

Quiet Corruption: Teachers Unions and Leadership
in South African Township Schools

by

Kathlyn McClure Pattillo
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All the school leaders who took time to share their experiences with me. You trusted me with your stories and I offered nothing in return. I hope that this thesis will do justice to you.

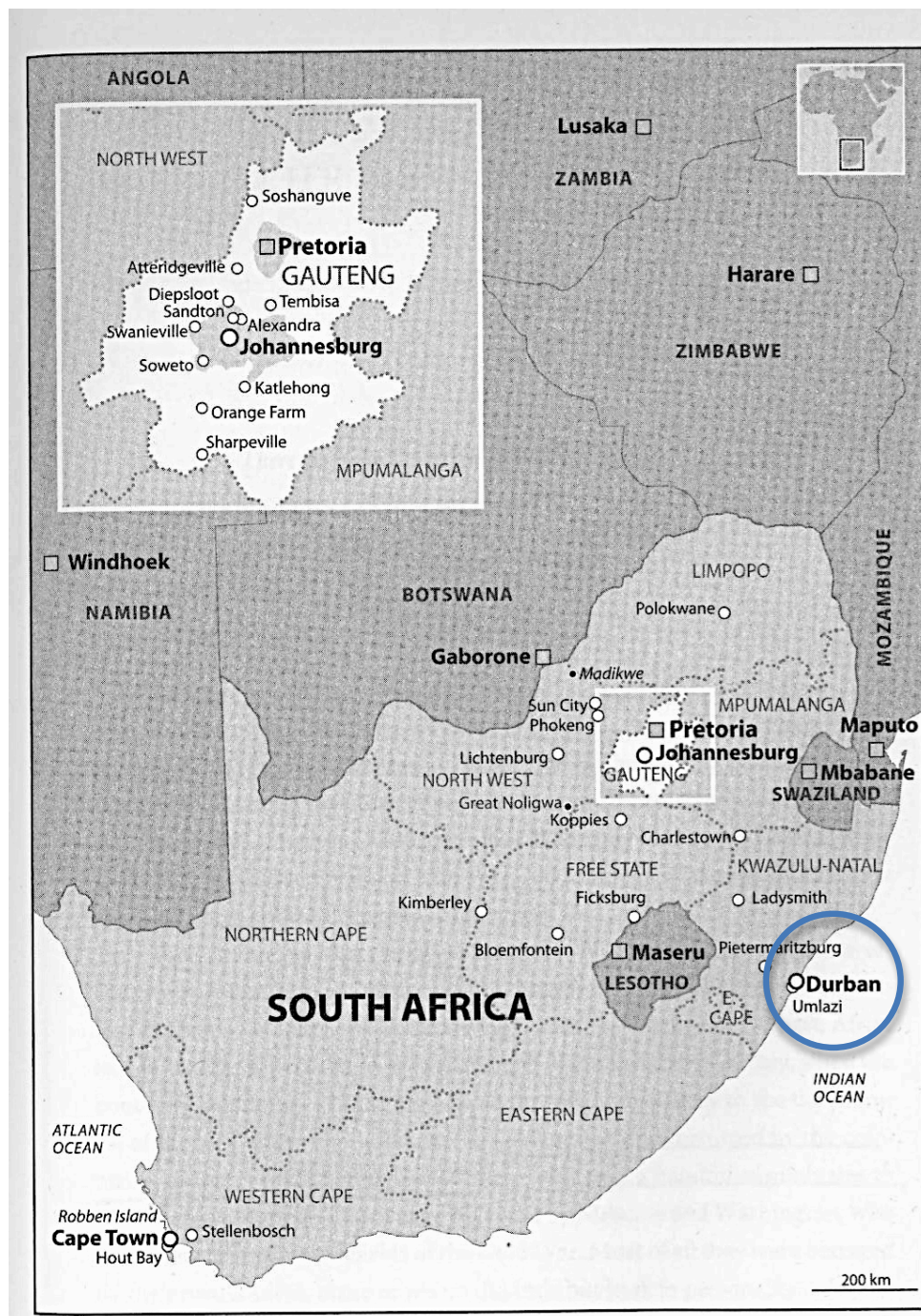
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
C2005	Curriculum 2005 (otherwise known as Outcomes-Based Education)
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
EI	Education International
HOD	Head of Department
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teacher's Organisation of South Africa
NATU	National Teachers Union (formerly Natal African Teachers' Union)
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NECC	National Education Co-Ordinating Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PMLP	Principal's Management and Leadership Program
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team (Principal, Deputy Principal and HOD's)

A note on terminology:

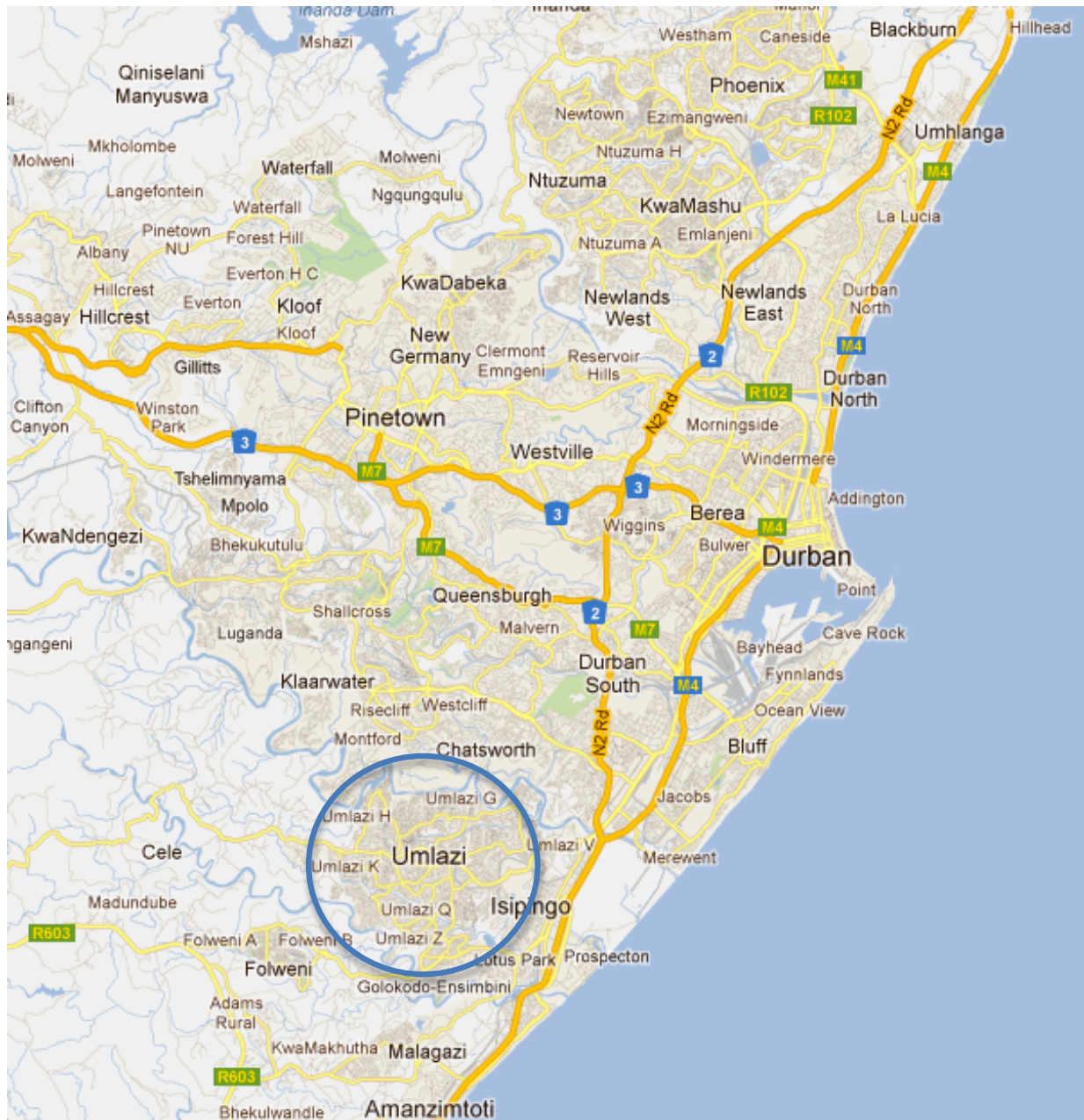
Historically white schools, otherwise known as former Model C schools, were designated for white students during apartheid. Historically black schools were designated for African, Coloured and Indian students. Learners is the term used for students, and educator for teachers, because those are the terms used by the South African Department of Education.

MAPS



SOUTH AFRICA – Durban and Umlazi circled in blue

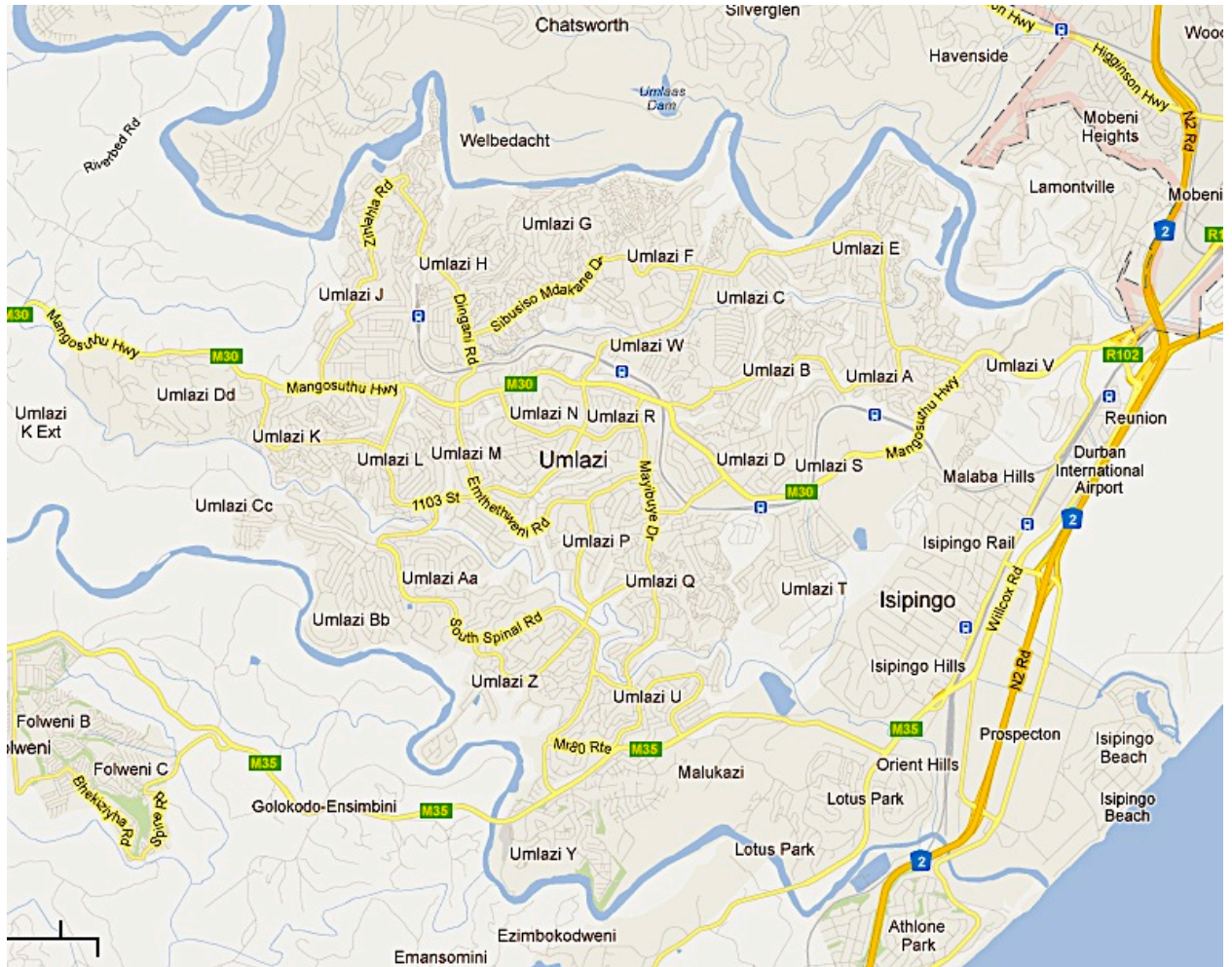
Alec Russell, *Bring Me My Machine Gun: The Battle for the Soul of South Africa from Mandela to Zuma* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009).



DURBAN AND SURROUNDING TOWNSHIPS –

Umlazi circled in blue

<http://maps.google.com/> (Accessed: March 27, 2012)



UMLAZI TOWNSHIP

<http://maps.google.com/> (Accessed: March 27, 2012)

PREFACE

August 2010

The principal sits alone in his office. The oldest students are in the main hall, watching a video to teach them a science lesson. They are studying for matric, the exam they take to graduate that determines their entrance to university and career prospects. The teachers were tipped off that union members are coming, so for their own safety most of them have left.¹

The school is supposed to be closed. The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) has ordered its members to embark on a strike action. Most of the other schools in the township are closed for the strike. Teachers are at rallies downtown, chanting slogans about their rights as workers. Other teachers have stayed home. Though most of his teachers and students have left, this principal refuses to leave his school unstaffed. Only the students in matric remain, along with a few teachers who come in, a few hours at a time, to review the necessary material for the upcoming exams.

During the strike, SADTU leaders and members in Umlazi township gather each morning to organize. They discuss whether or not members at each site are actively participating in the strike and which schools are continuing to teach. They travel around the township in caravans, stopping outside certain schools to pressure them to close. Though he does not yet know it, today is this principal's turn for a visit.

¹ All information and quotes in the preface, except where specified otherwise, are drawn from: Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

The principal's cell phone rings and he answers. It is his friend, an MEC,² phoning to ask if the principal is at school. "Where are you?" The principal replies, "I'm at school." The MEC says, 'I don't know what we're going to do. I've been informed that today your school will be under attack.'

The principal goes to warn the four teachers who remain and asks them to leave. "Look. We are under attack. So do me one favor. I don't mind if they find me here. Now I am decided. If it means dying here, that will happen. I'm completely against what is happening." The teachers immediately follow his request and leave. A teacher who was present at the time describes what was going through her mind.

We were worried, actually, as to what is going to happen. And we worried for our own sakes. Some were saying, 'Let's go. Let's not stop here. Let's go! What if they recognize us and then come after us?' We were expecting anything. Violence or anything. But mostly we were afraid for the teachers who were inside, for the schoolchildren. Because we have seen how strikes end up in other places, where people end up throwing stones and things which are violent. Burning down the property and all that. We were not sure what they were going to do. So we were scared. We were scared. We were afraid.³

As one teacher drives down Mangosuthu Highway away from the school, he passes by the convoy of union members driving in the opposite direction. He calls the principal to warn him. A deputy principal and Head of Department (HOD) remain with the principal until they decide that they too must go. They position themselves amongst the houses beyond the schoolyard so that they can keep an eye on the situation. His secretary calls, saying, "Just go down. Lock yourself in the strong room. There's nothing you can do. The forces are too much for you."

² A member of the Executive Council of the South African legislature.

³ Educator, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

The principal tells the security guard to open the gates, so that when the mob arrives they will not have to force their way in. He sits in the office in silence and the tension builds until finally he hears them. The convoy has arrived and a group of union members begin to *toyi-toyi*⁴—a form of militant dance and song—outside the gates of the school. The crowd of about forty people dance outside the gates, stomping their feet, jumping up and down, swinging their legs up into the air in a high kick. They wave their hands in the air, chanting, “You are a traitor! You are selling us out. Come out!” They sing struggle songs. “Release Mandela, because we want freedom.” “*Umshini wami, mshini wami. Khawuleth’umshini wami. Wen’uyang’ibambezele. Wen’uyang’ibambezele.*” (“My machine, my machine. Please bring my machine gun. You’re pulling me back. My machine, please bring me my machine.”)

The principal listens to the faint sound of the crowd singing and honking their car horns. The school’s security guard knocks on the door and enters the office, explaining that the crowd is demanding to see the principal. As the principal walks outside, he runs into his students, who have gathered and are preparing to confront the mob. Community members—most likely the students’ parents—have informed them that their school is under attack, and have given the students stones and sticks.

The students are upset and their mood is intense. They yell, “We’re not going home. We’re staying. It’s our future! We want to kill and finish with the teachers that are coming in here!”

⁴ *Toyi-toyi* is a militant form of dance and song frequently used during political protests in South Africa. Historically, it was used in street demonstrations against the apartheid regime, as a tactic to intimidate South African troops, and performed at township funerals. In recent years, it has been used in protests against a failure of government service delivery, in xenophobic attacks against refugees and, as in this case, in strikes by trade unions.

The principal, alarmed, tries to calm them down. "What! Stop it. Please on my knees, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop! If you attack them, if you kill them, it will upset me. So please. Please, my dear boys and girls. I know it's painful and unfair. But please wait for my call. Go back to your classes. There is nothing that I'm going to do."

They listen respectfully but in response, urge the principal not to give up, saying "No, sir. This is too much. This is too much." As he speaks, they listen. He begs them to stand down. "Please. Please please please."

As the students remain there, the principal walks down to the gate. He asks the crowd to tell the union leadership to come forward and meet with him. The crowd is excited and everyone wants to join, but he demands that only the leadership can come with him to the office. "No. This is a school. I am the principal, the person in charge of the school. Don't lose sight on the fact that I am in charge." The principal and a few union leaders sit down in the office to exchange viewpoints.

"We are at war with government, so you must close the school."

"The school is closed. The grade 12's are studying. I don't understand what you want."

"No. We demand that you close the school."

"You can't come in here and demand me. Demand what?"

"Don't you want the money?"

"If it means I have to throw aside my guiding principles and my moral principles, you can go to hell with that money. Even if you tell the government that me alone, I don't get that salary increase. I don't mind. But you can't come here."

Suddenly, the door is pushed open and policemen enter, guns cocked, yelling, “Don’t you know what a strike is? Fifty meters away from the institution! What do you want here?” The union leaders spring up out of their chairs and press themselves up against the corners of the room, crying out, “No sir! No sir!” They plead with the principal to get the policemen to back down. “Please sir! Come to our rescue!” The principal appeals to the policemen, “Please don’t shoot them! Don’t shoot them.”⁵

After clarifying what is going on, the policemen leave the room. The principal talks and argues with the union leaders until they finally reach an agreement. In an interview, the principal told me the story.

They said, ‘Sir, we are quite aware. But the problem is, you know when you are in a struggle, you want to be victorious. Do us one favor. Just close the school today.’

Then I said, ‘Look. Closing a school is not an easy thing. These kids are angry. They are going to kill you.’

So then I went to the kids. I appealed them. They were angry. I said, ‘Please, for my sake. Do you want us to prove how wise a man can be—that your wisdom can defeat any purpose no matter what?’ They said, ‘What do you mean sir?’ [I said] ‘Let us do this. There is a condition here. They want me to close the school here today and [they will] never come back and disturbing. But what we’re going to do is: please listen now. Take one book. And then cross before them. They will wave hands and ululate and clap hands. All sorts of them, because now a stronghold has been defeated. You go to the other side of the buildings. Then you stand there. In a matter of five minutes or three minutes, they will all be gone. Then you come back. Then we continue with our work. The condition is that they will never ever come back. There’s an agreement.’

Then I went to the masses before I could allow the kids to go out. I said, ‘Look, please. Get out of the way. Get out of the way.’ So then, they agreed. They respected me by that time, because they could see that they were protected by my appeal to the police. And some police were angry! They wanted to shoot. And I appealed to them. So the kids, they went there. Oh, what a chaos! What an exciting moment for them, that finally the school has been closed. So they went

⁵ Earlier, after speaking with the principal, the MEC had called the police and demanded that they go to the school to prevent an attack. He had such urgency in his voice that the police arrived in twelve vans, prepared to intervene in a violent attack or to prevent someone from being killed.

that side. Then they were gone. It was a matter of three minutes or what. Then kids all came back in school uniform. It was so exciting! We talked. They were so happy, saying, 'We never knew that teachers are so foolish! They can be fooled by you, all of them.'

So they came back... We talk and talk and I said, 'Look now. Let us not waste a day. Get into your classes' ... As to how one survived, only God knows.

But that tells you how much I hate this question of strikes. I hate it. Because up to now, they have not come out with a plan to use, other than using kids. Because my concern is kids. If they could leave kids alone, then I'm fine. They can talk the language the government understands, but not at the expense of the kids.

You see, sometimes they've got a problem with your conscience. Here is a child I know. They are very poor at home. The child has gone as far as matric. He has become a hope in the family. If he finishes matric, we think our plight may be somewhat alleviated. We have plans and all that. Here are teachers wanting their salary increase or whatever that they want. But the problem is, they are using wrong means to achieve whatever they want. You cannot use kids in order to achieve your salary increase. You are not fighting kids, but who becomes the victim is the child! That is strong morally wrong! I will condemn it until I die. I will never accept that.

I must look for means to hit at the government, up to a time where government listens to me. But to use kids is one simple thing that I will never, never, never condone. What we need is to sit down as teachers. If we say we want to strike, what is it we are going to do so that the government listens to us? Because today in this country, there is only one instrument of talking: it's the strike.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem of Quiet Corruption

At the end of the day, we have so many uncommitted people who are holding high positions. And that alone is not only destroying that person, but it is destroying the organization. You know, people serving under a directionless leader get frustrated. They suffocate... But if they have the right people to follow, if they get the right leaders in their workplaces, I can tell you people will perform. People like to work, but they need to be managed. They need the right direction.⁶

- Felix Mshololo, Principal of Menzi High School

Though South Africa's government has committed a high amount of funding to education reforms post-apartheid, these reforms have failed to improve the majority of the country's schools. Apartheid left the legacy of a powerful achievement gap—between historically white and historically black schools, between white and black students—that has not been rectified by reforms. A 2006 study by the South African Institute for Justice and Reconciliation found that “close to 80 per cent of South Africa's schools are essentially dysfunctional.”⁷

Many of South Africa's schools face challenges similar to schools across the developing world, including high rates of tardiness and absenteeism by teachers, and a lack of effective teaching. A 2010 World Bank report terms these phenomena ‘quiet corruption’—where education reforms are rendered ineffective at the local level because teachers do not show up and when they do, are incapable or unwilling to teach well. The report found that in many African countries, primary teachers are absent 15 to 25 percent of

⁶ Felix Mshololo. Interview by author, 19 November 2010, Umlazi.

