

**AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW SELECTED
HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS
IN PIETERMARITZBURG EDUCATION DISTRICT
MANAGE THE PREVALENT NON-PAYMENT OF
SCHOOL FEES**

BY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mbangiseni Gabriel Mseleku declare that this research report, “An Investigation of how selected historically disadvantaged Schools in the Pietermaritzburg Education District manage the prevalent non-payment of school fees” is my own work and that all sources I have quoted or used have been acknowledged.

M G MSELEKU


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26. 03 . 03

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DEDICATION

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO:

My parents who have shown me unconditional love and have taught me to become what I am. They have set an example that has given me inspiration to further my studies.

ABSTRACT

The study was set out to investigate how selected historically disadvantaged schools in the Pietermaritzburg Education District, manage the prevalent non-payment of fees. The study used the survey method. The principals of schools were targeted because they are the accounting officers for the financial matters and executive members of the School Governing Bodies. Permission for conducting this research was obtained from the District Manager for the Department of Education and the principals of the sampled schools. For the purpose of data collection, the use of questionnaire and document analysis was adopted. Five principals, each representing their respective circuit in the District, responded to the questionnaire. The research studied financial records to obtain a general view of how principals manage school fees and to draw conclusion on the extent of non-payment of fees.

The findings revealed that there is widespread tendency of non-payment of fees in schools. Poverty was cited as the reason for non-payment. Low and middle level income parents did not prioritise school fees from the lists of their accounts. Though principals understand that the victimising of non-paying learners of any form is contradictory to the South African Schools Act No 48 of 1996, they go on to withhold learners' results.

Parents have not applied for school fee exemption and schools have not yet advised them to do so. Non-paying parents are reluctant to explain their position to the school and also unwilling to offer voluntary service to school as a form of payment.

School fundraising efforts do not help them gain any reasonable amount of cash. The parental support in this venture is lacking.

The study recommends that principals should look at other means of dealing with payment and should assist the eligible parents to apply for fee exemption. The Department of Education should consider scaling down personnel expenditure in the office based ranks to add more funds for teaching and learning in the historically disadvantaged schools.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African education is faced with confusion with respect to compulsory and free education. As much as the present government would have loved to provide free education, it has not been able to due to financial constraints and the international debts it inherited from the apartheid regime. This study investigated how principals of selected historically disadvantaged schools manage the non-payment of school fees by parents.

1.2 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The South African Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education(Section 29 of the Constitution) and that therefore the government should make provision for basic education from grade 1-9. The government allocates funds to schools using the Standards and Norms formula for school funding. These allocations do not meet all the requirements for schools. For example, disadvantaged schools still need financial resources for basic learner support materials and for general improvement of the school infrastructure and other assets (Idasa, 25 October 2001). The government is mindful of the resource constraints and insists that, “all parents are encouraged to make financial contribution to add quality to their children’s education, but individuals should not be denied access to education because of their parents’ inability to pay” (SASA 1996:35).

Public schools charge school fees at their own discretion. There are no constraints regarding the fees amount, as long as the majority of parents approve it. Once this has been agreed upon, it becomes compulsory for every parent to pay regardless of their financial status. Since parents are the main source of income it is evident that there are wide inequalities between public schools as they compete for quality education, achievable through financial feasibility (SASA 1996). Disadvantaged schools take many learners whose parents cannot afford school fees (Arnett & Reab: 2000). The major problem facing the schools is that

they must ensure that all children gain access to education while the majority of parents come from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

The school fees requirement discourages learner enrolment to some extent and evidence suggests that a decrease in enrolment is associated with a sharp increase in school fees (Azuma 1999:57). There is need for schools to look for other avenues so that they do not depend solely on the state and parents as the only source of income.

Exploring these avenues is a challenge but needs to be taken. Such challenges include seeking donations and sponsorship from business organizations and other donor agencies. The former, have policies that show preference to taking donations from charity organizations like Cancer Association, Deaf and Blind Associations, rather than educational institutions. Although others tend to donate commodities, which the company produces in most cases, those commodities are irrelevant to the needs of the schools (Mkhulisi, 1999).

In face of the above, the study aims to ascertain the extent to which disadvantaged schools in the Pietermaritzburg Education District encounter the problem of school fees non-payment and how these schools deal with the situation.

1.3 MAJOR PROBLEMS AND ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Schools restrictions in relation to payment of fees create a possibility that some learners cannot enrol in schools .A learner is discriminated against if he/she cannot afford fees unless the school grants him fee exemption. Recent incidents reported in newspapers support this argument. It is reported that some schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal do not accept learners who are unable to pay school fees (The Daily News. 21 January 1999:2). According to the report, many children were not allowed to register at schools without paying fees for the year. At a public secondary school in Durban, only those who had

money were allowed to enrol their children and more than 100 learners were told to go home if they did not have fees. In 1994 a nine year old, grade 4 pupil was reported as not having attended school because his parents could not pay school fees (The Mercury, 10 March 1999:3) (according to the reporter), his primary school adopts a ‘no pay, no school attitude’. The chairman of the Governing Body says that they are running a business, and therefore they make school fees compulsory to ensure that the school keep running. In response, this research looks at the prevalence of non-payment in historically disadvantaged schools in Pietermaritzburg Education District and the management of school fees.

1.4 REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS TOPIC

The main reasons that motivated the researcher to conduct this research were firstly, a desire to pursue a study on how principals of historically disadvantaged schools handle the problem of non-payment of school fees. Secondly, the researcher intended to find out how principals carry out their role as financial accounting officers. The last, and most important was for the researcher to add to the body of knowledge on this topic which has been scarcely dealt with before and to seek strategies for augmenting school fees that will help principals deal with problems of non-payment and scarce financial resources due to the prevalent non-payment of school fees.

1.5 KEY QUESTIONS

The study centred around two critical questions in an attempt to achieve the gist of the topic. The questions were:

- ◆ How prevalent is the non-payment of school fees in historically disadvantaged schools in the Pietermaritzburg Education District?
- ◆ How do the schools generally manage school fees and their non-payment?

1.6 METHOD USED

This is a quantitative study which aimed to collect the data in simple raw form. The data

were grouped and presented in tables and figures. The data were collected by means of questionnaire with structured and open-ended questions. Documentation were studied in order to triangulate and also to see how schools manage school fees. Tricker (cited in Mthembu 1999) argues that the advantage of triangulation is that it allows for evidence from different sources to be examined, compared and cross checked.

1.7 THE PRINCIPAL THEORY INFORMING THE RESEARCH

PROJECT : OPEN SYSTEM THEORY

Katz and Kahn's Open System Theory framed this study. This model emphasizes the importance of materials for the achievement of organizational goals and the management of various forms of inputs(Hanson 1985). According to this theory, schools should have resources in order for them to function properly. Katz and Kahn see economic(fees) and physical(equipment, facilities and buildings) factors as the major fields of forces shaping the character of contingencies impacting on the organization. The model explains the problem of scarce resources for schools as they attempt to meet community expectations and societal demands as open systems to the surrounding environment through the input-output exchanges. The Open System Theory was thus used to trace the management of 'input-output exchanges' between the studied schools and their environments.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

To facilitate clarity it would be appropriate to define the key concepts or concepts which are pertinent to this study.

The Act: Refers to the South African Schools Act No. 84 passed in 1996 and implemented in 1998.

Constitution: Refers to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996).

Education Department: Refers to the department established by section 7(2) of Public Service Act, 1994, which is responsible for education in the province.

