

JEDER MENSCH BRAUCHT  
FREIHEIT, UM SEINE  
ANLAGEN UND FÄHIGKEITEN  
ENTFALTEN UND  
VERWIRKLICHEN ZU KÖNNEN.  
DIESE FREIHEIT ERHÖHT  
VERFÄLLEN KULTUR UND  
WISSENSCHAFTEN, STAGNIERT  
DIE WIRTSCHAFT.  
GEISTIGES LEBEN BRAUCHT  
FREIHEIT GENAUSO, WIE DER  
KÖRPER DIE LUFT ZUM ATMEN.

## Liberales Institut

Jean Redpath

# Independent Schooling in South Africa

Friedrich-Naumamm-Stiftung



*Occasional Paper* 18

Imprint:

Published by  
The Liberal Institute of the  
Friedrich Naumann Foundation  
Truman House  
Karl-Marx-Straße 2  
D-14482 Potsdam

Phone +49 (3 31) 70 19 - 2 10  
Fax +49 (3 31) 70 19 - 2 16  
[libinst@fnst.org](mailto:libinst@fnst.org)  
[www.libinst.de](http://www.libinst.de)

Production  
COMDOK GmbH  
Office Berlin  
Reinhardtstraße 16  
D-10117 Berlin

Printed by  
ESM Satz und Grafik GmbH  
Wilhelminenhofstraße 83-85  
D-12459 Berlin

First Edition 2006

# Independent Schooling in South Africa

Cinderella or Fairy Godmother?

Jean Redpath

Paper presented at the conference  
"Liberal Education – International Perspectives" organised  
by the Liberal Institute of the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung,  
Potsdam 2-4. September 2005.

## Summary

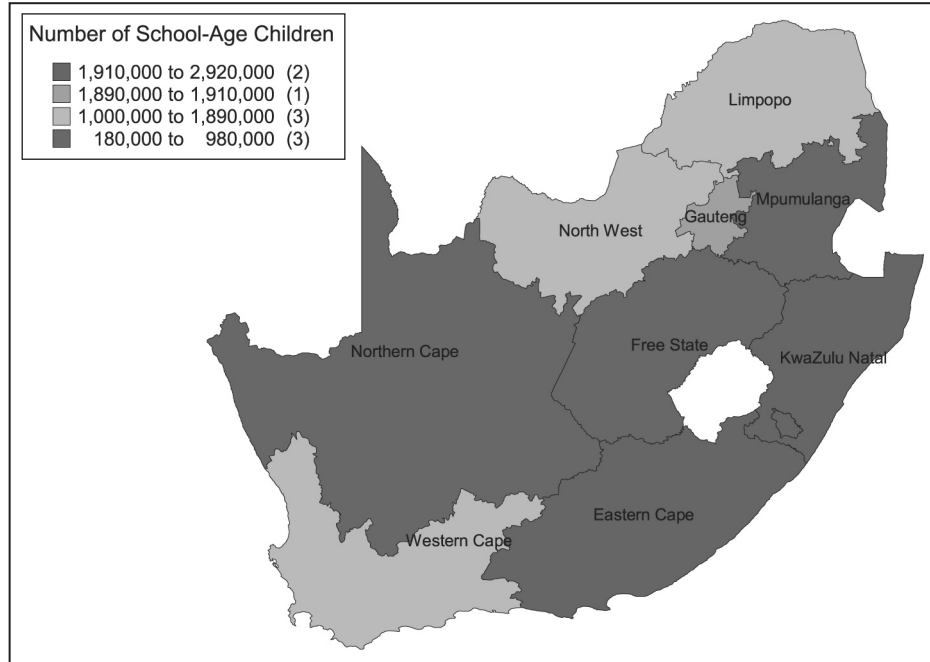
*This paper discusses how the practice of charging school fees in public schools has impacted on the public and independent school sector in South Africa. The practice has led to the illegal exclusion of many poor children from public schools, and to an entrenchment of relative privilege in formerly white public schools. At the same time, strong growth in the independent school sector has been predominantly in the middle-low income sector where demand has been created by exclusions and poor quality in public schools. However such growth appears to be levelling off at a relatively low level. While government policy changes are mooted which may address the problem of exclusions of the poor from public schools, comparison with other developing countries suggests there is strong need for independent schools to carry a larger share of schooling provision, particularly for the poor. However, innovative funding methods will have to be sought in an increasingly difficult schooling environment characterised by extreme poverty and widespread HIV and AIDS prevalence.*

The extent to which children are enrolled in South African schools is closely related to the practice of charging school user fees, according to the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Roithmayr 2002). What is the extent of enrolment? There are in the region of 12.5 million children of school-going age in South Africa. The provinces with the greatest number of school-going age children are the Eastern Cape and KwaZuluNatal.

Average school enrolment in South Africa is at around 91 % in 2004, according to the Minister of Education (Reply to Parliament , 10 November 2004). However, there is wide variation among the provinces. The greatest estimated enrolment is in two of the poorer provinces: Eastern Cape, which is densely populated, and Northern Cape, which is sparsely populated. The lowest enrolment is in the relatively wealthy province of the Western Cape (85 %), with Gauteng, also a wealthy province, also showing slightly lower enrolment.

While enrolment may seem to be relatively high by African and developing country standards, it is of concern that more than one million (an estimated 1 179 849) children of school-going age in South Africa are not enrolled at school. CALS has argued that this is largely due to the practice of charging school fees in public schools. The low enrolment in Gauteng and Western Cape in particular may also be a function of increasing migration to the urban centres in these provinces, where fees are characteristically higher than those in the rural areas from which these migrants originate.

Map 1: Provincial Distribution of School Age Children in South Africa



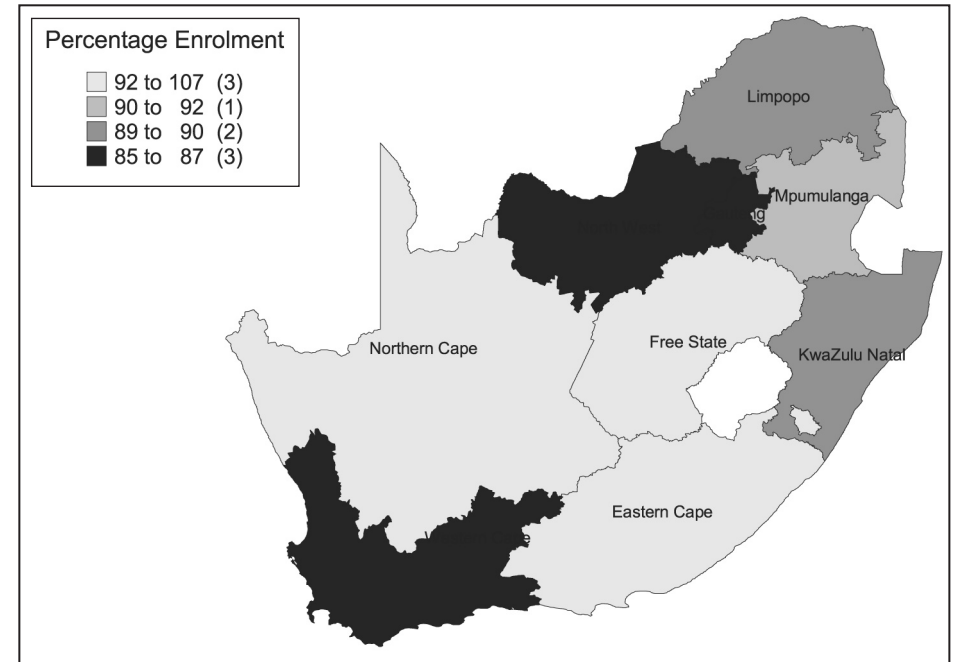
Map created using data supplied in the Minister's Parliamentary Reply November 2004

Nearly all public schools in South Africa charge fees. Empirical evidence suggests that the requirement to pay fees operates as a significant barrier to public education for many children: despite being legally prevented from excluding pupils on the basis of non-payment of fees (those unable to pay are supposed to apply for partial or full exemption from fees), research conducted by CALS (Roithmayr 2002) and independently by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town (Giese et al 2003) shows that public schools in practice regularly exclude pupils or discriminate against them on the basis of non-payment of fees or for not having a school uniform (compulsory in public schools), despite government policy to the contrary.