⁷ Nick Taylor, “School Reform and Skills Development,” *Money and Morality: 2006 Transformation Audit*, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (2006): 65-73.

the time, and that often when teachers are present, they are not actually teaching.⁸ As Shanta Devarajan, Chief Economist for The World Bank's Africa region, says, "Quiet corruption does not make the headlines the way bribery scandals do, but it is just as corrosive to societies."⁹

South African township¹⁰ high schools, in particular, are plagued by quiet corruption and many are in crisis because of it. However, there are a select few township high schools that have managed to overcome these challenges to achieve good matric pass rates. These high-performing 'outlier' schools are providing a quality education, despite the fact that most of their students live in informal shack settlements. In townships, you can tell which schools fit this description because parents vote with their feet—the few 'outlier' township high schools are extremely overcrowded, while the majority of failing schools, where quiet corruption is rampant, have diminishing numbers of students.¹¹ While abroad in Durban in 2010, I spent time in one of these 'outlier' schools. The experience provoked me to question: Why are some schools effective while others are failing? Why are some school leadership teams effective at creating a culture of teaching and learning while others are not? Why is quiet corruption—high rates of tardiness, absenteeism, and ineffective teaching—more present in some schools than in others?

The South African media tend to blame the crisis in township schools on SADTU, the most powerful teachers' union that is aligned with the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling political party. While in Durban, I witnessed a twenty-day strike action organized by

⁸ The World Bank. "Africa Development Indicators 2010—Silent and Lethal: How quiet corruption undermines Africa's development efforts." Washington, DC, 2010, xi.

⁹ The World Bank. "'Quiet Corruption' Undermining Development in Africa." Washington, DC, March 15, 2010.

¹⁰ South African townships are areas on the periphery of cities that were established by the apartheid government for non-whites through the Group Areas Act of 1950.

¹¹ Bongani Nkosi, "Overflowing schools turn their backs on unwanted pupils," *Mail & Guardian*, January 23, 2012.

Sinegugu Ndlovu, "One pupil per class schools face closure," *Independent Online*, January 26, 2010.

SADTU. I spoke to educators about the violent confrontations occurring in township schools between striking and non-striking teachers. I watched thousands of teachers take to the streets in protest, angrily chanting slogans and singing songs of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The media portrayed the strike as proof that SADTU is an obstacle to quality education. As a common line of argument goes, SADTU is responsible for the education crisis because it takes away from time on task and enables teacher absenteeism and tardiness through strikes and union meetings during school hours. Critics of SADTU point to instances like the confrontation in the Preface of this thesis to argue that there are ‘good’ principals who are resisting SADTU while ‘bad’ principals are more active in SADTU. Even the President of South Africa implicitly blames SADTU members in township schools for their “choice” of being lazy, ineffective teachers who only teach for a few hours a day, saying in a 2009 speech, “We must ask ourselves to what extent teachers in many historically disadvantaged schools unwittingly perpetuate the wishes of Hendrik Verwoerd, if they decide to teach for about three hours a day.”¹²

This rhetoric is unhelpful because it demonizes teachers and places the blame on them, rather than recognizing that there are larger systemic reasons for the teachers’ actions. Criticisms of SADTU by the media are allegations based upon anecdotal evidence and assumptions, not research. Though SADTU obviously does have a powerful role and influence in township schools, there is little research about the exact form that that influence takes. My experience watching the 2010 strike action made me realize that we need to take a

¹² Henrik Verwoerd was the prime minister of South Africa from 1958-1966 and the key architect of apartheid. Jacob Zuma. “Address by the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma, on the occasion of the President’s national interaction with school principals, Durban International Convention Centre.” August 7, 2009. Accessed from <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=623> on April 3, 2012.

closer look at the local realities in township schools to see what is actually happening with SADTU, instead of making easy and unfounded criticisms of the union.

This thesis focuses on the way that SADTU affects school leaders. The literature on education reform in South Africa has found that the leadership team of a school is the key determinant of whether or not a township school is responsive to reforms and improves with additional resources. Researchers have identified the strategies used by leaders of the few high-performing ‘outlier’ township schools—but they have not identified the reasons why, at the local level, the majority of school leaders in townships do not transform their schools, and the incentives that pressure them toward or against school transformation. I conducted this research project to bring the local realities of school leaders into the discourse about SADTU and education policy in South Africa. Through interviews, I aimed to understand what it means to be a school leader in a township today, and how SADTU influences the kinds of choices they make. This thesis answers two questions: *How does SADTU affect leaders in South African township schools as they choose whether or not to adopt leadership strategies to improve their schools? How did SADTU evolve to affect leaders in the way that it does?*

The thesis examines SADTU’s effect in township schools and places the union in historical, political and economic context. The thesis does this by analyzing the case of SADTU in Umlazi, a township in Durban, South Africa. The study draws from interviews with over thirty school leaders in Umlazi high schools and historical analysis of secondary sources. The thesis is both a historical and sociological analysis rooted in the local experiences of school leaders themselves. By listening to them explain the pressures they

face to act in certain ways, we can begin to understand why the majority of township schools are failing.

Chapter One explains the paradox of the education crisis in South Africa and the research gap to which this thesis contributes. Chapter Two provides information about the case of Umlazi township, the state of leadership and school performance there, and reasons why the case of Umlazi township is a useful lens through which to view SADTU.

Part I explains how SADTU affects leaders today: Chapter Three examines the 2010 strike action and the ways that the event, and previous strikes, shaped the incentives facing school leaders. Chapter Four explains the main way that SADTU affects leaders through a policy of ‘cadre deployment’ and patronage-based political appointments to school leadership positions.

Part I argues that the reality about SADTU’s affect on school leaders might be surprising to some: though one might assume that the main impact would be through class time lost due to strikes, in actuality strikes are just a piece in a larger system of incentives. The main way that SADTU affects school leaders is through an unwritten policy of patronage-based political appointments to school leadership positions, called ‘cadre deployment.’ In Umlazi, SADTU had a powerful influence over which educators were chosen for leadership positions. This provided incentives for many leaders to prioritize their union activism, rather than committing to eliminating a culture of quiet corruption in their schools, so that they would have a better chance of being promoted. SADTU influenced the appointments process to promote leaders who enabled quiet corruption instead of candidates who were better qualified and capable of effective leadership. The result of this

was to make effective leaders feel like their commitment to their schools is not valued by SADTU.

In 1990, SADTU was established with the goal of educational equity; in 2010, its policies are having a negative affect on township schools. Part II aims to understand this shift and examine how SADTU evolved to operate in this way, by analyzing the history of SADTU itself and the historical, political and economic factors that have shaped the union's development. Chapter Five examines how SADTU evolved to implement cadre deployment. Chapter Six examines the motivations for teacher militancy and the 2010 strike.

This thesis is significant because it shows that to reform education in South Africa, inputs such as resources to schools and teacher training may not be enough. In the case of Umlazi, there were political factors that shaped how leaders are motivated and committed to implementation of reforms. Previous research on education reform in South Africa did not examine SADTU's effect on township school leaders, and thus ignored a factor that has crippled the implementation of reforms at the local level. In the case of Umlazi, political forces hindered education reform by promoting ineffective leaders, implicitly condoning quiet corruption rather than eliminating it.

On a more global scale, the thesis is significant to efforts to improve school quality in urban, high-poverty contexts across the world. It shows us that in order to understand why quiet corruption is present in so many schools across the world, we must understand the factors that shape the incentives and pressures facing school leaders at the local level. Leadership is important because it shapes school culture, which can determine the extent to which quiet corruption—teacher absenteeism, tardiness and lack of commitment to improvement—is present in a school. The factors affecting school leaders, such as teachers'

unions, must be examined and understood; these factors can influence school leaders and educators to come to school and stay motivated to improve, or they can influence them to be less committed to improving. These levels of motivation and commitment are important because despite the amount of training a leader receives, as many resources as they are provided with—if they do not show up and commit to implementation, those resources are not put to use effectively. In the implementation of education reforms, leadership, and the context within which it is exercised, matters. Historical, political and economic context also matter. We must understand these factors in order to develop constructive, pragmatic solutions that can address the past, root out quiet corruption and effectively improve the world's schools.

This thesis is the first study to examine the effect of teachers unions in South African township schools. The case of SADTU in Umlazi contributes to the literature about teachers unions globally because it offers the case of a union that has not been examined before.

While some researchers have examined the role of SADTU and unions, it is usually focused at a macro level, on the role of unions in education reforms. Examining the political and historical factors at the local level will reveal crucial information that can help us to understand why the paradox of South African education reform persists.

Many of the views expressed by school leaders in this thesis are pessimistic. However, it is important to view SADTU's effect in Umlazi in comparison with other teachers unions around the world. Examining the effect of teachers unions on incentives in the US, some researchers argue that teachers unions have a negative effect, while others insist that unions help school leaders. Moe, Bascia and Carini all agree that teachers unions in the US do affect the incentives facing school leaders—they just disagree about exactly

how. From one perspective, Moe offers a critique of teachers unions in the United States, arguing that they have a powerful impact on the incentives facing school leaders. The key problem with the US education system, he argues, is that it provides incentives for ineffective organization, teaching and leadership and protects leaders from the consequences of failure. He claims that the education crisis in the US persists because of teachers unions' influence in blocking progressive education reforms and their historic connection with the Democratic Party.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, other researchers argue that teachers unions can play a more positive role by providing incentives for school leaders to improve. Bascia argues that teachers unions can help to improve school performance and improve teacher quality by advocating for better working conditions for teachers.¹³ Carini reviews the findings of seventeen studies about the teacher unions-student achievement link, and finds that teacher unions help to improve school performance by improving school organization.¹⁴

While in many states in the US unions have blocked reforms, in South Africa they have acted differently. SADTU has had a powerful influence in the Department of Education because of the Tri-partite alliance with the ANC, so it has been highly involved in the process of developing education reforms post-apartheid. SADTU has not tended to block progressive reforms, but rather has less visibly hurt reforms by providing incentives for leaders to prioritize unionism over effective leadership. SADTU enabled quiet corruption in Umlazi by influencing the type of leadership appointed at the local level.

¹³ Nina Bascia, "What Teachers Want from their Unions: What We Know from Research," in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories for Resistance*, edited by Mary F. Compton and Lois Weiner, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁴ Robert M. Carini, "Teacher Unions and Student Achievement," in *School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence*, edited by Alex Molnar, (Information Age Publishing, 2002).

SADTU's effect on school leaders is not anomaly. In fact, the literature about teachers unions in Mexico and Newark, New Jersey, and patronage in developing countries, shows that the path of SADTU's influence on school leaders is similar to how other unions and government bureaucracies have developed in the past. Murillo's analysis of teachers unions in Mexico shows that the country faced a similar problem to the one facing South Africa today. The main teachers union, SNTE,¹⁵ served as the political arm of the PRI, the ruling political party, and because of this relationship, implemented patronage-based political appointments to school leadership positions.¹⁶

Union control over new management positions in education had several consequences. It elicited administrators' loyalty to the union rather than to the SEP... The resulting politicization of the SEP [The Secretariat of Public Education] made the SEP's control of education performance increasingly inefficient, because supervisors knew that they owed the position to their union careers.¹⁷

School leaders in Mexico, like many in Umlazi today, had loyalty to a union rather than to improving their schools.

In New Jersey, the Newark Teachers Union emerged from a historical context of riots and mass violence similar to the context from which SADTU is emerging. Newark in the 1960's was similar to Umlazi today: both are high-poverty, racially segregated urban school districts, historically under-resourced with a strong influence of teachers unions. Golin's study of the 1970 teacher strike in Newark reveals that it is in some ways similar to the 2010 strike action in South Africa; both events were characterized by teachers resorting to violence and intimidation. But while in Newark, teachers were fighting for more power to

¹⁵ SNTE is Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion.

¹⁶ Maria Victoria Murillo, "Recovering Political Dynamics: Teachers' Unions and the Decentralization of Education in Argentina and Mexico," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 41 (1999): 40.

¹⁷ Murrillo, "Recovering Political Dynamics," 39.

influence the Board of Education, South African townships teachers are striking for a different reason—to reduce inequality in the education system and ensure that all South Africans, not only a politically connected elite, benefit from the country’s economic growth.

Writing about political corruption in South Africa, Hyslop argues that evolving from patronage-based political appointments to a more professionalized government bureaucracy is a shift that many other countries have gone through in the past. “In Britain 150 years ago, military commissions were openly bought and sold and there was no such thing as competitive public examinations for civil service positions.”¹⁸ In the US, as Moe also points out, the bureaucracy in the Department of Education was plagued by patronage-based public appointments.

From the late 1800s through the first several decades of the twentieth century, party machines and patronage held sway throughout much of American government. Under patronage systems, government jobs were controlled by party bosses and public officials, who used them as political currency to maintain their political machines...these employees were dependent on the party in power and expected to be party loyalists, funders, and campaign workers.¹⁹

From the experiences of the US, Mexico and other countries, clearly strikes and patronage-based political appointments are global issues. Thus, though this thesis may seem pessimistic, it is important to keep in mind that other teachers unions and government bureaucracies have experienced similar challenges to South Africa. Though to some Umlazi school leaders, the current situation may seem hopeless, similar issues are being faced around the world and solutions are being found. South Africa can learn from the examples of other countries in order to solve the education crisis.

¹⁸ Jonathan Hyslop, "Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31(2005): 777.

¹⁹ Terry M. Moe, *Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America's Public Schools*. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 33.

CHAPTER ONE

The Paradox of the Education Crisis in South Africa

If you can ask a school that has been there since 1994: After 21 years, what effect has the transition had on you as a school? What effect has the current government? Do you feel the impact? Do you feel the effect? Is there any shift, to say we can actually feel being part of the country, and we can see the results, to know we have been able to move from this one to this one? They will tell you, out of ten, only one maybe. The rest, they will tell you *'Things are still the same.'*²⁰

- Former SADTU Site Steward

This chapter explains the state of the education crisis in South African township schools and the reforms that have attempted to solve the crisis. It pinpoints a research gap—SADTU's effect on leadership at the local level—that has not been adequately examined in the literature about education reform in South Africa.

Like many other countries around the world, South Africa's education system is in a state of crisis. Despite reforms and high levels of resources, the education system is fundamentally broken. The majority of students drop out before they reach matric, the last year of high school. Of the roughly 1.1 million students who enrolled in school in 1998, only 24% ultimately passed the matric exam twelve years later in 2010.²¹ The extent of the crisis in education is shocking, as the country's scores are among the lowest in the world on international tests.²² Close to 80% of grade five learners are shown to be "at serious risk of not learning to read."²³ Out of fifty countries tested in the Trends in International

²⁰ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

²¹ Matric is the exam all South African high school students must pass in order to receive a school-leaving certificate.

Stuart Saunders, "In a worse state than we think," *Mail & Guardian*, July 4, 2011.

²² "South Africa's Education System: No One Gets Prizes," *The Economist*, January 14, 2010.

²³ Servaas Van der Berg and Nicholas Spaul, "SA education: The poorest choice," *Mail & Guardian*, April 8, 2011.

Mathematics and Science Study in 2003, South Africa ranked last.²⁴ Out of forty countries tested in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study in 2006, South Africa ranked last.²⁵

Der Berg and Spaull explain that South Africa's education system is dysfunctional not only in comparison to developed nations, but also in comparison to other African countries.

In tests conducted in 15 sub-Saharan African countries in 2007 by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (Sacmeq), South Africa ranks 10th out of 15 for grade six reading and 8th for grade six maths – *behind countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Swaziland and Zimbabwe* – even though South Africa has fewer pupils per teacher, better access to resources and more qualified teachers than these countries.²⁶

Even more alarming is the fact that South Africa's poorest students are performing worse in comparison to poor students in other African countries. "When ranked by the performance of the poorest 25% of learners, South Africa came 14th out of 15 in reading—behind Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho."²⁷ Despite the fact that South Africa's government spends a greater percentage of its national budget on education than any other country in Africa—20%²⁸—and the country has numerous advantages over other countries because it is more

²⁴ The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study reports every four years on the mathematics and science achievement of eighth and fourth graders worldwide. South Africa's 2003 scores were worse than all other African countries participating, including Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Botswana and Ghana. Ina V.S. Mullis, Michael O. Martin and Pierre Foy, "IEA's TIMSS 2003 International Report on Achievement in the Mathematics Cognitive Domains: Findings from a Developmental Project," TIMSS & PIRLS International Study, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, 2005.

²⁵ The Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study reports every five years on the reading achievement of fourth graders worldwide.

U.S. Department of Education, "The Reading Literacy of U.S. Fourth-Grade Students in an International Context: Results from the 2001 and 2006 Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS)," National Center for Education Statistics, November 2007.

²⁶ Servaas Van der Berg and Nicholas Spaull, "SA education: The poorest choice," *Mail & Guardian*, April 8, 2011 (emphasis added).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Eleanor Davis, "On the road to learning," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2011.

economically developed, South Africa's education system is performing worse than those countries.²⁹

THE CRISIS IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

The education crisis has a particularly acute impact in townships—predominantly black, urban residential areas where blacks were forced to relocate due to policies enforcing apartheid between different races. Historically black township schools (designated for Africans, Indians and Coloureds during apartheid) were consistently under-resourced during apartheid. Despite education reforms and efforts to increase resources to those schools since 1994, the majority of township schools are low performing in comparison to historically white schools. Quiet corruption is pervasive in most township high schools, as they face higher rates of absenteeism by teachers and a poorer quality of infrastructure than historically white schools.³⁰ While teachers in historically white schools teach roughly 5 hours a day, educators in township schools teach about 3 ½ hours a day.³¹

Historically white schools tend to be of a better quality because during apartheid, they received much higher levels of funding than black schools. Even today, they have much higher school fees, so students who can afford to pay can attend better schools while high-poverty black students must attend their local school, most likely a low quality historically black school.³² Access to a high quality school is usually a function of your family's ability to pay high school fees; in this way, the inequities and divide promoted by apartheid are

²⁹ Nick Taylor, "What's wrong with South African schools?" JET Education Services, May 2008, 20.

³⁰ Trevor Manuel, "Our diagnosis of SA's problems," Speech given at launch of the Diagnostic Report by Minister and Chairperson of the National Planning Commission, June 9, 2011.

³¹ Trevor Manuel, "Three reasons why we are failing," *Independent Education*, June 7, 2011.

³² In South Africa, all government schools are allowed to charge school fees. The schools serving the poorest students are designated as 'no-fee' schools.

perpetuated today in South Africa's education system.

As a result of the crisis, the education system has maintained a substantial achievement gap between black and white students, and between students of different classes. In a 2005 math test in the Western Cape, only 2 out of 1,000 6th graders in historically black schools passed, compared with roughly 2 out of 3 students in historically white schools.³³ While roughly half of white students go to university upon graduation, only 1 in 10 black students do.³⁴ Analysis of data from international tests shows that there is an achievement gap and striking divisions based not only on race, but also on the social class of a student.³⁵ Black students from poor socio-economic backgrounds are most affected by the crisis in education, and are at the highest risk of dropping out before gaining any meaningful skills.

On a more macro level, the education crisis in South Africa has had a powerful impact on the country's economy by perpetuating inequality between different races and classes. Ineffective township schools produce graduates who do not have the skills needed to gain employment. South Africa's unemployment rate officially hovers at around 25%, but unofficially it nears 40%.³⁶ For youth, it stands at over 50%.³⁷

The dire state of township schools has resulted in an exodus; if a family can afford to send their children to a historically white school, they prefer to do so.³⁸ Because townships are located in dense urban areas, students have relatively easy access to historically white

³³ Cynthia Dugger, "Eager Students Fall Prey to Apartheid's Legacy," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2009.

³⁴ "South Africa's Education System: No One Gets Prizes," *The Economist*, January 14, 2010.

³⁵ Craig Soudien, "The Promise and Perils of South Africa's Education Policy Landscape," Speech given at NAPTOSA Annual Convention, University of Cape Town, 2007.

³⁶ "South Africa: Disappointment," *The Economist*, January 14, 2012.

³⁷ Stuart Saunders, "A sad state of teaching affairs," *Mail & Guardian*, July 8, 2011.

³⁸ Celia Dugger, "New Schools in South Africa Serve the Underserved," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2010.

schools as long as they can afford the higher tuition. The township high schools are left with the poorest students; these schools are severely affected by the education crisis in South Africa.³⁹

WHY EDUCATION REFORM FAILED

The need to rectify inequalities in the education system is clear. South African Presidents Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma have all claimed that education was one of their top priorities, and each has attempted to radically improve the education system and achieve educational equity by paying for and implementing an array of progressive reforms—including changes to curriculums, school governance policies, feeding schemes, teacher training programs, the way schools are funded, teacher training and salary increases.⁴⁰ The theories of why these reforms failed to improve township high schools fall into three main categories:

Funding. Township schools today generally have access to fewer resources than historically white schools because they tend to have lower school fees, and some argue that this is the reason why township schools are still low performing. A historical inequity in funding left a powerfully negative imprint on township schools.⁴¹ In order to combat this and achieve equity in education, the government implemented the South African Schools Act in 1996, which reformed funding structures in order to increase resources to township schools. Since 1996, the government has committed high levels of funding to education

³⁹ Makola Collin Phurutse. “Listening to matric teachers: township realities and learner achievement levels” in *Marking Matric*, edited by Vijay Reddy, 213-227. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006).

⁴⁰ These reforms include the South African Schools Act in 1996, Curriculum 2005 (Outcomes Based Education) in 1997, and the Revised National Curriculum Statement in 2002.

⁴¹ Graeme Bloch, Linda Chisholm, Brahm Fleisch and Mahluba Mabizela, Ed. *Investment Choices for South African Education*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001).

reforms; today, the country spends roughly 20% of its total national expenditure on education.⁴² South African teachers are among the highest paid teachers in the world.⁴³ South Africa's levels of spending on education are on par with, if not more than, other countries, according to Saunders. "As a proportion of gross domestic product, public expenditure on education is about 5%, which compares well with Australia (5.2%), Brazil (5%), Germany (4.4%), Namibia (6.5%), Russia (4%) and Pakistan (2.9%)."⁴⁴ The failure of these high levels of funding could be attributed to the historical legacy of apartheid, which provided much higher funding to historically white schools than historically black schools.

Misguided School Reforms. Harley and Wedekind, and Jansen, argue that educational reforms were adopted for political and symbolic reasons, rather than being adopted for their effectiveness.⁴⁵ There was a gap between the theory of written policy at the national level and the troubling reality of what was actually going on as school leaders implemented reforms. Reforms focused too much on achieving equity in the inputs provided to schools, such as financial resources, teacher training, curricula and books, while neglecting the implementation of policy within schools themselves.

Lack of Skilled Educators and Leadership Capacity. Fiske and Ladd argue that a lack of managerial capacity post-apartheid was the reason reforms failed.⁴⁶ Coming out of

⁴² Davis, "On the road to learning."

⁴³ (In purchasing power parity terms) Trevor Manuel, "Our diagnosis of SA's problems," Speech given at launch of the Diagnostic Report by Minister and Chairperson of the National Planning Commission, June 9, 2011.

