

MASIBAMBANE SECONDARY SCHOOL, BLOEKOMBOS

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Masibambane Secondary School was initiated in 1999 by the Bloekombos community when a 'padkamp' was taken over to house the first batch of secondary school learners. The desperate need for a secondary school was spurred by rapid growth, with the population doubling to 44 224 between 1996 and 2001. At inception, 17% of the population had no formal schooling, with 66.5% having a primary and/or secondary school qualification.

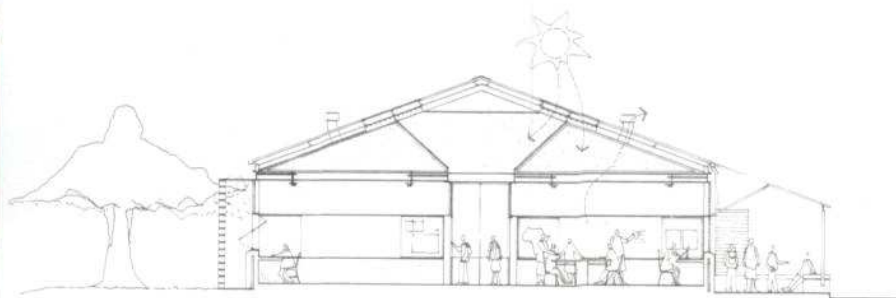
The CSIR initiated the Thuba Makote Programme on behalf of the National Government Department of Education and Training. The aim of the programme was to address the need for delivery of quality learning environments, together with community development in disadvantaged areas. A key objective was to achieve maximum impact and cost-efficiency within a tight delivery programme, while ensuring that various levels of intervention are sustainable and appropriate.

The school was identified as the pilot project for the Western Cape in 2002. It was poorly resourced, with many critical educational problems associated with the lack of permanency of teacher and management appointments. The 809 learners were accommodated in a platoon system with inadequate facilities. A prefabricated building and two steel portal frame structures, at different levels of deterioration, accommodated classrooms. The site was degraded, with rubble and concrete structures scattered over it.

A school task team, comprising representatives from the CSIR, the Western Cape Department of Education, professional consultants and 13 political and social groups, established core aims and objectives. Three active focus groups were targeted to deal with issues regarding construction skills training, education and recreation. These group activities were run intensively, parallel to the design and construction programme. The level of success of these programmes was limited by the need to realise these projects prior to ownership, and the prioritisation of initiatives taking place within a more regularised school environment.

The construction brief entailed establishing facilities for 1 200 learners in terms of supporting the new curriculum requirements and, secondly, supporting the needs of the broader community as identified by the stakeholders. In developing an approach it was important to establish:

- The sense of the whole: The school is formed as a set of buildings around a centralised court. A sense of unity is achieved by the relationship of each building to the courtyard, edged by a generous covered walkway. This court accommodates general play, gathering and peripheral spaces for discussion and lunch breaks. These daily activities at the school are generally organised and supported by community members. This space also absorbs the pageant of matric dance gatherings and community celebrations.



- **Social spaces:** The primary courtyard is framed by a covered walkway that identifies entry areas into the classrooms, hall and secondary courts. These courts and covered walkways provide shelter, shade and seating areas for informal socialising. The hall is positioned centrally to the courtyard and plays an important role in school and community gatherings. The sports field directly relates to these courts and the hall, allowing them to be both a school and community resource.
- **Re-use of existing structures:** The re-use of existing tarmac surfaces to support play courts and the industrial shed portal frames allowed the limited budget to be focused on the provision of learning spaces. The two existing shed structures provided an opportunity for a frame that is modular and afforded a generosity in volume and flexibility of layout.

The teaching facilities were handed over in December 2003 and the hall was constructed with funding from the Western Cape Department of Education in 2004. The school is now run by permanent staff and a principal who have realised many initiatives as a direct response to the needs of the school, the learners and the community. The ongoing pressure of increasing enrolment numbers and financial constraints have again led to platooning and heavy use of the facilities. However, a level of ownership and pride is evident on visiting Masibambane School. ■