In November 2004, the Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, acknowledged the problem in a Parliamentary reply:

*... the exemption policy was not effective in certain instances and that the policy was not being implemented in some schools. School principals were not*

Map 2: Percentage Enrolment of School-Age Children by Province



Map created using data supplied in the Minister's Parliamentary Reply November 2004

*informing parents of their exemption rights; and learners were being excluded from all or some of the school programmes, denied school reports, verbally abused, and textbooks were being withheld and attendance at school denied. Further, it was found that legal action, such as attachment of moveable and even immovable property, was being taken against parents without the school establishing if they (the parents) qualified for exemptions. In some cases parents had defaulted on small amounts of fees. The exemption policy was also not effective in regard to partial exemption. Schools refused to recognise the school education costs of other siblings. Moreover, in many cases additional costs were incurred by parents in regard to school uniform as well as other costs such as school excursions, textbooks, stationery and other school requisites. Often these other costs were not taken into account in the determination of exemptions. (Parliamentary Reply, 10 November 2004)*

The Minister has proposed changes to legislation to alleviate the problem, which will be discussed after exploring the reasons for the retention of school

fees post-1994, despite the restricted ability of the majority of the population to be able to pay such fees.

The CALS argues that the practice of charging school user fees in the public sector originally arose out of an attempt to maintain white privilege in education inherent in apartheid. (Roithmayr 2002). Roithmayr explains that at the end of the 1980s, the then-government asked parents of children in white schools to choose from three alternative models of racial integration and school funding. Model A schools were to be completely private and to receive a 45% subsidy, phased in over three years. Model B schools were to remain state schools, but could admit black students up to 50% of the school's maximum enrolment. Model C schools were to create so-called „state-aided schools.“ These schools were to receive 75% of their budgets via state funding, and were responsible for supplying the remaining 25% of their operating budgets through user fees from parents and private voluntary donations. Model C schools, like Model B schools, could also admit black students capped at 50% of enrolment. (Roithmayr 2002)

The majority of parent bodies in white schools voted to remain state schools (Model B). But in 1992, the government required that all schools convert to the Model C form. It has been argued that the then-government undertook such unilateral restructuring, and adopted the mechanism of school fees, in part to shift control of public schools to local white communities and out of the hands of a soon-to-be-elected democratic government (Karlssen 1998 in Roithmayr 2002).

## Historical Background

Says Roithmayr:

*Thus, at the time that the new democratic government took over in 1994, most historically white schools were Model C schools and charged school fees. Predictably, the practice of charging fees disproportionately excluded black learners, whose parents were too poor to afford the significant expense (Roithmayr 2003: 5)*

But even if the school fee policy had its roots in the previous government, why was significant change not introduced with the advent of a new democratic government? Fiske & Ladd explain the reasoning behind the retention of school fees:

*Crouch and Colclough, a pair of international consultants, argued that if schools were not allowed to charge fees and use them for purposes such as the hiring of additional teachers, they argued, the quality of the formerly white schools*

*would deteriorate. That in turn would induce many key „opinion- and decision-makers“ to pull their children out of the public school system and enroll them in private schools (called independent schools in South Africa), which were specifically permitted under the 1996 South African Schools Act (SASA). (Fiske & Ladd 2005: 136)*

Once outside the state education system, both Crouch and Colclough argued, families would have little reason to exert political pressure for more spending on public schools. The consultants were careful to emphasize that the argument was not an elitist one designed to privilege the middle class but rather a means of improving schools for the poor. Roithmayr confirms this explanation.

*International consultants persuaded the new government to adopt a fourth option. This option equalized funding to some degree, but still retained privately supplied school fees as a significant source of funds for public schools. In arguing for the practice of charging fees, the consultants noted that, in the absence of fees, the budget for education would have to be doubled in order to equalize funding at the level enjoyed by historically white schools. Moreover, they argued that without parent fees, middle-class and wealthy families would flee the public school system for private schools, and overall levels of funding for education would drop correspondingly. The government agreed to adopt the fourth option, and thereafter proposed legislation consistent with that option. Thus, in 1996, Parliament passed the South African Schools Act („SASA“). (Roithmayr 2003:6)*

Consequently, local school governing bodies (SGBs) now make most of the relevant decisions with regard to school fees under SASA. Under the law, SGBs are charged with making decisions about the amount of fees to be charged, and with administering and controlling the use of fees for operating purposes – as well as the granting of exemptions. Explains Roithmayr:

*Under these (the SASA) regulations, parent bodies must fully exempt parents whose income is less than 10 times the annual school fee, and partially exempt those whose incomes are less than 30 times but more than 10 times the fee. Partial exemptions are granted at the discretion of the governing body. However, if parental incomes are more than 30 times the fee, parents cannot qualify for any exemption. The regulations also provide for conditional exemptions, under which families can plead special circumstances, either relating to a parent's ability to pay fees or ability to collect information about income. (Roithmayr 2003: 7)*

Parents wishing to qualify for an exemption must apply in writing, or in person if desired. When submitting an application, they must provide evidence of income, assets and liabilities, and other information requested by the school governing bodies. Governing bodies must render a decision within twenty-one days of the application, and if the governing body denies a request for exemption, parents have the right to appeal.

## Exemption Policy

Although the exemption policy looks quite sound on paper, the exemption regulations do not work in practice, as has been acknowledged by the Minister of Education. Schools and school principals collude in this, as they rely on school-user fees as their only form of discretionary income, according to research conducted by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town:

*Some principals who participated in the research were sympathetic to the poverty, sickness and hunger that prevented caregivers from paying fees, yet emphasised the necessity of obtaining school fees because they provide the only discretionary income the school has. This income is commonly used to maintain school buildings and services, pay electricity, water and telephone accounts and purchase equipment such as blackboards, chalk and paper. A principal of a school in Umzimkulu explained the dilemma they face: „Our school relies on school fees for our own funds. We have electricity in the school but we must pay for electricity from our own funds.“ „We cannot afford to run the school if no-one pays,“ he said, a comment with which there was widespread agreement among principals across the research sites. The potential shortfall in discretionary funds thus appears to be at the centre of why many of the schools were aggressive in collecting fees. (Giese et al 2003)*

The Minister of Education promised in November 2004 to push for a change in the law so that exemptions will be automatic for the poorest 40% of learners rather than being dependent on parents or caregivers applying for exemption, and the poorest 40% will furthermore become automatic recipients of school nutrition.

According to a Bill now before Parliament in October 2005, the Minister of Education will announce in the Government Gazette an annual basis which poor schools will not be charging school fees. Such schools will receive more money from the national treasury. Amongst other things, schools will no longer be allowed to force parents to do physical labour in lieu of school fees. Governing bodies will however also be empowered to act against parents who try to avoid paying school fees by not filling out forms that disclose their levels of income.

However, opposition parties are concerned that poor children will in this way be trapped into the worst performing schools. Says opposition Democratic Alliance MP Helen Zille, former Education MEC:

*Poor children will be trapped in the weakest schools that continue to get weaker largely because of poor management and weak teaching. If there is one key lesson we have learnt in education in the past 10 years it is this: pouring money into badly managed, inefficient and incompetent schools does nothing to improve their quality (News24, 14 August 2005).*

Better schools which charge average to high fees will be forced to charge even higher fees as funds are directed to poor, poorly performing schools.

*...the Bill will make it increasingly difficult for poor children to gain access to good schools, fundamentally undermining the rights of these children (News24, 14 August 2005).*

Zille would prefer to see poor, poorly performing schools shut down and more exempt places being made available in the better performing schools via redirection of funds to better performing schools. Such an approach would affirm what students are doing in practice: research conducted in 1999 showed a flight of black and Coloured learners who had the means to do so, to former white and Indian public schools and other better performing schools, despite the distances they would need to travel for the better quality education they seek (Sekete 2000 in Hofmeyr & Lee 2004: 166).