⁴⁴ Stuart Saunders, "In a worse state than we think," *Mail & Guardian*, July 4, 2011.

⁴⁵ Ken Harley and Volker Wedekind. "Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990 to 2002." In *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, edited by Linda Chisholm. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004).

Jonathan Jansen, "Autonomy and accountability in the regulation of the teaching profession: a South African case study," *Research Papers in Education* 19 (2004): 51-66.

⁴⁶ Edward B. Fiske and Helen F. Ladd, *Elusive Equity: Education Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

apartheid, close to half of teachers in black schools were not certified to be teachers. Teachers in township schools were not as well trained or qualified as teachers in historically white schools. In addition, the teaching profession itself was not well respected. Teaching was one of the few career paths available to blacks who wanted to receive further education during apartheid. Post-1994, top university graduates were more likely to go into other professions, and the lowest performing graduates were the most likely to go into teaching because the government offered a bursary for them to study education. Without a qualified and committed teaching corps, even the best-designed curricula would not be implemented effectively at the local level.

While these theories may explain the poor quality of historically black rural schools today, they are insufficient to explain the crisis in township schools. Rural schools face challenges due to their location—such as isolation from other schools, problems in attracting and retaining high quality teachers and school leaders, lack of appropriate physical infrastructure and lack of access to resources such as libraries or textbooks; these issues can impede the ability of schools to access and benefit from reforms in the Department of Education. However, township schools face a distinct set of challenges. Unlike rural schools, township schools are located in urban areas and thus are in close proximity to Department of Education officials. They tend to have qualified and certified teaching staffs. The problem is not their ability and capacity to access and implement government programs; the problem is whether school leaders have the will and commitment to implement reforms to improve the quality of teaching in their schools.

The case of Umlazi township high schools shows that the three main categories of theories are insufficient. In Umlazi, there are a select few 'outlier' township schools that are

managing to achieve high matric pass rates with students from informal shack settlements. These schools have managed to overcome the problems of limited resources, misguided reforms and a lack of highly skilled educators, in order to weed out quiet corruption. Though these issues definitely do have a negative impact on schools, they are not impossible barriers and are insufficient excuses for failing township schools. This presents the paradox of the education crisis in South Africa: All township schools have similar inputs, but only certain schools have been responsive and are producing high quality results. Why have certain township schools become high performing while others have not?

LEADERSHIP

There is a growing body of research on education reform arguing that while inputs to schools do matter, it is the leadership of a school that matters more, because it shapes the school environment within which teachers work and the incentives that drive whether or not teachers will be committed to reforming their school.⁴⁷ A school's leadership team plays a major role in school transformation; effective school leadership teams create the conditions necessary for high-poverty students to succeed by ensuring that a school's environment enables a culture of effective teaching and learning in every classroom in the school.

In the South African context, researchers such as Arends and Phurutse, Taylor and Prew conclude that the school environment is the key reason why a teacher continues to teach or decides to quit, and that this is determined by the quality of a school's leadership

⁴⁷ In the US, urban districts have increasingly put a greater emphasis on leadership development programs for principals. For example, New Leaders for New Schools is a non-profit which partners with urban districts to identify and train high-potential educators to have the effective leadership necessary to transform failing schools.

team.⁴⁸ Thus, the quality of leadership and the environment it creates within a school is the key determinant of whether or not effective teachers are willing to stay or leave, how reforms are implemented and whether students within that school succeed or fail. In order for inputs such as curricula to be taught effectively in a high-poverty environment, there first needs to be a common school culture of high achievement and commitment to teaching amongst all teachers in a school.⁴⁹

South African researchers such as Botha, Phurutse, Moloji, Kamper and Mampuru, have outlined the exact qualities that distinguish effective leadership teams from ineffective leadership teams in high-poverty, disadvantaged South African schools. In the American context, researchers Ferguson and Fryer call this type of effective leadership the ‘No Excuses’ approach, where school leadership teams set a tone of high achievement in a school and create a culture that promotes continuous improvement.⁵⁰ While the South African researchers are analyzing schools in high-poverty areas in South Africa, and the American researchers are analyzing similar contexts in the US,⁵¹ both sets of researchers have identified overlapping sets of strategies of effective leadership that are useful in varied contexts.

⁴⁸ A school leadership team (in South Africa, they are called School Management Teams) includes the principal, deputy principals and heads of departments.
Fabian Arends and Makhola Phurutse. *Beginner Teachers in South Africa: School Readiness, Knowledge and Skills*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

Nick Taylor. “What's wrong with South African schools?” JET Education Services, May 2008, 5.

Martin Prew, “Successful principals: why some principals succeed and other struggle when faced with innovation and transformation,” *South African Journal of Education* 27 (2007).

⁴⁹ Harley and Wedekind, “Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990 to 2002,” 204.

⁵⁰ Ronald F Ferguson, Sandra Hackman, Robert Hanna, and Ann Ballantine, “How High Schools Become Exemplary: Ways that Leadership Raises Achievement and Narrows Gaps by Improving Instruction in 15 Public High Schools,” Report on the 2009 Annual Conference of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, June 2010.

Holand G Fryer, “It May Not Take a Village: Increasing Achievement Among the Poor.” Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University, 2010.

⁵¹ For example, Ferguson writes about ‘No Excuses’ charter schools including KIPP Academies.

When implementing strategies of effective leadership, a school management team (which includes the Principal, Deputy Principals and Heads of Departments) creates an environment that promotes and rewards high academic achievement. Effective leadership teams use a variety of strategies: They have a vision of high expectations, communicate goals to staff and learners and make everyone accountable to meet those goals, stress effective use of time and resources, ensure a feedback and evaluative mechanism for teachers, have invitational and consultative leadership, work relentlessly to support and improve the effectiveness of their teachers, and believe in the potential of all students to achieve.⁵²

As research has shown, leadership is the factor that has the most impact on whether or not a township school culture has quiet corruption in the form of teacher absenteeism, tardiness and a general lack of commitment to effective teaching. What makes effective school leaders different from ineffective leaders is that they have more of a commitment to eliminating a culture of quiet corruption in their schools and doing whatever it takes to make students succeed. Because of the challenges facing their school, without this will and focus, a school leadership team in a high-poverty township school is not going to be high performing.

In South Africa, leaders in education reform have recognized that school leadership is important. As one academic argues, "Without a principal who manages school resources

⁵² In order to develop a conception of effective leadership and list of strategies, this thesis draws from research on effective leadership in high poverty South African schools, including the following studies:

Makola Collin Phurutse, "Listening to matric teachers: township realities and learner achievement levels" in *Marking Matric*, edited by Vijay Reddy, 213-227. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006).

C Molo, K.P. Dzvimbo, F.J. Potgieter, C.C. Wolhuter and J.L. van der Walt, "Learners' perceptions as to what contributes to their school success: a case study," *South African Journal of Education* 20 (2010): 475-490.

Gerritt Kamper, "A profile of effective leadership in some South African high-poverty schools," *South African Journal of Education* 28 (2008): 1-18.

Marisane Edward Mampuru, "Determinants of school success in disadvantaged environments." (Masters in Education, University of South Africa, 2003).

R.J. Botha, "Excellence in leadership: demands on the professional school principal," *South African Journal of Education* 24 (2004): 239-243.

efficiently and ensures that teachers arrive at school on time, cover the curriculum and assess at appropriate level, any policy intervention will achieve limited success.”⁵³ At a 2010 conference, leaders in education reform in Brazil, Ghana, India and the US met to advise South Africa on its own education system; their key advice was that moving forward, South Africa should place “school leadership and effective, professional teaching at the heart of educational reform.”⁵⁴ In order to do this, South African non-profits and the Department of Education have developed leadership training programs for principals. When you walk into many principals’ offices, you see posters about the qualities of transformational leadership; you see books about effective leadership on their shelves.

The reality is that in the majority of township schools, these programs have failed. Though school leadership teams may know about the correct strategies of effective leadership, most are not implementing them. As the former President of SADTU argues, the education system is plagued by a “deeply institutionalized culture of non-compliance.”⁵⁵ In order to understand why some leaders are more effective than others, this thesis examines the incentives that make leaders more or less likely to be so.

TEACHERS UNIONS

Though there is no extensive research to substantiate their claims, leading academics in South Africa tend to blame SADTU for the education crisis. During the 2010 strike action, in particular, SADTU was frequently criticized in the media. There are a few common themes to this criticism: that SADTU members are selfish and only looking out for

⁵³ Servaas Van der Berg and Nicholas Spaul, “SA education: The poorest choice,” *Mail & Guardian*, April 8, 2011.

⁵⁴ “Schooling Reform is Possible: Lessons for South Africa from international experience.” Report summarizing the proceedings of a Round Table at The Centre for Development and Enterprise, Johannesburg, 2011.

⁵⁵ Duncan Hindle, “Time for schools to be marked,” *Mail & Guardian*, September 2, 2011.

their own personal interests, that SADTU as an organization promotes this selfishness, and that SADTU's presence in schools is the root cause of the educational crisis.

In 2011 the *Mail and Guardian*, one of South Africa's most respected newspapers, published an impassioned editorial that demonized unions, with rhetoric that is representative of the tone the newspaper usually adopts when referring to SADTU.

Another week, another education study that suggests how the country's largest teacher union cripples the wellbeing of South Africa's learners...It does not mince its words about the union's contribution to the wretched teaching that leads inevitably to appalling academic performance and to the blighting of thousands of young lives...When SADTU bullishly keeps on holding union meetings during teaching time, referring with its bloody-minded dogmatism to 'rights', it is time to ask (again) whether those rights supersede the interests of South Africa's youth...It will take nerve to tell these 'little union lords', in sociologist Sakhela Buhlungu's apt phrase, either to rediscover the idealism that fuelled the union's birth 21 years ago or find other jobs. Can government do it?⁵⁶

Mamphela Ramphela, former vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town, has said, "We have the highest level of teacher unionization in the world, but their focus is on rights, not responsibilities."⁵⁷ Stuart Saunders, another leading South African academic, writes with fervor.

Doesn't the South African Democratic Teachers' Union believe that floundering teachers should be identified and helped to improve? Does it have no concern for the pupils whom the teachers are paid to teach? Does it really believe that strikes do not interfere seriously with teaching and learning?⁵⁸

In an editorial, Jonathan Jansen tells the story of a teacher who dies, goes to Heaven and finds it quiet. "So the puzzled teacher asked the obvious question: 'Okay, but where are the teachers?' The angel responded: 'They're in hell, attending a Sadtu meeting.'"⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Editorial, "Little union lords' costing education," *Mail & Guardian*, July 15, 2011.

⁵⁷ Cynthia Dugger, "Eager Students Fall Prey to Apartheid's Legacy," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2009.

⁵⁸ Stuart Saunders, "A sad state of teaching affairs," *Mail & Guardian*, July 8, 2011.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Jansen, "Education's date with bad fate," *Mail & Guardian*, April 13, 2011.

Even government officials criticize SADTU, though less explicitly. Trevor Manuel, a Minister in the Presidency, criticized SADTU in a speech at the 2011 National Teaching Awards Ceremony.

Teacher unions are part of the problem, jostling for power over promotions and acting to undermine centres of excellence...What should be a healthy conversation in a developmental state about teaching quality in the poorest of schools always degenerates into a fight about resources, about politics and about power. Nothing should be more important than the quality of teaching, especially in poor communities. There are simply no excuses that deserve to be tolerated.⁶⁰

Trevor Manuel's commission, in suggesting reasons for the failure of school reform, placed the blame on union action and meetings, teacher absenteeism, and the difficulty of firing teachers who have been charged with misconduct.⁶¹ These quotes are indicative of the discourse around school reform; the media, academics and even government officials tend to criticize and blame SADTU for the education crisis without providing a deeper examination of its role in schools.

The problem with this criticism is that it blames SADTU without providing a nuanced or balanced perspective on the union that is based on substantial evidence. Everyone claims that SADTU affects township schools, but no one knows exactly how. Yet, understanding this 'how' is crucial to the success of reform because SADTU has a powerful, if unavoidable, role to play in improving schools. At a 2010 conference on South Africa's education strategy, Bobby Soobrayan, Director-General of the Department of Basic Education, said, "It is well known that no system can transcend the capacity and

⁶⁰ Trevor Manuel, "Three reasons why we are failing," *Independent Education*, June 7, 2011.

⁶¹ Editorial, "Little union lords' costing education," *Mail & Guardian*, July 15, 2011.

performance of its teachers. In this respect, the elephant in the room which mediates ‘the how’ is the teachers’ unions.”⁶²

CONCLUSIONS

It is crucial to reexamine our assumptions about SADTU. The discourse needs to shift from blaming and criticizing SADTU’s leaders, to working with them to identify in what ways the union can reform itself to fight quiet corruption. But in order to do this, we must first understand exactly what is happening at the local level with leaders in township schools. By examining how SADTU affects leaders in Umlazi and how SADTU evolved to do so, this thesis aims to rewrite the narrative about SADTU’s role in township schools.

⁶² “Schooling Reform is Possible: Lessons for South Africa from international experience.” Report summarizing the proceedings of a Round Table at The Centre for Development and Enterprise, Johannesburg, 2011.

CHAPTER TWO

The Case of Umlazi Township

Everybody is worried about the schools here at Umlazi. Only four or five schools that are performing. Others are not performing. Once these principals retire, Mr. Mshololo retires, my principal retires, and other principals, good performing schools—I don't see any improvement that will be in those schools. Everything will just go down. So I've lost hope... The schools are like this—are dying a natural death.⁶³

- Deputy Principal at School B

This chapter explains the methodological approach of the study. It provides historical and socio-economic context for the case of Umlazi township and background for the six schools where I conducted interviews. It explains the state of the education crisis and leadership in Umlazi schools. It also acknowledges possible alternative explanations for the case.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The thesis will contribute a sociological analysis and history of SADTU's effect by integrating past research with the perspectives of Umlazi school leaders. The goal of the study is to present the case of Umlazi schools at the local level. It will utilize over thirty interviews with principals, deputy principals and SADTU site stewards at six high schools in Umlazi, as well as SADTU publications, newspaper articles and other historical research.

The study was also informed by conversations with a few staff members at education non-profits and research organizations. In addition, the study was informed by nine interviews conducted at Menzi High School for a previous research project in December

⁶³ Deputy Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

2010. That study documented a high performing township high school's leadership and teaching strategies.⁶⁴

The methodology of the study was to capture perspectives from township school leaders at the local level, including Principals, Deputy Principals and SADTU and NATU site stewards, from both SADTU and other teachers unions. In August 2011, I conducted interviews in a variety of all types of schools in the township, from high to low performing. Interviews were semi-structured and covered SADTU's effect in terms of the leader's school, district-wide trends, events and history.⁶⁵ Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours. All interviews were taped and transcribed. The interviews were conducted in a confidential manner and the interviewees and schools were assured of anonymity so that they could speak as honestly as possible.

CASE SELECTION

Umlazi is a useful case for education reform because it allows us to examine the effect of a teachers union in a group of schools where many factors are held constant. All high schools in Umlazi are similar in terms of their history and the type of students that they serve, and yet schools have dramatically different performance. All schools have had access to similar levels of funding, have had many progressive reforms and do not face barriers to implementation due to distance from Department of Education officials. On the surface, Umlazi seems to have all the necessary inputs to improve schools, but the reality of implementation has proven that there were impediments to the process that were not

⁶⁴ Kathlyn Pattillo, "From Failing to Effective: A Case Study of Transformational Leadership and Teaching at a Township High School in Durban, South Africa" *ISP Collection*, Paper 883 (2010). Accessed September 30, 2011. http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/883

⁶⁵ Appendix B includes a list of interview questions.

adequately accounted for in reforms. This thesis documents how the factors of SADTU and leadership play into this process.

Umlazi shares many characteristics with other townships in South Africa. However, Umlazi is not representative of all townships. The limited scope of this project meant that I only had the capacity to focus on one township. Because some characteristics differ from township to township, further research is needed in order to see whether or not the findings of this study can be generalized to all township schools.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Umlazi is located in the Natal region of South Africa, in Durban (what is today KwaZulu-Natal province). Umlazi was first designated as a location in 1847, when British colonial authorities forcefully occupied Natal and established designated 'locations' for the Zulu tribe. The land was later granted to the Anglican Church; most of what is today Umlazi township was previously part of Umlazi Mission Reserve. Umlazi was officially established as a township by the Group Areas Act of 1950, which imposed apartheid (separation) by allocating specific areas of land to different racial groups. Like other townships, Umlazi was originally intended to house Africans and provide a pool of labor who would commute to nearby industrial areas and mines in cities. In comparison with historically white residential areas, urban townships were poorly resourced during apartheid.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, South African townships experienced high levels of violence. In particular, Umlazi and other Durban townships experienced some of the highest levels of violence in South Africa. The violence was catalyzed by both political factors— violence related to the anti-apartheid struggle and a low-scale civil war between the ANC

and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)—and economic factors, including the increasing numbers of informal settlements in Umlazi in the 1980's. By the late 1980's, the township was densely populated and economically depressed due to a constant influx of migrants from rural areas. By 1993, Natal had the largest concentration of people in South Africa (8.5 million) and the highest unemployment rate of any province in the country. It rose sharply from 12.1% in 1980, to 25.2% in 1991.⁶⁶ Following the state of emergency in the late 1980's, the violence intensified in the early 1990's and tapered off following the political transition to the ANC in 1994. Today, Umlazi is the second largest township in South Africa, after Soweto.⁶⁷

Because of this history, all Umlazi schools have a similar background in terms of the violence that occurred in the 1980's and early 1990's, and the socio-economic background of their learners. The legacy of apartheid means that life in Umlazi is "characterized by poverty, crime, violence, and death."⁶⁸ Townships have high rates of crime, drug abuse and unemployment. The impact of this on schools is that most students in Umlazi schools face huge barriers to learning. In 2007, Thulas Buthelezi documented the conditions facing youth in Umlazi today.

An interplay of social and school factors such as violence, inadequate family life, exposure to crime, gang culture, availability of drugs and alcohol, particular gender relations, and traditional authoritarian school culture, render youth in these settings more vulnerable to HIV infection, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, child abuse, suicide...The abundance of alcohol in the context of unemployment and poverty that exist in urban townships leads to the escalation of crime rates. Robbery, car hijacking, torture, and murders, had long become

⁶⁶ Anthony Jeffery, *The Natal Story: Sixteen Years of Conflict* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1997), 6.

⁶⁷ Soweto, or South Western Townships, is located outside of Johannesburg and is the most populous area of townships in South Africa.

⁶⁸ Thulas Buthelezi, "Dimensions of Diversity: Educating urban township learners, a case of Umlazi township school in Durban, South Africa," *International Handbook of Education* (2007): 146.

the ritual of township life... Children are routinely exposed to gang violence, with the possibility of being raped (with its possibility of HIV infection), assaulted or robbed by gangs.⁶⁹

In Umlazi schools, educators estimate that over 50% of students are raised by single parents or their grandparents and many students are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.⁷⁰ KwaZulu-Natal, where Umlazi is located, is the South African province with the highest HIV infection rate.

LEADERSHIP IN UMLAZI SCHOOLS

All Umlazi high schools are historically black government schools with minimal (typically no more than 400 rand or roughly \$50) to no school fees. The majority of their learners are from black, low-income families in Umlazi. Most draw at least half of their learners from informal settlements and also from hostels.⁷¹ Almost all learners speak Zulu at home and informally with their friends, but the official policy of government high schools is to teach all classes in English. In practice, many teachers switch to Zulu to deliver a portion of their instruction.

Despite the similarity in the context of all Umlazi high schools, different schools have dramatically different outcomes as measured by their matric pass rates (as seen in the following table). This study defines school performance as a school's pass rate on the matric exam, which students take in order to graduate from high school. Though the use of these test scores as an indicator of education quality has limitations, it is currently the only indicator by which to objectively compare high schools in South Africa.⁷² In 2010, the

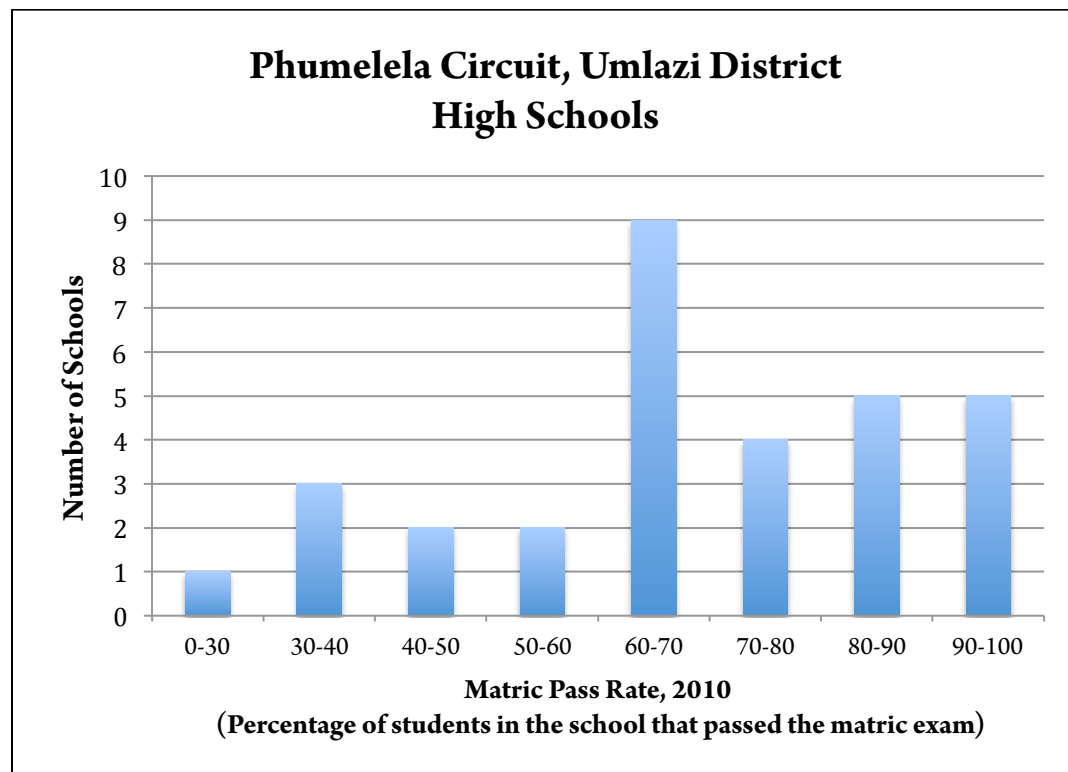
⁶⁹ Buthelezi, "Dimensions of Diversity," 157.

