

# THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF THE SALESIAN WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA. A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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The focus of this article is the question, what has been the educational impact of the Salesian work in South Africa since its foundation until the 1950s? In an earlier article<sup>2</sup>, I explored in some detail the the social impact of the foundation that the Salesians made in Cape Town, and while this article begins with this foundation, yet it focusses on the educational models that the Salesians were working with and the South African educational context in which this work developed.

## 1. Cape Town 1896

The Salesian work for young people in South Africa began at the end of 1896. We can be certain about this because the Claremont House Chronicle has a wonderful memento, the original ticket of the first group of Salesians to come to South Africa, Cape Town in 1896.

Steam ship Greek tickets, 28th Nov 1896, Southampton to Cape Town:  
Federico Barni / Thomas Giltenan / Carlo Fea / Daniele Dellacasa / J. Raimetti<sup>3</sup>.

This list in itself offers us a key to understanding the original scope of what the Salesians thought they were coming to do. Fr Federico Barni had been a pioneer of the Mission to London and the Cleric Thomas Giltenan was a young Irishman, sent to assist with the teaching of English, and looking after the boarders. The other three were Italian coadjutor Brothers who came with the skills of printing, book-binding and tailoring. Their overall emphasis then was the technical education of poor and abandoned youngsters. What they clearly had little or no idea of, were the complexities of the world of work in the racially divided Cape Colony.

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<sup>2</sup> William John DICKSON, *War, Racism and Immobility: The Social Impact of the Early Salesian Work in Cape Town*, in Francesco MOTTO (a cura di), *L'Opera Salesiana dal 1880 al 1922. Significatività e portata sociale*. Vol. II. *Esperienze particolari in Europa, Africa, Asia*. Atti del 3° Convegno Internazionale di Storia dell'Opera Salesiana (Roma, 31 ottobre – 5 novembre 2000). (= ISS - Studi, 17). Roma, LAS 2001, pp. 351-376.

<sup>3</sup> Lansdowne House, Archives Claremont House Chronicle, p. 1.

## 2. The history of the technical education in South Africa dates back to the 1850's

It was under the influence of Sir George Grey in the early 1850s that a very elaborate and sound system of industrial and vocational education was started for non-whites. For example during the years 1855 to 1861 over £46,000 was provided by the Colonial Office in London for this type of education for non-whites [...] These schools turned out not only shoemakers and tailors but also carpenters and masons<sup>4</sup>.

The need for technical education served the continuing demands of Cape Town as an imperial and commercial port but work in those trades from the beginning tended to be restricted to 'coloured' people. (In Southern Africa the term 'coloured' is an ethnic label for people of mixed ethnic origin. During the Imperial and Apartheid eras, in the Cape, the government divided the population into 4 racial categories: White, Black, Coloured and Indian and these categories had different access to political and citizenship rights).

What developed in the years leading to and after the Boer War was the so called problem of the "Poor Whites".

The poor white problem was mainly a rural problem [...] It involved a transition from a patriarchal form of rural life to the modern form of industrialized and commercialised agriculture.

Many (poor white agricultural workers) flocked to the cities and created slums. There was no employment for them because they knew no skilled trades. They were loath to do unskilled work because that would reduce them to the level of the Blacks<sup>5</sup>.

What is interesting historically, is that at the same time as Fr Barni led the first group of Salesians to start work at the Institute's first home in Buitenkant Street, the Cape Government had made a decisive change in their technical education policy which both allowed the beginnings of our work and yet sadly limited it to working for white children.