However, this approach (of shutting down poorly performing schools) is only an option in urban areas where there is more than one school within travelling distance. A recent study showed that in rural areas, more than half a million children (565 000) walk two hours or more to their nearest school each day (Sunday Times 28 August 2005).

Despite the hard attitude of principals and teachers in poor school on fees in the recent past, most public schools do not in fact collect much in the way of fees - 55% of schools are not able to raise more than Rand 10,000 pa (\$1700) in total from fees, with only 15% of schools charging more than Rand 500 (\$85) per year (Roithmayr 2003).

Yet the best public schools in South Africa are charging fees which in the past were expected only in the private school sector - public schools in the wealthiest communities charge per child Rand 10,000 (\$1700) p.a.; many good public township schools charge Rand 6,700 (\$1120) p.a., and good suburban public schools as

much as Rand 15,480 p.a. (\$2580). (Roithmayr 2003). The table bellows gives an indication of the fees charged in two provinces in South Africa.

Yet the table above masks the continued stark socio-economic and racial differences among public schools. Government appears to have succeeded in the aim of ensuring that wealthier families who attend formerly white schools did not flee the public school sector for the independent school sector in the post-apartheid era. The table compiled by Fiske & Ladd below shows fees charged and exemptions granted in schools in the Western Cape classified according to whether they were formerly African, Coloured or Black.

The number of exemptions from fees in the high-fee white schools is extremely low in absolute terms (under 6%), which means the majority of parents in

Figure 7-2: Annual Fees Charged by Secondary Schools, Eastern Cape and Western Cape 2001.

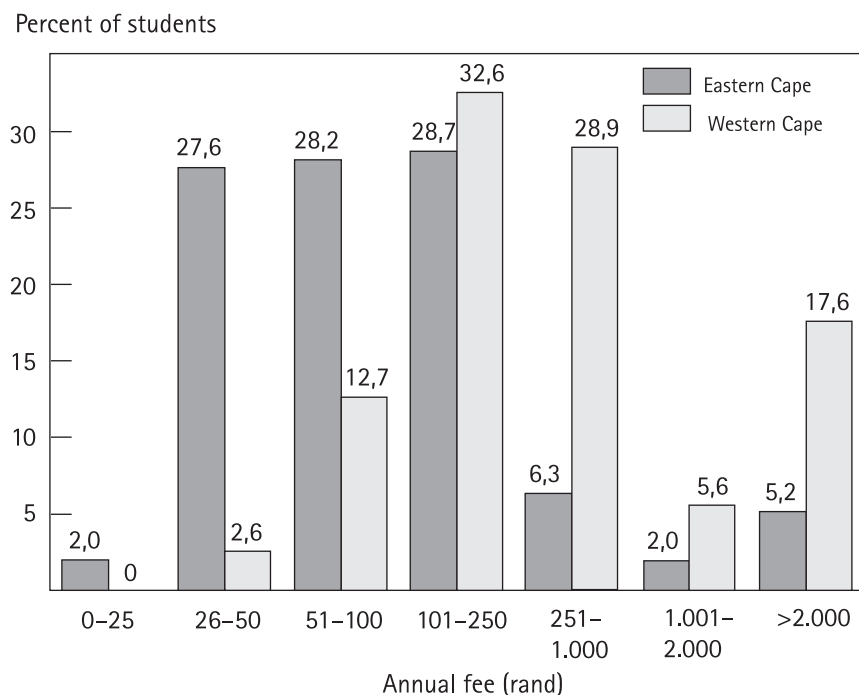


Chart Reproduced from Chapter 7: *Elusive equity: education reform in post-apartheid South Africa*, Human Sciences Research Council 2005

these schools can afford to pay these fees. This is most likely an indication of the continued residential separation by socio-economic status (see table below) of the South African population. Consequently, better, high-fee public schools are continuing to serve wealthier families. Furthermore, government per student subsidies have not been skewed in favour of poor schools, as one might have expected (see table below).

In 2001 average public spending per pupil in Western Cape was about Rand 3600 for primary school students and about Rand 4000 for secondary school students, with public funds available per learner in public schools being slightly *higher* in formerly white schools. This is despite the school funding norm allocations for the financial and academic years 2000 and 2001, which requires education departments to direct funds to poorer schools by ranking schools from the poorest to the least poor school, on the basis of the poverty of the school community and the conditions at school. Scores on these two factors are combined into a pover-

Table 7-1: Percent of Students with Fee Exemptions, Primary and Secondary Schools, by Former Department, Western Cape, 2001<sup>a</sup>

School category	DET (African)	HOR (coloured)	HOA (white)	Total
<b>Average annual fee charged (rand)</b>				
Primary	45	99	2,077	443
Secondary	105	333	2,701	1,126
<b>Percentage of students with fee exemption</b>				
Primary schools <sup>b</sup>				
1 (low)	1,9 (67)	3,6 (159)	* 2,5 (226)	
2	1,7 (37)	1,7 (188)	*	1,7 (225)
3	4,3 (6)	1,9 (219)	*	2,1 (225)
4	13,3 (4)	2,3 (218)	10,6 (2)	2,7 (225)
5 (high)	0 (1)	1,3 (26)	4,1 (197)	3,7 (226)
Total	2,5 (115)	2,2 (810)	4,1 (199)	2,5 (1,127)
Secondary schools <sup>b</sup>				
1 (low)	0,9 (64)	1,7 (20)	0 (2)	1,1 (68)
2	2,5 (9)	3,6 (56)	0 (1)	3,4 (66)
3	*	4,0 (63)	*	4,2 (66)
4	*	3,8 (15)	6,9 (51)	5,9 (66)
5 (high)	*	*	5,1 (65)	5,1 (65)
Total	1,2 (55)	3,6 (154)	5,7 (119)	3,7 (331)

Source: Based on data from Western Cape Education Department.

Table reproduced from Chapter 7: *Elusive equity: education reform in post-apartheid South Africa*, Human Sciences Research Council 2004



ty index, and subsequent resource allocation is based on the position of a school on the poverty index: 60% of available *recurrent non-personnel resources* must go to 40% of the poorest schools on this ranking. However, the policy excludes capital expenditure and spending on educators, items which are at the heart of funding inequalities between schools (Fiske & Ladd 2005).

High-fee public schools thus continue to enjoy revenues both from government subsidies as well as from fee-revenue, as reflected in the table 7.3, which shows total funding, as opposed to non-personnel funding. Furthermore, Fiske & Ladd (2005) note that because the table reflects fees charged per student rather than the fees actually collected, they probably understate the true disparities in fee revenue across types of schools. That is because the formerly white schools collect fees more readily. Fee exemptions while more common in the formerly white schools than in the schools of the other departments, are still a very low percentage (less than 6%).

**Table 7-3: Resources in Secondary Schools, by Former Department, Western Cape, 2001<sup>a</sup>**

Resource	DET (African)	HOR (coloured)	HOA (indian)	HOA (white)	Total
<b>Per student (rand)</b>					
Annual fees	105	333	283	2,701	1,126
Total public funds per learner	3,402	3,972	3,803	4,419	4,034
<b>Teachers and qualifications<sup>a</sup></b>					
number of SGB teachers per school <sup>b</sup>	0,13	0,94	0,67	5,96	2,60
SGB teachers as percent of state-paid teachers	0,4	3,0	2,5	29,5	9,4
Learners per state-paid teacher	33,6	33,2	35,3	32,4	33,1
Average qualifications	13,83	14,10	14,17	14,48	13,30
Percent of unqualified teachers	2,6	0,8	1,2	0*	0,9

Source: Based on data from Western Cape Education Department.

0\* = Less than 0,1 percent.

- Teacher qualifications are on scale of 10 to 17, with 10 representing matriculation from secondary school and the numbers above the years of additional training. A qualified teacher is one who has passed the matriculation exam and has three years of training (13 = 10 + 3).
- Weighted average, calculated as the total number of teachers hired by school governing bodies (SGB) divided by the number of schools.