Parent: Refers to a person who has been awarded the custody of a child. A person who is the biological father or mother of the child. A person who by virtue of relationship reside with the child and inherited the responsibility of caring and nurturing the child when the actual biological parents are deceased or incapable. For the purpose of this research such persons shall be referred to as parents(KZN Provincial Gazette No 5178 of 1997).

Principal: Refers to an educator appointed or acting as the head of school.

Historically Disadvantaged Schools: Refers to those schools which were deprived of opportunities to develop to their full potential, which were under-resourced financially and materially(Hartstorne, 1992)

Learners:Refers to any person receiving education in an officially registered school (SASA 1996).

Quality Education: Refers to the practice of education undertaken effectively and efficiently with acceptable high standards.

School: Refers to a public or independent school which enrolls learners in one or more grades between grade zero (known as “reception”) and grade 12.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This study comprises of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 is the introduction and overall exposition of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses or reviews the literature associated with the research topic, perceptions and application of the South African Schools Act as this has direct implication on the school fees issues and the right to learn.

Chapter 3 elucidates the methodology utilised by the study.

Chapter 4 presents the data collected from respondents during the course of the survey. It also includes the description of results and the statistical analysis thereof.

Chapter 5 concludes and comprises of the summary, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section expresses how the local and international literature delve with the school fees topic and the problems that arise. It explores the role the government plays in protecting the learners' right to learn, the possible reasons for prevalent non-payment of fees and the approaches schools use to manage the problem of the prevalent non-payment.

2.2 THE PREAMBLE TO THE PROBLEM

The research presents the South African situation in relation to the global school community in terms of financial resource allocation and management. Formal education has always been an expensive commodity for the poor. This has not only been a South African problem, but it has been a global one.

“In many countries, education has become a privilege for which households must pay. However, mass poverty means that, many parents cannot afford to send their children to school. Cost-sharing is a catch-all phrase that describes the distribution of education costs between parents and the public purse”.

(Oxfam International, 2001:5)

The above quote is testimony that globally, education has to be paid for. Only a minority of non-industrialised countries has yet achieved universal primary education, and in most Third World nations universal secondary education remains a distant goal (Bray and Lillis:1988). The causal factor for this status quo is poverty, which renders parents unable to pay school fees because according to Luthuli (1977) the ability of children's ability to pay depends on the parents' income.

Before the government took over the education responsibility, education was offered by missionaries free of charge and only those people who belonged to that particular

denomination had an access to education(Christie 1985). What transpires from this discourse is that although education was minimal and not available to all, it was free. When governments took over, they provided education for the greater community and started charging fees for tuition. It is from this angle that this dissertation has been approached.

Most Africans live in poverty. If they are now expected to pay for their education, it stands to reason that most of them will not be able to afford it . When one compares Third World and First World countries as far as education is concerned, the major difference is that the problem in the latter countries, is how to spend the funds allocated to education. In the former countries the problem is how to raise funds for education.

Permission to charge user fees in South Africa and in some African states has some adverse effects. A Black Sash cited by Roithmayr (2002) reaffirms that schools initially charged annual fees of R50 per child and 75% of the households in the community could not afford such fees. While the school fee increase was moderate until 1995, it began to increase in 1996 and drastically in 1997 and 1998. Azuma (1999) hypothesises that the more school fees increase, the higher the number of parents who do not pay.

2.3 THE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

The school fee hike is not only experienced locally, it is a global problem. In Tanzania, Ghana and Zambia it has forced parents to withdraw their children from schools (Oxfam 2001). Similarly the World Bank Study (1996) demonstrates that the enrolment dropped in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Cote d'Ivoire after the introduction of school fees (Reddy and Vandemoortele 1996).

In the study conducted in the United Kingdom by Levacic (2000), the issue was whether there was a link between expenditure on education and academic achievement. The report states that there is a paradox concerning the relationship between expenditure on education and outcomes. While parents, students, teachers and managers are convinced that with

more resources better educational outcomes could be provided, the findings of educational research on the link between educational expenditure per student and educational outputs at the school, college or system level are still subject to much controversy.

Bush (2000:99) made the following observation in his study of the impact of finance and resources on management .

“Resource allocation has become more important in many countries as educational organisations have been accorded more autonomy. In England and Wales, this trend is represented by Local Management of Schools (LMS). A parallel development in Hong Kong is the School Management Initiative (SMI) while Singapore has introduced a small number of independent and autonomous schools. Similar initiatives are evident in New Zealand and parts of USA and Australia.”

It is noted with interest that all countries mentioned by the authors above are all developed countries and their concern is how and who should manage the funds. In Africa, which has many underdeveloped countries including South Africa, the scenario is completely different. Oxfam International(2001) reports, for example, findings from case studies in Tanzania, Ghana and Zambia which raise fundamental questions about the practice of charging for education. For many households, education has become an unaffordable luxury. Some children are being kept out of school altogether, while others are dropping out before completing their primary education. Parents are being forced to make choices about which child to send to school.

2.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCENARIO

“Can the ANC deliver free state schooling?” Crouch(1994) cites this question from the Weekly Mail and Guardian, 10, 23,1994. During the election campaign the African National Congress (ANC) had promised the voters, inter alia, free education. When the

ANC won the elections it was time to face reality. With the economy of the country in recession, it was not possible for the government to provide free education for everybody, hence the question of whether the ANC can deliver free education. With the passage of time it has become clear that the government cannot fulfill its promise of free education. Much has been said about how inefficient the government is, but the bottom line is that parents have to pay for their children's education.

This status quo is a big problem for principals to be able to run schools effectively. The effectiveness of any school depends on the availability of resources.

2.4.1 THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The prime reason for traditionally black schools to be without resources is through what Karlsson (1998) calls the inherited discourse of apartheid as a special form of colonial domination and privilege based on racial differentiation and that is deeply entrenched through an equitable schooling system and marks the lives of all South Africans.

For schools to acquire resources they require funds. Most learners' parents in African schools especially, cannot afford to pay fees because they live in abject poverty. In view of the above argument the Constitution of South Africa (1996) entrenches the right to education. Section 32 (a) states that:

“Every person shall have the right to a basic education and to equal access to education institution.”

This suggests that any school policy which discriminates unfairly in terms of admission and treatment of learners is not acceptable. The question of ability or inability to pay compulsory school fees shall not be used to respectively include or exclude those who have not payed as this violates the right to basic education.

The government's attempts at addressing equity in education were the passing of the South

African Schools Act No 84 of 1996. This act safeguards the learners' interests in education. It stipulates that:

“No learner may be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that his or her parent is unable to pay or has not paid the school fees determined by the school governing body”

This clause in the act ensures that the provision of the constitution that everybody is entitled to basic education and is not violated. Basic education is a legal entitlement to which every person has a claim (DoE, 1995: 40 par. 11). Because of this clause, schools in traditionally black areas are overflowing with learners who have not paid their school fees (Azuma, 1999). Could this be attributed to the poor socio-economic background of the catchment areas?

2.4.2 POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND THE SCHOOL FEE EXEMPTION POLICY

The question of funding raises uncertainty as to whether the state or parents should pay for education. Azuma (1999) stated that due to insufficient funds the Department of Education provides, school governors always persuade parents to pay more money to the school in order to improve the school, but some parents are excluded from schools due to failure to pay. Financial instability impacts on the schools' expectations of the parents. According to Mkhulisi (1999), people living in the poor socio-economic background suffer from unemployment and their standard of living is low compared to affluent society inhabiting suburbs. In agreement with Mkhulisi's findings,

Mncwabe's survey (2000) revealed that households in the black designated areas only earn between R200-R1 000. Most low income people are domestic workers, work as casual jobbers or run small business enterprises selling in the streets. Most families are supported by women who also take care of grandchildren.

