

**STUDY OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL FUNDING NORMS:
PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS**

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ABSTRACT

The majority of South African learners attend public schools, all of which are encouraged to supplement government funding with private funds - namely through fees charged of learners' parents. A review of the literature suggests that school fees can impede the right to education and the achievement of other national development goals by restricting access for poor learners, or by diminishing the quality of education. While the issue of school fees has been hotly debated in South Africa, there is little information about what is actually happening in schools. This research, conducted in a peri-urban area outside of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, is designed to explore the perspectives and experiences of principals with regards to the school fee policy. Eleven principals were interviewed: nine from relatively poor schools and two from a wealthier area, and their experiences with regards to the implementation of the school fee policy were compared and analysed.

The findings suggest the implementation of the policy tends to be similar across schools of similar financial standing, but that there are considerable differences between the experiences of principals from poor and wealthy schools. The wealthier schools implemented the policy 'to-the-letter' and had hired staff and created systems to ensure all rules were properly followed. All of the poorer schools found parts of the policy impossible to implement in their schools and had adapted the policy in similar ways to better fit their situation. For example, amongst other adaptations, they allowed parents to apply for an exemption by simply discussing their circumstances with the principal, or obtaining an affidavit from the police, instead of making everyone fill out an official application form.

Part of the problem is that the policy is based on assumptions which are not consistent with the reality of the South African context in that there are many different 'realities' faced by schools, yet there is only one rigid policy. Many schools find parts of the policy's processes to be impractical or irrelevant at best, and actually decreasing the quality of education they are able to provide at worst. Areas within which policy assumptions and reality did not match include: the implications of the distribution of income in South Africa on school financing; the power and access to information of parents and SGBs, and the ability or desire of parents to pay fees and/or be involved in the oversight of their children's education; and, the ability of provincial Departments of Education to properly support poor and/or Non-section 21 schools. Additionally, Non-section 21 schools were found to be at an economic disadvantage compared with Section 21 schools.

Another issue is that there are currently adverse incentives built into the policy. Amongst other effects these incentives encourage principals to minimise the number of exemptions approved, and for parents to either not pay at all, or to provide information to principals that underestimates their annual income.

The significant contrasts in experiences between experiences of poor and wealthy schools and the adverse incentives built into the policy suggest the right question to ask may not be whether or not schools are implementing the policy correctly, but whether the policy is correctly designed to achieve the goals of the South African education system within the current context.

DECLARATION

Submitted as the dissertation component in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Development Studies in the Graduate Programme of the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare this dissertation is my own unaided work and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where the work of others has been cited, it has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text accordingly. The research was conducted between September, 2007, and January, 2008, under the supervision of Professor Francie Lund. The opinions expressed, and conclusions presented, are those of the author alone. The dissertation is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Development Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KIN RAY', is written over the word 'Signed,'.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CSG	Child Support Grant
DOE	National Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HEARD	Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division
HOD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NSSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
NP	National Party
PDOE	Provincial Department of Education
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SFAI	School Fee Abolition Initiative
StatsSa	Statistics South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1994, at the inception of a new democracy, the South African government declared its commitment to the educational rights of its children through its Bill of Rights which guarantees a basic education to all South African citizens. It has reaffirmed this internationally, by ratifying a number of treaties, including: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Education for All Dakar Framework; and, the UN Millennium Development Goal commitment. Each of these commitments requires the South African government to provide a basic education to all of its children, and the international ones stipulate it should be free.

While it has been working toward this goal, the enormity and complexity of the issues that face the system require a sustained amount of attention, monitoring and funds - all three of which have also been demanded by a wide range of other pressing social, political and economic issues facing the new democracy. The big question has been how to tackle the residual effects of the apartheid era's policies and reform the education system despite the numerous competing developmental objectives preclusion of a complete overhaul of the system.

After a long period of international isolation due to the widespread condemnation of apartheid policies, the new government was especially open to gaining new international perspectives. The transition to democracy occurred at a time when neo-liberal approaches to development were predominant. These approaches recommended a restraint of government spending in social service sectors and for making up the difference through the increased investment of private sources. In the case of education, this meant charging fees of parents of learners in the system. Simultaneously, the role of education in development was becoming more prominent and international movements to extend access to education to all children were gaining momentum; most of which called for the elimination of user fees in education. It is in this context of competing national and international interests and theories that the reform of the South African education system has evolved.

It is likely due to this context that legislation pertaining to education financing has been an attempted reconciliation between funding needs for different national programmes and a compromise between the diverse international approaches and pressures. South Africa chose to allow schools to charge user fees while trying to mitigate the potential negative effects of the policy by including amendments which addressed the needs for increased equality and redress within the system. The policy has evolved and been further amended since 1994, but remains essentially intact. Many contend the policy is both perpetuating the inequality established in the education system by apartheid, and limiting South African children's ability to access their basic right to education (Spren & Vally 2006; HSRC 2005; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004; Roithmayr 2002). This study aims to fill a gap in the research on effects of the policy by looking at how it is actually being interpreted and implemented on the ground by principals.

In order to provide a wider context within which to examine the South African situation, the first section of this chapter will look at the historical background of education rights internationally, and at how the role of education in development has become one of the pre-eminent goals of many international development movements. The next section will give a theoretical framework within which to situate the discussion of the issues of equity and school fees in education. The final section will introduce the present study and conclude with an outline of the remainder of the dissertation.

1.1 Education in Development

1.1.1 Historical Context of the Right to Education

Education has been recognised internationally as a universal human right since the 1948 inception of the United Nations (UN). Article 26(1) of the original UN Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory" (UN 1948). In addition to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, five other major international treaties on human rights were signed between the 1960s and 1990s that guaranteed basic

education for all¹. Almost every country in the world is a signatory to at least one of the international treaties (Tomasevski 2003, 7).

Since 1990, the Education for All (EFA) campaign has targeted universal education across the world as one of the most important development goals for poor countries. Participants agreed to undertake a mutual and concerted effort to reduce illiteracy and extend basic primary education to all of the world's children. The widespread participation² of countries and organisations set the EFA Conferences apart from previous conferences, as did its far-reaching goals and, perhaps most importantly, its organisers'³ great influence and ability to garner international media attention and funding. The second EFA conference in 2000 produced the Dakar Framework for Action which reiterated and reconfirmed the commitment of the 1990 conference, and added 2015 as a deadline for achievement of the goals. These goals were designed to work hand in hand with another significant UN-sponsored international commitment signed in 2000 with a deadline of 2015: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁴ (UN 2000). A more detailed history of the international context of education rights and the EFA and MDG commitments are outlined in Appendix I.

The publicity and academic interest surrounding these two major campaigns has intensified pressure from the coordinating organisations and other donors for countries to make an effort to reach their goals. There has also been a significant funding increase (particularly in loans from the World Bank) and technical assistance given to participating countries. While accomplishment of the goals set by these international commitments is not assured, there is a significant amount of research being conducted around the completion of these goals and a

¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, in force 1976); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, in force 1976); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, in force 1969); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women (1979, in force 1981); and, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, in force 1990).

² The original EFA commitments were developed by delegates from 155 countries and over 150 organisations. The second EFA forum had 164 attending countries (1,100 participants).

³ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank were the four sponsors of the conference and also formed an Inter-Agency Commission for post-conference follow-up of the initiative.

⁴ The MDGs include seven essential indicator goals (and one goal of a global partnership for development) agreed upon by almost all of the world's countries: universal primary education is goal number two.

considerable amount of media attention surrounding the campaigns' progress. Support and pressure has also been given to developing countries, including South Africa⁵, by other major aid donors and signatories. This is potentially due to the fact that a focus on education is considered necessary to achieve not only the education-related targets, but also those relating to economic growth and health (UN 2007; UNESCO 2007). The next two sections explore the pivotal role education plays in development.

1.1.2 Education's Intrinsic & Instrumental Roles in Development

Education has two important roles to play in and for development. Firstly, as an internationally recognised human right its value should not need justification as it should be considered intrinsically valuable in-and-of itself and, thus, should be a primary goal of development. Secondly, education is essential for the access and exercise of other human rights (Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004; Tomasevski 2003; Watkins *et al.* 2001; Watkins 2000). This section explores the way education is both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable in the world of development.

Intrinsically valuable

Up until relatively recently almost all development theories defined 'development' as synonymous with a high level of industrialisation, with incomes and production the main indicators of a country's progress along the continuum⁶. In the 1990s, a group of development theorists began to consider ideas of development beyond the world of economics, and to define wealth and poverty not in terms of income but in terms of human 'capabilities' and freedoms.

⁵ The 2000 EFA evaluation explains the history of South Africa's EFA participation: "South Africa did not participate in the Jomtien World Conference in 1990 because of its international isolation due to its apartheid policies. After its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa was invited to participate in the EFA process, and was welcomed at the Mid-decade Review on Education for All which was held in Amman, Jordan, in 1996" (DOE 2000).

