christian Brother who had lived in the country for many years, had become Principal of St Columba's. He was of the "old school" and governed as an autocrat, employing weekly fifteen-minute briefing sessions in lieu of substantive staff meetings.³²

During the second term of 1990, Br Lynch announced his intention of leaving St Columba's at the end of the year and of going on sabbatical during the third term.³³ After a "vote" had been taken by staff members (each ballot being delivered personally to Lynch in his office), he announced that Mr "Boet" Brand would act as Principal during his absence.³⁴ Brand, an Afrikaans master who had been on the staff since 1986, was seen as being very close to Lynch in his thinking and, indeed, as his personal choice of successor.³⁵ He clearly decided to pursue a management style modelled upon that practised by his mentor.³⁶ This led him quickly into open confrontation with a section of the staff, especially when he failed to mark fully the Std 10 Afrikaans language paper of the June 1990 examination, allowing students instead to mark sections of each other's scripts whilst he provided the answers. The outrage felt by some members of staff at this "seriously unprofessional conduct" was exacerbated by Brand's requiring the (unprecedented) submission to him of all marked scripts by the rest of the staff, presumably for his perusal.³⁷

³² Interview No 3 with Sally McCall (member of staff, 1987-1996); personal experience.

³³ In accordance with the decisions explained above, p.77.

³⁴ Interview No 2 with "Boet" Brand.

³⁵ Brand himself remembered being regarded as Lynch's "golden boy or the chosen one". (Ibid.)

³⁶ "... Boet very much took on the way that Br Lynch thought." (Interview No 3 with Sally McCall.)
At his first staff meeting as Acting-Principal, Brand described himself as "a pragmatic moderate, with a healthy dash of conservatism". (Personal recollection.)

³⁷ Personal Collection: Members of Staff of St Columba's High School to B.Brand, 11 July 1990.

In July 1990, Brand was involved in another controversial incident when he refused to allow the circulation of a collection list among the staff, and the distribution of pamphlets among the students, relating to the first anniversary commemoration of the deaths of an old boy, Robert Waterwitch (matric. 1986), and his Umkhonto we Sizwe comrade, Coline Williams, killed, apparently whilst laying a limpet mine at the Athlone Municipal Offices, in July 1989.³⁸ As a result, a group of old boys delivered a petition, with more than sixty signatories, demanding an apology from Brand to the Waterwitch family and “all those who hold Coline and Robbie’s memory dear”.³⁹ A few staff members shared the indignation of the old boys concerned.⁴⁰

At this time, Sue Nicolson, attached to the Education Faculty of the University of the Western Cape, was involved in an “Action Research” project at St Columba's, having been invited in by Ms June Pym (on staff since 1977), with Br Lynch's blessing, to encourage staff members to reflect critically on their teaching. Becoming aware of “tremendous tensions and a sense of unresolved conflict among staff members”, Nicolson approached Brand, asking him whether she might be allowed to facilitate a process whereby the staff “might be able to address some of these problems”.⁴¹ After consulting the rest of the staff, he agreed. She proceeded to interview those members of staff who were prepared to be

³⁸ Brand maintained that he was acting on the clear instructions of Br Lynch, given to him prior to his departure. (Interview No 2 with “Boet” Brand.) With regard to Robert Waterwitch’s death, see Interview No 0034 with Robert van Niekerk, p.6; and Interview No 0022 with Giovanni Perez, pp.5-6. See also Truth and Reconciliation Commission, University of the Western Cape Hearing, Day 3, Wednesday, 7 August 1996, Case No CT/00306, Coline Williams, pp.9-10, which quotes a pamphlet, apparently distributed by Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) at the time, suggesting the possibility that their two operatives might have been captured, tortured, and killed, and their bodies afterwards placed at the scene of the blast, as well as referring to the suggestion of an unnamed employee of the Directorate of Covert Collections (DCC) that the limpet mine which killed the two MK operatives might have been “spiked” by a DCC agent who had penetrated the MK cell in question.

³⁹ Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town, Christian Brothers file: G.van Harte, G.Perez, G.Schroeder, and R.van Niekerk, to Archbishop L.Henry, undated.

⁴⁰ Interview No 2 with “Boet” Brand; personal recollection. A reasonable speculation here is that there was some measure of collusion between the staff members and the old boys concerned, as part of a campaign to ensure that the politically conservative Brand did not secure the succession (especially as some were colleagues in the South African Democratic Teachers Union). In the event, he did not. (See Chapter Three above, pp.59-60, especially footnote 103.)

⁴¹ Personal Collection: S.Nicolson, “A Survey of Staff Members’ Perceptions of St Columba’s School: an analysis and recommendations”, August 1990.

interviewed (twelve out of fourteen), and produced a written assessment of staff perceptions of St Columba's.

Her primary conclusion was that the major problems were structural: "The Catholic Church is hierarchical in its structure; as a result, the school is structured hierarchically." A member of staff was quoted in support of this conclusion thus: "The way of running the school is very 'old style', very Catholic. Decisions are made, announced."

She went on to identify a number of issues arising out of the structural problems, including: teacher insecurity (based on the fear of dismissal, a fairly regular occurrence under Lynch's régime);⁴² gossiping ("Lots of bonhomie covers much backstabbing", one teacher said.); factionalism (fuelled by the Principal's policy of "divide and rule"); lack of a Christian ethos, with regard to attitudes towards lay teachers (strikingly ironic in an institution the avowed *raison d'être* of which was the achievement of such an ethos); concentration on personal issues rather than on teaching practice; lack of trust; avoidance of issues; interpersonal conflict.

"Laying down the law without consultation", Nicolson concluded, "might keep the teachers 'in line', but it almost surely will not keep them motivated, fulfilled and happy". One teacher was quoted thus: "The principal can take his word as law without consultation or negotiation - this is an unacceptable style of management. I feel totally disempowered, devalued, worthless. The basic problem is in the structure of the school."⁴³

In sum, then, Nicolson's report recorded the negative consequences of a rigidly hierarchical mode of governance upon a professional body which included some who aspired towards the achievement of a more democratic *modus operandi* at the school.

⁴² Interview No 2 with Sally McCall: "He ... got rid of staff whenever it suited him." On one occasion, the first news a staff member had of her impending departure was the discovery of an advertisement for her job in the local press. (Personal communication.)

By the end of 1990, therefore, it is clear that the very premises of the Christian Brothers' hierarchical and authoritarian management style were being challenged, at least by some members of staff.⁴⁴ The broader political environment, in which the apartheid state, and its authoritarian ethos, had all but succumbed to the sustained onslaught of the enormous forces unleashed by the national-democratic movement, had had a powerful impact on the school. Some staff members were clearly inspired by aspirations towards a more participatory and democratic ethos also in the microcosm of the school, and hence were bound to come into conflict with those who subscribed to the hierarchical mode of control traditionally exercised by the Christian Brothers' Congregation and, indeed, the Church of which it formed part.

CONCLUSION

Although the official ideology of the Christian Brothers had been significantly challenged from 1976, on a number of fronts - governance, discipline, political position, student representation, it had, by the end of the 1980s, largely weathered the storm. The Christian Brothers remained firmly in control of the school, even if this were in the future to be exercised through a largely lay Board of Governors and a lay Principal, subject of course to the effective veto of the Brother Provincial (or his representative). The style of discipline was essentially that traditionally practised by the Christian Brothers, albeit in a less draconian form. The Prefect System remained in place. There was no Students' Representative Council. The school's "official" political position was essentially

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Parents, however, were strangely silent. Perhaps they were still cowed by their traditional subservience to the Brothers, who, after all, in their view, were doing them and their sons a great service, or perhaps they were simply largely ignorant of developments beneath the surface at the school.

conservative, evolutionary, focused narrowly on the achievement of social mobility for its graduates, on “education for liberation”, economically conceived.

But in the latter half of the 1980s St Columba's was a different school from the one it had been before June 1976. This is witnessed, for example, by the counter-ideological thrust, both in content and methodology, of the teaching of History at St Columba's from the mid-1980s, as well as in the activities of the Historical and Geography Societies.⁴⁵ Further, tragic, evidence of the degree of political “conscientising” experienced by at least a few St Columba's students during this period (no doubt, not entirely on campus) was the death in action, referred to above, of one of its recent graduates, MK-operative Robert Waterwitch, in July 1989.⁴⁶

By the end of the 1980s, then, some members of the school community - especially on the teaching staff - were committed to continuing the struggle for a more participatory and inclusive mode of governance, a more humane and rational style of discipline, a deeper involvement in the life of the broader community of which the school formed part, and from which it had tried, in vain, and at times with disastrous consequences, to insulate itself.⁴⁷

The clash of ideologies at St Columba's would continue into the 1990s: an authoritarian, hierarchical, traditionalist mind-set continually being jostled by the aspirations of some towards a more liberal, participatory, democratic dispensation, surely more in keeping, most particularly in a post-apartheid South Africa, with the last decade of the twentieth century.

⁴⁵ See above, pp.58-62.

⁴⁶ See p.80.

⁴⁷ In April 1988 there was an arson attack on the original school building, which caused substantial damage. The popular wisdom is that this was belated recompense for the political position adopted by the school's management in the mid-1980s. (Interview No 0022 with Giovanni Perez, p.5.) The Athlone House Annals recorded that there had been school strikes in the area during the preceding week in which St Columba's had not participated. (Athlone House Annals, 28 April 1988.)

PART TWO

HISTORY AS PEDAGOGY:

AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN THE HIGH-SCHOOL CLASSROOM

CHAPTER SIX

ORAL HISTORY AND THE "NEW HISTORY"

1. PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND COUNTER-IDEOLOGICAL HISTORY

In the latter half of the 1980s, the broad national-democratic movement presented not only a political challenge to the apartheid state, but also a direct challenge to its education system. The school boycotts and educational upheaval of 1984-1985 led to the formation of the Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee in October 1985, which in turn called a National Consultative Conference on the Crisis in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in December 1985.¹ This conference adopted a series of resolutions under the slogan, "People's Education for People's Power", which effectively launched the People's Education movement.² It was to be based, inter alia, upon the following principles:

1. An absolute rejection of apartheid education - its ideologies, structures, content, and method.³

¹ See G.Kruss, *People's Education: an examination of the concept* (Bellville: Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, 1988), pp.6-8, for an account of the origins of People's Education.

² For the resolutions of the National Consultative Conference, see *People's Education: a collection of articles from December 1985 to May 1987* (Bellville: Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape, n.d.), p.29.

³ A good description of how History, in particular, was typically taught in apartheid schools at the time is given in M.Walker, "History and History Teaching in Apartheid South Africa", in *Radical History Review*, 46/7, 1990, pp.298-308. For a detailed analysis of the dilemma of the History teacher in apartheid South Africa, see O.van den Berg & P.Buckland, *Beyond the History Syllabus: constraints and opportunities* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1983).

2. Progress towards the goal of a non-racial, democratic future: “education for liberation, justice and freedom”.⁴
3. Education for control and empowerment.
4. Education for collectivity and creativity: People’s Education aimed to encourage “collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis”.⁵

It is clear from the above that the stress of People’s Education was as much upon a new pedagogical methodology which would stimulate critical thought and analysis as it was upon a new, alternative content.

In March 1986 a follow-up conference was held in Durban where the National Education Crisis Committee was established.⁶ This body soon set up a People’s Education Secretariat, which, in turn, created various subject commissions, notably the English and History Commissions.⁷ In the remarkably short space of two months, the latter commission produced a workbook, *What is History?*, intended for use in schools from the beginning of 1987.⁸

This proclaimed boldly, in its preamble, that:

History - properly taught - should not just tell of the deeds and sayings of people in authority, it should recover and comprehend the doings and thoughts of ordinary men and women. It should examine the historical sources of dispossession,

⁴ Fr S.Mkhatshwa in his keynote address at the National Consultative Conference, *People’s Education: a collection of articles*, p.7.

⁵ Resolutions on People’s Education 1(2), in *People’s Education: a collection of articles*, p.29. For a discussion of the principles of People’s Education, see G.Kruss, *People’s Education: an examination of the concept*, pp.10-19.

⁶ G.Kruss, *People’s Education: an examination of the concept*, p.8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.24-25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.28-29. Unfortunately, the state banned its use in black schools even before its publication. (L.Callinicos, “Popular History in the Eighties”, in *Radical History Review*, 46/7, 1990, p.290.)

oppression and exploitation, and should examine the ways in which these were resisted.⁹

The workbook went on to outline its approach as being based upon: the use of evidence, “which the historian selects and interprets”; the development of historical skills; the critical use of sources; discussion and group work; student-directed learning; and a generally critical and questioning attitude.¹⁰ In accordance with its preamble, it included exercises focused upon “history from below” and, specifically, oral history, quoting the memorable slogan of the National Campaign for People’s History and Culture in Mozambique, “Our Old People Are Our Libraries”.¹¹ Probably for the first time in South Africa, “history from below”, and, specifically, oral history had been placed squarely upon the senior-secondary pedagogical agenda.¹² Leslie Witz’s manual, *Write Your Own History*, which was published in the following year, devoted a substantial section to oral history methodology.¹³

History teaching at St Columba’s was not unaffected by the spirit of the times. As has been detailed above, History was taught there, from the mid-1980s, in a critical, questioning, and counter-ideological manner. The syllabus content was expanded to include themes from the history of the dispossession, exploitation, and oppression of the subject peoples of South Africa, and their resistance thereto, as well as a critical examination of the political mythology of the Afrikaner-nationalist rulers.

Classroom methodology was characterised by questioning, the presentation of argument, an emphasis on discussion and debate, and the active encouragement of divergent views -

⁹ *What is History? A New Approach for Students, Workers and Communities* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1987), p.1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.16, 34-36, 60, 94.

¹² For an early critique of *What is History?* and a response, see “ ‘What is History?’ A New Approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities”, *Perspectives in Education*, 1988, Vol.10, No 1, pp.75-83.

¹³ L.Witz, *Write Your Own History* (Johannesburg: SACHED Trust & Ravan Press, 1988), pp.68-86. See also L. Witz, “The Write Your Own History Project”, in J.Brown et al (eds), *History from South*

in essence, a training in the democratic process. No one ideological line was upheld, students were encouraged “to challenge and be challenged”, and history was presented as an ongoing argument between present and past, not as a body of immutable facts, merely to be memorised and recited. The official syllabus, texts, and examinations were subjected to critical scrutiny, whilst a library of alternative texts was compiled and made available for students’ consultation and study.¹⁴

In 1986 a Historical Society was founded, which invited guest speakers on a range of counter-ideological topics.¹⁵ In 1989 the members of this society made an attempt to undertake a history of the school “from below”, with a focus upon oral history, but this proved abortive owing to lack of time and energy, their efforts being conducted purely extra-murally.¹⁶

In 1992, as part of the school’s “Athlone Week” curriculum project, in which it ventured out into its immediate community, the “History Group” interviewed older residents of the area, and reported thus:

We soon discovered ... that our most valuable resource was human: the aged residents of Athlone. ... Their oral reports made the history of Athlone come alive for us. For many in our group, history finally made sense. We were given the opportunity to record the evidence of people who had helped to make and shape the history of Athlone. Their accounts were informative, interesting and humorous. ... We felt as though we truly had developed a sense of Athlone and of the skills required to record history.¹⁷

Africa: alternative visions and practices (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ See pp.60-62 above. Whilst the management of the school was not always comfortable with these developments, it did not interfere in their implementation. See also C.Kros, “History for Democracy”, in *People’s Education: a collection of essays*, pp.63-72.

¹⁵ See pp.58-59 above.

¹⁶ Personal experience. (I had been the Senior History Master at St Columba’s from 1984 and had founded the Historical Society in 1986.)

¹⁷ M.Robinson & K.Hammond, *Education is All Around Us: a school explores its community* (Bellville: Materials Development Project, University of the Western Cape, 1993), pp.40-41.

In the light of the counter-ideological tradition of history teaching that had developed at St Columba's, it seemed entirely appropriate, therefore, to adopt a popular history, or "history from below", approach to the pedagogical aspect of this dissertation. This led, in turn, to a focus on oral history as a popular-history technique for exploring the *challenge from below* to the "official ideology" of St Columba's High School, which has been described in the first part of this dissertation.

A second reason for this focus lay, however, in the nature of the sources available to any historian of the school.

2. AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

As indicated at the outset of this dissertation, I found, when undertaking its historical research component, a paucity of documentary and other sources available, owing primarily to the absence of a culture of preserving such records at the school, but also to the refusal of the Provincial Superior of the Christian Brothers' Congregation to allow access to the key records of the South African Province of the order housed in its archives at Boksburg.¹⁸ Although managing to locate some relevant documentation, especially in the Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Town, and having over time compiled my own collection of relevant documents, I turned, of necessity, to oral evidence as a crucially important source, which led me to a study of its nature, its peculiar strengths and weaknesses. The distinctive merits of oral evidence as a tool of historical research (freshness, immediacy, poignancy and pungency of expression, the unofficial voice, "history from below") were immediately apparent,¹⁹ but so too was the fact that it had a peculiar and vexed problematic, which is referred to below.²⁰

¹⁸ See "Note on Sources" above, pp.7-8.

¹⁹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, 1988), gives, perhaps, the classic account of oral history in English.

²⁰ See pp.105-106.

The striking merits of oral history as a *pedagogical* tool also soon manifested themselves, more particularly in the tradition of the “new history”,²¹ with its emphasis upon involvement of the student in the processes followed by the historian: the interrogation and interpretation of sources in search of evidence, the posing of historical questions, engaging in the ongoing enquiry that history is, the presentation of findings - in a word, “doing” or “creating” history”. Oral history accorded well, too, with the principles of People’s Education, with its emphasis on collectivity, creativity, activity, critical engagement, and empowerment.²² All of this suggested the opportunity for an oral history project for senior students, which would simultaneously provide raw material for much-needed oral evidence to further the purely historical research *and* test the aptness of oral history as a pedagogical methodology in the classroom.

The abstract complexity of the undertaking would demand that it be undertaken with the most senior class available, unencumbered by the immediate demands of an external matriculation examination, that is Std 9. There would, necessarily, have to be some “spiralling down” from the level of academic historical research to that of the Std 9 History classroom. Moreover, although other types of source, in so far as they were available, would not (and should not) be excluded from the students’ search for evidence, the limited *size* of the research project being undertaken would justify focus on one interesting, challenging, and problematic methodology.

The location of an oral history project squarely within the tradition of the “new history” in schools led me to a careful consideration of the philosophical base of its teaching methodology, and of its essential features, especially those which would relate most directly to such a project. What follows, therefore, is a brief outline of the philosophical

²¹ In the early 1970s a new approach to the teaching of history in schools began to take hold in Britain. It became known as the “new history”, and its influence soon spread to other parts of the English-speaking world, including Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. For an outline of the development of history-teaching in Britain during this century, focusing on the introduction of the “new history”, see D.Sylvester, “Change and continuity in history teaching, 1900-1993” in H.Bourdillon (ed.), *Teaching History* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.9-23.

²² See pp.84-85 above.

underpinnings of the “new history”, and a characterisation of its main features, with a focus on those elements judged most relevant to an oral history methodology in the classroom.

3. PHILOSOPHICAL BASE OF THE “NEW HISTORY”

The American educational theorist, Jerome Bruner, held that “the curriculum of a subject should be determined by the most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the underlying principles that give structure to that subject”, its “basic ideas”.²³ These “basic ideas” determine what should be taught and how it should be taught, and Bruner believed that, by means of a “spiral curriculum”, which turned back upon itself at ever-higher levels of complexity, “any subject [could] be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development”.²⁴

The first concerted attempt, in Britain, to apply Bruner’s theories to the history curriculum was made by the Schools Council History Project from 1972,²⁵ but it was P.J.Rogers who, at least in Britain, laid a coherently articulated philosophical base for the application of Bruner’s theory to the teaching of history at school level by undertaking a careful epistemological analysis of the nature of the discipline.²⁶

²³ J.S.Bruner, *The Process of Education* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p.31.

In 1965 Paul Hirst introduced a similar idea, that of “rational forms of knowledge” (history being one), with their own central concepts, distinctive logical structure, and their own techniques and skills for exploring experience. (P.H.Hirst, “Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge”, in R.D. Archambault (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis and Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

²⁴ J.S.Bruner, *The Process of Education*, pp.33, 13, 52-54. Bruner maintained, moreover, that, “Intellectual activity anywhere is the same, whether at the frontier of knowledge or in a third-grade classroom. ... The difference is in degree, not in kind.” (Ibid., p.14.)

²⁵ Schools Council History 13-16 Project, *A New Look at History* (Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall, 1976), pp.10, 22.

²⁶ See, especially, P.J.Rogers, *The New History: theory into practice* (London: Historical Association, 1979), and P.J.Rogers, *History: why, what & how* (London: Historical Association, 1987).

Rogers began by identifying the “basic ideas” or structures of history, that is, the *propositions* (“know that”), *procedures* (“know how”), and *concepts* with which it is concerned. History, he argued, is conceptually non-esoteric, borrowing its concepts from whatever field it happens to be concerned with at the time, but this is not to deny it a distinctive propositional and procedural nature. Propositionally, history is concerned to produce an *explanatory narrative* of the past, which necessarily implies selection, not all events having significance (in terms of their consequences) for the historian’s immediate purpose. But historical events must also be intrinsically related to other events, in a process known as “colligation”, if a coherent explanatory narrative is to be produced.²⁷ Hence the importance of *context*.

History, then, is a “reconstruction” of the past, which depends upon three (or four) key components: *evidence* of particulars obtained from sources, as critically appraised; enabling background knowledge of facts, norms, and assumptions (what Rogers called “*contextual frame of reference*”); and *empathetic identification* with historical agents (to which he later added *imaginative inference* based upon established knowledge). Finally, history is an *open enquiry*, carried on in terms of rigorous standards, which in themselves enable valid criticisms to be made of earlier historical judgements. The *procedures* of history are concerned primarily with the appropriate ways of handling the sources in order to produce propositions of the kind referred to above.²⁸

²⁷ W.H.Walsh, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 2nd ed., 1958), pp. 23-24, 59-64.

²⁸ The above discussion is derived largely from P.J.Rogers, *The New History*, pp.5-16, and *passim*. Also relevant is P.J.Rogers, *History: why, what & how?*, especially pp.31-43. The latter work analyses in depth what is meant by historical explanation and understanding, and details the educational benefits that accrue from the study of history.

4. MAIN FEATURES OF THE ‘NEW HISTORY’

In the light of the foregoing discussion, the central emphases of the “new history” in the classroom would include the following:

A. *The use of sources in order to derive historical evidence*

This is clearly central to the approach as outlined above, an explanatory historical narrative being derived, in the first instance, from a critical analysis of historical sources. Of course, any study of historical sources immediately raises certain key difficulties, which have to be addressed if such study is to have educational significance. These include:

1. the question of *what counts as a source*, a consideration of which leads to a realisation of the rich diversity of historical sources and the crucial distinction between primary and secondary sources;
2. questions relating to *validity* and *reliability* of sources, for example, the problem of the author’s bias;
3. the question of *what to select* from the sources for use as evidence, which raises consideration of a different kind of bias, that of the historian;
4. other questions relating to the *interpretation* of sources, for example, the problem of gaps and contradictions in the evidence, and the significance of contextual knowledge.

A concept related to contextual knowledge is that of the “second record” of the historian, which Hexter defined thus: “It is everything he [the historian] can bring to bear upon the record of the past in order to elicit from that record the best account he can render of what he believes actually happened in the past. Potentially, therefore, it embraces his skills,

the range of his knowledge, the set of his mind, the substance, quality, and character of his experience - his total consciousness".²⁹

In the tradition of the "new history", every student is a "proto-historian", with a unique - if relatively undeveloped - "second record". Nichol, for example, argues cogently that the teacher must help to provide the student with a surrogate "second record", but, of course, this would not be to deny him the use of his own (supposing this were possible). Indeed, its use should surely be encouraged.³⁰

Another crucial consideration is the extent to which the teacher would need to "spiral down" from the level of the academic historian to that of the "proto-historian" in the classroom.³¹ Surely a fundamental principle in teaching, especially at secondary level, is not to underestimate the ability of students, without, at the same time, making unrealistic, hence possibly crippling, demands upon them. The effect of such an approach is to draw a great deal more from students than might otherwise be the case.

