

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU – NATAL**  
**(EDGEWOOD)**

EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE SELECTION OF PRINCIPALS IN THE  
UMZINYATHI AREA OF THE KWAMASHU CIRCUIT


BY  
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**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I declare that this dissertation titled “ **Educator perceptions of the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit**” is my own work and that all sources consulted and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged and that this work has not been submitted to any other University.

Signed.....

**Statement by Supervisor**

This dissertation is submitted with/without my approval.

Signed .....

Dr T. M. Ngcobo

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this piece of work to my wife Nomhlangano Potantia, my children, Zwakele, Sinethemba, Liyandithemba, SithembeleNkosini and Sibongithemba and my extended family, particularly my mother, who were very encouragingly supportive and patient during the entire period of my studying.

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S. S. Makanya

## **ABSTRACT**

In this study I explored educator perceptions of the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit. The main aim was to help generate better understanding of education staff selection into principal positions. It was hoped that this would help contribute towards the selection of appropriate principal candidates.

The study was qualitative and was framed by the interpretive paradigm. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of thirty seven participants from two schools, a primary and a secondary school. The schools were chosen because they had recently undergone selections of principals. Findings in this study were that the educator sample perceived the selection of school principals in the stated context was flawed and unfair. The educators' views were that even though selection procedures and criteria are set out clearly by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, these guidelines are not followed. Also, they felt that the composition of selection committees leaves much to be desired as parents and educators are not well prepared for undertaking the task of selecting principals.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction.**

This study was about the perceptions of educators on the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. This chapter provides the background and purpose of the study. Conceptual frameworks, motivation for this study, theoretical location of the study and questions for research are also outlined. The chapter also outlines the methodology, limitations of the study as well as the structure of the dissertation.

#### **1.2 Background and Purpose of the study.**

##### **1.2.1 Background.**

My personal experience as a principal is that Circuit Inspectors and sometimes Chairmen of School Committees used to recommend to the Chief Inspector of the Department of Education, individuals to be appointed as principals. This was also confirmed by other “mature” principals, in terms of experience in the teaching profession. Acting on these individuals’ recommendations, the Provincial Minister of Education would then appointed principals. This view is in line with Gumede’s (2003) assertion that before the democratic elections of 1994 the powers of school

governance in South Africa were decentralized but the ultimate powers remained with the Provincial Department of Education. The selection of principals was based on competence. However it was not clear how competence was determined as there were no clear guidelines and regulatory framework within which this selection was to be conducted. Thus the selection process could easily be manipulated. As a result, there was a strong perception among educators that the selection process was full of nepotism.

Since 1996 the management of the selection process, including the recommendation for the appointment of principals, has been delegated substantially to School Governing Bodies (Thurlow, 2003). However the School Governing Bodies are required to carry out this process within a legislative and regulatory framework. The obligations of the state, as employer, regarding the selection process are set out in Section 195 and 197 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) while the obligations of the employer in general are prescribed through the Labour Relations Act (1998) and the Employment of Educators Act (1998).

According to these Acts the selection and recommendations for the appointment of educators has therefore now become a function of governing bodies of all public schools in South Africa. Section 20 (1) of the South African Schools Act (1996),

in particular, stipulates that the governing body of the public school must “recommend to the Head of the Department the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Employment of Educators Act of 1998, as amended, and the Labour Relations Act.” Resolution 5 of 1998 of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) establishes broadly agreed parameters within which the advertising and filling of educator posts should take place. This study explored the perception of educators in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit on whether the educators felt that the criteria laid down by legislation are adhered to by the Selection Committees in this area. Such a study was viewed as important as educator perceptions play an important role in establishing whether selected candidates are acceptable or not to the educators. The view was that if the selections are not acceptable this might lead to disputes over the legitimacy of both the process and the of promoted candidates. There is a possibility that this may result in school ineffectiveness in areas such as academic performance.

### **1.2.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to generate better understanding of education staff selection, particularly as it relates to the selection of principal in KwaZulu-Natal in general and the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit in particular. It was hoped that the development of such understanding would contribute towards the selection of suitable candidates to positions of school principals.

### **1.3 Conceptual framework**

The following provides the frameworks of key concepts in this study.

Perception. In this study the meaning of this concept is informed by Kruger and Adams (2002 ) conceptualization that perception refers to “the meaning we attach to the information received through our sensory receptors” as influenced by factors such as our mental state, past experience, knowledge and motivations.

Thus, perception in this study refers to the meaning educators attach to the selection process of principals based on these educators’ past experiences, knowledge of regulations and, where relevant, their motivations and/or ambitions.

Selection is, as informed by Grobler et al (2002:127), “the process of choosing from a group of applicants the individual best suited for a particular position .”

Circuit refers to a group of four wards within a district under the jurisdiction of a Circuit Manager. Circuit Managers disseminate information from the districts of the Department of Education to schools and give support to schools as far as possible on management and administration issues.

Ward consists of a number of areas within a circuit a circuit. The wards are headed by the Ward Manager. The Ward Manager gives support to the principals under her/his jurisdiction. (Although not part of the study, the conceptualization of “wards” helps give a fuller picture of the other concepts, namely, area and circuit.)

Area consists of a number of schools, geographically close to one another, grouped together in the form of a cluster within a ward of a circuit. Each school is headed by a principal who is responsible for its day to day functioning.

#### **1.4 Motivation for the study.**

The selection process is the heart of an organisation's human resource programme and effectiveness. If the selection process is effective then the employee will be able to achieve personal career goals while the organization will benefit from a satisfied and, therefore, productive employee (Grobler et al, 2002). The problem in staff selection is to accurately predict who in the applicant pool will become capable, productive and loyal employees (Nel et al 2002). What this means is that mistakes in staff selection may have very serious consequences for corporate effectiveness. According to Tyson and York (1996) such mistakes may very adversely affect colleagues, subordinates and clients. Related employee incompetence may then lead to costly mistakes, loss and waste of valuable resources, accidents and expenditure on training which may have a disastrous effect on the productivity of the organization.

Smith (2001) points out that while staff selection within the problem of prediction, will always be a complex process, the use of procedures which reduce the chances of error must be preferred. Riches (1997:23) has argued that “ the

underlying principles of any selection process should be based on equity (fairness), effectiveness (it does what it purports to do) and efficiency (the selection process is not overextended and create unreasonable costs).” Thurlow (2003) has argued that while the selection process in South Africa may promote greater equity, effectiveness and efficiency, the “quality in selection” will ultimately only be achieved if the process is well managed at the point of implementation - the schools themselves.

It has already been pointed out that in the new education dispensation the selection of principals is the task of school governing bodies. In the execution of this task, school governing bodies are required to form selection committees which recommend candidates to the Provincial Department of Education. Selection committees ( as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) are composed of a Departmental representative, parents, educators and teacher unions. One of the issues that prompted this study were anecdotes at school level of educator dissatisfaction with the involvement of school governing bodies i.e. parents, educators and teacher unions in the execution of the critical task of selecting school principals. It is claimed that these dissatisfactions stem from perceptions that some criteria other than those laid down in the regulations are used in the selection process. As a result, the view is that some individuals are advantaged at the expense of others who may be more qualified for the positions. In response to



this, this study explored the perceptions of educators regarding the selection process. Of main focus was whether educators felt that the selection committees were following guidelines and procedures as laid down by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. The purpose therefore was to develop a better understanding into what appears to be dissatisfactions with the process.

### **1.5 Theoretical location of the study.**

The study is, at conceptual level, located in the aspect of Human Resource Management field which is concerned with the total development of human resources within organizations. The study was at this level also located within the universalistic approach to staff selection. This approach is based on the premise that the matching of applicants to objective criteria facilitates effective staff selection. An examination of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education official selection system indicates that it is framed by this approach. This approach is contrary to particularistic approach whereby selection is shaped by the personal affiliation of the players such as kinship, religion, ethnic or political similarities. In this study I explored educators' perceptions to find out whether they felt that the selection process in the Umzinyathi area is in practice actually informed by the universalistic approach or the contrary particularistic approach.