The Department of Education takes the parents' income levels into consideration by creating chances for school fee exemption for certain category of parents to ensure that compulsory school going learners are not wantomly refused admission into schools and to protect their right to learn. The school fee exemption policy SASA (1996) makes provision for partial, conditional and total exemption as illustrated in the example below:

FULL EXEMPTION

If the combined annual gross income of the parents is less than 10 times the annual school fees per learner, the parent qualifies for full fee exemption.

PARTIAL EXEMPTION

If the combined annual gross income of the parents is less than 30 times but more than 10 times the annual school fees per learner, the parent qualifies for partial exemption from school fees.

NO EXEMPTION

If the combined annual gross income of the parents is more than 30 times the annual school fees per learner, such households income does not warrant any exemption.

CONDITIONAL EXEMPTION

Special circumstances affecting the parent's ability to pay the fee, or the need to acquire relevant information about a parent's circumstances may result in conditional exemption being awarded.

Example

School XYZ: Levies a school fee of R800,00 per annum

Full Exemption: Combined gross annual income is below R8 000,00 per annum.

Partial Exemption: Combined gross annual income is between R8 000,00 per annum and R 24 000,00.

Range for Partial Exemption: from 0% to 100% is $R24\ 000 - R8\ 000 = R\ 16\ 000$.

Calculation of Partial Exemption:

The gross combined annual income of family A is R20 000

This is $R20\ 000 - R8\ 000 = R12\ 000$ above full exemption.

This family should pay	<u>Amount above full exemption</u>	
	Range for exemption	* 100
	=	$\frac{12\ 000}{16\ 000} * 100$
		= 66.6 % of school fees

Family A should pay R533 school fees or receive a school fee exemption of R267,00 (33%)

Source: Exemption of Parents From Payment of Fees, Department of Education (1998) at par.4.

This formula could be used by any school in the region in order to grant school fee exemption for parents who apply. However they will have to furnish proof that their income is limited.

Hofmeyr, (2000) foresees problems with this special exemption. She says that since the charging and setting of school fees and the school budget have to be approved by a majority of parents, it would be possible for a majority of parents to support high fees that they know they won't have to pay. The effectiveness of school fee exemption policy is also doubted by Roithmayr (2000) in highlighting that income - based exemption schemes do not accurately measure poverty, ability and willingness to pay. In his conclusion he stated that the exemption regulations do not work well enough to provide access to quality education for those who cannot pay.

In Nasson and Samuel's (1996) argument school fees exemption policy does not necessarily bring about equal opportunity to education because it is discriminatory in one way or another. In their argument they claim that:

“In theory every learner can attend the school even though his or her parents cannot pay or did not pay school fees. However , it appears that the Act does not pay enough attention to the influence of those provisions on learners. There is no doubt that school fees exemptions is a tool to support poor learners. However, if other learners in the school know that someone’s parent is exempted from paying school fees because of poverty, such a learner may encounter invisible discrimination against him or her.”

The act provides for school governing bodies to take legal action against parents who do not pay the fees when they can afford to. Rapitso (2000) reports of a Krugersdorp teacher who has had her furniture and car attached after the Krugersdorp High School instituted legal action against her for being unable to pay school fees for her two children. This is one of many cases that have been taken to court for defaulting and is linked to findings that parents fail to pay a school fee of R150 when they can buy other expensive clothing for their children, (Mkhulisi 2000).

In other cases principals themselves embezzle the school fund due to dishonesty or lack of proper school fees management skills. Khumalo (2002) reports that teachers and members of the school governing body at Dlangani High School in Bulwer, KwaZulu Natal have called for the resignation of the principal, who stands accused of allegedly stealing more than R60 000 in school fund. Such cases would lead parents who are reluctant to pay into believing that non-payment is the right route because principals, steal the money after all. Because of the many problems surrounding the issue of school fees, many organizations have called for the abolition of school fees.

Baloyi (2002) quotes Willy Madisha, the president of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union, as saying that paying school fees in addition to paying for textbooks, stationery, uniforms, transport to and from school and food are all direct and indirect costs on the already heavy burden on the poor and must be abolished. Without funds the school cannot operate efficiently. The principal can then be perceived as inefficient because the school is not effective.

This study will concentrate on how principals who serve poor communities manage to run schools effectively. Most poor communities are so poor that they cannot even support a fund raising event promoted by the school as argued by Zwane (1992).

2.4.3 SCHOOLS' STRATEGIES FOR COLLECTING OUTSTANDING FEES

In a bid to try and collect fees certain schools have gone on to break the law by engaging in some of the following misdeeds. Bissety (1999) reported that a woman living in Glenwood, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal had a foster child turned away from the schools she applied to because she could not afford to pay the school fees. Apparently the schools did not even want to apply the exemption rule. This was despite the fact that the law stipulates clearly that no child should be turned away if the parents cannot afford to pay school fees.

Mecoemere (1999) states that about 35 schools in Bethlehem, Free State are subjecting pupils to various kinds of punishment for owing school fees. The report goes on to say that in some schools learners were being beaten for owing even though the South African Schools Act stipulates clearly that corporal punishment has been banned in South African schools.

Whether these drastic measures are effective or not, is not stated. The fact remains though that most parents cannot pay because they have nothing to pay with.

2.4.4 FUND RAISING

The Department of Education expects the School Governing Bodies to raise funds as a voluntary source of income, but Mthembu's (1999) research findings claims that schools rely on traditional means of fund raising namely raffles and film shows which do not gain them any reasonable revenue. Parental involvement in fund raising is also questioned by principals who believe that the Act "Weakened" parents in the sense that they now believe that everything has got to be done for them (Roithmayr 2002). Many fundraising attempts have managed to collect nothing more than R3 000 a year according to Mthembu (1999),

while one ex-Model C school managed to raise R10 000 a day on one occasion each time a fundraising project was organised (Dodd 2002). Schools have no relationship with the private sector and the learners are completely negative as far as fundraising is concerned. This suggests that fundraising in historically disadvantaged schools is in no way helping to augment the fees paid by parents.

Thomas and Martin(1996) suggest that schools should create partnerships with the business sector. They emphasise that requests for sponsorship carry more weight when presented in the form of a business plan explaining the school's development plan and the impact the objective will have on the development of young people and future generations. The school credibility can attract donors to invest in education.

2.5 SOME MODELS COMMONLY USED FOR UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL FEES PROBLEMS, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT

Resource allocation and schools' resource base lead to school effectiveness when used effectively. According to Hoy and Miskel (1978), it is impossible to state that one school is more effective than another without a theoretical model as a guide. They have therefore divided their theoretical approaches to organisational effectiveness into two models.

There is the goal model and the system resource model of organisational effectiveness. The goal model is defined in terms of the degree of goal attainment. The system resource model defines effectiveness as the organisation's ability to secure an advantageous bargaining position in its environment and to capitalise on that position to acquire scarce and valued resources. Both these models refer to school effectiveness from different approaches. Seemingly, they complement each other. For any organisation to attain its goals it must have adequate resources and that is a luxury most traditionally black schools don't enjoy because the majority of parents cannot afford to pay school fees. In addition to these models managers commonly rely on the following approaches for resource management :

2.5.1 Problem Based Model

Ramsey's problem based model explains how to stretch resources and do even more with less. A possible problem which should always be anticipated by school managers is that some of the parents may not always pay the expected user fees. For the school not to run on a budget deficit, the budget should be goal oriented and priority driven.