**Table reproduced from Chapter 7: *Elusive equity: education reform in post-apartheid South Africa*, Human Sciences Research Council 2005**

## Wealthy Public Schools

At the same time that wealthy public schools have continued to enjoy good funding, since 2000, independent schools with fees more than 2.5 times the average provincial per capita norms and standard expenditure on public schools received no subsidy, while Independent Schools with fees below that level continue to receive a subsidy capped at a maximum of 60% of average provincial per capita non-personnel spending on public schools (Fiske & Ladd 2005).

Fiske & Ladd conclude:

*As our analysis shows, the fee policy did indeed succeed in Keeping most middle-class students in the public school system ... fees have affected the way in which students sort themselves among schools, with class beginning to replace race as the primary determinant of who is able to gain access to the formerly white schools. Furthermore, fees have failed to increase resources at schools serving historically disadvantaged students; instead, they have reinforced the advantages enjoyed by the formerly white schools. (Fiske & Ladd 2005)*

## Growing independent School Sector

Given this environment, one might have expected the independent school sector - traditionally catering to wealthy mostly white families - to have shrunk over the past ten to fifteen years. However, the independent school sector has *tripled* its share of schooling provision. In 1988, it formed 1% of total South African schooling provision. Since 1990, the sector increased its share of schooling provision to approximately 3.2%, according to another study published by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (Du Toit 2003). Furthermore, most of this growth has been in the middle to low income sector - and catering mostly for families who are not white:

*With historically disadvantaged learners (those who are not white) now constituting more than 70%, and with more than half of independent schools charging affordable fees, the sector reflects the profile of the South African population more closely. (Du Toit 2003:1)*

In fact, independent schools are more or less as integrated as most public schools (or rather, as un-integrated) - predominantly Coloured and Indian independent schools are in fact slightly more integrated than former Coloured and Indian public schools; African and White, slightly less integrated than their public school counterparts. Only the formerly white public schools show some signifi-

cant degree of integration - but they are still 58.6% white, and as we have seen, comprise mostly persons able to pay high school fees.

Indeed, the lack of integration in schools generally a decade after the demise of apartheid is notable. African pupils at African schools - whether public or independent - experience almost no diversity in their schooling. As Fiske & Ladd comment on public schools:

*Thus although formerly white schools are now racially integrated, most African and coloured students continue to attend schools that are essentially all black. That observation should surprise no one. Particularly in provinces such as Eastern Cape, where white learners constitute a tiny proportion of all students, racial integration will never play more than a minor role in determining the quality of the educational opportunities available to black students. Even in the Western Cape, where the proportion of white students is higher-about 10 percent in primary schools and 16 percent in secondary schools-the main determinant of educational opportunities and outcomes for black students will be the quality of the schools formerly designed to serve African and coloured students. (Fiske & Ladd, 2005)*

Not only do independent schools now more closely reflect the demographics of the country and of public schools, more than half (53 %) of independent schools in 2003 charged less than Rand 6000 (\$1000) p.a. - less than „good“ public schools charge. What is driving growth in the low-income independent school sector?

Some of the demand appears to be arising from a lack of adequate and quality provision in the public sector - anecdotal evidence suggests a growth in unregistered schools, arising from lack of adequate provision.

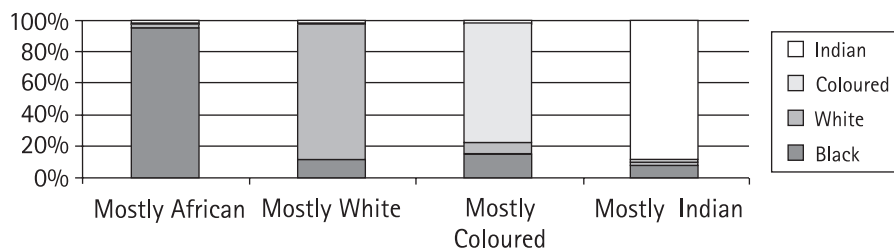
The combined pressure of fees and the lack of places in schools has lead in some instances to parents starting their own schools to appease the demand. There is no firm quantitative data available on the full extent to this is occurring, but Du Toit estimates an additional 2000-3000 unregistered schools across the country, in addition to the 1287 registered independent schools. (Du Toit 2003)

Julia Frielinghaus has investigated two examples of the phenomenon, illustrating how such schools arise. In the informal settlement of Sunrise Park near Rustenburg in the North West province, 298 children who were refused entry into the nearby Paardekraal Secondary School, are now taught in a dilapidated Zionist church. The Phuthaditjaba Community Development School has „one room, the roof leaks, and windows are broken, but the unpaid teachers are driven to continue in the knowledge that without their efforts, the children would be getting no education at all“. (Frielinghaus, 2004)

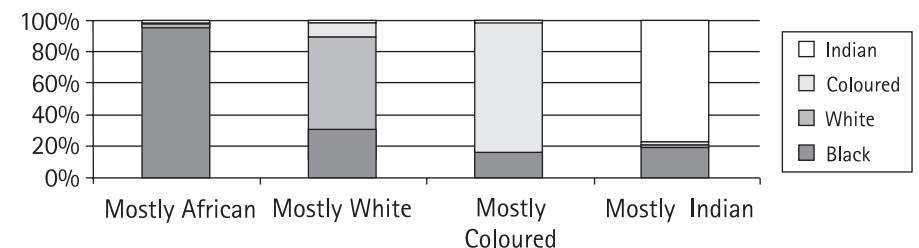
Some unofficial schools manage to procure the facilities and resources to teach properly. The Peoples' Power Secondary School in Khayelitsha near Cape Town, for example, provides an education to 1 800 students who have been excluded from other schools. The school operates out of the Andile Nhose Community Centre, so it has access to reasonable facilities and the children are at least not exposed to the wind and rain. It has also benefited from donations of computers and other equipment. The 18 teachers, however, have received no payment since the school opened at the beginning of 2004. (Frielinghaus, 2004) The sustainability of such schools is therefore under question.

Like most parent-initiated schools, neither the Peoples' Power Secondary School nor the Phuthaditjaba Community Development School is registered. Both schools have made numerous attempts to become formally recognized. But both

Integration in Independent Schools



Integration in Public Schools

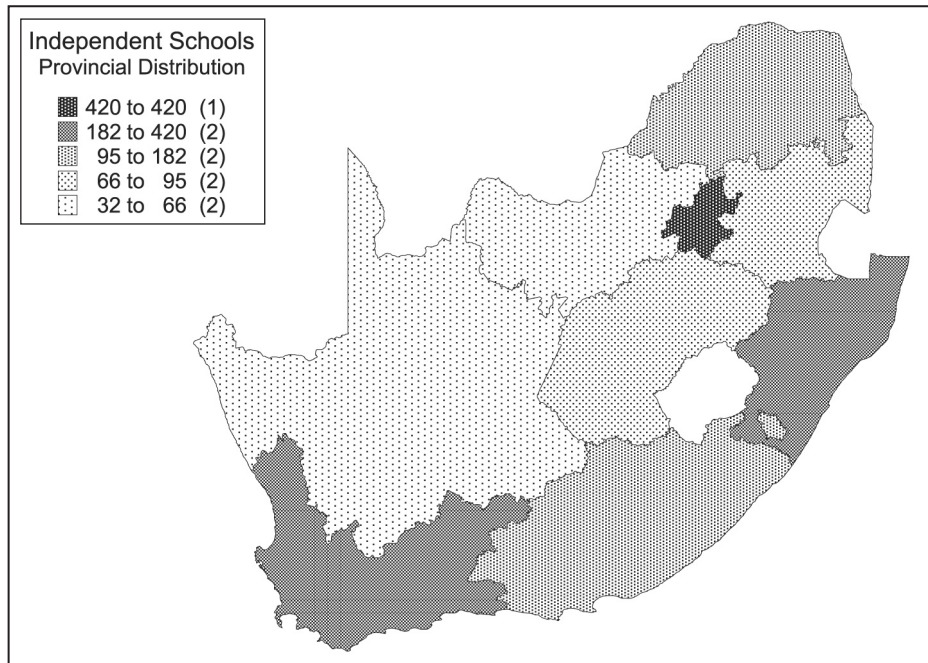


these schools have been told that they will not be registered and the children must be accommodated elsewhere. The biggest hurdle facing these parent-initiated schools, according to those schools, is not finding teachers or pupils or premises, but obtaining official sanction to operate. (Frielinghaus, 2004)

Provincial education departments determine the requirements for registration as an independent school, or may make a non-public school a public one.