In addition, the study is at epistemological level located within the interpretive approach because I believed that the reality to be studied consisted of educators'

subjective experiences of the external world (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

Analysis therefore needed to take this into consideration.

### **1.6 Questions for the research.**

The study was guided and intended to respond to the following questions:

1. What are educator perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit?
2. What contributes to educator perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area?
3. What can be learnt from these perceptions?

### **1.7 Methodology.**

This study was both quantitative and qualitative. Data was collected by means of questionnaires which were mostly open-ended and also by means of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were included in order to probe into findings emerging from data collected by means of questionnaires. The sample consisted of thirty seven participants from two schools, a primary and a secondary school both of which were selected on the basis that the principals of these schools had recently undergone the selection process. Also taken into consideration in the selection of these schools was their proximity to each other. Data was analysed by means of content and interpretive strategies.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study.**

The study was confined to only two neighbouring schools in one area, Umzinyathi, and one circuit, KwaMashu. Also, the study focused only on the perceptions of educators and excluded that of the parent component of the school governing body involved in the selection process of principals. Consequently, findings emerging from this study may in no way be regarded as generalisable to the whole of the KwaMashu Circuit. However, the qualitative nature of the study means that the findings may provide useful guidelines for further studies on this subject. Also of importance is that the study's qualitative nature also enabled deeper understanding of the stated issue of focus.

### **1.9 Structure of the study.**

The report on this study consists of five chapters, namely:

Chapter One provides the background and purpose for the study. The chapter further outlines conceptual frameworks, motivation for the study and theoretical framework in the study, questions guiding the research, methodology used, limitations of the study as well as the structure of the study.

Chapter Two is on issues emerging from reviewed related literature.

Chapter Three presents the methodology by means of which the study was conducted.

Chapter Four is on findings in the study and includes the presentation of data.

Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations relating to suggested improvements on the selection process implementation and related further studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW.**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

According to Small (2003:7) "human resource management has been given much prominence in the management of organizations" because people are viewed as the most central resource in any organization. What this means is that human resource management which focuses on skills and abilities of people is therefore very essential for effective and efficient management of organizations. At the core of human resource management in schools is the job of the principal. A principal's job is highly socialized, diverse and challenging in both technical and interpersonal aspects (Morgan et al (1983). The selection of the principal must therefore be undertaken with utmost care if the selected principal is to be effective in carrying out these complex responsibilities.

In this chapter I discuss the different approaches to staff selection and present the selection process that appears to be universally adopted by most organizations, including that of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE), the province in which this study was conducted. The latter provides the context within which the selection process in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit occurs and within which the investigated educator perceptions were located.

## **2.2 Staff selection.**

The succeeding discussion begins with an exploration of approaches that have been found to underpin staff selection process, proceeds by exploring a process perceived as being generic to the various approaches and ends with the presentation of the process prescribed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

### **2.2.1 Approaches to staff selection: particularism and universalism.**

Two apparent approaches to staff selection were discerned from the identified literature in this study. Akinnusi (1991:167) describes these as “particularism” and “universalism”. Selection Committees opt for either of the two depending on underpinning approaches to their management of people. In this study I explored educators’ perceptions in relation to these approaches. The purpose was to find out which of the approaches they felt actually informs the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. The study was itself, as indicated in Chapter One, framed by the universalistic approach to staff selection based on the premise that the matching of applicants to objective criteria facilitates effective staff selection.

On the other hand, the particularistic approaches to staff selection are shaped by the personal affiliation of the players, such as kinship, religion, ethnic or political

similarities. The particularistic approaches of appointing people to posts as a reward for support or in recognition of an affiliation are sometimes adopted by both government agencies or departments and individual managers in schools and colleges. According to Foskett and Lumby (2003:70) this approach is mostly applicable to Africa and China. The authors' claims are that in China, for example, holding a role within the Communist Party may influence decision regarding promotion. Also according to these authors, affirmative action in South Africa has also resulted in ethnicity being a highly significant factor in staff selection. However, contrary to the above views, indications are that the universalistic approach is the officially preferred approach in South Africa. Issues pointing to this include stipulations by the KZNDOE, as presented under 2.3 below.

This approach is viewed as being fairer than the particularistic approach and, therefore, more motivating. This view is informed by convictions that this approach is most likely to be more successful in identifying the best match to the vacant post. This is because in this approach a detailed description of the post is provided and a variety of instruments used to measure the match of applicants to the post. Lundy and Cowling (1996:232) describe a typical sequence of such instruments as including application forms, interviews, tests, medical examination and references.

In addition, convictions on this approach are, perpetuated by the view that the effectiveness of the universalistic approach can further be increased by staff training. However, there are suspicions that less obvious factors may also be at play in that those involved in the selection may be consciously or unconsciously influenced by class, religion or membership of networks. Of interest in this study was also whether this claim was part of what informed the educator perceptions.

### **2.2.2 The selection process as underpinned by the universalistic approach.**

O'Neill et al (1994) in Thurlow (2003:12) suggests that the five key issues to be considered during selections include personnel, criteria weighting, instruments and matching.

#### **1. Personnel**

This is about deciding on who needs to be involved in conducting selection. For example, in South Africa the involvement of personnel on the staff selection committees in public schools is to a large extent prescribed in the Government Notice 222 (33: bl) and the South African Schools Act of 1996 both of which empower governing bodies to form staff selection committees. In countries such as Australia there is however much debate about the involvement of parents in the appointment of principals.



## 2. Criteria and Weighting.

This involves the setting out and weighting of criteria that relate closely to job and person requirements. In relation to this, Bush & Middlewood (1997:147-148) argue that:

The weighting of criteria cannot by its very nature be precise but it does enable the criteria to be used consistently. It is easy to say that one task is more important than another but rather more difficult to give it a value. Weighting, however, is one way of reducing inconsistencies in the selection process.

## 3. Instruments.

Instruments are methods by which an assessment is made to measure a candidate's performance. These can be in the form of tests, exercises, interviews and assessment centers.

(a) Tests. These include psychometric tests which can be used to assess ability and personality. It is claimed that these can be more reliable than interviews (O'Neil et al, 1994) . Tests have not been widely used in education in the past but their use is growing in Britain in particular.

(b) Exercises. The use of various exercises is developing in the education world and include in-tray exercises; written reports; role-play simulations; oral presentations and leaderless group discussions.

(c) Interviews. Almost every employer includes a face-to-face interview as part of the selection process. This continues to be the most popular and frequently used instrument of selection. However, literature findings about interviews demonstrate the unreliability of the interviews as a predictor of future performance, as they do not give a good indication of a candidates' potential. Thomas (1993) in Thurlow (2000:10) cites prejudices that may occur during the interview process as one of the reasons interviews may be unreliable predictors.

Also, interviewers often make up their minds about a candidate within the first five minutes of the interview and consciously or unconsciously spend the rest of the interview trying to justify their judgement. Research on memory shows that we remember information we hear at the beginning and end of an interview and thus tend to forget vital details and facts given in the middle. Furthermore, interviewers' judgements of candidates can be affected by candidates' appearance, speech, gender and race either positively or negatively. People tend to favour those they perceive to be like themselves.

Also, it is impossible for the human brain to concentrate at the same level over a prolonged period. Thus if you are interviewing several candidates on the same day they may not receive equal amounts of your attention. In line with this, the British Psychological Society has found that even well conducted interviews are only 25 percent better than choosing someone by sticking a pin in a list of candidates.

