

FROM A CONCENTRATION CAMP TO A POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL: A HISTORICAL-ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE IN DEVELOPING A NEW IDENTITY

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Abstract

The overall goal of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, as proclaimed by the United Nations, is to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. This integrated and multi-dimensional approach is supported in South Africa by the White Paper for Education and Training and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for History as part of the Social Science learning area. The aim of this article is to report on how a historical-environmental approach to education had been realised in the context of Eenheid primary school in Nylstroom (Modimolle) located on grounds used for a concentration camp during the South African War (October 1899 to May 1902).¹ In particular, the researchers wanted to establish how a diverse group of learners experienced and internalised their historical-environmental events in creating their present identity. The findings of the school's learners (n=51) who participated in a case study suggest that the historical memory which developed from the unique location of the school not only expanded the learners perspectives on intercultural understanding, but also contributed to a better appreciation and responsibility of environmental and socio-cultural issues in a post-apartheid South Africa. In the process an ethic of sustainable living and the creation of a "new" South African identity developed.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development; Historical-environmental learning; Concentration camps; South African War; Socio-cultural understanding; Integrated approach to learning; Nylstroom (Modimolle); Eenheid primary school.

¹ Also referred to as the Anglo-Boer War to denote the official warring parties. Some scholars prefer to call it the South African War, thereby acknowledging that all South Africans, white and black, were affected by the war and that many were participants.

Introduction

Education for sustainable development as described in the United Nation's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 should not only focus on the biophysical environment but also on complex social issues, such as the links between environmental quality, human equality, human rights, peace and their underlying politics.² According to Wals³ sustainability education should bring about a closer link between educational processes and real life using an interdisciplinary comprehensive approach. This requires learners to have skills in critical enquiry to explore the complexity and implications of sustainability. In the end education for sustainable development requires a pedagogy which sees learners develop skills and competencies for partnerships, participation and action.⁴

In South Africa the White Paper on Education and Training promotes this idea of a multi-dimensional approach to teaching and learning when it unequivocally stated:

*Environmental education, involving an interdisciplinary, integrated and active approach to learning, must be a vital element of all levels and programmes of the education and training system, in order to create environmentally literate and active citizens and ensure that all South Africans, present and future, enjoy a decent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources.*⁵

This integrated approach to teaching and learning is also restated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for History which, inter alia, seeks to promote:

*...(L)ocal studies which integrate history, geography, environmental education and democracy education; and the inclusion of lost voices and processes in history.*⁶

The aim of this article is to examine how this holistic approach to education had been realised in the context of Eenheid (Unity) primary school. This school is located in Nylstroom (Modimolle)⁷ north of Pretoria on the terrain formerly

2 UNESCO, "Framework for the UN DESD international implementation scheme", 2006 (available at: www.unesco.org/education/desd), as accessed on 10 November 2011.

3 AEJ Wals, Learning in a changing world and changing in a learning world: Reflexively fumbling towards sustainability, *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 24, 2007, p. 36.

4 K Henderson & D Tilbury, "Whole-school approaches to sustainability: An international review of sustainable school programs" (Report prepared by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES), Sydney, 2004), p. 7.

5 South Africa, *White Paper on Education and Training* (Pretoria, Government Press, 1995), p. 18.

6 Department of Education, *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) Policy, Social Sciences* (Pretoria, Department of Education, 2002), p. 5.

7 The name of the town Nylstroom officially changed in 2002 to Modimolle (available at: http://www.leeulekker.com/articles/view/south-africa/limpopo/modimolle/towns-cities/modimolle_nylstroom), as accessed on 10 November 2011.

used as a concentration camp during the South African War (October 1899 to May 1902). To commemorate this event the school erected a monument at the main entrance of the school in 2010. Within the unique context that this school offers, the researchers wanted to establish how a culturally diverse group of learners experienced and internalised their historical-environmental events in creating their present day identity.

At first a broad overview will be given on the role of concentration camps during the South African War, after which the events in the Nylstroom camp will be highlighted in particular. This will be followed by a conceptual framework, the empirical investigation, discussion and conclusion.

Concentration camps and the South African War

On 12 October 1899 the first shots of the South African War were fired, which was the beginning of the most destructive armed conflict South Africa has experienced.⁸ This war, which was the result of over a century of conflict between the main role players, namely the Dutch-speaking Boer colonists of the Transvaal and Free State republics and the British Empire, continued for 32 months. On 31 May 1902 the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging was signed in Pretoria between the delegates of the two Boer Republics, Transvaal and the Orange Free State and representatives of the British government. For the Boers this Peace Treaty signalled the total loss of their independence.⁹

The erection of concentration camps formed an important part of the British forces' tactics in an effort to outmanoeuvre the Boer forces' war effort. Originally these camps had been established as "refugee camps" by Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of British forces. These "refugee camps" bid those Boers who had voluntarily surrendered to the British Crown (called the "hands-uppers") a safe place to stay where they were protected from being re-commandeered by their fellow burgers.¹⁰

During September 1900 when the first two camps were set up, it happened that the Boers changed their tactics from a more conventional way of warfare to that of guerrilla fighting. This new way of warfare proved successful, which made the British realise that a different approach was necessary to counteract

8 H Giliomee & B Mbenga, *New history of South Africa* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2007), p. 206.

9 F Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War: An overview", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), pp. 33-35.

10 SV Kessler, "The Black and Coloured concentration camps", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), pp. 33-35.

the Boers' guerrilla campaign. One of the strategies which was decided on by Lord Roberts and his successor Lord Kitchener, was to introduce a policy of destroying the farms of Boer men who were on commando. This approach, which was known as the 'scorched-earth policy', was characterised by the burning down of Boer homes and their crops and the driving away or slaughtering of their livestock. By turning vast stretches of countryside into wasteland, the British authorities hoped to deny the commandos any sheltering, source of intelligence and food supplies which in the end would make the continuation of the guerrilla war impossible, thus forcing the Boers to surrender.