*„The requirements tend to be fairly rigorous on issues like having formal premises, which makes it difficult for poor township parents, for example, to comply“ (Frielinghaus, 2004).*

Map 3: Independent Schools in South Africa



Map created using data from Du Toit (2003)

## Low Fees

But the growth in low-fee independent schooling has not just been among „self-starter“ schools as a result of lack of places, but also because of a demand for quality.

Schools recently started by the Catholic Institute for Education (CIE), which has provided independent education for many years in South Africa, have recently been investigated. In the 1970s, the CIE defied apartheid's education laws by admitting pupils of every race to Catholic schools. The CIE currently serves 95 independent schools, of which half are in rural and township areas. Some 30% of these schools charge less than Rand 1000 per annum for school fees and approximately 35% charge less than Rand 10 000 per annum. (Rassool, 2004)

Rassool describes one such school: Khanyisa High was established in 1994 in the peri-urban community of Payne's Farm (popularly known as KwaPayne) in Umtata. Khanyisa High started with 96 learners in Grade 8 who were unable to afford to pay fees at other schools, or were rejected by these schools. There were two main criteria for attendance: learners would not be selected on merit (in other words, there would be no evaluative or entrance test), and mathematics would be a compulsory subject (Rassool 2004).

Parents of Khanyisa pupils pay an annual fee of Rand 2000, in four instalments of Rand 500, but 50 to 60 learners – a quarter of the school's enrolments – receive free education. Since 2001 the Eastern Cape education department has paid a subsidy to the school (of around Rand 1000 per learner). In 1995, the school managed to raise Rand 250 000 to build five classrooms. The school has expanded dramatically since then. Recently the school has added 17 additional classrooms, two science laboratories, a computer lab with 31 computers, an administration block, and a hall. (Rassool 2004)

Only two of the school's first 58 senior certificate examinees failed at the end of 1996. The school has had a consistently excellent academic track record, with 15 distinctions in mathematics among last year's matriculants. Each year five to six learners get into university medical schools around the country. (Rassool 2004)

Edu-College, a middle income independent school running out of several old office blocks under the N2 highway in central Port Elizabeth, was also started in 1994. The school began as a few Saturday enrichment classes for school children, as part of an already existing franchise. After eight years, the school encompassed enrichment classes, a pre-primary, primary and high school, as well as a post-

school college offering hotel management, information technology and tourism training. (Frielinghaus, 2004)

For the last few years the school has achieved a 100% pass rate. The school receives subsidy funding amounting to Rand 400 000 from government and private sources, but the majority of the income comes from fees, which amount to Rand 450 to Rand 490 per month for primary and high schools. Some bursaries are available, particularly for students with various talents. For example, there are 16 junior international soccer players amongst the pupils on full bursaries. Edu-college provides extra curricular activities such as a brass band run by a former member of the Cape Town symphony Orchestra, a wide range of sports, and a computer laboratory.

Another development in the independent school sector is the extent to which wealthy independent schools offer outreach programmes to poorer schools. Hofmeyr & Lee (2004) note that most independent schools have forged string links with disadvantaged communities, with 64% of independent schools having partnership and development programmes with under-resourced independent or public schools.

Ann Bernstein (2004) outlines one such example:

*One example of this is an initiative that was run with private-sector funding by St Mary's School for Girls in Waverley, Johannesburg. The school offered extra-mural maths and science classes to learners from Alexandra. Nearly 150 learners from grades 9 to 12 from five Alexandra schools attended classes for a minimum of eight-and-a-half hours every week. They received tuition in mathematics, science, accounting, English and computer literacy. Success rates varied from year to year, but somewhere between 85% and 96% of outreach students passed senior-certificate maths. In 2002 the two top standard-grade maths students at Alexandra High School were outreach learners. Outreach learners achieved all five of the distinctions for maths at East Bank High School, and the majority of these top performers in neighbouring schools attended the St Mary's programme. (Mail & Guardian, 8 December 2004)*

Another example in Cape Town:

*Based in the Western Cape, the Leap Maths and Science School is a dedicated school for learners in the further education and training phase. This School currently attracts eighty learners from the surrounding Cape townships all of whom are currently educationally disadvantaged. The school is set up as a resource-sharing model with the Diocesan College (Bishops). The school functions*

*on an extended school day until 17h00 during the week with extra Saturday tutorial classes to maximize contact time with learners. Afternoons are spent at the Bishop's campus where learners utilize the laboratories, library and school grounds. Learners at Leap pay the same school fees that they would have paid in a public school – these amounts are ploughed back into their original township schools that also benefit from the structure as Leap shares its resources with these schools. (Leap brochure)*

And in Mpumalanga:

*Penryn College in Mpumalanga, itself originally a development of St Stithians College of Johannesburg, reaches 725 partner schools and over 200 000 learners in its Penreach programme. (Hofmeyr 2004)*

Despite the innovations in the sector and the observed growth in the independent school sectors' share of schooling, available data suggests a leveling off of this growth. The majority of existing registered independent schools were established in the period 1994 to 1999, with a peak in 1999 followed by a sharp drop in additional registrations.

This may be related to the reductions in government subsidies for independent schools implemented in 1998 – less than 0.38 percent of the national education budget for 2005/6 (R67 465m) is spent on independent school subsidies (R253m), while 83% (R56 083m) is spent on ordinary public schools. Less than half a percent of the amount spent on public schools plus independent schools is spent on independent schools, yet they provide 3% of schooling in the country.

Table reproduced from Independent Schooling (Du Toit 2003) 16 HRD Review HSRC Press, 2003

Yet it is clear there remains a demand for more and better schooling, particularly for the poor, and that educational outcomes among public schools still leave much to be desired. Fiske & Ladd comment on the continued inequalities in his analysis of educational outcomes in South Africa – and the continued poor quality in the majority of public schools.

*Our analysis of these three outcomes measures – progress through school, course taking, and performance on Senior Certificate examinations – shows that South Africa still faces huge challenges in its efforts to provide black students with an adequate education. Although many black students currently enrolled in formerly white schools clearly have access to better education than was available to them during the apartheid period, their number remains a small proportion of*

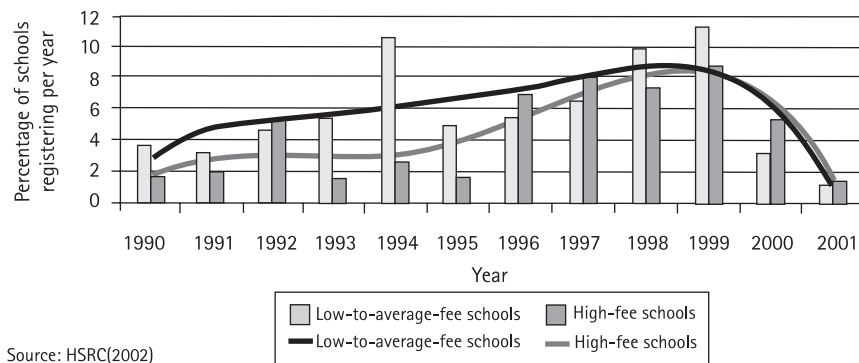
the total. Unfortunately, none of the evidence presented in the previous section indicates much improvement in educational outcomes for the vast majority of previously disadvantaged students. Even in Western Cape, which boasts very high pass rates on the matriculation exam in comparison with other provinces, the students in the former black schools continue to exhibit very poor outcomes, whether measured as progress through school or as success on the matriculation exam. (Fiske & Ladd, 2005 Chapter 9)

A number of the graphs supporting Fiske's analysis are reproduced below, showing the low retention rates for black pupils, high repetition rates for black pupils, reduced number of students sitting for Grade 12 examinations, and the stagnant pass rate in public schools in the Western Cape - a province which generally performs better than most other provinces.