In view of the above it was thus necessary to explore educator perceptions in this study of how the interviews are conducted and whether they believe the interview should be the only instrument used in the selection of principals.

#### 4. Matching

The final stage in this process is selecting the candidate who best matches the requirements of the job. The selectors match all the evidence which has been derived from the variety of instruments used to assess the performance of candidates.

Of importance about the above instruments in this study was that it helped explore educator perceptions on whether they believed this form of a process frames principal selection in the Umzinyathi area. The intention therefore was to determine the degree to which the participants view the selections to be framed by universalistic considerations.

### **2.2.3 The relationship between universalism and the selection process prescribed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.**

An examination of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education official staff selection system indicates that its prescribed selection process is informed by the universalistic approach, as is apparent in the following discussion. The KwaZulu-Natal selection of education staff is informed by the stipulations of the South African National Department of Education that the whole process of appointing principals begins when a potential vacancy is identified whereby schools notify the Department of Education of the vacancies. The identified vacancies for all schools are then advertised in the official bulletin/gazette. The applicants are required to send completed application forms, curriculum vitae and list of preferred schools to the Education Department and not directly to the school where the vacancy exists, as is the case in other countries (Gumede, 2003).

#### **2.2.3.1 Sifting**

The first step in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education staff selection process comprises of the sifting of applications. This takes place at the circuit

offices of the education department. Individuals who are not qualified for the job opening on the basis of the criteria, as stated in the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) document, Chapter B 3.2 (b), are then eliminated from the pool.

Also, applications are immediately discarded from the selection process if:

- they do not meet the minimum requirements of M+3 (matric and a recognized three year equivalent teaching qualification) and appropriate experience,
- forms are received after the closing date notwithstanding allowances made for mail post marked before the closing date,
- forms are incomplete in cases of, e.g., unsigned application forms or where the required curriculum vitae and preference list is not included,
- applicants were previously granted a Voluntary Severance Package,
- applicants are retired from the State and is in receipt of a State Pension, and
- applicants are substitute or temporary educators. (Gumede, 2003).

The application forms that are not discarded are then forwarded to the relevant school for further processing by the school's selection committee.

#### **2.2.3.2 Shortlisting.**

The selection committee, appointed by the school governing body each year, takes the responsibility for the process of selection and recommendation for appointment of new staff members and the promotion of qualifying applicants.

The province's stipulations are that the schools' selection committees shall begin the process by shortlisting applicants using curriculum vitae in order to obtain a manageable number of at least five or eight candidates.

### **2.2.3.3 Interview**

The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 states that interview committees shall be established at educational institutions where vacancies are advertised and shall comprise of one departmental representative (who may be the principal serving as an observer and resource person), members of the governing body, excluding educator members who are applicants to the advertised post(s) and one representative per union that is a party to the provincial chamber of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC). The union representatives shall be observers to the process of shortlisting, interviews and the drawing up of a preference list.

According to the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, the interview committee may conduct shortlisting subject to these guidelines:

- the criteria used must be fair, non-discriminatory and in keeping with the constitution of the country,
- the curricular needs of the school,
- the obligations of the employer towards serving educators,

- the list of shortlisted candidates for interview purposes should not exceed five per post, and
- the committee should invite each of the shortlisted applicants and state the specific time of the interview.

Applicants are given five working days' notice to attend the interview. Telephonic notification must then be confirmed in writing. Interview committees have to agree beforehand on questions to be put to candidates. According to the Department of Education (2000) these questions need to be in line with the interview aims which are to find out three basic things. These are whether the applicant is suitable for the position at the school, professionally competent to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the advertised post or whether their actual experience will be of help in the new position.

The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 states that once the interview committee has made its ranking list, it needs to forward the list to the school governing body (SGB). The SGB then sends the list of recommendations to the provincial Department of Education.

#### **2.2.3.4 Appointment.**

The Department of Education (DOE) then makes the final decision subject to satisfying itself that agreed upon procedures were followed and that the decision is in compliance with the Employment of Educators Act of 1998, the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the Labour Relations Act of 1995, all of which amended.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented arguments emerging from the literature reviewed on particularistic and universalistic approaches to staff selection. The selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal was discussed to provide the context within which educator perceptions were explored. What was of interest in this study was the degree to which current practice is perceived by educators to be in line with the KwaZulu-Natal principles which themselves were found to be in line with international universalistic selection principles of human resource management.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As already indicated, the purpose of this study was to explore educator perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology I utilised for this purpose. This discussion is informed by the understanding that " methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known." (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:6). In line with this definition, the presentation commences with the discussion of the research setting and the sample of the study. This is followed by a discussion on ethical issues taken into consideration in reporting on this study. Discussion then focuses on research instruments that were used for collecting data in the sample schools. The discussion of data analysis strategies then ensues with the chapter ending with a discussion of limitations relating to this study.

#### **3.2 Population and sample.**

The population comprised schools, educators, principals, deputy principals, heads of department and post level one educators in the KwaMashu Circuit. The Kwa Mashu Circuit is in the Pinetown District of the Ethekewini Region. The sample consisted of two schools, a primary and a secondary school, in the

Umzinyathi area of Inanda North Ward, located in the northern side of KwaMashu township. The schools were selected by means of purposive sampling on the basis that they were headed by newly appointed principals. What this meant was that the experience of the selection process was fresh in the minds of both educators and principals.

The sample responding to the questionnaire comprised all educators (thirty seven) in the two schools. These consisted of two principals - both males; four deputy principals - two males and two females; nine heads of department - six males and three females; and twenty two post level one educators - ten of whom were females.

The sample for the interview was chosen by means of stratified sampling. It was made up of the two principals who were chosen because both had recently undergone the selection process, two deputy principals and two heads of department who were chosen on the basis of seniority and experience and two educators both of whom were chosen because they had been members of selection committees and therefore had first hand information on the selection process in the stated context. Each category was represented by one member from each school. This “blend of randomization and categorization” (Cohen et al, 2001:101) enabled me to obtain views from different categories of staff and arrive at findings that apply to the above groups.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

The permission to conduct the study was formally requested by letter from the Circuit Manager (see Appendix A), after which two letters were written to the principals of the sample schools asking for permission to study their schools (Appendix B).

Other ethical considerations involved promising the participants that their names were not going to be disclosed nor those of the sample schools and that participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so. These helped to alleviate fears and suspicions of victimization among the participants. This also made the study more reliable because the information was given freely and voluntarily.

### **3.4 Research design**

In this research, the case study methodology was employed. Cohen and Marion (1994) define a case study as an approach where the researcher studies the characteristics of an individual or unit in order to establish some generalization about the wider population to which the individual or unit belongs. The methodology also enabled me to focus on one aspect, namely, the perceptions of educators, with depth (Bell, 1993). Also of advantage about this methodology in this study is that it allowed flexibility in the data collection procedures (Jegede, 1999:40) because I was able to use both questionnaires and an interview.

The study was therefore mainly qualitative in that it was concerned with understanding a social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). The qualitative nature of the methodology, therefore, helped develop better understanding into meanings and experiences that contributed towards the formation of educator perceptions on the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area.

In addition, the interpretive paradigm was adopted to help explain the subjective reasons and meaning that lay behind educators' perceptions on the selection of principals in their schools. The choice of this research framework was therefore influenced by my belief that the reality to be studied consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world.

Although the study was mainly qualitative in nature, it also employed a quantitative research method. This applied to data collection through the use of questionnaires and the related analysis. This assisted with the calculation of the degree to which particular educator perceptions were widespread in the sample schools. The research design was influenced by the perception that no research is entirely quantitative or qualitative. This standpoint was influenced by Waghid's (2000) view that quantitative and qualitative research approaches should be seen as complementary to each other in the broader social discourse of research.

