

Protesting pupils shut down school

Grade 10 pupil Nandipha Mzolo during the protest.

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Pupils at Sukuma Secondary School in Imbali Unit 1 brought learning to a standstill on Monday and Tuesday as they closed F J Sithole Road with broken bottles and burnt tyres at the school's entrance.

Pupils at the school have been without electricity for the past three months and some in Grades 10, 11 and 12 have not had teachers since the beginning of the year.

Pupils said the electricity problems started at the beginning of the year and at first they thought it was load shedding because the electricity would go off and then come back on a few hours later or the next day.

Some of the pupils who spoke to **Echo** but wanted to remain anonymous said that when the electricity was not reinstated for days in January, they turned to teachers and the school principal for answers and were told that a transformer was damaged.

"We saw Eskom cars coming in and out of our school and we had hopes that they were fixing the electricity but until today [Monday] we still do not have electricity. When we closed in March we were told that when we return, we will have electricity but we still don't and no one has explained the reason for this.

"Some exams were written late in the first term because the school had obtained copies of the examination papers at ZamaZulu Secondary school because we do not have electricity.

"Grade 12 pupils who are doing consumer studies did not do their practicals because there was no electricity. This is going to reflect badly on their results because these practicals con-

tribute to their marks. What is even worse is that they pay for these practicals," she said.

Pupils who are staying at the boarding house situated on the school grounds were sent home when returned to school for the second term. They were told they could not stay in the boarding house because there was no electricity.

"During the first term borders would get help from the day scholars who were living near the school with ironing of their uniforms but they still could not study because it was dark. Most of them who are not from the area went home and they are left behind with their school work. Others found alternate accommodation.

"When we asked teachers how pupils who were sent home will catch up with school work, we were told by these teachers that is not their problem because they will not start with teaching all over again when they return. This is so unfair to them.

"Enough is enough now. We will protest until there is electricity and we have teachers," she said.

Pupils without teachers say that at the end of their first term they had to write exams although they did not have a teacher.

"[The school] organised teachers but they only reported to school twice a week and some weeks, they wouldn't show up at all. We were told that we must write the exams whether we know what to write or not because the department gives us the paper to write," they said.

"If we continue like this we are going to fail at the end of the year.

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