The table above shows the recent drop in the number of candidates sitting for the Grade 12 examination. Consequently, despite the apparent improvement in the pass rate (see graph below), the net proportion of pupils passing each year has been decreasing in recent years - while the actual number passing in a year has not exceeded the number which passed in 1994.

In 2000, according to the National Education Department, some 499 schools achieved a pass rate of under 20% (National Report on the Performance of Individual Schools in the 2000 Senior Certificate Examinations). When it comes to Maths and Science matriculants, the picture is even darker.

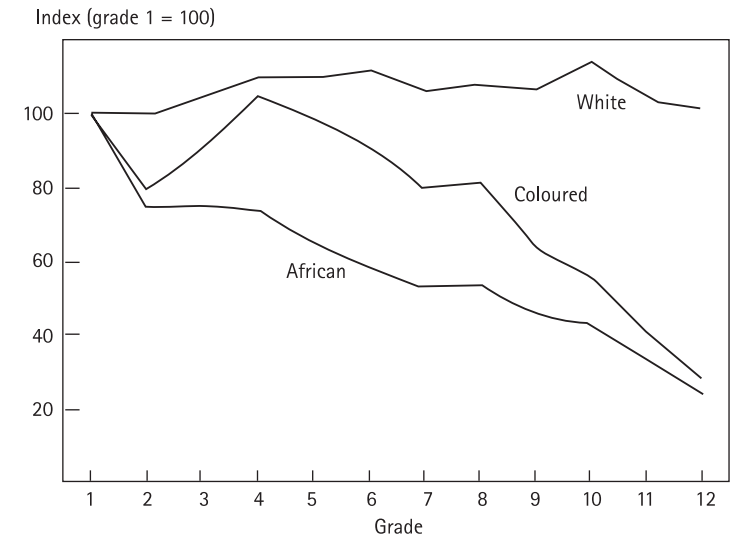
Figure 1: Registration of additional independent schools per annum by annual school-fee category, 1990-2001.



Source: HSRC(2002)

Table reproduced from Independent Schooling

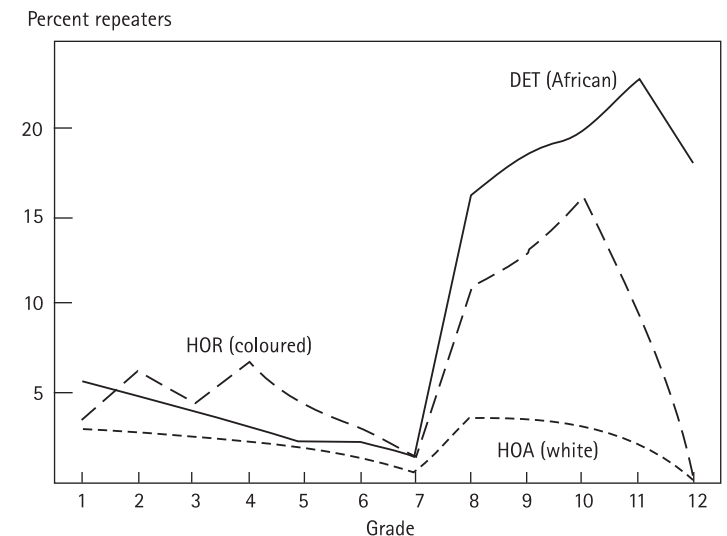
Figure 9-1: Learners by Grade and Race, 2001.



This graph above shows the extent to which the enrolment of black and Coloured children in school rapidly decreases with increasing grade in the Eastern Cape.

Source: Based on data from Eastern Cape Department of Education.

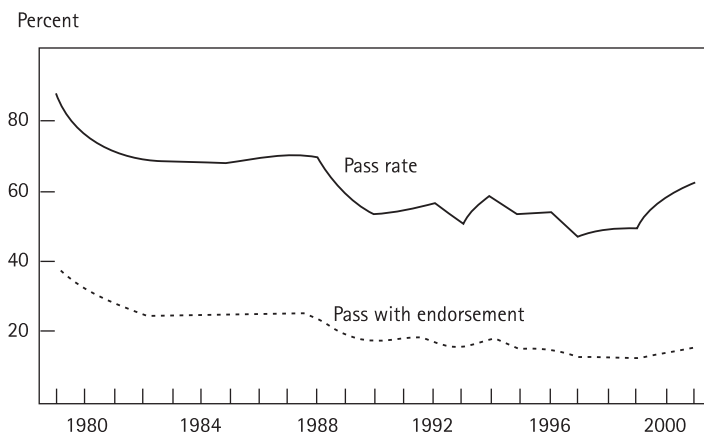
Figure 9-2: Repetition Rates, by Grade by Former Department, Western Cape, 2001.



This graph above shows the high repetition rates for black and Coloured learners in the Western Cape.

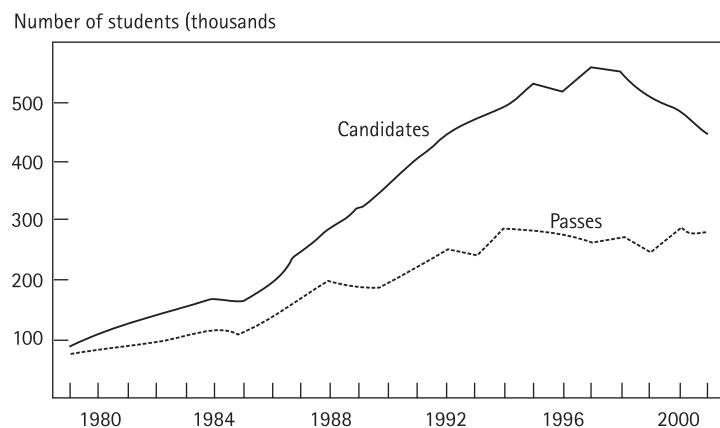
Source: Based on data from Western Cape Education Department.

Figure 9-4: Senior Certificate Candidates and Passes, 1979-2001.



Source: South African Institute of Race Relations (201, P. 156).

Figure 9-5: Senior Certificate Pass Rates, 1979-2001.



Source: South African Institute of Race Relations (201, P. 156).

The Centre for Development & Enterprise (CDE) research has found SA is facing a national crisis in higher grade (HG) maths and science schooling. The extent of the crisis is illustrated by the following statistics: between 1991 and 2003, HG enrolment plummeted by 32,95% ... only 23,42% of all HG maths graduates were African. One-fifth of secondary schools did not offer maths at all and only half offered HG maths. Where maths was offered, one-third of schools achieved pass rates of 0%-19%. (Financial Mail 4 February 2005).

Public schools some ten years after the demise of apartheid appear to have failed to redress the educational inequities of apartheid (and may in fact have entrenched them) and have furthermore failed to increase the overall number of pupils emerging with a „matric“ (Grade 12) qualification.

The question remains whether public schools will ever be able to offer equitable, quality education. James Tooley in his extensive work on schools for the poor in developing countries, comments as follows:

*When I present my work about the „private alternative“ in education at conferences and seminars, a response I sometimes get from even those who are somewhat sympathetic to my work is along the lines of „It might work for the middle classes, but certainly not for the poor. And what about the poor countries? It certainly wouldn't work for them.“ No, it is generally assumed that if it is the poor we are concerned about, educationally speaking, then there is no role for the private sector, and its promotion would only be detrimental to their chances... My experience is that this is the bottom line for most people who give this matter any thought. Equity-or one of its popular near-synonyms, equality of opportunity or just plain equality-is the principle reason why government intervention in education is justified... I find it a rather touching faith that governments could provide equity in education, given their record to date.... In the developed world, we see huge disparity in the quality and standard of state schools from middle-class to working-class areas. ... (Tooley 2003)*

Certainly, the data from South Africa on the record of government in providing equity and quality in schooling suggests that Tooley's cynicism would not be out of place here too. Public schools often do not work as well as they should precisely because they are public schools, due to what Sol Stern has called the „perverse rewards“ of the public education sector:

*Of course if the monopoly were doing its job - providing a quality education to all the state's children - there would be no education crisis and the voucher alternative would be purely academic. But it is now an open secret that in*

*many areas of (New York) State, the taxpayers' money is going straight down the drain... Consider the problem of failing schools. When schools in the private sector fail, dissatisfied parents take their tuition money to another school and the failing school must respond either by improving or closing down. In the public school sector, however, failure has its perverse rewards. Not only is no one ever fired and no school ever closed, but failure creates a rationale for even more jobs for the industry... (Sol Stern quoted in Bernstein 2003).*

In terms of South Africa's labour laws, teacher applicants to public schools not appointed to posts can declare a dispute if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the appointment process. During former MEC for Education in the Western Cape Helen Zille's first 18 months of taking up her position, she claimed that her department had to deal with approximately 1000 disputes in those 18 months. She estimated that approximately 60% of these disputes had been entirely frivolous.