The homeless Boer women and their children, together with aged men who were unfit to fight, were transported to these "refugee camps" where they soon by far outnumbered the "refugees". These people (the so-called "undesirables") were not seeking British protection and had therefore been placed in these camps against their will. For this reason it is more appropriate to refer to these camps as concentration camps rather than "refugee camps".¹¹ Separate concentration camps were established for the black people who were also homeless after their property was destroyed by the ruthlessly application of the scorched earth policy.¹² From the outset the British military authority was unprepared to accommodate the thousands of people in these camps which accordingly resulted in their ill-planning and poor administration.¹³ In September 1901 the Nylstroom Camp was one of the 34 concentration camps for whites. In all of these camps there were approximately 110 000 inmates housed.¹⁴

The concentration camp at Nylstroom

Establishment

The Nylstroom camp had been under construction since 30 May 1901, and officially came into operation on 1 June 1901 as a fairly small camp with 743

11 F Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War: An overview", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), pp. 23-29; T Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), pp. 514-516; E Lee, *To the bitter end: A photographic history of the Boer War* (England, Viking, 1985), pp. 162-169; National Archives Repository of South Africa (TAB) Pretoria, Tkp 135: General reports on the burgher camps of the Transvaal and Natal, 10 March 1903.

12 JS Mohlamme, "African refugee camps in the Boer republics", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), pp. 110-131.

13 B Nasson, *The war for South Africa* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2010), p. 247.

14 F Pretorius, "The fate of Boer women and children", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), p. 44.

inmates (87 men, 270 women and 386 children). At the time Nylstroom was a small village with “widely- scattered houses” in the valley of the Little Nyl (Nile) River which was located in the Waterberg district of the Transvaal.¹⁵

After ten months, on 25 March 1902, the camp officially broke up after the 1 474 inmates had been transported by train from between 20th and 24th March to the Irene camp, near Pretoria.¹⁶ The plan of relocating the camp was first put forward by the six-member Ladies’ Commission which was appointed by the British Minister of War to carry out an official investigation of the conditions in the various camps. In November this commission reported that the high malarial prevalence in the Waterberg district was enough reason to remove the camp from its present site.¹⁷ It appeared that the British authorities decided to speed up the implementation of the commission’s recommendation after General Beyers had freed 150 internees at the Pietersburg camp in January 1902, which was about 87 miles (139 kilometres) from Nylstroom.¹⁸ During the same time there were rumours of an intended attack by the Beyers Commando on the Nylstroom camp. Contrary to the general custom, this camp was not fenced off by barbed-wire. Under cover of the surrounded thick bush it was possible for the Boer forces to come quite close to the camp.¹⁹ To make things even worse, the eight-man police force had not always proved very vigilant in their efforts to properly guard the camp.²⁰

When the camp came into operation, the inmates were at first accommodated in the houses of the village, the Gereformeerde church and even in the local jail. As their number increased they were also housed in tents that were spread out between the houses which gave the camp “a very untidy appearance”.²¹ It was only when Superintendent Cooke, as the first British official in charge of

15 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom by dr Kendal Franks, 8 Augustus 1901; Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies, Report on the burgher camp Nylstroom, 19 November 1901.

16 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Report on the Nylstroom refugee camp by Major Anstruther Thomson, travelling inspector, 12 January 1902; TAB, Dbc 12: Monthly reports of the Nylstroom burgher camp, 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene), 1 April 1902.

17 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps...; E Wessels, “A cage without bars”, F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth* (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 2001), p. 82.

18 JA van Rooy, *Naamlijs van die gestorwene in die konsentrasie kamp van Nijlstrom, Waterberg* (Pretoria, Noordelike Drukpers, 1917), p. 4; R Odendaal, *Waterberg op kommando, 1899-1902* (Nylstroom, Published by the author), pp. 79-80.

19 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department...; Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

20 TAB, Dbc 5: Papers received: Nylstroom burgher camp, June 1901 - March 1902; TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom, general reports, 25 June 1901; TAB, Dbc 14: Statistical return for burgher camp Nylstroom month ending June 1901, circular no. 76, 6 September 1901; TAB, Pmo 33: Statement of evidence by major EF Brereton, 13 November 1901.

21 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps...; TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department (statistical return), 30 June 1901.

this camp,²² was succeeded by Duncan on 3 September that all the tents were removed to the terrain of the now primary school of Eenheid (Unity). With the tents now situated at one place, the camp was set out in a more structured and organized way. The appearance of the camp took the form of a square block with each tent exactly 16 yards from one another. In November 1901 the camp intake reached its peak with 1 852 inmates. Of this total 1 275 lived in the camp, while the rest stayed in the adjoining village part of the camp.²³

Image 1: The location of the town of Nylstroom



Source: Available at: http://www.ditholosafaris.com/safari_locations.php

Tension in the camp

The camp at Nylstroom represented a mosaic of different socio-cultural and political classes of people which was often characterised by strained relations amongst them. For obvious reasons, feelings of enmity existed between the women whose husbands were on commando and the British camp officials. These Boer women held the camp Superintendent and his officials responsible for the poor living conditions they and their children had to come to grips with.²⁴ Up to a total of 62 Boer families, for example, were boxed in to the 13 “small, airless and dark” cells of the jail, while others had to stay in overcrowded houses and “old and patched” tents which could not always

22 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 25 June 1901.

23 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

24 AWG Raath, *Die Boervrou, 1899-1902 (Deel 2: Kampsmarte)* (Orkney, EFJS Drukkers), p. 258.

render sufficient protection against the soaring temperatures of the summer and damp winters.²⁵ One of the Boer women in the camp, Helena Elizabeth de Beer, testified that the tent she and her children received was in such a poor state that when they overturn their bedding in the morning it was wetter from the bottom than it was the case with the upper part.²⁶

Apart from the poor accommodation arrangements, there were also other circumstances in the camp that ignited further feelings of bitterness between the Boer women and the British officials. The Boer women showed, for instance, little confidence in the work of the camp medical staff who they held responsible for the many deaths that took place in the camp. At one stage the Nylstroom Camp represented the highest average death rate among children if compared to all the other camps in Transvaal.²⁷ From September to the end of December 1901 alone an average of 49 children died each month. The most common causes of these deaths were measles, diarrhoea, pneumonia, enteric fever and dysentery.²⁸

In an effort to assist the sick people, a hospital which could accommodate twelve patients opened in the same month that the camp had been established. A house in the adjoining village part of the camp served this purpose.²⁹ In the course of time the hospital was enlarged and by the end of January 1902 it was equipped with sixty beds.³⁰

Despite the existence of hospital facilities with qualified medical staff, the culture of hospitalisation was a completely unknown custom to the Boer women. In this regard the medical officer of the camp, Dr Percy Green, reported in September that:

*... there are still a great prejudice against, and great difficulty in, getting patients to come into hospital under compulsion.*³¹

25 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom...; JA van Rooy, *Naamlijs van die gestorwene...*, p. 4; R Odendaal, *Waterberg op kommando...*, p. 79.

