

SCHOOL

VLAKFONTEIN VOCATIONAL ~~INSTITUTE~~

(Report by Southern Transvaal Regional Secretary and Research Assistant after a visit to the college on 6 October, 1960)

Situation and Buildings

The <sup>school</sup> ~~college~~ is set in the midst of the Vlakfontein township complex about seven miles east of Pretoria. It comprises an administrative building, a hostel, a block of classrooms, and blocks for each of the seven trades in which instruction is given.

Finance

The <sup>school</sup> ~~college~~ is controlled and financed by the Department of Bantu Education, which pays all capital costs (buildings, equipment, machinery, tools) as well as administrative expenses and teachers' salaries. The Department also pays a subsidy ranging from £3 to £12 per student per year (dependent on the trade) for material used by the student in his practical work.

Courses of Instruction

Instruction is given in the following trades:

- masonry
- carpentry
- plumbing
- wiremanship
- tailoring
- cobbling
- general mechanics

The entrance qualification for all courses except wiremanship is Std. VI. For wiremanship (i.e. electrical wiring) it is the Junior Certificate. Courses extend over four years except in the case of wiremanship, where the period is three years.

After completing the courses in masonry, carpentry, plumbing and wiremanship, students are tested by the Department of Labour and those who pass are awarded a certificate which is recognized by state departments and local authorities, entitling the holder to a minimum wage of £4 16s. on entering employment. Students who complete the other courses successfully are given a certificate by the Department of Bantu Education.

Under the present system, two-thirds of the instruction is devoted to practical work and one-third to theory. Apart from their trade subjects, students attend courses in English, Afrikaans, Bible history, arithmetic and bookkeeping. English and Afrikaans are used equally as media of instruction.

#### Staff and Student Enrolment

The figures for 1960 are:

Trade	Number of Students					No. of teachers	
	1st yr	2nd yr	3rd yr	4th yr	Total	White	African
Cobbling	7	5	3	7	22	1	1
Masonry	29	14	24	28	95	1	3
Carpentry	18	10	17	29	74	2	3
Wiremanship	7	2	6	-	15	1	-
Plumbing	16	1	6	13	36	1	1
Tailoring	18	10	16	12	56	1	2
General mechanics	20	14	20	17	71	1	2
					<u>369</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>12</u>

To the staff listed above should be added the Principal of the ~~school~~ school, a European administrative officer and a small clerical staff.

The Principal, Mr. V.E. Kurtz, taught for 18 years in European schools before 1945, when he began teaching vocational subjects to Africans. The remainder of the White teaching staff have artisan qualifications and a technical teaching diploma of the Department of Education. The African teaching staff are all past students of the ~~school~~ school.

The number of applications for admission each year is about 4,000, so that only the most promising are able to enter the ~~school~~ school.

Fees

Students pay £2 per year towards the school fund, from which special amenities are financed, and £3 for books, sport, insurance and medical costs. Students living in the hostel pay £26 per year.

Scope of Instruction

The training which students receive at the ~~school~~<sup>school</sup> is on a more elementary level than that provided for White youths at the technical colleges of the Union Education Department, and consequently students complete the course without obtaining qualifications comparable with those of White artisans. The Principal and White members of his staff aver that the students master the theoretical side of their subjects only slowly and with difficulty, but admit that this can be ascribed to the low entrance qualification, which does not provide the grounding in mathematics which is essential for an understanding of the more involved technical subjects.

Most of the students who qualify in masonry, carpentry, plumbing and wiremanship find employment with the Departments of Bantu Administration and Development or Bantu Education or with local authorities which have housing schemes for <sup>ei</sup> their townships, and many of the remainder become self-employed.

Since the ability to use elaborate equipment would be wasted in this type of employment, students are required to use only the basic tools of their trade, and in some subjects, e.g. tailoring, ~~and carpentry~~ no electrically-driven equipment is used at all. (The carpentry section has a large workshop containing a variety of power tools such as bandsaws, circular saws and drills, but the students do not use them.)

The scope of the courses is accordingly limited. In general mechanics the students concentrate on welding, soldering and sheet-metal work, with only the most basic instruction in motor mechanics. Wiremanship is confined to the wiring of houses.