### **3.5 Triangulation**

Data collection was triangulated by means of questionnaires (Appendix C) and interviews (Appendix D). This was in line with De Vos, et al's, (2002:341) assertion that triangulation occurs when:

The researcher seeks out several different types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationship. By observing something from different angles or viewpoints, they get a fix on its true location. It allows researchers to be more confident of their results.

The rationale for this strategy was that “the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (Merriam 1998:69). In view of the above, triangulation helped ensure trustworthiness in this study.

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaires**

One of the reasons for relying on this instrument in this study was that it enables the gathering of responses. (Wisker, 2001). The use of questionnaires was therefore suitable for this research because all educators in the two sample schools participated in this study. In addition, the choice of this instrument was influenced by Cohen et al's (2001 ) claim that the advantages of the questionnaire are that it tends to be more reliable and encourages greater honesty because it is anonymous and is more economical than the interview in terms of time and money. Two types

of questions were used, namely, closed and open-ended questions.

### **3.5.1.1 Closed questions**

Section A asked for objective information about personal and school information.

The ease of responding to this section, among other things, helped put participants at ease so they would gain confidence and respond to the remaining sections in a relaxed manner.

### **3.5.1.2 Open-ended questions**

Open-ended questions were placed towards the end of the questionnaire. They were formulated in a way that enabled participants to express their attitudes without much discomfort. This was of particular importance because according to May (1997) it gives participants greater freedom to answer the question in a way that suits their interpretation.

Also, open-ended questions are a very attractive device for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest and personal comment from the participants.

A further advantage of this type of questions is that it puts the responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly into the participants' hands than is the case with closed questions. As Cohen, et al (2001:255) put it " an open-ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which .....are the hallmarks of qualitative data."

### **3.5.2 Semi- structured interviews**

Data was also gathered through face-to-face interviews with educators. Interviews were chosen because they enable more in-depth responses because participants are probed to become involved and motivated to say more about the research topic.

Interviews were conducted after data from the questionnaire had been collected and collated. This was in consideration of Kellinger's (1970 in Cohen, et al 2001:269) suggestion that "interviews might be used to follow up unexpected results, for example, to validate other methods, or to go deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do."

Interviews, therefore, helped me to cover aspects which were not covered by the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interviews therefore enabled me to have more latitude to probe beyond the initial answers and thus enter into a dialogue with the interviewees.

This was in line with Bernard's (2000:191) view that semi-structured interviews demonstrate that the interviewer is fully in control of what he/she wants from the interview but leaves both the interviewer and interviewee to follow new leads. In line with this, I allowed the participants to use the language of their choice in informing about their perceptions on the selection process of principals in their own way. Also, the semi-structured interviews enabled visual interaction between interviewer and interviewee through verbal and non-verbal communications

such as facial expressions and the use of hands (May, 1997:93). Records of these interviews were made through note taking because most participants were not comfortable with, and were suspicious of, the use of audio tapes. This could have been a disadvantage because some issues might have been missed. However the researcher took care of this by repeating responses to the interviewees to ascertain that the responses were accurately and correctly recorded.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data from questionnaire was analysed by means of content analysis. The presentation of findings in Chapter 4 will be according to questions in instruments and the emerging themes are presented in the final chapter in the section on conclusions (5.2.1). The questionnaires were first checked for completeness. Responses with the same meaning were grouped together and then reduced into categories relevant to the research question. A summary of each individual interview was written up and incorporated into the responses from the questionnaire to develop comprehensive understanding and meaning.

### **3.7 Methodological constraints**

The sample was drawn from only two nearby schools comprising one primary and one secondary school. There are ten primary schools and four secondary schools in the Umzinyathi area. The size of the sample was therefore



not representative of the population. However, as already indicated the purpose of this study was not that of arriving at generalisable findings but to develop better understanding in relation to educator perceptions of the selection of school principals. Another limitation was that, initially, there were doubts and suspicions among the participants concerning the underlying motive for the investigation. However, assurance to the participants that the study was purely academic and that permission had been sought from the Circuit office and their principals reduced their fears. A promise of anonymity also helped allay the educators' fears.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter the research methodology for conducting this study was outlined. In the next chapter the findings that accrued from the gathered data are presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings that emerged from the study of educators' perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. The discussion is in two parts. Part One deals with findings from the questionnaire while Part 2 deals with findings from the interview.

#### 4.2 Part One: Findings from the questionnaire

##### 4.2 1 Section A: Participant information

Table 1: Participant Gender information

	male	female	Total
Principals	2		2
Deputy Principals	2	2	4
Heads of Departments	6	3	9
Post Level One	10	12	22
Total	15	22	37

The above table indicates a leaning or preference towards male educators regarding promotions into positions of school principals in that both schools had male principals. Two of the deputy principals in these schools were females. The preference for males appears to be the case also at Head of Department (HOD) level in that of the nine HODs, only three (33.3%) were female. This was contrary to the situation at Post Level One where the sex distribution was more or less the same, with a ratio of 10:12.

Table 2: Participant Age Ranges

	23-30	30 - 40	40-50	50+	Total
Principal		2			2
Deputy Principal			3	1	4
Heads of Department		3	6		9
Post Level One	1	13	8		22
Total	1	18	17	1	37

Table 2 above indicates that both principals were relatively young in comparison with the other School Management Team members, with their ages in the range of 30 - 40 years. The deputy principals were slightly older as three (75%) of them had their ages in the range of 40 - 50 years while one of the deputy principals (25%) was 50+ years old. Six Heads of Department (66.7%) out of the nine were in the

40 - 50 year age range while the remaining three (33.3%) were in the 30 - 40 year age range. Contrary to the above, the majority of Post Level One educators, thirteen (59%), were between the ages of 30 - 40 years while only eight (36%) were in the 40 - 50 year age range.

Table 3: Participant Teaching Experience.

	0-5yrs	6-10yrs	11-15yrs	16+yrs	Total
Principal			2		2
Deputy Principal			2	2	4
Heads of Department		1	5	3	9
Post Level One	8	5	8	1	22
Total	8	6	17	6	37

Both the principals had teaching experience of 11 - 15 years, as indicated in Table 3 above. Two deputy principals out of the four also had experience of 11 - 15 years while the other two deputy principals were more experienced than the principals, as their experience exceeded 16 years. Five heads of departments (55.6%) out of the nine also had experience of 11 - 15 years while the remaining three (33.3%) had 16+ years experience. Fourteen Post Level One educators (64%) of the twenty two had teaching experience of above 6 years.

The findings (Table 3) indicate that half of the deputy principals and a third of Heads of Department are more experienced than principals in the sample schools. However, the findings are that selectors tended to take experience into consideration when appointing people to management positions as the experience of the majority of the staff in promotion posts is higher than ten years.

The findings (Table 3) were that the majority of participants, thirty five (95%), had an average age ranging between 40 - 50 years; twenty nine (78%) had a teaching experience of more than 5 years. The educators' teaching experience was of benefit to the study because most participants had been in the education system for a relatively long time. This implies that the majority of participants were very aware of what is happening in education in terms of promotion selection and it also helped increase the reliability of collected data.