⁷⁰ NATU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁷¹ Originally built to house workers who migrated from rural areas to the township to work in factories, hostels today are the equivalent of subsidized government housing for the poor.

⁷² High performing township schools are defined as successful because though they may have limitations, they are doing the best they can under the circumstances, and they are achieving higher matric pass rates than low

average matric pass rate for South Africa was 67.8%. The table below shows the range of school performance in Umlazi.



In order to capture the perspectives of a variety of school leaders, this study draws from interviews with leaders from six high schools, including high, average and low performing schools. The following table summarizes key information about the six schools where I conducted interviews.⁷³

performing schools. There are obvious limitations to using this measure as the indicator of school performance. For example, there are ways that schools can manipulate their results by holding back students or refusing to admit low performing students to artificially improve their pass rate.

⁷³ A list of matric pass rates for Phumelela Circuit, Umlazi district (which includes Umlazi township schools) was provided to me by a principal. All information in the table about the six schools was provided to me by school ledaers.

SIX UMLAZI HIGH SCHOOLS						
	<i>Principal's Union Affiliation</i>	<i>Year Principal Appointed</i>	<i>Matric Pass Rate for 2010</i>	<i>Number of Students for 2011</i>	<i>School Fees (typically over 50% do not pay when there are fees)</i>	<i>Involvement in Strike Action</i>
School A	NATU	1984	85%	3180	500 Rand	Matric in session
School B	NATU	1990	92%	1360	300 Rand	Matric in session
School C	SADTU (Former NATU)	1994	87%	756	250 Rand	Closed
School D	NATU	2000	78%	1342	400 Rand	Closed
School E	SADTU (Former NATU)	2009 (acting)	52%	1088	No-fee school	Closed
School F	SADTU	2011	23%	323	No-fee school	Closed

In general, there were key differences between the high and low performing schools that I visited in Umlazi; these differences confirm the strategies of high-performing township schools as identified by the existing literature. This section will describe these general differences.

In Umlazi, high performing schools make the most of what few resources are available to create a culture of teaching and learning that stresses and rewards high performance (Schools A and B can be considered high performing). They have an extended school day, beginning earlier and ending later than is typical of most township schools, in addition to extra classes on weekends and vacations. Leaders in these schools have a vision of a relentless pursuit of better results that they infuse into their teaching staff. They stress the importance of time on task in the classroom and continuous professional development.

They constantly work to create a school culture that recruits, develops and supports the most effective teaching possible, in order to make high quality, transformational teachers feel supported in their work. They seek out resources from South African companies and non-profits in order to provide additional services, such as feeding programs, to their students. Leaders in high performing schools have a vision of education that is skills-based—that not only enables students to pass matric and move on to further education, but also prepares them to find employment.

Low performing schools tend to have a school culture that protects mediocrity and enables quiet corruption (Schools E and F can be considered low performing). They have higher rates of teacher absenteeism and tardiness. When asked why their schools are low performing, school leaders in low performing schools make the excuse that their students are unmotivated. While high performing schools usually have experienced principals who have been leading for over ten years, low performing schools usually have younger principals who have been recently appointed within the past few years.

Research on leadership in Umlazi has found that though most principals are aware of strategies for improving their school, many are not implementing them. In his dissertation research, the principal of School A examined this very problem.

I discovered that in my research, 60% of the principals were aware of the implementation of Quality Management Systems, but were not implementing them... In Umlazi, you would be generous if you're talking about 40% effective principals. Because if they're not implementing Quality Management systems in schools, there is no way they can be effective.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Principal, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

His study found that the majority of principals in Umlazi schools do know the correct leadership strategies to use; he claims that the problem is the fact that so few of them have the will to implement strategies.

As explained in Chapter One, researchers have not identified the reasons why Umlazi leaders are more or less likely to commit to reforms and effectively implement them—yet academics and the media have tended to blame SADTU for the education crisis. However, for the Umlazi schools where I conducted interviews, it is not union meetings during class time that are the problem; in Umlazi schools, union meetings tend to be held during breaks so that they don't interrupt time on task. To an extent, many school leaders have been able to accommodate SADTU and compromise so that teachers are active members while also being committed to their responsibilities as teachers. The main issues that school leaders brought up, again and again, were the 2010 strike action and the policy of cadre deployment. Chapter Three and Four will examine these topics.

SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Besides the factors of leadership and teachers unions, which this thesis focuses on, there are other possible alternative explanations for the education crisis in Umlazi. These include the following:

- School leaders portray struggles over appointments to be political, when they could be personal grudges.
- The differences in leadership between leaders could be a function of where they were trained and what degrees they received (younger principals may not be as well trained as older principals).

- The differences in school performance could be a function not of the particular leadership strategies of their school leadership team, but rather of the amount of time the leaders have been in office (more recently appointed leaders have had less time to improve their schools).
- Variations in school performance could be due to variations in their student bodies (lower performing schools could have higher poverty rates, etc).
- Variations in performance could be due to some schools having access to more financial resources than others.

Due to the limited scope of this project and time constraints, the study could not examine and control for all of these factors or provide a comprehensive examination of SADTU's role in schools.

Rather than trying to develop a theory about the relationship between teacher unionism and school performance that would control for all alternative explanations, this thesis takes a more sociological and historical approach. The study captures the perspectives of school leaders and their interpretations of the way that SADTU affects them. I did not interview district or national level officials, because the scope of the study was limited to school leaders. I only conducted interviews in six schools; ideally, I would have conducted interviews in all Umlazi high schools to gain a more complete perspective. The thesis aims to present the most plausible and accurate examination possible based upon the thirty interviews that were conducted, informed by historical and political analysis.

The purpose of the thesis is to listen to what school leaders are saying at the local level, in order to understand the pressures that they face. In doing so, we can begin to understand why quiet corruption is pervasive in many township schools. Though there are

limitations to this methodological approach, there are significant findings to be gained from listening to school leaders themselves and putting their perspectives in context.

This thesis focuses on cadre deployment, a way that SADTU negatively affects schools, but SADTU does have a positive role in schools as well. The union acts as a voice for teachers and protects them from being mistreated.⁷⁵ The union advocates for the rights of teachers and works to improve the status of the teaching profession. This role has been well articulated by SADTU itself; if one reads SADTU's literature or listens to President Ntola speak, one is presented with a fierce defense of SADTU's role. This thesis aims to document the story about SADTU that has not been told, and in Umlazi that story is a pessimistic one. Many of the school leaders I interviewed had profoundly negative opinions about the future of education in Umlazi, and this thesis aimed to put their views forth honestly.

⁷⁵ As one educator explained, "You must have someone that is going to assist you in times where you find yourself unable to speak for yourself... They used to speak for us where we were unable to speak. Its our voice." SADTU Site Steward, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

CHAPTER THREE

The 2010 Strike Action

You are a sellout. During the apartheid era, those people were dealt with differently. But now, we had to deal with those people in a manner that is going to enlighten them, that what they are doing is wrong... Then you used to be killed. During that time, because we were fighting for our freedom. Today, if you are doing something that is wrong, we had to turn to speak to you... That's the reason why we say 'we have more votes.' If you have been swallowed by the majority, so then, join them! Because if you are against the mob, do you think that you are going to survive? You are not going to survive.⁷⁶

- Former SADTU branch secretary

As explained in Chapter One, criticism of SADTU usually focuses on the union's role in strikes, as SADTU members pressure township schools to close and take away from time on task. During the strike, many South Africans argued that as teachers demonstrated in the streets, learners were sitting at home; some went so far as to call teachers selfish for going on strike, criticizing them for putting their own welfare before that of the learner. This chapter reexamines these assumptions to ask: During strikes, how does SADTU affect school leaders in Umlazi?

The 2010 strike action is important, because the event—and the threats of violence and intimidation that came along with it—provoke us to think about the incentives facing school leaders to act in certain ways. As the principal's story from the Preface illustrates, the strike in Umlazi was an intense and emotionally charged event. Like teacher strikes around the world, educators faced a dilemma: to strike and sacrifice their students' time in school, or to continue teaching and be seen as betraying the union. What made the strike in Umlazi important was the way in which certain types of schools experienced it differently. This

⁷⁶ SADTU Site Steward, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

chapter analyzes the strike and examines the differences in the way it was experienced by historically black and historically white schools and by high performing and low performing schools.

Interviews with school leaders, both those who did participate in the strike and those who did not, reveal that schools' experiences with the strike tend to be representative of their overall experiences with SADTU. Highly effective school leadership teams chose to put their matric students' time in school as the utmost priority, while less effective school leadership teams closed their schools completely during the strike. By intimidating school leaders to close their schools, SADTU members in Umlazi instilled fear in educators who did not want to strike. SADTU has become an obstacle to effective leadership by creating the impression that school leaders have to choose between providing a high quality education to their students and fighting for their own rights as teachers.

THE STRIKE ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA

The strike began in August 2010. It was initiated by SADTU to achieve better benefits for teachers through an increase in salaries, a housing allowance and increased health insurance. Initially, SADTU demanded a salary increase of 10%. The Department of Education refused to offer more than 5%. Negotiations led to a stalemate, with neither side relenting. SADTU embarked on the strike action to increase the pressure on the Department of Education; with over 240,000 members (over 66% of South Africa's teachers), SADTU had the capacity to exert a powerful influence and call upon its members to refuse to teach. The other teachers unions quickly followed suit and also joined the strike, which lasted for twenty days.

During the strike action, teachers in township schools across South Africa took to the streets to voice their demands for higher pay. Educators marched in massive rallies in cities. Rallies were emotionally charged events, with hundreds of educators enthusiastically marching, chanting and singing freedom songs. Convoys traveled from school to school to ensure that all educators were participating in the strike. Groups of union members would travel to schools that were refusing to close and *toyi-toyi* outside the gates, in order to intimidate the school leaders; the Preface documented an example of one such confrontation. The level of intensity at the demonstrations varied from school to school. In some cases, the police would actually come to throw teargas on the crowd and arrest educators, and there were reports of vandalism and attacks on schools by the crowds.

These instances of violence and demonstrations by union members increased the pressure on all teachers to participate in the strike and confronted them with the dilemma of whether or not to participate. The Department of Education also had a ‘no work, no pay’ policy, whereby if an educator did not show up to school, they would not receive their salary for that day. As one educator describes, the 2010 strike action was an intense experience for school leaders in Umlazi.

It was a complete chaos... There were a lot of people who were uneasy and very worried. Fearful, stressed... Emotions were very high, and that was a very terrible time, I have to say. It took longer than expected. And basically it was a dead end... at the end of the day nothing was gained.⁷⁷

There were a few factors that made the strike particularly powerful and increased the pressure on the ANC-led government to reach an agreement. Firstly, the teachers’ strike coincided with strikes by other public sector trade unions under the Congress of South

⁷⁷ Former SADTU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

African Trade Unions (COSATU). More importantly, it was August, two months before matric examinations were due to begin. The exams are the most crucial period of the year for the Department of Education, because they are the main indicator by which the Department measures its progress from year to year. SADTU and the Department of Education were both under intense pressure to resolve the strike so that students could return to learning and prepare for exams. Despite this pressure, negotiations lagged and the strike would last for more than three weeks.

Just a month before, in July, South Africa hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Educators believed that because the country had benefited economically from the event, that they deserved to benefit as well.⁷⁸ SADTU members I interviewed said that they were willing to sacrifice so much for the strike because they believed that because of the World Cup, the government had money to spend, and that the government's refusal to increase salaries could be broken down if only the union could build up enough pressure.

“YOU ARE A SELLOUT!” – INTIMIDATION DURING THE STRIKE

These factors—the need to maintain pressure on the Department of Education by ensuring that as many teachers as possible refrained from teaching, the recent World Cup and the impending matric examinations—combined to create an intense environment in townships during the strike action. Intimidation was used during the strike to ensure that as many educators as possible were participating, in order to strengthen the strike action and place more pressure on the Department of Education to meet SADTU's demands. Though SADTU spokesperson Numsa Cembi said at the time, “Our members are keen to go on

⁷⁸ Former SADTU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

strike, they don't need to be intimidated to go on strike,"⁷⁹ the reality was that intimidation was common. In some cases, teachers who did not participate were threatened. As the Principal of School C, a SADTU member, said, to pressure a teacher to strike, "They threaten that they're going to burn the school... They threaten to just beat you up, and violently treat you."⁸⁰

Around ten AM each day, the striking teachers would organize into convoys and visit the school leaders that refused to close.⁸¹ At one low performing school, School E, four out of thirty educators stayed at school during the strike. The principal of the school, a SADTU member, explains how the convoys of SADTU members came to disrupt classes and crowd into her office.

In the long run, they tried to use violence to achieve what they want from the department... There were a number of threats around here at Umlazi... We want to go to school, but we were being threatened because they are going to, what you call, kill us all. They will damage the school if we were there at school.⁸²

She argues that in her position as principal, she is supposed to be neutral and keep the school open—but when SADTU members came to *toyitoyi* at the school and called her a sellout, she faced tremendous pressure to close her school. The principal of School C faced a similar dilemma. "South African strikes can be very violent. If you are seen to be betraying the rest of the group or the mob, they can earmark you and attack you as an individual."⁸³ Both of these principals are SADTU members and said that they wanted to keep their schools open during the strike, but were too afraid to do so. As the former SADTU secretary of Umlazi

⁷⁹ South African Press Association, "Motshekga: Respect non-striking teachers," *Mail & Guardian*, August 19, 2010.

⁸⁰ Principal, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁸¹ Deputy Principal 2, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁸² Principal, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁸³ Principal, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

district explains, all SADTU members were expected to participate. “It was a SADTU, a professional strike ... so it involved all of us, whether you wanted to or not. You had no choice.”⁸⁴

SADTU leaders believed that the strike was only going to be effective if everyone participated. It was this need that drove leaders to intimidate and threaten other educators. From their perspective, they were justified in intimidating and threatening teachers because that was the only way they could achieve the goals of the strike. One SADTU member who participated in the convoys explained why the attacks were justified.

If you have taken resolution that you are on strike and then you continue to work, while a lot of us are not working, you will be labeled, called a rat ... We’re determined. We’ll find out where you live. And once we find out, then it will go like this. *We’ll attack your house. Because you have shown that you have weakened our spirit.*⁸⁵

According to this line of reasoning, non-striking teachers are ‘betraying’ the union because they are going to ultimately benefit from the salary increase, but they are not willing to sacrifice their own pay during the strike for that goal since they know that others will sacrifice for them.

STRIKES, SCHOOL CULTURE AND QUIET CORRUPTION

What is important about the threats and intimidation is that it was more commonly utilized to pressure educators at Umlazi’s high performing schools and in historically white schools. The schools most resistant to closing for the strike were the highest performing schools, including Schools A and B.⁸⁶ As one school leader explains, “The teachers that are vocal are always teachers that are in these schools in Umlazi ... Schools around the white

⁸⁴ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Deputy Principal 2, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi.

suburbs, nothing happened to them ... Those schools, they've got high scores."⁸⁷ Historically white schools in the predominantly white suburbs of Durban largely ignored the strike action and continued teaching; the majority of Umlazi's schools were closed.⁸⁸

The strike is important because the way that a school experienced it is an indication of the school's culture and the extent to which quiet corruption is present in the school. Leaders in the historically white schools, and the most high performing township schools, were less supportive of the strike and refused to completely close their schools.⁸⁹ These are the same schools that tend to receive the highest pass rates on the matric exams; their school leaders utilize the 'No Excuses' leadership strategies discussed in the Introduction. These school leaders' commitment to learning during the strike is representative of their commitment to high achievement throughout the year and the kind of culture they enable in their schools—a culture that stresses effective learning and teaching, and performance, above all else.⁹⁰ In contrast, in the lowest performing schools, the leaders were more likely to support the strike and the schools were completely closed for the entire three weeks of the strike action.

An important difference between the leadership of high performing and low performing schools is that leaders in high performing schools mediate the influence of SADTU by ensuring that there is less pressure and intimidation for teachers to strike. For example, the Principal of School A supported teachers whether they wanted to strike or not. As he says, "There was no war. There was no feud among the members. We had to

⁸⁷ Principal, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁸⁸ Former SADTU Site Steward, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁸⁹ Deputy Principal 2, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁹⁰ In some cases, educators at those schools would come and teach in the early morning, before leaving to go and join the groups of union members *toy-toying* in the afternoons.

understand. They were exercising their right.”⁹¹ He believes that SADTU members have the right to choose whether or not they want to participate. As a Deputy Principal at School A explains, the Principal “gets along with everybody, whether you are a SADTU or a NATU or NAPTOSA. He gets along with everybody irrespective of your background. So that makes him to be above the union issue.”⁹²

CONCLUSIONS

The 2010 strike action presents an interesting puzzle and raises questions: Why did the highest performing township schools refuse to close, while the lower performing schools immediately closed? Why were historically black schools striking while historically white schools were not? The strike shows that some leaders claim to be more ‘unionist’ and some more ‘professional’—but what do these labels really mean? Was the strike really just about salaries, or was it about something more? The patterns illuminated by the strike provoke us to reexamine our assumptions about SADTU’s role in strikes and teacher militancy, which will be examined in Chapter Six.

Many critics of SADTU claim that the union worsens schools by taking time away from teaching and learning through strikes. They have some evidence to back up this claim. According to one study, SADTU “was responsible for 42% of all work days lost between 1995 and 2009.”⁹³ But as this chapter reexamined SADTU’s affect, it showed that school leaders do not think that strike itself hurt schools. It was not the issue of the strike that frustrated them the most—it was the way that participation in strikes is used as a barometer

⁹¹ Principal, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁹² Deputy Principal 1, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁹³ South African Press Association, “Sadtu opposes reclassification of education.” *Mail & Guardian*, January 24, 2012.

of union activism, which is then used to promote people through cadre deployment.

According to school leaders, the strike is important because of the way that it plays a part in a system of promotions that provides incentives for school leaders to prioritize union activism over effective leadership.

The strike is important for what it says about the state of Umlazi schools today—the kinds of pressures that school leaders are under, and the way that SADTU influences those pressures. As Chapter Four will explain, strikes play a role in shaping the incentives facing school leaders: if they strike, they will be seen as loyal and rewarded with promotions by SADTU, and if they do not, they will be seen as sell-outs. The literature about education reform has failed to identify the root of the education crisis in township schools because the role of strikes is different from what one would expect; the role of strikes in shaping incentives and cadre deployment will be discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cadre Deployment and Incentives

A simple question: What has been the singular problem since 1994? Why don't you see a shift, at least a shift in performance for most schools?...The problem is not with the structure itself. The problem is the people inside.⁹⁴

- Former SADTU branch secretary

Critics of SADTU tend to focus on the way that the union protects ineffective teachers, by defending tardiness and absenteeism and interrupting class time with union meetings and strikes during school hours. Yet, interviews revealed a different reality. The main way that SADTU affects school leaders is through an unwritten policy of patronage-based political appointments called cadre deployment. School leaders criticized the way that appointments play a crucial role in a system that provides incentives for leaders to prioritize unionism over improving their schools. The education system in Umlazi is crippled, some argued, because ineffective leaders are appointed to leadership positions in schools.⁹⁵ This chapter uses information gained from interviews with school leaders to document the phenomenon of cadre deployment and answer the question: How does SADTU affect Umlazi school leaders as they choose whether or not to adopt leadership strategies to improve their schools?

This thesis argues that the problem with the education crisis in Umlazi is not a lack of skilled teachers with the potential to be effective leaders—rather, the problem is that effective leaders are not being promoted to leadership positions in schools and that there is

⁹⁴ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁹⁵ Zengele's study of teacher unionism and school appointments revealed a similar phenomenon in Gauteng province. However, that study did not examine the way that cadre deployment affects school leadership. Vincent Thulani Zengele, "The Involvement of Teacher Unions in the Implementation of the Employment of Educator's Act 76 of 1998." (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2009).

no incentive for leaders to be effective (besides the incentive of helping students). Through cadre deployment, loyal unionists have been ‘deployed’ to school leadership positions based upon their union activism, rather than their qualifications, proven track record of effective leadership, or potential to improve a school. SADTU influences what kind of educators are chosen to lead schools based on whether or not educators are loyal to the union and have been supportive of strikes. In doing so, SADTU rewards and encourages union activism rather than effective leadership. Most Umlazi principals were appointed through cadre deployment, and as a result, they are not necessarily committed to improving their schools and eliminating quiet corruption.

“YOU ARE GIVEN THE MANDATE.”

Both SADTU and NATU school leaders explained how cadre deployment works: when a vacant post opens up, leaders in the local SADTU branch choose one of their members who they want to reward and ‘deploy’ to the position. According to one school leader, “They distribute schools as they’re sitting around the table.”⁹⁶ The Principal of School C, who is familiar with the process because he is a former SADTU branch leader, explains. “In SADTU meetings, they discuss these matters to crux. That a certain school must be taken over ... Somebody must be shifted there ... And then they say, how can we take over that school and be in charge of that school?”⁹⁷ Allegedly, in order to secure the posts, union members manipulate School Governing Bodies (SGB’s) who have power over which candidate is chosen. In other cases, leaders argued, local union leaders allegedly tamper with or throw away applications in the district office or solicit bribes in exchange for leadership

⁹⁶ Deputy Principal 1, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi.

⁹⁷ Principal, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

posts. The principal of School C estimates that 65% of school leaders in Umlazi are political appointments.⁹⁸

He described to me how he was expected to influence members of the SGB's—parents of students who sit on the interview committees and score the candidates' answers—in order to ensure his own prospects for future job promotions. During the interview process, the union is allowed to have an observer. Though technically, the observer is only supposed to monitor the process for mistakes, in some cases they influence the SGB to choose a certain candidate. As this principal explained, when he was an observer, he was given a 'mandate' to ensure that the SADTU 'cadre' would be 'deployed' to the position. In order to do so, he was expected to inform the SGB members which candidate they are supposed to score highly. If he did not influence the SGB to promote the 'cadre,' he himself would not be promoted when he is up for an appointment, because the branch leadership would no longer trust him to be loyal. Loyal SADTU members are rewarded with deployments. As the Principal explains, "You are given the mandate—that you must make sure that so and so takes over that school—and if you fail, they will fail you ... Because you just failed the union."⁹⁹

The Deputy Principal at School D, a SADTU member, describes how during the interview process, SADTU members will intimidate candidates and influence the scoring so that their chosen candidate will win.

A lot of tactics will be used to disqualify anyone who they don't want to come for an interview. During an interview the scores are discussed. Not only that they are influenced, they are also discussed. You may have a higher ranking of scores, but

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

because the post is designed for so and so, that so and so will get the post.¹⁰⁰

As another school leader explains, if the SADTU leaders' candidate is not appointed, the leaders will do whatever it takes to pressure the legally appointed person to leave. "Those who have been appointed by the politicians, they are going to use force, threat and all that. And it becomes dangerous for this innocent somebody who has been legally appointed. If he doesn't leave, he will have to fight and risk his life."¹⁰¹ The Deputy at School E describes how when he was appointed in 2001, SADTU raised a dispute against him.