From 1855 under Governor Sir Charles Grey, the Colonial authorities who had always worried about the need for skilled labour in a colony where skills were scarce and where the government were anxious to keep labour prices down, decided to introduce technical training departments in colonial coloured schools. In 1895 however, there was a major change of policy. An influential Afrikaner politician, Herman van Roos, who later became Minister of Justice, in the Union Government became concerned about juvenile delinquency among the children of unemployed whites. He was responsible in that role, for setting up the first Reformatories for the Union of South Africa. One of his assistants an Englishman called E. H. Norman, who became the first probation officer in South Africa and believed that prevention was

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Gideon MALHERBE, *Education in South Africa*. Vol. 2. Cape Town, Juta and Co 1977, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

better than cure, promoted the development of so called Industrial Schools, where white children, in danger of ending up in prison were sent to be taught a useful trade.

In fact the Dutch Reform Church was the first to propose vocational education as a measure for combatting «Poor Whitism». In the 1890's it sponsored the establishment of industrial schools and extended them after the Anglo-Boer War as a means of training potential Poor White boys from rural areas in industrial occupations such as shoemaking, carpentry, smithy work etc and girls in domestic work. By 1910 there were only 400 pupils all told in these schools, a mere drop in the bucket. In 1911 the Prisons Department established two industrial schools, more or less as reformatories for destitute and delinquent children. The fact that vocational education has been associated with the destitute, defective and the delinquent sorely handicapped its future development. The association and the idea mentioned before, that manual work was «Kaffir work» placed training in occupations requiring manual skill beyond the pale for the boy and girl from the well-to-do or average homes. Thus vocational education was born in South Africa under tremendous handicap. Though the Church baptised it and the Prisons department nursed it for a time, it was begotten in shame. Placed later on the door step of the provincial education department, this foundling was never happy. In fact it was the Cinderella of the school system<sup>6</sup>.

The Cape Colonial Government had decided in 1895 to offer a grant of £12 a year for their useful education as well as paying their teachers' salaries.

In a letter of invitation sent by Bishop John Leonard, Vicar Apostolic of the Western Cape 1871-1908<sup>7</sup>, to Alexander Wilmot, a Catholic member of the Legislative Council of the Cape Colony dated 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1895 to be taken to Turin, Bishop Leonard set out his shopping list. He was looking for a priest, 'though not strictly necessary to begin with, a Brother capable of running a printing press, as well as but not only of teaching young students that trade, and perhaps another brother who would be able to teach bookbinding and all the jobs that pertain to that trade, a Brother carpenter who can deal with building and furniture making, and a tailor capable of teaching tailoring<sup>8</sup>.

Bishop John Leonard<sup>9</sup>, saw the coming of the Salesians as a unique opportunity to deal with two persistent problems. He wanted an economical solution to the problem of publishing Mgr Kolbe's *Catholic Magazine*, for he was a great business man and very careful with money. He also hoped to deal with the ongoing problem of what to do with the Catholic Orphan boys who outgrew the care of the Sisters of Nazareth's orphanage in Cape Town. The Salesians looked like an answer to his prayers. But the clear connection between Cape Government finance becoming

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bleonj.html>

<sup>8</sup> ASC F419, *Cape Town, Correspondence, 1891-1896.*

<sup>9</sup> Dr John Leonard Vicar Apostolic Western Cape (1872-1908).

available for Industrial Schools for White children and the foundation of the Salesian Institute, I suspect, both gave the Salesians a unique place in the development of technical education in Cape Town but also hampered their further expansion and development in South Africa for the next 50 years. While it is clear they had no intention either of becoming involved in the penal system or restricting their mission to racially divided education, when this was combined with the traumatic experience of going bankrupt<sup>10</sup>, it is clear that the expansion of the Salesian work beyond the Institute was severely hampered by the nature of its origins.

Educationally, however it was because there was a Cape Government grant that there were also the annual inspections by government inspectors. These clearly show that students often arrived at the Institute in the period from 1897 to 1917 who were struggling with basic literacy. The Inspection reports for this period from 1898 show groups of boys who are struggling with Standard 1 work<sup>11</sup>. Even in 1915, some of the boys entering the Institute were still functionally illiterate as the Inspection report shows:

Department of Public Education, Cape Town, Sea Point,

Salesian Institute, Special RC,

Date of Inspection, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1915:

Standard One: 3 boys, average 11 years;

Standard Two, 6 boys, average age, 13 years,

Standard Three, 15 boys, average age, 13 years, 12 promoted.