#### 4.2.2 Section B

##### Educator perceptions of the selection process

##### Question 8: How would you rate the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit

Table 4: Participant Rating of the Selection Process

	Open and fair	Partly open and fair	Flawed and unfair	Total
Princ.		2		2
D. Princ.	2	2		4
HOD	1	5	3	9
PL1	7	9	6	22
Total	10	18	9	37

Only ten participants (27%), comprising two of the four deputy principals (DP), one of the nine heads of departments (HOD) and seven out of the twenty two Post Level One educators (PL1) rated the selection process in the Umzinyathi area as being open and fair. These participants gave the following reasons for their rating:

- vacant posts are advertised in the bulletin by the Department of Education for all educators;
- procedures and criteria to be followed are set out clearly for Selection Committees;

- posts are advertised timeously;
- the application process, shortlisting and interviews are conducted according to procedures;
- observers from different teacher unions are invited;
- Selection Committees are given training;
- the selectors use correct criteria such as qualifications and experience;
- Selection Committees are comprised of people from outside the school, e.g. School Governing Body members who are not educators

The findings were further that more deputy principals (DP) (50%), than HODs (11%) and post level one (31%) while no principal felt that the selection process was open and fair. On the other hand, eighteen of the participants(48%), comprising two principals (100%), two DPs (50%), five HODs (83.3%) and nine PL1 educators (40.9%) rated the selection process as being flawed and unfair. The following reasons were presented for this rating:

- most School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are not sure what is expected when selecting candidates;
- in most cases principals are selected according to the party they support;
- a person who has contacts in the area stand a better position to get the post;
- the contacts in the teacher unions are used as trump cards to get the post;
- Selection Committees select their own preferred candidates irrespective of leadership qualities in key performance areas;

- there is confusion concerning closing dates;
- bribery (top of the list in many participants) is practiced by some Selection Committee members;
- teacher unions and Selection Committee members practise favouritism;
- there are many disputes in the area;
- in most cases internal promotion is preferred;
- Superintendents of Education Management (SEMs) are not always available, but send principals from other schools who are sometimes inexperienced as Departmental representatives;
- Some people are selected just because they live in the area.

The above findings also indicate that both Principals who had been recently promoted were of the opinion that the selection process was partly open and fair. A possibility for this is that the principals might have been involved in other interviews. Also, another possibility for this may be that the principals were referring to disputes that are prevalent in the Umzinyathi area so much so that one of them was appointed after a long dispute between the School Governing Body and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. There were similarities between responses given for “partly open and fair” on one hand and “flawed and unfair” on the other.



Only nine participants (24%), comprising three of the nine HODs (33.3%) and six PL1 educators out of the twenty two (27.2%) felt that the selection process was flawed and unfair. Reasons given were that the preferred candidate is known long before the process commences and that post level one educators were selected at the expense of more experienced individuals such as deputy principals and heads of department.

The above findings are that about half (48%) of educators are of the opinion that the selection process for principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit is partly open and fair. While about a quarter (24%) of the educators felt the process was flawed and unfair, only a little more than a quarter (27%) felt that it was open and fair. This means that there is generally an element of dissatisfaction about the process.

**Question 9: To what extent do you think the selection committees rely on the following criteria (competence, skills, knowledge, affirmative action, curricular needs, minimum qualifications, kinship, political similarities and others) for promotion purposes?**

Table 5 below indicates that twenty of the thirty seven participants (54%), comprising one of the two principals, two of the four deputy principals, seven of the nine Heads of Departments and ten of the twenty two Post Level One

educators felt that competence, skills, knowledge and affirmative action were seldom used as criteria in the selection process. Contrary to this, fourteen (38%) of the thirty seven participants, consisting of one principal, two deputy principals, one Head of Departments and nine Post Level One educators were of the opinion that the above mentioned criteria were regularly used. On the other hand only three (8%) of thirty seven participants comprising one HOD and three of the twenty two Post Level One educators believed that competence, skills, knowledge and affirmative action were often used as criteria in the selection process of principals.

Table 5: Criteria for Promotion.

Criteria	seldom				regularly				often			
	<b>* 4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Competence	1	2	7	10	1	2	1	11			1	1
Skills	1	2	7	10	1	2	1	10			1	2
Knowledge	1	2	7	10	1	2	1	7			1	5
Affirmative action	1	2	7	10	1	2	1	8			1	4
Curricular needs		2	7	6	1	2	1	11	1		1	5
Minimum qualifications		2	6	1	1	1	2	14	1	1	1	7
Kinship			4		1	2	4	5	1	2	1	12
Political similarities	1		4	4	1	2	4	6		2	1	12
Other	1		1	8	1	2	4	5		2	4	9

\*Numbers in bold type in the above table stand for the following:

4=Principal 3=Deputy Principal 2=Head of Department 1=Post Level One Educator

From the above it appears that the perceptions of the majority of the educator population are that the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit is not in line with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education selection model which stipulates, among other things, that:

“The evaluation of persons shall be based on training, skills, competence knowledge and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve a public service broadly representative of the South African people, including representation according to race, gender and disability” (Foster &Smith (2001:192).

Also, fifteen (41%) of the thirty seven participants, consisting of one Principal, two Deputy Principals, four Heads of Departments and twelve Post Level One felt that other criteria are often used in the selection of principals. On the other hand, twelve (32%) of the thirty seven participants, comprising one principal, two deputy principals, four Heads of Departments and six Post Level One educators believed that other criteria were regularly used. Only ten (27%) of the thirty seven participants were of the opinion that other criteria were seldom used. This gives the impression that the majority of educators are of the opinion that criteria other than those mentioned in the procedures for the selection of principals are used in

the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. Other criteria perceived as being used for principal selection included the following:

- bribery;
- connectivity;
- favouritism;
- race;
- nepotism;
- geographical location;
- family background;
- appearance;
- age.

**Question: 10: Do you think the best/most suitable candidate is selected for the principalship position?**

Table 6: Participant Rating of the Selected Candidates.

	Yes	No	Total
Principal	1	1	2
Deputy Principal (DPs)	2	2	4
Heads of Department (HODs)	3	6	9
Post Level One (PL1)	6	16	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37</b>

It appears from the data in Table 6 that very few educators have confidence in the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area. Only twelve (32%) of the thirty seven participants comprising two principals, two DPs, three HODs and six PL1 educators are of the perception that the most suitable candidate is selected.

Reasons for these responses were that:

- there are guiding principles like resolutions;
- curricula vitae (CVs) that are used during the shortlisting of candidates are scrutinized;
- points are awarded correctly in accordance with the rules;
- those selected as principals score high marks during interviews;
- candidates who are capable, dedicated, have good visions and are highly qualified are selected;
- schools in the Umzinyathi area obtain good Matric results, compete well with Model C schools, have discipline and are engaged in all activities.

The majority of participants indicated that they have no confidence in the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. Twenty five of the thirty seven participants (68%) comprising one principals, one DPs, six HODs and sixteen PL1 educators gave the following as reasons for their perception:

- Selection Committees choose their friends to the positions;
- people who do not know the needs of the community are selected;

- some newly appointed principals fail to run schools properly because there is chaos in schools after their selection as they lack leadership qualities;
- inability of most Selection Committee members to understand English as a medium of communication;
- people who are able to express themselves fluently are regarded as the best candidates even though most Selection Committee members hardly understood what they were saying;
- the selection process is influenced by outside forces, such as teacher unions and others;
- Selection Committees do not have the capacity to carry out the awesome task of selection since they are not capacitated enough;
- Principals are selected because of experience rather than their leadership qualities;
- Principals who have no knowledge of primary education are selected in primary schools and educators who are qualified to work and had served for a long time in primary schools are selected as principals in secondary schools;
- Some candidates are selected on the grounds that they have acted in the post while others in the same situation are elsewhere ignored;

The findings indicated further that principals and deputy principals were divided over the question of whether the best/most suitable candidate is selected while

HODs and PL1 educators were mostly in agreement that not the best candidates were selected. What this means is that even some of those individuals whose applications for promotion in the past have been successful do not have full confidence in the selection system. Overall, the findings were that educators feel that not the best candidates for school principal positions are selected in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit.

**Question 11: What are your views on the composition of selection committees?**

Responses to the question on educator perceptions on the inclusion of various stakeholders in selection committees indicates that the majority of the sample educators were of the opinion that parents, educators and teacher unions should not be included in the process.