Budget drawers' starting points are not to decide to incrementally raise all current program budgets but to examine which instructional approaches and consequent resources allocations best enable school personnel to meet changing students performance and enhance the quality of education provided by the school (Ramsey 2001). This model is a solution to the previously deprived schools which are supported mostly by poor parents who cannot afford to pay more than their minimal household income can afford.

Sexton (1962) argues that when financial resources are shifted from one equipment to another, year after year, the limited funds will, after a couple of years manage to get the school the required material resources. This is provided the non-recurrent resources are managed well to last longer and serve the school for a number of years before they are written off. This will also prevent school fees hike.

2.5.2 Rational-decision Making Model

Hartman and Boyd, (1998) claim that resource allocations should be understood and distributed in the most efficient and effective way. People responsible for resource allocation should therefore have knowledge for the needed inputs. The prioritisation of goals, the decisions dealing with costs and benefits are necessary within the framework of a rational decision-making model. This model demands thorough knowledge of strategic planning by the school managers so that the few resources the school can afford can be exactly what the teaching practitioners need. It is testimony to Demison's (1984)

claims that an efficiency objective achieved through accomplishing the variety of goals in succession uses fewer resources.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The literature draws attention to the plight of the schools who need to have resources and apply pressing measures for all parents to pay. The intervention that the government has made to alleviate the problem calls for all stakeholders to work together towards the quality of education for children.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodological issues to investigate how schools manage school fees and their non-payment with reference to the new school fees policy, as stated in the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by means of a survey. The survey was adopted for the study because of its ability to suit descriptive studies where the interest is to find out how many people in a given population possess a particular attribute, as argued by Robson (1996).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which were used to determine means and frequencies.

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE

The researcher opted for this instrument because it allows delivery to respondents for self administration and to be collected thereafter. Gay (1987) also points out that the use of a questionnaire is more efficient than that of an interview. It requires less time, is less expensive and permits collection of data from any size of the sample. However, questions in a questionnaire can be misinterpreted. To minimize this flaw by the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot study to ensure that questions were not ambiguous.

There were very few open-ended questions in this study. Most questions were close structured. This was because, although open-ended questions can reveal information

the researcher did not anticipate, the respondent is free to answer the way he wishes, at the same time open-ended questions can lead to a collection of some irrelevant information (Bailey, 1994).

Questionnaires were delivered personally to the research sites and dates for collection were set. The researcher first phoned to find out if respondents had completed the questionnaires and if they were available to produce requested finance documents for analysis.

DOCUMENTATION

Cash analysis registers, petty cash registers, records of outstanding fees from the previous years were studied. The researcher did this on his own in one secondary school. With two other secondaries, the principals were eventually asked to do the filling of the documentation checklist as they were not available to supply the researcher with the financial books.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH SITE

The research was conducted in selected historically disadvantaged schools in the Pietermaritzburg Education District. Historically disadvantaged schools comprise of schools which were deprived of opportunities to develop to their full potential and under-resourced financially and by means of equipment and buildings (Hartstone, 1992). These schools were meant for Africans (Blacks) only and fell under the Department of Education and Training and Kwa-Zulu Department of Education and Culture.

RESEARCH POPULATION

Pietermaritzburg Education District has fifty two mainstream schools clustered in five circuits. Some of these schools are in the urban area while others are in the townships and rural areas. Only schools from the townships and rural areas formed the population of the study.

TARGET GROUP

The principals of schools were targeted as research respondents because they are accounting officers for school fees management at their schools. They are also executive members of the School Governing Bodies who have the obligations as per appointment to guide the governing bodies to do correct things in line with the Schools Act (SASA1996).

THE SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The sample was selected by means of strategic random sampling which enabled all the schools in the identified population equal opportunities of being selected. The sample consisted of 3 secondary schools and 2 primaries.

3.6 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

GAINING ACCESS

Permission for conducting the research was requested from the Pietermaritzburg District Manager who granted it provided the principals of the schools were willing to participate. Furthermore, permission from the principals of the selected schools was requested for them to participate as respondents and gate-keepers as the research involved checking the schools' financial records. This necessitated prior approval of the School Governing Bodies. All the principals of the selected schools were willing to participate and had no problem in making their financial documents available for the researcher's use.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The question of ethics was taken into consideration as advised by Groenewald (1989) and Bayle, et al (1996). The authors state that the researcher needs to make the participants aware that they are not obliged to participate in the study and that they may withdraw at anytime if they so wish. Nachmias (1987) also stresses that the participants involved in research must do so with their consent, especially if they are to divulge confidential information.

McMillan and Schumacher's (1993) advice was also taken into consideration. The authors point out that the researcher should be frank and should not misrepresent the nature and purpose of the study. Participating principals were told the purpose and scope of the study and were treated with respect. Schools' names and participating principals were to be kept anonymous. Information gathered was going to be used for research purposes only and therefore should be treated confidentially. The researcher invited research participants to ask questions for clarification.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

According to Cohen and Manion (2000), the wording of the questionnaire is of paramount importance and its pretesting is crucial for its success. Accordingly a pilot study was carried out to identify problems that were likely to be encountered during the survey proper, to test the length of the questionnaire and the clarity of the questions so that modification could be made, if necessary, before conducting the actual data collection.

There were no formalities followed in getting two principals to respond to the pilot questions. The researcher discovered that in some questions the responses did not provide the required information. In this case such questions were rephrased, struck out altogether or substituted. The questionnaire covered areas under investigation. In general the responses indicated that the wording of the questionnaire was found to be satisfactory. The pilot study increased the validity and practicability of the questionnaire.

3.8 DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED IN DATA COLLECTION

Some respondents did not keep to the agreed upon dates for handing back the questionnaire. The study was conducted at the time of matric examinations when the principals had to collect question papers from the Regional Office, return answer scripts after examination sessions and serve as Chief Invigilators. Appointments were sometimes postponed and rescheduled to enable those who were not ready to get time to respond to the questionnaire. In one case the questionnaire was lost and therefore the researcher had to supply another copy. These difficulties affected the time scale for the researcher. Although some difficulties

were experienced, as described above, all the principals of the selected schools finally responded to the questionnaires.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research design and methodological considerations have been described. An analysis of the data collected for the study is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives the statistics of learner enrolment and the number of learners who failed to pay school fees to arrive at the extent of non-payment of school fees. Also important is the strategies schools use in dealing with the non-payment problems. The discussion of parents' involvement in school fee issues is included.

SECTION A

4.2 YEAR 2001 AND 2002 SCHOOL FEES

Table 1

	Year 2001				Year 2002			
School Fees in Rand	100	150	180	200	100	150	180	200
Number of schools	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	2

AVERAGE SCHOOL FEES
IN YEAR 2001 = R146

AVERAGE SCHOOL FEES
IN YEAR 2002 = R182

The statistics in Table 1 show that two schools in year 2001 charged R100 school fees per child whereas none of the schools charged this amount in 2002. This makes R150 the minimum amount charged by schools in year 2002. Two schools raised their fees by 80% and 100% respectively. The highest amount charged was R200 with the average for school fees reaching R182 in 2002. It seems as if schools have a tendency of increasing

school fees, putting more demands on parents without considering the socio-economical factors of their catchment areas as found by Azuma (1999). A Black Sash study cited by Roithmayr (2002) reaffirms that schools initially charged an annual fee of R50 per child and 75% of the households in the community could not afford such fees. School fees increased drastically in 1997 and 1998.