Class One to Three should show full copybooks, penmanship only moderate.

However, as a result of the expertise and hard work of the Salesian Brothers the students were achieving outstanding results in the National Technical examination by the mid-1920's.

National Technical and Commercial Examinations, 1927.

Preliminary Technical Certificate, 9 students (both parts), 6 students one part only.

1928 National Technical Certificate (Printers) one student. National Trade School Certificate, one student, Preliminary Technical Certificate, three students, National Technical Certificate Printing (Part 1) two students.

What is very remarkable educationally is that at the same time, by 1927, 1928 there were groups of the Institute's school age students who were achieving National Technical Certificates and some even passing the National Printing Exams which were renowned for being exceedingly difficult for full time adult professionals. What was required was not only the technical expertise to set up the print letter by letter with the appropriate spaces but also a capacity to read and spell correctly. This was

<sup>10</sup> W. J. DICKSON, *War Racism and Immobility...*, p. 374.

<sup>11</sup> Archives of the Salesian Institute, Cape Town. School Inspections.

an enormous achievement by any standards and as a result the students were much in demand in local printing firms.

We have to pay tribute to those Salesians who dedicated themselves to this mostly unappreciated and un-glamorous apostolate in those early years.

In addition, the misunderstandings between Fr Barni and Bishop Leonard which led to the Salesians being legally declared bankrupt and having to accept a board of Supervisors called delightfully in Dutch Law, 'curatores bonis' without whose signatures no cheques could be signed or business done. All this meant that a wider development of our work had to wait.

What impressed the writer of the Annual Education Report to Parliament in 1920 was the dedication of the Salesians to their work in the Industrial schools:

For the poor white children a great and noble work is being done by the existing industrial schools for boys and girls. [...] From the list handed to me, 13 are distinguished as industrial institutions, of these 4 have been established by the Dutch Reform Church and have in attendance 317 pupils, 4 for girls. One institution for boys was established by the Roman Catholic Church and one by the Administration. In these 13 schools there are no less than 706 pupils. The boys receive day school instruction up to standard VI or even VII and learn the following trades: wagon making, cabinet making, shoemaking, tailoring etc.

Because the grants to industrial schools are not so large as those given to boarding houses for indigent scholars and because of the late European war [...] almost every one of those schools notwithstanding wise economy in every department is more or less burdened with debt. That this is an undesirable state of affairs no one will deny who knows that the industrial schools are the best solution to the poor white problem. And more good could be done by these schools could the Church, by following the example of the Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations appoint as Rectors or staff of these schools some younger ministers who have a love for that work and who have been trained for that purpose<sup>12</sup>!

Given that the Salesian Institute was the only Roman Catholic Industrial School in the Cape, we can see that the Salesian style of education familiar and dedicated had clearly made a significant impression on the School Inspectors when they were recommending the traditional Catholic Salesian practice to other Churches in running these institutions.

Perhaps from a Salesian point of view it is also worth saying that the model of Technical Education that those early Salesians brought to South Africa was one that had grown up in a rapidly developing economy like Turin. Don Bosco who appreciated the independence of small hill farmers looked for an equivalent in the city and saw that skilled Master Craftsmen were effectively independent and could make their own choices. They were not exploitable like so many of the urban poor. His development of workshops and technical education grew out of his understanding of the needs of those who initially came for recreation and religious instruction at

<sup>12</sup> *Cape Education Report*. Industrial schools 1920, p. 52.

the Oratory. How this model fitted a South Africa bedevilled by the Anglo-Boer conflict and the already racially stratified jobs market is a question that is still to be fully answered.