**(i) Parent component**

On the question of whether parents should be involved in the selection process of principals, only seven (19%) (one DP, one HOD, and five PL1 educators) of the thirty seven participants indicated that parents should be involved in the selection process of principals because:

- the school belongs to the community;
- parents are stakeholders in schools;

- for schools to function properly they need teachers, parents and learners;
- parents know the needs of learners, their children;
- parents pay the school fees and should take a decision in the choice of the principal they need.

Contrary to the above, the response by the majority of the participants (81%) (two Principals, two DPs, eight HODs and 17 PL1 educators) were that parents should not be included in the selection of school principals. The following reasons were presented:

- parents lack education and tend to listen to the principal or whoever leads in that school;
- some parents know very little about curricular needs of schools;
- parents choose the candidate who is desired by the prominent member of School Governing Body (SGB);
- parents lack expertise to participate in the selection process of principals;
- they are powerless against the dictates of teacher unions who are more knowledgeable;
- no criteria are used to choose parents to sit on Selection Committees;
- parents are sometimes easily dominated by teacher components;
- most parents are illiterate and do not understand the selection procedures;
- they do not fully understand the school needs;
- most parents are not knowledgeable about educational issues and,



therefore, lack competence;

- most parents are ignorant and employ their relatives to sensitive positions irrespective of whether those relatives are competent;
- old and uneducated parents are selected to serve in Selection Committees;
- and SGBs have a tendency of co-opting parents whom they will be able to manipulate.

Fifteen of the participants (41%) gave the following suggestions to be considered if parents are to be involved in the selection of principals:

- the academic qualifications of parents should be a priority;
- the parent should be a person with expertise in the field of education;
- the parent should be a person who has potential and who could be able to assist any person;
- parents need to be workshopped in order to understand the procedures;
- parents should be able to communicate in English to understand the questions asked and answers given during interviews;
- parents should have the knowledge and skills to conduct interviews;
- parents should be able to interrogate the relevant skills that the principal should possess.

The above indicate that educator perceptions are that parents are, for the reasons stated above, not yet ready to undertake the task of selecting principals.

**(ii) Educator component**

On the question of whether educators should be involved in the selection process of principals, only eight participants (22%) comprising two DPs, one HOD and five PL1 educators were of the opinion that educators should be involved in the selection process because:

- educators help to make the process more respectful;
- educators give guidance where it is needed;
- educators see to it that the process is open and fair;
- educators know the kind of principal they need to manage the school;
- as stakeholders educators must be involved; and
- educators are parents of learners at schools.

The majority (78%) of the thirty seven participants (comprising both Principals, two DPs, eight of the nine HODs and seven PL1 educators) were, on the other hand opposed to the inclusion of educators in the selection process for the following reasons:

- educators tend to be intimidated and biased;
- their opinion is not always taken into consideration;
- educators sometimes leak sensitive information which lead to disputes;
- they cannot be trusted, they may be tempted to prefer their friends in staff rooms;
- they do not have any influence in Selection Committees;

- they are part of the problem and succumb easily to pressure from teacher unions; and
- in most cases educators are post level one who may not have all the interviewing skills and they may have little or no say in the process.

The following were given as suggestions for consideration to be taken when selecting educator component for inclusion in selection committees:

- suitable educators should be co-opted and some formal training should be provided;
- an educator should be a person who is not easily bribed in any way to give confidential information;
- the educator should be able to communicate with other educators;
- the educator should be an active member of a union and be knowledgeable on educational issues;
- the educator component should include educators from other schools;
- the number of educators should be increased to equal the number of parents;
- the educator should be secretive and should not take sides with other candidates or collaborate with teacher unions;
- educators should be workshopped on shortlisting and conducting interviews;

- educators should have administrative and managerial experience;
- educators should be bold enough to stand for the truth; and
- the educator component should at least include one post level one and a head of department.

The above indicated that educator perceptions were mostly that educators should not be included in selection committees of principals in the Umzinyathi area and that much has to be done before they may be involved.

### **(iii) Teacher unions**

Regarding the question of whether teacher unions should take part in the selection process of principals twenty five (68%) of the thirty seven participants comprising of both Principals, two DPs (50%), eight HODs (89%) and eleven PL1 educators (50%) felt that teacher unions should not be involved in the selection process of principals because:

- they tend to favour their own members irrespective of whether they have the necessary skills, competence and knowledge;
- unions tend to influence and intimidate selection committees as they claim to be knowledgeable;
- if things do not go their way unions lodge unnecessary disputes;
- union members are corrupt;

- unions tend to compete among themselves as to the number of posts obtained in the area;
- they are influenced by their members to be corrupt; and
- unions are sometimes forced by governing bodies to sign the documents that the process was fair even if they do not agree.

The above findings are that about two thirds of participants believed that unions were corrupt and employ wrong techniques to influence Selection Committees to select their members to positions and therefore should not be part of selection committees.

On the other hand, twelve of the thirty seven participants (32%), the majority of which comprised post level one educators (75%), felt that teacher unions should be included in the selection of principals. Reasons given for this were:

- union members are usually firm and knowledgeable;
- they make sure that the process is open, free and fair and help to root out corruption;
- the involvement of different unions bring different opinions to selection committees;
- their involvement give credibility to the process;
- unions help to make sure that procedures are followed;

- unions play an important role in resolving problems; and
- they give the educator a voice as most educators keep quiet in selection committees.

Overall, findings regarding educator perceptions on the composition of selection committees in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit was that parents were not yet viewed as ready for the task. The overall justification was that they do not understand the procedures properly. As far as the involvement of educators in the selection process of principals is concerned, educator perceptions were generally that educators should be excluded. The majority of the educators also felt that teacher unions should not be involved because they abuse their participation to ensure the selection of their members even if they were not competent.

What the above seems to be pointing to is that educators are not totally against the procedures prescribed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as far as the composition of selection committees is concerned. Findings are that educators are of the opinion that there needs to be improvements such as workshops, particularly on the involvement of parents, educators and teacher unions.

**Question 12: In your opinion what are the strengths of the selection process?**

In response to this question, only ten participants (28%) (one Principal, three Deputy principals, two Heads of Department and four Post Level One educators),

felt that the selection does have strengths, supplying the following as justifications for this perception:

- at least there is an existence of a Selection Committee which includes all stakeholders;
- affirmative action is now used;
- the selection process reduces corruption compared to what was happening previously;
- the process promotes transparency;
- at least there are guidelines and procedures;
- sometimes justice is done because qualifications are considered;
- the presence of all stakeholders.

The responses indicates that most deputy principals (75% of them) and that half of the Principals were generally of the perception that the selection process does have strengths. On the other hand, heads of departments (78%) and post level one educators (82%) were generally of the opinion that the selection process does not have strengths.

**Question 13: What are the weaknesses of the current selection process of principals?**

Twenty seven of the participants (72%) who comprised one Principal, one Deputy Principal, four Heads of Departments and eighteen Post Level One educators stated the following as weaknesses of the current selection process of principals:

- the selection process is biased and unfair;
- people who sit in Selection Committees do not have any experience of being principals themselves;
- selectors do not consult with educators outside the Committee in schools to check the needs of the school;
- most members are not well informed about school activities;
- after appointments have been done officials of the Department of Education do not give support and guidance to the newly appointed principals;
- unfairness sometimes result in disputes and/or even death;
- popularity supersedes competence;
- acting principals directly or indirectly influence the decision;
- the current methods used can under no circumstance yield the desired results;
- non-availability of Superintendents of Education Management (SEMs), who in most cases are represented by principals from other schools, undermines the process;

Overall, findings regarding this question were that the selection process in the



Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit was perceived to have more weaknesses than strengths.

#### **4.3 Part Two: Findings from interviews**

The purpose of semi-structured interviews was to seek further understanding on some of the responses that educators had given in the questionnaire.