26 AWG Raath, *Die Boervrou...*, p. 258.

27 JC Otto, "Die smart van vrou en kind", JH Breytenbach (ed.), *Gedenkalbum van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (Kapaad, Nasionale Pers, 1949), p. 464.

28 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony, and Natal. Total list of inmates, sick, and deaths in burgher camps, Transvaal, for month ending 30 September and December. 1901; TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, September 1901, 2 October 1901, 31 October 1901; TAB, Cd 902: Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa. Statistical return of inmates, sick, and deaths in burgher camps, Transvaal, for month ending 31 October and December 1901.

29 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 25 June 1901.

30 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Monthly reports..., 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene) 1 April 1902.

31 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 2 October 1901.

The Boer mothers strongly believed that when a child was hospitalised, it did not take long before death would occur. They blamed the medical staff and experienced it as another manner of British punishment. To avoid hospitalisation, many of the Boer mothers disguised the illness of their children, or hid them and preferred to rely rather on their old Boer remedies.³²

For the doctor and nurses of the camp this obstinate attitude of the Boer women who deliberately rejected proper medical care for their children, was difficult to understand. They considered hospitalisation a high priority, following Dr Green's remarks that:

*... the camp ... will always be unhealthy, as the inhabitants are saturated with malaria poison, and the condition of life at present, and surrounding circumstances, are just the conditions to bring out the poison.*³³

On his part Green's successor, Dr Sturdee accused the Boer women's unhygienic life style as the reason for the high mortality rate of the children. He explained that some of the mothers:

...are so filthy, dirty and careless in their habits ... that they are not really fit to be entrusted with the care of even their own children leave alone orphans.

In an effort to take the children out of the care of these "improvident and irresponsible mothers" and to make hospitalisation for sick children more accessible, Sturdee wanted to start a children's home.³⁴ His dream never materialised, but one can imagine that when rumours of his intentions became known, it would have contributed to more intense feelings of bitterness on the side of the distressed Boer women towards the British name.

Apart from accusing some of the mothers for their insanitary life style, Sturdee also realised that especially the houses in the village part of the camp were too overcrowded (in one instance 49 people) to be in any way successful in combating the spreading of diseases.³⁵ For this reason he requested the British authorities in October to make more tents available in an effort to remove some of the inmates from the houses.³⁶ It is not clear how the Boer women and their families responded to Duncan's plan to be relocated to the

32 B Nasson, *The war for South Africa...*, p. 247; E van Heyningen, "A tool for modernisation? The Boer concentration camps of the South African War", *South African Journal of Science*, 106(5/6), May/June 2010, p. 5; T Jackson, *The Boer War* (London, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 153-155; JC Otto, *Die konsentrasiekampe* (Kaapstad, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1954), p. 130.

33 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 2 October 1901.

34 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 21 October 1901, 1 December 1901.

35 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom....

36 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 31 October 1901.

tent section of the camp. One can, however, assume that not all of them would have taken a keen interest in this venture, for the simple reason that the tents could not have given the same amount of protection against inclement weather.

The provision of poor food rations, lacking in nutritional value, further aided the conditions for diseases and also added to the antagonistic attitude of the Boer women towards the British officials. Food in the Transvaal camps was allocated according to prescribed ration scales. In 1901 the full ration scale per person per week was: 7 pounds (about 3 kg) of meal or flour, 4 ounces (about 113 g) salt, 6 ounces (about 170 g) coffee, 12 ounces (about 340 g) sugar and 3 pounds (1.36 kg) of meat and 1 pound (0.453 kg) of rice. Children younger than 12 years old received half of this supply. Instead of meat, babies under the age of three received a bottle of milk which was diluted with tinned "Ideal" milk.³⁷ These scales prove to be inadequate as calculations during this time showed that adult women were about 700 calories below their supposed minimum daily intake.³⁸

Duncan was the first to admit at the end of November that the general health of the inmates was poor as the result of the non-availability of meat and vegetables.³⁹ Despite this admittance, he was convinced that some of the Boer women and their families "seemed happy and contented" because they were:

*...bywoners (a poor tenant farmer) who lived in much worse conditions in their own homes and lived mostly on fruit and vegetables, so that the fare they received in the camp was to them novel and luxurious. Some of the people in the camp had never seen white bread until they were brought into Nijlstrom.*⁴⁰

The provision of food supplies were dependent on the single railway line which was situated about a mile away from the camp and ran northwards from Pretoria to Nylstroom from where it headed to the final stop at Pietersburg.⁴¹ The delivery of food supplies to the remote Nylstroom and Pietersburg camps had always been a source of difficulty. Apart from the great distance to these camps, the traffic on the line was often of an irregular nature due to the raids

37 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

38 E van Heyningen, "A tool for modernisation?...", *South African Journal of Science*, 106(5/6), May/June 2010, p. 8.

39 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 1 December 1901; TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department..., 12 January 1902.

40 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp....

41 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp...; Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

of the Boer guerrillas.⁴² To compensate for the lack of fresh meat, tinned corned beef was issued which the Boer women, whom preferred fresh meat more than anything, found unfamiliar.⁴³

As a substance for vegetables, lime juice was introduced as a vitamin booster to fight diseases. This juice was often regarded by the Boer families as too sour and they were only willing to drink it if sugar was added.⁴⁴

The provision of fresh water in the camp also led to differences and tension. As a result of the influence of the war, the water supply was scarce and in many instances polluted with disease. Despite the camp authorities' efforts to supply the Boer women and their families with fresh water, this seemed not appreciated by everyone. As a precaution measure for a possible shortage of drinking water, wells were sunk. Furthermore all drinking water was boiled and distributed on a daily basis.⁴⁵ However, for many of the Boer families the boiled water had no taste and they preferred to obtain their drinking water from the Nyl river which ran past the camp at a distance of about 150 yards (137.16 meters).⁴⁶ Many of the camp inmates were from the district which meant they had drunk the river water all their lives. Therefore they could not understand why the British officials suddenly objected and wanted to withhold them from doing so.⁴⁷

The inability of the camp administrators not to execute their water policy in a scrupulous way might have been the reason for the negative inspection report Duncan received in January 1902. In this report it was mentioned that "the arrangements for the supply of drinking water are not quite satisfactory..." It is unclear in how far the drinking of the river water added to the spreading of diseases in the camp.⁴⁸

42 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 31 October 1901; TAB, Tkp 135: General reports....

43 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 31 October 1901; TAB, Tkp 135: General reports...; E van Heyningen, "A tool for modernisation?...", *South African Journal of Science*, 106(5/6), May/June 2010, p. 8.