It is also clear that the Cape Town Institute depended, for personnel, on the House in London where the pattern of Salesian educational development had taken a very different path. At Battersea what started was a parish mission in a desperately poor area of London catering for a poor immigrant community, many of them Irish bargees and others Belgian prostitutes, with an already existing Catholic elementary school founded in 1879 and supported by a Local Education Authority grant.

Beside the Sacred Heart School, the Salesians gradually developed a sort of junior seminary or boarding secondary school that fostered vocations. No Salesian Technical School or Oratory was ever really attempted in those early years, and those candidates who presented themselves for Salesian life were mostly trained as pupil teachers in the Sacred Heart Elementary School, before qualifying after a two year course at the Catholic Teacher Training College in Hammersmith and ultimately aiming at priestly ordination<sup>13</sup>. There was no effort to train or develop skilled Master Craftsmen who could staff the Institute in Cape Town. According to one of the earliest witnesses, writing in 1897, Brother Luigi Roncali, "My Fr Rector said to me that there will never be a workshop with different trades because the house here is a studentate"<sup>14</sup>. Fr Macey's ideal seems to have been the top hatted clergy gentleman rather than the Salesian in shirt-sleeves.

### 3. South African Education

The first European style schools were founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Dutch Reformed Church who required members to be able to read the Bible and write and count in Afrikaans. With the British take over in 1799, the London Missionary Society began a series of 12 mission schools by 1827 in rural areas which were open to Africans but taught through the English language. This was seen as a threat by the Dutch farmers who refused to let their children attend them. The division of education by language is a persistent problem even till to-day in South Africa. By 1877 49% of white children in the Cape Colony were attending school.

After the Boer War Sir Alfred Milner brought thousands of teachers from Britain, Canada, Australian and New Zealand to teach English and British cultural values. The Afrikaner Churches responded with their National Christian Education programme, which initially was not government funded but with the arrival of Jan C. Smuts as Union Prime Minister, anxious to promote reconciliation, Provincial control of education became the norm and grants for both Afrikaans and English medium government schools became the norm.

<sup>13</sup> William John DICKSON, *The dynamics of growth. The foundation and development of the Salesians in England.* (= ISS - Studi, 8). Roma, LAS 1991, p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

While Catholics initially benefitted from Cape Government grants for Mission Schools, the creation of the Union of South Africa and the growing power of the Afrikaans lobby meant that Catholic Secondary education struggled to attract government funding.

Under Bishop Grimley (Vicar Apostolic of the Western Cape from 1862-1871)<sup>15</sup> in 1867 the Marist Brothers arrived from Marseilles to begin what became the Marist Brothers St Joseph's College, initially in the city then in 1918 out at Rondebosch. Though the colonial government provided some funding for elementary education, secondary students had to pay their own fees. Bishop John Leonard, who succeeded Grimley in 1872 always maintained that his predecessor had practically bankrupted the diocese in pursuit of the expansion of Catholic Education. Leonard was well known as a careful administrator who drove a hard bargain and demanded a lot from any religious orders he let into the diocese. In 1901 Bishop Leonard demanded payment from the Marist Brothers Superior of the £75 rent specified in the contract and the previous year rent as well, otherwise he threatened to charge them 5% interest<sup>16</sup>. Given that this was during the Boer War, one can appreciate Leonard's reputation as hard man.

Any expansion of the Salesian education in South Africa, then either had to find a way to come under the existing provision for 'poor white' education, or face the vagaries of finding Catholics who were able to pay for education in fee paying schools.

#### **4. Claremont, Lansdowne Rd, Cape Town 1923**

Claremont was one of the southern suburbs of Cape Town, originally a farming area, it had already become a municipality by 1886 and by 1913 was incorporated into Cape Town itself. With the railway opening in 1864, there was a housing boom just after the Boer War, and an additional station was opened as a result of the expansion of the suburb in 1931. Racially Claremont was a mixed area, with a Congregational Church founded in 1840 and the Claremont Mosque in 1851, indicating the presence of a sizable Coloured population. In the 1960's the Apartied policies led to the expulsion of most of the coloured population<sup>17</sup>.