4.3 YEAR 2001 ENROLMENT

Table 2

ENROLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
Less than 499	0
500-800	0
801-1000	2
1000+	3
TOTAL	5

Two schools had enrolment which was between 801 and 1000 in year 2001. The other three schools' enrolment was above 1000.

4.4 NUMBER OF LEARNERS WHO DID NOT PAY SCHOOL FEES IN YEAR 1999, 2000 AND 2001

Table 3

SCHOOLS	LEARNERS WHO DID NOT PAY				
	YEAR 1999	YEAR 2000	YEAR 2001	TOTAL	AVE
A	47	55	71	173	57,6
B	58	64	83	205	68,3
C	42	58	69	169	56,3
D	56	72	87	215	71,6
E	28	37	59	124	41,3
Combined School Averages	46,2	57,2	73,8	177,2	59,2

N = 5 schools

The average number of learners who did not pay year 1999, 2000 and 2001 in each of these five schools show that the non-payment rate is increasing and has become persistent. This entails reduced financial resource base. The average non-payment rate of school D which is 71,6 multiplied by R200 the price of school fees, amounts to R14200 income lost through non-payment in year 2001.

4.5 HOUSEHOLDS ESTIMATED INCOME

Table 4

INCOME	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	PARENTS' INCOME IN %
Unemployed	5	40%
R400-R800	5	25%
R801-R1200	3	25%
R1200+	3	10%

All principals reported that 40% of their parent community is unemployed with 25% earning between R400 and R800. Three schools out of five have a 25% parent community which earn between R801 and R1200. The same number of schools have 10% parent community which earn R1200 and above. Such a situation influences the payment of fees at historically disadvantaged schools more especially because media has reiterated to that effect when the SABC 1 news bulletin, Sunday 12 January 2003 informed public that the unemployment rate is 36,6% and for the fact that Luthuli (1977) argues that the ability of children to pay school fees depends on the parents' ability to earn and raise money. This suggests that unemployment and poverty will remain the major cause for non-payment of school fees.

SECTION B

4.6 PRINCIPALS' MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH NON-PAYMENT

Table 5

QUESTION	YES	%	NO	%
1. Does the school want the fees to be paid in full on or before registration?	3	60%	2	40%
2. Does the school refuse to register learners who failed to pay the previous year?	0	00%	5	100%
3. Is the payment of fees in fixed monthly/quarterly instalments?	1	20%	4	80%
4. Are the parents free to decide how much to pay in instalments until they finish?	4	80%	1	20%
5. Does the school allow parents to pay at least any portion of the fees before their children are registered.	4	80%	1	20%
6. Does your school have a due date by which all outstanding fees should have been paid?	4	80%	1	20%
7. Are there any learners getting financial assistance, e.g. bursaries, social grants, but still do not pay?	4	80%	1	20%
8. Does the school make any follow-up on learners getting financial assistance who decide to use it elsewhere other than school fees?	4	80%	1	20%
9. Has the non-payment of school fees affected your school before the inception of the 1996 South African Schools Act?	2	40%	3	60%
10. Do parents who cannot afford to pay come out clearly to state their problem(s) to the school?	2	40%	3	60%
11. Does the school withhold reports (results) from the learners who do not finish paying or do not pay at all?	4	80%	1	20%
12. Do some parents who cannot pay school fees also fail to purchase other school necessities, e.g. uniform, educational tours etc.	1	20%	4	80%
13. Do you think some learners' performances are affected by the fact that they know that their parents have not paid school fees?	0	00%	5	100%

This section intended to find out how principals manage the situation at their schools and what tactics they use to reduce the non-payment rate. Thirteen (13) Yes/No questions

were asked to this effect.

Questions 1-6 deal with the mode of payment schools want parents to follow. Data reveal that schools have various tactics for dealing with non-payment. These tactics include pressure, illegally and legally acceptable means as well. 60% of schools want fees to be paid in full on or before registration. However, the very same schools do not refuse to register those who do not pay anything on registration. This registration requirement does not apply to 40% of the schools. Seemingly this was intended to give the schools the opportunity to register those who are able to pay and then get the exact number of those who cannot pay so that they engage in further negotiations as to whether they pay in instalments or assist the school by offering voluntary services, (this is the response to question 6 section C). Now that the Schools Act compels schools to take children regardless of payment or not, the majority of schools (80%) allow parents to pay any amount in instalments to be finished by a certain due date. At the same time the due dates are often not met which then leads these schools to use incorrect tactics like withholding learners' reports (question 11 of this section and also Question 1 Section C). Very few schools (20%) try to enforce that money should be paid in fixed instalments. This also does not materialise. When fees are long overdue, the majority (80%) of schools withhold reports so that those who have not paid, although capable, can be forced to come forward and pay. Seemingly, principals feel that those parents who can afford to buy other school necessities and expensive clothes for their children (question 12) but neglect schools fees should be pressurized in this way. This is not the right route to take especially since the Act stipulates that such parents should be dealt with through legal procedures. This has not yet happened. Learners failing to pay fees return to school the following year and this perpetuates the culture of non-payment which Luthuli (1977) says is prevalent among black South Africans. One school was unlucky to be reported to the Department of Education for withholding reports for learners who did not pay in year 2002. In the year 2002 *The Natal Witness*, 18 December 2002 reported that the matter was under investigation and the officials would call the principal for disciplinary action

if he is found guilty.

60% of schools claim that their schools did not experience the fees problem (Question 9) prior to the inception of the South African Schools Act. This was either caused by the fact that fees charged were low or that the unemployment rate was not as high as it is now. Schools dealt with the problem anyway without restrictive measures imposed on them or no one bothered about the children out of school (Idasa 1999). Data shows that non-payment of school fees is an old problem for up to 40% of schools..

In eighty percent (80%) of schools some children get bursaries and social grants (questions 7 and 8) but still do not pay fees. This situation is confirmed in Zwane's (1992) study. Seemingly this is caused by dire poverty or because schools request parents to buy other school necessities such as school uniforms, additional stationery as well. Parents then decide to utilise the grants and bursaries for these school requirements.

Eighty percent (80%) of schools reported that the majority of parents do not come out in the open to say that they are unable to pay whereas 20% schools do not experience this problem.

All the schools reported that the learners' performance is not affected by the fact that they know that their parents have not paid their fees.

It is not clear how fees and their non-payment are managed at one school when its responses are "NO" to all questions 3-6.

SECTION C

4.7 ENCOURAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS TO PAY AND MODE OF COMMUNICATION

This section comprised of open-ended questions which enabled respondents to express

their views openly regarding the issue of school fees.

Question 1 and 2 required schools to furnish information on how they encourage parents to pay and how they communicate finance matters to non-paying parents.

All five schools stated that they invite parents to budget meetings where school needs are tabled and discussed and the need to pay is highlighted. Financial income and expenditure report is given quarterly for transparency and assurance that money is not fraudulently used. The five schools present the audited financial statements. The number of learners with outstanding fees is also shown.