Within the limits of the courses the standard of workmanship is

apparently high. In the examinations held by the Department of Labour in 1959, 89 per cent of the <sup>school's</sup> ~~students~~ students passed.

The articles which students make in the workshops are sold to members of the public, who may also place orders for articles made to their own specifications. These include men's suits, shoes and leather suitcases, chairs, benches, bookcases, kists, teatrays, metal canisters, coalscuttles, etc. Students of the four branches of the building trade themselves erected and fitted some of the <sup>school</sup> ~~buildings~~ buildings, and they are at present building a school at Hebron, some 27 miles from Pretoria, to which the Kilnerton school will be transferred next year.

According to the Principal, students who complete their courses have no difficulty in finding employment, invariably in the urban areas.

#### Discontinuation of Present Type of Training

As from 1961 no further students will be admitted for vocational training, and the <sup>school</sup> ~~school~~ will be converted into a Bantu Junior Technical School providing courses leading to a new certificate of the Department of Bantu Education, the Bantu Technical Junior Certificate. Students at present enrolled for vocational training will be able to complete their courses.

The new course will last three years, with Std. VI as the entrance qualification. The curriculum will comprise Bible history, physical training and singing as non-examination subjects; and a Bantu language, English, Afrikaans, arithmetic, social studies, a technical subject (theory) and workshop practice as examination subjects. For the technical subject students will have the choice of any one of the following: general mechanics, building construction, carpentry, electrotechnology, ~~and~~ drawing and draughtsmanship.

Examinations in the academic subjects will be the same as those written by students at academic schools. About one-third of the students' time will be occupied by practical work.

The course will be open only to residents of the Pretoria area, and the existing hostel will therefore be unnecessary. It will be converted into extra classrooms.

As a substitute for the present type of training, a trade school will be established somewhere in the Reserves -- it is not yet certain where. Courses will last two years instead of the present four, and instruction will be given in the same trades as those now taught at Vlakfontein (one difference being that there will be separate two-year courses in tailoring, one for making trousers and the other for jackets). The entrance qualification will remain Std. VI for subjects other than wiremanship, and J.C. for wiremanship.

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NAVRAE/ENQUIRIES;

Kurtz.

Principal,

Vlakfontein Vocational School,

P.O. EERSTE FABRIEKE,

Pretoria.

4th October 1960.

Tel. No.

VLAKFONTEIN, 17.

The Secretary,  
SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS,  
P.O. Box 97,  
Johannesburg.

re: COURSES OFFERED AT PRESENT HERE, THE POSITION IN 1961  
AND SUBSEQUENT YEARS : VLAKFONTEIN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL.

I am replying to your unnumbered letter of the 21st September 1960. In answer to paragraph one of your letter, I have to inform you as follows:

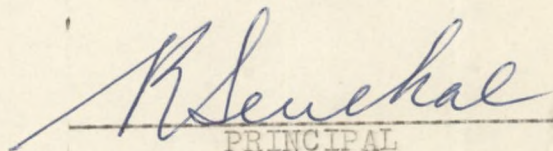
(a) The courses offered at the Vlakfontein Vocational School are:

- (i) Bootmaking and Leatherwork, term of training is 4 years;
- (ii) Bricklaying and Plastering, term of training is 4 years;
- (iii) Electrical Housewiring, 3 year course, post Junior Certificate (Standard VIII);
- (iv) General Mechanics, term of training is 4 years;
- (v) Plumbing and Drainlaying, term of training is 4 years;
- (vi) Tailoring, term of training is 4 years;
- (vii) Woodwork (Cabinet-making and Carpentry), a 4 year course.

(b) To gain admission applicants must be in possession of the Standard VI certificate for entry into any of the above trades, Excepting Electricians who must be in possession of the Junior Certificate.

I need to mention that compliance with certain factors has always been a condition for admitting students, as applicants usually encounter difficulties either here at School or elsewhere where they reside as boarders in the neighbouring Native villages.

Changes due to take effect from January 1961 are envisaged by the Department of Bantu Education, but no finality has reached this office yet.

  
PRINCIPAL

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