With no help and precious little sympathy from London, is it any wonder that Fr Tozzi, Fr Barni's successor, found himself so struggling to cope with the fall-out from the bankruptcy and the need to build the Institute on secure financial foundations that it meant that it would be 30 years before the Salesians even tried to develop a second house on the 8 acre farm property at Claremont on Lansdowne Rd, only 15 miles outside Cape Town that Fr Barni had managed to purchase and hold on to before he left Cape Town<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bgrimley.html>

<sup>16</sup> Archdiocese of Cape Town Archives, Box 25, Bishop Leonard to Brother Joseph, 20.8.1901.

<sup>17</sup> Gamildien, F. (2004) *Claremont Main Road Mosque*.

<sup>18</sup> Lansdowne Rd, House Archives, Claremont Chronicle, Vol. 1, p. 1.

Fr Tozzi had toyed with various ideas of how to develop a second house and received the encouragement of Bishop Rooney, Bishop Leonard's successor, to take on the pastoral care of the area in 1922. Fr Tozzi eventually agreed to open a Chapel and decided to develop an Agricultural School which opened in 1923.

The attempt to begin an agricultural school at Claremont however, got off to a very bad start due to the prevailing racially segregated labour market.

One of the most telling entries in the *Salesian Echo* for the 1924<sup>19</sup> refers to a Prize giving visit to the Institute and Lansdowne by no one less than the Minister of Justice, Van Roos, and the Secretary for Agriculture, Du Toit, who said, trying one suspects to cover the fact that market gardening was considered as coloured work: "[...] while most of the intensive style market farming in our country was done by coloured people, with the strong arm of African labour, it needed the intelligent Europeans to direct its future".

This clearly racist ideology for agricultural education must have been the kiss of death for our agricultural schools, whose students were drawn from the urban poor whites who had neither any experience of the land or any intention of taking up a coloured occupation.

What is clear from one of Tozzi's earliest visitation reports at Lansdowne in 1932 is that he thought that the setting up of a festive oratory for coloured boys should be the priority<sup>20</sup>. The agricultural school at Lansdowne effectively served as a farm for the needs of the hungry Institute and was very much seen by the Salesians as a preparatory school for the Institute though the Cape authorities refused ever to recognise it as a separate institution.

It was not, however, until 1945 when the milk herd stables were pronounced a risk to public health that there was any real pressure to try another model in Lansdowne and its development had to wait till well after the end of the Second World War<sup>21</sup>.

In the history of the GBR province the prevailing educational model was that of the College that was established at Battersea, as a boarding and day secondary boys' school. This was replicated in Farnborough in 1902 though it was actually originally founded for the orphans of the Boer War and also in due course at Chertsey in 1919 and Bolton 1925. The notion of a secondary school that would teach Arts and Trades was an alien one due partly to the prevailing apprenticeship system in the UK which was totally outside the school system and only began after compulsory elementary education was over. Fr Tozzi, though he spoke and wrote English very correctly, was never really at home with what I suspect he thought was a 'middle class' English model of education. His attempt to broaden the educational base at Lansdowne in 1921 looked to the continental model of an agricultural school that had been so successful in Spain and brought over two Italian Salesians, the Bondioni brothers, Oswald and Maurice to pioneer it. Though he left South Africa to become

<sup>19</sup> Cape Town House Archives, *Salesian Echo*, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> *Claremont Visitation Report*, 1932.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1945.



Provincial in 1926, it is clear from the visitation reports that he still held the reins there till his departure for the USA in 1940 due to the coup staged by some of the Irish and Scots confreres<sup>22</sup>.