SADTU is dominant in the posts. If you compete with them, *if you are not strong enough, you are gone...* They rig the process of interviews and selection... But if they're beaten, they look for flaws in the process and then they dispute. I'm telling you I've been a victim of that myself.¹⁰²

Loyalty to SADTU is measured by how actively educators have participated in strikes and union meetings, whether or not they were willing to help influence SGB's to appoint other SADTU members, and how politically active they have been in supporting the ANC (which is aligned with COSATU and SADTU through the Tri-partite Alliance). The SADTU site steward at School C said that during the 2010 strike action, her convoy would go around to schools and she would threaten the teachers in order to get them to stop teaching and join the strike. "I would say, 'That is wrong. You need to stop this. You are all comrades. Don't forget that what posts are available, you are not going to be assigned, because you are like this' ... Because you are not a true SADTU member, the way you do things."¹⁰³ The principal of School C explains how cadre deployment rewards people who are loyal to SADTU.

¹⁰⁰ Deputy Principal 2, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁰¹ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁰² Deputy Principal, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

¹⁰³ SADTU Site Steward, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

You have done a lot of sweating for the union. Its now time for paypack on your side. It doesn't matter whether you're going to do justice to the position or whatever, but because you have made so much input towards the organization, so we must try and get you to a position where you are personally going to gain as well.¹⁰⁴

The Principal of School E (who switched from NATU to SADTU so that she would have a better chance of being promoted) claims that because of cadre deployment, promotions in Umlazi are based more upon union activism than whether or not the candidate has the qualities necessary for effective school leadership.

*They place people who are not really qualified to be leaders... Just because they are SADTU people, then. I think there is a list. The rumor is that there is a list of people who are going to take leadership positions in the schools. They don't care, that person, does he qualify? Does he have those leadership and management qualities that are needed to take over in that particular school?... They tell you, 'We are the ANC. We are the people ruling the country. So we are the final word.'*¹⁰⁵

The result of this is that principals are sometimes lacking in the basic qualities necessary to be in a position of power. One educator told me that she is appalled by this, because someone may be appointed to a school leadership position and yet, "You find that guy does not even know how to read."¹⁰⁶

Leadership positions in schools provide the appointee with a great deal of power through an increased salary and opportunities to advance into higher government positions that can bring access to even more resources.¹⁰⁷ Because of SADTU is a union under COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, which is connected to the ANC, the ruling political party, through the Tri-partite Alliance, leadership positions in schools are

¹⁰⁴ Principal, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁰⁵ Principal, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁶ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁰⁷ SADTU Site Steward, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

seen as stepping-stones to a political career.¹⁰⁸ A former SADTU branch secretary says that this provides incentives for school leaders to conform to the union's agenda. "At the end of the day he wants to climb the ladder... He knows he has been promised a very good thing there. So he knows he must push the agenda. He is not confused... He knows he will be rewarded."¹⁰⁹ The process of how this occurred—how SADTU evolved to utilize cadre deployment and the politicization of school appointments—will be examined in Chapter Five.

THE CASE OF NTOMBELA

What happens to leaders who try to change the system? The case of Ntombela, a former district manager of Umlazi District who was ousted from his position because he refused to support political appointments and strikes, provides an example. His story shows that even when leaders within SADTU try to change the culture of cadre deployment, they are met with such fierce resistance that they have to back down.

When Ntombela was appointed to be district manager in 2008, he disrupted the status quo. Under his leadership, district officials sent out notices that teachers who were absent for strikes would be subject to the 'no work, no pay' policy, and that teachers going to union meetings during school hours would be reprimanded. In addition to his lack of support for union meetings and strikes during school hours, Ntombela also did not support the cadre deployment of unqualified school leaders. In one case, when a principal retired from School F, the SADTU branch leadership decided that they would deploy a loyal cadre of their choosing to the post. Another candidate disputed the appointment, arguing that he

¹⁰⁸ The third partner in the Alliance is the South African Communist Party (SACP).

¹⁰⁹ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

was more qualified, with more experience and academic degrees. Ntombela supported the second candidate.

Ntombela was harshly penalized for his lack of support for the strike and for meddling in the struggle over the appointment at School F. His office was broken into, his property damaged, his furniture stabbed and his tires slashed. One day, SADTU members stormed his office in person to pressure him to conform. He called the police to arrest them. This decision was highly criticized by local SADTU leaders, as the arrested members ended up being tried in court. The principal of School B told me the story.

They say ‘You cannot do this, because you know there is political appointment. There is somebody who has been appointed to take over this position. So the appointment is wrong!’...And then they accuse him, they falsify, with falsify accusation, and it was accusation today and tomorrow, and you know *when you’re against these corrupt forces, you can’t win...* His life was at stake. They were desperate to remove him... They would come to his office and threaten him, ‘So you better go or else you are going to die.’

He was supported when he was promoted. It was only in the execution of his duties, then SADTU had to have this rift. Because when he was promoted, he was under the impression that he was to serve and promote the interests of the ANC... Unaware that among them, his appointment meant now they were going to start the day with jelly and custard. You see? Which Ntombela did not like, did not do, did not agree to.

They said to him, ‘You’ve been part of SADTU. Disruptive and all that. Why at the moment you take the office, now you’ve changed? You’ve become a person who’s concerned with morality, concerned with right, all those things. Continue to be the person you have been.’¹¹⁰

The SADTU site steward at School F explained that local leaders were so angry at Ntombela because he himself had been deployed by SADTU.

Why would he? Because he was also a comrade. Why would he go to an extent of arresting his comrades? So just because he had been promoted. In fact, he was a deployee from us. Because he was a teacher, and we decided that no, we should

¹¹⁰ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

deploy him to be director. And then we agreed with him, that he will listen to everything that we would say to him. Only to find that he changed his mind.¹¹¹

He and other SADTU site stewards argued that Ntombela betrayed them and the other members, because SADTU chose him to be promoted and then he did not follow the protocol of cadre deployment to reward other members. The SADTU site steward explains why he helped to orchestrate the attack against Ntombela's offices. "Its because he was not willing to listen to us. That's a policy here in South Africa. They just go the street if you don't listen."¹¹² According to one educator, "He couldn't deliver. So they decided that they would take him out."¹¹³

Ntombela ultimately resigned as a result of these pressures and intimidations.¹¹⁴ He was in the position of district manager from 2008 to 2010. The case of Ntombela's tenure shows how because of cadre deployment, there can sometimes arise a direct conflict between SADTU's claim of fighting for a higher quality education, and its own policy of rewarding loyal members with political appointments. Ntombela allegedly left Umlazi because he was trying to improve the schools there by prioritizing school transformation and a culture of teaching and learning over union activism. The story shows that in Umlazi, being a 'real SADTU' has come to mean supporting the promotion of ineffective leaders, at the indirect cost of maintaining a low quality of education in some schools.

¹¹¹ SADTU Site Steward, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ NATU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹¹⁴ There are possible alternative explanations for Ntombela's resignation. While most of the school leaders interviewed confirmed the interpretation of the event as told here, a few disagreed and argued that Ntombela himself was corrupt and soliciting bribes for school leadership positions. The limited scope of this study meant that I did not have the time to examine these alternative explanations further.

PRIORITIZING UNIONISM OVER LEADERSHIP

The politicization of school appointments means that members are unsure of whether or not SADTU expects effective leadership of them; what they are clear on is that they need to be loyal to the union, active in strikes and helpful in enabling cadre deployment. The deputy principal at School F was the person Ntombela was supporting to be principal over the chosen SADTU ‘cadre.’ He is now deputy principal of the school (the SADTU ‘cadre’ ended up being appointed to be principal). He is a SADTU member, but because of what happened with his disputed appointment, he believes that SADTU does not value effective leadership.

In the past it used to be the general characteristics of a person, showing some skills, you know, some kind of qualities which show that a person can lead: Are you a person that is able to listen to people? Are you able to come up with ideas and share with people, and take what people actually give to you? And shape it to actually benefit them rather than benefiting you alone? But like I said, today its not like that. *We are all confused as to what is actually expected of any person to be a leader*, because we have seen people climbing the leadership ladder who doesn’t have the skill that we expect them to have.¹¹⁵

The principal of School B argues that education reform in South Africa has failed because it has not addressed this issue of leadership—and without commitment by school leaders to be effective, to have a vision of transforming their school like he has, all other reforms will be ineffective.

If a person is not appointed on merit, there’s nothing you can do with that person. Its not going to work. They come up with a whole lot of programs, a thousand programs—they’re not working!... What if a person himself, there is no leadership qualities in him? What are you going to do with that? Because that’s what’s happening. *They are not looking at schools to lead them*, get education going on. They are looking at schools as getting positions for better

¹¹⁵ Deputy Principal, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

salaries ... [they think] 'whether I don't perform is immaterial, as long as I get the money that I want.' That's all they want.¹¹⁶

By incentivizing and rewarding union activism through cadre deployment, SADTU has indirectly provided incentives for school leaders to be less effective. SADTU's affect has caused leaders to become passive, rather than working actively to improve their school. The problem with cadre deployment is that it has rewarded principals who make excuses and take a more passive approach to leading, while de-valuing the principals who are willing to do whatever it takes for their students to succeed. The principal of School A, a NATU member, fears that because of cadre deployment, he is going to be somehow pushed out of his position.

*You teach and you lead when it is impossible for you to lead. But at the same time, you must always position yourself that tomorrow you may not be here. Not just because you're going to make a mistake—just because the jealous factions would have designed a method of getting you out.*¹¹⁷

SADTU has created a culture in Umlazi where effective leaders feel like they are not valued for their commitment and hard work. As a result, effective school leaders do not feel supported at the local level in Umlazi.

CADRE DEPLOYMENT AND QUIET CORRUPTION

Cadre deployment has contributed to the dysfunction of Umlazi high schools because it has enabled ineffective leaders to be appointed who are not necessarily committed to improving the quality of their schools. A culture of quiet corruption is pervasive in many schools because cadre deployment has promoted leaders who are not committed to eliminating it. According to the principal of School A, the impact of cadre deployment is

¹¹⁶ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

¹¹⁷ Principal, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

that most Umlazi school leaders have given up on trying to improving their schools.

The majority of the leaders in the township have actually stood aside and folded their arms. They are allowing SADTU to push things because they have a feeling that SADTU is dictating terms to them. No initiative. No innovations. No exercising of proper leadership in the position where they are. So people have just decided just to play it cool.¹¹⁸

As explained earlier, quiet corruption occurs when issues such as absenteeism, tardiness and overall lack of commitment prevent schools from becoming high performing.¹¹⁹ According to many of the school leaders interviewed, most Umlazi principals promote a culture of complacency rather than hard work and high achievement—i.e. a culture of quiet corruption—and that is the reason why so many township schools are failing.¹²⁰

The policy of cadre deployment has perpetuated a system that provides incentives for school leaders to view their loyalty to SADTU as their first priority, rather than the goal of improving their school. It is not that the two have to be mutually exclusive, but school leaders feel that because of cadre deployment, they are pressured to choose unionism. The Principal of School B, a high performing school, argues that most schools are not performing as well as his because their school leaders are not primarily loyal to improving their school. “We have schools that are dysfunctional purely because of that... The moment you appoint a politician to run a school, you are saying, ‘You have to serve my interest.’ Not interest of the country as a whole.”¹²¹ A former SADTU branch secretary at School E argues that if a

¹¹⁸ Principal, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹¹⁹ The World Bank, “Africa Development Indicators 2010—Silent and Lethal: How quiet corruption undermines Africa’s development efforts,” Washington, DC, 2010.

¹²⁰ Though it may not be as obvious as corruption in the form of bribery or embezzlement of public funds, quiet corruption can be equally, if not more, destructive because no matter the number of national reforms that a government tries to implement, if educators and leaders in schools are not committed to the idea of reform, and to the project of transforming their schools through hard work and a relentless persistence, then reforms will fail to improve schools.

¹²¹ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

principal has a complacent attitude and is not loyal to the mission of improving their school first, no reform can transform that school to have a 'culture' of high achievement.

Schools that are performing better are only performing better because of the leaders. Schools that are performing bad are only performing worse because of their leaders...Because the person there does not, is not, does not care!...They cannot even go and network and find out, but where can he improve? What can he do to improve? He doesn't even know. He doesn't even care. That's a problem. And unfortunately, as long as he's a unionist, then forget it...As long as you cannot put the interest of the learner first, there's nothing you can do. The learners will always suffer.¹²²

Many educators I spoke with expressed fear that because of cadre deployment, the few highly effective principals that are left will be replaced by unqualified leaders who will allow those schools to become dysfunctional. The negative affect of the cadre deployment policy is that as high performing principals leave and retire, they are not necessarily being replaced by high quality leaders. The deputy principal at School B argues that because of cadre deployment, even his school is at risk of becoming dysfunctional after his principal retires.

Because of again, politics, *people like us will not survive in the new system*. When [our principal] leaves... people who will be coming in will be the people who will fit in the status quo in terms of political pressures. Because we are the old guard. The new guard will have to come in. That's it. When he goes, there's no guarantees that a SADTU member may not get the post. So once a SADTU member gets the post, its SADTU that will be dictating to him what to do. Even if it means closing the school. So we are...sorry, I have a bad vision. But its very serious. That's the reality.¹²³

¹²² Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹²³ Ibid (emphasis added).

CONCLUSIONS

SADTU had a powerful influence over which educators were chosen for leadership positions and why they were chosen. This provided many leaders with incentives to prioritize their union activism, rather than commit to eliminating a culture of quiet corruption in their schools, so that they would have a better chance of being promoted. As a result of the cadre deployment policy, the incentives for school leaders have rewarded union activism, rather than effective leadership.

In addition to the placement of unqualified educators in school leadership positions, cadre deployment has had the effect of promoting a culture in township schools where principals are accountable to the union's orders, rather than accountable to the mandate of improving their school. The bottom line is that without high quality effective leaders who are committed to improvement, schools are destined to be dysfunctional. If school leaders in townships are not committed to improvement, then South African education reforms will continue to fail.

CHAPTER FIVE

Patronage and Public Appointments in South Africa

We don't have shortage of skill. We have a shortage of skill within the ruling party. But the skilled people, they won't be appointed.¹²⁴

- Principal of School B

Cadre deployment is not unique to SADTU or even particularly specific to the teaching profession at all. It is a policy implemented by the ANC across many sectors of the South African government. This chapter explains the history that led to today by answering the question: How did SADTU evolve to implement cadre deployment in Umlazi?

To do so, the chapter provides a historical analysis of the role of patronage-based public appointments and political corruption in South Africa. The chapter tracks how this role changed over time, from political corruption pre-1994 to the ANC's use of cadre deployment as a mechanism to seek first political stability, then rent seeking, to the normalization of corruption throughout the South African government bureaucracy. The chapter also examines the three main factors that enabled SADTU to implement cadre deployment: a rapid increase in membership, education reforms which devolved power to schools and educators and the Tri-Partite Alliance with the ANC. By telling this history, the thesis aims to provide a more complex and nuanced understanding of SADTU's role in schools than is traditionally offered by criticisms of SADTU today.

The chapter argues that SADTU utilized cadre deployment because it was a practice that was normalized throughout the South African government. As the ANC gained more power post-1994, so did SADTU. In the process, SADTU leaders began moving up into

¹²⁴ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

positions of power in the government and cadre deployment was implemented more frequently. The culture of leadership at the national level of the ANC influenced the way that leadership at the local level of SADTU was valued and rewarded. As a result, SADTU rewarded leaders who valued loyalty, conformity and prioritizing the union's struggle above all else.

CADRE DEPLOYMENT PRE-1994

There is a deep history of patronage-based public appointments in South Africa. Though they did not use the term 'cadre deployment' specifically, other actors long before the ANC utilized the practicing of rewarding loyalists through political corruption. Hyslop explains how the roots of political corruption in South Africa started with Paul Kruger from 1870-1910, a State President of the South African Republic who enabled his patronage networks to take advantage of rent-seeking opportunities. When Alfred Milner became administrator of the Transvaal, he imposed a rational-legal bureaucracy to rid the government of Kruger's corruption.¹²⁵

Employment would once again be linked to loyalty after 1948, when Afrikaner nationalists came into power through elections and implemented a policy of rewarding loyalists connected to the Afrikaner *broederbond*, a secret society, through rent-seeking activities."¹²⁶ Afrikaner nationalists also implemented patronage-based political appointments with the aim of ridding the civil service of all Anglophones, who they saw as threatening. According to Hyslop, in the civil service, "non-Afrikaners were politically

¹²⁵ Jonathan Hyslop, "Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31(2005): 781.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

suspect ... stable employment and upward social mobility was provided for working-class and lower middle-class Afrikaners.”¹²⁷

Between 1972 to 1984, as the apartheid state began to unravel economically and ideologically, instances of corruption and looting of the state increased. Particularly in the Bantustans, or ‘Homeland’ areas designated for African tribes, rent-seeking and patronage-based appointments were common. Hyslop explains, “Homeland government became a byword for corruption and incompetence ... Homeland leaders presided over massive patronage networks ... the homeland bureaucracies never attained any real effectiveness, acting more as a conduit for the delivery of patronage than of services.” In the KwaZulu Bantustan (which was later incorporated into what is today the province of KwaZulu-Natal), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) promoted its own people to government positions. The political cultures of the white apartheid state and black Bantustan government shaped the South African government bureaucracy to enable patronage-based political appointments, rent seeking and corruption.¹²⁸ It is against this backdrop that the ANC came into power in April 1994.

CADRE DEPLOYMENT FOR STABILITY

Upon taking control of the South African government in April 1994, the ANC faced many challenges. South Africa’s economy was on the verge of collapse. Though ultimately the political transition would be a peaceful one, in 1994 there was a very real threat that South Africa would devolve into civil war. The anti-apartheid struggle in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s was accompanied by high levels of violence—police committing acts of violence

¹²⁷ Ibid., 781.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 773.

against ANC members, ANC members committing violence against IFP members, and so on—and ANC leaders feared that the violence would worsen.

In the early 1990's, the province of Natal (where Umlazi is located) experienced particularly high levels of violence in comparison to other areas of South Africa, because of a low scale civil war between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). On the surface, violence between the two groups could be seen as an ethnic or ideological conflict, as the majority of IFP supporters were Zulu migrants from north of Durban. The IFP presented an alternative to the ANC; while the ANC was officially banned until 1990 and aimed to destabilize the apartheid state through violent uprising, the IFP was institutionally supported by the apartheid state, as it controlled the KwaZulu Bantustan. As Zulu wrote in 1993, "The IFP is seen as no more than a representative of the regime."¹²⁹ Writing in the same year, Harries argued, "Culture has become a terrain of struggle in Natal where the ANC and COSATU attempt to present an alternative set of images, traditions, and cultural events to those of Inkatha."¹³⁰ Although the conflict seemed to be ideological, the root causes were not. The conflict was provoked by what ANC leaders called the 'Third Force'—IFP members were actually assisted by the KwaZulu police force and used as a tool to divide township residents so that they would not unite against the apartheid police. The conflict between the IFP and ANC was a mechanism for the apartheid regime to weaken black opposition.

¹²⁹ Paulus Zulu, "Durban Hostels and Political Violence: Case Studies in KwaMashu and Umlazi," *Transformation* 21 (1993): 2.

¹³⁰ Patrick Harries, "Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha, and Zulu History," *History and Theory* 32 (1994): 125.

In Umlazi, rising population density exacerbated the conflict, as more and more people competed for increasingly limited resources.¹³¹ Hostel residents, mostly migrants from rural areas who tended to be IFP supporters, competed with township residents over access to water and land who tended to be ANC supporters.¹³² As a result, in 1991 hostels became politicized as locations for the struggle and violence in townships intensified. In Umlazi, according to Zulu, IFP-controlled hostel leaders aimed to “expel all ANC supporting ‘comrades’ from the hostel.”¹³³ From early 1992, the IFP hostel leaders decided to force all Umlazi hostel residents to become IFP members.¹³⁴ Township residents were loyal to either the IFP or ANC. Relations between the two groups were extremely tense and violent.

Because of this conflict, in 1994 ANC leaders were hesitant to trust existing government officials, National Party leaders and IFP members. ANC leaders feared that after the transition to democracy, the IFP and National Party would utilize government positions to undermine the ANC and destabilize the country. In Natal and particularly in a township like Umlazi, which had been hotly contested, it was crucial for the ANC to gain complete control over the government in order to protect itself and prevent violence from breaking out. The ANC needed to assert its authority and appoint its own people to government positions in order to mitigate the threat of government being infiltrated by the ‘Third Force.’

¹³¹ As Zulu wrote about the violence in 1993, “Out of 11 hostels in the Greater Durban Functional Region, only two, Umlazi and Kwa Mashu, have become political trouble spots.”

Zulu, “Durban Hostels and Political Violence,” 1.

¹³² As explained in a previous footnote: originally built to house workers who migrated from rural areas to the township to work in factories, hostels today are the equivalent of subsidized government housing for the poor.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

For these reasons, the ANC utilized cadre deployment to fill the government with loyal ANC members. According to Kopecky, the term deployment “derives from the ANC’s Deployment Committee—an unofficial, yet institutionalized and active body charged with personnel policy within the party.”¹³⁵ Through cadre deployment, the ANC promoted and rewarded leaders loyal to the party to powerful positions, both in government and in the private economic sector. Particularly during the first Mbeki presidency from 1999-2004, Kopecky argues, the South African state had an “aggressive and overtly party political pattern of appointments.”¹³⁶ In doing so, the ANC followed in a long tradition of South African public officials utilizing political appointments as a way to distribute rewards through patronage networks.

The ANC’s use of cadre deployment was not only a response to the conflict in the few years prior; it was also the result of the way that the Party’s political culture had evolved. The political culture of the ANC was based around clientelism, defined by Lemarchand as a set of actors conducting “mutually beneficial transactions” based on “conditional loyalties.”¹³⁷ To ensure that the ANC could operate effectively while banned, the organization developed a political culture that relied heavily on associational clandestine networks that valued trust, loyalty and sacrifice, pressured members to conform and stifled dissent. This political culture of clientelism would carry over into the post-1994 government, through the practice of rewarding loyal party members through cadre deployment.

¹³⁵ Petr Kopecky, “Political Competition and Party Patronage: Public Appointments in Ghana and South Africa,” *Political Studies* 59 (2011): 729.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 725.