*The amount of time and money these disputes absorb is enormously wasteful. Sometimes such a dispute can bring an entire school to a standstill... Every day in education shows me how crippling the effect of our labour legislation is. (Helen Zille Focus 16, November 1999).*

Teachers in South Africa are highly unionised - in 2001, of 354201 teachers in South Africa, 97% were members of unions - and applicable public service and labour legislation is conscientiously policed by the relevant unions, although usually with integrity, there are individuals who act to the detriment of schools.

*It is important for me to say in this context that the teachers' unions have acted appropriately in upholding the rule of law in the Bonga case. When the teacher who failed to get the promotion refused to abide by the outcome of arbitration, the teachers' unions supported my tough action, and I think they acted with integrity. (Helen Zille, Focus 16, November 1999).*

Only serious misconduct appears to result in serious consequences for teachers in the public service. In 2004, some 269 teachers were fired and 187 given final written warnings for serious offences, including 49 for rape and sexual abuse (Sunday Times, 28 August 2005). Yet the 61 teachers who helped Grade 12 (matric) pupils to cheat by leaking exam answers or allowing them to cheat in other ways, were merely fined Rand 3000 - and not banned from future invigilating, the activity in which they were engaged when assisting the cheats. (Mail & Guardian, 16 August 2005).

Problems of attendance of teachers in public schools, especially low-fee public schools, have been so severe that an attendance register for teachers in schools is now routine. A spot-check by the current MEC Western Cape at one school in July 2004 found 30 of the 52 teachers not present when the school opened at 8am (Media Release, Office of the MEC for Education Western Cape, 21 July 2004). By comparison, accountability of teachers in independent schools is more direct. This echoes findings in a report commissioned by the Indian government, discussed by Tooley:

The Indian government recently sponsored the PROBE

Report - the Public Report on Basic Education in India (The Probe Team, 1999) - which gives a useful picture of the relative merits of public and private schools for the poor. ...Private schools, they said, were successful because they were more accountable:

*This feature of private schools brings out the key role of accountability in the schooling system. In a private school, the teachers are accountable to the manager (who can fire them), and, through him or her, to the parents (who can withdraw their children). In a government school, the chain of accountability is much weaker, as teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions unrelated to performance. This contrast is perceived with crystal clarity by the vast majority of parents. (64) ...As parents see it, the main advantage of private schools is that, being more accountable, they have higher levels of teaching activity. This is confirmed by the PROBE survey (102). (Tooley 2001: 171)*

Hofmeyr & Lee (2003) point out there is a popular misconception that teachers in independent schools are paid more than teachers in public schools. In fact, data from the Independent Schools Association (ISASA) (which includes all high-fee schools) shows that the average take-home salary for a teacher in their schools is Rand 86 000 p.a.

A similarly qualified teacher in a public school would take home just over Rand 80 000, but would also enjoy a housing subsidy, medical aid, and a 13th cheque, giving a total package of Rand 115 000 compared to Rand 112 000 in the independent school sector. (Hofmeyr & Lee 2003).

Furthermore, most low-to-average fee schools only survive because they pay significantly less than do public schools - Rand 112 000 refers to the average including high-fee schools. According to Hofmeyr & Lee, most teachers in low fee schools prefer to be at these schools because of the greater curricular freedom

and ability to „make a difference“; many are married women able to rely on their spouses' incomes and benefits. Consequently, teachers in independent schools, particularly low-income schools, tend to be there because they want to be there, and consequently tend to be dedicated to their jobs. Again, this finding echoes what has been found in India:

*In a state school, the average teacher pay varies between about 4,000 rupees to 9,000 rupees per month (about \$95 to \$200), depending on qualifications. In these unaided private schools it was significantly lower, from as low as 400 to 600 rupees per month in the rural school (i.e., \$9.50 to \$14.20 per month) to a high of 2000 to 5000 rupees per month (\$47.60 to \$119.00) in the city. As for teacher qualifications, all of the schools had teachers qualified at least to the intermediate (grade 12) level, and the great majority of schools had mainly graduate teachers. Some schools had Masters' graduates, and one a Ph.D. (Tooley: 2003)*

School governing body posts in high fee public schools (posts paid for by the school out of fees, as opposed to posts allocated by the Department) also exhibit more accountability than permanent posts, as poorly performing teachers face a greater degree of insecurity – another reason for the better quality of teaching at high-fee public schools.

Research comparing the unit cost per student among 13 non-public Catholic schools in black townships around Johannesburg showed that these schools had less than half the unit costs found in neighbouring public schools. The average

**Table 12:** Senior Certificate Examination pass rates for public and independent schools, 2001

Pass rate	Public Schools		Independent Schools	
	Percentage	Low-to-average-fee schools	High-fee schools	Combined
Without endorsement	46,6	39,4	21,1	31,4
With endorsement	15,1	27,1	51,7	37,5
<b>Total pass rate</b>	<b>61,7</b>	<b>66,5</b>	<b>72,8</b>	<b>68,9</b>

Sources: DoE (200 L); HS RC (2002)

Notes: Pass rates for 2002 were not available at the time of the survey.

Chart reproduced from Du Toit (2003)

unit cost in the Catholic schools was Rand 2295, compared to Rand 4654 in the public high schools (Hofmeyr & Lee 2003:166).

The total amount allocated in the national budget for ordinary schools is Rand 67 465m, hence the average amount spent per pupil taking into account the full allocation to schools is Rand 5866 – showing these independent Catholic schools to be doing even better than this study shows. Thus any school charging significantly less than Rand 6000 per year is operating more efficiently than government in public schools. Enrolment at the Catholic schools in this study was furthermore increasing while that at the public schools was decreasing, possibly reflecting a choice decision on the part of parents. (Hofmeyr & Lee 2003:166).

Pass rates even in low-average fee independent schools are higher than those in public schools in South Africa (Du Toit, 2003).

Independent schools in the low-average fee category have a better pass rate (66.5% against 61.7%), with 41% of those passing, passing „with endorsement“, compared to 25% in public schools (Du Toit: 293).