The departure of Fr Tozzi for America and the influence of Fr Ainsworth meant that the second educational model was introduced in South Africa was the model of the selective English Grammar School. Fr Bill Ainsworth was the 'eminence grise' under the extremely hesitant Fr Couche. Though he was only provincial secretary yet because he nursed Couche through what we would now see as 'nervous exhaustion' after the war, he became a very effective advocate on the Provincial council. He effectively promoted the development of a Catholic boys' secondary Grammar school on the English model at Lansdowne (after the war) and more effectively still when he became the Provincial Delegate for South Africa, under Fr Hall.

This very clearly was what the English Province was able to offer. Though the first generation of English and Irish Salesians had little formal training though a few had qualified by the pupil teacher route as elementary school teachers, few, if any, before the war had a university degree, much less a teaching qualification. The closure of Lansdowne as a Farm led to the purchase of a property outside Johannesburg at Daleside and the transfer of the dairy herd to this new site in 1949. At Lansdowne Rd, the Salesian parish remained and the Salesians began to develop a secondary school for Catholic boys, but this took some time to develop due to the difficulties of finding Salesian staff and Catholic students who could pay.

## **5. Daleside Wakerville 1949**

With the help of Bishop Whelan of Johannesburg and the Hurly Brothers the Salesians purchased 900 morgan of the Hewitt Estate known as Nooitgedacht Farm in 1949. After trekking from Cape Town with a loaded Ford V8 and "midst many misfortunes" the first Salesian, Bro Maurice Bondioni, arrived at Daleside on 2 March 1949 to take up residence in the Clonlea homestead. He was followed closely by a herd of cattle and the new rector, Fr Doyle. It was the first Salesian house in the Transvaal and only the third foundation in South Africa, after 50 years in the country. This new work received Episcopal approval on the 2 June 1949, and was canonically erected on the 31 January 1950.

Within a few months, renovations and extentions sprouted and were to continue unabated for the next 20 years. The old homestead, which had given hospitality to President Paul Kruger on several occasions, became the community home for eight years and housed the original Bosco boarding school (latterly St John Bosco College), which officially opened with 10 boarders on 31 January 1951. Michael Rua primary school for local black children had begun on 2 August 1949<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> W. J. DICKSON, *The Dynamics of Growth...*, pp. 257-258.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.boscocentre.co.za/background-and-history>

Daleside, though it started initially as an agricultural school with the Bondioni Brothers carving a farm from the Veld it very quickly developed an interesting sideline that became an unusual feature for the Salesians. In the first reports, it says that while there are very few white pupils at the College, the native school has already 60 pupils in the first year of its existence. This was the Salesians first entry into non-white education in South Africa, even though it took place as a bye-product of their main work<sup>24</sup>.

While it is true that the schools at Lansdowne and in Daleside actually developed as small but very effective Catholic boys boarding and day schools yet they always struggled to find sufficient Catholics willing and able to pay for their sons' education and a properly qualified Salesian staff.

## 6. Booyens 1952

Less clear educationally effective was the impact of the young white Workers' Hostel at Booyens founded in 1952. This was a work that had been started by the St Vincent de Paul Society and handed over to the Salesians. Though clearly founded as a way of trying to offer young white workers a decent basis from which to complete apprenticeships, it never became really part of the network whereby local businesses actually supported the work. Unlike similar work in Munich, employers were never convinced that they might have any social obligations to house, or supervise their apprentices outside work.

## 7. Swaziland 1953

Swaziland is a landlocked kingdom, surrounded by South African and Mozambique created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the conquests of King Sobuza I and Mswati II from whom the country gets its name. In 1881 the British recognised the independence of the Swazis and again in the convention of 1884. Fearing that they might be absorbed by the Afrikaner republics the British decided to take over Swaziland as a British Protectorate in 1906 and it only achieved independence in 1965<sup>25</sup>.

The first Catholic missionaries were Italian members of the Servite Order who set up their first Mission in Mbane in 1913. When Bishop Costantino Maria Attilio Barneschi O.S.M. (Vicar Apostolic of Swaziland 1939, then Bishop of Bremersdorp 1951-1965)<sup>26</sup> visited the Cape Town Institute, he was impressed by the work and through the subsequent visits of Fr Freddy Stubbings to Swaziland, negotiations began for the foundation of a school at Bermersdorp or Manzini in Swaziland.