⁶ Some leftist theorists, such as Raúl Prebisch, blamed the 'underdevelopment' (under-industrialisation) of developing countries on the ways in which international trade overwhelmingly benefited developed nations. But, even though these theorists shifted the focus toward the plight of the poor and what is beneficial for poor countries, they still considered national income to be the gauge of development.

Economist Amartya Sen is likely the best known proponent of these ideas. His writings advanced the ‘development as freedom’ concept which asserts that those who view economic growth as the main objective of development often forget that the underlying reason for economic growth should be an improvement of people’s well-being. While improvements in gross national product or in personal incomes may be important, they should be viewed as merely the means to expanding freedoms, not as the ultimate goal: “viewing development in terms of expanding substantive freedoms directs attention to the ends that make development important, rather than merely to some of the means that, inter alia, play a prominent part in the process” (Sen 1999, 3). Money itself does not have intrinsic value, it is what it can purchase – i.e. food, healthcare, education, housing – that adds to personal welfare.

The idea of ‘development as freedom’ identifies the opportunity to receive basic education and healthcare as well as the liberty of political participation and economic participation as substantive, or ‘constituent’, freedoms, meaning they do not need to be justified in terms of their instrumental value (in achieving goals like economic growth) but rather are essential on their own right because they are needed “to realise human potential in a broader sense” (Watkins 2000, 16; Sen 1999). It raises quality of life by introducing people to new ideas and enabling them to think critically and make informed decisions. Education, in this light of human capability expansion, is one of the most essential reasons for development, not just a means for generating more productive citizens.

Instrumentally valuable

The intrinsic value of education does not diminish its significance as a critical instrumental force in development; instead, it becomes more crucial as a facilitator for the achievement of other freedoms. Tomasevski (2003) explains: “Education operates as multiplier, enhancing the enjoyment of all individual rights and freedoms where the right to education is effectively guaranteed, while depriving people of the enjoyment of many rights and freedoms where it is denied” (Tomasevski 2003, 16). In other words, education is a constitutive freedom, but it is also a means for the advancement of other social, political and economic freedoms. If one is not educated, one’s access to information and skills is severely reduced meaning entry to economic markets is restricted, capacity to utilise social services hampered, and voice in

political and democratic institutions diminished. This section gives a brief summary of education's instrumental roles in development, including its role in economic expansion, reducing poverty and inequality and improving the overall health of individuals. A more thorough overview of the arguments and ideas can be found in Appendix II.

Today, a substantial body of research exists on the relationship between investments in education and economic growth. Studies have found that investments in the expansion of primary and secondary education have significant positive effects on economic growth and poverty reduction (Tokman 2004; Weber 2002; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2002,1994; Betts 1999; Becker *et al.* 1990). For individuals the returns to education seem fairly obvious: the higher one's level of educational attainment, the higher one's earnings are likely to be. While fewer studies have been done on a macroeconomic level, it is widely agreed that education (along with health, infrastructure, and other social and institutional variables) plays a critical role in both the creation of economic growth and the reduction of poverty and inequality. Critics maintain that there is not a simple, straightforward connection between education and economic growth as a nation's history and social context will greatly affect outcomes, even with better access to quality education.

Countries which have educational inequalities tend to have similar inequalities in wealth distribution⁷. Educational deprivation limits access to information and markets, hinders awareness of economic opportunities and reduces a person's ability to adapt to changes in skills required to participate in the job market. This increases economic inequality since those who are educated continue to reap benefits while those who are not drift further behind. Initial levels of inequality have been shown to be especially hard on the poor because inequality's impact on economic growth has a double effect on poverty: it both slows economic growth (making the whole pot smaller than it could be) and it also may reduce the share of that growth poor people are able to obtain (Wodon & Yitzhaki 2002; Birdsall & Lodoño 1997). While there is not extensive information about wage differentials, education and poverty in South Africa, van der Berg explains how evidence from Moll (2000) and

⁷ I.e.: Countries with substantial inequalities in educational attainment generally also have a high measure of economic inequality, and vice versa.

others shows that, in South Africa, “even where education was not directly responsible for changes in earnings, its distribution determined who could benefit from the new opportunities for blacks in the labour market” (van der Berg 2002, 4).

A third area of development in which education plays a key role is health. Health and education are not only interrelated, they are essential components of one another. Literate individuals with multiple years of schooling are more likely to safeguard their personal health and to better promote that of their children (Sperling 2005; Watkins 2000; Whitman *et al.* 2000). This is especially true for the education of women. Strong correlations have been shown between the increase in educational-achievement levels of women and almost all of the health indicators used to measure the ‘human development’ of a nation. The health of individuals also affects their capacity to learn and therefore the likelihood of benefiting from education they receive. Malnutrition or hunger decreases energy levels, hinders the ability to concentrate and diminishes the capability to process information or perform complex tasks (Del Rosso 1999; Pollitt 1990). Malnourished children are more likely to have irregular attendance and less likely to stay in school than healthy children. If education is linked with future earning power, the implication is malnourished children are more likely to be poor, or stay poor, for the rest of their lives.

1.2 Situating the School Fees Discussion

A number of international studies have been done on school fees within the context of the larger theoretical framework of equality and equity in education. Before discussing the specifics of the situation in South Africa, it is important to understand the larger frameworks within which the discussion takes place. This section describes the current discussions in education development around the issues of equity versus equality, and the next looks specifically at the debate revolving around school fees.

1.2.1 Issues of Equity

In countries with deeply ingrained social and economic inequalities, there is generally a history of exclusion of a specific class, gender or race from the education system. When it

comes time to reform, often one of the primary foci of new plans is to make the education system more equitable. However, the concept of what 'equity' is remains vague. In their works, Fiske & Ladd (2004, 2002) present an excellent framework of the concept of equity within which to analyse the success of educational transformation. Their framework, summarised below, compares and combines the different ways international literature approaches the issue of equity in basic education provision. In it they specify three distinct definitions of 'equitable education' which could be applied in an analysis of a system: equal treatment, educational adequacy and equal educational opportunity.

Equal Treatment (Distributional Equity)

The essence of distributional equity is that each learner receives equal treatment in terms of the provision of resources, regardless of their race, gender, province or level of income. In general, it measures how equally educational inputs (ie: funds, textbooks, teachers, etc.) are distributed across a system. In a system which encourages private investment in education, one could distinguish between the equality of distribution of public funds and that of the sum of public and private funds together.

A significant feature of the distributional equity concept, remarked upon by Fiske & Ladd (2002), is that the distribution across the entire population is what counts, not just improvement in those who currently receive the least. If schools in poorer communities were allocated more funds and the quality of education improved dramatically but, simultaneously the same increase in the amount of resources were provided to the wealthiest schools, the system would not be deemed any more equitable than it had been initially since the difference between what the wealthiest and poorest schools receive remained constant (Fiske & Ladd 2002, 6).

Educational Adequacy

The educational adequacy approach is simple: as long as all schools have sufficient resources to provide a level of education deemed 'adequate', then equity within the system has been achieved and the government need not worry if some schools have additional resources as this does not make the system any less equitable. Advocates for this approach are described

by Spreen & Vally (2006) to believe “a baseline standard for basic education must drive a funding strategy, rather than a ‘closed-budget’ view” (Spreen & Vally 2006, 357). A focus on equal spending from the top, especially in a neo-liberal policy atmosphere that focuses on budgetary constraints, will not sufficiently increase the funds available to poor schools.

The main criticism of this approach is the difficulty in determining what exactly would constitute an ‘adequate’ education and how much this should cost. Disagreements over these definitions have often led to an approach being taken that is easier to create consensus about financial calculations (such as distributional equity). Additionally, in poor countries politicians may not want to make these calculations as they may not have the funds to provide what should be the baseline amount of funds for all children.

Advocates of an adequacy approach to funding argue the government’s foremost responsibility should be to ensure that each child receives an adequate amount of funding to assure enjoyment of his or her right to education, regardless of whether or not that exceeds current spending (DOE 2003a; Roithmayr 2002; Fiske & Ladd 2002). In this way the adequacy approach to equity does address some of the perceived shortcomings in the ideas of distributional equity; however, many believe that it still would not be sufficient for the SA system as it does not take into account the historical inequities and the need for redress (Chisholm 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004, 2002; Roithmayr 2002).

Equal Educational Opportunity and Redress

A point made frequently in the literature is that *equal* may not, in fact, be *equitable*. While ‘equal’ means all parties have the same quantity of a certain resource, ‘equitable’, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, means “implying justice dictated by reason... and what is fair to all” (American Heritage 2008). A government aiming for distributional equity will try to ensure each child is treated exactly the same way regardless of race or income level and a government with a policy of educational adequacy would attempt to fund education so the average child would have access to an adequate level education. These policies may be *equal*, in the sense that everyone is given approximately the same amount, but they still may not be *equitable* since, in an education system, ‘fair to all’ would likely be for children to

have the opportunity to receive a level and quality of education that provides them with an equal amount of knowledge and skills upon graduation from the system.