Again, this appears to echo the findings on efficiency and quality in developing countries generally, quoted by Tooley:

*First, there is the important work by World Bank economist Emmanuel Jimenez and sociologist Marlaine E. Lockheed, and other colleagues who studied „The Relative Efficiency of Private and Public Schools“ in Thailand (Jimenez et al. 1991, 205–218; Jimenez et al. 1988, 139–164).*

*The researchers conducted detailed quantitative analysis using longitudinal data and looked for the value added by the school, whether private or public. Using advanced statistical techniques to control for potential bias from social background, the researchers concluded that the private schools are, in general, „more effective and less costly“ than their public counterparts at improving the mathematical performance of students. Taking their methods on to a broader canvas, the researchers showed that, based on studies comparing private and public education in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Thailand, and focusing now on mathematics and language teaching, private school students again, in general, outperformed the public school students. This result, again, held true even when controlling for the potential bias of social class. And again, there was „preliminary evidence“ to suggest that the unit costs in private schools were lower than in the public schools (Jimenez et al. 1991, 205). ... (Tooley, 2003)*



... the evidence from Chile is unequivocal. Chile brought in a system of vouchers in 1980, which allowed for these subsidies to be spent at private schools or at local municipal schools. The evidence shows that the subsidized private schools were more efficient than the municipal schools—employing less teachers per pupil and having lower unit costs. Yet they achieved higher test results in mathematics and Spanish. This result holds even when the test scores are adjusted to control for socioeconomic status (Larrañaga 1997). (Tooley 2001: 176)

There is in addition research which suggests similar efficiency gains for private schools in the developed world:

*A study by Pollard (2002) in the United Kingdom suggests that independent schools can deliver more education per unit costs than state schools, especially if the hidden costs in state education are factored into the equation. (Hofmeyr 2003: 166)*

Consequently, says Tooley, perhaps the best way forward is to encourage the further expansion of independent schools – even for the very poor:

*... not all children can afford the private schools. But if the state sector provides schools which are so cavalier about their clients, indifferent to their needs, then this suggests that reformers' efforts would best be served by helping such children attend private schools—whether through public or private voucher/scholarship schemes (or both)—rather than by objecting to the private sector. (Tooley 2001: 179)*

International comparison with other developing countries suggests that the independent school sector's share of schooling in South Africa is relatively low:

*...in Moscow, the same proportion of students attend private school as they do in the UK (about 7%). In countries such as Colombia, 28% of total enrolment in the kindergarten and primary education is in the private sector, increasing to 40% at secondary school level; in Argentina and Cote d'Ivoire, 30% and 57% of secondary school enrolment is in the private sector; Indonesia has 23% private primary and secondary school students. (Tooley 2001: 27)*

This suggests there is room for further growth in South Africa – yet the high number of very poor communities in need of schools in South Africa – some 75% of children are classified as officially living in poverty – suggests that innovative funding mechanisms will have to be found.

In Andhar Pradesh, India, Tooley's research has shown that one of the ways in

which independent low income schools assist the very poor is to allocate a number of places to the very poor without charge – much like Khanyisa High's system.

*Even though these schools are for the poor, a key feature is that they have a significant number of scholarships—that is, free places for even poorer students. The free places were allocated by the School Correspondent, on the basis of claims of need checked informally in the community. Five of the schools had between 15 and 20 percent of students in free school places. (Tooley, 2001: 172)*

However, in extremely poor communities where all members of the community are poor and none can afford to pay to go to school, different funding solutions must be found. One of the options is a full bursary system such as offered by the tertiary business school CIDA college in Johannesburg, which accepts only poor rural students and obtains bursaries from businesses for each student attending. While the private sector supports a number of students in tertiary institutions in this manner, such a tradition has yet to be established in a large-scale way in primary and secondary schools.

Schools fully funded by donations to the school (as opposed bursary funding) is a further funding mechanism – but the sustainability of institutions which rely on such funding is always under question, as donor funding is both usually for limited periods of time and increasingly directed through government.

In the most impoverished communities, adequate schooling provision and the funding thereof is only one of many problems facing communities. HIV and AIDS is exacerbating the problem of poverty in South Africa:

*Some 5.3 million people in South Africa are infected with HIV/AIDS, according to 2004 estimates by the South African government's Department of Health. More than half of these are women of an age most likely to be mothers (between 15–49 yrs). Approximately 90 000 children were infected with HIV through mother to child transmission in 2002, and an estimated 500 000 children live with mothers who have AIDS. Close to 1m children (equivalent to around 10% of the school-going population) have been orphaned, the majority as a result of AIDS.*

*Consequently, many children attending school are either orphans heading households, or caring for sick relatives or parents at home. Households' ability to earn income, as well as the cost associated with illness, make the costs associated with attending school beyond the reach of many children. Furthermore, such children are in need of many kinds of care and support, from provision of adequate nutrition to counseling to health services. (Giese et al 2003)*

HIV and AIDS is a problem which all schools – public and independent – face. The full consequences of the AIDS pandemic are beyond the scope of this paper, but it is clear that there is a need for schools operating in poor communities to be far more than just schools, but also centres of support for children.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the teaching profession is also pertinent. Recent research by the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) measured the impact of HIV/AIDS via a nationally representative sample of 17 088 teachers who gave an oral fluid or blood specimen for testing. Nearly 13% tested positive. The Mail & Guardian reported on the research as follows:

*HIV prevalence is highest (21%) among 25- to 34-year-olds, followed by 35- to 44-year-olds (13% tested positive). More than a fifth (22%) of the HIV-positive group need immediate anti-retroviral therapy – about 10 000 of all teachers. „This means that in about 10 years almost a quarter of experienced teachers will have died of Aids,“ said Dave Balt, president of the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa). And because of an only slightly lower prevalence in the 25–29 age group, there will not be sufficient teachers in the system to provide education for all the learners. This situation is exacerbated in rural areas, where the prevalence is much higher.*

... About 4 000 teachers died of Aids last year, the study found... The study found that the health of teachers is apparently poorer than that of the general population: 10,6% had been hospitalised in the preceding 12 months, as opposed to the 7% observed generally in the Nelson Mandela/HSRC study of HIV/AIDS (Mail & Guardian, 1 April 2005).

The study found that the number of teachers had declined over the past seven years. By 2002/03, some 21 000 teachers (about 6%) were leaving the system annually. Crouch has estimated that the combination of the existing teacher shortage plus the AIDS pandemic would create a yearly deficit of 12 000 teachers between 2011 and 2015. (Mail & Guardian, 1 April 2005).

Low fee independent schools already report difficult recruiting sufficient quality teachers. The teacher shortage is likely to push teacher salaries up, which will make it difficult for low-average fee schools – which as we have seen tend to offer slightly lower salaries – to be able to attract teachers and remain low-fee.

Teachers shortages are not the only problems preventing further growth in the independent school sector. Independent schools are also operating in relatively hostile policy environment – referred to as a „policy vice“ by Hofmeyr (2003: 166).

They are subject to labour laws, administration laws and taxation laws, the last two of which do not apply in public schools: many have to operate as a business as well as a school, unlike public schools, where administration does not draw as much energy away from the core functions of education.

Government furthermore seeks increasingly to erode the independence of independent schools. For example, laws such the Education Laws Amendment Act attempt to place government control over what and how independent schools teach and assess their students. These provisions are imposed on all independent schools, including those who make use of no public funds at all.

The tight fiscal environment in South Africa means the likelihood of government subsidies to independent schools being increased in the near future is extremely low. Furthermore, a voucher system is certainly not under consideration by the government at present. Obtaining adequate funding in a climate of extreme poverty will remain the key challenge for low income independent schools. Whether they have reached their midnight-hour or can rise to the challenge of increasingly catering for education for the poor will be determined by the extent to which the question of funding can be resolved.

## Bibliography

Bernstein A. *No child left behind* Mail & Guardian 8 December 2004

Bernstein, A. *Choice is essence of good schooling* Business Day, 12 June 2003

Du Toit, J *Independent Schooling* Chapter 16 HRD Review HSRC Press, 2003

Fiske, E.B.; Ladd, H.F. *Elusive Equity: Education Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa* Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa /Nexus, 2005

Frielinghaus, J, *Private Schools for the People* article featured on [www.bythepeople.co.za](http://www.bythepeople.co.za)

Giese, S.; Meintjies, H.; Croke, R.; Chamberlain, R.; *The role of schools in addressing the needs of children made vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS* Publication of the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, July 2003

Hofmeyr, J.; Lee, S.; *The new face of private schooling in Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa* Chisholm L (ed) HSRC Press 2004

Rassool, M. *Where Independence Breeds Excellence* article featured on [www.cie.org.za](http://www.cie.org.za)

Roithmayr, D. *The Constitutionality of School Fees in Public Education* Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), University of the Witwatersrand, September 2002

Tooley, J. *Serving the Needs of the Poor: The Private Education Sector in Developing Countries* in *Can the Market Save our Schools?* Fraser Institute 2001 (Hepburn Ed) pp167-184





**Jean Redpath** is an independent research consultant specialising in quantitative analysis. She is also editor of the website [bythepeople.org.za](http://bythepeople.org.za), which encourages and highlights voluntary and private initiative in the security, education and health sectors in South Africa.