##### **Question 1: What are your views on the composition of Selection**

##### **Committees particularly regarding Departmental representatives?**

Responses by the majority of the participants indicated that most of the participants were of the view that departmental representatives should be included in Selection Committees. This view was held by seven (88%) of the eight interviewed respondents comprising one principal, two deputy principals, two heads of department and two post level one educators. The following reasons were cited for this view:

- since they are knowledgeable they give guidance to Selection Committees,
- departmental representatives oversee the selection process and make sure that the right candidates are selected,
- departmental representatives assist Selection Committees by explaining the procedures, the seriousness of confidentiality and the importance of fairness,
- they give guidance on the type of questions to be asked in the interview, expected answers and qualities of the best candidate,

- they also help in the clarification of Departmental Acts, thus, minimizing the number of disputes,
- departmental representatives see to it that during interviews scores are given correctly and consistently,
- departmental representatives help solve problems that may arise, minimize corruption and bias, demonstrate the importance of the task and play a mediation role between Selection Committees and unions,
- departmental representatives present the position of the Department of Education, and
- the principal is introduced to her/his prospective senior.

Contrary to the above, one of the interviewed principals (12% ) was of the view that the inclusion of Departmental representatives was unnecessary because they make no contribution at all to the selection process. The reasons he gave are as follows:

- Departmental representatives do not influence the process and they do not present the position of the Department of Education.
- The situation was even worse where principals from other schools were appointed to represent the Department. They kept quiet because they do not want to commit themselves for fear of being involved in disputes.

The responses by this principal who had just been promoted suggest that the failure of Superintendents of Education Management (SEMs) to be available during the selection process is quite common and is viewed as a problem by some educators.

The above indicate that the overall view of the interviewees were that Departmental representative should be included in the selection process of principals to give guidance to Selection Committees. The perception was that these officials are knowledgeable on the procedures and may therefore help resolve misunderstandings between teacher unions and the parent component in particular.

**Question 2: What is your comment on the way interviews are conducted by Selection Committees?**

The reason it was important to include this question on interviews in this study was because most of the selection process outcomes are determined at interview level of the process.

Only two participants (25%) of the eight interview participants, comprising one head of department who had recently attended an interview for the position of a principal and one post level one educator, felt that interviews are well conducted by Selection Committees. Their reasons were that:

- Selection Committees were able to make candidates feel at ease;
- allocation of time was fair;

- the panel was able to give clarity on questions;
- introduction of Selection Committee members was good ; and
- different people ask individual questions during the process.

One of the post level one educators pointed out that there had been a lot of improvements compared with the time at which the process began in 1996 because the atmosphere is now conducive and dignity is facilitated by thorough preparation.

On the other hand, the views of six of the interviewees (75%) comprising two principals, two deputy principals, one head of department and one post level one educator felt that the interviews were not well conducted because:

- selection committees had no capacity to conduct interviews;
- questions asked during interviews were not clear;
- expected answers were not known by members of the committee;
- questions asked were below the level of principals;
- candidates who are eloquent were awarded high marks;
- no consistency in scoring;
- in some cases scores were given verbally, and some members tended to wait for dominant members to give their scores after which they gave scores that are closer to those given;
- selection committee members were not accountable for the scores given as

- they did not give reasons for their scoring;
- averages were reached in different ways;
  - some selection committee members sleep while conducting interviews;
  - selection committees were sometimes workshopped by Deputy Principals who were applicants; and
  - language used is not friendly to everybody and this hinders the process.

The above findings indicate that educator perceptions are that practice is contrary to guidelines given by Lotter et al (2003:33) that Selection Committee members must ensure that all members of the interview panel have a very good understanding of how the rating scale works and how to rate the responses of applicants. The recommendation is further that after completing the rating form the chairperson of the Selection Committee should ask a few members to share their ratings and the motivation for each rating with the committee. The committee could then negotiate an overall score that most of the members can accept.

**Question 3: Should interviews be the only instrument used in the selection process of principals?**

Only one participant, a principal, out of the eight participants interviewed, felt that the interview should be the only instrument used in the selection process of principals because "the Department of Education decided it should be so." Seven

(87%) of the eight interviewed participants, were of the opinion that the interview should not be the only instrument. Their feeling was that:

- Interviews should be complemented by other instruments.
- like the assessment of learners which was based on summative assessment in which written examinations were the only instrument used and did not produce the required results so interviews alone may not succeed. There needs to be a balance between presentation and the practical part of it.

This perception is in line with Southworth's (1990:44) statement that "the decision should not be based on the interview alone. The interview is merely one part of the process." Also in line with this is Thurlow's claim in Lumby et al (2003:75) that if the interview is the main or only instrument there is always the possibility that the person appointed may be merely the one who performs best at interviews, and not necessarily the person who will perform best in the tasks of the job. The reasons given by Thurlow are that:

- interviewers' judgements of candidates can be affected by interviewee appearance, speech, gender and race either positively or negatively,
- people tend to favor others whom they perceive to be like themselves, and
- few interviewers have undertaken any training in interview skills.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented and discussed findings on Umzinyathi educator perceptions of the selection process of school principals. In the next chapter, I present the summary of the study and recommendations drawn from conclusions drawn findings in this study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter comprises two main components. The first part is a summary of the study which includes the main findings and conclusions drawn from the findings about the perceptions of educators concerning the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. The last part of the chapter is on recommendations for issues viewed as having the capacity of overcoming educator perceived weaknesses of the selection process. The recommendations also relate to further studies on the selection of staff in the education system.

#### **5.2 Summary of the research.**

In this study I explored educator perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. The purpose was to contribute to knowledge on effective staff selection in the education system in general and as it relates to the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal in particular. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews, with the school sample consisting of two schools, a primary and a secondary schools. All the educators in both schools comprised the respondent sample. The case study methodology was employed. This made the study mainly qualitative though a quantitative research



method was also employed. The former comprised data collection through semi-structured interviews while the latter had data gathered through questionnaires. The limitation of the study was that it was confined to only two schools in one circuit. However, of strength about the study despite this limitation is that its qualitative nature stands to contribute to better understanding of the current staff selection process and in so doing promote better effectiveness in schools.

### **5.2.1 Conclusions.**

Findings in this study are hereby presented in response to each of the key questions of the study.

#### **Key Question One: What are educator perceptions of the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit?**

Findings are that educator perceptions of the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit was partly open and fair. The majority of educators were of the opinion that criteria other than those prescribed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education were used by Selection Committees in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. What this means is that the selection process was perceived to be informed by the particularistic approach and that this was shaped by personal affiliation such as political similarities, kinship and family background. Findings were also that educators were not satisfied with

the composition of selection committees and that their perceptions were that parents, educators and teacher unions were not ready for the task of selecting school principals. The perceptions were that as a result not the best candidates were selected into positions of school principals in this Umzinyathi area. Furthermore, the findings were that the educator perceptions were that interviews were not well conducted. The educator views as a result that interviews should not be the only instrument used in the selection process of principals.

**Key Question Two: What contributes to these educator perceptions of the selection of school principals in the Umzinyathi area?**

Findings were that the above perceptions arose from educator experiences in the selection process. For some of the educators such experiences had been gained when being involved as members of selection committees while for others the experiences were as applicants for promotions. Some of the perceptions also resulted from appointments that had been made after a long process of dispute resolution. Another contributory factor of the perceptions was poor performance in schools in the Umzinyathi area of the KwaMashu Circuit. For the educators this meant that individuals promoted into positions of school principals in this area were not always suitable for this task.