Equal educational opportunity aims to ensure all children have the potential to attain the same levels of achievement and economic advancement through the education system (Fiske & Ladd 2004, 5-8). Unlike educational adequacy, this approach acknowledges that some children will be more expensive to educate due to historical and social factors and believes these factors should be taken into account in policy and funding. In other words, this approach takes on the challenge of addressing 'equity' instead of just 'equality' as defined by Weber (2002): "while equity is seen as addressing unjust outcomes, equality is defined in relation to inequality...an equitable system would strive to overcome the disadvantages so all students would have 'equal opportunity'" (Weber 2002, 263).

Critics of this approach again point to the difficulty in determining whether or not a child has received 'equal opportunity', and also highlight the fact that an individual's success depends on more than resources; it also depends on that individual's determination and will to succeed. Phurutse (2005) summarises this point well:

The educational context does play a major role in the educational performance of learners, but the agency of the learners and other people in the specific context play an equally critical role in getting good[results]...Resources by themselves will not improve the quality of education.

(Phurutse 2005, 16)

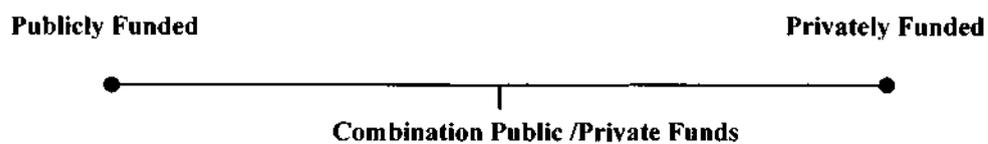
Despite these challenges, much of the literature on the subject of educational equity deems equal educational opportunity to be the long-term goal of any education system.

1.2.2 School Fees

Trends in Education Financing

Education is an expensive service to provide. In addition to physical infrastructure and educator salaries which are generally the most expensive, there are the recurring costs of books, equipment, utilities and supplies. While education in Western Europe and the United

States after World War II was expected to be fully financed by the state, in the 1980s and 1990s, the influence of neo-liberal ideas about the supremacy of market-driven systems began to seep from economics into education and other social sector areas (e.g. health, water and sanitation provision, among others). Neo-liberal education policies change the emphasis of education budget policy from traditional educational goals to economic efficiency: if a state cannot fund the education system while maintaining fiscal austerity it becomes reasonable, and even desirable, for the state to require those using the 'service' to pay. The financing of education can be seen as a continuum with fully government, or publicly funded, systems on one end with an increasing of private to public funds from left to right until fully privately funded systems are reached on the right.



Countries such as Norway, Sweden and Great Britain, which mostly charge fees only for extracurricular activities, are likely to lie nearer to the left of the continuum. Moving to the right one finds countries where public finance does not fully cover the costs of education and governments to ask or require parents to make up the difference. In these education systems that are to some extent privately-funded, households may encounter a varied number of education charges including direct school fees for attendance or to take an exam, and indirect costs such as books, uniforms and supplies.

This semi-privatisation of education financing has been shown to be a large burden on poor families as they often must make trade-offs between spending money on education and spending it on other essential goods. Parents consistently identify cost as one of the determining factors of whether or not they will send their children to school (Tomasevski 2004; Watkins *et al.* 2001). This can be particularly damaging to gender equality when girls' education is not highly valued within a culture as parents are more reluctant to pay the high costs to send their girl children to school and thus often prioritise the education of boys. Considering the relationship between girls' education and the health and education of their

children, this prioritisation has numerous negative effects which transmit poverty across generations.

Current Events

The issue of school fees, and its connection to enrolment, has increased in salience as the EFA and MDGs' deadline of 2015 approaches. The push to enrol remaining out-of-school children is becoming more urgent, especially for developing countries receiving international aid to achieve the education goals. Given that un-enrolled children tend to be poor, and thus the most affected by fees, school fees have come to be considered one of the major lingering obstacles to the achievement of universal primary education (Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004, 7).

To overcome this obstacle, an increasing number of activists, donor organisations and policy analysts have joined what could be termed an 'anti-school fees' campaign. While not unified, it is a growing movement which calls for developing countries to abolish fees at the primary level to improve enrolment, while simultaneously asking developed countries and multi-lateral organisations to increase financial aid to help cover the additional costs caused by the increased enrolment. The campaigns against school fees have been gaining momentum since 2000 and there has been substantial international publicity about the large initial increases in enrolment, where fees have been abolished abruptly (often called a 'big bang' approach), such as Uganda, Lesotho, Kenya and Malawi (Manzo 2006; Avenstrup *et al.* 2004). Using countries' national education statistics and those collected by UNESCO, Avenstrup *et al.* (2004) found enrolment rose by "240 percent over six years in Uganda, 78 percent over eight years in Malawi, 15 percent over three years in Lesotho, and 14 percent in one year in Kenya" (Avenstrup *et al.* 2004, 14).

These increases in enrolment are impressive; however, suddenly abolishing fees is not without drawbacks. New studies have been conducted which suggest a negative correlation between rapid increases in enrolment and quality of education. The authors question the ability of governments to provide immediate universal education and maintain any semblance of quality (Crouch & Vinjevoid 2006; Crouch 2005; Weber 2002). If there are

too many children suddenly entering school when the infrastructure and system are not ready for them, average educational achievement may actually drop: more children might attend, but fewer actually learn due to the crowded, resource-poor conditions⁸.

The results of these studies have led some development experts to conclude that, while fees may not be ideal, they are a reality and may even have some positive effects on quality. Simply expanding access will not be enough to reduce inequality and poverty and increase economic growth if the quality of education accessed is low (Crouch & Vinjevold 2006; Murphy *et al.* 2002). While he does not necessarily favour school fees, Weber (2002) summarises the argument well:

Access and expenditure cannot be separated from quality. Even if students have equal access or access is not limited through user fees, or even if financial allocation patterns target poor schools, the key question from the perspective of equity is qualitative: To what are students gaining access?
(Weber 2002, 279)

Due partly to these different ways of interpreting results, the schools fees issue is engendering intense debates within the international educational development community. Three of the most widely used arguments in favour of school fees are summarised by Bentaouet Kattan (2006).

First, with regard to government fiscal inadequacy, the central idea behind the charging of school fees is that resources are almost always scarce, and education may not receive sufficient funding to provide adequate services; thus, fees are necessary to help fill the gap. Proponents argue that requiring parents to pay and allowing them to choose their children's schools will help to stabilise the fiscal imbalances of the state as well as improve the quality of education due to the inter-school competition for private funds.

⁸ In Uganda, the percentage of children entering grade one who are expected to reach each successive grade dropped from 59 percent before the abolition of fees, to 37 percent when education was made free (Avenstrup *et al.* 2004). This happens in many countries despite the fact that, often, many of the costs to families remain in 'hidden' fees (e.g. fees for sitting an exam) charged by schools illegally, or even with the implicit consent of the government.

Taken from another perspective, if a government is failing to adequately fund its education system, schools would be justified in charging fees of parents in order to fulfil their educational obligations. A core tenet of this argument is that parents will want to secure the best education possible for their children. Given this, governments should not stand in the way of parents who would like to increase the quality of education their children receive by contributing their own resources.

The second argument in support of school fees is that, in countries with large socio-economic class differences, the allowance of parental contributions will be more likely to ensure the middle class remains in the public system⁹. The reasoning is that if the quality of education in wealthier schools goes down because of dispersed and progressive funding, the middle and wealthy classes may choose to leave the system. The feared negative repercussion of this 'middle-class flight' is that overall state education quality would enter a sharp decline due to lost funds, teachers and the critical political support of the middle class (Chisholm 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2003; Roithmayr 2002).

The third justification contends that if parents pay fees it will not only augment the revenue received by schools, it will also encourage parents' oversight of the services provided due to their new 'ownership' of the education their child receives. Proponents believe parental oversight will then improve the efficiency of spending (including minimising graft) and the quality of education (Bray 2004). This argument stems from a larger movement within educational development that supports the decentralisation of education. The belief is that local control over education is more efficient and reactive to community needs than a centralised administration.

An additional argument for school fees deals not with educational quality, but more with what is fair to the country as a whole. It maintains that school fees are more just to the larger society than a general tax because not everyone has children enrolled in the public school

⁹ This argument is widely attributed to the influence of Crouch, who was a key education consultant / advisor to the new South African government during the transition.

system (e.g. some may educate their children privately, others may not have children at all), and thus those who use the service should be the ones to fund it (Bray 2004, 1996).

On the other hand, opponents of school fees believe a system which employs school fees to augment education revenues is inherently both discriminatory and unequal, with the poor and marginalised populations losing the most. A number of arguments are used.