Even, however, at the level of the "proto-historian", the senior high-school student would require much assistance from the teacher-historian, who would have to provide both contextual framework (in Rogers' terms) and a surrogate "second record" (in Hexter's terms) so that s/he is enabled meaningfully to interpret his/her sources.³² Nevertheless, the student involved in an oral history project such as that outlined above would be operating, in Nichol's classification, at a level requiring the rudimentary exercise of most of the professional historian's skills:

²⁹ J.H.Hexter, *The History Primer* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), p.104.

³⁰ J.Nichol, "History Teaching, the Historian's Evidence, and Pupils' Historical Understanding", in *Developments in History Teaching* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980), pp.32-33.

³¹ J.Nichol distinguishes three levels of student response to evidence, the highest being that of the "proto-historian". (Ibid., p.26.)

³² Ibid., pp.31-33. Dickinson, Gard, and Lee argue for the development of pupils' "second records" through increasing knowledge both of historical context and the historical method. {A.K.Dickinson, A.Gard, & P.J.Lee, "Evidence in History and the Classroom", in A.K.Dickinson & P.J.Lee (eds), *History Teaching and Historical Understanding* (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp.16-17.}

“the ability to decipher the source’s meaning; ... to see its relevance against the general understanding developed of the topic; and to use it as evidence to help answer the questions he has about the subject”.³³

B. An understanding of cause and consequence

Central to historical explanation is an understanding of the causes and consequences of events. The area of causation is a vexed one in history, and high-school students have to be led progressively to an appreciation that it is a very difficult matter of historical judgement to link causes to events, and to establish a hierarchy among a multiplicity of causes. Moreover, consequences are not always obviously to be derived from events, and are, of course, only discernible with hindsight (which, therefore, has a *positive* historical application, as well as attendant perils).³⁴ A further consideration is that some factors may *prevent* or *delay* change rather than causing it.

C. A sense of time and chronology

A sense of chronology is clearly crucial to an understanding of the cause-effect sweep of history. Events can hardly be properly interpreted if not accurately sequenced. (One must, of course, beware the “Post hoc, ergo propter hoc” fallacy, that is, the mistaken notion that, merely because one event occurred after another, it was necessarily *caused* by it.) A recognition of the perils of anachronism is a further invaluable side-benefit of the acquisition of this indispensable faculty.

D. An appreciation of change and continuity in history

Students of history must be led to an awareness that, although the present is different from the past, it is intimately related to the past, from which it has derived, and with which

³³ J.Nichol, “History Teaching”, p.31.

it retains some continuities. However, change “has neither a constant rate nor a consistent direction”.³⁵

E. *Historical Empathy and Imaginative Inference*

Rogers has argued that valid historical reconstruction is not possible without the development of these faculties.³⁶ It is necessary, he maintains, to identify with a Cromwell or a Nelson or, indeed, a Hitler “in the personal sense of seeing things as [he] did”.³⁷ Of course, it is crucial that these faculties be exercised in close correlation with historical evidence: “In history the imagination must be disciplined by the evidence.”³⁸

The emphasis on empathetic identification popularised by the “new history” has, however, sparked an animated and sometimes abstruse debate. Fundamental questions asked include: What precisely does it mean? How is it developed? Can it be validly assessed? Is it, indeed, even possible? Questions relating to the use of the imagination, including empathy, are bound to arise in the interpretation and analysis of oral evidence.

Some difficulty arises from the fact that the term is variously defined, and one aspect of the debate is the question of whether it describes an affective or cognitive activity, or some combination of the two. But more fundamental is the question of its very possibility. Clearly, empathy in the absolute sense is an impossibility; one can simply not enter into the mind or feelings of another person.³⁹ What the historian must do is to *imagine* the thoughts and feelings of people in the past in order the better to understand and the more

³⁴ P.J.Rogers, *History: why, what & how?*, pp.6-8, 35-36.

³⁵ *History in the Primary and Secondary Years: an HMI view* (London: HMSO, Department of Education & Science, 1985), p.3.

³⁶ P.J.Rogers, *History: why, what & how?*, pp.34-35.

³⁷ P.J.Rogers, *The New History*, pp.12-13.

³⁸ *A New Look at History*, p.18. V.Little, in “What is Historical Imagination?”, *Teaching History*, 36, 1983, pp.27-32, provides a perceptive account of the different ways in which the historian uses the imagination.

³⁹ V.Little, “What is Historical Imagination?”, p.30; A.Low-Beer, in “Empathy and History”, *Teaching History*, 55, 1989, p.11, quotes Bernard Crick on what he terms the “empathetic fallacy”.

cogently to explain their actions or omissions. Vivienne Little aptly sums up the function of “empathy” to the historian thus: “Empathy is an heuristic device which the historian abandons when it has done its work, just as the builder removes the scaffolding. Its work is to aid the faithful reconstruction of the past ...”⁴⁰

As defined above, the attainment of “empathy” is a valid pedagogical aim of the “new history”. Whether, and how, it can be taught, however, and, even more problematically, assessed, remain vexed questions indeed.⁴¹ Jenkins and Brickley, for example, have launched a radical attack on the mode of assessment, in Britain, of the (supposedly) ascending levels of “empathy”,⁴² arguing that it rewards a particular ideological stance, that of classical liberalism (after John Stuart Mill).⁴³ Low-Beer expresses a similar concern: “... affective *assessments* raise moral issues. Insisting on certain sorts of attitudes immediately raises the issue of propaganda in history”.⁴⁴

F. *The Posing of Historical Questions*

The asking of appropriate questions is the key to historical enquiry. For example:

What happened? When did it happen? Why did it happen? Why did it happen *then*?

What effects did this event have? How do I know this to be true? What was it like to be ...? What would I have done if ...?

⁴⁰ V.Little, “What is Historical Imagination?”, p.31. Ann Low-Beer concurs: “When empathy is mentioned among historians, it is often not distinguished from imagination, and always rests upon issues of interpreting evidence, a bedrock of actual historical testimony”. (A.Low-Beer, “Empathy and History”, p.11.)

⁴¹ See, for example, P.Clements, “Historical Empathy - R.I.P.?”, *Teaching History*, 85, October 1996, pp.6-8.

⁴² See, for example, R.Ashby & P.Lee, “Children’s Concepts of Empathy and Understanding in History”, in C.Portal (ed.), *The History Curriculum for Teachers* (London, New York, & Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1987), pp.62-88.

⁴³ K.Jenkins & P.Brickley, “Reflections on the Empathy Debate”, *Teaching History*, 55, 1989, pp.18-23. See, especially, Note 9, p.23.

⁴⁴ A.Low-Beer, “Empathy and History”, p.8.

It will be clear that such questions link with other emphases of the “new history”, for example, Cause and Effect, Time and Chronology, Change and Continuity, Empathy and Imaginative Inference.

G. *History as an Ongoing Enquiry*

It should become clear to a student being taught in accordance with the philosophy of the “new history” that historical judgements, dealing as they do with the rich and complex tapestry of human affairs, on which the evidence available is always incomplete and the jury is always out, are necessarily tentative. History is therefore an ongoing debate amongst its practitioners, but one carried on in terms of the rigorous norms of the discipline as agreed amongst professionals, which will, hopefully, be progressively internalised by students following a course in this tradition. History is *process*, rather than product, and by means of an oral history project high-school students can meaningfully *participate* in this process.⁴⁵

H. “Spiralling”

It will be clear from the above discussion that the “new history” is fundamentally concerned with the progressive acquisition by the student of the concepts, skills, and procedures employed by the historian, *at levels appropriate to his/her development*. This last requirement dictates the “spiral curriculum”, as proposed by Bruner and developed in history by Rogers (and others), the notion of a curriculum which “turns back upon itself” in order to address the “basic ideas” or structures of the discipline at ever-more complex levels.⁴⁶ More specifically, the research reported here required the “spiralling down” of the

⁴⁵ The above discussion of the salient features of the “new history” owes much to *History in the Primary and Secondary Years: an HMI view*, pp.2-4, and *A New Look at History*, pp.16-18, 36-43. Dickinson, Gard, & Lee argue cogently that history as a study can be meaningfully approached only as “an ongoing public form of knowledge with its own shared understandings, procedures, and standards”. (A.K.Dickinson, A.Gard, & P.J.Lee, “Evidence in History and Classroom”, pp.3-13.)

⁴⁶ See above, pp.90, 93-94. Rogers explains it thus: “A key idea can be encountered in examples of greatly varying difficulty, and education is a matter of arranging a graded sequence of representations

skills of the academic historian to those of the “proto-historian” in the Std 9 History classroom.

How, and the extent to which, this was achieved will become clear in the course of the succeeding chapters, which describe an oral history project into selected aspects of the history of St Columba’s High School which attempted to apply the main principles of the “new history” methodology, as outlined above, to the teaching of history in the senior-secondary classroom, and to assess the efficacy of the attempt.

The next chapter will examine more closely the pedagogical value of the oral history methodology in the classroom, especially in terms of the tradition of the “new history”.

such that, by moving from the simplest and most concrete representations of a key idea to the more and more complex, comprehensive, and abstract, the pupil may eventually acquire a comprehensive understanding of the idea itself”. (P.J.Rogers, *The New History*, p.17.)

CHAPTER SEVEN

ORAL HISTORY AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

1. THE PEDAGOGICAL VALUE OF ORAL HISTORY

As has been suggested, in the nature of the history of any school, more especially one which does not have a tradition of preserving its records, much valuable evidence will not be written, for example, teacher, student, parent, and community perspectives. Oral history is an invaluable means of filling these gaps.¹ Access to oral evidence will also cast fresh light on other evidence, notably documentation, through elucidation and exposition. Moreover, it is common cause that oral history has striking and distinctive merits as a tool of historical research,² as well, of course, as its own problematic.³

Oral history has considerable merits also as a pedagogical tool. Most fundamental is its involvement of the student in the process of the “creation” of history. This accords well with Bruner’s dictum that a subject should be taught by pursuing its “basic ideas” - its propositions, procedures, and concepts, to use the terms of Rogers’ analysis.⁴

To a student involved in an oral history project, history is not mere inert subject matter, a lifeless product, but a *process* for the extension of knowledge. The student becomes an apprentice researcher, and is introduced actively to the problems posed by the “reconstruction” of the past, presented, perhaps, in an intensified, certainly in a peculiar,

¹ See “Note on Sources”, p.8 above.

² See p.88 above.

³ See pp.105-106 below.

⁴ See pp.89-91 above.

form by oral evidence. S/he must painstakingly compile his/her sources, and then grapple with the vexed problem of their historical significance, establishing their reliability, allowing for their bias, selecting what to use from them as evidence, and then interpreting this evidence in the light of the contextual frame (including his/her own “second record”).

In the course of interpreting the evidence, and writing and presenting the fruits of his/her research, the “proto-historian” will surely come to a deeper understanding of some of the key variables of history - time and chronology, change and continuity, cause and consequence. S/he will also, in the processes of interpretation, synthesis, and presentation, have been posing historical questions and employing empathetic identification and imaginative inference. S/he will surely come in the end to an awareness of the essentially tentative nature of his/her findings, hence to an appreciation of the nature of the historical enterprise as one of ongoing enquiry and constant revision. In this way, the student will in all probability achieve a much more profound sense of the nature of history as a discipline than would be the case through more conventional teaching.⁵

In addition to coming to understand some of the procedures employed by the historian, and to practising at least at an elementary level, some of the skills of the historian, the student will acquire, as well, other, more general, skills and concepts aimed at in the classroom, including:

- oral skills of listening, questioning, talking, discussing and arguing;
- interviewing skills;
- social skills of interaction, discussion, and co-operation;
- emotional skills of imaginative identification with others;

- intellectual skills of information-gathering, extrapolation, analysis, synthesis, judgement and evaluation;
- skills of presentation.⁶

An enormous educational advantage of oral history is that it involves every willing student, irrespective of ability range, in one way or another, and might well reward his/her work by public exposure.⁷ This renders it especially relevant in South African schools, as it includes not only the well-off and literate, but everyone, as well as drawing on the story-telling traditions of many South African communities.⁸ A striking example of how this has been realised is the researching, writing, and publishing of the history of the working-class community of Heideveld on the Cape Flats by the students and teachers of the History Society of the Cathkin Senior Secondary School, a project which involved the extensive use of oral evidence.⁹

2. ORAL HISTORY AND THE WESTERN CAPE INTERIM SYLLABUS

Oral history accords well, also, with some of the requirements of the current Interim History Syllabus of the Western Cape Education Department. This recognises, in its preamble, that, "History, in addition to its content, is a *mode of enquiry*, a way of

⁵ See Chapter Six, *passim*.

⁶ See P.Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.139-152; A.Ross, "Children Becoming Historians: an oral history project in a primary school", *Oral History*, 12(2), 1984, pp.21-31; M.Hewitt, " 'History is everything that's behind you': uses of oral history in schools", *Oral History*, 22(2), 1994, pp.85-87; and J.B.Coltham & J.Fines, *Educational Objectives for the Study of History: a suggested framework* (London: Historical Association, 1971), pp.16-23.

⁷ J.Geddes, "Organising an Oral History Project in a Secondary School", *Oral History*, 20(1), 1992, pp.56-57.

⁸ J.Bam & P.Visser, *A New History for a New South Africa* (Cape Town: Kagiso Publishers, 1996), p.119.

⁹ R.Prinsloo & M.Robinson, *Our Community in Our Classrooms: How a school in Cape Town brought local history alive* (Bellville: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education, Materials Development Project, 1992). See pp.16-19, and *passim*, for the use of oral history.

investigating the past which requires the *acquisition and use of skills*".¹⁰ [My emphasis.] General Aim No 2.6 is "To contribute to [pupils'] understanding of history as an academic discipline and the [acquisition of the] intellectual skills and perspectives which such a study involves".¹¹ Specific Aim No 3.2 is directly applicable:

To give the pupils an understanding and appreciation of such historical skills as the ability to locate evidence, to organise, classify and interpret this evidence in a logical way[,] and to communicate historical ideas.¹²

General Remark No 4.10 strongly recommends project work "in connection with local and/or regional history", although the syllabus, as articulated, does not make obvious provision for such work.¹³

3. ORAL HISTORY AND THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CURRICULUM

By way of comparison, it is informative to examine the requirements of the recent, and influential, National Curriculum for History in England and Wales. This originally prescribed three Attainment Targets to be achieved at ten ascending levels of sophistication.¹⁴

The original Attainment Targets were:

¹⁰ *Interim Syllabus for History Higher and Standard Grade: Stds 8, 9 and 10* (Cape Town: Western Cape Education Department, 1996), p.1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁴ Department of Education and Science, *History in the National Curriculum (England)* (London: HMSO, 1991). Subsequently, the three Attainment Targets were conflated into a single Attainment Target described at nine ascending levels of achievement. This conflation did not, however, alter the central thrust of the National Curriculum. {Department For Education, *History in the National Curriculum (England)* (London: HMSO, 1995), pp.15-17.}

1. *KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY*

The development of the ability to describe and explain historical change and continuity, and analyse different features of historical situations.

2. *INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORY*

The development of the ability to understand different interpretations of history.

3. *THE USE OF HISTORICAL SOURCES*

The development of the pupils' ability to acquire evidence from historical sources, and form judgements about their reliability and value.¹⁵

Attainment Target 1 was concerned with chronology; continuity and change; causes, motives, and consequences; ideas, attitudes, and circumstances; describing, analysing, and explaining historical situations.¹⁶ Oral history clearly has a role to play here.

Of course, the acquiring of historical knowledge and historical understanding should be complementary and interdependent processes. Redfern argues that, when the National Curriculum was being debated: "What most people wanted was the development of knowledge through understanding[,] and they were firm in their belief that this could only come through *active pupil involvement in historical inquiry*". [My emphasis.] He continues: "Working with real evidence was of central importance in such activity and it seemed to many of us that oral evidence had unique and exciting roles to play".¹⁷

Attainment Target 2 was concerned with awareness of different versions of the past; fact and point of view; how deficiencies of evidence and the *nature of the sources* determine

¹⁵ Department of Education and Science (DES), *History in the National Curriculum (England)* (London: HMSO, 1991), pp.3-10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.3-5.

¹⁷ A.Redfern, "Both Understanding and Knowledge: the value of oral evidence in the classroom",

historical interpretations; strengths and weaknesses of different interpretations; the *problem of objectivity*.¹⁸ [My emphases.] The scope for oral history here is self-evidently extensive.

Attainment Target 3 was concerned with the use of different historical sources; comparison of the usefulness of different historical sources for particular enquiries; the problem of the reliability and value of different historical sources; the problematic nature of historical evidence.¹⁹ Oral evidence has a highly significant, if not central, role to play here.

Moreover, the General Requirements of the National Curriculum required, inter alia, that pupils should be involved in historical enquiry and communication, including:

- the asking of questions, identifying of sources, collection and recording of information;
- selection and organisation of historical information;
- presentation of results, orally, visually, and in writing.²⁰

The requirements of the English National Curriculum, and those of the Western Cape Interim History Syllabus, clearly emphasise, then, the nature of history as a *mode of enquiry*, and the need for students to come to an understanding of this by active involvement in such enquiry. In the process, certain skills, especially those related to the location, selection, and interpretation of evidence, and the organisation and presentation of the results of this historical enquiry, will be acquired. Students will come also to an appreciation of the vexed nature of interpretation and the problematic nature of different historical sources. All of these ends would surely be well served by an oral history project.

Oral History, 20(1), 1992, pp.29-33.

¹⁸ DES, *History in the National Curriculum (England)*, pp.7-8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

²⁰ *History in the National Curriculum (England)*, 1991, p.35. See also T.Lomas, "Oral History and the

4. ORAL HISTORY AND REMINISCENCE THERAPY

Such an oral history project might have an especially valuable by-product, the improvement of inter-generational relations and perceptions. So often there is mutual misapprehension and lack of appreciation between the generations as the result of a failure to communicate meaningfully. Geddes, for one, comments on the breaking down of such prejudices as a result of her projects. The old tend no longer to see the young as rude and uncaring, the young the old as boring and complaining. Moreover, the old seem to gain in self-esteem, having their memories valued and appreciated. Friendships sometimes develop across the generations.²¹ Indeed, it has been observed that older witnesses are often more forthcoming, in certain areas, with children than with adult interviewers, fearing no social sanctions for unorthodox views.

Much, in fact, has been written which suggests the therapeutic value of reminiscence to the elderly, and the especial value of oral history in this regard.²²

5. THE PROBLEMATIC OF ORAL HISTORY

Of course, oral history has its own problematic, notably the vexed question of the reliability of memory. The Popular Memory Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, for example, has argued cogently that we “compose” our memories to make sense of our past and present. We remake or repress memories which are painful or “unsafe”; we seek “composure”, an alignment of past, present, and future.²³

National Curriculum”, *Oral History*, 20(1), 1992, pp.34-40.

²¹ J.Geddes, “Organising an Oral History Project in a Secondary School”, pp.54, 57.

²² See, for example, J.Bornat, “Oral History as a Social Movement: Reminiscence and Older People”, *Oral History*, 17(2), 1989, pp.16-24; A.Norris & M.A.El Eilah, “Reminiscence Groups: a therapy for elderly patients and their staff”, *Oral History*, 11(1), 1983, pp.27-30; J.Adams, “Reminiscence in the Geriatric Ward: an undervalued resource”, *Oral History*, 12(2), 1984; and P.Duffin, “Reminiscence: at the Sharp End”, *Oral History*, 17(1), 1989, pp.15-21.

²³ See, for example, A.Thomson, “Anzac Memories: putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia”, *OralHistory*, 18(1), 1990, pp.25-31.

Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame maintains that the first purpose of every biographical account is “*not* to describe the past ‘as it was’, or even as it was experienced, but to confer to past experience a certain *meaning*; a meaning which will contribute to the meaning of the present ...”²⁴ One way of “composing” the past is “uchronia”, the invention of an ideal narrative to compensate for the disappointments of the past.²⁵

Significant, too, are “silences”, what Luisa Passerini refers to as “historical amnesia”²⁶ (consider, for example, the “silence” around the slave origins of many of the forebears of today’s inhabitants of Mamre).²⁷ Hence the need, again in Passerini’s phrase, to “psycho-analyse” our texts, to take cognisance not only of what they confess, but what they conceal or repress, to contest the romanticisation characteristic of popular memory, in order to try to penetrate to the “reality” of past experience.²⁸

These are complex questions, indeed, which many might consider to be beyond the grasp of the average senior-secondary student. I believe, however, that they can be meaningfully approached, in at least an introductory way, at this level.

6. CONCLUSION

An oral history project, therefore, involves all participants in the experiencing of history as a process for the extension of knowledge - in the active “doing” or “creating” of history. This involvement entails the acquisition of most valuable concepts and skills, some specifically historical, others more general, as well as a more profound understanding of

²⁴ I. Bertaux-Wiame, “The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration: how Women and Men Came to Paris Between the Wars”, in N. Burchardt and P. Thompson (eds), *Our Common History*, pp. 193-194.

²⁵ A. Portelli, “Uchronic Dreams: working class memory and possible worlds”, *Oral History*, 16(2), 1988, pp. 46-56.

²⁶ Quoted in R. Samuel, “ ‘Myth and History’: a first reading”, *Oral History*, 16(2), 1988, p. 15.

²⁷ K. Ward, “The road to Mamre: migration, memory, and the meaning of community, c. 1900-1992”, unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1992, especially c. 2.

²⁸ Quoted in R. Samuel, “ ‘Myth and History’: a first reading”, p. 15.

the nature of history as a field of study. The student will come, at least at a rudimentary level, to an appreciation of the complex process of interpreting (necessarily fragmentary) historical sources, and the tentativeness, therefore, of historical knowledge, as well as to some understanding of the peculiar problematic of oral history. Valuable by-products of the process might well be improved inter-generational attitudes and therapeutic benefits for the elderly. All in all, the educational value of an oral history project must surely be considerable.

The next chapter will describe in detail the research plan adopted for the oral history project, and its implementation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RESEARCH PLAN AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

1. ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a suitable technique for classroom research focusing on the execution of an oral history project, because such research is small-scale, and much of the data generated is of an impressionistic nature, both facts rendering tests of statistical significance inappropriate.¹ Cohen and Manion, for example, acknowledge the appropriateness of action research, inter alia, to curriculum research and development, as well as to research on teaching methods, learning strategies, and the modification of attitudes and values.² All of these characterisations apply to the current project.

Action research involves, in broad outline, the following phases:

- the identification of a specific “problem” or “problems” requiring solution
- the formulation of an action plan
- the execution of this plan
- observation, and modification, of the plan in action
- reflection on the efficacy of the plan
- the revision of the plan

¹ See, for example, L. Stenhouse, “The psycho-statistical paradigm and its limitations 1” and “The psycho-statistical paradigm and its limitations 2”, in J.Ruddock and D.Hopkins, *Research as a Basis for Teaching: Readings from the work of Lawrence Stenhouse* (Oxford and Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1985), pp.20-30.

² L.Cohen & L.Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London; Sydney; Dover, New Hampshire:

- the initiation of a new “action research” cycle:
execution, observation, reflection, revision, and so on.³

2. FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

An action research plan originates with the recognition of “problems” which need to be addressed. The following “problem area” was identified:

Would the introduction of oral history as an historical research technique into the Std 9 History classroom, with the focus on the history of their own school, enable students to begin to discover the true nature of history as a field of study, its methods, and some of the problems the historian encounters, and thus to acquire, at least at a rudimentary level, some of the skills of the historian, by themselves participating in the “doing” of history?⁴

The identification of this “problem area” led directly to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS ONE

That the oral history project would produce in students a deeper understanding of the nature of history.