<sup>24</sup> Daleside Salesian Archives. Chronicle.

<sup>25</sup> Philip BONNER, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State*. Cambridge, Cambridge U. Press 1983. See esp. pp. 60, 85–88.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bbarn.html>

The draft agreement was drawn up for "a day and boarding school for the education of Swazi boys from Standars 7-10 and for no other purpose whatever without the prior written consent of the Church"<sup>27</sup>. What is particularly interesting about the foundation in Swaziland is that its pioneers Fr Frank Flynn and Fr Patrick Fleming were among the first to gain external London degrees via Wolsey Hall Correspondence courses and when they came to Bremersdorp in 1953 were determined that what was on offer by way of curriculum was in no way inferior to the curriculum and qualifications offered in any equivalent schools in the UK or Ireland.

Despite starting from a much lower base where English was very much a second language, they encouraged a breadth of religious, sporting and cultural activities that can still make us gasp. Not only were teams entered for soccer or ball games interschool competitions, but also for tennis, athletics, swimming and even cricket as well as debating, poetry and Shakespeare recitations as well as what were described as 'Zulu' songs and dancing<sup>28</sup>. The Brass marching band that had so entranced Bishop Bernaschi at the Institute has its successors at Manzini today.

In the House Chronicle account of the Rector's Prize Day Address for March 1957 he remarked on the progress of

[...] this young school, just in its fifth year and that had naturally suffered teething troubles and growing pains. The teething troubles had been satisfactorily met by an adjustment of subjects and an increase of staff. The adjustment of subjects had been made by separating the two parts of English (i.e. English Language and English Literature) and of Physical Science (i.e. Physics and Chemistry) and treating each as a separate subject with a separate teacher in each case: thus one part of the subject no longer crowded out the other.

In the matter of staff, the Rector said he was being admirably helped out by a staff of six Salesians and three African teachers.

Our growing pains were of two kinds. First the High School was too small and immediate new buildings were necessary and this was being taken care of by the projects in hand for new refectories, kitchens, dormitory and chapel. Thus the congestion of the ablution block and the supplying of further classrooms and library will be met. Another big growing pain will become acute when we take over the Primary Section for 200 boys.

He was also pleased to add that we have one student at Roma University. This particular student Michael Dlamini who came to us in 1955 having already a second class matriculation. He wished to proceed to a BSc but did not even have the first elements of Physical Science or Maths<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Africa Meridionale (AME) Provincial Archives, Booyens, Johannesburg. Manzini Documents: Swaziland Correspondence. This first draft was subsequently amended to allow the Salesians to also become directly involved in the work of the Mission.

<sup>28</sup> Manzini, March 1957, records both the growing pains of the school and the opening of a primary department of 200 students.

<sup>29</sup> Manzini, Chronicle March 1957. Fr Rector's Prize day speech.

This account of the early progress of the school, shows how quickly the Salesians had settled into the development of an effective Grammar School curriculum and also how quickly they realised that they would need to develop the level of Primary education in order to enable the secondary school to be effective. In Swaziland under the British Protectorate the curriculum was very clearly the one that was familiar in British Grammar Schools of the period and with which the early Salesians were very familiar and they did not have to cope with the complications of having to teach Afrikaans or through it as they might well have done in South Africa. The other familiar feature was the Examination System where they school used the English Examinations of the time. Clearly the Salesians were working in an educational context with which they were familiar even if the cultural context was completely foreign to them.

As well as the familiarity of the educational context the Salesians found themselves making friends with the Government Education Officer William Pitcher who was hopeful the school might receive large grants for increasing school accommodation and if were to receive £10,000 he wanted to know if we would be prepared to extend or not<sup>30</sup>. Here the British policy of preparing the colonies for independence might well explain the huge investment in education.