¹³⁷ Rene Lemarchand, “Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building,” *The American Political Science Review* 66. (1972): 69

CADRE DEPLOYMENT FOR RENT-SEEKING

Post-1994, cadre deployment evolved to be more about rent seeking and financially rewarding those loyal to ANC networks, rather than just being a tool utilized to ensure stability and gain political power. Appointments through cadre deployment became highly coveted because they provided leaders with access to power and resources in the ANC's patronage network. Southall argues that this enabled "the monetarisation of relationships within the ANC;" in other words, the South African state became "a source of tenders."¹³⁸ Corruption, clientelism and rent-seeking became endemic to South Africa's entire government structure. In 2011, South Africa's Special Investigating Unit told MPs, "20% of South Africa's procurement budget—between R25-billion and R30-million—was lost to corruption each year."¹³⁹

At Polokwane in 2007, the normalization of corruption was unofficially condoned by the ANC as Jacob Zuma was elected to the Presidency amidst allegations of his involvement in the 1999 arms deal.¹⁴⁰ Around the same time, numerous other high-level ANC officials were charged with corruption in the form of rent-seeking. Although Zuma has more recently claimed that he will not tolerate corruption (and has fired several high-level officials for it), high rates of corruption in the South African government bureaucracy have persisted. The legacy of the ANC's political culture has made the Party slow to punish

¹³⁸ Roger Southall, "The ANC for Sale? Money, Morality & Business in South Africa." *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (2008): 295.

¹³⁹ South African Press Association, "Safety, corruption at centre of State of the Nation feedback," *Mail & Guardian*, February 14, 2012.

¹⁴⁰ The 'moneterisation' of the state came to a critical juncture in the arms deal of 1999, in which ANC leaders finalized a deal of over US \$4.9 billion to purchase arms that, as it was later revealed, the South African army did not want or need. The deal was highly criticized by both outsiders and insiders within the ANC, and top ANC leaders (including Jacob Zuma, who would eventually become President) were put on trial for corruption charges, though an investigative team found them not guilty.

Andrew Feintein, *After the Party: Corruption, the ANC and South Africa's Uncertain Future*. (London: Verso, 2009).

corrupt public officials. As Hyslop argues, the ANC has an “overriding ethos of organizational loyalty ... Such loyalties can easily be transmuted into patronage networks and make it difficult for deeds of corruption by those comrades to be publicly acknowledged or denounced by the ANC.”¹⁴¹ Put another way by Andrew Feinstein, a former ANC MP who attempted to expose the arms deal and was then shunned by the Party, all values collapsed under loyalty to the ANC.¹⁴²

The ‘monetarisation’ of the ANC created an institutional culture in South Africa’s government bureaucracy that rewarded incompetence. In almost all sectors of government, including the military and police force, the ANC promoted cadres, who did not necessarily have the skills to lead effectively, to positions for which they were not qualified. Southall claims, “ANC ‘cadres’ were desperately short of the skills required by modern business ... ‘transformation’ rapidly assumed priority over efficiency and capacity.”¹⁴³ The ANC increasingly valued loyalty and trust over the quality of a candidate’s leadership. Jonathan Jansen, a prominent public intellectual, has frequently criticized the politicization of government appointments; the impact of cadre deployment, he argues, is that many government agencies have a culture of incompetence.

The truth is, you need not be competent to find a job in South Africa. You need the right political credentials. You need the right networks ... It helps if you make the right noises, show up at the right funerals and embrace the right scoundrels. But whatever you do, do not—under any circumstances—demonstrate competence; it could cost you your deployment.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Hyslop, “Political Corruption,” 783.

¹⁴² Feinstein, *After the Party*.

¹⁴³ Roger Southall, “The ANC for Sale? Money, Morality & Business in South Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (2008): 291.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Jansen, “Incapacitated by incompetents,” *Mail & Guardian*, March 31, 2010.

CADRE DEPLOYMENT IN SADTU

Criticisms of corruption in the ANC tend to focus on high-level rent seeking and looting of the state. Although high-level corruption is important, what is also important—but less examined—is the way that corruption at the local level rewards incompetence and a lack of commitment to effective service delivery, and in doing so, is crippling South African schools. As Chapter Four explained, cadre deployment has a powerful affect on the type of leaders that are rewarded and promoted in Umlazi schools. Just as public appointments in many sectors of the ANC-led government became increasingly based around patronage, so did the appointment of leadership positions in schools become highly politicized.

The ANC's policy of cadre deployment has impacted schools by normalizing the appointment of school leaders to be based upon their political loyalty and unionism rather than skills and qualifications. As one educator explains, "It's a fight of power which borders even to education, that you need to have a political career in order for you to be successful... Education has no value any longer. You survive provided you are political elite... You cannot afford to be neutral nowadays."¹⁴⁵ In order to be rewarded with a high position, potential school leaders in Umlazi first need to prove their loyalty to SADTU and conform to the orders of their local branch leadership; they do not need to worry about proving that they actually have the proven capability and commitment necessary to effectively lead a school.

Three other factors were influential in creating the conditions for cadre deployment to become so pervasive in Umlazi schools: SADTU's rising membership, education reforms that devolved power over school appointments to the local level, and SADTU's affiliation

¹⁴⁵ Deputy Principal 1, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

with the Tri-partite Alliance. In part due to these three factors, the union began to exert a powerful influence over school appointments in Umlazi beginning in 2002.

From 1990 to 2002, SADTU experienced a rapid increase in membership, which created pressure for the organization to become more responsive to members' needs. When SADTU was launched in 1990, it had 30,000 members. From 1993 to 1995, over 80,000 teachers joined SADTU—most of whom were younger black teachers. By 1999, membership had doubled to over 200,000.¹⁴⁶ After years of tremendous growth, in 1999 SADTU's membership began to stabilize, from 218,878 in 1999 to 210,235 in 2003.¹⁴⁷ According to Govender, "SADTU's assessment of its decline over this period includes a failure to offer better quality service."¹⁴⁸ In other words, SADTU leaders thought that educators were leaving the union because it was not doing enough to address their issues. Because growth of new members was stagnant, SADTU was under pressure to adapt in order to retain its existing membership and offer benefits that would attract new members.

2002 marked a clear shift in the priorities and mission of SADTU. That year, in order to take a more active stance and satisfy the membership, according to Govender, SADTU jointly established "a new trade union-owned, independent consumer services company, Lesaka Holdings ... [which would provide] a range of assurance and financial services and products, including healthcare, property, funeral benefits and asset management."¹⁴⁹ The establishment of Lesaka Holdings marked a shift in the union as a

¹⁴⁶ Jon Lewis and Shermain Mannah, "South African Teachers and Social Movements Old and New," in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories for Resistance*, ed. Mary F. Compton and Lois Weiner, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 183.

¹⁴⁷ Logan Govender, "Teacher unions, policy struggles and educational change, 1994 to 2004," in *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed. Linda Chisholm, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 274.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

whole— away from the original collective goal that prioritized the entire nation and education quality for all, towards a more narrowly defined focus of satisfying members' needs. That year clearly indicated that SADTU's mission was evolving away from its original values in order to provide greater benefits to its members; this would eventually lead the organization to support school leadership appointments that would be based upon patronage and cadre deployment, rather than effective leadership. SADTU transformed from 1990 to 2002 to be more focused on the welfare of its individual members.

Secondly, education reforms post-apartheid devolved power over leadership appointments to the local level, which created the conditions that would make it possible for SADTU to actually implement cadre deployment. Historically, apartheid education officials and inspectors wielded power over appointments to school leadership positions. In townships, white inspectors would drop in unannounced to hire and fire teachers if they were not teaching to the apartheid pedagogy and curriculum. The decentralization of power was a reaction to this history. In 1996, the South African Schools Act (SASA) decentralized power over schools and shifted the locus of power away from national officials, towards educators, learners and parents at the local level. SASA mandated that every school have a School Governing Body (SGB's) made up of stakeholders, including parents, who were given increased influence and power over the process of appointing principals and other school leaders. In addition, the position of district director was created in 2002, in order to decentralize power away from the provincial level. These reforms made it easier for SADTU to manipulate the appointment process to ensure that its cadres would be promoted, by influencing uneducated parents on SGB's and influencing district directors to be loyal to SADTU.

Lastly, because of the Tri-Partite Alliance, leaders who were successful in SADTU had the potential to move into the ANC, where they could gain more powerful positions and have access to lucrative networks of resources (whether legal or illegal). For example, as Govender points out, “SADTU’s president, Shepard Mdladlana, and general secretary, Randall van den Heever, became ANC Members of Parliament (MPs).”¹⁵⁰ The Deputy Principal at School A estimates that 60% of provincial councilors were formerly in school leadership positions. The Tri-partite Alliance provided tangible and attractive benefits for SADTU members who gained power through cadre deployment. Additionally, as the values of the ANC and COSATU evolved over the course of the 1990’s, they influenced the values of SADTU to evolve in a similar way. COSATU transformed from promoting solidarity with the entire working class, towards a more limited scope that prioritized the needs of certain groups of workers.

The history of patronage and public appointments in the South African government bureaucracy, coupled with the ANC’s promotion of cadre deployment and the three factors explained above, led SADTU to implement cadre deployment and ultimately promote ineffective school leaders to leadership positions in township high schools.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 270.

CHAPTER SIX

Teacher Militancy in Township Schools

We have been taught from the ages of the struggle that if you and I cannot agree, let me pinch you where you can feel the pain more. For example, let me break your house. Then you'll see that I'm serious.¹⁵¹

- Former SADTU site steward at School B

Critics of SADTU point to stories like the one in the Preface as evidence that SADTU negatively impacts school leaders through strikes. This study draws a different conclusion. As Chapter Four argued, strikes themselves are not the main way that SADTU impacts school leaders—cadre deployment is. Strikes are only a tool within the system of cadre deployment, as they are used as a barometer for union activism. By making this claim, the thesis aims to challenge the publicly accepted narrative about SADTU.

Chapters Four and Five explained how SADTU affects school leaders and how the union evolved to implement the policy of cadre deployment. This chapter aims to explain the history of teachers' motivations for striking. Critics of SADTU reduced the 2010 strike action down to utilitarian reasons, that teachers were only striking because they were greedy and wanted higher salaries. An analysis of the historical context for the strike shows that their motivations for striking were much more complex. This chapter will examine this complexity by answering the question: How did SADTU evolve to promote teacher militancy in 2010?

The chapter provides a historical analysis of the role of township teachers as political agents in South African township schools. The chapter tracks how this role changed over

¹⁵¹ Former SADTU Branch Secretary, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

time, from the Bantu Education Act in 1953 to the Soweto uprising in 1976, student boycotts in the 1980's, the role of trade unions in the anti-apartheid struggle, and SADTU's creation and teacher strikes in the 1990's. In light of this history, the chapter reassesses the 2010 strike action and township teachers' motivations for participating.

The chapter argues that SADTU became a more radical union because of the way that black teachers had historically been oppressed under apartheid. Today, SADTU members are striking not only in response to localized motivations of wanting higher salaries; they are also taking part in a global phenomenon of middle class workers protesting for political rights and a share of economic growth. SADTU is a social movement that enables teachers to voice dissent against economic inequality and the monopolization of capital by a South African political elite. Strikes are a means by which teachers gain a voice.

THE POLITICIZATION OF TOWNSHIP TEACHERS UNDER APARTHEID

Underlying the original apartheid ideology was the view that races were in competition and in struggle with one another; thus, writes Cell, "In the long run the only way to avoid disaster was physical, territorial separation."¹⁵² In 1905, the South African Native Affairs Commission recommended that the country clearly divide its territory into white and black areas. At the same time, it was necessary to have African laborers near white areas. To solve this problem, townships such as Umlazi—areas specifically for African laborers, the majority male—were created near major labor centers. By 1976, black

¹⁵² John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982): 194.

townships existed across the country and were attracting thousands of Africans each year from rural areas.

The apartheid regime purposely kept townships economically depressed because they were solely intended to be pools of labor, not thriving communities. In order to do so, the National Party used the education system as a tool to oppress blacks and advantage whites. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 separated educational institutions by race, creating nineteen different education departments.

During apartheid, teachers were prevented from being politicized. Black teachers were agents of the state and followed orders, while white teachers were allowed to exert more influence in policy-making.¹⁵³ As Chisholm explains, “control over teachers’ work in black schools was bureaucratic, hierarchical and authoritarian.”¹⁵⁴ Teachers were subject to strict monitoring, surveillance and evaluation. Inspectors used checklists to evaluate teachers and ensure that they remained loyal to apartheid education.¹⁵⁵

Although the first black teachers’ union, the Native Educational Association, was established in 1879,¹⁵⁶ and other teacher associations were later created, they were not politically active. A 1978 law made promoting politics in school an offense punishable by the expulsion of the offending teacher. Teacher organizations that did exist were recognized by the apartheid state and expected to be obedient. Kihn describes the ideology of teacher organizations before 1990.

¹⁵³ Linda Chisholm, “The Democratization of Schools and the Politics of Teachers’ Work in South Africa.” *Compare* 29 (1999).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵⁶ J. Heystek and M. Lethoko, “The contribution of teacher unions in the restoration of teacher professionalism and the culture of learning and teaching.” *South African Journal of Education* 21(2001): 223.

Education and politics were separate; professional teachers educated children and did not involve themselves in inappropriate political activity. Professionalism, as manifested in the large teacher associations, denied teachers the right to public protest or industrial action and posited *education in politically neutral terms*.¹⁵⁷

Though teacher associations were politically neutral, in the late 20th century schools became increasingly politicized. The first signs of teacher militancy in South Africa were in the 1940's, in a 1944 mass protest action by over 12,000 teachers against inadequate teacher salaries.¹⁵⁸ In the 1950's, the ANC used teacher and student militancy in townships as a tool to disrupt the apartheid regime, by organizing school boycotts and strikes.¹⁵⁹

On June 16, 1976, thousands of youth protested on the streets of Soweto against the requirement that the language of instruction in schools should be Afrikaans. Though the uprising started in Soweto, according to Jeffery, "Within two months of 16 June, at least 80 black communities from all over the country had expressed their fury; within four months the number had risen to 160."¹⁶⁰ The government's reaction to the uprising, with excessive use of force by shooting into the crowd, aimed to stop the student protests from transforming into violent resistance—but the effect was to further embolden students.¹⁶¹ In addition to protests, students also called for township residents to stay away from work; they used roadblocks and threats to coerce workers into staying home.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Paul Kihn, "Comrades and Professionals: Teacher Ideology and Practice in the Western Cape, 1985 to 1990." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994: the Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, ed. Peter Kallaway (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 328 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁸ Logan Govender, *When 'the chalks are down': a Historical, Political & Social Interpretation of Teacher Militancy in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 1996), 28.

¹⁵⁹ Gay Seidman, "Guerrillas in their Midst: Armed Struggle in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement," *Mobilization* 6 (2001): 119.

¹⁶⁰ Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, 27.

¹⁶¹ William Beinart, "Popular politics and resistance movements in South Africa, 1970-2008," in *Popular Politics and Resistance Movements in South Africa*, ed. William Beinart and Marcelle C Dawson (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 18.

¹⁶² Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, 29.

The student protests subsided a few months after the Soweto Uprising but intensified again in 1984. According to Simpson, local council elections in November and December 1983, coupled with rising high rents, provoked “the onset of the most sustained mass urban revolt in South African history.”¹⁶³ The revolt and subsequent school boycotts had a particularly powerful impact on education as they forced township schools to close.¹⁶⁴ Students saw schools as agents of the apartheid regime, and by extension, they saw teachers and school leaders as agents of apartheid as well. The Soweto uprising and subsequent student protests took on meaning far beyond the symbolic question of the role of Afrikaans in schools—that question only represented the larger issue of apartheid itself.¹⁶⁵ As Mannah and Lewis argue, “schools in the townships became the battlefield of the struggle.”¹⁶⁶ Education and politics became inextricably linked.¹⁶⁷

As education became politicized, so did teachers. The increasing protests by township youth and the ANC’s use of violence in the 1980’s provoked a profound shift in the conception of what it meant to be a teacher in a South African township. Teachers were pressured by students to be more supportive of the struggle. As a result, Kihn writes, a different conception of teacher professionalism emerged over the course of the 1980’s.

¹⁶³ Thula Simpson, “The role of the African National Congress in popular protest during the township uprisings, 1984-1989,” in *Popular Politics and Resistance Movements in South Africa*, ed. William Beinart and Marcelle C Dawson. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 76.

¹⁶⁴ As Govender argues, “The school boycotts of 1984/85 brought the educational system to a virtual state of collapse, especially in black townships.”

Govender, *When ‘the chalks are down’*, 35.

¹⁶⁵ Jon Lewis and Shermain Mannah “South African Teachers and Social Movements Old and New,” in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories for Resistance*, ed. Mary F. Compton and Lois Weiner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 182.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁶⁷ In this process emerged the concept of “people’s education as people’s power”, where education was seen as having a directly political purpose, to train and mobilize people for the resistance. The National Education Crisis Committee, created in 1985, brought together leaders from communities, unions and youth to form a movement to promote this ideal and provide an alternative education to that provided by the apartheid system. *Ibid.*, 181.

Ideology did not exist in isolation from the lived, often frightening, realities of student boycotts and anti-apartheid activity. The new professionalism was born in part of a strategic and physical exigency. During the late 1980s, within a context of moral condemnation and battles on the grounds of schools, the monopoly of a state-condoned, neutral professionalism ended; a more complex ideology of professionalism, responsive to the politics of teaching and the organized resistance movement, manifested itself in emergent teacher unions and a forceful teacher unity movement.¹⁶⁸

This more progressive notion of professionalism mandated a role for teachers as political agents. The teaching profession was seen as symbolic to everything that the anti-apartheid struggle was trying to achieve, because of the historic role of schools as locations for oppression. As Samuel argues, “the organized teaching profession was seen by many as an ideal platform from which the state could be challenged.”¹⁶⁹

A NON-RACIAL, UNIFIED, POLITICAL TEACHERS UNION

The role of teachers was also provoked to shift as they were increasingly influenced by trade unions, which had helped to catalyze the township protests in the 1980's.¹⁷⁰ Black trade unions were the most powerfully organized opposition to the anti-apartheid struggle, because while political organizations including the ANC were banned, the state had legally recognized black trade unions in 1979.¹⁷¹ The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa's largest trade federation that was established in 1985, was highly politicized and encouraged the various teacher organizations to unite and politicize as well.

¹⁶⁸ Kihn, “Comrades and Professionals,” 235 (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁹ Harold Samuel, “A History of the Search for Teacher Unity in South Africa,” in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories for Resistance*, ed. Mary F. Compton and Lois Weiner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 227.

¹⁷⁰ Govender, *When ‘the chalks are down’*, 1.

¹⁷¹ Anthony W. Marx, “South African Black Trade Unions as an Emerging Working-Class Movement,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27 (1989): 385.

In 1988, COSATU brought together representatives from nine teacher organizations to meet in order to achieve teacher unity. At the conference, all of the organizations present agreed to the ‘Harare Proposals’, which explicitly stated that the goal of teacher unity was a political one.¹⁷² They agreed to be subsumed under one non-racial, unified, political teachers union. A statement from a journal from the Teachers’ Association of South Africa, an Indian teacher organization that would later be subsumed under SADTU, explains how teacher unity was symbolic of the political vision of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Retaining our identity through federalism is entirely unacceptable in a truly democratic new order. Ethnicity, federalism and minority grouping do find favor with those who are uncertain about the future...If we are truly committed to preparing for democracy and a new order, a single united teaching force is the best possible investment for the future.¹⁷³

Despite signing the Harare Proposals, in 1988 the teacher organizations could not unite into a union because political organizations were still banned.

On February 2, 1990, President De Klerk announced that he intended to dismantle apartheid, free Nelson Mandela and unban political organizations, including the ANC—and everything changed. That day set the stage for the creation of SADTU. On October 6, 1990, in Johannesburg, the teacher organizations that had agreed to the ‘Harare Proposals’ were officially united together and SADTU was established. SADTU was launched as the first non-racial national teachers’ organization, embodying a new conception of teacher

¹⁷² Two of the items listed in the proposal indicate that the goal of teacher unity was a political one: “4. The organization should commit itself to be part of the national mass democratic movement... 9. The representatives of organizations agreed to urge their organizations that they, as well as the envisaged organization, would abide by the principle and practice of non-collaboration with all structures of the apartheid system.”

Ian Moll, “The South African Democratic Teachers Union and the politics of teacher unity in South Africa, 1985-90,” in *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggles*, ed. Elaine Unterhalter (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991), 199.

¹⁷³ Samuel, “A History of the Search for Teacher Unity,” 230.

professionalism.¹⁷⁴ From the beginning, SADTU's mission was an explicitly political one, as its Constitution states.

The main aim of SADTU is to eradicate all forms of discrimination in education and to strive towards a free and democratic system of education in South Africa. SADTU teachers are strongly committed to overcoming the serious legacies of apartheid education, and view their union as an effective structure through which they can participate in a transformative programme of national reconstruction and development.¹⁷⁵

SADTU would achieve this mission by uniting all educators regardless of their race; this was in contrast to existing teacher organizations, which were all divided along racial lines.¹⁷⁶ One such teacher union, NATU¹⁷⁷ was founded in 1935, limited to African teachers and had previously been aligned with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). NATU and other teacher organizations represented a past in which a person was defined by their race and tribe.¹⁷⁸ In contrast, SADTU represented a new type of teacher organization that would embrace and unite all types of South Africans, rather than divide them, and would be more representative of the 'new' South Africa to come.

SADTU's political role was institutionally formalized in 1993 when it joined the Tri-Partite Alliance with COSATU and the ANC. As part of the Alliance, SADTU's mission was seen as more than just advocating for educators and students—it was part of the wider

¹⁷⁴ When it was established, SADTU claimed claiming to represent over 150,000 teachers. Moll, "The South African Democratic Teachers Union," 200.

¹⁷⁵ SADTU. "Constitution as amended since 2010 7th National Congress."

[http://www.sadtu.org.za/sites/sadtu.org.za/files/SADTU%20CONSTITUTION%20-%202010%20docx%20\(latest\).pdf](http://www.sadtu.org.za/sites/sadtu.org.za/files/SADTU%20CONSTITUTION%20-%202010%20docx%20(latest).pdf)

¹⁷⁶ The teacher organizations at Harare included: the African Teachers' Association of South Africa (ATASA), the United Teachers' Association of South Africa (UTASA), the Teachers' Association of South Africa (TASA), the National Educators' Union of South Africa (NEUSA), the Democratic Educators Teachers' Union (DETU), the Western Cape Teachers' Union (WCTU), and the Professional Teachers' Union (PTU). Vincent Thulani Zengele, "The Involvement of Teacher Unions in the Implementation of the Employment of Educator's Act 76 of 1998." (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ NATU was originally called the Natal Bantu Teachers' Association, then the name changed to the Natal African Teachers' Union and later to the National Teachers' Union.