All five schools write letters to remind owing parents to pay. One out of five schools send messages through the learners that they must remind their parents that they have not yet paid or that they are still owing the school a certain amount of fees. This school is also among those five which write letters. This means that, in this school, the matter is communicated both verbally and in writing. All five schools withhold December academic progress reports (results). It seems that schools do not have effective strategies for motivating parents to pay except resorting to the withholding of reports. In their response to question 1 of Section C they stated that: “We withhold reports as the last resort and it helps a little bit to pressurise those who can pay to come forward.” This also indicates that paying for school fees is not the households’ priority. Withholding the learners’ results is also not an effective strategy for achieving 100% payment because according to Table 3 and question 2 of section B, statistics and principals’ responses reflect that learners who did not pay the previous year(s) do come back to attend the following year.

Question 11 of Section B of this study has also indicated that schools withhold reports at the end of the year. This is not allowed according to the South African Schools Act (1996). Due to many schools still disregarding the law, the minister emphasized that

schools should stick to the Act (Asmal 1999).

4.8 PROBLEMS THAT ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE NON-PAYMENT OF SCHOOL FEES

All five respondents reported that schools experience a shortage of learning materials because of financial constraints. It would appear that schools are unable to meet all their yearly planning when it comes to implementation because all respondents stated that: “The budget deficit leaves the Schools Governing Bodies and management teams with no option but to postpone targets in the year planner for the following year.” Planning is merely paperwork which never materialises to the expectations of the School Governing Bodies. The data report that at one of the schools plans were in place to upgrade the school by adding one classroom so as to ease the congested classrooms. This project failed to materialise. This response was directed to question 3 of Section C. : “Consequently no development is taking place and maintenance of buildings and equipment is at a low level,” the respondent of this school remarked in his response to this question of the questionnaire.

4.9 SCHOOLS’ RESPONSE TO APPLICATIONS FOR PARTIAL, CONDITIONAL AND FULL SCHOOL FEES EXEMPTION

The South African Schools Act (1996) states that poor parents may be partially, conditionally or fully exempted from paying school fees. This study also wanted to find out whether schools did this as a means of accounting for legitimate non-payment, i.e. parents who cannot pay because they are really needy and live in poverty. In response to Section C, Question 2.1, it has been found that only one out of five schools indicated that school fee exemptions are granted when applicants provide evidence and signed affidavits from the magistrate declaring their financial status. The principal stated that each case is treated on merit. The majority of schools (4) have not yet told parents about the school fee exemption policy. It would appear that principals are sceptical of the repercussions of granting fee exemptions because responses from four principals stated

that: “If schools grant exemptions, it would have an influence on the paying parents who would not want to hear anything about people who do not pay when they pay (Question 5).” In testimony of this scenario is Azuma’s (1999) findings that (at ex-DET schools) there were no reports regarding school fee exemption and its criteria. Three respondents also stated that there are a few parents who would qualify for exemption from fees because of the tight formula used against the low fees charged by historically disadvantaged schools. The fact that only one out of five sample public schools has not adopted criteria for exemption, needs special attention because the Schools Act allows public schools to charge fees only when its requirements are met as mentioned in Subsection 2.6.1. The requirements include the provision of equitable criteria and procedures for the exemption, although according to Roithmayr (2002) income-based exemption schemes are not effective as they fail to measure poverty against the willingness to pay. School fee exemption will nevertheless have to be applied to schools.

4.10 SERVICES OFFERED BY PARENTS WHO CANNOT PAY SCHOOL FEES

One respondent stated that there are less than ten parents while the other four stated that there are very few parents who turn up to offer voluntary services to schools if they cannot afford to pay. “The majority of such parents are not prepared and simply abstain,” one respondent reported. However, those who come are asked to clean premises and buildings but they run away once the tough tasks like working in the vegetable gardens are given (question 6). All five respondents stated that there are no parents who have repair skills like repairing toilets, doors, leaking roofs, lawn mowers, etc. which usually cost a lot of money when technicians are hired.

4.11 PRINCIPALS’ VIEWS ON THE GOVERNING BODIES’ POWERS TO REFER OUTSTANDING FEES CASES TO LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES AND THE CHASING OF CHILDREN AWAY FROM SCHOOLS

In response to question 7.3 all five schools stated that referring outstanding accounts to

the attorneys partly seems to be a solution for dealing with parents who do not pay when they can afford to, but an exercise of this nature needs to be carefully carried out and be the very last option after some means have been attempted and proven to fail.

In response to question 7.3 all five schools agree that children should not be chased away from schools on the grounds that their parents have not paid or cannot pay. This clause in the Act is being observed by all schools to protect the learners' right to learn.

SECTION D

4.12 FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

This section was included in order to find out whether schools attempt to extend their source of income in view of the fact that schools will either have to partially, conditionally or fully exempt a certain number of learners from paying school fees and the fact that schools should not depend solely on fees as the only source of income.

4.12.1 PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS HAVE WITH PRIVATE COMPANIES AND THE MODE OF EXPRESSING THEIR NEEDS

Four principals stated that their attempts to appeal to companies and business people for donations and sponsorships have drawn a nil return. Responding to the open-ended question No. 1 of Section D, four out of five principals also stated that private companies are not keen to donate to individual schools but prefer to donate to benevolent societies or offer scholarships to people to do scarce subjects at tertiary level and have them serve the bursar in return. This social responsibility is also considered within the limited budget. Responses by one principal stated that companies reject requests for monetary donations because they prefer to donate commodities which they produce rather than donate money, yet their products may not be useful to the schools. Mkhulisi's research (1999) is also a testimony to this assertion. Only one principal out of five stated that his school has partnership with Umngeni Water Board. Teaching aids like charts illustrating the water recycling were donated to the school.

All schools write letters to express their needs whereas Thomas and Martin (1996) recommend the writing of business plan stating all the future school development and the need for funding.

4.12.2 TYPES OF FUNDRAISING PROJECTS SCHOOLS ENGAGE IN AND REVENUE ACCUMULATED

Table 6

FUNDRAISING PROJECT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
3.1 Civvies Day	5
3.2 Parents' Fun Day	0
3.3 Fun Run	1
3.4 Raffle	1
3.5 Door to door cash collection	3
3.6 Beauty contest	5
3.7 Others	5

All five respondents stated that they had a civvies day where learners dress casually and pay a certain amount of money. The same number of schools also have beauty contests which competitors pay an affiliation fee and an admission fee is collected from the audience. Fun runs and raffles are seldom used by schools. One school has tried these projects. Door to door cash collections are undertaken by only three schools out of five. There is no parental involvement in schools' fund raising projects, hence, the reason none of the schools have never ever tried parents' fun day.

Other fundraising projects mentioned were pick a box show, selling of empty bottles, cans, old newspapers and magazines, film and/or video show and concerts.

There was no mention of tuck shop and hiring of classrooms for community usage which could earn the school a certain amount of cash and is recommended by Berger (1983);

Bray and Lillies (1988), as one of the best projects schools could try to gain revenue.

All respondents reported that their fundraising efforts have earned them very little revenue. The average amount ever collected by these five schools is R1500. This is in keeping with Azuma's assertion (1999) that previously deprived schools lack fund-raising skills and depend much on traditional methods of fundraising.