The first argument against school fees is that they tend to further marginalise already vulnerable segments of the population and discriminate against the poor by acting as a barrier to access of education. When school fees are set at a flat rate, poorer families are forced to spend a larger proportion of their household income to educate their children than wealthier families (Bentaouet Kattan 2006; Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004). For many poor families this can mean they are forced to make difficult choices between education for their children and other essential items like food or clothing or seeds for the next year's planting.

Opponents of school fees further assert fees are not only discriminatory, they also reinforce existing inequalities and create them anew in each generation. In an education system where there is not a limit imposed on how many resources communities are allowed to raise for their school, wealthier communities will undoubtedly be able to raise more funds. This creates a system in which an individual student's likelihood of attaining a certain stage of education is highly correlated with his/her family income level, since those who can pay the price for education are generally wealthier, and are more likely to live in areas proximate to quality schools (public or private) (Bentaouet Kattan 2006; Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004; Blackmore 2000).

While there are other factors (such as caste and gender) involved in a parent's choice about sending their child to school, many poor parents in developing countries have withdrawn their children from school because they are unable to pay the costs. As this often occurs before the children have acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills, it is another way fees re-enforce the societal status quo: without an education, those children will be denied the

benefits and opportunities education can bring and poverty will likely be transmitted across generations (Watkins *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2000).

Furthermore, opponents of school fees argue there is little evidence from research that there is a valid case for school fees increasing quality and cost-effectiveness due to intensified oversight and involvement by parents (Bentaouet Kattan 2006; Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004). Advocates feel that it may be reasonable to believe this may be true in communities where parents are educated and have grown up in a culture that promotes parents involvement in education, or in those which have been involved with programmes designed to increase involvement. However, it disregards the fact that the relationships between school administrators and parents in poorer communities are often “marked by extreme asymmetries in power and access to information” (Watkins 2000, 177). Parents who have a limited education background often do not have information about their rights (or those of their children). Additionally, parents from more class-conscious culture may not always feel comfortable asserting themselves with officials who are likely to be better-educated and of higher economic status.

As mentioned above, advocates of school fees believe cost-sharing to be a reasonable and effective alternative to taxation of the general populace. This belief is consistent with neo-liberal economic policies that have become increasingly prevalent across the social sector. Conversely, throughout the literature opponents of school fees have a strong reaction to the cost-sharing concept. Watkins (2000) holds that, not only are school fees a form of taxation, but they are a more regressive and inequitable kind:

Cost sharing represents a system of taxation, levied through the education system...The problem is that cost sharing is less efficient and less equitable than the alternative. There are strong grounds for governments to finance basic education entirely out of general taxation. From an equity perspective this is advantageous, both because progressive general taxation links revenue mobilisation to ability to pay; and because cost sharing is excluding so many poor people from an education.

(Watkins 2000, 187)

The argument is that a cost-sharing system reduces the state-citizen relationship into one of a producer-consumer. Parents become a consumer of a service, instead of citizens with a right to be provided with a public good (Narodowski & Nores 2002; Lubienski 2006). It disregards the fact that “this ‘product’ is not an individualised benefit for each ‘payer’, but a broader public good to be enjoyed by the citizens regardless of how much any one individual has paid for it” (Lubienski 2006). The responsibility of a state to its citizens may not be fulfilled when provision of public goods is left entirely to the ‘invisible hand’. “Markets are based upon inequality, envy, greed, desire, and choice” but the provision of public goods by the state should be, by definition, the antithesis of that, being accessible and non-discriminatory: while not every consumer may have access to any one market, or part thereof, every citizen should have a right to access the education market (Blackmore 2000).

Finally, opponents of school fees are adamant there are many ways for governments to finance increases in education spending. They could shift spending from other parts of the budget, such as military or higher education¹⁰; improve the efficacy of current education spending by reducing wastage within the system, apply for more donor support, or implement some combination of the above (Bentaouet Kattan 2006, 51).

1.3 Outline of the Dissertation

While Chapter 1 has provided a theoretical framework for the analysis of the school fees issue, to effectively evaluate the South African school fee policy, it is also essential to have an understanding of the historical and legislative context within which the policy has evolved and is implemented.

¹⁰ It is often argued that spending at higher education is extremely regressive due to the fact that while it costs more to educate each pupil, the citizens from lower income quintiles rarely access it – leaving all of the benefits of the spending to those in higher income quintiles who could theoretically pay for a larger portion of the education should state spending be reduced. Whereas the majority of benefits for increases in primary school spending accrue to those in lower income quintiles due to the facts that they, on average, have more children per family and are less able to finance their children’s education on their own. On the other hand, a number of tertiary-education citizens are essential for a country to

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the history of the evolution of education policy in South Africa and background information about the present study and the area in which the research was carried out. It looks first at apartheid-era education as the consequences of that system continue to affect the state of education in South Africa today. Next, the transition to democracy and post-1994 legislation that pertains to school fees are explored. The concluding section of Chapter 2 gives a justification for this study on the South African school fee policy, presents the research questions, and provides relevant background information about the study area.

Chapter 3 looks at the methodology utilised in this research. The study was designed as a case study looking at the area of KwaNdengezi with a focus on the perspectives of principals within the particular community and later was expanded to include a few principals from a wealthier neighbouring area for comparison purposes. The chapter explains the way the study was designed, then describes the data collection methods, types of data gathered and discusses how the data analysis was conducted.

Chapter 4 presents the heart of the study. First, the findings from interviews with principals in KwaNdengezi are explored looking at how processes are designed within official policy, and how they are being implemented. Next, the chapter looks at the similarities and differences between the findings from the experiences related by principals of Pinetown schools and those of the principals in KwaNdengezi.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, returns to the original research questions and analyses the findings within the broader theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 1. Conclusions are drawn about systemic issues that should be addressed, and recommendations are given for ways the South African government might approach these challenges. Ideas for further research are also put forth for consideration. Finally, the report will conclude with critical reflections.

Chapter 2: South African Context

2.1 History of Education in South Africa

In South Africa from 1948 until 1994, apartheid laws were used by an oppressive regime to severely limit the freedoms and opportunities available to the non-white majority of the population; the government of the Union of South Africa between 1910 and 1948 and British Colonial rule pre-1910 had effectively done the same. With the transition to democracy in 1994, the new African National Congress (ANC)-led government inherited a country whose wealth, education, access to utilities and social services were all extremely unequal and overwhelmingly divided along racial lines.

The education system the ANC inherited was just as unequal as the economic one. Under apartheid- government rule, education was intentionally structured to reinforce the system of oppression of the black majority by the white minority. The challenge facing the ANC was, and is, the transformation of an inherently unequal education system that has historically excluded and marginalised the majority of SA citizens to one which provides all children with access to a race-blind, quality education.

While great strides have been made towards accomplishing this objective in terms of extending infrastructure and high enrolment rates, serious challenges remain. Many scholars (Hall & Monson 2006; Chisholm 2005; HSRC 2005; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd, 2004, 2003, 2002; DOE 2003) who have assessed the transition within the education system from apartheid to democracy concur with Chisholm (2005) that, while changes may have occurred, “there are also deep continuities with the past” (Chisholm 2005, 203). This section looks at how the education system has evolved, and how it has remained unchanged, from the apartheid era through to the present.

2.1.1 Apartheid Education

Surprisingly, mass education for the majority only began under apartheid rule (Fataar 2001, 11); pre-apartheid education for black Africans was generally limited to the relatively few

state-aided mission schools. However, the education system introduced was racially differentiated into black, coloured and white systems and all were designed to promote white racial superiority and sustain white privilege (Fataar 2001; Nekhewevha 1999). The method of financing and even the curriculum was set up to further these goals of apartheid¹¹: white students were groomed to become managers and entrepreneurs while black students were prepared to lead lives as workers. The majority of teachers were ill-equipped in both training and materials to handle the large class sizes, and the curriculum they were given to teach often reinforced the ideas of white supremacy and neglected the historical, social and cultural views of the black African population.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as the resistance movement against apartheid grew stronger, education became a key point around which protests rallied. The subjugation of the majority by the state became a key feature in the movement's calls for change, and schools became 'sites of struggle' (Fataar 2001). Many youth boycotted schools in protest against apartheid policy and many others either failed or dropped out due to the poor conditions of schools. In short, apartheid education led to a "total collapse of the teaching and learning culture" in many black communities (DOE 2000, 20). Research using data from 1995, 2001 and 2003, has found that, in South Africa, school attendance rates are affected by the resident parents' average years of education, particularly when the parent has fewer than four years of schooling (DOE 2006c, 60). The fact that, by 1990, 66 per cent of black youth and 34 per cent of black adults were functionally illiterate (DOE 2000, 20) thus has serious implications not only for the youth who dropped out, but also for inter-generational education and poverty, as children's likelihood of achieving a high level of educational attainment is diminished when their parents are not educated.