44 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Sanitary inspector's report, burgher camp Nylstroom, 28 December 1901; E Van Heyningen, "A tool for modernisation?...", *South African Journal of Science*, 106(5/6), May/June 2010, p. 9.

45 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 31 October 1901.

46 TAB, Cd 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 1 December 1901; TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Monthly reports..., 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene), 1 April 1902.

47 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

48 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Monthly reports..., 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene), 1 April 1902.

There is ample proof that the Superintendent and his officials were tireless in their efforts to constantly improve and uphold the sanitary arrangements of the camp in order to curb the spreading of diseases.⁴⁹ Where these arrangements brought discomfort in some measure, it appears that the Boer women simply ignored it. Some of the inmates, for example, did not take the trouble to clean their tents and houses properly. Others, again, did not make use of the latrines at night because they felt that it was erected too far from their tents. To prevent any excuse for further abusing the sanitary regulations, the camp officials decided in January 1902 to place night latrines in an open space in the centre of the camp. These latrines opened at 20:00 and were locked at sunrise.⁵⁰

All these actions on the side of the Boer women showed an attitude of non-corporation and hostility towards the British camp officials who they held responsible for their suffering. In August, Dr Kendal Franks, Consulting Surgeon to His Majesty's Forces became cognisant of this wilful attitude after he had visited the camp. He asked for more stringent measures to be imposed:

*...more might be done in this camp by a judicious exercise of authority, because it is evident that the Boers are totally ignorant of the elements of sanitation, and will not, unless compelled thereto, take the simple precautions for the preservation of health.*⁵¹

Apart from their tense relationship with the British camp officials, several of the Boer women whose husbands were still on commando also sometimes felt particularly bitter towards their fellow Boer families who voluntarily surrendered to the British forces.⁵² Where these "hands-uppers" or non-combatants were given the chance to perform work in the camp at the cost of the "undesirables", one can imagine that it would contributed to an even further deterioration of relations. For all work done everyone was paid two shillings a day and they also received extra meat. While some of the men were involved in woodcutting outside the camp to provide in the supply of firewood, a number of the women helped the camp matron to inspect

49 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom...; TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating..., Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, 31 October 1901; Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

50 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Monthly reports..., 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene), 1 April 1902.

51 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom....

52 TAB, Dbc 12: Burgher camps department, Pretoria. Monthly reports..., 25 January 1902 (transferred to Irene) 1 April 1902; F Pretorius, "The Anglo-Boer War...", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth*, p. 44; TAB, Tkp 135: General reports....

the tents and aided with the nursing of patients.⁵³ With these cash earnings, it was possible to buy extra food and other luxuries from the camp store.⁵⁴

A number of black internees formed another group of people in the camp. Unfortunately the details of their role and interaction with the white internees and British camp officials are infrequent. Much of the archival information went missing when pages were, for no clear reason, removed from the Nylstroom camp register in 1911.⁵⁵ To gain some sort of insight in the role they played, we had to rely on passing remarks that were mentioned in some of the reports on the camp. From these we have learned that the black population was divided into two categories. There were those who were employed by the British to help with the general camp administration. They were for instance involved in tasks such as emptying, cleaning and disinfecting the eight latrines in the camp as well as the small private latrines throughout the village.⁵⁶ For the reason that there was no barbed wire around the camp, six blacks were also appointed by the camp authorities as guards to ensure that nobody entered or left the camp at night.⁵⁷ The employment of Black guards might have been a strange and in a certain sense a humiliating experience for the white internees. Suddenly they found themselves under the authority of blacks while they had treated them as their subjects for centuries.

There were also those loyal servants who accompanied the Boer women to the concentration camp, and between whom there obviously existed good relationships.⁵⁸ They were not rationed and were dependant on sharing the already scanty portions which were allocated to their mistresses. In some cases these servants slept in a small separate encampment, in wagons or even in some of the outbuildings of the town.⁵⁹

Inclusion of local history in the school curriculum

This conflict between the British Empire and the Boer Republics of South Africa had a huge impact on the social, economic and biophysical

53 TAB, Cd 853: Further papers relating... Total list of inmates, sick and deaths in burgher camps, Transvaal for the month ending 30 September and December 1901. Medical report, burgher refugee camp, Nylstroom, September 1901, 2 October 1901, 31 October 1901; Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

54 TAB, Dbc 14: Burgher camps department Pretoria. Burgher camp Nylstroom..., 25 June 1901.

55 E van Heyningen, "British concentration camps of the South African War (Nylstroom), 1900-1902" (available at: <http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/mss/bccd/Histories/Nylstroom/>), as accessed on 28 August 2011.

56 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

57 TAB, Cd 819: Report on the refugee camp at Nylstroom....

58 SV Kessler, "The Black and Coloured...", F Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched Earth*, p. 133.

59 Anglo-Boer War Museum Bloemfontein, Cd 893: Report on the concentration camps....

environment. In remembrance of this war the school principal decided to use the school's unique historical location to include the local history in its approach to environmental education. The local history was highlighted by a ceremony at which a monument was unveiled in 2010 which commemorates the people that were held in the camp and the political development which followed leading up to the present day free and democratic society. The symbolic value of this monument produced the historical memory which was further activated and extended by the history teacher's lessons of the South African War and in particular the events at the Nylstroom concentration camp. Hereby opportunity was given to the learners to articulate how these experiences had shaped their perspectives of their present day identity in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Image 2: The monument in front of the Primary School of Eenheid (Unity)



Source: Photo, S Raath

As part of their 50 years celebrations (1960-2010), this monument was erected at the entrance gate of the primary school of Eenheid (Unity) in Nylstroom. The child on the left is chained to the wall and symbolises the detention of the children during their time in the concentration camp in 1902. On the right, in 2010, the children enjoy complete freedom with no chains around their wrists. They were no more suppressed by a foreign power and could experience the comfort of freedom of speech and movement. In the middle the granite "tent" symbolized everything that was in the past

and will be in future with the message to “stand together, (and to) stand strong”. The point of the triangle points to the cross that combines the past events of 1902 and the present expectations of 2010 and beyond. The cross symbolises the belief, in a Christian context, that the Almighty, as in the past, will also guide the school into the future. As part of the celebrations, and to uphold the biophysical environment, 14 indigenous cycads were also planted, representing the 14 different classes of the school.⁶⁰