Croom Helm, 2nd ed., 1985), pp.216-217.

³ On the methodology of Action Research see, for example, S.Davidoff & O.van den Berg, *Changing Your Teaching: the challenge of the classroom* (Pietermaritzburg: Centaur, in association with Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, 1990); S.Kemmis, “Action Research” in T.Husén & T.N.Postlethwaite, *The International Encyclopaedia of Education* (Kiddington, Oxford: Elsevier Science, 2nd ed., 1994), Vol.1, pp.42-48; S.Kemmis & R.McTaggart (eds), *The Action Research Planner* (Victoria: Deakin University, 3rd ed., 1988); J.McNiff, *Action Research: principles and practice* (London: Macmillan, 1988 & Routledge, 1992). A most useful general guide to classroom research is D. Hopkins, *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research* (Milton Keynes & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985).

⁴ I stressed during the course of the project, however, that oral history was but one of a number of types of evidence that the historian uses. Consequently, students were not to be confined rigidly to the use of this type of evidence in constructing their historical syntheses, but were, indeed, encouraged to use whatever other sources they could locate. The teacher, as senior researcher, assisted them in this process.

HYPOTHESIS TWO

That the oral history project would result in an improved attitude towards the study of history on the part of students.

HYPOTHESIS THREE

That the oral history project would result in the acquiring, at an elementary level, of some of the skills of the historian.

It was hoped, also, that the investigation of certain aspects of the life of the school which had a direct impact upon students (for example, discipline, student representation, style of governance) *from an historical perspective*, would result in a deeper understanding of the nature of these issues in the life of the school, and the problems associated with them. These areas, as selected by the students themselves, would form the focus of the oral history project.

3. INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

The plan of action for the oral history project was as presented in the table below:

TABLE I : PLAN OF ACTION FOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

WEEK	ACTIVITY
1	Introducing and Organising the Project
2	Preparation : Questioning Technique
3	Preparation : Interviewing Technique
4	Interview Week
5	Transcription

6	Processing Data
7	Writing Individual Projects
8	Planning Presentation

I commenced the oral history project two weeks into the new academic year (of 1996) with an overview of its nature and purposes, as well as of the oral history method, with the aid of handouts. These were:

1. an outline of the Action Research Project as a whole;⁵
2. a timetable for the oral history project, detailing its aims, the skills it hoped to teach, mark allocations for the term, and instructions in the keeping of a journal.⁶

It was stressed that the main purpose of keeping the journal was to help the teacher improve his teaching, thus that the following should be recorded: whether the aims of a lesson were achieved or not; what worked and what did not; as well as suggestions for future improvement.

In pursuit of a consultative style, and in the interests of securing maximum support, a steering committee was nominated, consisting of three students and myself. Students' input into decision-making, via the steering committee and plenary sessions, would help them to a sense of ownership of the project. All this took just one period, the project getting off to a brisk and very positive start. One student commented in her journal: "I have a great feeling about this project because for the first time we will be 'making' history."⁷ This showed a clear understanding, right at the outset, of the fundamental aim of the project.

⁵ See Addendum 1, "Action Research Project - Term 1 1996, Std 9 History".

⁶ See Addendum 2, "Information on Oral History Project, 1996".

⁷ Student G, Journal, 29 January 1996.

It should be recorded that I had, in the previous year (1995), conducted a pilot oral history project with the Std 9 History class, from which I had learnt a great deal of practical value which accrued to the benefit of the present project.⁸ For example, what had seemed to me (as a teacher) an exaggerated concern for marks (which I dubbed “marks mania”) had dogged the pilot project. To anticipate this, I gave a clear mark allocation at the outset of the oral history project in 1996.⁹

4. ORGANISING THE PROJECT

On Day Two, the class of eleven (later reduced to ten) divided itself into three working groups (2 x 4, 1 x 3). I allowed this division to take place naturally.

I stressed that this year’s project would be concerned with the decades of the 1970s to the 1990s, as the pilot project had been concerned with the earliest decades (1940s to 1960s). This would facilitate comparisons, hence the perception of change and continuity across the decades. Each student then “brainstormed” the following question, *What aspects of the life of the school interest me?*

Students’ ideas were reported back in plenary session, nearly twenty different topics being identified. These would have to be narrowed down to three or four manageable themes.

On Day Three, after both group and plenary work, the following themes were agreed upon:

⁸ A number of instructive problems had arisen in the implementation of the pilot Oral History Project in 1995, including an initial lack of enthusiasm for a demanding project not seen to be directly related to syllabus requirements; “marks mania”; unfortunate timing (Term 3, running over into Term 4); a few students with personal axes to grind. Nevertheless, *Interview Day* was a palpable success, generally good-quality recordings and some most valuable oral evidence being produced. The pilot project concluded with a well-received poster display and dramatic presentation focusing on those aspects of the history of the school studied (discipline; student representation/governance; image of the school in the community/gender issues). Almost in spite of themselves, students had, perceptibly, learned a great deal and gained valuable skills. However no structured evaluation of the pilot project was done.

⁹ See Addendum 2.

1. Running of the School, including governance and student representation
2. Discipline
3. Politics, including the school's "official" political position, how the school was involved, and how its political position was perceived by the broader community.

This selection, most fortuitously, accorded very closely with the choice of themes I had made for my own historical research. Perhaps this was not as surprising as might at first appear in that my original selection had been made from a student (and lay teacher) perspective in accordance with the "history from below" approach I had consciously adopted.¹⁰

A generally positive and constructive attitude was perceptible throughout this process.

5. PREPARATION

A. THE NATURE OF ORAL HISTORY

Day Four commenced with an introduction to the *idea of oral history*, using question-and-answer to ensure a basic understanding of the concept. I went on to explain why some historians prefer the term "oral evidence" to "oral history", as only *one* type of evidence used by the historian, a methodology, and not a discrete branch of historical studies. I invited students to suggest other types of evidence, and we briefly discussed a range of these. In the course of the discussion, the distinctions between the historian and the archaeologist, and history and pre-history, arose and were considered. This discussion, as a whole, was of fundamental significance in that students had to be made fully aware that oral history did not stand on its own, but would depend upon collation with other sources when an historical account came to be written. Moreover, the spontaneous part of the

¹⁰ See pp.86-88 above.

discussion referred to above would have helped to clarify the concept of “history” in the minds of students.

Next the class focused on the *nature of oral history*. I asked students to reflect on its peculiar advantages and disadvantages, and to assist them in this process gave each a copy of Bertolt Brecht’s poem, *Questions From a Worker Who Reads*, and asked them to identify its central idea.¹¹ This they promptly did - history is not the monopoly of the rich and powerful, but belongs also to ordinary people, like ourselves; hence, “history from below”.

Week Two commenced with students reporting back on the advantages and disadvantages of oral history. They produced the categorisation as laid out in Table II below after a plenary discussion, with one student acting as scribe:

TABLE II : ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ORAL HISTORY AS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS¹²

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Different views from different people/ Different perspectives	Lies/Distortion
Direct/First-hand evidence	Omissions/Withholding evidence
Ability to question the witness	Unreliability of memory
Uncovering hidden/missing evidence	Bias
Evidence from the “little” people	Nostalgia
Getting a broader picture	Irrelevance
<i>Personal impressions</i>	

¹¹ See Addendum 3.

¹² As recorded in my Journal, 5 February 1996.

This was pleasing, as students had managed to light, unassisted, on some of the chief advantages and disadvantages of oral history. I handed out copies of Perks's introduction, "What is Oral History?", to confirm, consolidate, and enrich students' views.¹³

After reading this individually, the class went on to an impromptu discussion of some of the problems posed by interpretation, for example, what nostalgia tells us about how people remember the past (nostalgic memories of District Six being cited as an example).¹⁴ In the spirit of collaborative effort and joint ownership of the project, my policy was, whenever at all possible, to allow relevant spontaneous discussion to proceed naturally.

B. QUESTIONING & THE IDEA OF *INTERVIEW DAY*

The next day the class proceeded with an introduction to the methodology of questioning. By way of introduction, a handout on questioning technique was issued, from Leslie Witz's manual.¹⁵ In discussion, the class gave examples of leading, open-ended, and follow-up questions. The importance of asking for examples, whenever appropriate, was stressed.

At the beginning of the next lesson, in accordance with the principle of "spiralling", I handed out a brief "History of St Columba's", written by me for the Christian Brothers' Centenary magazine (1997 being the centenary year of the Christian Brothers in South Africa).¹⁶ This was in order to provide some basic context, hence to facilitate appropriate questioning. It was well received, with students expressing ignorance of the material, and

¹³ R.Perks, *Oral History: Talking about the Past* (London: Historical Association, 1992), pp. 5-8.

¹⁴ This discussion related directly to some of the issues raised under the heading of "The Problematic of Oral History" above, pp.105-106.

¹⁵ L.Witz, *Write Your Own History* (Johannesburg: Ravan & SACHED Trust, 1988), pp.72-77. Also useful in this respect are M.Randall, *Testimonios: a guide to oral history* (Toronto: Participatory Research Group, 1985), and, for the primary school, A.Harris & M.Hewitt, *Talking Time: a guide to oral history for schools* (London: Tower Hamlets Education, 1992), which includes activity sheets.

¹⁶ Addendum 4, "St Columba's High School – A Brief History".

the view that it would help them in posing questions. The “brainstorming” of questions began, first individually, then in groups.

The next few classes were concerned with the refinement, ordering, and addition of questions. Gender emerged as a fourth theme, with the only girl in the group, and one of the original girls at the school (from 1993), displaying, perhaps unsurprisingly, especial interest in this area.

In the interim, I had convened the first steering committee meeting specifically to moot the idea of an *Interview Day*. Interviews could, of course, have been conducted in students’ own time. However, to create a sense of occasion and especial value, I felt it to be a good idea to designate a special day as *Interview Day*, and to gather all interviewees at the school on that day.¹⁷ The steering committee wholeheartedly endorsed this idea, giving excellent reasons for doing so, notably that *Interview Day* would be a more intensive experience than separate interviews after hours; it would be well organised and supervised; it would be the climax of the project and would create a special sense of occasion. When they realised that it would be difficult to get working people to come in during school hours, the members of the steering committee suggested a Saturday morning for *Interview Day*, thus displaying a real commitment to the project.

C. INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE & PRACTICAL PLANNING

Week Four commenced with discussion, first in groups, then in plenary, on the question of Interviewing Technique. Extracts from Witz and from Randall, asking students to respond, in particular, to the questions, “What have you learnt?” and “What surprised you?” were distributed.¹⁸ Towards the end of the first period, copies of (edited) transcripts of a

¹⁷ See J.Geddes, “Organising an Oral History Project in a Secondary School”, *Oral History*, 20(1), 1992, pp.54-55.

¹⁸ L.Witz, *Write Your Own History*, pp.78-83; M.Randall, *Testimonios*, pp.14-27. Both of these manuals

flawed interview, conducted by a student the previous year, were handed out for critical analysis as a homework assignment.¹⁹ Students were now expected to apply in practice what they had learnt in theory.

The next period consisted of a discussion of the pros and cons of the interview, with students correctly highlighting these. The cons included the missing of key follow-up questions and the intrusive expression of the interviewee's own point of view.

Something of a furore arose the next day when one of the members of the class (who had seemed the least committed from the outset) refused to attend *Interview Day* if it were held on a Saturday. He was asked to withdraw from the room, whilst the rest of the class discussed the issue. We decided, together, that he would be given the option of being excluded from the project (with other, independent work being set for him) or reconsidering. These options would be put to him by the other members of his group. The next day he backed down, accepting the terms of the project. I believe that this impasse was successfully resolved because of my consultation with, and the intervention of, the rest of the class. One student expressed the view, in his journal, that, "The way we were consulted about everything is something that I liked very much as it shows that we are being treated as adults".²⁰

The date for *Interview Day* was finally fixed, and practical arrangements were discussed.

In the meantime, the journals revealed many positive comments on the efficacy of group work. One student said, "The class discussions are fruitful and class spirit seems to be very enthusiastic. Everyone is participating well in small groups."²¹ Another commented on the use of the co-operative learning technique of having to report on another's views (used in

provide valuable tips also on the practical aspects of interviewing, for example, on the use of tape recorders and notebooks. (See L. Witz, pp.78-80; M.Randall, pp.19-23.)

¹⁹ Addendum 5, "Interview between Samantha Mahomed and Mr M.Goslett, 1994".

²⁰ Student B, Journal, 22 February 1996.

²¹ Student B, Journal, 16 February 1996.

the exchange of views over the flawed interview) thus: “This was a valuable exercise because we learn [in this way] ... to listen to other people and understand their points of view and respect them.”²²

One period was devoted to the practical planning of *Interview Day*. The following division of responsibilities within the groups was agreed upon: Chief Interviewer, Scribe, Sound Engineer. These roles could be rotated, as each group would conduct six interviews on its chosen theme (Politics; Running of the School; Discipline and Gender). It was explained that the assignment required of each student would be an “illustrated essay” on his/her group’s theme, the illustration being supportive of and *secondary* to the historical argument. It would be due in four-and-a-half weeks’ time (an “absolute deadline”), whilst transcriptions would be due in just over a week’s time. This gave students the March-April vacation to complete their individual assignments. As these would not be handed in until Term Two, it was agreed that a test on interviewing technique would be substituted for the purposes of Term One assessment.²³

An Introductory Questionnaire used in the previous year’s pilot project was amended in group and plenary discussion.²⁴

During Week Five of the oral history project, trial interviews were held, with groups dividing into pairs, interviewing each other in turn on Discipline (using our agreed list of questions).²⁵ As the weather was fine, this took place outside, and proved a fruitful and pleasant experience. After the interviews, students were encouraged to make positive and constructively critical remarks to each other. The next day, each pair reported back, in plenary session, on the “pros” and “crits” of the trial interviews. They characterised their responses (on the blackboard) as in Table III below:

²² Student G, Journal, 21 February 1996.

²³ See Addendum 2.

²⁴ See Addendum 8.

²⁵ See Addendum 9.

TABLE III : STUDENT EVALUATION OF TRIAL INTERVIEWS²⁶

PROS	CRITS
Humour shown	Eye contact lacking
Simple, clear language used	Follow-up questions lacking
Clarification sought	Inappropriate body language (e.g. lounging)
Friendliness shown	Active listening lacking
Examples sought	Leading questions asked
Notemaking done	Need to rephrase some questions
Patience shown	Need to formulate follow-up questions mentally
	Need for good diction
	Putting words into interviewee's mouths
	Interviewer intruding own opinions
	Interviewer rushing interview
	Interviewee going off at tangents

²⁶ As recorded in my Journal, 29 February 1996.

The trial interviews had proved an invaluable exercise, because they provided actual practice in interviewing and highlighted potential pitfalls, as the list of “crits” makes abundantly clear. I stressed the desirability of letting the interview develop naturally, rather than feeling the pressing need to complete a prepared list of questions. The list of “pros” and “crits” make it clear that some experience is crucial before budding interviewers can be let loose on an unsuspecting public.

The next lesson took a more conventional form, with input by me on the art of transcription, giving tips and identifying possible problem areas.²⁷ A handout followed.²⁸

D. PROVISION OF CONTEXT

If students were to be readily able to comprehend the responses of their interviewees, and promptly to produce appropriate follow-up questions, they would need as much contextual information as possible, both on the microcosm of the school and the macrocosm of society at large. Such contextual information would be crucial also in interpreting the interviews and other source material. The provision of context by the teacher is necessitated by the dictates of the technique of “spiralling down”.²⁹

As indicated, I had previously handed out a thumbnail-sketch “History of St Columba’s” in order to provide very basic context so as to facilitate the phrasing of appropriate questions.³⁰ I now gave more detailed and analytical contextual information to students, culled from my own historical research as reported in Chapter Two above, “The Founding Ideology of St Columba’s High School, 1941-c.1955”, in which I stressed the hierarchical

²⁷ See, especially, E. Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview: a manual for fieldworkers in folklore and oral history* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), pp.94-102, Plates 11-13.

²⁸ Addendum 6, “Tips on Transcription”.

²⁹ See pp.90, 93-94, 97-98.

³⁰ See pp.115-116 and Addendum 4.

structure both of the Catholic Church and Christian Brothers, and its effects. Students found this input most intriguing and enlightening.

E. INTERPRETING ORAL EVIDENCE

After a test had been written by students on interviewing technique (a critique of an interview in the previous year's pilot project), a guest speaker, Dr Clive Glaser of the University of Cape Town's Oral History Project, kindly visited us to speak to students on an area which would soon be confronting them, "Problems of Interpreting Oral Evidence". He stressed that, in assessing evidence, one should treat oral and written evidence in the same way; for example both were liable to subjectivity. However, there were special problems related to the interpretation of oral evidence, which he detailed under two headings: memory and the interaction of one person with another. Conflicting evidence raised especially interesting questions. Contradictions were sometimes more apparent than real, and could in themselves be most revealing. History, he concluded, was about *versions* of the past, about people *today* contesting their differing views of the past.

All this was most valuable, and students responded very positively. The questions raised by Dr Glaser related directly, and most pleasingly, to the problematic of oral history.³¹

6. INTERVIEW DAY

By *Interview Day* all preparations had been made. All the students, and the six interviewees, arrived on time, and the interviews proceeded as per schedule. (Each interviewee would be interviewed thrice, once by each group on their chosen theme.) Students were visibly excited, and a little nervous; this was clearly the culmination of the

³¹ See pp.105-106.

long preparation phase of the project. I provided the typed programme for the day, lists of questions, and release forms.³² We (students and I) provided recorders, tapes, leads, and adaptors, the school being ill equipped in these areas, as well as refreshments.

In general, the interviewees, all old boys, proved most communicative and highly articulate. There was a good spirit amongst them, and, indeed, between them and students. The day passed, it seemed, without major mishap, and appeared to have been a great success and fitting climax to the first phase of the oral history project.

The next day a “post-mortem” took place in groups on the “pros” and “crits” of *Interview Day*. On balance, a positive assessment emerged. There had been a relaxed mood and good rapport between students and interviewees; the day had been well-structured, and the schedule had been kept to; it had been a valuable learning experience both for interviewing and social skills. On the negative side, the quality of recording equipment had been variable; background noise had sometimes been a problem (dogs, chairs, etc.); examples had not always been solicited; nerves had played their part. On the whole, though, *Interview Day* was perceived by students to have been a very worthwhile experience. In their journals, they all characterised it, positively, for example, as a “very pleasant”, “most valuable”, “wonderful” experience, “a day to remember”.³³

7. PROCESSING

There were several stages in processing the data produced by the oral history interviews. Firstly, students had to turn to the daunting, demanding, and time-consuming task of transcription. Much guidance and encouragement was essential here, as transcription has the potential to break the hardest of spirits.³⁴ Week Seven was devoted solely to this

³² Addenda 7-13: “Timetable – Oral History Interview Day”, “Questionnaires 1-5”, Release Form.

³³ Respectively, Students G, A, D, C, Journals, 9 March 1996.

³⁴ Most valuable here is E. Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Folklore*

painful but invaluable process, which students found gruelling but interesting. A number of students did not, however, meet the deadline, which had thus to be extended by a day or two to accommodate them. In some instances, significant problems of poor playback quality had arisen, underlining once again the absolute necessity for thorough pre-testing of equipment.

Students' processing of the material towards the production of their individual assignments (of about 2 000 words in length) commenced during Week Eight. The following advice was proffered:

1. Read and re-read the transcriptions, identifying themes and issues, a blow-by-blow chronological account not being what was required. The use of the card-index system for notemaking and the purpose and method of footnoting were explained, to the clear appreciation of students.
2. Assess the reliability of the evidence. (A note on *Reliability* was read and discussed.)³⁵
3. Seek other relevant sources, e.g. maps, photographs, newspapers, documents, statistics.³⁶ Further interviews, including follow-ups, could be considered.³⁷
4. Proceed to synthesise the evidence and the interpretation based upon it. (A note on *Synthesis/Interpretation* was read and discussed.)³⁸

and Oral History, pp.94-102, Appendix: Plates 11-13. R.Perks, *Oral History: talking about the past*, p.22, has calculated that verbatim transcription takes from five to ten minutes for each minute of speech. On this basis, a 45-minute interview could take up to seven and a half hours to transcribe!

³⁵ Addendum 14, "Reliability of Evidence".

³⁶ Once again, the teacher, as senior researcher, would help to identify and obtain such sources.

³⁷ In practice, these did not occur, time and energy levels proving prohibitive.

³⁸ Addendum 15, "Synthesis/Interpretation".

Testimony had to be considered in relation to the questions posed, but discrepancies were bound to surface. This raised the need to establish reliability and secure independent corroboration, also to *account for* discrepancies, in itself a valuable interpretive exercise.³⁹

When they had emerged from this orientation, students were thrown into the process themselves, but in groups for mutual aid and support. Each student was given a pack of photocopied transcripts (which volunteers had helped to photocopy and collate) on his/her chosen theme, for processing. In addition, students were given a selection of documents on their respective themes, for example, extracts from the Christian Brothers' Athlone House Annals, other documents procured from the Athlone file at the Christian Brothers' Archives in Boksburg, some from my personal collection, and political pamphlets from the mid-1980s, as well as being introduced to secondary sources on the 1976 and 1980 school rebellions.⁴⁰ This was, once again, in accordance with the teacher's role as senior researcher and educator, responsible for "spiralling down" the process of historical research to the level of the high-school student.

The deadline for the submission of individual assignments was extended by two weeks to allow for the integration of other types of evidence and group discussion of interpretation. Thus ended Term One.

The first two weeks of Term Two were devoted to completion of work on the individual assignments, which students were finding very hard work, but also "challenging", "interesting", "rewarding", "useful", and "valuable". Two comments perhaps deserve full

³⁹ See, for example, P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp.209-212. Thompson points to three checks which oral evidence must be subjected to: internal consistency, cross-checking with other sources, and comparison with knowledge of the wider context. These concepts had to be introduced, with examples, and students, in groups, set to work to consider the evidence they had gathered in the light of such tests of reliability. (See Addendum 14, "Reliability of Evidence".)

⁴⁰ For primary documentary sources, see Bibliography – Part I, pp.167-170. Secondary sources included, E. van Heyningen, H. Phillips, & D. Killick, "The Cape of Storms Again: an account of the unrest in the Cape Peninsula, August to September 1976", History Workshop, Paper 4 (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, 1977); and F. Molteno, *1980: Students Struggle for their Schools* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1987).

quotation: "I've never worked so hard on anything before"; and "I'm working like a person in an office".⁴¹ In response, we agreed, in consultation, that the assignment would form a significant part of the Term Two mark, as much as 40%.

When the assignments had been submitted, I proposed a break in the oral history project to give me time to assess them, and to prepare a mode of evaluation of the project as a whole. We had, collectively, reached a stage of near-exhaustion at this point. Moreover, the conventional syllabus was demanding attention (with mid-year examinations around the corner). What remained of the unfinished oral history project was:

1. Some form of collective presentation;
2. Evaluation of the project as a whole.⁴²

8. PRESENTATION AND *HISTORY WEEK*

The extremely demanding work of producing individual assignments having been completed, students, in their groups, were asked to "brainstorm" a mode of collective presentation of their findings. The following options emerged:

- The publication of a magazine or booklet, with illustrative material (documents, photographs, line drawings, etc.), under topical or thematic headings, perhaps to coincide with the celebration of the Christian Brothers' Centenary in South Africa (in 1997).
- An exhibition at the school and/or local library, similarly illustrated (with the possible inclusion of edited highlights from the tapes themselves). Interviewees would be

⁴¹ Students' comments as recorded in my Journal, 17 & 18 April 1996.