4.12.3 PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN FUND RAISING PROJECTS

Responses to question 5 by all respondents stated that parents are hardly involved in fundraising projects. Three out of five respondents reported that once schools start to initiate better methods of fundraising like parents fun day with the sale of cakes, drinks, snacks and light meals and assorted entertainment, there is lack of support. The respondents of these schools stated that they tried to organise parents-manned projects but the response was poor. "It seems as if this would be a waste of capital as few children turn up as clients to the project" one respondent reported. One respondent stated that some learners are completely negative as far as raising of money is concerned. In accordance with Govender's study (1997) principals in poorly designated areas do not expect to raise more than R3000 a year through parent and community involvement.

SECTION E

4.13 DOCUMENTATION STUDIED

The researcher visited the sampled schools to study financial documents. The purpose of this visit was to validate information supplied by the respondents in the questionnaire and to ascertain how school fees are managed by the principals.

Findings from documentation are discussed with reference to what respondents have already stated. Findings and discussions are from a scrutiny of the following documentation: Cash Analysis Register, Cash Requisition Notes, Petty Cash Control

System, Budget and Annual Audited Statements.

Table 7

(i) Responsibilities according to documentation

Officials assigned with tasks	Collection of money/bank deposit slips	Cheque requisition notes are prepared by	Cheque requisitions are approved by
	Number of schools	Number of schools	Number of schools
Principal	1	1	1
SGB chairperson	0	0	2
Treasurer	0	2	1
Educator(s)	0	0	0
Finance Officer	0	1	1
Clerk	4	1	0
HOD's	0	0	0
Deputy Principal	0	0	0
TOTAL	5	5	5

In four schools only the clerk s are responsible for collection of bank deposit slips. This task could be delegated to educators or HOD's as well now that there is no cash involved as reflected in Table 7. One school still uses the principal for the collection of bank deposit slips.

The cheque requisition notes are prepared by the principal at one school whereas in two schools they are prepared by the treasurer. Only one school uses the finance officer while the other uses the clerk for preparing cheque requisition notes.

The cheque requisitions are approved by the principal in one school, the SGB chairperson in two schools, the treasurer in one school and the finance officer in the other. The finance officer may not approve cheques for payment, he can only requisition them as his responsibility is to keep the finance books up to date and pay school accounts.

(ii) PETTY CASH CONTROL SYSTEM**Table 8**

	AVAILABLE	NOT AVAILABLE
	NO OF SCHOOLS	NO OF SCHOOLS
Monthly petty cash amount	1	4
Petty cash vouchers	0	5
Receipts for goods bought using petty cash	0	5
Monthly petty cash expenditure	0	5
The schools use small amount cheques	5	0
Petty cash certificates	0	5

It was discovered that four schools were not using petty cash except one but even at this school, the amount appears in budget only (R3000) and has not yet been used to buy the school small amount need. Consequently all documents that are prepared and supplied when petty cash is used were not available. All five schools use small amount cheques.

(iii) CASH ANALYSIS REGISTERS, ANNUAL BUDGETS AND AUDITED STATEMENTS**Table 9**

	YES	NO
	No of schools	No of Schools
Is the cash analysis register available?	5	0
Does it show monthly balance?	5	0
Does it show monthly expenditure?	5	0

Does it show income and its source?	5	0
Is the annual balance shown?	5	0
Is the audited statement available?	5	0
Is the budget available?	5	0
Is the cash analysis register controlled monthly by the treasurer?	5	0

With regard to strategies for motivating parents to pay (Section C question 4,7 of this document), respondents stated that they discuss the budget with parents and show them income and expenditure statement quarterly. The availability of these documents in schools confirmed that what was said by respondents was correct. The documents also indicated the proper management of funds. As a result, parents can not complain about mismanagement and fraudulent use of funds.

4.14 CONCLUSION

The findings illustrate that historically disadvantaged schools are not accustomed to fundraising on a large scale as is the case with former Model C schools. The previously deprived schools rely heavily on the state and the parents to provide funds for their day-to-day management needs.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

In the historically disadvantaged school, school fees mainly contribute to school operations, Roithmayr (2000). The findings from the sample in Pietermaritzburg suggest that under the current circumstances, it is probably difficult to maintain educational standards at public schools without charging fees. As a result there is tendency for schools to increase the amount to be paid regardless of the socio-economic factors and hope for an improved payment rate. Consequently the non-payment rate is persistent in accordance with figures reflected in Table 3.

Although it is evident that previously disadvantaged schools are largely dependent on the fees as the source of income, it can be concluded that there is widespread prevalent non-payment of fees in these schools. Principals and their governing bodies try various strategies, legally and illegally to address this problem but nothing materialises. Principals find themselves in a dilemma of whether to keep to the Schools Act and appear to be condoning non-payment in the eyes of those who are paying, or use illegal measures to pressurise parents with arrears and face the full might of the disciplinary action by the Department of Education. Presently it is unfortunate that previously disadvantaged schools do not have effective solution to the non-payment problem. They do not want to admit that some people are poor and therefore need to be granted fee exemption.

Schools charge an average fee of R182 after the fee increase. This amount had remained unchanged for a number of years and has seemingly reached the ceiling. This cannot be exceeded to keep up with the inflation rate.

In view of the bulk of the non-paying parents schools are sceptical of granting fee exemption although the international research Roithmayr (2002) confirms that

exemption schemes like the SASA's do not work adequately to protect the poor from the impact of the fees because apart from fees, parents still have to get other school requirements like uniforms and supplementary stationary. Govender (1997) argues that practice and procedure for fee exemption discourages eligible parents from applying. Nevertheless, this does not preclude anyone who feel he deserves it from submitting applications for fee exemption.

The Act prohibits schools from chasing away children who have not paid or victimising them in any way. Although this clause of the Act intended to protect learners' rights to learn, schools still withhold learners' reports. Perhaps, schools should abstain from managing non-payment of fees in this way. The learners' right to learn and compulsory education encourages the underprivileged parents' misconception about their role in paying school fees. Black parent perception is that it is the responsibility of the state to provide all necessary resources for the school, yet South Africa has not been able to provide free education. This type of perception parents hold is dangerous and can lead to conflict, according to Azuma's (1999) view.

Prevalent non-payment is the pressing problem for principals who have to ensure that schools acquire resources for teaching, learning and operation costs. Parents with problems stand aloof instead of declaring their weak financial position volunteering their services to help schools.

School fees are managed very well by the stakeholders according to documentation studied. Previously disadvantaged schools rely on traditional means of fundraising and therefore collect little revenue from such activities. Parents do not help schools with fundraising projects to boost their incomes. This is strongly condemned by principals. Stakeholders need to work jointly to find effective fundraising projects in order to augment the school financial resource base which has only one source, that being fees contributed by parents.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the obligatory fees which schools would levy in order to finance limited operating costs, schools need to raise other non-obligatory contributions through other fund raising activities and projects. School Governing Bodies, parents and educators could organise somebody to workshop them on fundraising skills. From there they can start with groups, each group being responsible for a certain project. The schools' progress and achievements are evaluated and monitored on a continuous basis so that they can ascertain the extent to which they have made use of their strengths and opportunities for fundraising to gain revenue. This sort of income from fundraising projects would cover the budget deficit created by the granting of fee exemption. This will mean that schooling will be free for those who cannot afford to pay for, while those who can afford will be required to make contribution towards the operating costs for providing a reasonable level of education.

The schools may work out an effective system for collecting fees, and when a parent defaults, the matter can then be handed over to the attorneys. The attorneys levy their payment and cost for sending out summons on the defaulting parents. Schools are not charged for this service. Those who cannot afford fees because of poverty qualify to be granted fee exemption. This helps deal with the person who should directly bare the brunt, the parent not the child, and dealing fairly with those who cannot afford. The child's right to education may not be tempered with. It is argued by Azuma (1999) that: "It is inevitable for any society to seek a more productive and creative system if it faces financial constraints". This necessitate stakeholders to work together toward defeating the schools financial problems.