2.1.2 Pre-Democracy Plans

When the African National Congress began to develop education policy in preparation for the transition to democracy, it drew upon the Freedom Charter from the Congress of the

¹¹ In the 1970s, an average of R644 was spent on every white learner, while only R41.80 was spent for each black pupil (Rembe 2005, 111 [data from Hyslop 1990]).

People of 1955¹². The Freedom Charter is a framework of resistance and ANC ideology that asserts South Africa belongs to all of its citizens and all should enjoy equal rights, regardless of race or socio-economic status. With regard to education, the Freedom Charter states: “Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children” (Freedom Charter 1955). In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Freedom Charter served as an inspiration for the ‘People’s Education’ philosophy which promoted a unified, multi-racial, national education system with an equity-driven approach to implementation and funding (Fataar 2001). It was expected People’s Education would underpin any future ANC education policy. However, the extent of change and the form of policy in all realms were greatly affected by the negotiated transition to democracy, and education was no exception (Chisholm 2005; Rembe 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004).

A negotiated transition was deemed necessary by both the ruling National Party (NP) and the ANC-led resistance group. Both acknowledged significant changes were needed, but each was looking to protect the interests of their own constituency: the ANC for the majority, and the National Party for the white minority population. The NP enjoyed an advantage when it came to negotiations because any transformation which took place was negotiated within the current framework, and the existing system benefited their constituency. Furthermore, they were the current government and could effect unilateral changes before the transition took place which would limit the reach of future reforms (Chisholm 2005, 203; Rembe 2005, 21).

In the years preceding the transition to democracy, the NP exploited their advantages to protect the privileges of their constituency. In 1992, the NP launched a reform plan it called the “Education Renewal Strategy” (ERS); the plan called for the creation of one unified education system and also for its decentralisation. Former white-only schools were given four options, or models, labelled A, B, C and D, from which to choose. The models offered differing levels of state subsidy and school independence. By the end of 1992, the vast majority of schools had chosen to become Model C, meaning they would remain state-aided

¹² The Freedom Charter was declared at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, South Africa on 26 June 1955. The Congress of the People was a resistance gathering by the Congress Alliance, which consisted of: the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress. The Charter was later adopted by all four organizations.

(state would fund salaries) but become more autonomous by taking possession of all physical assets and having to raise remaining budget needs through fees (Fiske & Ladd 2004, 51). Each school was required to set up a school governing board composed of parents and teachers, with parents having to make up the majority (Rembe 2005; Azuma 1999). These boards were empowered to set admission standards (such as language requirements) and, important to this study, to set the level of school fees designed to augment state subsidies.

Allowing all of the former white-only schools to become self-governing changed the power dynamics of the whole system and resulted in significant (intentional) consequences for future reforms. First, the autonomy of the Model C schools meant they had to be consulted on any future reforms which affected their powers, making change a longer, more difficult process. Secondly, Model C schools were given ownership and control of the physical assets of their school. Model C schools enjoyed a privileged position in terms of assets and did not want to sacrifice them. Giving each school ownership of the physical assets it possessed at the time ensured the incoming government could not undertake a major unilateral redistribution or division of assets, as any changes would have to be approved by the 'owners'.

2.1.3 Post Democratic Transition: Launching of a New Era in Education

At the time of transition it was widely recognised that extensive reform of the education system was critical as a channel through which to tackle issues of redress and redistribution. Education was also symbolically significant since it was through the apartheid education system that inequities in opportunity were begun and reinforced. Thus, the new ANC-led government committed itself to prioritising education in policy and budgets from the outset. Of utmost concern in developing new education policies were the issues of equity and redress: the new system should not discriminate based on race, class or gender; and, additionally, funding should prioritise previously disadvantaged schools to redress imbalances inherited from the colonial and Apartheid education systems (DOE 2003a; DOE 2000).

The new government began by enshrining the right of all South African citizens to basic education in the constitution itself. The Bill of Rights states: “Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education” (RSA 1996(a), 29(1)). There are no qualifying clauses within this right to education and the fact that there are no qualifications has been highlighted as significant by many (Spren & Vally 2006; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2002; Roithmayr 2002).

Other rights guaranteed by the constitution (such as healthcare, food, water, housing, etc.) are all qualified by a ‘progressive realisation’ clause¹³. As the only social right not qualified by these clauses, the general consensus is that the original intent of the authors was to acknowledge the tremendous role education plays in the quest for equality and redress and to oblige the government to provide it for all citizens, regardless of the condition of the nation’s finances or other political priorities.

While the ANC’s early plans for the education system called for increased expenditure and extensive reform, the evolutionary rather than radical nature of the negotiated transition greatly affected the scope and scale of potential reforms. In addition to having to negotiate with the NP about protecting the privileges of the old elite, it was becoming clear that budget constraints were going to pose serious dilemmas for social spending. Since education already received around 22 percent of the budget in 1995 - a larger percentage of the budget than in most developing countries, and more than other South African social sectors received. Policymakers were hesitant to add to the education budget, despite the large investments needed to reform the system. This has led to the government focusing attention and limited resources on improving the situation of ‘the poorest of the poor’ (Wildeman 2008).

In 1995, the first White Paper on Education and Training was released. In publishing the White Paper, the 1994 education policy declarations of expanded and equal access began to be circumscribed by a focus on balanced budgets, fiscal discipline and global

¹³ The essence of progressive realisation is that as long as the state is making identifiable progress towards achieving these rights for all citizens, then it will be considered to be fulfilling its obligations (even if not everyone is receiving full benefits of their rights). Progressive realisation clauses protect the state from prosecution if they do not have the funds to finance full, immediate realisation of all citizen’s rights.

competitiveness which would later be emphasised in the new Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program of June 1996 (Weber 2002, 277). Of particular note was that schools were to become self-governing and required the creation of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in all schools similar to those of the ex-Model C schools, with stipulations that the membership was drawn from the school community and that attention to race and gender representation was given (DOE 1995). Instead of eliminating the Model C system, the White Paper essentially extended it to include all schools, regardless of race or income level of the community, and thus its model of school governance and autonomy became the archetype for all schools in the new system.

The government's decision to grant all schools self-governing status and the ability to charge fees was considered by many to be a concession to the old white elite, but the politically-charged decision can be attributed to other factors as well. First, as mentioned, due to the decentralising reforms made by the NP pre-transition, the government was required to consult with Model C schools before changing any policies to do with the schools' autonomy or authority (Rembe 2005). It was unlikely the new government would be able to reduce the power or autonomy of the former Model C schools.

There also existed a fear amongst policymakers that if former white-only schools did not remain self-governing and have the right to charge fees, a mass flight of the middle class to private schools would ensue, thus denying the public system the participation of influential businessmen and politicians (Rembe 2005; Lewis & Motala 2004; Fiske & Ladd 2003; Crouch 2002). Eventually, they believed, this would mean less money for public education and a dramatic decline in the quality of education offered¹⁴.

Another consideration in the development of the policy was that, by this time, views about quality education in the country were framed and defined by the education provided in the formerly white-only schools. The expectations of most citizens were that all schools would be given the rights and privileges enjoyed by the Model C schools. Whether it was the best

¹⁴ This fear was fuelled by the advice and warnings of international consultants who were influenced by the reigning neo-liberal ideas about development and education which considered cost-sharing to be an ideal way for governments to trim state budgets (Fiske & Ladd 2004; Crouch 2002; Roithmayr 2002).

system or not, it represented all that had been denied to the rest of the population, and thus was desired. Additionally, as the state-run education system had historically been used as a tool of repression, there were many black Africans who distrusted the system. This constituency of the ANC also called for communities to be in control of their schools (Chisholm 2005; Rembe 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004).

Finally, while all these groups pushed for the Model C system, the new government determined that state resources available for education would not be sufficient to provide all children in the country with an education of the quality (and expense) the former Model C schools enjoyed. It was argued that designating all schools as self-governing and allowing them to charge fees would free up funds for poorer schools in previously neglected areas since wealthier schools would not require as much of the government's funds to preserve their current quality of education.

2.2 Key Legislation

2.2.1 South African Schools Act

In addition to the White Paper, the first democratic government released two other key documents which pertain to school funding and school fees: South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996 and National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSFF) in 1998.

SASA provides the foundation for most essential elements of the education system. Filled with references to the goals of equity and redress, it establishes key points about rights to education, school funding, and school governance. First, parents are required to send all children between the ages of seven and 15 to school. This implies every child should receive a minimum of nine years of compulsory education (they must make it through at least the ninth grade), regardless of race or gender. Second, the state is obliged to treat all of those children equally by funding public schools on an equitable basis. This was done with equity and redress in mind: "in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities" (RSA 1996(b), (34)).