¹⁷⁸ These unions would later be brought together under the umbrella federation of NAPTOSA.

struggle for equality in South Africa. SADTU became an influential player in the process of pressuring the government for reforms in the early 1990's and catalyzing the end of apartheid, through unprecedented levels of teacher militancy and strike actions from 1990 to 1993.¹⁷⁹

MILITANT UNIONISM OR PROFESSIONALISM?

Teacher militancy from 1990 to 1993 involved, according to Chisholm, “stay-aways, ‘chalks-down’, marches to regional offices, submissions of lists of grievances, sit-ins and the prevention of departmental officials from visiting schools.”¹⁸⁰ In 1990 and 1991, the main goal of these protests was to push out school leaders who were seen as agents of the apartheid regime. As Chisholm writes, “During the struggle against the previous government and its education system, black principals were seen as collaborators with the white government and therefore they were not acceptable to be members of SADTU.”¹⁸¹ SADTU members confronted members of older, more established teacher associations, who were seen as complicit in apartheid.

Older teacher organizations were more conservative and integrated into the apartheid education system. Many, including NATU, had agreements with the education authorities controlling the Bantustans, which mandated that all teachers within their areas be required to join and pay a membership fee. These more established teacher associations also had control over school leadership positions. Principals had to be seen as loyal to the Department. In order to be promoted, they had to follow the Department's orders exactly.

¹⁷⁹ Govender, *When 'the chalks are down.'*

¹⁸⁰ Chisholm, “The Democratization of Schools,” 116.

¹⁸¹ Heystek and Lethoko, “The contribution of teacher unions,” 225.

As a result, the established teacher organizations and their school leaders, argues Moll, were seen as “the very principals and inspectors who carried out state repression of progressive students and teachers.”¹⁸² During the teacher militancy of the early 1990’s, educators and school leaders frequently opposed one another.

In the discourse about teacher organizations in South Africa, the discussion over teacher militancy was termed as a conflict between militant trade unions and professional associations. Govender argues that while older teacher organizations, including NATU, claimed to be more professional with the role of traditional teacher organizations under apartheid, SADTU was more unionist and was conceived as being different from all teacher organizations that had come before, because it would exert a powerful influence over education policy and fight aggressively for the rights of teachers.

A serious schism resulted—pitting the new generation of progressive unions against the older, professional associations. The latter were labelled conservative and prioritized their commitment to the interests of the ‘child’ over those of ‘politics’; while the former were labelled radical and regarded themselves as ‘workers’ and would not balk at taking strike action.¹⁸³

In contrast to older teacher organizations, which were formed as associations of professionals, SADTU was highly influenced by COSATU, which was formed explicitly in order to organize workers and use the mechanism of strikes.

In Umlazi, the schism between militant unionism and professionalism took on an overtly political tone. Historically, the main established teacher organization in the township, NATU, was aligned with the IFP (though it later became non-aligned) and SADTU was

¹⁸² Moll, “The South African Democratic Teachers Union,” 192.

¹⁸³ Govender, “Teacher unions, policy struggles and educational change,” 271.

aligned with the ANC.¹⁸⁴ SADTU's ideology mirrored the ideology of the ANC, in that it used violent protest to make schools 'ungovernable' in order to achieve its aims.¹⁸⁵ In earlier decades, the ANC had turned to armed struggle because traditional protest and nonviolent tactics had proven to be ineffective in ending apartheid.¹⁸⁶ In contrast to the ANC, the IFP benefited from apartheid through its control of the KwaZulu Bantustan and professed an ideology of nonviolence. NATU and older organizations were seen as complicit in apartheid, passively accepting the status quo, in contrast to the ANC and SADTU's ideology of fighting actively for the end of apartheid.

In his 1996 study of the causes of teacher militancy in South Africa, Govender argues that militant unionism was a response to teachers' highly politicized role.¹⁸⁷

Teacher militancy from 1990-1993 is finally understood in relation to the historical conjuncture in which teachers found themselves, firstly, as a result of

¹⁸⁴ In 1961, the ANC created *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (otherwise known as MK), an armed guerrilla resistance movement within the ANC. Through acts of violence, primarily against government property, MK aimed to disrupt the apartheid regime. In the later years of the 1980's, this mandate expanded to include acts of violence against whites and white areas, with the broader aim of making South Africa 'ungovernable' in order to force the white regime to transfer power to blacks. In 1987, ANC leaders concluded, "Only when whites felt that their physical safety was under threat would they feel induced to reform."

Simpson, "The role of the African National Congress in popular protest," 93.

¹⁸⁵ Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the IFP, argued that his party professed the ideology of non-violence, and that he was "heir to the leadership of the liberation struggle ... After his fall-out with the ANC in 1979 Buthelezi made a strict distinction ... Inkatha, and not 'the present ANC,' is the legitimate heir to the traditions and values of the old ANC. *It is 'the heir of the struggle through non-violence and negotiation.'*" This ideology of non-violence could have translated over into the ideology of its aligned union, NATU, which professed an ideology of negotiation rather than strikes.

Harries, "Imagery, Symbolism and Tradition in a South African Bantustan," 120 (emphasis added).

¹⁸⁶ Seidman, "Guerrillas in their Midst," 117.

¹⁸⁷ Govender draws upon the work of Giroux, Freire and Marx to identify the following reasons for teacher militancy: Demands for higher salaries

Demands for better working conditions

Overcrowding, lack of facilities and learning materials

Inadequate levels of teacher capacity

Victimization of teachers (teachers dismissals, suspensions or transfers 1990-92) / Authoritarian management styles

Political grievances

Govender, *When 'the chalks are down,'* 55.

their specific class location in the capitalist-apartheid economy and, secondly, as members of the politically disenfranchised black majority.¹⁸⁸

Govender's analysis stresses the importance of teachers' class location and uses social movement theory to argue that teacher militancy was the result of the combination of relative deprivation, rising expectations and mass society. SADTU gave teachers in township schools a powerful voice that they had never had before.

THE IMPACT OF HISTORY IN THE 2010 STRIKE ACTION

These historical factors—the politicization of teachers in the 1980's, the political role of SADTU and militant unionism as symbolic of the anti-apartheid struggle—are crucial to understanding educators' motivations for participating in and supporting the 2010 strike action. This section will present school leaders' perspectives on the strike and will place them in context with these historical factors to understand how teachers view their participation in the 2010 strike and the role of teachers today.

Many younger educators joined SADTU because they saw it as more progressive than older teacher organizations. Their generation participated in the Soweto uprising and subsequent protests, saw the power of protest in the anti-apartheid struggle and believe that strikes have an important role today. They are the generation of school leaders coming into power post-1994.¹⁸⁹ The SADTU site steward at School D explains why she joined SADTU when she first started teaching in 2000.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸⁹ Though before the uprising, most youth did not have any knowledge about the ANC, the uprising provoked many to have a greater sense of political consciousness and desire to become more politically active. The uprising inspired 7,000-10,000 young blacks to leave South Africa in order to be recruited and trained by the ANC in Mozambique, Swaziland and Botswana. Jeffery, *The Natal Story*, 29.

It was the only union that spoke to my needs. I didn't know about their mission, this NATU's mission. I couldn't understand most of the things they were saying. Because each and every time they would agree... They just took whatever they were given... *They did not have a mind of their own...* That was not working out for me, because I need to express my views... So I think the older generations had to be more... docile? If I may say. They tend to take everything they are told, because they believe whatever is there cannot be changed.¹⁹⁰

According to the former site steward at School A, SADTU's vision resonates with him because it is more democratic and its use of strikes is an appropriate response to fighting for the rights of teachers when negotiations for higher salaries fail.¹⁹¹ The viewpoints of these two school leaders are consistent with the perspective of many in SADTU; as SADTU spokesperson Jon Lewis said in 2010, "Our average member is about 40 years old and this means these are the people who were students during the 1980s, so their militancy is not something new."¹⁹²

In analyzing the motivations of SADTU members today, it is important to recognize the violence from which they were emerging. As Seidman argues, the ANC's "armed struggle can be a central component of movement participants' self-understanding."¹⁹³ SADTU's teacher militancy today evolved in response to the role of protest, strikes and politicized teachers in the decades before 2010.¹⁹⁴ When asked why he participated in the 2010 strike, the SADTU site steward at School C said, "We need to fight ... its like that in South Africa.

¹⁹⁰ SADTU Site Steward, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

¹⁹¹ Former SADTU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁹² Kamogelo Seekoei, "Union lords', not idealists, running show at SadtU," *Mail & Guardian*, September 3, 2010.

¹⁹³ Seidman, "Guerrillas in their Midst," 113.

¹⁹⁴ Deputy Principal, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi.

"If you see Cosatu, you are aware how many strikes are here today because of Cosatu. Strikes, strikes all over. Strikes in the mining industries, strikes in the chemical industries, strikes in the textile industries, all over the show strikes, strikes, strikes. That's their philosophy, their principle, how they work."

You know that to get something we've got to go to the road. Do the *toyi-toyi*."¹⁹⁵ The SADTU site steward at School E explained that the 2010 strike required a wartime mentality that prioritized the strike over everything else.

Our school we did suffer from the strike. And I won't run away from that. But if you are fighting, there must be always casualties... What we want we must have. *Our demands must be met. At all costs...* We must maintain that unity if you are embarking on strike. It's like if you are going on a war. You mustn't—all the soldiers must be together, having all practiced how they are going to fight the war... Because if we don't embark on strike, and the others embark on strike, then that means you are going to fight a losing battle. For us to be together, that means we are going to be able to fight a winning battle. That's what we wish to get. That's what I used to tell them: You are the people of South Africa, you have to fight.¹⁹⁶

Just as protests did during the anti-apartheid struggle, the 2010 strike action could quickly turn from peaceful protest to become more violent, with intimidation of those who did not want to participate. One educator argues that *toyi-toying* in 2010 is similar *toyi-toying* in the 1980's.

It's a violent kind of situation... People, they become consumed into this mob spirit... People may end up doing terrible things. Because in the past, when there is a *toyi-toyi*, people would burn tires, car wheels. They would burn them and line them up on the road and then sometimes they would burn people and take the tire over you and then pour some petrol and then light you up and then you burn down... So whenever there is the sound of people *toyi-toying*, all those things, they just come back. And then it's scary. So whenever they sing those songs... They will jump up and down. And they will say some things, words like sometimes vulgar and all that. They will be swearing and all those things. Like you are a traitor. You are selling us out... And then out of violence, then people can do anything. So that's what we were afraid of.¹⁹⁷

In Umlazi, if a teacher does not want to participate in strike actions, they are seen as betraying the struggle.

¹⁹⁵ SADTU Site Steward, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁹⁶ SADTU Site Steward, School E. Interview by author, 1 August 2011, Umlazi (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁷ Educator, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

Strikes are seen as the only mechanism by which educators can express frustration against larger issues of inequality. In interviews, SADTU members expressed that they think the government will only listen to them if they make the strike more intense, imposing more pressure through threats and intimidation, as otherwise no one will listen. As a leader at School C argues, educators in township schools are motivated to strike because of the continued inequality that they see between the conditions of their schools and historically white schools, which have more resources.

We were trying to destabilize those schools who were fully functioning...the former Model C schools. Especially the white-controlled schools... The situation here is that the SADTU as a union, has a majority of blacks... There is that kind of segregation. If I'm a white person, I will join this union. If I'm a black person, I will join this one. And then the strike was organized by SADTU, which is dominated by blacks. That is why those schools did not join the strike at that time... There is this belief that the whites are still earning more than blacks... That is why they do not want to participate, because they are better off than us.¹⁹⁸

Educators are fighting to rectify the legacy of apartheid and racial inequity. The SADTU site steward at School B frames 'the struggle' of the strikes in terms of race as well.

Black schools were not operating...Its because we are blacks and they are white...so they don't participate in the strike...I think they say *toyi-toying* is something for the black people only. That is why I say its racism. They think that they don't have to go to the streets. We should go to the streets for them.¹⁹⁹

Most of the teachers striking in 2010 were in historically black schools. Despite the many education reforms since 1994, teachers in township schools still face different working conditions and pressures than teachers in historically white schools. They have a tougher school environment, as they have access to fewer resources than teachers in historically white schools and tend to have a poorer quality of physical infrastructure. More of their

¹⁹⁸ HOD, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

¹⁹⁹ SADTU Site Steward, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

students come from low-income homes and the schools are more likely to experience burglary. Due to these challenges, it is understandable that SADTU members argue that they deserve higher salaries than the teachers in historically white schools.

SADTU AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

From the way that SADTU members speak about the 2010 strike action, it is clear that something more than salaries is at stake. The rhetoric of school leaders reveals the political role of SADTU's strikes. They serve not only a utilitarian purpose, for higher salaries, but also a symbolic purpose. Strikes are about rectifying the injustices of the past, addressing inequality and fulfilling SADTU's role as a defender of the working class.

Teachers today see themselves as part of a struggle that is a continuation of the anti-apartheid struggle—to gain the wave of socio-economic rights that were not gained in the wave of political rights won in 1994. Robins explains.

[A] particularly sobering aspect of the South African transition to democracy has been the growing recognition that, while South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions on the planet, the actual realization of these constitutional rights has not lived up to expectations. *Although there have been considerable gains in terms of 'first generation' human rights—political and civil rights, such as freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc—the same cannot be said concerning the realization of second generation socio-economic rights.*²⁰⁰

The political transformation of 1994 was not followed by a total economic transformation.

The majority of resources in the country are still controlled by an economic elite. Though

²⁰⁰ Robins, cited in Rosenthal.

Kelly Rosenthal, "New social movements as civil society: The case of past and present Soweto," in *Popular Politics and Resistance Movements in South Africa*, ed. William Beinart and Marcelle C Dawson (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 246 (emphasis added).

no longer solely white, the economic elite is populated by BEE²⁰¹ entrepreneurs and those who are politically connected to the ANC. At the same time, inequality in South Africa is worsening. The number of South Africans living in shacks has risen by 50% in the decade post-apartheid, to 12 million people—over a quarter of the population.²⁰² The official unemployment rate is close to 25%, but trade unions claim it is closer to 40%. There is a widespread sense of distrust in government, and a sense of unfairness at the way that things have worked out post-apartheid.

The 2010 strike action was a mechanism for teachers to express their frustration with the economic and political climate of the township—where access to resources is largely limited to a certain class, the politically connected elite. They sense that while corruption is rampant at all levels of government, the poor are getting poorer. The rhetoric used by SADTU and COSATU leaders confirms this argument. Speaking about the 2010 strike action, Thembile Ntola, the President of SADTU, said, “This is a class struggle.”²⁰³ In 2011, COSATU spokesperson Patrick Craven said, “South Africa is the most unequal country in the world in terms of income and the most concrete way to address this inequality is to close the wage gap. Wage negotiations are the most powerful tool we have in acting decisively on this question.”²⁰⁴

To understand how SADTU evolved to promote teacher militancy in 2010, it is useful to view the 2010 strike through the lens of Huntington. Within his theoretical framework, SADTU’s strikes are manifested frustration in a politically modernizing society.

²⁰¹ BEE is Black Economic Empowerment, the South African government’s program to promote black ownership in business by rewarding companies with government contracts based upon how ‘pro-black’ the companies are in their hiring policies.

²⁰² Rory Carroll, “Townships in revolt as ANC fails to live up to its promises,” *The Guardian*, February 21, 2006.

²⁰³ Matuma Letsoalo, “Ntola still head of class,” *Mail & Guardian*, October 15, 2010.

²⁰⁴ Matuma Letsolao, “SA hit by strike fever,” *Mail & Guardian*, July 15, 2011.

In 1968, Huntington argued, “Political instability in modernizing countries is thus in large part a function of the gap between aspirations and expectations produced by the escalation of aspirations which particularly occurs in the early phases of modernization.”²⁰⁵ That the timing of the 2010 strike occurred a month after the World Cup—when South Africa was seen to be at the peak of its success and growing economically—was no accident. Teachers wanted to benefit from that growth. They saw ANC leaders in their flashy cars, heard about allegations of corruption in the media, and felt a strong sense of injustice, which was then expressed through the strike.

Due to South Africa’s progressive constitution and the promises made by the ANC post-apartheid, educators in the middle class have rising expectations about what the government will provide. Because the ANC is in control of the majority of government, with no powerful opposition parties (except the Democratic Alliance in the Western Cape), the ANC has no real reason to listen to its constituents and their frustrations. A strike is the only way for teachers to express this sense of injustice and voice dissent; it is the only way for them to gain a voice in the political process.

It is also useful to view SADTU’s teacher militancy in 2010 through the lens of Buhlungu’s interpretation of how African labor unions serve a political role; his 2010 analysis focuses on COSATU’s transformation post-apartheid.

Because of the particular configuration of social, political and economic structures in colonial and post-colonial Africa, labour organizing is a complex process of mobilisation which entails...Resisting economic exploitation at the level of the workplace; fighting to achieve political reform (liberation and democracy); and promoting economic development and social reconstruction.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University, 1968).

²⁰⁶ Sakhela Buhlungu, *A Paradox of Victory: COSATU and the Democratic Transformation in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010), 2.

Within Buhlungu’s framework, SADTU has a political role because of its position as a union in a post-colonial African state. Buhlungu’s theory follows from Davies, who wrote in 1966: “at every turn African unions find themselves deeply involved in politics – a fact as true today as it was under the imperial administrations”²⁰⁷ In using strikes as a way to express discontent at South Africa’s economic and political climate, SADTU is acting in the way that unions across the African continent have acted—as Buhlungu says, “agents of liberation and development”²⁰⁸ that advocate for social and political transformation.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explained how the 2010 strike action was a mechanism by which teachers expressed discontent with the political system; it cannot be reduced to a purely utilitarian fight for higher salaries. Traditionally, the motivation for teachers to join the SADTU strikes was explained by their desire for higher salaries. By placing the 2010 strike action in historical context, with theories about social movements in South Africa and teacher militancy, we find that the strike has a purpose beyond the simple ‘greediness’ for higher salaries by which it is characterized in the media.

As this chapter shows, historically, strikes and protest in South Africa have served an overtly political purpose. They have been a way of expressing dissent against larger economic and political conditions. The 2010 strike action followed in this tradition, and was an expression of dissent against inequality and the fact that the ANC elite benefits from South Africa’s development while on the whole, the working class does not.

²⁰⁷ Buhlungu, *A Paradox of Victory*, 2.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

This chapter argued that school leaders in Umlazi are striking because they have rising expectations that are not being met. Following the theories of Huntington and Buhlungu, the chapter claims that SADTU is utilizing protest because unions in South Africa have historically had a political role. SADTU members see strikes as a continuation of the anti-apartheid struggle for 'second-generation socio-economic rights.' Teachers will continue to strike because it is one of the only ways that they can express frustration with the ANC-led government. In order to respond to and address the plight of SADTU members, larger economic inequities in South Africa will need to be addressed.

CONCLUSION

Solving the Crisis

South Africa's first democratic government stepped into the rest of the world in 1994 with the impression that it could change it for the better. Instead, its realpolitik and greed have changed us. We are not the people we dreamed we were. But, as Tutu points out, the South African 'sky is still firmly in place' – although the dark clouds are getting heavier and the thunder ever louder.²⁰⁹

- Editorial in the *Mail & Guardian*, September 30, 2011

South Africa's education system is in crisis, and this crisis deserves to be treated with a sense of urgency. However, blaming SADTU and calling for the union to be abolished, as some have done, is neither constructive nor an appropriate response. Instead of jumping to conclusions and making assumptions, what we should be doing is asking questions to better understand the situation. What is actually going on at the local level in township schools? What is SADTU's role there? How can we move forward with SADTU to ensure that the education system values effective leaders who are trying to improve their schools?

My hope is that this thesis can, in some small part, contribute to the process of answering these questions. The thesis shows that the main way SADTU affects school leaders is by providing them with incentives to prioritize union activism over effective leadership and improving their schools. In Umlazi, SADTU manipulated the promotions process to influence how leaders were chosen, and ultimately promoted candidates who were not qualified to lead and transform schools. This made school leaders less likely to implement strategies of effective leadership, because they knew that improving their schools

²⁰⁹ Editorial, "Birthday wish for Archbishop Tutu," *Mail & Guardian*, September 30, 2011.

would not be lauded or valued by SADTU. The history and reasons for this were explained in Chapter Five.

SADTU affects school leaders through strikes, also, but not in the way that one would initially expect; according to school leaders, it is not strikes themselves that hurt schools most, but rather the way that strikes play a role in the larger process of incentives for cadre deployment. Participation in strikes is used as a barometer for union activism, which is then used in the process of cadre deployment to reward loyal unionists. As Chapter Six argued, the motivations for the 2010 strike were influenced by the political role of township teachers in South Africa, and were the manifestation of rising expectations being unmet and frustration with a lack of economic opportunity.

Simultaneously, SADTU members in Umlazi are both using cadre deployment as a way to reward loyal members—and in a way, reward a local political elite—while also protesting against the larger system of an ANC-led political elite benefiting from South Africa's economic development while the majority of South Africans do not. This may seem contradictory, but it actually makes sense. Strikes are the only way for teachers to make themselves heard by the government and show that they deserve to share in the growing economy, while cadre deployment is also one of the few ways to access highly lucrative positions and resources. Both cadre deployment and strikes are ultimately indications of how the economic and political climate in the township, and the lack of strong political institutions through which to express dissent, affect teachers and make them become more 'corrupt' in order to survive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

There are a few courses of action that could help to steer Umlazi schools on a better course in the future:

Professionalization of the Appointment Process. As this thesis has argued, the current appointment process makes it difficult for school leaders to be appointed by merit alone. This could change with the professionalization of the process, so that school leaders would be chosen based on their academic and professional qualifications, rather than a union's influence. This could be done by transferring power over this process from SGB's to an independent agency or body of educators unaffiliated with unions. By doing so, the Department of Education could take a step towards valuing effective leadership in its high schools. SADTU can show its commitment to improving township schools by supporting the professionalization of the appointment process. School leaders should be appointed based on competence, not their loyalty to SADTU. They need to see that working hard has value—that they will not be rewarded only for being politically connected, but rather for their leadership and proven track record of performance.

A Social Movement for Reform. The current system of political appointments is entrenched and beneficial to many of those within it. SADTU, the ANC and the Department of Education will only change if they face pressure to do so. A social movement for education reform could possibly create the necessary pressure to build a sufficient

mandate for the professionalization of the appointment process.²¹⁰ The movement could show politicians that if they are courageous enough to try and change the institutional culture of the way leadership is rewarded in township schools, than the public will support them. One organization, Equal Education, has the potential to be this movement. The organization is mobilizing South Africans to solve the education crisis through mass action, organizing of youth in townships and a legal and research team. Just as protests by township youth in the 1980's were a way for youth to challenge the apartheid regime, an organization like Equal Education could use similar tactics to pressure SADTU and the ANC to change today.²¹¹ Importantly, Equal Education acknowledges that it will need to build alliances with SADTU in order to affect real change. The organization's coordinator said in 2009, "We know that the teachers' union is one of the most powerful institutions in the country, and if we style ourselves as its adversary, we'll be dead in the water."²¹²

Addressing the issue of strikes and teacher militancy will require a different course of action.

