

Students kneel on floor to write. Government is casual about furnishing schools for blacks. South Africa. 1960s.

This black and white photograph in landscape format shows around fifteen black schoolchildren, aged about ten, kneeling on the floor to write. They sit in a tight grouping, hunched over as they write in exercise books or chalkboards. They appear to be concentrating hard, working diligently. All wear white school shirts and shorts, and their feet are bare. Their hair is short-cropped and their heads are all bowed over their writing, with faces unseen, suggesting the students' diligence, but also hiding their individuality.

Ernest Cole wrote the following observation in his notebook, while photographing conditions on the impact of the Bantu Education Act in schools: 'No. of Private Teachers – 7, one qualified with an overflow of about 400 children... late afternoon sessions over 80 to a class'.