Third, schools are to be self-governing and, in order to do this, all schools must found a School Governing Body whose members include the principal, elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and learners (in secondary schools only); parents must make up the majority of members and chair the body (Lewis & Motala 2004, 117).

Sections 20 and 21 of SASA outline the “Functions of all governing bodies” and the “Allocated functions of governing bodies”, respectively, are particularly significant for this study. Functions of all governing bodies listed under section 20 include the creation of a code of conduct, administering school property and recommending the appointment of educators. Additionally, SASA obliges all SGBs to try and increase school funds: “A governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school” (RSA 1996(b), (36)).

Upon application to the Head of Department, SGBs can be allocated additional functions relating to the financial management of the school. These include the ability to maintain and improve school grounds, purchase textbooks and learning materials and pay for services to the school. If a school is awarded “Section 21” status, it is allowed to manage its own finances and PDOE funds are deposited directly into the school’s bank account. A non-Section 21 school, or a Section 20 school, has its financial affairs managed directly by the PDOE. While the first clause stipulates schools must apply to the Head of Department to be allocated Section 21 functions, the sixth clause allows the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) to allocate functions to schools without the governing bodies having to apply (RSA 1996(b) (21[6])). After SASA was legislated the vast majority of ex-Model C schools, which had already been self-governing and managed their own finances, were automatically awarded Section 21 functions without needing to apply. Almost all schools serving black, Indian and Coloured students were required to apply and prove their ability to manage school finances.

Fourth, while devolving much of the authority to school governing bodies, goals of equality are incorporated; SASA prohibits schools from discriminating ‘unfairly’ against learners who

wish to be admitted. In particular, it explicitly states that schools are not allowed to turn away learners on the grounds that they are unable to pay school fees: “no learner may be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that his or her parent is unable to pay or has not paid the school fees determined by the governing body” (RSA 1996(b), (5[3])).

2.2.2 National Norms and Standards for School Funding

The National Norms & Standards for School Funding (NNSF), of October 1998, outlines how funding of public schools will work and distinguishes the financial responsibilities of the state and those of the parents or SGBs. Funding for all of South Africa’s social sectors is transferred from the national government to the provinces through ‘Equitable Share’ allocations which give a higher percentage of funds to poorer provinces in an attempt to equalise service provision across provinces. ‘Equitable Share’ is received as a lump sum amount, calculated by the national treasury using a complex formula which takes into account factors such as levels of poverty, water and sanitation infrastructure backlogs and numbers of school-going children. While the national government allocates a specific amount for each social sector based on the formula, provinces are not required to spend according to that distribution and may use the funds according to provincial priorities. Thus provincial departments in any of the social sectors are not guaranteed a certain level of funds and are required to make a case for funding annually. Each year, the DOE releases an official national funding norms and standards document for education, which gives a recommended per-learner allocation amount for each quintile. In this context of each sector having to compete for a portion of limited funds, the publishing of an annual national norms and standards for school funding could be considered an advantage to provincial education departments in the quest for better funding as their case is made stronger by these official recommendations (Wildeman 2008).

NNSF is particularly important to this study as it legislates progressive funding of schools and provides an exemption provision to the school-fee policy which is designed to address the fact that many of South Africa’s households cannot afford fees due to extreme poverty. It acknowledges that funding provisions as they stood would not support the state’s goals of equity and redress as they were overwhelmingly benefiting middle-class and wealthy parents.

It proposes a more progressive state funding policy that is designed to most benefit poor communities: “[in order to] effect redress and improve equity...public spending on schools must be specifically targeted to the needs of the poorest” (DOE 1998b, [44]). Due to provincial governments’ authority over spending allocations, the original national funding norms do not prescribe any minimum amount in Rands that must be spent per learner, but it does compel provinces to provide more of the education-allocated funds to poorer communities¹⁵. The poorest 20 percent of schools are then meant to receive 35 percent of total funds for recurrent costs¹⁶, the second quintile 25 percent, the middle quintile 20 percent, the fourth quintile 15 percent and the least poor 20 percent of schools receive five percent.

In terms of the responsibility of parents, the NNSSF reiterates the duty of school governing bodies to raise additional funds. It admits: “Educational needs are always greater than the budgetary provision for education” and so the state does not want to restrict parents from investing their own money in their children’s education (DOE 1998 [42]). However, it also recognises that due to the extreme poverty and inequality in the society, there will be numbers of parents who could not reasonably be required to pay fees. In these cases the policy attempts to both protect learners against discrimination due to parents’ inability to pay, and introduces rules regarding exemption¹⁷. Parents are required to apply for an exemption through the school and provide proof of income. If parents have not applied for an exemption, and do not pay, the SGB is given the authority to pursue legal action against the parents to obtain the fees.

¹⁵ The original version obliges provinces to create a “target list” of schools in their own province and rank them by need or poverty, and then break that list into quintiles. This created a good deal of inter-provincial inequality in funding as poor learners in poorer provinces were likely to end up in a higher quintile than poor learners in a wealthier province.

¹⁶ It is important to note here that funding for personnel costs is not allocated according to this progressive breakdown, despite the fact that they make up the large majority of the education budget.

¹⁷ The initial policy stipulated school governing bodies must grant full exemptions to any learner whose parents earn a combined annual gross income of less than ten times the annual school fees per learner; and, to any learner who is officially part of the foster care system.¹⁷ Partial exemptions (the specific amount left to the SGBs to determine) were to be granted for any learner whose parents’ annual income is less than 30 times the annual school fees. This policy was later amended to include a more complex equation discussed in section 4.1.2.

These original policies were harshly criticised for not effectively ensuring all children were able to enjoy their right to a quality basic education. The main critique of the education policy (and school fees) was that, while middle-class families did stay in the public schools system, school fees allowed historic inequities to continue, in large part because allowing school fees did not greatly improve poor schools' funding levels. First, the fees for poorer schools were too low to have a significant effect. It was found the fees for nearly all schools in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 in 2001 did not exceed R100 per annum (DOE 2003b, 78). Second, despite the relatively small amount, few children attending poor schools; less than 50 percent of learners across schools in quintile 1 paid the fees charged by their schools, and figures were similar for quintiles 2 and 3, so revenue gained was minimal (DOE 2003b). The end result was that wealthy communities maintained quality schooling while poorer communities were still under-resourced (Spren & Vally 2006; Lewis & Motala 2004; Fiske & Ladd 2003): between 1996 and 2001, quintile 5 learners were receiving a public plus private expenditure that was up to 50 per cent higher than other learners (DOE 2003b).

In addition to these issues, it has been argued extensively that the exemption policy was ineffective at protecting poor learners (Hall & Monson 2006; Spren & Vally 2006; Chisholm 2005; HSRC 2005; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004, 2003, 2002; Roithmayr 2002). Many schools were either not aware of, or did not inform parents of, the rules regarding the exemption policy (HSRC 2005). In reality it was not in poor schools' best interest to implement the policy as such a large percentage of students were likely to be eligible, thus cutting funding by a considerable amount (Hall & Monson 2006; HSRC 2005). Even in school that had implemented the policy, very few parents applied. This is attributed to a few but serious problems with the exemption policy.

First, it was not effectively publicised to caregivers, and thus they did not know their own rights. Second, schools, even the poorest, were not given additional funds if they had high levels of exemptions, so there was little incentive to publicise or grant exemptions if it meant they would be left with inadequate funding, often schools would withhold reports or not allow students to sit for exams if they had not yet paid their fees in full, whether or not their parents might qualify for an exemption. Third, the actual exemption application process was

too burdensome for most caregivers as it required them to know their rights and the criteria for exemption, stand-up to school officials and to submit personal information regarding income and expenses (often, if families are working in the informal sector this can be near impossible). Fourth, the policy did not include secondary costs (such as uniforms, transport and school materials) when calculating which families should receive exemptions, meaning for some families the school fees would still be an ‘unconstitutionally heavy burden’ (Roithmayr 2002, 17-18).

2.2.3 Amendments and Current Issues Concerning School Fees

Currently, SASA and NNSSF still make up the core of education legislation and remain basically intact, though a few key changes have been made in response to shortcomings. The major change with regard to the school fees situation includes the introduction of ‘no fee’ schools to address the fact that there are some communities in which virtually all students would be exempt. The amendment stipulates that schools in the bottom two quintiles “will be obliged to seek Departmental approval for the charging of schools fees” (DOE 2003a, 24). The idea behind the creation of ‘no-fee’ schools was to ensure the poorest children were not being excluded from schools, nor were their families expected to bear an excessive cost burden for the children to attend. The schools are meant to receive a minimum amount per learner from the province according to the levels established by the national norms and standards.

Additionally, the amendments include a tightening of the fee-exemption policy through a more explicit formula to calculate exemption status, and by placing the onus on schools to inform parents of the existence of the exemption policy and the process by which they can apply for them. School governing bodies are not allowed to sue parents until they can prove the information has been made available to parents.