There were also visits from Peter and Cecilia Weidners mine owners from South West Africa who became great benefactors and also from a representative of the Ernst Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Fund, looking for projects to support<sup>31</sup>.

In a very interesting memorandum, in the Delegation archives there is an anonymous paper answering those who would have preferred to restrict the range of the curriculum to the standards required for the Junior Certificate and avoid the difficulties of staffing and teaching students up to the Matriculation, pre- university exam<sup>32</sup>.

The author suggests that this proposal assumes that Africans should only be given a level of education suitable for their proper expectations. This is strongly refuted by the author for whom university education should be made possible for their students as indeed it was and the chronicle recounts the first Manzini student to attend the university at Roma in 1960<sup>33</sup>.

One feature had, also, been learned from the Cape experience. A clause that would have excused the Salesians from mission work outside school was excised from the agreement by the Provincial Council so that not only was Manzini, a Catholic Boys Grammar school it was also a Mission centre for Swaziland. One can trace the origins of the Malkerns Mission and School from this clause and also the immense service and responsibilities that the Salesians have assumed over the subsequent years at the Cathedral, for the diocese and for the wider Church in Southern

<sup>30</sup> Manzini, Chronicle February 1959.

<sup>31</sup> Manzini, Chronicle March 1959.

<sup>32</sup> AME Archives, *Swaziland Documents*: Memorandum on Developments in Manzini.

<sup>33</sup> Manzini, Chronicle March 1957, Fr Rector in his Prize Day speech, recorded that Michale Clement Dlamini had taken up his university place at University in Roma, Basutoland.

Africa as a result. The Salesian Foundation at Manzini became an outstanding educational example for a Southern Africa bedevilled by racial segregation in education and 'apartheid' in society where highly motivated educationalists and missionaries could shape a new generation of African leaders. One laconic note in the Manzini chronicle while recording that the German Dominican Sisters were invited for the Academy (Sacred Concert) for the Feast of Our Lady also notes that ex- chief Albert Luthueli, the leader of the ANC was the guest of Honour. This was at a time where he was practically always under house arrest in South Africa and yet it was to the Salesians that he felt it was safe to entrust his sons for their education<sup>34</sup>.

In the immediate aftermath of the Sharpeville shootings in 1959, when racial tension was on the boil and school strikes occurred in Manzini too, the Salesians managed by reference to the Royal Councillors, to diffuse most of the discontent<sup>35</sup>.

In a later episode of school disturbances after the Soweto schools riots in 1975 Fr Larry O'Donnell suspected but wisely closed a blind eye to his Deputy, Stanley Mabizle's out of school activities. He actually turned out to be the Head of the ANC's organisation in Swaziland organising the armed resistance to the South African forces around Swaziland<sup>36</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

What emerges from this brief survey is that that the educational impact of the Salesian work in South Africa was largely restricted for the first 50 years by the educational context in Cape Town which was bedevilled by the complexities of racial, religious and social barriers.

The Salesian educational model of a School of Arts and Trades which in an Italian context became the springboard for reaching out to poor and at risk young people in a South African context remained restricted to the education of poor white Catholic boys.

In the post-second world war period we see a new generation of Salesian pioneers determined to break out of the confines of the past and to reach out to young Africans in what they understood as a truly missionary and educational endeavour. In South Africa itself this was hampered by being restricted to working for white Catholics who could pay school fees, however modest, but where there was an educational context which was familiar and with a modicum of government support then the effectiveness of their work cannot be underestimated.

This very limited survey will no doubt invite further questions about what are the most appropriate educational models for a hugely changed South African context and hopefully may spark further interest in researching its origins.

<sup>34</sup> Manzini, Chronicle 4<sup>th</sup> may 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Elias MASILELA, *No. 43 Trelawney Park, Kwamanago, Untold Stories of Ordinary People caught up in the struggle against Apartheid*. Claremont, South Africa 2007, chapters 28, 29.