### **Key Question Three: What can be learnt from these perceptions?**

Conclusions drawn from the above were that educators in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit are unhappy with the manner in which principals are selected and that the educators are therefore highly unlikely to find the promoted principals' leadership acceptable. This is because the perceptions were that procedures and guidelines stipulated in the procedures and guidelines of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education are not fully applied by selection committees. These could mean poor performance in schools if not attended, for example, by implementing the recommendations below.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions in this study, I suggest the following recommendations which I view as having the capacity to help contribute towards the improvement of educator perceptions of the selection of school principals. The recommendations are grouped in terms of the key questions.

#### **5.3.1 Educator perceptions.**

Educators are of the opinion that criteria used by selection committees are not those prescribed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. To address this perception the recommendation is that extensive workshops need to be organised

for Selection Committee members on criteria, procedures and guidelines to be followed in the selection process. Furthermore, follow up workshops need to be conducted to make sure that issues addressed in the workshops were well understood. This should result on improved educator confidence on the selection process. Also, educators have no confidence in the selection process particularly regarding the composition of selection committees. In order to improve educator confidence on this issue it is recommended the composition of selection committees need to be adjusted. For example, the Department of Education may either do this by appointing an independent committee to deal with the selection process or by having Selection Committee members being selected from experienced principals, Superintendent of Education Management (SEMs), retired principals or from experienced principals from other districts. Educators seem to have no confidence in the involvement of parents in the selection of principals. Educators need to be workshopped on the necessity of having parents in Selection Committees, for example, by indicating that parents are knowledgeable on the kind of principal they need to head “their” school and to guide their children.

### **5.3.2 Related further research.**

This study only explored educator perceptions of the selection of principals in one area and one circuit. As already indicated, the weakness of this study was that the findings may in no way be regarded as generalisable. In view of this, my

recommendation is that further related studies be conducted in the schools around Umzinyathi area and later in the whole KwaMashu Circuit in order to validate or invalidate findings in this study. The hope is that in so doing this will help find out how generalisable the findings are in relation to the whole of the Umzinyathi area and KwaMashu Circuit.

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## Appendix A

The Circuit Manager

KwaMashu Circuit Office

P. O. KwaMashu

4360.

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sithembiso Selby Makanya. I am registered for the Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood).

I request your permission and support to enable me to undertake a study at two schools in your circuit. The aim of the study is to explore educator perceptions on the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit. It will be a qualitative study which will involve questionnaires and interviews with the school personnel. This exercise will not disturb the functioning of the school. The study is purely academic. I will not disclose the names of the schools or the names of educators who will accept my request to use them as participants. To ensure this, no real names of the schools will be mentioned and educators will be referred to as participants.

Participation will be voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time, should they so wish, without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.

Should you wish to consult my supervisor her contact details are as follows:

Dr. T. M. Ngcobo Tel No.: 2602494

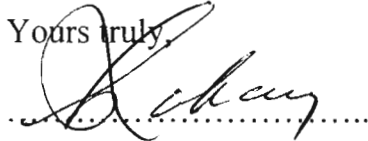
EMAIL: Ngcobot9@ukzn.ac.za.

My contact numbers are: 031 – 5101039 (W) 031 – 7740811 (H)

Cell. No: 0722830641.

Thanking you in advance for your kind co-operation to my request.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. S. Makanya', written over a horizontal dotted line.

S. S. Makanya.

Appendix B.

The Principal

.....  
.....

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Sithembiso Selby Makanya. I am registered for the Master of Education degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood).

I request your permission and support to undertake the study at your school. The title of the project is: Perceptions of educators on the selection of principals in the Umzinyathi area of KwaMashu Circuit. The aim of the study is to explore the educators perceptions on the selection of principals. It will be a qualitative study which will involve questionnaires and interviews of about 30 minutes with the school personnel. The exercise will not disturb the functioning of the school. The study is purely academic. I will not disclose the name of the school or the names of educators who will accept my request to participate in the project. To ensure this, no real name of the school will not be mentioned in the report and educators will be referred to as participants.

Participation will be voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time, should they so wish, without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.

Should you wish to consult my supervisor her contact details are as follows:

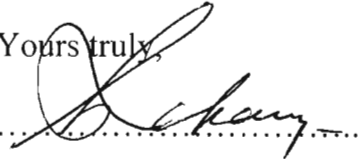
Dr. T. M. Ngcobo Tel. No: 2602494

EMAIL: Ngcobot 9@ukzn. Ac.za.

My contact numbers are: 031 – 5101039 (W) 031 – 7740811

Cell No: 0722830641

Thanking you in advance for your kind co-operation to my request.

Yours truly,  


S. S. Makanya.

## Appendix C

### **Questionnaire on the selection process of principals.**

Dear participant,

I would be grateful if you would assist in my research by answering questions as fully as possible. Your assistance will be very much appreciated. The research is an aspect of my MED degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood). The research is purely academic. Please be open in your answers.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be anonymous. I shall not disclose the name of the school or the names of educators in the report. Information will be kept where no one will have access to it and after the research has been approved data will be burnt. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, should you so wish, without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself. Please sign the declaration at the end of the questionnaire.

Yours faithfully

S. S. Makanya

**Section A.**

1. Personal information.

Please enter a cross in the appropriate box

- 1. Gender                    male-            female .
- 2. Age            23 – 30. 30 – 40. 40 – 50. 50+.
- 3. Nature of employment      Permanent.....      Temporary.....
- 4. Rank      Principal.... Deputy ... HOD . Level One ..
- 5. Experience    0 – 5yrs.... 6 – 10yrs 11 – 15yrs 16yrs+

2. School information.

- 6. Type of school    Primary Secondary...
- 7. Enrolment    1 – 299. 300 – 599  600+.

**Section B.**

Selection process.

8. How would you rate the selection process of principals in the Umzinyathi area?

- Open and fair .
- Partly open and fair .
- Flawed and unfair .

Please give reasons for your opinion

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. To what extent do you think the Selection Committees use each of the following criteria

	Seldom.	Regularly	Often
- competence	... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- skills	<input type="checkbox"/> ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- affirmative action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- curricular needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- minimum qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- kinship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- political similarities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please list other criteria used if there are any

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Do you think the best/most suitable candidate is selected for the principalship position?

Yes  No

Please give reasons for your answer



.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. What are your views on the composition of selection committees with regard to the following?

11.1 Parent component

.....  
.....  
.....

11.2 Teacher component

.....  
.....  
.....

11.3 Teacher unions

.....  
.....  
.....

12. In your opinion what are the strengths of the selection process for principals?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

13. What are the weaknesses of the current selection process for principals?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

14. Please make some practical recommendations about how the process might be improved?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

15. Please use this space to make any further comments you might wish to make on the selection process of principals.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Appendix D.

### **Interview schedule.**

1. What are your views on the composition of selection committees with special reference to the Departmental representative?
2. What is your comment on the way interviews are conducted by selection committees?
3. Should interviews be the only instrument used in the selection process of principals? What other instruments should be used?

APPENDIX E



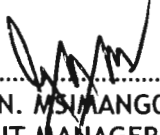
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Address	<i>A186-7 Musa Road</i>	Private Bag	<i>X018</i>	Telephone	<i>031-5031177</i>
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Adres	<i>4360</i>	Privaatsak	<i>4360</i>	Telefoon	
				Toll Free No.	<i>0800 360691</i>
				Fax	<i>031-5031178</i>
Enquiries		Reference		Date	
Imibuzo	<b>O.K.SHABALALA</b>	Inkomba	<b>REQUEST -</b>	Usuku	<b>2006-02-17</b>
Navrac		Verwysing	<b>MED RESEARCH</b>	Datum	

Mr S.S. Makanya  
Mqhawe P. Sec. School

**REQUEST TO DO MED RESEARCH**

1. Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct MED research provided you don't disclose any participants as explained in your letter.
2. I wish you success in your endeavour to empower yourself with further education.

  
.....  
DR G.N. MSIMANGO  
CIRCUIT MANAGER