Finally, to reduce inter-provincial inequality in funding there is now a national system in place for establishing quintiles across provinces and, to inhibit discrimination, schools are not allowed to exclude a child from essential academic activities (such as sitting for exams, receiving their marks or graduating) due to non-payment.

Despite these changes, the school fee policy continues to receive harsh criticism. First, while the introduction of national quintiles has decreased inter-provincial inequality of funding for the bottom two quintiles, it has strained the budgets of poor provinces which have greater percentages of no-fee schools which are required to be funded at higher levels. Table 1 shows the percentage of each province's learners who have been determined to be in quintiles 1 or 2 and should thus attend a no-fee school. If one compares the Western Cape, a relatively wealthy province, with KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), a poorer province, one finds that the Western Cape only has to fund 15 percent of its learners at no-fee levels while KZN has to fund nearly 45 percent of its learners at a no-fee level: KZN would be required to fund almost 30 percent more of its learners at higher per-learner allocations.

Table 1: Provincial percentages of learners in no-fee schools (2007)

Province	National Quintiles 1 and 2		Total percentage of learners in no-fee schools in 2007
	Quintile 1 (%)	Quintile 2 (%)	
Eastern Cape	34,85	21,58	56,43
Free State	30,83	14,90	45,73
Gauteng	10,46	11,44	21,90
KwaZulu-Natal	24,19	18,76	42,95
Limpopo	33,96	22,34	56,30
Mpumalanga	16,68	20,17	36,85
Northern Cape	26,28	17,69	43,97
Northwest	22,70	15,24	37,94
Western Cape	5,54	8,02	14,56
NATIONAL TOTAL	20	20	40

Source: DOE 2006g

Table 2 shows the total number of learners in each province in no-fee schools, and the per learner allocation each province provided in quintiles 1 and 2. The large difference in percentages of no-fee schools means that the Western Cape would need to spend a smaller percentage of its education budget on quintiles 1 and 2 schools and a smaller percentage of its total provincial budget on education than KZN. This leaves the wealthier province in a better position to fund learners in all of the quintiles at a higher level. To illustrate, in 2004 the Western Cape spent R5,171 on each learner while KZN spent R4,603, yet the Western Cape still only put 39 percent of its provincial budget into education while KZN allocated 46.5 percent (Wildeman 2007).

Table 2: Number of learners and no-fee schools in 2007 by province

Province	Number of learners in no-fee schools in 2007	Number of no-fee schools in 2007	Per learner allocation, Quintile 1	Per learner allocation, Quintile 2
Eastern Cape	1,224,711	3,825	554	554
Free State	298,184	1,304	721	596
Gauteng	377,274	432	738	738
KwaZulu-Natal	1,173,503	3,341	629	560
Limpopo	1,015,524	2,557	579	579
Mpumalanga	404,431	983	829	648
Northern Cape	102,244	335	557	555
North West	267,042	728	658	658
Western Cape	132,560	407	738	677
TOTAL	4,995,473	13,912	667	618

Source: Wildeman 2008

While the bottom two quintiles are receiving what has been deemed ‘adequate’ by the national norms and standards, this has often come at the expense of funding for the higher quintiles, in which there are also many poor schools. Table 3 shows the targeted per learner funding for each of the quintiles. Funding is significantly reduced if a school is in quintile 3 versus 2, and reduced again for quintile 4, yet many schools in quintiles 3 and 4 are serving a majority of poor learners.

Table 3: National targets for school per learner allocations (2007-2009)

	A	2007		2008		2009	
		B	C	B	C	B	C
NQ1	30.0	R738	100%	R775	100%	R807	100%
NQ2	27.5	R677	100%	R711	100%	R740	100%
NQ3	22.5	R554	100%	R581	100%	R605	100%
NQ4	15.0	R369	67%	R388	67%	R404	67%
NQ5	5.0	R123	22%	R129	22%	R134	22%
Overall	100	R492	89%	R517	89%	R538	89%
No-fee threshold		R554		R581		R605	

Source: DOE 2006d, 31

This has caused what some call a marginalisation of ‘middle’ income schools as many of the schools in quintiles 3 and 4 do not receive enough income from school fees to compensate for the lower allocations from the government, meaning there are schools operating at sub-

adequate levels of funding, despite having been determined to fit into the higher quintile (Wildeman 2008; Fiske & Ladd 2004).

In terms of issues of implementation, many of the same criticisms mentioned previously still apply, particularly those with parental awareness of policies, high rates of non-payment and exemption. Exemption has also become more complicated. As of 2005, in order to determine total, partial and conditional exemptions, the SASA policy requires schools to plug household income into a formula then compare the result to a chart which takes the number of learners in the household into account in order to find the percentage exemption from school fees the parent should be given.

Overall, critics maintain the current legislation does not adequately deal with the issues of equity and redress, nor does it effectively protect the rights of poor students. School fees, in particular, are identified as substantial barrier to access (Spren & Vally 2006; HSRC 2005; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004; Roithmayr 2002). Despite enrolment figures which hover around 90 percent for all grade levels, for those who are not attending school or have dropped out, school fees are a key factor in their families' decision to take them out of school. The 2006 Department of Education Monitoring and Evaluation Report found that, in 2003, almost 40 percent of seven to 15 year olds who were not in school cited insufficient money for fees as the major cause (DOE 2006c, 55).

2.3 The Present Study

2.3.1 Justification

The importance of education to the transformation of South Africa into a more equal society cannot be over-estimated. The Department of Education asserts:

The task of improving quality, and equality of quality, in education is perhaps the most important development task confronting our nation...high-quality education, equally distributed, is one of the most effective and least conflictive ways of transforming a society. If we fail to use education to transform our society, for example by spending without paying sufficient attention to the distribution of quality, we will have been guilty of not using

one of the most powerful levers a society can use, and of having let go of a golden opportunity.

(DOE 2003b, 1)

As mentioned, school fees continue to be identified by critics as one of the key obstacles to South Africa being able to provide the quality primary education it guarantees in its Bill of Rights (Spren & Vally 2006; HSRC 2005; Veriava 2005; Fiske & Ladd 2004; Roithmayr 2002). The Department of Education has also acknowledged the potential problems the school fees pose. In various documents (DOE 2003a; DOE 2003b; DOE 2000) the DOE recognises the critical nature of the school fees situation, and its potential to restrict access to education. However, due to the decentralised nature of the system and the amount of power given to SGBs at the school-level very little is actually known about how individual schools are implementing the school-fee policy on-the-ground. In 2003, school fees were named by the DOE as one of the two top issues on which more data urgently needed to be collected (DOE 2003a, 23).

To-date, much of the research on the equity of the education system has been done on a fairly broad scale, and, while they often include at least a cursory discussion about the school fees issue, they are not specifically focused on it. On the other hand, studies focused on school fees tend to revolve around the specifics of the exemption policy and look at the issue through a lens of school fees as potential of barrier to access for poor children. They do not look at the challenges faced by schools in the implementation of the policy.

Wildeman (2008) recently conducted a study looking at the first eight years of the school fee policy at the provincial level and noted that he could find almost no information about how schools have actually been coping with the policy or about issues with implementation (Wildeman 2008, 27). Additionally, while a few studies have collected data from schools, these have mostly been through surveys that do not provide the insight or depth of information a qualitative study can offer. Finally, despite the central role principals play in the interpretation and implementation of education policy on the ground, I could find no studies that had done in-depth qualitative work with principals. An in-depth study of the

realities of the implementation of the school fee policy and their impact on equity could fill critical gaps in current knowledge of the issue.

2.3.2 Research Questions

This case study was developed to investigate how the fee-setting and exemption policies are being implemented on the ground and the implications this has for the equity of the system as a whole. Although there is some overlap, research questions guiding the design of the study can be divided into two areas: implementation of the policy, and effects on quality/equity.

Specific research questions regarding implementation include: How is the school fee policy being implemented at the school level? What are the issues schools are facing in the implementation of the policy? How are fees being dealt with at the school and community level compared with what the official policy says or promotes? What are the opinions of the principals, the primary actors on the ground, about schools fees? In what ways are they seen as beneficial and/or as a hindrance? Considering the great amount of leeway given to school governing bodies in the setting and collecting of fees, what are the realities in poorer areas of the implementation of the school fee policy? What are the processes by which schools take decisions regarding the setting of school fees? Do these processes differ between schools (e.g. who is responsible for making the decisions and who is responsible for enforcing them)? What is the role of the principal in the process? Who is exempt from school fees, and do they take advantage of their potential exempt status by applying to be officially exempt from paying fees?

Specific research questions regarding quality and equity include: Does a school's ability to collect school fees affect the quality of education they provide? Does the effect of school fee collection on school quality (looking at both staffing and infrastructural uses of the fees) vary from school to school? Are there children who cannot access education because of inability to pay (ie: do schools turn children away, or send them home who cannot pay the fees)? What effect, if any, do school fees have on enrolment and/or attendance? What penalties are applied to families who are not exempt but have not paid fees? Would abolishing school fees

in South Africa make a positive impact on the access and quality of education available in the public school system?