Reducing Income Inequality. To address the motivations for strikes, the ANC needs to make a more aggressive and effective effort to reduce income inequality and ensure that South Africa's middle and lower classes are benefiting from economic development, rather

²¹⁰ Ann Bernstein, executive director of the Johannesburg-based Centre for Development and Enterprise, has called for a social movement for education reform that would include political parties, teachers unions and parents. Nkosi, Bongani. "Public education sector challenged to reform." *Mail & Guardian*, September 8, 2011. The organization organized a conference that brought together over 60 experts from education reform internationally. The Brazilian President, for example, advised South Africa to engage the entire country in transforming education, and create a social movement to do so.

²¹¹ Example of one such protest: Thirty-three years after the 1976 Soweto uprising, students once again rose up in protest for educational reform. In 2009, thousands of youth marched to Cape Town's City Hall to advocate for a national policy that would provide libraries to every school. The protest was organized by Equal Education

²¹² Celia Dugger, "South African Children Push for Better Schools," *The New York Times*, September 25, 2009.

than just a politically connected elite. Umlazi educators are frustrated because they have rising expectations for what the government should provide for them, but those expectations are not being met. They feel betrayed by SADTU and the ANC, and the promises made to them at the dawn of the 'new South Africa' in 1994. What the strike represents for teachers is a fight to end the inequality that has persisted during apartheid and after. They are protesting the fact that ANC leaders continue to benefit financially from the country's economic prosperity while the majority of South Africans are still in poverty. Teachers in township schools see this when they go to work every day and they see their students struggling to get enough food to eat, while privileged students in historically white schools have all the resources they need.

Promoting a Political Culture of Democratic Exchange. In the Preface, the Principal of School B said, "Today in this country, there is only one instrument of talking: it's the strike."²¹³ Teachers supported the 2010 strike action because it was the only mechanism available for them to express dissent against the ANC and ensure that they would be heard. Their grievances were directed towards inequality in the education system and inequality in the country as a whole; if there were another way for them to pressure for changes in the ANC-led government, it is likely that they would use it. To avert teacher militancy in the future, the ANC needs to promote a more inclusive, responsive and democratic political culture. Roger Southall argues, "the ANC is widely perceived to have lost its moral compass."²¹⁴ To prove to SADTU members and South Africans at large that the Party is still rooted in the values upon which it was first established, the ANC should

²¹³ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

²¹⁴ Roger Southall, "The ANC for Sale? Money, Morality & Business in South Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (2008): 281.

enable more public spaces for democratic exchange, so that citizens can criticize the government without taking to the streets.

Recent research has identified compelling reasons for the ANC to reduce income inequality and promote a more democratic political culture—not only because they are the right things to do, but also because political institutions and inequality are important determinants of economic growth. In a recently published book, Acemoglu and Robinson argue that in order for a nation to develop and ensure prosperity, everyday people need to believe that they are benefiting from their work. Additionally, political institutions must be made more democratic so that all citizens feel like they have a voice in government.²¹⁵ Their research provides evidence that South Africa's widening inequality and political climate that suppresses dissent are factors that are crippling the country's economic growth. In order for the ANC to enable long-term economic growth, the party must reform South Africa's political institutions so that they reward competence rather than a political elite and allow a political dialogue that does not punish South Africans for speaking out to criticize government officials and the ANC.

THE LIMITATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Even these four recommendations can only have a limited effect. Promoting and valuing effective leadership is not enough to improve all township schools on the massive scale that is necessary. Solving the education crisis will take more comprehensive and systemic solutions that address the challenges related to poverty that youth in townships

²¹⁵ Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 3.

face. Despite trying to reach out for resources from private funders and non-profits, many township schools are still not able to address the severe challenges facing their students—such as a lack of food at home, violence, risk of crime and inability to afford the fees for further education at the tertiary level. Even in the high performing schools, many students drop out before matric and come to school hungry. We cannot place the blame solely on school leaders for failing to overcome these challenges, because a school can only do so much. In order to help all township schools be high performing, South Africa must fix the underlying problems that prevent students from succeeding—problems related to high poverty rates, crime, food insecurity at home, a lack of parental support, and a lack of access to adequate healthcare.

There are also fundamental issues that need to be addressed concerning the persistent inequity between historically black and historically white schools in terms of their access to resources. Township school leaders are the first to recognize that they face challenges on a different scale from historically white schools. Harder conditions teaching in township schools make those schools less able to recruit and retain well educated, high quality teachers, because the learners generally tend to be poorer and face more obstacles to learning than learners in historically white schools. In order to truly reform education and address the achievement gap, these issues must be addressed as well. Improving school leadership cannot fundamentally solve the education crisis—but it is a critical start.

Further research is needed in order to explore alternative explanations for the state of Umlazi schools, test the findings of this study in other contexts and better understand the nature of South Africa's education crisis. Research should examine SADTU's effect on leaders in townships other than Umlazi, to know whether SADTU is affecting school leaders

there in similar ways or if the case of Umlazi is unique. This research will be crucial in order to understand SADTU and develop ways to work with the union in reforms. The scope of this study was limited, because it focused specifically on school leaders at the local level as they go about the practice of running and leading schools. It would be valuable for further research to broaden the scope and pursue an examination of SADTU's effect that includes more interviews with SADTU branch, provincial and national leadership. Further research should also identify the many factors that affect school leaders at the local level.

SIGNIFICANCE BEYOND UMLAZI

The story of teachers unions and leadership in Umlazi is relevant to understanding quiet corruption in schools across the world. At the beginning of this thesis, Shanta Devarajan, Chief Economist for The World Bank's Africa region, was quoted as saying, "Quiet corruption does not make the headlines the way bribery scandals do, but it is just as corrosive to societies."²¹⁶ The story of what has happened in Umlazi is a story of how quiet corruption became normalized as acceptable school culture. Political factors provided incentives for leaders to focus on union activism more than committing to school transformation and eliminating quiet corruption. It seems that leaders in Umlazi failed to transform township schools not because they were incapable of doing so, but because more often than not, in order to achieve their own goals of becoming financially secure, it was more immediately useful for them to be loyal leaders in the union rather than effective leaders in their school.

²¹⁶ The World Bank. "Quiet Corruption' Undermining Development in Africa." Washington, DC, March 15, 2010.

The Deputy at School F said that to be rewarded, you have to conform to the wishes of the SADTU branch leadership. “Especially at Umlazi, if you are not in good terms, you may have all the qualities, the skills for that particular post, but you won’t be given it ... There is only one way to get through here: you first have to identify yourself with this kind of nature, or this kind of culture.”²¹⁷ The culture of SADTU in Umlazi is one that values loyalty, being active in strikes and in union activities, and sacrificing for ‘the struggle.’ The perspectives of school leaders presented in this thesis show that many view this culture as sacrificing education for politics. In this way ‘typical’ corruption (political appointments through patronage networks) enabled ‘quiet’ corruption (absenteeism, tardiness, lack of commitment to effective teaching) because of the way that it valued leaders who were loyal to SADTU, rather than leaders who were improving their schools.

From the case of Umlazi, we can draw lessons for education reform in other contexts. Education reform failed to improve Umlazi schools because it did not account for the powerful political factors that shape the reasons why school leaders are more or less committed to implementing reforms effectively. The case shows us the limitations of education reforms, and how they can be crippled by quiet corruption in schools. Teacher training programs, curricula and resources can only do so much if teachers and school leaders are not committed to showing up every day and helping their students improve.

The case points to the importance of political institutions in development. As the World Bank analyzes the reasons for quiet corruption across the world, there is a need to research the role of political corruption and political factors such as teacher unions. Education reforms cannot be imposed without looking at the political context within which

²¹⁷ Deputy Principal, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi.

they are implemented. It is crucial to understand the local educational bureaucracy, whether corrupt or not, in order to design effective reforms, as local politics can be the determinant of the success of development interventions. To understand the orientation and motivations of Umlazi school leaders, politics and history matter. In the case of this thesis, context allowed us to understand the role of a teachers union and the way that the union was providing incentives for a certain kind of leadership—but in other contexts, there are probably factors that affect school leaders similar to the way that SADTU does in Umlazi. We need to better understand these factors and the local pressures that affect school leaders around the world as they implement education reforms. By understanding these factors, we can bring the local reality into the discourse about education reform and ultimately design more effective interventions and public policies.

This thesis shows that there are widespread misconceptions about SADTU's effect in township schools. Though the media may portray SADTU members as selfish and lazy, they are not more of those things than any other group of people. Through strikes, they are acting rationally to try and achieve better lives for themselves and their fellow South Africans. Though cadre deployment, too, can be portrayed as a system that rewards patronage to greedy SADTU leaders, that is not the whole story; the practice is rooted in deeply historical and political factors that explain why it is logical. When you go into Umlazi schools and talk to educators, you see that many have good intentions and the desire to improve their schools. As Principal Mshololo was quoted as saying at the beginning of this thesis, "If they

have the right people to follow, if they get the right leaders in their workplaces, I can tell you people will perform. People like to work.”²¹⁸

Instead of writing SADTU members off as useless, it is crucial to engage with them to continue the conversation about the education crisis. We can start by asking why they think leaders are not transforming their schools. Their answers help us to understand what has gone wrong. All we have to do is listen.

²¹⁸ Felix Mshololo. Interview by author, 19 November 2010, Umlazi.

AFTERWORD

August 2011

The Principal of School C and I sit in his office, a fan whirring in the background, my voice recorder on the desk between us. Appointed in 1994, he has been a principal in Umlazi for the entire post-apartheid era. Although he is a SADTU member and has a completely SADTU staff, he is critical of the union. We sit in his office for two hours as he tells me about how he takes part in meetings for cadre deployment, where the SADTU branch leadership chooses which cadre to appoint to which position. After a particularly damning quote, he looks down at the tape recorder and glances towards the door, as if to make sure no one is listening.

Truly speaking, most SADTU people would rather be in meetings, meetings, meetings, discussing how they're gonna sabotage the government, how they're gonna twist their arm to end up yielding their requests and submitting to their dictates and whatever demands. But SADTU doesn't have a good reputation when it comes to quality work at schools...

If all schools were like Menzi High School and were like [School B], then schools would be the same. If people were all programmed with the mentality of working hard, rather than earning high, then we would be having better schools in Umlazi.²¹⁹

In his own school, he works with his teachers to compromise on union involvement; for example, if there is a union meeting during the day, instead of letting all the members go, he makes them choose one representative to send so that only one teacher will be missing from class. He has mitigated SADTU's influence by creating a school culture of high achievement within his own school, while still being supportive of the union. Although he

²¹⁹ All information in the afterword, except where indicated otherwise, is drawn from the following: Principal, School C. Interview by author, 16 August 2011, Umlazi.

has been able to lead his school to be high performing, he is too afraid to try and pressure other SADTU principals to do the same because he thinks that he will be victimized.

Nobody would listen to you, if you came and told them what should be done to get the school in a better position and who to appoint. This is politics. They don't treat it as education. They treat it politically. They appoint anybody they want...Everybody would then be: 'If you're interested in quality schools or quality education thing, go and become the priest in the church and preach. We're not here for moral whatever, moral satisfaction, moral code or that.' They just look at school as one of the arenas that will serve as a source of income. And that's it.

He tells me the story of how Ntombela's office was attacked.

Where is he today? He was thrown out! There was strike after strike after strike. They were revolting against him because he wanted quality education... They said, 'Are you still a real SADTU? Are you for us or against us? Are you with the employer or with us?' And then they—he just resigned. He was accused for everything and they stalked him. They ill-treated him until he resigned. He's no more there. So if you want the worst torture and torment, go in and try and tell them to do right. Then you will be out straight away.

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APPENDIX A

School Profiles

SCHOOL A

School A is the second-largest high school in the entire province of KwaZulu-Natal. The school has over 130 educators and 3,000 learners. Established in 1968 as a primary school and then converted to a high school in 1984, it was the first high school in South Africa to offer a comprehensive curriculum with many different streams and choices. The principal explains that the curriculum is focused on skills development and job training, to educate students to be productive and responsible citizens, which is the reason why his school attracts such incredibly high enrollment. “People want relevant subjects that are going to allow them to be absorbed into the workplace, and we are offering those subjects ... Our vision is to offer subjects that are going to make them globally competitive.” The school offers subjects including accounting, science, business studies and economics, and also offers vocational training for adults including electrical theory and mechanics. All students are required to take mathematics every year. School A’s mission statement reads, “to produce highly committed and fully dedicated people with skills, knowledge and values in order to make a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of this country.”²²⁰ With a matric class of over 400 students in 2010, School A achieved an 84.7% pass rate.

Year	# Students
8	543
9	845
10	834
11	588
12	370
Total	3180

Year	Matric Pass Rate ²²¹
2005	63
2006	80
2007	42
2008	75
2009	76
2010	89

The principal has multiple graduate degrees, including an MBA and a PhD in school management. In 2011, he was named one of the top ten teachers in the country by the non-profit Stars in Educate. He estimates that over 55% of his learners live in informal shack settlements; many cannot afford the school fees of 500 Rand, many are AIDS orphans, and many come from families who are unemployed so they have inadequate food security at home. In 2004, the principal started an initiative to feed those students one meal a day (originally funded through teachers’ contributions, he eventually found sponsorship through South African corporations). In 2008, he also applied for funding for a library.

With such a massive staff, the school leadership team focuses on providing helpful support and understanding to teachers, while still maintaining a school culture that stresses high achievement. As the principal says, “I have a lot of good teachers, but those teachers are

²²¹ Matric pass rates are provided where available. Schools B, D and F only provided me with their matric pass rate from 2010, because they do not have records of their past matric pass rates.

showing their goodness within a free environment that is provided to them by the leadership in the school.”²²² His leadership strategy is to ensure that all staff members feel supported “We are also taking care of the welfare of the staff members inside the school. That cleaner that is cutting grass on the other side, before the end of the day I must go and greet him, and talk to him and find out how he feels. It’s my duty to do that. If I don’t do it, he doesn’t feel emotionally accepted in the workplace. He feels rejected. I have that kind of vision, as I’m leading this school, that all people must find a home in me.”²²³ As one educator explains, she stays teaching because at School A, she has found a principal that supports her and creates a school environment that supports effective teaching. “[In Umlazi] there isn’t that much pressure put on principals for performance ... I wouldn’t work at another school. Really I wouldn’t, because I don’t know if they are as passionate about work as our current principal ... If the principal is relaxing and not pushing the educators, then the educators won’t do anything.”²²⁴ Interestingly, School A was one of the few township high schools to have a racially mixed staff during the 1980’s, and it is one of the few high schools to have white teachers today (most high schools have entirely black teaching staffs). The school has 120 teachers (80 SADTU and 40 NATU).

SCHOOL B

School B is one of the top performing schools in the township, with a matric pass rate consistently close to 100% for the past twelve years. The school’s principal has a vision similar to leaders of other ‘No Excuses’ schools. He says, “I don’t believe in mediocrity; if you want to succeed at what you do, you must put in the effort, and I instill this commitment in the pupils by putting in the long hours and work.”²²⁵ His vision is to prepare students with the skills they need to be marketable in the workplace, saying, “Let us not teach for examination purposes, but let us educate them. Let them have more time at school than time elsewhere. Let them value the school more than anything else. Let us say those who are poor, let them depend entirely on their education to alleviate poverty in their families.”²²⁶

Year	# Students
8	371
9	270
10	380
11	168
12	171
Total	1360

The school deals with issues related to crime, as all Umlazi schools do; in 2010, the principal was robbed at gunpoint when entering the school during matric exams. The school was also highly politicized in the 1980’s. As the principal says, “It was one of the schools declared ‘conquered territory.’ Which meant it was a terrain for politicians to manipulate kids into doing things that were fighting against the government of the day.”²²⁷ When he came in, in *year*, he stressed that the mission of the school was not politics, but education.

²²² Principal, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Former SADTU Site Steward, School A. Interview by author, 8 August 2011, Umlazi.

²²⁵ Simone Samuels, “No excuses, only dedication,” *Independent Online*, January 5, 2012.

²²⁶ Principal, School B. Interview by author, 15 August 2011, Umlazi.

²²⁷ Ibid.

SCHOOL C

School C has had varying academic performance over the years. The current principal has led the school for seventeen years. The principal is a SADTU member and the entire teaching staff is SADTU. He and his deputy principals have successfully found resources from non-profits to assist their school, which provide food (a company brings a truckload once a week to be distributed amongst students) and psychological counseling for HIV/AIDS-affected students. In this way, they are an effective school leadership team in that they have a relentless pursuit to help their students and they take a 'No Excuses' approach. However, though the school's leaders have reached out for these resources, there is a limit to what they can do—the economic backgrounds of the learners do cause substantial challenges to effective teaching and learning.

Year	# Students
8	136
9	122
10	199
11	207
12	92
Total	756

Year	Matric Pass rate
1998	86
1999	17
2000	72
2005	56
2006	46
2007	49
2008	59
2009	89
2010	87

SCHOOL D

School D was the first school in Umlazi, established as a missionary school. An average school academically, School D uses many of the same strategies for high achievement that the other high performing schools in Umlazi do, like a longer school day (educators and learners arrive at 6:30 am) and classes on weekends and vacations. The principal has a relentless pursuit of better performance each year.

We need to be very radical if we want results. Umlazi, it's the only township where there are schools, mostly our schools, NATU principal schools, they start at half past 6 like this one. Half past 6 in the morning. And there's a start and teach until the afternoon, for the children. Especially the grade 12's. And we don't allow to many laziness in children. That can help a lot to raise them up.²²⁸

Year	# Students
8	308
9	357
10	286
11	234
12	157
Total	1342

When the principal was appointed in 2000, there was a traditional curriculum, but he introduced more practical subjects like commerce, computer graphics and design. The school has 50 teachers (35 SADTU and 15 NATU).

²²⁸ Principal, School D. Interview by author, 3 August 2011, Umlazi.

SCHOOL E

Established in 1964, School E was first a primary school and later turned into a high school. The school has a history of high performance, but has declined in recent years. In 2001, there was a major scandal where 46 out of 142 matric papers were mysteriously lost on the way to the marking center, which resulted in students being rejected from university. In 2006, the school's performance started to plummet due to a principal with alcohol abuse, and rapidly decreased to a low point of 22% in 2007. In 2009, a student stabbed another student on school grounds. In 2010, the school's matrics achieved a 52% pass rate. As a result of these issues, today most of the school's learners are dropouts from other schools.

Year	# Students
8	249
9	293
10	239
11	186
12	121
Total	1088

The principal was recently appointed, and is a former NATU member who switched to SADTU so that she would have a better chance of being promoted. She explained that her appointment is being disputed by SADTU because she is not the chosen 'cadre.' School E was completely closed during the 2010 strike action. The school has 34 teachers (30 SADTU, 4 NATU)

Year	Matric Pass rate
2006	84
2007	22
2008	69
2009	62
2010	52

SCHOOL F

According to its principal, School F was historically "one of the best institutions at Umlazi."²²⁹ Established in 1965, by 1989 it had well over 1,500 students. From 2006 to 2009, the school's performance declined, due to an aging and incompetent principal; during those years, enrollment fell from 1,000 to 460 students.²³⁰ In 2008, the school's matric pass rate was 12%. Today, the school is one of the lowest performing high schools in Umlazi.

The school has been mired in controversy. Since the previous principal retired in 2007, there has been a power struggle over the principalship. Two SADTU members were among the candidates for the position; a less qualified candidate with fewer degrees was passed over in favor of a more qualified candidate. SADTU brought a case against the process because the chosen principal was not the chosen 'cadre' that the branch leadership wanted to deploy. The district director (Ntombela) supported the more qualified candidate, rather than the SADTU 'cadre'—this was one of the many reasons why Ntombela was ultimately pressured to resign. The appointed 'cadre' is now the Principal, and the other candidate is an acting Deputy Principal. The Deputy has brought a legal suit against the appointment process (with allegations that the current principal paid a bribe of 30,000 Rand for the post), but as of August 2011, the case had yet to be tried in court.²³¹

Year	# Students
8	73
9	68
10	76
11	50
12	56
Total	323

²²⁹ Principal, School F. Interview by author, 11 August 2011, Umlazi.

²³⁰ Sinegugu Ndlovu, "Sex scandal school 'on the mend,'" *Independent Online*, June 23, 2009.

²³¹ I interviewed both the Principal and Deputy Principal and they each have different allegations about the other. The information provided here was explained to me by other leaders at the school.

Because of the controversy over the principalship, the school has lacked a permanent leadership team and there is currently only one principal and one HOD. This has led to disciplinary issues and other problems. In 2009, five teachers were fired after being charged with raping thirteen students in a school bathroom. Educators spoke about learners bringing knives and guns to school. The school staff's morale is low due to these issues. The principal hopes that he will be able to improve the school, but he is pessimistic because he says that his learners are unmotivated. School F was completely closed during the strike action.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured. This was a list of questions used to initiate discussion.

Introduction

- Explanation of research (connection between leadership, performance and union involvement)
- Name, gender, position at school, grade taught, # years taught at this school

August 2010 Strike

- What was your school's experience during the strikes last August? Did teachers at your school strike? Were your SMT and principal supportive of the strike?
- How did you feel about the strike? Were you supportive of SADTU during the strike?
- Why do you think the strike occurred?
- What did SADTU have to gain from the strike?

Unions

- Are you a member of a union? Why did you decide to join?
- What do you believe your union is trying to achieve? What is the role of a teachers' union?
- How many teachers at your school are members of each union?
- How many hours a week do they spend working on union responsibilities (during school hours and outside of school hours)? How often do you go to union meetings or workshops? What do you do in those events?
- Do you think the unions have influence over decisions such as promotions, who is chosen for principalships, or which schools are chosen to be renovated? If so, how much power do they have in the outcomes of these decisions?

SADTU

- What kinds of expectations does SADTU have for you as a principal (or HOD)?
- How supportive is your SMT of SADTU? How supportive is your principal?
- How would you describe SADTU as an organization? Does the organization's vision value effective leadership?
- How do you think that SADTU has changed since 1994?

Wrap-Up

- South Africa spends a high amount of financial resources for education, and yet on international tests, the country's scores are among the worst. Why do you believe that this is?

- Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

For principals

- School profile: matric scores from as far back as available, number of students in each grade, amount for school fees
- Financial situation: what percentage of students from informal settlements? Section 21 status (do they have control over their budget)?
- What do you think that the Department of Education can do to better support effective SMT's and good principals?