⁴² Described in Chapter Nine.

guests of honour at the opening of such an exhibition. This would, hopefully, help further to bridge the generational gap.⁴³

- Dramatic reconstructions, e.g. *A Typical Day in the Classroom Twenty Years Ago*.
- Articles in local and educational publications such as the *Eastern Argus*, *Athlone News*, *Chalkline*, and *Upbeat*.
- The possibility of the storing of tapes and transcripts in a sound archives, such as UCT's Oral History Project.⁴⁴

The idea of an illustrated booklet seemed to enjoy the most support. It was felt that it could be sold to old boys and current students and teachers as a memento. Moreover, in the words of one student, "It will live on forever!"⁴⁵ It was agreed that we should aim at a gala launch. Heartening, indeed, it was, even in the state of near-exhaustion we had all succumbed to, to find a real commitment to seeing our project reach fruition in a concrete, public, and permanent form. Clearly, the project *was* jointly owned by myself and the students involved.

At this point, the oral history project went into recess.

During Terms Three and Four, work continued, at intervals, on the presentation of the oral history project. At first, the focus was, as suggested above, on the production of an illustrated booklet, which would serve as a permanent record of the project and of those aspects of the history of the school studied. To this end, two students were allocated to each of the following:

⁴³ See p. 105.

⁴⁴ Perks offers valuable practical advice on modes of presentation, *Oral History: talking about the past*, pp.24-31. See also Geddes, "Organising an Oral History Project in a Secondary School", pp.56-57.

⁴⁵ Student B's comment, as recorded in my Journal, 26 April 1996.

1940s-1960s⁴⁶

1970s

1980s

1990s

Design and Layout

In this way, students would study not only a theme over time (as they had done for their individual projects), but also a particular period “in the round”, considering a number of aspects of that period and the inter-connections between them. This procedure would, it was hoped, help students to a deeper appreciation of the complex skein of history.

Each pair produced a draft chapter on their period for perusal and editing by me, and presented this to the whole group for question, comment, and suggestion. Redrafting was then done. In this way, students were once again, as “proto-historians”, experiencing the process of the “making” of history and the nature of history as an ongoing debate, with one’s findings always subject to revision in the light of the arguments of other “historians”.

At this juncture, the minds of students were wonderfully focused by news which reached us during the fourth term of a *History Week* competition to be held at Christian Brothers’ College, Pretoria, in late January 1997, as part of the Centenary celebrations of the Christian Brothers in South Africa. This seemed almost Providential in its timing. All Christian Brothers’ schools in the country were invited to present their history in the form of “videos, charts, pictures, diagrams and written material”. Good-quality research and the acknowledgement of sources were stressed.⁴⁷ This was all grist to our collective mill, and suggested to students the need to modify the nature of their presentation. The material thus far accumulated could be used in producing a series of posters, chronologically

⁴⁶ This period (especially the first two decades) had formed the focus of the pilot project of the previous year; hence students were not *au fait* with it. However, the tapes and transcripts produced were made available for study.

⁴⁷ See Addendum 16, “Christian Brothers Centenary History Week”.

arranged, which would focus on key aspects of the history of the school in the decades studied.⁴⁸

However, students were quick to see that their foci might well differ from those suggested in the guidelines received. These seemed to reflect a rather uncritical, top-down approach, for example, “Research on all Headmasters and/or Brothers”, and “Past pupil leaders of your school”.⁴⁹ Students decided that they favoured a more bottom-up, and a broader, less-triumphalist approach, such as had been adopted in our own research project. As one expressed it, we should show the history of our school “warts and all”.⁵⁰ This was most gratifying, as it was concrete evidence of the advance in historical thinking that students had made during the course of the project.

Students’ devotion to the production of the poster display was, in my experience, quite simply, unprecedented. As no time was available for this purpose during the fourth term, with final examinations looming, they decided, unsolicited, to complete the work during the end-of-year holidays. Eight of the ten honoured this obligation admirably, presenting themselves at least a dozen times for four-hourly working sessions during the holidays, including the festive week between Christmas and New Year.⁵¹

⁴⁸ This would not necessarily mean the abandonment of the aim of producing a booklet or magazine, but that the priority would be the production of the series of posters for *History Week*, which could also serve as a permanent display at the school. Some of the materials used for the poster display could be used again in the ultimate production of a booklet or magazine.

⁴⁹ Addendum 16, “Contents of the Projects”. The original covering letter had suggested that the projects would help, inter alia, “in the promotion of your school with the public”. This was reminiscent of the traditional approach to school history-writing, which the first part of this dissertation is, in part, a reaction against. (See Introduction, pp.1-5.)

⁵⁰ Student B, classroom comment.

⁵¹ The other two had holiday jobs. Although St Columba’s students did not, in the end, win the competition, they were singled out for honourable mention. In my considered view, this outcome was less than just in that their presentation was the most truly “historical” of the eight, not merely presenting historical facts, illustrations, or artefacts, to speak for themselves, as it were, as others did, but interpreting and linking them into a historical synthesis. It was also the only presentation to look *critically* at aspects of the history of the school. Visually, too, it was, by common consent, aesthetically pleasing. Two of the four adjudicators, both museum curators, intimated afterwards that they had chosen St Columba’s as winners. (See Addendum 19 for a reproduction of the poster display.)

Students' comments, after the completion of the poster display and the *History Week* trip to Pretoria, indicated that the experience had been a most educationally valuable one.⁵²

The next chapter is concerned with a description of the process of evaluation conducted into the educational efficacy of the oral history project, as a whole, and an analysis of the data produced by this evaluation process.

⁵² Their comments have been incorporated into the evaluation of the project as a whole presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PROJECT EVALUATED

1. OBSERVATION TECHNIQUES

The third major aspect of action research (after formulation and implementation of an action plan) is observation of the plan in action. I had originally hoped for "triangulation": my own observation, that of students, and that of an outside observer.¹ However, the smallness of the staff of my school (thirteen full-time teachers, including only two for History), and the consequent demands made upon their time and energies, as well as the difficulties inherent in trying to obtain an extra-mural observer, rendered the last-mentioned impracticable.

Two vantage points could, however, be fully exploited with respect to their unique perspectives on the teaching situation: the teacher himself and the student. The teacher kept field-notes on his observation of events in the classroom, and wrote these up, on a daily basis, in a journal. Students' observations were revealed in several ways:

1. A journal of impressions of classroom activities, including constructive criticism, was kept by each student. Students were given written directions, at the outset, as to the keeping of the journal.² Whenever possible, time was made available during the period for this purpose. A mark was allocated to the manner in which the journal was kept, so as to encourage diligence.

¹ D.Hopkins outlines the rationale for "triangulation", in *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research* (Milton Keynes & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985), pp.111-113.

² See Addendum 2, "Timetable for Oral History Project, 1996", p.2.

2. The individual research essays which students were required to write on one of the chosen themes of the oral history project,³ as well as the draft chapters on a chosen period of the school's history for the intended booklet,⁴ would, perhaps, give valuable insights into their perceptions of the project, and, certainly, a sense of what they had learnt.
3. Questionnaires, which students were asked to answer both individually and (as somewhat modified) in groups, were administered at the end of the project, in order to try to assess its value as a learning experience, and the extent to which the hypotheses had been "proven".

The main thrust of the observation/evaluation phase of the project is represented by 3, and will be described in detail below. An assessment of students' research essays in terms of the aims of the project as a whole follows.

2. RESEARCH ESSAYS

Each student had been required to write a carefully researched essay on his/her chosen theme (Politics, Discipline/Gender, Governance of the School) of about 2 000 words, using both the interview transcripts and other source material made available to him/her by the teacher.⁵ This assignment was meant to be an exercise in the "making" or "doing" of history, a "spiralled-down" version of the historian's task, in which the student could experience what it felt like to be an historian as s/he compiled his/her sources, interrogated them in order to produce usable evidence, analysed and synthesised his/her insights into a meaningful interpretation, and, finally, wrote an historical account for public scrutiny. Later, most students had written a second research essay (or draft chapter) on a period in the history of the school (1940s-1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s).⁶

³ See pp.118, 123-125.

⁴ See pp.126-127.

⁵ These essays are referred to, in each case, as Research Essay 1.

⁶ These essays are referred to, in each case, as Research Essay 2.

The writing of the research essays proved to be a challenging undertaking indeed for the students, one to which they rose with differing degrees of success. All attempted to grapple with the source material available to them, seeking corroboration for assertions made in one interview by reference to other interviews and, to a lesser degree, other sources, and striving to address and resolve apparent contradictions. Occasionally, however, oral evidence was uncritically accepted, and simply quoted as gospel.⁷

Questions were, indeed, posed of the evidence, and attempts made to find tenable answers to them. Sometimes, however, interesting questions were asked but not adequately pursued. For example, one student posed the potentially fruitful question of why so few black students were admitted to the school before the 1990s. Although he speculated interestingly (e.g. "Did the school have a prejudice against blacks?"), he failed to provide a carefully reasoned argument, or indeed any evidence, to account for the phenomenon he had accurately identified.⁸

Although some cause-effect links were made, students often failed to appreciate the *multiple* causality of events and to establish an interpretive connection between them, admittedly a higher-level faculty of the historian. For example, one student suggested that, during the 1990s, enrolment at the school fell because of the constantly rising fees *or* because of the decline of discipline.⁹ What she did not explain was that these factors acted reciprocally upon one another in that fees were raised because enrolment declined, and that enrolment declined because fees were raised. Nor did she identify other causal factors, notably parents' perception of a decline in discipline, and the more or less simultaneous opening of "Model C" schools offering better facilities at lower rates. Parents, doubtless, asked why they should pay such relatively high fees when at least one of the traditional values of the institution, for which they had sent their children to the school, appeared to

⁷ For example, Student I, Research Essay 2, *passim*.

⁸ Student I, Research Essay 1, p.2.

⁹ Student G, Research Essay 1, p.4.

have been eroded.¹⁰ In general, students failed to give this kind of *textured* explanation for a phenomenon or event. No doubt, this reflected, in part, the necessary inadequacy of their contextual knowledge and “second record”.

Sometimes, however, *why* questions were simply missed; things just *were* or *happened*, without any explanation being offered. For example, the Principal scrapped the Students’ Representative Council (SRC) at the beginning of 1986,¹¹ or girls were admitted to St Columba’s at the beginning of 1993 - *tout court*.¹² This was disappointing. In my own historical account, I had attempted to contextualise and explain the Principal’s unilateral disbanding of the SRC at the commencement of 1986 in terms of his perception of that body both as importing dangerous political influences into the school and, more fundamentally, as threatening the traditional hierarchical structure of control at the school, and had suggested interaction between these two motives. Student docility in the face of the scrapping of the SRC had been explained by reference to the (self-confessed) demoralisation of the rump of student leaders at the outset of 1986.¹³ Two students did offer a *partial* explanation of the disbanding of the SRC, suggesting, respectively, that the Principal of the day disapproved of its political focus, and viewed it as a potential threat to his control of the school.¹⁴ Again, however, these students had not achieved a fully articulated explanation of the motives or causes of actions.

The other glaring weakness in some of the essays, from the historical point of view, was the lack, at times, of a clear sense of time and chronology. Sometimes, this was more a matter of structure than of understanding, in that there were sudden switches of time back and forth, rather than the pursuit of a clear chronological direction. More fundamental, however, was a vagueness about time, for example, the use of a phrase such as “in the old days”, the omission of key dates, and even the failure to recognise change over time,

¹⁰ See pp.30-32.

¹¹ For example, Student B, Research Essay 1, p.4; Student I, Research Essay 1, p.1.

¹² For example, Student G, Research Essay 1, p.4.

¹³ See pp.57-58.

¹⁴ Student F, Research Essay 1, p.1; Student C, Research Essay 1, p.3.

almost a sense of stasis in one or two cases.¹⁵ Clearly, one cannot take such skills for granted; they need to be explicitly taught.¹⁶

On the positive side, however, students did make gallant attempts at historical explanation. For example, two students showed a thorough appreciation of the significance and mode of functioning of the hierarchical principle at St Columba's. One wrote:

The Brothers' hierarchy is structured very similarly to that of the Catholic Church. You have one person on top controlling everything, and he passes the orders down, and everything is done according to the way that person wants it to be done. ... For the system to work efficiently, obedience was of the utmost importance. ... If you stepped out of line, you were dealt with accordingly as ... a threat to a system which had been in existence for hundreds of years.¹⁷

Some students displayed also a sensitivity to the need to provide contextual information if events such as the rebellions of 1976 and the mid-1980s were to be comprehensible.¹⁸ A few attempted also to pursue the consequences of significant events. In his second-language, one student wrote:

The boycotting [of 1976] saw a dramatic change at the school [in] the mood of the students. [They] realised the amount of power which they had, and started to become politically curious. ... The boycotts slowly opened the minds of the students, and many questions were asked. Although some people disapproved of the sudden halt by the St Columba's students to the boycotts, [other] people were proud of them. Amongst the great supporters of [the school], the Athlone community was a significant example, for they continued to send their children to St Columba's.¹⁹

Students showed some ability to generalise from specific instances, to quote aptly from their sources in support of their arguments, and to acknowledge these references by means of footnoting. There was evidence, too, of some capacity to empathise with differing

¹⁵ Students C and H, Research Essays 1, *passim*.

¹⁶ See, for example, T.Lomas, *Teaching and Assessing Historical Understanding* (London: Historical Association, 1990), pp.20-30.

¹⁷ Student B, Research Essay 1, p.3. See also Student E, Research Essay 2, p.1.

¹⁸ See, for example, Student C, Research Essay 1, p.2; Student D, Research Essay 2, p.1.

¹⁹ Student D, Research Essay 2, p.2.

positions, for example, the political stances of the Brothers, lay teachers, students from poorer and more middle-class backgrounds, the more and less politically active.²⁰

Students, generally, strove hard for objectivity, whilst being prepared to put an argument and pose awkward questions (some of which they could not readily answer).²¹

It seems fair to conclude, on balance, that the research essays did evince some evidence, on the part of students, of a nascent understanding of the nature of history as a discipline, and some ability to employ the methods and techniques of the historian. Clearly, however, there was much still to be learnt. One cannot expect to transform the high-school "proto-historian", however able, into a skilled, adult practitioner overnight.²²

3. EVALUATION DESIGN

The main thrust of the observation/evaluation phase of the action research was represented by the administration and interpretation of a questionnaire, at the end of the project, which students were required to answer first individually, then, as modified, in groups. This evaluation design was adapted from a survey that had been used in a research project into language attitudes in Western Cape schools during 1991, which was considered by the researchers in that case to be especially appropriate to obtaining open-ended, affective responses.²³ This seemed to be fully in accordance with the nature of the action research as pursued in the current study, which has been characterised as small-

²⁰ See, for example, Student B, Research Essay 1, pp.2-3.

²¹ Student G, for example, asked why, during the 1990s, enrolment had declined consistently, there had been a sharp decline in standards of behaviour amongst students, and a high staff turnover, but was able to offer little by way of explanation. (Student G, Research Essay 1, pp.4-5 and Research Essay 2, p.3.)

²² See, for example, A.K.Dickinson, A.Gard, & P.J.Lee, "Evidence in History and Classroom" in A.K.Dickinson & P.J.Lee (eds), *History Teaching and Historical Understanding* (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp.1-20, esp. pp.13-14.

²³ Young, D.et al, *Language Planning and Attitudes towards the Role and Status of Languages, especially English, in Western Cape Schools*, (Cape Town: Language Education Centre, School of Education, University of Cape Town, 1991.)

scale and impressionistic, both considerations rendering tests in the psycho-statistical mode inappropriate.²⁴

Each student was presented with:

1. A "think sheet", which posed questions probing:
 - a) understanding of the nature of history as a study;
 - b) attitudes towards history as a study;
 - c) perception of the acquisition of skills.²⁵

These areas related directly to the three main hypotheses of the research project.²⁶

2. A group worksheet, which posed similar questions to be answered open-endedly by the same students in two groups of five, under elected leaders who would record the group's agreed responses.²⁷

Each of these was administered in a regularly timetabled 50-minute teaching period, thus rendering the evaluation process as unobtrusive and unthreatening as possible. Moreover, the instruction stressed that the questionnaire was in no way a *test*.²⁸

²⁴ See p.108.

²⁵ Addendum 17, "Think Sheet".

²⁶ See p.109-110.

²⁷ Addendum 18, "Group Worksheet".

²⁸ A further advantage of this methodology was that it might well offer "a method of examining democratic-making processes/approaches in relation to small group dynamics", but such a brief lay outside the scope of this research and was not pursued. (D.Young et al, "Language Planning and Attitudes", pp.31-32.)

4. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE NATURE OF HISTORY

4.1 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO “THINK SHEET” QUESTIONS 1-4

Q.1 *What, in your opinion, is the historian trying to do, and how does s/he go about doing it?*

All ten respondents recognised that the study of history is concerned with knowledge and understanding of the past, and most identified a *process* that needs to be gone through before this could be arrived at, involving the use of various kinds of evidence. There was a sense of the difficulty of establishing the “truth” about the past, the need to compare different versions of an event, and the essentially tentative nature of an historical account. Almost all respondents specified the central importance of trying to establish *why* events happened, as well as *how* and *when*.²⁹ One noted the need for thorough background reading before research was undertaken.³⁰ This last point was pleasing indeed, as it showed an understanding of the crucial significance of detailed contextual knowledge if research were to be relevant and well focused, as well, perhaps, as an understanding of the idea that every historical research project was part of an ongoing debate to which the practitioner in question contributes.

It is instructive to compare the above responses to those obtained by Shemilt from control pupils (those who had *not* experienced a “new history”-based project) when he did his classic evaluation study on the *Schools Council History 13-16 Project* in the late 1970s.³¹ Control pupils, he reported, tended to see History as “a corpus of pre-existent, pre-digested and inalienable ‘facts’ ... absolutely true and absolutely unchanging.” History,

²⁹ This contrasted with students' actual performance when they wrote their own assignments, often failing to address the “why” questions in particular. (See pp.132-133.)

³⁰ Student B.

³¹ D. Shemilt, *Schools Council History 13-16 Project: Evaluation Study* (Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall, 1980).

they believed, was “concerned with description to the complete exclusion of explanation”. The question *why*, as one boy asserted, “does not matter”.³²

It is clear from the above that the experimental group at St Columba’s had, by the end of the oral history project, advanced significantly beyond the level attained by the control group in Shemilt’s study, and, like his experimental group, placed much emphasis upon the construction of historical knowledge on the basis of processed evidence, rather than the mere transmission of an authorised version of received knowledge.³³

Q.2 *How does the historian use evidence?*

The respondents stressed the need to assess the validity and reliability of sources, to pose questions of the evidence, to “engage in critical thinking”.³⁴ Accounts had to be compared, and corroboration sought. Where accounts appeared to contradict one another, “the historian would have to take the evidence given to him, analyse it, and try to find out *why* they would disagree”.³⁵ [My emphasis.] The historian used his/her evidence to answer the questions s/he was interested in, to “solve his puzzle”, as one student put it.³⁶ Most stressed the need to base conclusions reached upon the evidence processed, not personal feelings, implying the need to strive for objectivity. Some pointed to the use of the historian’s evidence as a contribution to the ongoing debate of history.

In Shemilt’s study, most control pupils thought that history dealt with facts, not with evidence: “The facts just *were*, and like any other facts all that could be asked of them was

³² Ibid., p.19.

³³ Dickinson, Gard, & Lee cite Rogers’ argument that without some understanding of the *process* whereby knowledge is acquired, in this instance the historical method, it is impossible to speak validly of knowledge at all. (A.K.Dickinson, A.Gard, & P.J.Lee, “Evidence in History and the Classroom”, p.14 and footnote 58, pp.19-20.)

³⁴ Student A.

³⁵ Student I.

³⁶ Student G.

what they were. ... It is the business of facts to be known; it is [pupils'] business to know the facts and write them down."³⁷ In one respect, at least, some members of the present experimental group were, perhaps, a step ahead of Shemilt's experimental group in their approach to the use of evidence – they appeared to have a better idea of how to deal with apparent contradiction. Shemilt quotes one experimental respondent who felt, clearly, that the way to resolve contradictions was *quantitatively*: "You look to see which evidence led to one answer and which to another ... see which had *most* evidence pointing to it". [Emphasis in the original.] Some members of the present group preferred instead to interrogate the evidence, to analyse it, to try to *explain* and *accommodate* apparent differences of interpretation.³⁸ This showed, in my view, a quite mature understanding of how the historian deals with a problem of this nature.

Q.3 Explain what you understand by cause and effect in history.

The problem of causation in history is a vexed one indeed, even for adult practitioners. It is not surprising therefore that, as Shemilt has shown, many, even highly intelligent, adolescents treat the word "cause", not as indicating a subtle connection between events, but as denoting "power" or "strength", something that *makes something else happen*, a mere "physical agency". This notion of causation leads to a mechanistic and deterministic view of history, what is to happen being preordained by ineluctable forces.³⁹ The St Columba's respondents did not, individually, transcend these notions. They defined "cause" variously and vaguely as "what motivated an event", "what led to an incident", "an action resulting in something [else] happening", and so on.⁴⁰ They did recognise, however, that every event has both causes and effects; that every event is in itself a cause (hence, the concept of a chain of cause and effect); and that it is the business of the historian to attempt to establish and explicate the causes and effects of events. Perhaps the

³⁷ D. Shemilt, *Schools Council History 13-16 Project: Evaluation Study*, pp.36-37.

³⁸ See p.138. The influence of Dr Clive Glaser seems evident here. (See p.121.)

³⁹ Shemilt, *Evaluation Study*, pp.30-31.

⁴⁰ Students B, D, and H respectively.

question posed was simply too open-ended in its phrasing to elicit more precise and pointed responses. It would seem, however, that causation needs to be explicitly taught in order for it to be well apprehended.⁴¹

Q.4 *What value does empathy and the use of the imagination have for the historian?*

As indicated in Chapter Six, historians, whilst disputing the value of the term “empathy”, regard the use of the imagination as essential to the process of historical reconstruction.⁴² The historian must try to *imagine* the thoughts, feelings, and situations of people in the past in order the better to understand and explain their actions. As Vivienne Little put it, in her valuable essay on the use of the imagination by historians, “Empathy is a heuristic device ... Its work is to aid the faithful reconstruction of the past”.⁴³

Shemilt reports, however, that very few of his control pupils thought it important to reconstruct the motives and perspectives of their predecessors so as to understand them and their actions more fully, whereas nearly one-third of experimental pupils spontaneously argued for such a practice.⁴⁴

St Columba's respondents, on the other hand, showed a *universal* approval of the use of the imagination in the process of reconstructing history. One said, “To understand better why certain events took place, it is important to *feel with* people”.⁴⁵ [My emphasis.] Another maintained that, “Empathy is a great asset to the historian. He can feel the pain, suffering, hardships, or joy that the people at that particular time were feeling, and it could

⁴¹ See, for example, T.Lomas, *Teaching and Assessing Historical Understanding* (London: Historical Association, 1990), pp.10-19.

⁴² See pp.95-96.

⁴³ V.Little, “What is Historical Imagination?”, *Teaching History*, 36, 1983, p.31. See also A.Low-Beer, “Empathy and History”, *Teaching History*, 55, 1989, p.11.

⁴⁴ D.Shemilt, *Evaluation Study*, p.37.

⁴⁵ Student B.

greatly assist him in the writing-up of the event.”⁴⁶ A third saw the imagination as “colouring in the picture [of the past]”.⁴⁷

However, some also expressed wariness of the use of the imagination, including empathy. One, who had earlier approved its use, also described it as a “dangerous technique”, warning of the risk of bias, and concluding thus: “History cannot be made up. It has to be based on evidence.”⁴⁸ This was especially pleasing as it recalled the just stricture of the Schools Council Project: “In history the imagination must be disciplined by the evidence.”⁴⁹ Others expressed similar reservations, for example: “[Empathising] can ... be problematical because the historian might take just one view of what happened and turn a blind eye [to other views].”⁵⁰ Two students felt that the historian would need some similarity of experience in order to empathise effectively, one specifically mentioning the concept of the “second record”, which the teacher had referred to, by name, only once or twice during the project.⁵¹ One even identified what Bernard Crick had referred to as the “empathetic fallacy”: “You can imagine what people [in the past] felt, but you can’t feel it with them ... [That would be] insane”.⁵²

All in all, students exhibited a balanced and sensible view of the use of the imagination by the historian.