Schools need to prioritise their goals and finance the urgent and very important ones that have to do with school effectiveness so that the largest part of expenditure is incurred for schools effectiveness initiatives. A word of kind warning is also expressed by Ramsey (2001) that the exercise of prioritising the goals should be done carefully not to delete certain functions the school must perform or it ceases to be a viable educational delivery

system. Now that they know that some of the learners do not pay school fees on which they are entirely dependent, this calls for strategic planning for each coming year. The goal and decision making model dictates the shifting of financial resources to be on par with the priorities set for each year. This should serve as a guide for school managers.

According to Claassen (1996), it is estimated that education spending on positions higher than that of the principal in South Africa is as high as 29% in the education budget. Therefore bureaucratic control of education has to be scaled down and money channelled to where teaching and learning takes place. If teaching and learning requirements are sufficiently funded by the state, meagre financial resource contributions by parents will serve to finance operating costs.

Historically disadvantaged schools will never be the same. Some are in very poorly designated areas like rural schools with large number of poor parent community while others are township schools whose poverty levels aren't as bad. In order to avoid some of the exclusionary effects of school fees during the compulsory school phase in areas where poverty is not rife, the governing bodies can set up voluntary contributions with minimum or nil contribution at the lowest end. The contribution would be paid on a monthly, or quarterly basis as per agreement. The governing bodies can make an annual budget based on the agreement. Such a system should be associated with an increase in State expenditure for school operation costs.

If the State increases the expenditure for school operation costs and the utilisation of voluntary contributions works successfully, the public school can abolish school fees.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this dissertation intends to address the South African educational issues, the scope of the research is limited to the Pietermaritzburg district only. The findings are not as comprehensive as one would expect because of the number of schools (5) used as

a sample which is not representative of the population of 52 previously disadvantaged public schools in the District. The findings and analysis based on them can only suggest tendencies in the area rather than the general practice. Nevertheless, the findings give a good overview of the situation and financial position of schools in Pietermaritzburg, which share much in common with other previously disadvantaged schools in other areas in terms of educational problems and financial issues in particular.

The study was also limited to one category of stakeholders, principals, responsible for the collaborative management of schools and therefore others' views of the problem have not been heard. Nevertheless, triangulation through the use of the questionnaire and document analysis by the researcher served to reduce the limitations .

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher recommends that further study on the issue of school fees should involve other stakeholders of school as research participants. The use of an interview technique as a measuring instrument to triangulate the findings is recommended for the study.

It is highly recommended that the focus of the area be extended to the whole province of KwaZulu Natal, using the larger sample so as to get the findings that would reflect the general view of the problem.

5.5 CONCLUSION

It has been established that schools charge user fees with the Acts' mandate but do not stick strictly to all requirements for charging school fees as they do not grant fee exemption for the poor parents. In reality, however, due to the financial constraints of the education budget at National or Provincial level, public schools do not receive adequate resources from the State to run their activities properly. This compels schools to charge fees and impose obligation on parents to pay. They gradually put up their fees in order to keep up with inflation rate and to maintain the high standard of education. The majority

of parents honestly cannot afford to pay fees because of poverty and unemployment while there are those who do not prioritise school fees. This is evident from Mkhulisi's (2000) study which is supported by Hadebe (2001) that some parents fail to pay R150 when they can afford to buy expensive clothing, but can pay once their children's reports have been withheld.

In most schools, school fees form a large part of school income. The running costs of these schools are largely dependent on income from fees for maintaining the educational standards. The proportion of other sources of income such as donations and income from fundraising activities is generally little as compared with the total school income.

Non-payment of school fees can be ascribed to unemployment and poverty. However, to some extent unwillingness to prioritise school fees as the measure households need, also counts as the course of non-payment.

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APPENDIX 3

Enquiries: MG MSELEKU
Phone : 033 – 3981534

P.O. Box 2490
PIETERMARITZBURG
3200

29 August 2002

The Principal

Sir

REQUEST FOR PRINCIPAL'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

I wish to request the participation of the Principal in my research project. I am presently doing Masters Degree in Educational Studies at the University of Natal, Durban.

The topic of this research is: 'The Effect of South African School Fees Policy on the Quality of Education Offered by Historically Disadvantaged schools in Pietermaritzburg Education District'.

The information and statistics will be gathered by means of questionnaire and finance documents checklist. The principal is then requested to respond to the questionnaire and checklist will be used by the researcher when visiting the school of the participating principal. Names of school and participating principal will be kept anonymous. Information collected will be treated with all confidentiality it deserves.

The researcher will visit your school during the second week of September to deliver questionnaire and checklist.

I will be very grateful if the principal agrees to assist me in my professional development endeavour.

Yours Sincerely

MG MSELEKU



MEHLOKAZULU SECONDARY SCHOOL

F.J. Sithole Road • Imbali Township • P.M. Burg
P.O. Box 10 • Imbali 3215
TEL: (033) 3981983

30 August 2002

MR MSELEKU
SINAMUVA PRIMARY SCHOOL
IMBALI

Sir

RE: RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST FOR PRINCIPAL'S
PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

With reference to the above request, I would like to inform you that I am prepared to participate in your research Project.

Wishing you GOOD LUCK.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

T.A. Shabalala
.....

T.A. SHABALALA: PRINCIPAL



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDI ILE SAKWAZULU-NATAL
INDYINISIE KWAZULU-NATAL



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Imibuzo:
Navrae: N. G. CHONCO

Reference:
Inkomba:
Verwysing:

Date:
Usuku:
Datum: 21 - 09 - 2002

M. G. MSELEKU
P. O. BOX 2490
PIETERMARITZBURG
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SIR

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Your letter dated 10 September has reference.

Myself and the Department of Education are granting you permission to carry out a research towards a Master's Degree in any of the schools within Pietermaritzburg District. It should, however, be noted that granting you this permission does not in any way compel Managers of schools to participate in your research if they are not willing. This entails that you will further have to seek permission from them so that they participate willingly.

Best wishes for your studies.

N. G. CHONCO
DISTRICT MANAGER: P. M. BURG

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



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Ms V Hughes
P O Box 11
IXOPO
3276

17 November 1999

Dear Ms Hughes

School Fees

Thank you for your letter dated 4 October 1999. I appreciate your concern about unfair treatment against learners on the grounds that their parents have not paid school fees.

Section 40 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 81 of 1996) obliges the parent of the learner to pay school fees for the learner who may be enrolled for the payment of the school fees. The learner can be expelled from school on the grounds that any school fees and school transport such a learner cannot be withheld.

The sanction for non-payment of school fees is to subject the learner not only to unfair discrimination, but also to the possibility of being expelled from school. The Act provides for exemptions from paying school fees and certain circumstances the learner can be exempted from paying school fees.

Section 39 of the South African Schools Act, a parent who is unable to pay school fees may apply to the school governing body for either total, partial or conditional exemption from paying school fees. In terms of section 40(2) of the Act, a parent may appeal to the Minister of Education against a decision of the governing body regarding the exemption of such a parent from paying school fees.

I am referring your letter and my reply to the Member of the Executive Council responsible for Education in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. I have requested her to investigate the matter and provide me with feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Kader Asmal, MP
Minister of Education