Conceptual framework

Memory, history and national identity

According to Nora⁶¹ the concepts of memory and history are not entirely synonymous. He believes that memory is in a constant process of evolution because it is open to remembering and forgetting and, to a certain degree, exposed to manipulation. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction of the past of what is no longer, and therefore asks for analysis and criticism. Memory also takes root in the concrete, in gestures, images and objects, while history is bound to temporal continuities and to relations of people and societies. However, Nora holds the opinion that what we call memory today is no longer memory anymore, but already history. The threatened loss of memory has led to the growing desire for its preservation which paved the way for history to seize memory by penetrating and transforming it. An “acceleration of history” thus occurred to nurture and preserve the continuation of individual, group or national identity.⁶²

History and memory are critical co-agents for national bonding and the creation of a shared national identity. “[O]ne might almost say: no (historical) memory, no identity; no identity, no nation.”⁶³ Such as with memory and history, national identity is a socially constructed phenomenon. It emphasises a relationship between people and place (the environment) which is defined by social structures and social norms. History texts, monuments and museums and other forms of public history are of particular importance to communicate a message of national cohesion and identity in a multi-cultural country.⁶⁴

60 The drivers for the design and erection of the monument were Mr JS van der Merwe, the headmaster of the school, a teacher Mr Fredrich Nezer and his father Mr Willem Nezer.

61 P Nora, “Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire”, *Representations*, 26 (Special issue), 1989, p. 8.

62 P Nora, “Between memory and history: ...”, *Representations*, 26, (Special issue), 1989, pp. 8, 12-33.

63 A Smith, “Memory and modernity: Reflections on Ernst Gellner’s theory of nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalisms*, 2, 1996, p. 383.

64 AD Smith, “National identity and the idea of European Unity”, *International Affairs*, 68, 1992, p. 63.

Schools are a powerful link between historical memory and national identity. In many countries history in schools is closely linked to the development of a sense of common identity. History teachers, in particular are the people who are in the position to transmit national narratives about the past, thereby using historical memory as a way of defining and debating who “we” are.⁶⁵ However, Barton and McCully⁶⁶ warned that this kind of emphasis can also lead to the disavowal of any common notion of belonging when questions of who we are turned into questions on who we are *not*.

The utilisation of war as a political instrument has often proved in the past to be a vital event in the process of the development of social cohesion and national identity.⁶⁷ This research revolves around the Nylstroom concentration camp during the South African War, exploring how historical memory had manifested itself in the formation of primary school learner’s evolving national identity.

Empirical investigation

Research method

At first an extensive literature study was undertaken based on secondary and primary archival sources to serve as an orientation for the historical-environmental context of the study. The literature study was followed by a case study in which the research method chosen was a mixed approach that involves quantitative and qualitative analysis. This method is similar to what Creswell & Plano-Clark (2011)⁶⁸ proposes as mixed-method strategy. A questionnaire consisting of sections A (qualitative) and B (quantitative) was used as the data – collection method.

Research design

A case study was used to explain and investigate how a diverse group of

65 E Podeh, “History and memory in the Israeli educational system: The portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict in history textbooks (1948-2000)”, *History and memory*, 12, 2000, p. 65; KC Barton & A McCully, “History teaching and the perpetuation of memories: The Northern Ireland experience”, ED Cairns & MD Roe (eds.), *The role of memory in ethnic conflict* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 122.

66 KC Barton & A McCully, “History teaching and the perpetuation of memories...”, ED Cairns, MD Roe (eds.), *The role of memory...*, p. 122.

67 P Melling, “War and memory in the new world order”, M Evans & K Lunn (eds.), *War and memory in the twentieth century* (Oxford, Berg, 1997), p. 225.

68 JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (London, Routledge Falmer, 2011), p. 53.

learners in a real-life context at the Primary School of Eenheid (Unity) experienced and internalised their historical-environmental events in creating their present day identity.

A typology-based convergent parallel design procedure⁶⁹ was chosen to guide the implementation of the research. The convergent parallel design procedure was chosen because the researchers deemed that the use of in-tandem procedures would improve the overall strength of the study and complement and clarify results.

In the design of this research the researchers planned to implement the quantitative and qualitative data collection process during the same phase. The qualitative strand would be followed by the quantitative strand. At first the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are to be kept independent. The two sets of research results will only be merged into an overall interpretation when drawing conclusions at the end of the study. The philosophical assumption behind this convergent parallel design is the umbrella paradigm of pragmatism, which is well suited for guiding the work of merging the two approaches into a larger understanding. Creswell and Plano-Clark⁷⁰ describe pragmatism as a worldview that use diverse approaches and that value both objective and subjective knowledge.

Research methodology

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select the participants (learners) who are central to the study and the setting (school) where the unique historical event took place.⁷¹ The qualitative strand of the study was first implemented. It was requested from the respondents to answer the following open-ended question (Section A) in a short essay format: “What did you learn from the history of the concentration camp, and what is its meaning for you today?” When this phase of the research was completed, the essay was taken in.

Section B of the questionnaire was then used for the next quantitative research phase.⁷² Closed-ended items were used to determine the respondent’s historical knowledge on the South African War and the Nylstroom concentration camp, as well as the perceptions that exist in terms of the way in which the

69 JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting ...*, p. 77.

70 JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting ...*, p. 43.

71 JW Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (University of Nebraska, Lincoln, SAGE Publications, 2007), p. 125.

72 JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting ...*, p. 77.

war influenced the social events and biophysical environment at their school (See Tables 3-13). A five-point Likert-type scale was used on a continuum of 0 (no response), 4 (agree), 3 (partly agree), 2 (do not agree), and 1 (strongly disagree)⁷³ to collect the data.

All the Grade 7 learners (12-13 years old) (n=51) of the school, representing eight different language groups (See Table 2), were asked to participate in the two independent research surveys. The convergent parallel research procedure was completed during school time under the supervision of two teachers and one of the researchers. By completing the quantitative section of the research after the qualitative section, it excluded the possibility for the respondents to be influenced by the information embedded in the closed items of the quantitative section.

The analysis procedure of the qualitative data gathered during the first phase of the research was analysed by dividing the text data received from the respondents in small units (phrases, sentences, or paragraphs). Units were identifying that were relevant to the first part of the question: "What did you learn from the history of the concentration camp." Labels were then assigned to each unit after which grouping of the codes into themes took place. The second part of the question, "What does it mean for you today?" was analysed in the same way.⁷⁴

Reliability was determined by inter-coder agreement between the two researchers. The transcripts were coded independently by the two researchers and then compared to determine whether they arrived at the same codes. To analyse the quantitative data they were calculated in percentages and presented in frequency tables.