4.2 GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 1-4 ⁵³

Responses of the two groups of five to the four questions listed above did not differ appreciably from the individual responses as just described. The role of the historian was

⁴⁶ Student I.

⁴⁷ Student C.

⁴⁸ Student B.

⁴⁹ Schools Council History 13-16 Project, *A New Look at History* (Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall, 1976), p. 18.

⁵⁰ Student G.

⁵¹ Students H and B.

⁵² Student F.

⁵³ Question 1 on “Group Worksheet”, Addendum 18.

seen to be the ongoing and vexed attempt to establish the “truth” about the past, and to communicate his/her findings to the public at large, “to educate people about their past”.⁵⁴ This endeavour required the careful processing of many different kinds of source, according to established norms, so as to produce usable evidence. Although the historian tries to eliminate his/her personal bias, s/he cannot ever entirely do so. S/he must tease out the causes and effects of historical events, as well as identifying both change and continuity over time, “and try to find reasons for [both]”.⁵⁵ S/he must use his/her imagination in order to reconstruct the thoughts and feelings of historical agents, whilst guarding against “selective empathy”, which would significantly bias the historical account produced.⁵⁶

5. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RELATING TO ATTITUDES TOWARDS HISTORY

5.1 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO “THINK SHEET” QUESTIONS 5-8

Q.5 *What is the role of the ordinary person in history?*

Q.6 *Is what the historian does worth doing? Why?/Why not?*

Q.7 *Do you find history relevant to you? Why?/Why not?*

Shemilt found that most of his control pupils found history not personally relevant to them because it was perceived as not being about ordinary people, like themselves, nor about the sort of activities in which they could engage. One said, rather poignantly: “We don’t do anything” (presumably, of historical value). History was about political leaders, the rich, and the famous. Only by participating in a disaster or a great crime could they envisage a role in history for themselves, for example, “... if I fell off a wall on top of

⁵⁴ Group 2 (Students C, F, G, H, I).

⁵⁵ Group 1 (Students A, B, D, E, J).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

somebody famous". They subscribed to the Great Man Theory of History, the will of the mass of people being immaterial. The power of leadership was immanent in the leader. Hence, "Adolf Hitler could have changed his mind [and World War II would not have occurred]." ⁵⁷

Shemilt's experimental pupils, on the other hand, emphasised the role of collectivity: "One man doesn't make history ... the mass does". The power and authority of the Great Man originated from the will and beliefs of the masses. Moreover, the subject matter of history is the totality of human experience and endeavour, embracing *all* (lord and lady, master and servant). Ordinary people are a part of history in that they are affected by great events. History is also about the everyday life of ordinary people; hence, it is personally relevant to people like ourselves. ⁵⁸

Shemilt comments that ideally, however, pupils should find history relevant, not merely because of the role of ordinary people therein, but because the present is, after all, no more than a development and consequence of the past, quoting the philosopher A.N.Whitehead, in support, thus: "How the past perishes is how the future becomes". He concludes on a positive note, though, that, "... a radical revision about the nature of historical knowledge ... is arguably the most important as well as the most marked consequence of [Schools Council History 13-16] Project implementation". ⁵⁹

The responses of St Columba's students to Question 5 above, relating to the role of ordinary people in history, were directly comparable to those of Shemilt's experimental group. Several students emphasised the active role played by ordinary people in the making of history. One wrote, "The ordinary person plays a big part in his country [especially] in politics ..."⁶⁰ A number expressed dissatisfaction with their perception that the role of the ordinary person in history was so rarely acknowledged. For example: "It is

⁵⁷ D.Shemilt, *Evaluation Study*, pp.21-22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.22-23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.23-25.

⁶⁰ Student D.

a shame that ordinary people are not recognised[,] because they play [such] an important role in the making of history”.⁶¹ Another complained, perhaps influenced by Brecht’s poem, *Thoughts From a Worker Who Reads*, which had been used early on in the project: “They [the ordinary people] do all the hard work but get no credit”.⁶² Most, showing the direct influence of the oral history project, saw the ordinary person as an invaluable reservoir of information: “He/She can supply the historian with vital evidence.”; “He ... has experienced everything ... He is like an encyclopaedia ... you have to extract all the information from him.”⁶³ Such a pattern of response manifests a striking contrast with that of Shemilt’s control group, as summarised above.

In response to Question 6 above, *all* respondents felt that what the historian does is worth doing. Perhaps the central reason offered was that regarded by Shemilt as ideal: that one cannot understand the present fully without an appreciation of the past from which it has developed; moreover, that the past is linked to the present in the same chain that links the present with the future; hence, the continuity of past, present, and future. One student expressed this very idea, if somewhat awkwardly, thus: “To find out what happened in the past is vital for the future as well as the present because what they [people in the past] did will assist us with why things are the way they are today”.⁶⁴ Another said that the consequence of studying the past is “living your present life better because you know your past”.⁶⁵ A related reason for studying the past, given, somewhat optimistically, by a number of students, was so that humankind might learn from its mistakes in order to avoid them in the future.⁶⁶

A different, if related, benefit of the study of history mentioned by several was that it helps us to “place” ourselves in the world, giving us knowledge of and pride in our origins. One student put it thus: “The historian teaches us to have pride and honour in ourselves and in

⁶¹ Student G.

⁶² Student C. See p.114 and Addendum 3.

⁶³ Students A and F.

⁶⁴ Student A.

⁶⁵ Student F.

⁶⁶ Students A, C, H, I.

our forefathers. By having pride in our past we can learn to have patriotism for our country."⁶⁷ Without history, another said, "people would not know where they came from".⁶⁸ A second-language English-speaker expressed the horror of a situation of total ignorance of one's country's history thus: "Without history we would be lost in the middle of knowledge".⁶⁹ Another student averred energetically: "A country is no country if it does not have a history".⁷⁰

All of these views expressed, with spirit, and in different ways, what, in Shemilt's view, and that of many others, is the best reason for studying history – it leads to an understanding and appreciation of the ineluctable link between past, present, and future.

Similar answers were given to Question 7 above, concerning the personal relevance of history. *All* respondents found history personally relevant to them, because it enabled them to understand the present and people's feelings in the present (especially relevant to post-apartheid South Africa, as one student observed);⁷¹ because it linked meaningfully the past, present, and future; because, hopefully, it helped us to avoid the mistakes of the past ("History brings out the best and the worst of our pasts, [so that] we can see what to do in the future.");⁷² and because knowledge of our past stimulated pride "in ourselves and our nation".⁷³ ("We owe it to ourselves to know about our own history.")⁷⁴

Unlike Shemilt's control pupils, St Columba's respondents saw how historical events had a direct impact upon them. One said, "Happenings around me affect me".⁷⁵ Another expressed it, more memorably, thus, "History is all around me".⁷⁶ Also implied was an

⁶⁷ Student I.

⁶⁸ Student H.

⁶⁹ Student D.

⁷⁰ Student G.

⁷¹ Student A.

⁷² Student I.

⁷³ Student G.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Student H.

⁷⁶ Student A.

awareness of their potential role, even as ordinary citizens, as actors in history, not merely as passive recipients (and victims) of the decisions of the great.

Q.8 *How has your attitude towards history, both as a study and as a school subject, changed as a result of the oral history project? Explain your answer carefully.*

There was a universally positive response to this question. A number said that, before, History had been just another subject to them, but that now they had developed a special appreciation for it. Others reported that an initially positive attitude had been intensified by the experience of the project. Very pleasingly, the reasons given for these positive attitudinal changes related directly to the aims of the project. Most students reported a new awareness of the nature and difficulty of historical research and a new appreciation of the historian and his/her work. They expressed especial delight at having learnt historical research skills (“how to ‘make’ history”), and being part of a process of “actually ‘making’ history”.⁷⁷

Other insights attained were of the relevance of history to many spheres of life and career paths,⁷⁸ its breadth of interest (“History has no boundaries.”),⁷⁹ and its nature as an ongoing debate without definitive answers.⁸⁰ Extraneous lessons learnt included a work ethic (that hard work is ultimately rewarding),⁸¹ as well as tolerance of others and respect for their views.⁸²

Perhaps the ultimate tribute to the oral history project was that paid by the student who described History as a school subject thus: “It has become more exciting and interesting ... more challenging. It has become *almost like an extra-mural.*”⁸³ [My emphasis.]

⁷⁷ Students B, G, and I.

⁷⁸ Students B and H.

⁷⁹ Student A.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Students C, E and J.

⁸² Student D.

⁸³ Student F.

5.2 GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 5-8⁸⁴

Once again, group responses to these questions were not significantly dissimilar from individual responses. Both groups acknowledged the universal relevance of history: "Everyone is affected by their past. One's past determines one's future. ... History teaches us ... why things are the way they are today".⁸⁵ For example, history helps us to understand "why we still have such a lot of poverty and pain in our country".⁸⁶ Hopefully, knowledge of our past will ensure that its mistakes are not repeated. The central link between past, present, and future is once again clearly acknowledged in these responses.

The group responses to Question 8 confirmed that all students had found that their attitudes towards history had improved significantly. The project had led students to some understanding of the difficulties faced by the historian, and, in consequence, "We empathise with the historian as we have now felt what a painstaking job he/she has to do".⁸⁷ This, in turn, has led to a greater appreciation of the products of the historian's craft. Students once again expressed their joy and sense of achievement at being able to share in the historian's experience of "making" history.⁸⁸

6. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION RELATING TO ACQUISITION OF SKILLS⁸⁹

Q.9 What skills do you think you have acquired as a result of the oral history project?

Students reported their perception of the acquisition of a wide range of skills,

⁸⁴ Questions 2-3 on "Group Worksheet", Addendum 18.

⁸⁵ Group 1.

⁸⁶ Group 2.

⁸⁷ Group 1.

⁸⁸ Group 2 described the oral history project as "an experience that some of us will always remember".

⁸⁹ Question 4 on "Group Worksheet", Addendum 18.

corresponding closely to the list originally aimed at.⁹⁰ Because of a high degree of conformity between individual and group responses to this question, they have been conflated. Although categorised in the table below, there is, patently, significant overlap between many of the skills listed.

TABLE IV : SKILLS CLAIMED BY STUDENTS AFTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TYPES OF SKILLS	EXAMPLES GIVEN
1. Oral/Interviewing	<p>Listening accurately and with an open mind</p> <p>Questioning effectively (avoiding leading questions, using follow-ups, etc.)</p> <p>Communicating well with peers <i>and</i> elders (including sensitivity to body language)</p> <p>Entering co-operatively into discussion and debate</p> <p>Public speaking skills⁹¹</p> <p>Need for technical preparedness in interviewing</p>
2. Social/Emotional	<p>Ability to work closely with others</p> <p>Need for self-control, patience, tolerance</p> <p>Willingness to respect others' views, compromise, accept group decisions</p> <p>Conflict resolution</p> <p>Importance of teamwork and group bonding; role of the individual in a team</p> <p>Self-confidence⁹²</p> <p>Empathetic identification</p> <p>Most of oral and interviewing skills as above</p>

⁹⁰ See pp.99-101.

⁹¹ These were learnt when students presented their findings to the class as a whole. (See p.127.)

⁹² One student had felt that he would never be able to conduct an interview successfully; in the event, he did, and gained perceptibly in self-confidence during the project. (Student D)

3. Intellectual/Research	<p>Information-gathering</p> <p>Processing/Interpretation of sources, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessing validity and reliability - logical analysis (e.g. establishing cause-effect links) - reaching well-founded conclusions - synthesis
4. Presentation	<p>Importance and difficulty of effective layout and design, e.g.</p> <p>Need to balance text with striking and appropriate illustration⁹³</p>
5. Self-motivational	<p>Need for commitment, self-discipline, self-reliance</p> <p>Work ethic</p> <p>Ideal of striving for excellence</p> <p>Independent learning</p>

Evidence of the acquisition of the last category of skills is the collective wisdom of one group: "An endeavour of these proportions requires the highest dedication and self-discipline, which is *sacrifice!* [Emphasis in the original.]"⁹⁴ The same group had learnt that, "If you want something important done, you do it yourself".⁹⁵ It concluded, perhaps ruefully: "History is not an easy thing to do."⁹⁶ Both groups emphasised the value of the lessons of responsibility and independence. One put it this way: "This project taught us to work on our own and to be responsible for what we did ... without the teacher telling you what to do and policing you all the time".⁹⁷

It was gratifying, indeed, to note the close parallelism between the skills/outcomes aimed at in this project and those identified by students as having been attained. Moreover, a

⁹³ One student wrote: "An historian's job is more than just finding [and evaluating] evidence; presentation is of vital importance". (Student B)

⁹⁴ Student H for Group 1.

⁹⁵ Group 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

whole new category of most valuable outcomes, not envisaged at the outset, appear to have been realised (those labelled above as self-motivational).

The final chapter will be concerned with reflection on the pedagogical efficacy and value of the research project as described in the preceding four chapters.

CHAPTER TEN

REFLECTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The final phase of an action research cycle in the classroom involves:

- a) reflection on the outcomes of the teaching plan in the light of its stated aims (in this case, hypotheses);
- b) a consideration of the difficulties, surprises, successes, and discoveries that manifested themselves in the course of its implementation;
- c) the validation of findings, in this case by comparing teacher and student responses;
- d) interpretation of these findings in the light of theory, the norms of accepted practice, and the teacher's own intuition;
- e) the reaching of conclusions as to the plan's efficacy, and its adaptation for possible future use.¹

¹ For guidance on analysing classroom research data, see D.Hopkins, *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research* (Milton Keynes & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985), pp.105-115.

2. THE TEACHING PLAN IN EXECUTION

In this section, I shall reflect both on the strengths and the weaknesses of the research plan as implemented.

A. STRENGTHS

1) CONSULTATIVE STYLE

The teacher's adoption from the outset of a consultative style, and its maintenance throughout, was undoubtedly a positive aspect of the project. It gave to students a sense of joint ownership, which made them willing throughout to go the extra mile to see the project successfully completed. Their deep commitment was proven on at least two occasions: firstly, when they agreed, indeed suggested, and then insisted, that *Interview Day* be held on a Saturday (traditionally sacrosanct to students at St Columba's, unless involved in sporting fixtures); secondly, when they sacrificed so much of their time during the end-of-year vacation to complete their *History Week* presentation. One student early expressed his appreciation of this "management style" thus: "The way we [are] consulted about everything is something that I [like] very much as it shows that we are being treated as adults".² It is noteworthy, too, that the problem of "marks mania", which had dogged the pilot project of the previous year,³ did not recur during the project proper. It would seem to me wise for the teacher to adopt a consultative style of classroom management, at least whenever extraordinary demands are to be made of students, as in this project.

² Student B, Journal, 22 February 1996.

³ See p.112. A mark allocation had been provided at the outset of the project proper. (See Addendum 2.)

2) GROUP-WORK

Group-work was another aspect of the project that was, undoubtedly, highly efficacious. Many most valuable oral and social/emotional skills were learnt or reinforced in the process of the intensive group-work that was required throughout the project, as the evaluation data reported in the previous chapter bear out. Students made many positive comments on group-work in their journals and in response to the questionnaires.⁴ This is not to suggest that the process was problem-free, but that it was often in the resolving of difficulties that most was learnt. Thus, conflict resolution was listed by some students as a skill acquired, as were teamwork, patience, and tolerance.⁵

3) STRUCTURED CLIMAXES

A valuable aspect of the structuring of the project, as it eventuated, was what students characterised as its two “climaxes”, *Interview Day*, in the middle, and the *History Week* presentation at the end. It seems to me crucial that when students are expected to work intensively over an extended period of time that such climaxes are planned to occur at strategic moments. Also important is that they be, to some degree, *public* occasions, so that students receive the recognition of others and realise that they are not operating in a vacuum, that history is not an “ivory tower” pursuit, but of interest and value to all. Thus students found both these occasions “very pleasant”, “[educationally] valuable”, “wonderful”, “days to remember”.⁶

⁴ See pp.117-118.

⁵ See p.148.

4) TRAINING IN ORAL HISTORY

I believe that students received a fairly thorough grounding in oral history methodology, at a “spiralled-down” high-school level. Important aspects of this training were:

- a) looking at both the advantages and disadvantages of oral history (and allowing students to suggest these themselves, in the first instance);
- b) emphasising that oral evidence needs to be collated with other types of evidence, wherever possible, and that interpretation of evidence requires contextual knowledge (which was provided, as “spiralled down”);
- c) focusing on the methodology of questioning and interviewing (especially valuable being the critique of the interviews conducted by others, and students’ own trial interviews);
- d) focusing on the problematic of oral history, especially difficulties of interpretation (most valuable being the contributions of the guest speaker on the problems posed by the nature of the memory and the variables of interaction between interviewer and interviewee);
- e) having the actual experience of interviewing adults not known to students;
- f) having the first-hand experience of the invaluable, if exacting, task of verbatim transcription;
- g) experiencing the “bottom-up”, and “warts and all” orientations of oral history.⁷

⁶ See pp.122, 129.

⁷ See Chapter Six, p.128, and *passim*.

5) TRAINING IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

I believe also that students received a valuable, “spiralled down” introduction to the research methodology of the historian, in general, including:

- a) the need to pose appropriate questions at the outset of one’s research, and to be prepared to alter these during its course, as dictated by the evidence;
- b) the importance of establishing the reliability and validity of one’s sources;⁸
- c) the need to compare sources and obtain corroboration (wherever possible);
- d) the importance of contextual information to interpretation;
- e) learning how to deal with apparent contradictions;
- g) learning and applying notemaking skills (including the card-index system);
- h) learning and applying referencing skills (especially the importance of acknowledging sources by means of footnoting and the provision of a detailed bibliography);
- h) striving for objectivity and inclusiveness; attempting to study theme and period “in the round”;
- i) the processes of interpretation and synthesis;
- j) experiencing first-hand the problems and opportunities of presentation, oral, visual, and written - the final act of history “creation”.⁹

⁸ Validation is, of course, less of an issue in the case of self-produced tapes and transcripts.

⁹ See Chapter Six, *passim*.

B. WEAKNESS

TIME ALLOCATION

It soon became clear that the plan had been ambitious indeed in its assessment of the time required for completion of the project. The preparation phase took four weeks (of four 50-minute periods), rather than the two assigned to it; the processing of sources and writing of assignments took three weeks rather than two. In all, therefore, the planned phase of the project (excluding work on the presentation) took three weeks longer than intended. The production of the poster display took many more hours during the end-of-year vacation. With experience, however, and the tighter planning and execution that would ensue, the teacher-researcher could, I believe, fit the main phase of the project into an average term of ten weeks. Preparation of a public presentation would, inevitably, take many more hours of extra-mural time.

3. VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESES

As has been made clear throughout, this research was conducted not according to the psycho-statistical paradigm, which was judged inappropriate in the light of the small number of subjects, and its impressionistic and broadly humanistic nature, but in the tradition of sociological or ethnographic research.¹⁰ The validation of the primary hypotheses, therefore, will be pursued not by statistical analysis but by what I might term "bi-angulation", comparing teacher's and students' impressions as to the effects and efficacy of the research plan as implemented, and regarding concurrence of view as provisional proof of validity.¹¹

¹⁰ See p.108.

¹¹ See, for example, D.Hopkins, *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research*, pp.105-115.

A. HYPOTHESIS ONE¹²

That the oral history project would produce in students a deeper understanding of the nature of history.

The most valuable data relevant to this hypothesis were my analysis of the research essays written by students and their responses to Questions 1-4 of the individual evaluation questionnaires, as reported in the previous chapter.¹³ Both suggested a clear understanding that history was a *process* for the establishment of knowledge about the past, rather than a *product* of inviolable facts. Students recognised the essentially tentative nature of this knowledge in that sources were always incomplete and one could never fully and finally extract the personal factor of the historian and his/her unique “second record” from the equation. Hence, history was an ongoing and public enquiry, conducted according to established and agreed norms.¹⁴

Moreover, students clearly perceived, and demonstrated, that historical narrative and explanation were derived, in the first instance, from a critical analysis of the available sources, which were recognised as being diverse in nature, subject to testing for validity and reliability, valuable only in the light of the questions posed of them and the inquiry as a whole, as well as knowledge of the appropriate context, and subject also to judicious selection of detail before qualifying as historical evidence. Students demonstrated also a good understanding of how to use evidence, for example in their attempts to obtain corroboration and to resolve apparent contradictions.¹⁵

They displayed a balanced approach also to the use of the imagination in history, recognising that it was an essential interpretive tool, but expressing some wariness as to its

¹² See pp. 109-110 for the original statement of the hypotheses.

¹³ See pp. 131-135, 137-142.

¹⁴ See pp. 137, 141-142.

¹⁵ See pp. 138-139, 142.

possible abuse in reinforcing the historian's inherent bias ("selective empathy", as some called it), and in stressing that it must be subject to the discipline of the evidence.¹⁶

Students did, however, reveal two palpably weak areas in their understanding of history as a discipline, both in their essays and in their responses to the questionnaires. The first was causation, where they failed often to apprehend that sometimes a specific event can be related to a multiplicity of causes, or to offer a well-articulated explanation of the inter-relation between such multiple causes. They did, however, manifest a clear understanding of the fact that it was an important part of the historian's task to explicate cause-effect links, and made some tentative attempts to do so in their research essays.¹⁷

The second weak area was that of time concepts, where students displayed, on occasion, evidence of vagueness about the timing of events or situations, and, in a few instances, little evidence of an appreciation of change over time. However, most did evince some awareness of the central importance of chronological sequencing to historical explanation.¹⁸

These weaknesses were disappointing, and suggested the need for explicit and well-directed teaching of the concepts of causation, time and chronology, change and continuity.¹⁹

On balance, however, it seems fair to conclude on the basis of the above analysis that the oral history project did produce in students a significantly deeper understanding of the nature of history than they had had at the outset, a view to which they themselves testified with conviction.²⁰

¹⁶ See pp.140-141, 142.

¹⁷ See pp.131-135, 137, 139-140, 142.

¹⁸ See pp.133-134.

¹⁹ See, for example, T.Lomas, *Teaching and Assessing Historical Understanding* (London; Historical Association, 1990), pp.10-19, 20-30.

²⁰ See pp.137-142.

B. HYPOTHESIS TWO

That the oral history project would result in an improved attitude towards the study of history on the part of students.

The relevant evidence here were the responses of students to Questions 5-7 of the questionnaires and my own impressions. Their written responses were unambiguously and universally positive. They stressed their new appreciation of the active role of ordinary people in the making of history, who were not just “affected by great events” (as for some in Shemilt’s experimental group)²¹, but were positive, if rather under-appreciated, agents in history themselves. Ordinary people were also largely untapped reservoirs of historically valuable information. Furthermore, history helped to “place” the individual in the world, giving him pride in himself/herself and the groups with which s/he identified. Most importantly, history helped to link the past, present, and future in a chain of significance.²² All felt, unequivocally, that the historian’s task was worthwhile and that history was personally relevant.²³

The following attitudinal changes were evidenced both by students’ assertions and their observable behaviour in the classroom:

- a) A new appreciation of the difficulty of the historian’s task and a new respect for him/her and his/her work. (Some students said that they “empathised” with the historian.)²⁴
- b) An appreciation of the learning of historical skills, and joy at sharing in the “making” of history.²⁵

²¹ D. Shemilt, *Schools Council History 13-16 Project: Evaluation Study* (Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall, 1980), pp.22-23.

²² See pp.143-146, 147.

²³ See pp.144-146, 147.

²⁴ See 137, 141-142, 146-147.

²⁵ See pp.146-147.

My own impressions of students' attitudinal changes confirmed their written responses to the questionnaire. Perhaps the most striking proof of their enhanced positivity and commitment was their willingness to put in many long hours of their free time, firstly on the occasion of *Interview Day* and, secondly, and even more impressively, during the end-of-year vacation in completing their presentation for *History Week*. Students emerged from the project as palpably more enthusiastic and independent learners.