By making use of qualitative and quantitative data the researchers adhered to the advice of Ivankova et al.⁷⁵ who postulate that the type of phenomenon under investigation is best explained and understood when a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and analysed. It furthermore allows for triangulation of data to control for validity and reliability.⁷⁶

The interpretation of the research data was done by drawing inferences and meta-inferences. Inferences are conclusions drawn from the separate quantitative and qualitative strands and meta-inferences are conclusions drawn

⁷³ I Cohen, I Manion & K Morrison, *Research methods in education* (London, Routledge Falmer, 2000), p. 253.

⁷⁴ JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting...*, p. 208.

⁷⁵ NV Ivankova, JW Creswell & VLP Clark, "Foundations and approaches to mixed methods research", K Maree (ed.), *First steps in research* (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 2007), p. 266.

⁷⁶ PD Leedy & JE Ormrod, *Practical research: Planning and design* (New Jersey, Pearson, 1989), pp. 99-100.

across the quantitative and qualitative strands. A side-by-side comparison of the data was done by presenting the quantitative and qualitative results together so that they can easily be compared.⁷⁷ The researchers then looked for congruent and discrepant evidence between the databases.

Ethical aspects

For ethical purposes the questionnaire was anonymously completed. Before the implementation of the research, the respondents were requested by one of the researchers to answer the questions in an honest way. The respondents were also informed that their anonymity would be protected at all times.⁷⁸ Furthermore the respondents were individually involved and there was no opportunity given beforehand to discuss the content of the questionnaire with their peers. The appropriate permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Department of Education as well as from the school principal, who in turn, obtained the consent from the learners and parents concerned.

Results

To follow are the results gathered from the quantitative and qualitative strands of the questionnaire. The quantitative data was gathered using closed-ended questions while the qualitative data was gathered by means of an answer in a short essay format to the following open-ended question: "What did you learn from the history of the concentration camp, and what is its meaning for you today?"

Questions regarding biographical information (gender and home language) of the respondents were posed to establish the heterogeneous composition of the respondents in this case study.

Table 1: Biographical data of the respondents

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	27	53
Female	24	47
Total	51	100

77 JW Creswell & VL Plano-Clark, *Designing and conducting...*, pp. 213, 223.

78 JW Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry...*, p. 141.

Table 2: Additional biographical data of the respondents

Home language	Respondents	Percentage
Afrikaans	16	31.3
Sepedi	12	23.5
Sesotho	10	19.6
siSwati	2	3.9
isiZulu	1	2.0
Setswana	3	5.9
Xitsonga	1	2.0
isiXhosa	1	2.0
No indication	5	9.8
Total	51	100

From the biographical data in Tables 1 and 2 it is in the first place clear that gender is well presented with the 53% male and 47% female respondents. Furthermore the data shows that the respondents were a diverse group of learners, representing eight different home languages. Afrikaans (31.4%), Sepedi (23.5%) and Sesotho (19.6%) are the three home languages most spoken by the respondents.

Table 3: Subjects which the respondents indicated helped them to learn about their school's unique historical-environmental location

Response	Total	Percentage
Natural Science	36	71%
Geography / History (Social Sciences)	36	71%
Life Orientation	33	65%
Economic and Management Sciences	33	65%
Arts and Culture	27	53%
Technology	20	39%
Languages	15	29%
Mathematics	11	22%

Table 3 indicates that a great majority of the respondents (71%) believed that Natural Sciences and Geography/History (Social Sciences) were the subjects that taught them the most about their environment and their schools' history. On the other hand Mathematics (22%) and the Languages (29%) were indicated as the subjects that taught them the least about their environment and their local history. Life Orientation, Economic and Management

Sciences and Arts and Culture all showed percentages of more than 50% in their contribution to the respondent's knowledge on environmental and local history issues. From this it can be deduced that aspects of the environment as well as the school's history is taught by most of the teachers in most of the subjects. In this regard Haigh⁷⁹ claimed that the challenge for environmental sustainability education is to reach beyond the subject-bound confines of formal academic education.

Table 4: Reasons for the occurrence of the South African War

Response	Number of "Yes" responses	Percentage
Britain wanted control of the gold	48	94%
Expansion of Britain's territory	21	41%
The Boers were angry with Britain	29	57%
Zulus wanted more land	7	14%

Table 4 shows that the vast majority of the respondent's (94%) were of the opinion that Britain's desire to control the gold industry was the most important cause for the South African War.

From the qualitative data this economic motive was also identified by various respondents as the primary cause of the war:

'The English wanted our land because the gold mines were here.' *'[The] English people came to South Africa because they heard that South Africa had found diamonds and gold.'* *'The England people heard that there were diamonds in South Africa, they came like they were harmless but as soon as they heard again that there was gold in South Africa they started to think South Africa is rich, and we must take it all.'* *'When the British saw that South Africa had gold and silver they wanted to be the owners....'* *'All the British people wanted was to take all the gold.'*

Table 5: What was the influence of this war on the environment (biophysical, social and economic environment)?

Response	Number of "Yes" responses	Percentage
Farms did not produce food anymore	29	57%
Farm buildings were burnt down	36	71%
Families became fragmented	31	61%
Natural vegetation was destroyed	31	61%

⁷⁹ M Haigh, "Promoting environmental education for sustainable development: The value of links between higher education and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's)", *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(2), July 2006, p. 176.

Table 5 indicates that most of the respondents (71%) believed that the most devastating effect of the war on the environment was the burning of the farms, thereby destroying not only the natural vegetation (biophysical environment), but also denying the famers the opportunity to produce food (economic environment). Most of the respondents (61%) thought that the war's influence on the social environment was nearly as serious because it fragmented family ties.

The qualitative data also showed that the suffering of the women and children was regularly mentioned as a social concern. In many instances references were made to the inmates who had to "live in tents" and had to drink "water that was unclean." "They died from hunger" because they "didn't eat proper food."

Table 6: What does the monument on the school ground symbolise?

Response	Number of "Yes" responses	Percentage
War	16	31%
Illness	8	16%
Freedom	42	82%
Peace	38	75%
Division	14	27%
Suffering	22	43%

From Table 6 it is clear that the vast majority of the respondents (82%) indicated that the monument symbolises freedom, while 75% believed it symbolises peace.

These convictions are strongly supported by the qualitative data. The respondents believed that "...the South African people are free" and "...because we are free; we can do what we want." Some felt that the South Africans "are free, because they fought together as one. They are "...pleased that the war is something of the past, because now our school is known and the South African people are free." For others "it meant my country has fought for itself so that it could defeat those people and get our country so that we could have peace." Several of the respondents were appreciative of the historical process that created the present situation: "My country has got it rights back..." "What it means for me is that they (the children) weren't as free as we are, they didn't get the education and care we are getting, which we take for granted. I think we should appreciate everything we have and be thankful for what we have."

Table 7: Why is the monument surrounded by indigenous plants?

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
7a	Indigenous plants are part of the local environment	10 (19.60%)	5 (9.80%)	5 (9.80%)	29 (56.86%)	2 (3.92%)
7b	The plants are part of our heritage	4 (7.84%)	4 (7.84%)	5 (9.80%)	36 (70.58%)	2 (3.92%)
7c	Alien plants overcrowd our own indigenous plants	19 (37.25%)	2 (7.84%)	5 (9.80%)	22 (43.13%)	2 (3.92%)
7d	Indigenous plants use less water	7 (13.72%)	4 (7.84%)	11 (21.56%)	27 (52.94%)	2 (3.92%)

Table 7 shows that more than half of the total of the respondents (56.86%) agreed that indigenous plants should be planted to surround the monument, because they believed it represents the original local vegetation which must be conserved. Furthermore the majority of the respondents (70.58%) were convinced that indigenous plants should deserve a place around the monument for the reason that they are part of the South African heritage, while more than half of the respondents (52.94%) correctly stated that indigenous plants use less water than alien invasive species.

Table 8: The way the school operates now is an example of...

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
8a	Conflict	9 (17.64%)	22 (43.13%)	10 (19.60%)	7 (13.72%)	3 (5.88%)
8b	Things that went wrong	22 (43.13%)	12 (23.52%)	7 (13.72%)	8 (15.68%)	2 (3.92%)
8c	Tolerance between culture groups	13 (25.49%)	6 (11.76%)	11 (21.56%)	18 (35.29%)	3 (5.88%)
8d	Unity between the different race groups of our country	6 (11.76%)	3 (5.88%)	12 (23.52%)	28 (54.90%)	2 (3.92%)

Table 8 indicates that respectively 60.77% and 66.65% of the respondents disagree to strongly disagree that their school is an example of conflict and a place where things are going wrong. More than half of the respondents (56.85%) agree to partly agree that there is tolerance between the different culture groups while the vast majority (78.42%) agree to partly agree that unity between the different languages groups does exist in their school.

These convictions were supported in the qualitative data. In this regard a Setswana respondent answered that she is “proud of the white people who fought for our country,” while a Sepedi respondent was grateful that “... we are free and the people that helped us are now heroes.” Another Sepedi respondent felt that “...my country has fought for itself so that it could defeat those people (the British) and get our country so that we could have peace.” A Xitsonga respondent claimed that the “Boers were fighting for the whole South Africa...”

Table 9: The history of our school grounds helps us...

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
9a	to better understand everyday life	12 (23.52%)	2 (3.92%)	7 (13.72%)	28 (54.90%)	2 (3.92%)
9b	to understand the importance of peace	6 (11.76%)	2 (3.92%)	5 (9.80%)	35 (68.62%)	3 (5.88%)
9c	in no way to understand today's situation	18 (35.29%)	13 (25.49%)	5 (9.80%)	10 (19.60%)	5 (9.80%)
9d	to understand what happens when one group suppresses another group with force	12 (23.52%)	5 (9.80%)	16 (31.37%)	16 (31.37%)	2 (3.92%)

Table 9 shows that a majority of the respondents (68.62%) agree to partly agree that the history of their school contributed to a better understanding of everyday life, while a vast majority of respondents (78.42%) agree to partly agree that the history of their school terrain helped them to understand the importance of peace. The majority of the respondents (60.78%) do not agree to strongly disagree with the statement that the history of their school

was unable to contribute to a better understanding of today's situation in South Africa. As a matter of fact, the majority of the respondents (62.74%) suggested that they understand what the implications will be when one group suppresses another group with force.

From the qualitative data an isiXhosa respondent commented as follows:

What it means for me is that they (the inmates) weren't as free as we are, they didn't get the education and care we are getting, which we take for granted. I think we should appreciate everything we have and be thankful for what we have.

For an Afrikaans respondent, the history of their school grounds which was typified by suppression and bondage:

...means a lot to me, because it tells me of what happened to my family and how grateful I should be not to be there.

Table 10: Environmental projects are...

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
10a	supported by many learners	11 (21.5%)	5 (9.80%)	10 (19.60%)	23 (45.09%)	2 (3.92%)
10b	supported by a few learners	11 (21.56%)	11 (21.56%)	10 (19.60%)	17 (33.33%)	2 (3.92%)
10c	are a waste of time	30 (58.82%)	11 (21.58%)	2 (3.92%)	6 (11.76%)	2 (3.92%)
10d	made me love the environment	10 (19.60%)	3 (5.88%)	3 (5.88%)	33 (64.70%)	2 (3.92%)

From Table 10 it is clear that although more than the half of the respondents (52.93%) agree to partly agree that environmental projects in their school were only supported by a few learners, the majority of the respondents (64.69%) differed from their conviction. In fact, the vast majority of the respondents (80.40%) do not agree to strongly disagree with the assumption that environmental projects at their school were a waste of time. Their scepticism is supported by the majority of the respondents (70.58%) who indicated that they showed an appreciation and love for the environment.

Table 11: The teachers at our school...

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
11a	are proud of the school	7 (13.72%)	0 (00.0%)	6 (11.76%)	36 (70.58%)	2 (3.92%)
11b	emphasize the importance of a beautiful environment	5 (9.80%)	5 (9.80%)	12 (23.52%)	26 (50.98%)	3 (5.88%)
11c	do not care for the environment of our school	35 (68.62%)	4 (7.84%)	4 (7.84%)	6 (11.76%)	2 (3.92%)
11d	teach us to save water and energy	6 (11.76%)	3 (5.88%)	6 (11.76%)	34 (66.6%)	2 (3.92%)

Table 11 shows that the vast majority of the respondents (82.3%) agree to partly agree that their teachers were proud of their school, while 76.46% of the respondents do not agree to strongly disagree that their teachers were not prepared to take care of their school environment. The majority of the respondents (74.50%) and (78.36%) respectively agree to partly agree that their teachers emphasise the importance of a sustainable environment and urged them to take proper care of it by saving water and energy.

Table 12: The teachers taught the South African War...