On the basis of the above evidence, there can be no reasonable doubt that the oral history project did, indeed, result in a strikingly improved attitude towards history on the part of those students who experienced it. There was also further evidence of a deeper understanding of the purpose of history as a study, for example, in students' apprehension of the ineluctable link between past, present, and future, and of the historian's role in elucidating this link.

C. HYPOTHESIS THREE

That the oral history project would result in the acquiring, at an elementary level, of some of the skills of the historian.

The relevant data here were the research essays and poster-display presentation of the students, as evaluated by me, and their written responses to Question 9 of the individual questionnaire (and Question 4 of the group questionnaire).

On the strength of an analysis of the above, it became clear to me that students had, indeed, acquired many historical/research skills, at least at a rudimentary level. Many of these are listed above under the headings, "Training in Oral History" and "Training in Historical Skills", and in the last chapter under the heading "Question relating to the Acquisition of Skills".²⁶ It was noteworthy in the poster display, for example, that

²⁶ See pp. 154-155, 147-150.

historical facts, documents, and illustrations were not merely presented to speak for themselves, as it were, but were, in general, placed within an interpretive framework. For example, there was some attempt to account for the “crisis of the 1990s” at the school by reference to the opening of “Model C” schools to all, and the visibly declining standards of dress and behaviour of many St Columba’s students.²⁷

It might be objected that claiming the acquisition of a skill is not a guarantee that that skill has indeed been attained. My rejoinder to this would be twofold:

1. A student is unlikely to claim a skill which s/he does not believe that s/he has acquired in that s/he might well fear being put to the test and facing subsequent embarrassment. In this case, self-praise might well *be* a recommendation. Of course, s/he might *feel* that s/he has attained a skill which s/he has not. To this argument, my second point would apply.
2. My own ongoing observation and evaluation of students’ performance bore out their acquisition of many of the historical/research skills listed. This is not, of course, to maintain that all achieved all the skills at the same levels of proficiency, but that all achieved many, if not most, of the skills listed, at least at a rudimentary level. Moreover, these skills, by and large, had not been in evidence prior to the oral history project.

What I found even more gratifying was the visible acquisition by students of many *other* (non-history-specific) skills which I had hoped for: oral and interviewing skills, social and emotional skills, presentation skills, and, perhaps most gratifyingly, a category not originally anticipated, which I have labelled self-motivational skills.²⁸ Students became discernibly more mature, self-disciplined, independent learners during the course of the project. One paid perhaps the most glowing testimony to the educational efficacy of the

²⁷ See Addendum 19, “St Columba’s ‘History Week’ Poster Display”.

²⁸ See pp.100-101, 149.

oral history project in these words: "I have become a fuller person".²⁹ Education can hardly hope to achieve much more than that.

On balance, then, I believe that it is reasonable to conclude, with a fair degree of confidence, that students did, indeed, gain and develop many skills, including some specifically historical and intellectual, during the course of the oral history project.

It proved prohibitive, in terms of time, energy, and the need to prioritise, to test whether the investigation, from an historical perspective, of certain aspects of the life of the school which had a direct impact upon students had resulted in a deeper understanding of these issues.³⁰ However, from the outset, this represented a secondary interest to the researcher, as not central to the main thrust of the research. Moreover, it seemed reasonable to assume, on a commonsense basis, that such a result would be likely to ensue. Certainly, students, during the course of the project, often initiated intense classroom discussion around the very aspects investigated (especially discipline, student representation, gender issues, and questions of governance), displaying, in the judgement of the researcher, ever-growing insight.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) The oral history project was an entirely worthwhile pedagogical exercise in the light of its overwhelmingly positive effects on students, notably in their improved understanding of the nature of history, strikingly improved attitudes towards history as a study and as a school subject, and the acquisition by them of many most valuable skills, some history-specific, some not, some, indeed, not anticipated. No doubt, too, there were side-benefits, for example, in a deeper understanding of a number of key issues in the life of the school studied, and a greater appreciation of the institution

²⁹ Student F.

³⁰ See p. 110.

itself. In the light of the above, I would recommend strongly that oral history projects, similar in type, should be executed in other schools at the senior-secondary level, Std 9 seeming ideal for the purpose.

- 2) On the organisational side, however, the plan should be tightened in terms of time allocation, especially as the explicit teaching of certain key historical concepts, notably those relating to time and causation, demands inclusion.
- 3) Perhaps a useful addition to the plan, in terms of gauging its ultimate effect, would be a pre-test of historical understanding and attitudes towards the study of history.
- 4) Most valuable features of the plan, which *should* be retained, are a consultative style on the part of the teacher, group-work, the placing of trust and responsibility in the hands of students, and the structuring of climaxes at strategic moments of the project.
- 5) To conclude, on a personal note: the oral history project, as reported above, has been the most demanding and exhausting pedagogical experience in the more than twenty years of my teaching life, but also the most personally and professionally rewarding, especially in terms of the remarkable changes I have seen in the attitudes and conduct of students, and in the extraordinary generosity of spirit and commitment they have displayed. This, alone, has rendered it all worthwhile.

BIBLIOGRAPHY – PART I

A. ORAL INTERVIEWS

CONDUCTED BY RESEARCHER

INTERVIEW NO 1	Henry Burggraaff, Ex-Student and Ex-Teacher, 7 March 1995
INTERVIEW NO 2	“Boet” Brand, Ex-Teacher, 26 March 1995
INTERVIEW NO 3	Sally McCall, Teacher, 30 March 1995
INTERVIEW NO 4	Vincent Kolbe, Ex-Student, 26 June 1996
INTERVIEW NO 5	Harold Manus, Ex-Student, 2 July 1996
INTERVIEW NO 6	Patrick O’Connell, Ex-Student and Ex-Teacher, 3 July 1996
INTERVIEW NO 7	Giovanni Perez, Ex-Student, 10 July 1996
INTERVIEW NO 8	Russel Brand, Ex-Student, 1 July 1997
INTERVIEW NO 9	Neil Horne, Ex-Student, 6 July 1997
INTERVIEW NO 10	Ashley van Staden, Ex-Student, 9 July 1997
INTERVIEW NO 11	Clarence Adriaan, Claude Jagers, Bertram September, Ex-Students, 10 July 1997
INTERVIEW NO 12	Harold Trupos, Ex-Teacher, 10 July 1997

CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS AS PART OF ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

INTERVIEW NO 0001	Michael Curry, Ex-Student and Teacher, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
INTERVIEW NO 0002	Henry Jacobs, Ex-Student, Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995

- INTERVIEW NO 0003 Graham Faure, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0004 Henry Jacobs, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0005 Michael Curry, Ex-Student and Teacher, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0006 Graham Faure, Ex-Student, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995.
- INTERVIEW NO 0007 Walter van der Byl, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0008 Alpheus Harris, Ex-Student, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995.
- INTERVIEW NO 0009 Antonio Ferdinando, Ex-Student, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0010 Elizabeth Finnan, Ex-Parent, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0011 Alpheus Harris, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0012 Walter van der Byl, Ex-Student, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0013 Elizabeth Finnan, Ex-Parent, on Image of the School and Gender, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0014 Antonio Ferdinando, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Student Representation, 5 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0015 Peter-John Small, Ex-Student, 19 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0016 Neil Stoffberg, Ex-Student, 15 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0017 Claude Jagers, Ex-Student, 19 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0018 Patrick O'Connell, Ex-Student and Ex-Teacher, 17 October 1995
- INTERVIEW NO 0019 Russel Brand, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996

INTERVIEW NO 0020	Giovanni Perez, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Gender, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0021	Damascene Taylor, Ex-Student, on Governance, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0022	Giovanni Perez, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0023	Damascene Taylor, Ex-Student on Discipline and Gender, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0024	Russel Brand, Ex-Student, on Governance, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0025	Damascene Taylor, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996
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INTERVIEW NO 0028	Harold Manus, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0029	Glen van Harte, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Gender, 9 March 1996
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INTERVIEW NO 0031	Glen van Harte, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0032	Robert van Niekerk, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Gender, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0033	Harold Manus, Ex-Student, on Governance, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0034	Robert van Niekerk, Ex-Student, on Politics, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0035	Harold Manus, Ex-Student, on Discipline and Gender, 9 March 1996
INTERVIEW NO 0036	Glen van Harte, Ex-Student, on Governance, 9 March 1996

B. PRIMARY DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

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CHRISTIAN BROTHERS FILES (ATHLONE AND GREEN POINT)

Correspondence between successive Bishops of Cape Town and the Superior-General, Christian Brothers' Congregation, regarding the opening of Christian Brothers' College, Green Point, and St Columba's High School, notably the following:

Bernard O'Riley, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, to Superior-General, Christian Brothers of Ireland, 9 February 1926

Francis X.Hennemann, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, to W.M.McCarthy, Assistant to Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 26 August 1935

Francis X.Hennemann, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, to J.P.Noonan, Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 17 February 1939

J.P.Noonan, Superior-General, Christian Brothers, to Francis X.Hennemann, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, 12 January 1940

Francis X.Hennemann, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, to J.P.Noonan, Superior-General, Christian Brothers, 28 February 1940

J.P.Noonan, Superior-General, Christian Brothers, to Francis X.Hennemann, Vicar Apostolic of Cape Town, 28 March 1940

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G.van Harte, G.Perez, G.Schroeder, and R.van Niekerk, Ex-students, St Columba's High School, to L.Henry, Archbishop of Cape Town, c.July-August 1990, regarding Mr "Boet" Brand's alleged attitude towards commemoration of Robert Waterwitch's death

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Executive Director: Dept of Education and Culture, House of Representatives, to Principal, St Columba's High School, regarding award of "grant-in-aid of 15%", 13 November 1987

Executive Director: Dept of Education and Culture, House of Representatives, to Chairman, Christian Brothers Association, regarding conditions of award of grant-in-aid, 4 January 1988

Executive Director: Dept of Education and Culture, House of Representatives, to Principal, St Columba's High School, regarding award of "grant-in-aid of 45%", 23 September 1988.

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3. PERSONAL COLLECTION

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Lay Staff to Provincial Superior, regarding requests for written contract and improved conditions of service, 28 March 1988

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Proposed Items for "Open" Staff Meeting, c.1989

Members of Lay Staff of St Columba's High School to "Boet" Brand, Acting Principal, St Columba's High School, regarding his failure to mark scripts, 11 July 1990

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S. Nicolson, "A Survey of Staff Members' Perceptions of St Columba's School: an analysis and recommendations", August 1990

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4. ST COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

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| Education Box | “School Boycotts 1983-1986”: File “Western Cape Schools, 1985” |
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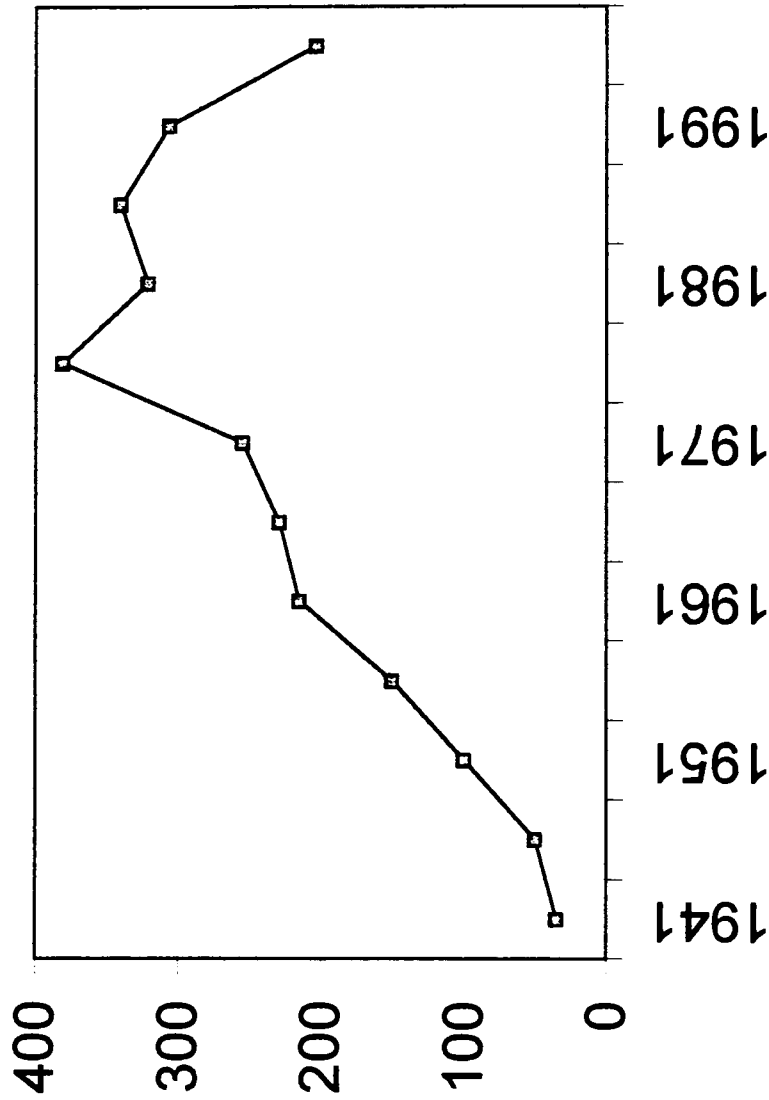
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ADDENDUM A

STUDENT ENROLMENT AT ST COLUMBA'S, 1941-1996



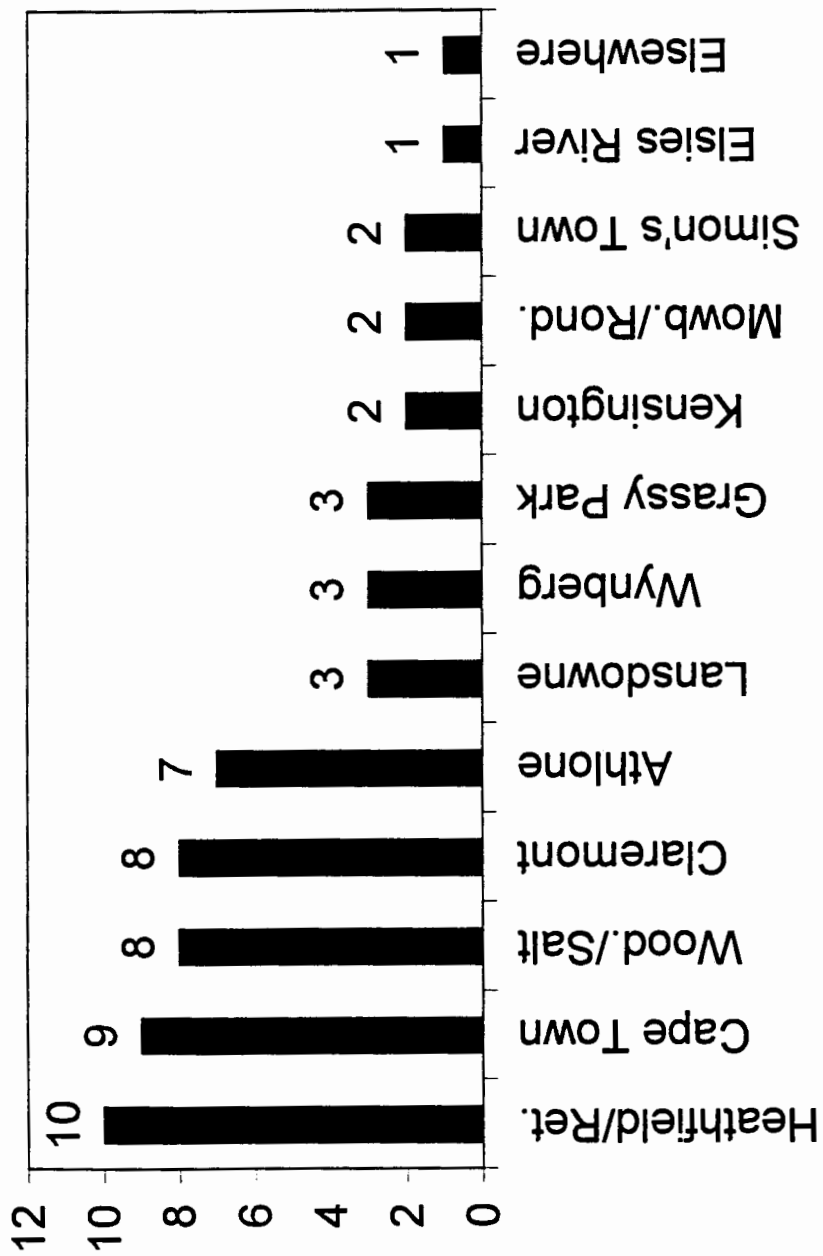
Year	No
1941	35
1946	50
1951	100
1956	150
1961	215
1966	229
1971	255
1976	381
1981	321
1986	340
1991	306
1996	203

SOURCES: J.C.O'Neill, "The Historical Development and Organisation of Christian Brothers' Education in South Africa" (Unpublished M.Ed.dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1971), p.64, and St Columba's Summary Registers, 1966-1996.

It is clear from the above graph and table that St Columba's student enrolment reached a peak during the mid-1980s, rallied during the mid-1980s, but declined sharply during the 1990s. This last phenomenon was due to two main factors: firstly, the opening of "Model C" (formerly white) schools, which could offer much better facilities at significantly lower fees, and, secondly, a perceived loss of tradition, especially in terms of a marked deterioration in visible standards of behaviour and dress, after the introduction of a lay Principal from 1991. (Personal experience.) This period, however, lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

ADDENDUM B

NEW ENROLMENTS AT ST COLUMBA'S BY AREA, 1952 (TOTAL 59)

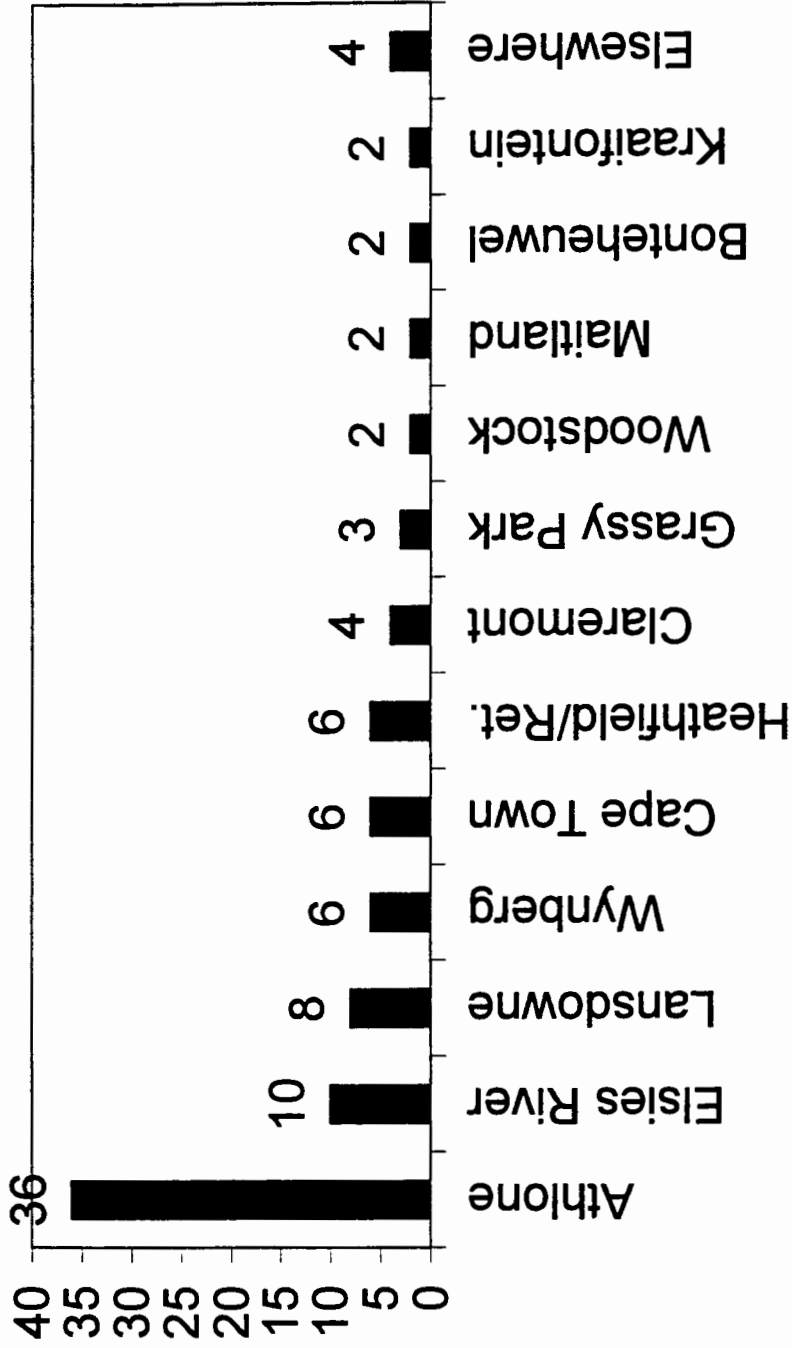


SOURCE: St Columba's Enrolment Register, 1952.

The purpose of this chart and the succeeding two is to demonstrate that St Columba's always drew its student population from a very wide catchment area. It is notable, for example, that in 1952 the vast majority of the new intake (88%) came from areas other than Athlone. This could be taken as evidence of its high reputation within the broader community it served.

ADDENDUM C

NEW ENROLMENTS AT ST COLUMBA'S BY AREA, 1968 (TOTAL 91)

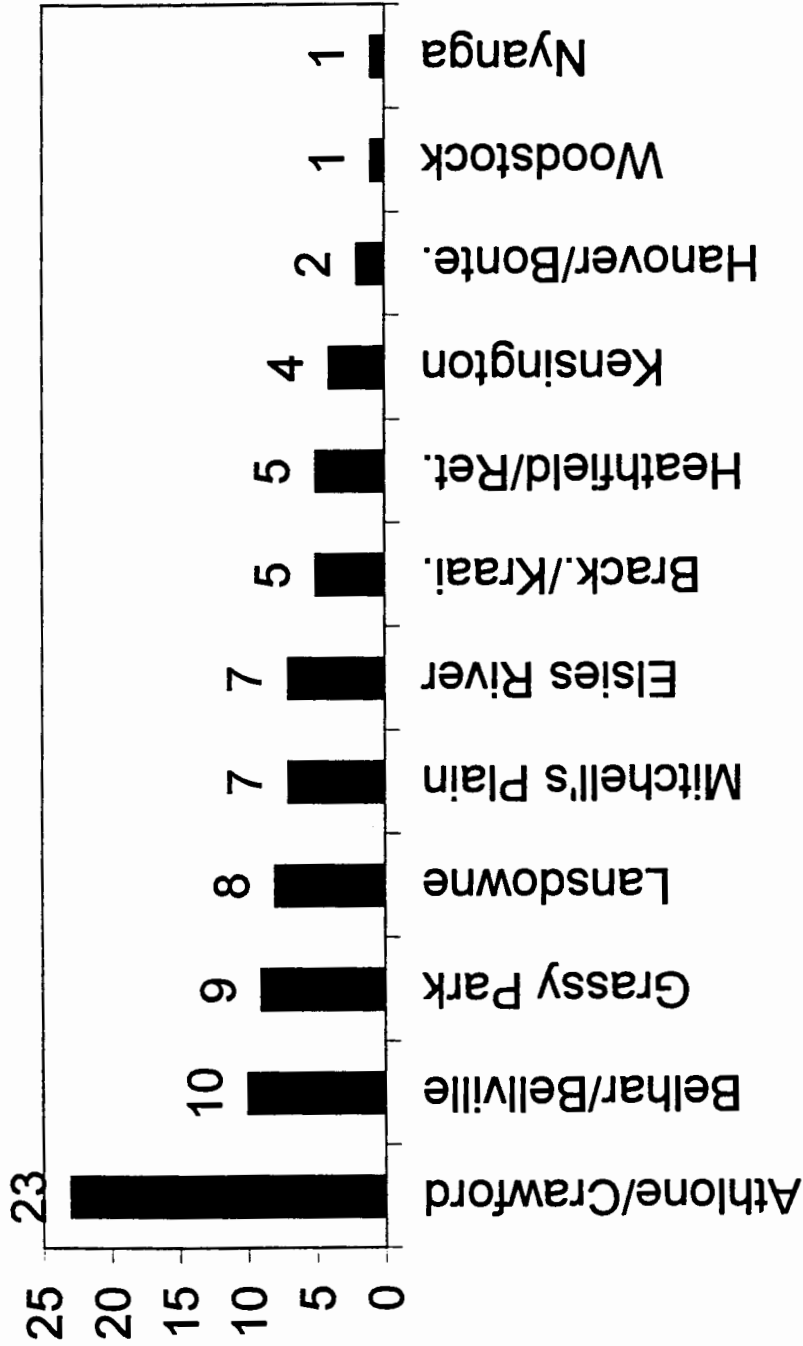


SOURCE: St Columba's Enrolment Register, 1968.