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
12a	not very clearly	26 (50.98%)	10 (19.60%)	5 (9.80%)	8 (15.68%)	1 (1.96%)
12b	only from one side	16 (31.37%)	16 (31.37%)	8 (15.68%)	9 (17.64%)	2 (3.92%)
12c	as an necessity	11 (21.56%)	5 (9.80%)	15 (29.41%)	19 (37.25%)	1 (1.96%)
12d	by referring to all the bad influences it had	9 (17.64%)	6 (11.76%)	11 (21.56%)	24 (47.05%)	1 (1.96%)

Table 12 reveals that the majority of the respondents (70.58%) denied that the South African War was not properly instructed by their teachers. In fact, the majority of the respondents (66.66%) agree to partly agree that the South African War was viewed by their teachers as a necessary element of their school history. Furthermore, 70.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that their teachers taught the South African War in a balanced way by also referring to all the bad influences it had on the socio-cultural relations.

Table 13: The learners have different view points on the concentration camp monument

Response		1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Do not agree)	3 (Partly agree)	4 (Agree)	0 (No response)
Item	Frequency (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
13a	I like hearing the view points of my friends	12 (23.52%)	1 (1.96%)	8 (15.68%)	28 (54.90%)	2 (3.92%)
13b	Children should not share their view points with others	22 (43.13%)	11 (21.56%)	5 (9.80%)	12 (23.52%)	1 (1.96%)
13c	Different viewpoints result in arguments	8 (15.68%)	11 (21.56%)	10 (19.60%)	21 (41.17%)	1 (1.96%)
13d	We must all think the same over the concentration camp	24 (47.05%)	8 (15.68%)	1 (1.96%)	17 (33.3%)	1 (1.96%)

Table 13 indicates that the majority of the respondents (70.58%) agree to partly agree that they are interested in hearing the view points of their friends on the monument at their school while 62.73% of the respondents disagreed with the assumption that everyone should have the same view point on the monument. A significant group of respondents (41.17%) indicated that different viewpoints result in arguments. This can lead to the assumption that Grade 7 learners (12-13 year old) do not want to engage in arguments over differing viewpoints.

Discussion

South Africa has a history of division between different cultural, political and racial groups. As explained, these strong divisional lines were also present in the Nylstroom concentration camp during the time of the South African War. Since the post-apartheid era of the 1990s, South Africa is still struggling

with the demands of difference, unity and identity. The primary school of Eenheid (Unity) used the school's unique environment and history to implant knowledge and to instill values in the learners in an effort to help them to develop and construct an intercultural understanding, thereby becoming responsible and positive citizens.

The research results showed that the school in some way started to develop an historical memory in a diverse group of learners by using the historical-environmental causes and results of the South African War. The majority of the learners believed that the symbolic value of their monument, together with their knowledge on the South African War, activated and developed their historical memory to such a degree that it contributed to an understanding and conscience for equality and social justice in contemporary South Africa. Hence, not all the learners supported this viewpoint which indicates that the process of historical memory development is not a given and must therefore be handled in a sensitive way, as Barton and McCully have warned.⁸⁰ The vast majority of the learners indicated economic circumstances - the British desire to control the gold fields - as the primary cause of the war. They became aware of how this British ideal was responsible for the implementation of the scorched-earth policy which impacted negatively on the natural vegetation, the social and economic fabric of the environment. From this episode the majority of learners indicated that they have learned why it is important to work towards a sustainable environment which is also the reason why they showed keen interest in supporting environmental projects.

The impact of the war on the social environment was also highlighted by the majority of the learners. The suffering of the women and children and the many deaths in the camp that fractured families was disturbing information which the learners had to come to grips with. They also realised that the insufficient food supplies, the shortage of clean drinking water and the improper tent accommodation were circumstances that negatively impacted on the social relations between the different groups of people in the Nylstroom camp.

The vast majority of the learners came to understand that the end of the war, and the message symbolised by the monument, represents to large extent peace and freedom. Most of the learners became aware of the importance of peace and freedom and are conscious of the negative implications these have on socio-cultural and political relations when one group unfairly suppresses

⁸⁰ KC Barton & A McCully, "History teaching and the perpetuation of memories...", ED Cairns, MD Roe (eds.), *The role of memory...*, p. 122.

another group by force. It was this realisation that made most of the learners believed that peace and freedom should be appreciated and cherished. However, the majority judged that this mindset has indeed developed at their school which is why the learners show tolerance towards one another. This attitude of acceptance promoted a feeling of social cohesion, mutual understanding and a sense of communal identity between the different groups in the school. By being knowledgeable about the happenings and by accepting the trauma of the past it contributed to a process of intercultural understanding and the recognition of an identity.

Furthermore most of the learners held the view that the balanced way in which their teachers were teaching the interaction of the different socio-cultural relations in the Nylstroom camp equipped them with the necessary knowledge to show a better understanding of present-day life issues. According to the results the learners indicated that they were allowed by the teachers to voice their opinions and to form independent viewpoints on the meaning of the historical events. However, a fairly significant group of learners (41.17%) indicated that they are not interested in engaging in debates regarding environmental-historical matters for the reason that it can lead to arguments. This might be an indication that Grade 7 learners are not yet ready to engage in critical thinking and the formulation of an independent viewpoint with regard to environmental-historical issues.

Conclusion

Through this research it is evident that the school in this case study adheres to the overall goal of the United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), supported by the White Paper for Education and Training in South Africa and the NCS for History. In this school an integrated, multi-dimensional approach to teaching and learning was followed during which the principles, values and practices of sustainable development were taught by not only focusing on the biophysical environment but also on complex social and economic issues.

The symbolic message manifested by the monument as well as the instruction received from the teachers on the events in the Nylstroom camp during the South African War provided the unique context for an historical-environmental approach to education. The teachers used the relationship between people and place (the environment), which is defined by the

monument, in their endeavour to develop an historical memory. This holistic approach to teaching and learning expanded the learner's understanding of the importance of a balanced biophysical, social and economic environment. They showed some appreciation and conscience for equality and social justice, not only in their own school but also in wider society. By being knowledgeable on the happenings and by accepting the trauma of the past, it helped some of the learners to remove negative stereotypes and repositioned them in time. In the process the development of an historical memory contributed to the development of an ethic of sustainable living and the creation of a new South African identity based on values very different from those that underpinned the government before 1994.

The initiative of the school principal and his colleagues to present the school's history in such an innovative way should be applauded. By investigating the role that their school grounds played during the event of the South African War, it not only linked the learners to the historical reality of the world around them, but they also came to the realisation of the influence that the past can have on the present.