In 1968, St Columba's drew its student population from an even wider catchment area. It is notable, however, that a much higher proportion of the intake than in 1952 (roughly 40% as opposed to 12%) came from the Athlone area. This could be taken as evidence of its established reputation within the immediate environs of the school, and this at a time when there were a number of state secondary schools within the Athlone area, at which no fees need be paid.

ADDENDUM D

NEW ENROLMENTS AT ST COLUMBA'S BY AREA, 1984 (TOTAL 82)

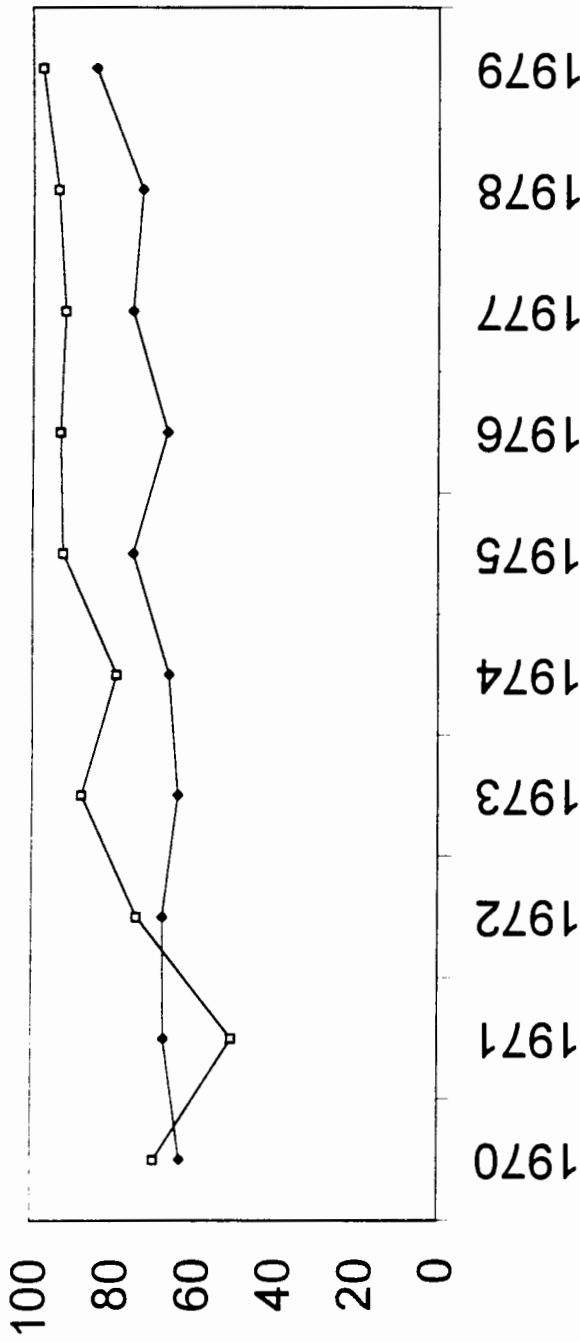


SOURCE: St Columba's Enrolment Register, 1984.

Once again in 1984, St Columba's drew its student population from a very wide catchment area. A relatively high proportion of its intake still came from the Athlone area (28%), but the rest came from a wide range of other areas, both socio-economically and geographically - from as far afield as Kraaifontein, Blackheath, and Mitchell's Plain. Clearly, the reputation of St Columba's within the broader community remained intact at this time.

ADDENDUM E

JUNIOR CERTIFICATE PERCENTAGE PASS RATES, 1970-1979

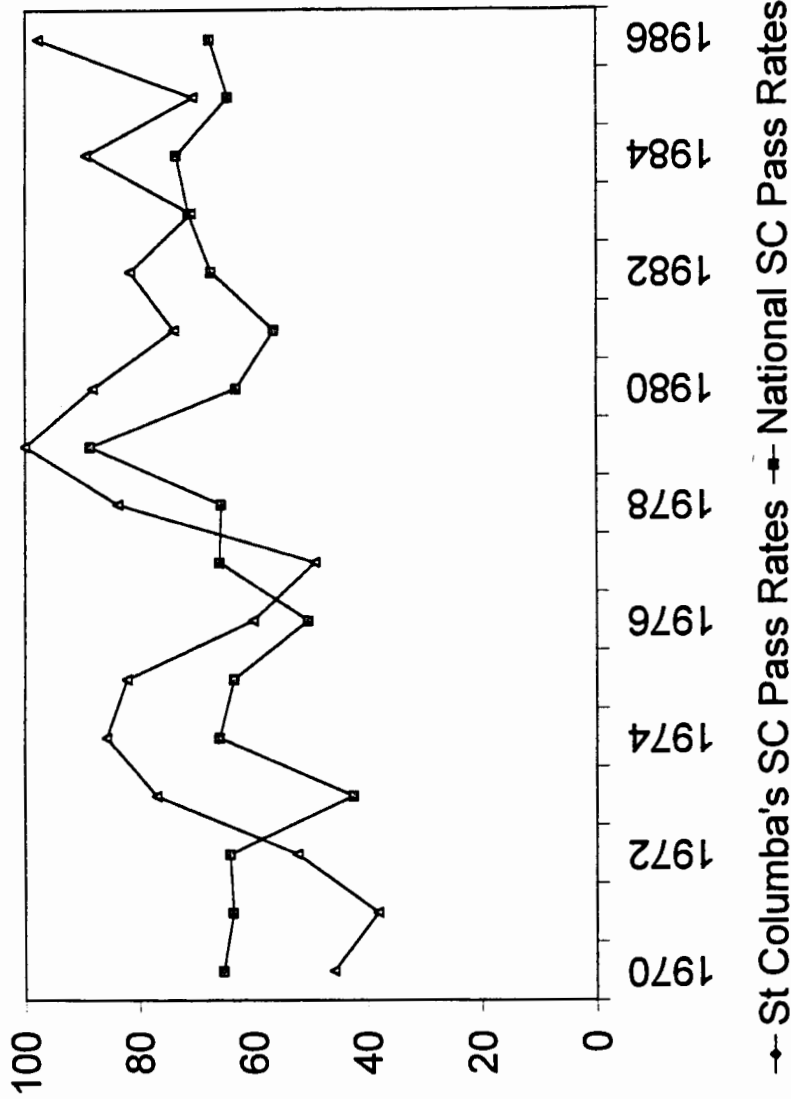


◆ National JC Pass Rates —□ St Columba's JC Pass Rates

SOURCES: *Surveys of Race Relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971-1980), and St Columba's Mark Books.

The above graph and table indicate clearly that, except for 1971, St Columba's Junior Certificate pass rates were always above national rates, sometimes appreciably so (in 1973 roughly 24% higher; in 1976 as much as 26.5%). This suggests the consistent maintenance of high academic standards during the 1970s. (The Departmental Junior Certificate examination was discontinued at the end of 1979.)

ADDENDUM F
SENIOR CERTIFICATE PERCENTAGE PASS RATES, 1970-1986



SOURCES: *Surveys of Race Relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971-1986), and St Columba's Mark Books.

The above graph and table indicate, that with the exception of a few lean years (notably in the early 1970s), St Columba's Senior Certificate pass rates were generally above national rates, sometimes strikingly so (in 1973 as much as 34.5% higher, and in 1986 more than 30%). This picture reinforces that of the Junior Certificate results (Addendum E) in suggesting that high academic standards were maintained at St Columba's over a protracted period of time.

ADDENDUM G
LAY STAFF AS PERCENTAGE OF TEACHING STAFF, 1965-1990



Year	%
1965	50
1972	40
1977	50
1981	60
1984	67
1990	81

SOURCES: Athlone House Annals, 1965, 1972, 1981; Administration of Coloured Affairs annual return VR-E.310E for 1976-1977; *Reflections 1984*, St Columba's High School magazine; Staff Address List, 1990.

The above graph and table show a steady rise in the proportion of lay staff between 1972 and 1990. (Indeed, the proportion doubled during this period.) This was to have significant consequences in that it led in time to the launching of a lay staff challenge to certain aspects of the traditional ideology of St Columba's, as has been detailed above.

ADDENDUM 1

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT – TERM 1 1996, STD 9 HISTORY

1. PROBLEM

How to introduce oral history¹ as an historical research technique into the classroom so that students begin to discover the true nature of history as a field of study, its methods and problems, and acquire, at least at a basic level, some of the skills of the historian, by actually *doing history*.

2. HYPOTHESES

- That the oral history project will produce in students a deeper understanding of the *nature* of history.
- That the oral history project will result in an improved *attitude* towards the study of history on the part of students.
- That the oral history project will result in the acquiring, at an elementary level, of some of the *skills* of the historian.

We shall investigate via our oral history project those aspects of the life of the school which students feel have a direct impact upon them *from an historical perspective*, i.e. studying how these have changed over time. These aspects will become the focus of the oral history project.²

3. PLAN OF ACTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- Explain what the action research project is all about
- Obtain the broad support of the class
- Ask each student to keep a daily journal on the project
- Explain how and why the journal is to be kept
- Form a steering committee (teacher and 2-3 nominated students)
- Promise to pursue a consultative approach throughout the project.

¹ Although oral history is only one of the types of evidence used by the historian, it is the one that we shall focus upon in this project.

² I hope, and expect, that students will, in this way, come to a deeper understanding of these areas and the problems associated with them, and that this will have a positive impact on the life of the school.

3.2 ORGANISATION

- Ask class to form working groups of 3-4
- Ask students to brainstorm (individually) the question:

What aspects of the life of the school interest me?

- Report back in plenary session
- Narrow ideas down under thematic headings

3.3 PREPARATION

- Introduction of the idea of oral history
- Class to consider the advantages and disadvantages of oral history
- Worksheet on the methodology of questioning
- Provision of basic context (outline of the school's history)
- Brainstorming of questions on chosen themes
- Selection of questions to be asked
- Worksheet on interviewing technique
- Critique of flawed interview
- Planning of *Interview Day*
- Trial interviews between students to be conducted and evaluated
- The art of transcription to be introduced
- Provision of more detailed context (based on teacher's research)

3.4 INTERVIEW DAY

- Execution
- Evaluation

3.5 PROCESSING

- Transcription
- Guest speaker on the problems of interpreting oral evidence
- Worksheets on Reliability and Synthesis/Interpretation
- Provision of packs of transcripts and documents
- Interpretation of interviews in groups
- Writing of individual research essays on chosen themes

3.6 PRESENTATION

- Brainstorming mode of collective presentation
- Work on presentation in pairs/groups
- Presentation and evaluation

4. OBSERVATION/EVALUATION

4.1 Teacher's field-notes and journal

4.2 Students'

- Journals
- Research essays
- Contributions to collective presentation
- Responses to questionnaires designed to establish whether hypotheses have been "proven"

5. REFLECTION

- Comparing outcomes with aims
- Considering difficulties, surprises, successes, discoveries
- Validating findings
- Interpreting findings
- Reaching conclusions
- Adapting plan for possible future use

ADDENDUM 2

INFORMATION ON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 1996

1. AIMS

The Oral History Project aims to achieve the following:

- To help the student towards a deeper *understanding of what history is* by providing him/her with an opportunity to *do history*.
- In this way, to help the student to acquire some of the *skills* of the historian.
- To improve the student's *attitude* towards history.
- To deepen the student's understanding of some key issues in the life of the school.

2. SKILLS

Some of the skills I hope you will acquire as a result of the Oral History Project:

- Oral skills: listening, questioning, discussing, arguing
- Interviewing skills
- Social skills: interaction, discussion, co-operation
- Emotional skills, e.g. empathy with people of another generation
- Intellectual skills: gathering sources, sifting sources, and selecting evidence, some understanding of the problems of interpretation (e.g. fact and point of view, bias, contradiction)
- Historical understanding, i.e. an understanding of key concepts such as: continuity and change over time, cause and consequence, tradition and conflict
- Some understanding of the special problems of oral evidence, e.g. the reliability of memory
- Presentation skills: how to synthesise and present what has been found, whether orally, visually, or in writing.

3. FIRST-TERM MARK

• Journals	20%
• Transcriptions	20%
• Research Essays	50%
• Attitude/Involvement, etc	10%
TOTAL	100%

4. TIMETABLE

WEEK	ACTIVITY
1	Introducing and Organising the Project
2	Preparation : Questioning Technique
3	Preparation : Interviewing Technique
4	Interview Week
5	Transcription
6	Processing Data
7	Writing Individual Projects
8	Planning Presentation

The presentation and evaluation of the project will take place later in the year.

5. KEEPING OF THE JOURNAL

- The main purpose of the keeping of the journal is so that the student can help the teacher to improve his teaching.
- Thus, the student must be aware of the *aim(s)* of each lesson.
- The student must record, honestly, whether the aims of the lesson were achieved, and, if not, why not.
- Also, the student should record what worked in the lesson and what did not, and suggestions for improvements in the future. *Be constructive.*
- Be prepared to give your *personal* responses to what happens in the classroom.
- Your responses can be of great value both to the teacher and future students.
- If time is not made available during the lesson, you must keep the journal up to date *on a daily basis* at home.
- Please keep the journal honestly and conscientiously. Remember it counts 20% of your term mark.

ADDENDUM 3

Questions From A Worker Who Reads

*Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
 In the books you will find the names of kings.
 Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
 And Babylon, many times demolished,
 Who raised it up so many times?
 In what houses of gold-glittering Lima
 Did the builders live?
 Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished,
 Did the masons go?
 Great Rome is full of triumphal arches.
 Who erected them?
 Over whom did the Caesars triumph?
 Had Byzantium, much praised in song,
 Only palaces for its inhabitants?
 Even in fabled Atlantis,
 The night the ocean engulfed it,
 The drowning still bawled for their slaves.*

*The young Alexander conquered India.
 Was he alone?
 Caesar beat the Gauls.
 Did he not even have a cook with him?
 Philip of Spain wept when his Armada went down.
 Was he the only one to weep?
 Frederick the Second won the Seven Years' War.
 Who else won it?*

*Every page a victory.
 Who cooked the feast for the victors?
 Every ten years a great man.
 Who paid the bills?*

*So many reports.
 So many questions.*

Bertolt Brecht

ADDENDUM 4

ST COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL – A BRIEF HISTORY

On 31 January 1941, Brothers Luman Hayes and John Carthage O'Farrell opened St Columba's High School, the first secondary school in the Athlone area of Cape Town, and the first (and only) school for "coloured" boys opened by the Christian Brothers in South Africa. On 9 February 1941, Bishop Hennemann officially opened the school, expressing his faith that "the returns would consist of the good done among the boys, the turning out year by year of young men, well educated and imbued with Christian ideals who, among their own people, might set an example and give a vigorous lead".

For the first twelve years, the Brothers lived with the St John's community in Green Point, and travelled every day the nearly 20 km there and back by bus and train. Pupils were especially delighted when the trains were running late! Br Hayes was dubbed the "Ou Ballie" by the locals and Br O'Farrell the "Jong Ballie"; hence the boys were "Ballie Boys", a nickname which has persisted to this day.

In 1949 the first extensions were made to the original two classrooms, three extra classrooms and a toilet block being added. On 26 March 1953, the Brothers took up residence in their newly-built house adjoining the school. Br O'Farrell was now the Superior of the community, having been Principal of the school since Br Hayes' departure at the end of 1946. In that same year (1953), St Columba's produced its first nine successful matriculants, who included Adam Small, later to become a renowned poet and academic, and Lawrence Henry, the present Archbishop of Cape Town.

In 1956 three more classrooms and a tennis court were added. During 1957 and 1958, the school participated in the Athlone parish productions of *HMS Pinafore* and *The Mikado*. The latter year saw also the departure of Br O'Farrell, a much-loved pioneer at St Columba's, after eighteen years' service. He was succeeded as Principal by Br Albeus O'Malley, who served until the end of 1964, when he, in turn, was succeeded by Br Gabriel Dillon.

During the early 1960s, the Brothers experienced the effects of apartheid in that they had to obtain a special government permit to live in Athlone, a "coloured" Group Area. This was granted on condition that "coloured" Brothers replace "white" Brothers as soon as possible. As a result, a Juniorate for prospective candidates to the Brotherhood was erected on the premises (as well as a science laboratory) – both completed by late 1967. From 1968 matric pupils were obliged to write the examinations of the new Coloured Affairs Department, rather than the National Senior Certificate examinations, which had previously been written.

Br Jim Quigley succeeded Br Dillon as Principal at the beginning of 1971 and served until mid-1973 when Br Donal Madden took over. During 1974 Fr Stephen Naidoo, an old boy, was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Cape Town. Ten years later he was to become Archbishop of Cape Town. In 1976 further extensions were made to the school, including a secretary's office and a new wing of two classrooms and a staffroom.

1976 was, of course, the year of the Soweto Uprising, and St Columba's was not untouched. Students boycotted classes in solidarity with other black students who were out on strike. Protests continued for several days and, on one occasion, students marched off the campus and were dispersed by police. The school received threats of being burnt down for not closing, and students were intimidated on their way to school. For a time, Brothers and senior boys guarded the school at night.

The school was similarly affected during the 1980 school boycott in the Western Cape, when Br Tom O'Brien was Principal, with students organising "awareness programmes" in lieu of lessons. During the 1985 State of Emergency, however, St Columba's, under Br Barry Lynch, Principal since mid-1984, decided to carry on normal lessons despite the disruption in other "coloured" schools. The result was an almost daily invasion of the premises by boycotting students from other schools, and a threat that the school would be burnt down if it did not conform. Finally, on 25 October 1985, the school bowed to pressure by closing for the rest of the year, but tuition continued via correspondence.

In 1985 the old Juniorate was converted into Biology and Geography Rooms, and the storeroom became a History Room, whilst in 1987 St Columba's entered the computer age with the building of a well-equipped Computer Room. However, disaster struck the school in April 1988 when a fire broke out in the original block. It appeared to have been caused by politically-related arson, as there had been school strikes in the vicinity in the preceding week in which St Columba's had not participated.

1990 was a revolutionary year indeed in the history of St Columba's. A decision was taken to close the Athlone House and appoint a lay Principal to succeed Br Lynch. This was to be a woman – Mrs Maria Nulty. She took office in 1991, our Jubilee Year, which was marked by many outstanding events, most memorably our first full-scale musical, *Godspell*, which was very well received.

In 1992 the school ventured out into its community in a curriculum project entitled "Athlone Week". This was to become an annual event, and led to the publication of a book, *Education is All Around Us*. 1993 saw another revolution – the admission of girls to St Columba's! This proved fairly painless, despite the forebodings of the traditionalists.

Mrs Nulty left St Columba's at the end of April 1995, to be succeeded once again by a Christian Brother, Br Paul Hurly. Although our financial future currently hangs in the balance, the spirit of St Columba's is such that we have faith in its continued survival. We believe that the prophecy of Bishop Hennemann, made in 1941, has been, and will continue to be, abundantly fulfilled.

ADDENDUM 5**INTERVIEW BETWEEN SAMANTHA MAHOMED AND MR M. GOSLETT, 1994**

Read the following (adapted) interview, done by a Std 9 student, very carefully, and answer the questions below:

S = Samantha Mahomed

G = Mr M. Goslett

S Good afternoon, Mr Goslett. Could you please give me your full name?

G Michael Thomas Goslett.

S You started at St Columba's in which year?

G In, er, 1962.

S When you attended St Columba's, was it what you expected?

G We had no expectations. We came from St Raphael's, so the next step was St Columba's. It was not a question of you going to another school, or that you had a choice.

S How would you describe the discipline at St Columba's at the time you were there?

G It was strict, it was quite firm. Those years, of course, you know, the problems that teachers have with corporal punishment, they didn't have those problems. If you needed six of the best, they gave you six of the best, but it wasn't anything vicious or anything like that. If you needed a slap, they would give you a slap. It was like, you know, you need it, you get it.

S What attitude did the students have towards the teachers, and vice versa?

G From the point of view of helpfulness?

S No, I mean on the whole, generally.

G Generally, there was a good attitude. There was a respect both ways. We had very few lay teachers. Most of them were Brothers. We had three lay teachers, and even their attitudes were good. Yes, it was good.

S So you enjoyed your school years?

G I – I really can't complain about it.

S I wish I could, really I wish.

S What kind of extra-murals did the school offer at the time?

- G Obviously they had sport, which was mainly soccer. Because of the political situation, there were not many extra-murals. The societies we had were religion-based. We didn't have the type of sports that you have today, because of the political situation. Interaction between the schools was limited.
- S Was there an SRC in your years?
- G Not at school level. We didn't need it at the time.
- S I wish that I could say the same now.
In your opinion, did the school set the right morals and standards for the pupils?
- G Yes. It was a question of dignity, a question of respect towards the student. There were no real rebels in the school, only naughty, devil guys, who liked to do *kwattekwaad*, you know. We had plenty of those confidence-tricksters.
- S So everybody had a good attitude towards their work and their teachers?
- G On the whole, yes, even the ones that were not so bright. They just sailed through.
- S Do you ever regret going to St Columba's?
- G No.
- S Why not?
- G It was like I said – I enjoyed my school life. Sometimes you thought, "I wonder what it would be like to have women in your class", but it was never a factor. Once you were involved in your schooling, the sex didn't matter. It was a question of work – you had work to do – and we had interaction [with girls] through YCS [Young Christian Students] and inter-schools [athletics].
- S If you could have changed anything about St Columba's, what would it have been?
- G I would say it would be to prepare the kids more for the rough-and-tumble of the world. A lot of our guys from those days, if you look at them now, are professional men. Those who are not professional men are, in effect, failures, in the sense that they believed what people told them automatically. They [the teachers] weren't prepared to say: "Listen, there are guys around that are confidence-tricksters, that will take you for a ride". You know, that type of thing. Not that you must be cynical, but people should be prepared for life.
- S Thank you very much, Mr Goslett, for your time. I know that you're a busy man. Although this was a short interview, it was a very informative one. Thank you.

Write a critical analysis of this interview, listing in detail:

1. *What was good about it.* (12)
 2. *What was not so good about it, and how you would have improved it.* (18)
- [30]

ADDENDUM 6

TIPS ON TRANSCRIPTION

1. AIM: For the transcription to be as accurate, readable, and *beautiful* as possible.
2. Make corrections in *black* ink only.
3. HEADING, e.g.:

ST COLUMBA'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW NO 34 with ROBERT VAN NIEKERK on POLITICS
TAPE 1 SIDE A
9 MARCH 1996
INTERVIEWER: PAUL MAARMAN

M = Paul Maarman
V = Robert van Niekerk
4. Use PLAY DIALOGUE FORM throughout.
5. "Stage directions" in square brackets, e.g. [The phone rings. Tape paused for 5 min.]
6. Leave blank spaces for unintelligible passages. Write in tentative interpretation *in pencil*. Use a second (or third) pair of ears.
7. Leave out "ers", false starts, tags ("you know", "you see", etc.), brief interviewer interjections (e.g. "hm", "yes"), stutterings, etc.
8. Indicate *significant* pauses by giving length in square brackets, e.g. [Pause 10 sec.]
9. Don't try to represent pronunciations by changing spellings.
10. Don't correct grammar, usage, etc. Use inverted commas or italics for any expression that is not "Standard English" (slang, "bad language", Afrikaans, etc).
11. Use { (braces) to indicate that two (or more) people are speaking at the same time.
12. You can usually "feel" when a sentence ends. Use a full stop.
13. Use -- (*two dashes*) when a speaker breaks off or is interrupted.
14. When you have finished your transcription, listen through the tape once more, checking your transcription very carefully.

ADDENDUM 7**TIMETABLE : ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW DAY**

TIME	ACTIVITY	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
0810-0900	PREPARATION			
0900-0950	SESSION 1	A ₁	B ₁	C ₁
0955-1045	SESSION 2	C ₂	A ₂	B ₂
1050-1140	SESSION 3	B ₃	C ₃	A ₃
1140-1200	TEA			
1200-1250	SESSION 4	D ₁	E ₁	F ₁
1255-1345	SESSION 5	F ₂	D ₂	E ₂
1350-1440	SESSION 6	E ₃	F ₃	D ₃
1440-1500	TEA			

KEY

A	Russel Brand
B	Damascene Taylor
C	Giovanni Perez
D	Harold Manus
E	Robert van Niekerk
F	Glen van Harte

GROUP 1 POLITICS

GROUP 2 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

GROUP 3 DISCIPLINE & GENDER

ADDENDUM 8

QUESTIONNAIRE 1 - INTRODUCTORY

It is a.m./p.m. on Saturday, 9 March 1996, and this is [*Full Name*], speaking to [*Name of Interviewee*] at St Columba's High School.

Let me introduce you to the other members of the team. This is [*Full Name, etc.*].

Introduce *all* interviews in this way. Ask the following questions only in the *first* of the series of interviews with each interviewee.

1. Would you please give us your first name?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What sort of work did your parents do?
4. Between which years were you at St Columba's?
5. How many members of your family have attended St Columba's?
6. Why did you come to St Columba's?
7. Who was the principal in your day?
8. What were the school fees in your day?
9. Do any teachers stand out for you? [*If so*] Why?
10. Did having been a student at St Columba's help you in getting a job? [*If so*] How?

We'd now like to ask you some questions about Discipline and Gender OR Politics OR the Running of the School [*whichever applies*].

ADDENDUM 9**QUESTIONNAIRE 2 – DISCIPLINE**

1. Please give us some examples of rules in your day.
2. What were the attitudes of students towards the rules?

3. What methods of discipline or punishment were used?
4. Who administered the punishment?/Was permission required?
5. What were the attitudes of students towards the methods of discipline or punishment practised?
6. How effective was the discipline practised?
7. What, if any, were its long-term effects?

8. Were there any expulsions during your time?
9. [*If yes*] How many?/Why were students expelled?

10. How were Prefects/Student Leaders [*whichever is appropriate*] elected or appointed?
11. How did students feel about this method of appointment/election?
12. What qualities were looked for in Prefects/Student Leaders?
13. What was the role of the Prefect/Student Leader?
14. What powers did Prefects/Student Leaders have?
15. What was the attitude of Prefects/Student Leaders towards staff members?
16. How did Prefects/Student Leaders treat other students?
17. What was the attitude of staff members towards Prefects/Student Leaders?
18. What was the attitude of other students towards Prefects/Student Leaders?
19. How effective were the Prefects/Student Leaders?
20. When and why was the name changed from Prefect to Student Leader?
[*Only in the 1990s.*]

21. How were the Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy appointed?
22. What were their duties and responsibilities?
23. When and why were these roles done away with? [*Only from 1994.*]

24. Was there a work ethic among students in your day? [i.e. Were students keen to work?]
25. Why?/Why not?

26. Were there any changes in discipline during your time at the school? If so, please describe them.
27. What effects did these changes have?

28. In retrospect [looking back], how do you feel about the school's discipline in your day?

ADDENDUM 10

QUESTIONNAIRE 3 - POLITICS

1. What were the political positions of the Brothers when you were at St Columba's?
2. How did their political positions affect the school?
3. What were the political positions of lay teachers?
4. What were the political positions of students?
5. What was *your* political position at the time?
6. How was South African history and politics taught?

7. What were the attitudes of students towards the political troubles of 1976/1980/1985?
[*whichever applies*]
8. How were students affected by the political troubles?
9. Were students involved in political activity?/If so, how?
10. Were any students injured or arrested? Details?

11. Was there an SRC at the time?
12. How was it elected?
13. What role did it play?
14. How effective was it?
15. What were the attitudes of the Brothers towards it?
16. What were the attitudes of lay staff towards it?
17. What were the attitudes of students towards it?

18. What were the attitudes of the Brothers towards the boycotts of 1976/1980/1985?
19. What were the attitudes of lay teachers towards the boycotts?
20. What were the attitudes of parents towards the boycotts?
21. How did students/teachers/parents/the broader community feel about the fact that the school was kept open in 1976/1980/1985?
22. In general terms, how did people within the broader community feel about St Columba's at the time?
23. How were extra-murals (sport and cultural affairs) affected by how people saw the school's political position?

24. In retrospect [looking back], how do you feel about the school's political position in your day?

Follow-up questions may arise, *for example*, on:

25. The guarding of the school by Brothers and senior students in 1976.
26. The April 1988 fire [which did substantial damage to the oldest block at the school].
27. The death of Robert Waterwitch [an old boy, who was killed apparently whilst laying a limpet mine at the Athlone Municipal Offices in July 1989].

ADDENDUM 11**QUESTIONNAIRE 4 - GENDER**

1. What was the attitude of boys towards girls before their admission to the school?
2. What was the attitude of boys towards women/female teachers before the admission of girls?
3. What was the attitude of boys towards each other before the introduction of girls?
4. When were girls admitted to the school? [*Only from 1993.*]
5. Why, in your opinion, were girls admitted to the school?
6. How did boys react when girls were admitted?
7. Did boys' attitudes towards girls and women change after girls had been admitted?
8. [*If yes*] How did they change?
9. What was the attitude of girls towards boys?
10. What was the attitude of female teachers towards their male colleagues (Brothers/lay)?
11. What was their attitude towards the boys?
12. How did the admission of girls change the school, with respect to:
 - (a) the rules
 - (b) disciplinary methods?
13. Were girls treated differently from boys?
14. [*If so*] How?
15. In retrospect [looking back], how do you feel about the school's attitude towards gender issues in your day?

ADDENDUM 12**QUESTIONNAIRE 5 - RUNNING OF THE SCHOOL/GOVERNANCE**

1. How was the school governed in your day?
2. Who made the important decisions?
3. What part did parents play in decision-making?
4. What part did teachers play in decision-making?
5. What part did students play in decision-making?
6. What part did the State play in decision-making?

7. Who was responsible for the appointment and dismissal of teachers?

8. Was there a Board of Governors in your day? [*Only from the late 1980s.*]
9. [*If so*] What was its role?
10. Who served on it?
11. How was it elected/appointed?
12. How was it regarded by the school community?

13. What was the school's admission policy in your day?
14. Did it change during your time?
15. How did it change?
16. Why did it change?

17. How were student voices heard in your day?
18. When did formal student representation start?
19. Why did it start then?
20. How were student representatives elected?
21. What were the duties and responsibilities of student representatives?
22. What channels did student representatives follow in pursuing grievances or complaints?
23. How effective were student representatives?
24. How did students feel about student representation in your day?
25. When was the name changed from Students' Representative Council to Students' Liaison Body, and why, in your opinion? [*Only in the 1990s.*]

26. In retrospect [looking back], how do you feel about how the school was run in your day?

ADDENDUM 13

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I agree to be allowed to be deposited with the St Columba's History Archives the tape or tapes, and the transcript, of the voluntary recorded interview conducted with me today by students of St Columba's High School.

I understand that the tape(s) and transcript, referred to above, including quotations therefrom, may, at the discretion of the Archivist of St Columba's High School, be used for research purposes, for other educational purposes, or for any publications.

I wish the following restrictions to be placed on the use of the tapes/transcript:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Understood and Agreed To:

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Archivist: _____

Date: _____

Accession Number _____

ADDENDUM 14

RELIABILITY OF EVIDENCE

THREE CHECKS

There are *three* main checks for the reliability of oral evidence:¹

1. Internal Consistency

Are there, *within the interview*, any inconsistencies, contradictions, or anachronisms (details out of time)? If so, this *could* mean that evidence has been withheld or made up.

2. Cross-check with Other Sources

Does the evidence square with that in other sources, such as documents or other interviews? Remember, however, that contradictions do not necessarily imply that someone is not telling the truth. Contradictions need to be carefully examined and, if possible, reconciled.

3. Cross-check with the Wider Context

Does the interviewee show authentic knowledge of, for example, the time, place, and social-class context from which s/he comes?

FOUR TESTS

For any detail of evidence to be credible it must pass *four* tests:²

1. Was the primary witness (the ultimate source) *able* to tell the truth?
2. Was the primary witness *willing* to tell the truth?
3. Has the primary witness been *accurately reported*?
4. Is there any *independent corroboration* of the detail under examination?

It is not always possible to obtain independent corroboration, but if a statement derives from the testimony of a single witness, this must be indicated, e.g. "Mr Jacobs says ..."
or "According to Br Smith ..."

¹ Derived from P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: oral history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.209-212.

² Derived from L. Gottschalk, *Understanding History: a primer of historical method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969), p.150.

POSSIBLE WEAKNESSES OF THE INTERVIEWEE

One also has to bear in mind the following possible weaknesses of the interviewee.³

1. Unreliability of memory for *hard facts* (dates, times, places, etc.) and *chronology* (the order of events).

Hence the need for *cross-checking*. However, oral history *is* generally reliable for the *unique* event which has made a powerful impression on the interviewee, and the *regularly repeated* event (e.g. the frequent use of corporal punishment).

2. Deliberate falsifying or unfairness to serve some private end, e.g. revenge.
3. Highly subjective views.
4. Excessive discretion (reserve, confidentiality).
5. Superficiality, gossip.
6. Over-simplification (cut-and-dried answers)
7. Exaggeration of the importance of his/her own role.
8. Not taking the wider context into account (too much emphasis on the purely personal).
9. Hindsight – projection back into the past of a *present* view or emotion.

CONCLUSION

All of the above makes it clear that it is not easy to assess the reliability of oral evidence. However, it is also not an impossibility. Remember that the historian's "truths" are derived from an analysis and evaluation of his/her "*sources*" rather than "*the actual past*", which s/he cannot gain access to.⁴

³ Derived from A.Seldon & J.Pappworth, *By word of mouth: elite oral history* (London & New York: Methuen, 1983), pp.17-26.

⁴ Gottschalk, p.171.

ADDENDUM 15

SYNTHESIS/INTERPRETATION

History is a deliberate attempt to give a meaningful account of some past event (or combination of events). In this case, the combination of events is the past of our school with specific regard to our four chosen themes: Politics/Governance/Discipline/ Gender.

To give such an account, established facts have to be:

- selected
- arranged
- emphasised (or minimised)
- placed in some sort of causal or explanatory order.¹

The historian approaches his/her material with a question or a set of questions in mind.² We are fortunate in that we have already formulated questions for our interviews. These may, of course, give rise to other, more pointed or “bigger” questions (*hypotheses*), for example:

- Did the system of discipline practised at St Columba’s have positive/negative effects upon students?
- Did the style of governance affect the official political position of St Columba’s?

How does the historian decide which facts to use and which to omit? *Relevance* to one’s questions/hypotheses will, in general, determine one’s choice. Although “the decision of what is relevant [and what is not] is largely a matter of personal judgement,”³ relevance must be proved in argument.

Remember, in *synthesising* (putting together) a historical account, the importance of the following aspects of history:

- reliability of the evidence used [see handout on Reliability of Evidence]
- chronology (the order of events)
- change/continuity over time
- causes and consequences
- ideas, attitudes, and perceptions
- the need to try to empathise with the people involved
- context
- logical argument
- the need to try to accommodate meaningfully apparent contradictions in testimony.

¹ L.Gottschalk, *Understanding History: a primer of historical method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A.Knopf Inc., 1969), p.207.

² *Ibid.*, pp.141-143.

³ *Ibid.*, p.211.

P R O G R A M M E

DAY	TIME	PROGRAMME	
Thursday 23 Jan 1997	17:00	Participants arrive at the College Hostel	
	18:00	Supper at Hostel	
	19:00-20:00	Participants set up their displays etc.	
	20:00	Participants hosted out	
Friday 24 Jan 1997	08:00-10:00	Preliminary Judging	
	10:00-10:20	Break	
	10:20-11:50	Visits by Mount Edmund Senior School	
	11:50-12:00	Break	
	12:05-13:35	Visit by Mount Edmund Junior School	
	14:30-16:00	Judging and Exhibition open to Public	
	16:00-20:00	Outing of historic Interest and supper	
	20:00	Students return to their hosts	
	Saturday 25 Jan 1997	08:00-10:00	Guest speakers and lectures on the history of the Christian Brothers. Public invited.
		11:00-13:00	Awards handed out and public and media invited
13:00-14:00		Lunch in Hostel	
14:00-18:00		Outing of historical interest	
Sunday 26 Jan 1997	18:00	Participants return to their hosts	
	08:00-09:00	Special Mass in honour of Edmund Rice and the work of the Brothers. Public invited.	
	09:30	Participants return home.	

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

CENTENARY

HISTORY WEEK

DATE : Thursday 23 - Sunday 26 January 1997

VENUS : Christian Brothers' College
Mount Edmund
Pretoria
College Hall

PARTICIPANTS : 4 Students and 1 Teacher from each school

0000000

Exhibits remain behind to form part of travelling road show.

CONTENTS OF THE PROJECTS

The possibilities are endless but here are a few guidelines.

- The establishment of your school. The general background - who invited the Brothers - who built the school etc.
- The Pioneering days - Focus on the founding Brothers who they were - where they had been before. Any incidents which happened in the early days.
- The development of your school. Changes of location - Girls enter the school - The Brothers move out - early out-reach programmes.
- Research on all Headmaster and or Brothers
- Research on Old Boys
- A focus on the first class in the College - what are they doing now?
- Fees and results through the years (various charts)
- Benefactors/friends of the College an acknowledgement of their efforts
- A history of a sport or all sports at your school (did they really jump higher in the old days?) Coaches as characters - famous sportsmen
- Past pupil leaders of your school ordinary reminiscences of past pupils
- The Video
 - * Take us around your school
 - * Points of interest
 - * Symbolism (eg. the Altar at Pretoria has a history behind it)
 - * Interviews with Old Boys, Brothers, Parents who can shed some light on what the school meant to the community

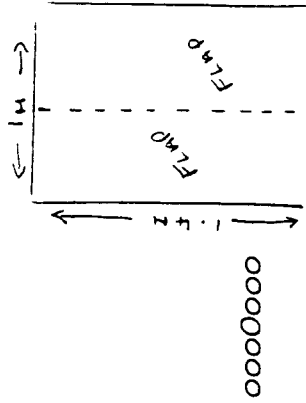
FORMAT

TV and Video units will be provided for schools to display their videos.

Exhibitions will take the form of videos, charts, pictures, diagrams and written material.

An essential part of the judging will be students ability to articulate the work researched. The four students should be able to tell 'the story' of your school and answer pertinent questions asked by the Judges and public.

As all Exhibits must fit in a trailer we suggest the following: Charts and diagrams must fit into a cardboard folder that you have made to the following dimensions: 1m wide x1,4m long. The sequence of charts must be clearly numbered at the back to allow the correct setting of exhibits at each center.



SOURCES

We want good quality research and
acknowledgement of sources

Possible Sources

- Rice House - see if you can get a Brother to help you out with lists of Brothers who worked at your school
- Headmaster files - for developments
- Old Board of Governors files for establishments
- Local parish - Most communities of Brothers knew the local priests well
- Past parents - Old Boys
- The Southern Cross
- Your school Bursar!!
- Karl Nolan - 012-868888

YOUR PARTICIPANTS

You must select four students for the exhibition. It is up to you to work out your selection process but the more children involved in the Research the better - remember it is their Centenary too!

ADDENDUM 17**“THINK SHEET”**

- Please answer the following questions as *fully* and *honestly* as possible.
 - Take your time; this is *not* a test.
1. What in your opinion, is the historian *trying to do*, and *how* does s/he go about doing it?
 2. How does the historian use *evidence*?
 3. Explain what you understand by *cause and effect* in history.
 4. What value does *empathy* and the use of the *imagination* have for the historian?
 5. What is the role of the *ordinary person* in history?
 6. Is what the historian does *worth* doing? Why?/Why not?
 7. Do you find history *relevant to you*? Why?/Why not?
 8. How has your *attitude towards history*, both as a study and as a school subject, *changed* as a result of the Oral History Project? Explain your answer carefully.
 9. What *skills* do you think you have acquired as a result of the Oral History Project?

Many thanks, fellow-researchers!

ADDENDUM 18**GROUP WORKSHEET**

- Please elect a chairperson, who will chair the discussions and record the agreed responses of your group (and differences where these occur).
 - Please record *full reasons* for your agreed answers.
 - Please discuss and answer the following questions as *fully* and *honestly* as possible.
1. What in your opinion, does the historian *try to do*, and *how* does s/he go about doing it?

In the course of answering this question, consider, amongst other things, the following:
 - ◆ the use of evidence
 - ◆ cause and effect
 - ◆ change and continuity
 - ◆ time and chronology
 - ◆ empathy and the imagination.
 2. Is history relevant to everyone? Explain your answer(s) carefully.
 3. How have your *attitudes towards history*, both as a study and as a school subject, *changed* as a result of the Oral History Project? Explain your answer(s) carefully.
 4. What *skills* do you think you have acquired as a result of the Oral History Project?

My sincere thanks, fellow-researchers!

ST COLUMBA

- ITS FOUNDING













BISHOP VS SUPERIOR-GENERAL






This correspondence between the Bishop of Cape Town, Francis J. Heenan, and the Superior-General of the Christian Brothers, J.P. 'Tommy' Burke, clearly set Bishop's growing impatience with the idea of the founding of St Columba's and the fact that C.B. 'Brotherhood' opening would proceed in the province eventually into the conviction that St Columba's will be opened in January 1941. Bishop Heenan's consent was to be secured as one of the founding fathers of St Columba's, and it is surely appropriate that it was by the Bishop, opened the school on 4 February 1941.






1940s



C B C

ATHLONE



The 31 January 1941, Brothers Hayes and O'Farrell opened St Columba's school in Athlone. It was the first high school in the Leinster Province opened for orphaned boys, and the first and only orphaned school opened by the Christian Brothers in South Africa.

Every day the two Brothers traveled from their residence home in Green Park to the two day-long runs and from there via train to Athlone.

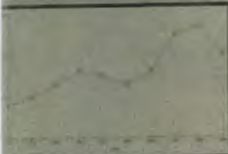
The boys were to be "strong champions of their people, loyal citizens in the state, and devout in their love the gods and promises of that life that should be the goal of all true education".

"The second fundamental of the good that comes to the world, the raising and year by year of young men, will be raised and raised with Christian ideas, who among their own people, might set an example and give a vigorous lead".

The boys come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds and many could not even afford a pair of shoes. Some were blind and some were deaf.

The rules of the school were fairly elementary. Punctuality was important. Boys had to be neatly dressed. Their maintenance and education had to be acceptable in the community. Academic standards were high and there were few failures as a result of

1950s



During the course of the simple semester passed the 1950s, the school was thriving, and enjoyed its greatest reputation to the community. The two very much-loved by the school and displayed for pride and honor are preserved at the school.



The end of 1950 saw the departure of Brother Edward Anderson of the school and principal.



We grew and politically conscious. It was not merely compliance or conformity. We were a bunch of idealistic boys, and really that much more of the outside world. We came here we enjoyed the beauty the Brothers gave us, we enjoyed our honor and ability, we enjoyed our natural resources and perhaps a future. There was no, perhaps the corner of our hearts. We had a ready for looking the Teacher and Librarian. Now there has or that time there was a political conscience had left there was already, which we did not experience here. In the mind that they were some one else from some one and just from an inner and gathering. What was achieved was accepted. We just want about characterly and morally.

When Justice, St. Columba's school early 1950s, continued in 1950s.

In 1951, a house for the Brothers adjoining the school grounds was completed and the Brothers took up residence there.

Detention for the first time...

EXTRAM 7 FROM A SCHOOL HOUSE ANNALS



Kleurling So Bundel is 'a Vanda

...the school...



1953 saw the first graduation class of St. Columba's. The class included people of the colors of European descent and also South Indian.

1960s



The "conventioneers" of the 1960s seemed to react only to the school as it was, judging the strength, by the number of letters on photographs.



The Catholic hierarchy of Cape Town showed continued support for the "spiritual" of the school.



Professors play an important role in the disciplinary system of St. Columba's. They advised the Brothers and other members in upholding the rules and regulations of the school. Pupils from the main class were asked to be obedient. Although pupils did not for the professors, the final decision as to who would be made professors was made by the staff.



Even at this early stage in the life of St. Columba's, the presence of Bishop Muenzinger was being felt. His boys looked the call to serve their communities by becoming priests and religious. St. Columba's has produced many priests and, of course, were appointed Archbishop.

In 1961, a building was completed on the grounds of St. Columba's. This building was used to be the way forward for suitable conditions for the Brothers. This would lead to the rebuilding of

STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATIONS OF ST. COLUMBA'S

During the 1960s the Brothers experienced the effects of apartheid, in that, as white men living in a so-called "Group Areas", they had to identify a special government permit to live in Athlone. This was granted as the understanding that colored Brothers would replace white Brothers as soon as possible.

...the school...

1970's A DECADE OF CHANGE

The main title is '1970's A DECADE OF CHANGE'. The word 'OF' is in yellow, and 'CHANGE' is in red. The background features several newspaper clippings and photographs, including a group of young women at the top left, a group of men in suits at the top right, and a school building at the bottom right. There are also various text snippets scattered throughout the page.

POLITICAL AWAKENING

POLITICAL AWAKENING

DR. B. MADDOX

The 1970's was a decade of change... (text continues)

EXTRA FROM ALIENOR BOWE 1971

EXTRA FROM ALIENOR BOWE 1971

EXTRA FROM ALIENOR BOWE 1971

The staff was not left unattended by the faculty of 27%... (text continues)

EXTRA FROM ALIENOR BOWE 1971

TURNOVER OF STAFF

DECADE OF CRISIS

1990s

At the end of 1990, the school was in a state of crisis. The staff was in a state of flux, and the school was in a state of flux. The school was in a state of flux, and the staff was in a state of flux.

The application of the system resulted in a marked improvement in staff and behavior in 1991, but during the course of 1991 the system, as described, did not meet, and the disciplinary methods were again widely disliked.

There has been a sharp decline in student numbers from 1990 to 1991, some parents have sought "better education" at St. Columba's school, where the "better education" is a result of the school's...

GENDER

In this decade, the emphasis of St. Columba's focus on all boys school was broken. In 1992, girls were admitted to the school, as they had been in the past. The school was in a state of flux, and the staff was in a state of flux.

Historically, the school has been a boys' school, but in 1992, girls were admitted to the school. The school was in a state of flux, and the staff was in a state of flux.

In 1992, in the first year of girls being admitted to the school, the school was in a state of flux, and the staff was in a state of flux.

ST COLUMBIAN

CHALLENGE

In 1991 St. Columba's celebrated its Golden Jubilee 50th years of existence. Several events took place in honour of this milestone year. Most memorable was the first all-school assembly ever performed at St. Columba's. It was a resounding popular and critical success.

CURRICULUM

A series of expressive projects, starting in 1991 with the school staff, took the school and staff to the next level. In order to evaluate various aspects of the school, a curriculum project was initiated. The first project was the publication of the University of the Western Cape of Curriculum & Assessment 1991. St. Columba's had taken a major step in curriculum development.

EDUCATION

Week of lessons without classrooms

St. Columba take a closer look at the Athlone area