2.3.3 Background to Study Area

KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal is the second most populous province in South Africa; the 2007 Community Survey by Statistics South Africa estimated there were 10.3 million residents (StatsSa 2007(1)). Containing around 20 per cent of the nation's population, KZN is consistently shown to be one of the poorest provinces using a multi-dimensional definition of poverty (Roberts & May 2000; May *et al.* 2000). The province also has the lowest life expectancy at birth (at less than 50 years) of any of South Africa's nine provinces (StatsSa 2006, 5). This is likely due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the province which increases the proportion of the provincial budget that must be allocated to healthcare, thus reducing the funds remaining for other social services such as education and social grants.

KwaZulu-Natal's education system has the highest percentage of learners and educators of any province in the country. Currently around 36 percent of KZN's population is between the ages of 5 and 19, which means, with an official starting age of 7, over 3 million children in the province should be enrolled in an educational institution and more if pre-primary school is included (StatsSa 2007(2)). The gross enrolment ratios¹⁸ (GER) for the province in 2006 were 101 percent for the primary phase (Gr. 1-7) and 91 percent for the secondary phase (Gr. 10-12), which are close to the national average of 102 percent and 91 percent, respectively (DOE 2008).

The overall gender parity index¹⁹ (GPI) of .99 for grades 1-12 shows girl and boy children are enrolled in almost equal proportions; however, it is interesting to note that, in KZN, the GPI indicates that, while there are fewer females than males in primary school (GPI of .95),

¹⁸ Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is the total number of children in the system divided by the number of children of official school age. A ratio of more than 100 percent suggests there are more children enrolled than are age appropriate for the level of schooling. This could mean learners are entering the system too young or too old, or that there is grade repetition.

¹⁹ Gender Parity Index (GPI) is defined as GER for females divided by GER for males. A GPI of more than 1 indicates that, in proportion to the appropriate school-age population, there are more females than males in the school system.

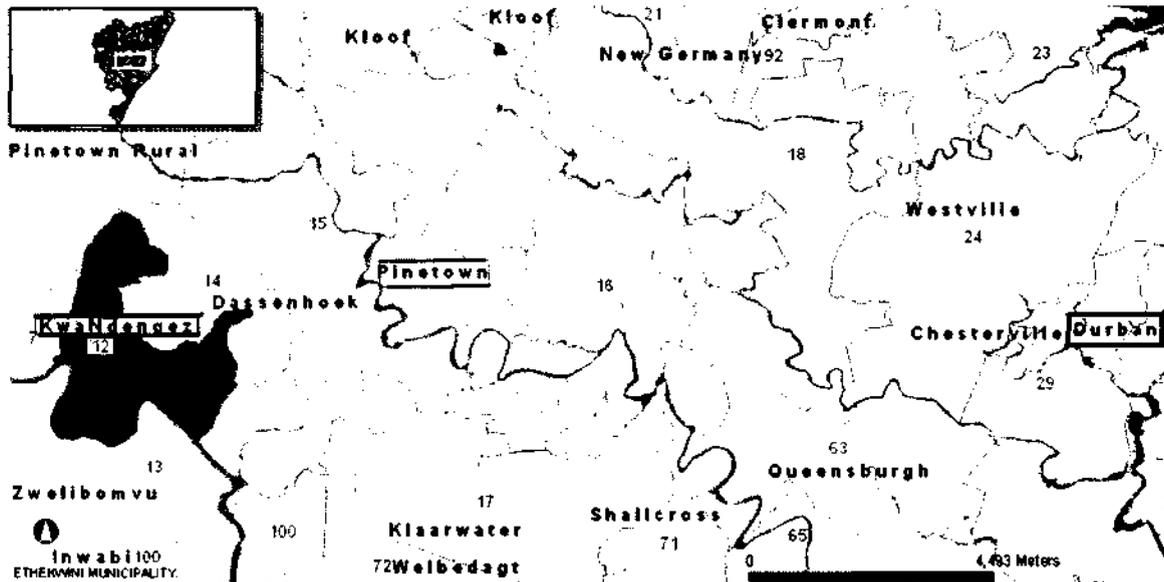
there are a greater number of females in secondary school (GPI of 1.06) (DOE 2008). This suggests a higher number of males than females are dropping out before or during secondary school. Surveys looking at the educational attainment for the population over the age of 20 in KZN found that about 19.8 percent reached grade 12, though only 6.9 percent continued their education past secondary school and 21.9 percent report not having had any formal education at all (StatsSa 2004, 52). Black Africans tend to have slightly lower educational attainment averages: 16 percent had reached grade 12, 4.3 percent progressed into tertiary education and 26.1 percent had no formal education (StatsSa 2004, 53).

School fees in KZN reflect the high levels of poverty as, in 2003, almost 60 percent of schools had school fees of less than R100 per annum, and only 10.7 percent of schools charged official fees of more than R500 whereas, in a wealthier province like the Western Cape, only 20 percent had fees of less than R100 and about 24 percent had annual fees of over R500.

KwaNdengezi and Pinetown

KwaNdengezi is a medium-sized “township” located in Ward 12 on the outskirts of the eThekweni Municipality / Durban metro area. The population was almost 35,000 at the time of the 2001 census, but has grown rapidly since (StatsSa 2001b). While there are no recent census estimates at the ward level, the Ward Councillor and other government officials estimate the population to be at 60,000 – 70,000 today. Though it is not in the poorest of wards in KZN, KwaNdengezi is mostly poor, with over 80 percent of its population earning an individual monthly income of less than R400 in 2000 (StatsSa 2001b). This is very low compared with the 2001 national average income of R979 per month, but only slightly lower than the national median income of R415 per month (StatsSa 2001b). The vast majority of the population is black African. Less than ten percent of KwaNdengezi is Indian or Coloured, and virtually no residents are white. KwaNdengezi is often referred to as “Pinetown South” as it is around 20 kilometres Southwest of Pinetown, which is the closest city.

Figure 1: Location of KwaNdengezi and Pinetown



Source: eThekweni Municipality (<http://citymaps.durban.co.za>)

Note: Durban lies just to the East of the map's border.

Pinetown is a small industrial city which, at the time of the 2001 census, had about 8000 residents within the city borders. Pinetown is considerably wealthier than KwaNdengezi. Individual data was not available, but over 75 percent of the households in Pinetown had a monthly income of R1600 or greater in 2001, and 64 percent earned R3200 or more per month (eThekweni Municipality 2008). Perhaps more telling is the fact that, in 2001, just four percent of Pinetown residents were unemployed. In KwaNdengezi, 37 percent of residents were unemployed.

Almost 70 percent of Pinetown residents in 2001 were white, 23 percent were black and around 10 percent were Indian or Coloured. The demographics are changing, however, and while there are not any official statistics, Pinetown today contains a much higher percentage of black and Indian or Coloured residents, while white residents appear to be migrating to other areas.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study was designed as a case study using twelve in-depth interviews as the primary source of data; eleven interviews were conducted with principals (nine in KwaNdengezi and two in the relatively more wealthy Pinetown for comparison), and one interview was conducted with a community leader familiar with the principals and schools. This chapter justifies the design and types of data used in the study, and gives an overview of the data collection and analysis techniques.

3.1 Study Design

This study was greatly influenced by the grounded theory described by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), as well as their ideas about qualitative ‘hypothesis-generating’ research. The ideas of Merriam (1998), and Cohen *et al.* (2000), about the critical components of successful qualitative research and case studies in education research, also shaped the study in various phases.

3.1.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative, inductive methodology that was developed by social scientists Barney Glaser and Anshelm Strauss in the 1960s, and has continually evolved as a method as it was applied in practice (Corbin & Strauss 1990). Grounded theory’s popularity grew from the dissatisfaction of many social scientists with traditional research methods which require researchers follow a rigid set of empirical principles: “formulating hypotheses and testing them statistically, developing scales and questionnaires, attempting to control for extraneous variables by using control groups, and striving to generalise from one sample to an entire population” (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003, vii).

The basic ideas behind grounded theory are that, first, researchers develop hypotheses only after listening to what the participants have to say instead of starting with a pre-set idea to test (theories emerge during investigation, not before). This means that no concept is considered important until it is found repeatedly across interviews. Second, participants are

the experts on the issue, as they are directly experiencing the phenomenon being studied. Third, researchers should be open to learning and changing their ideas and questions as new data is collected from participants and throughout data analysis process. Finally, the research is analysed by first coding data for concepts, then concepts are grouped together to form larger categories which themselves become cornerstones for the theories or findings (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003; Corbin & Strauss 1990).

The research is qualitative, with the focus of the research being the subjective experience of participants and the illumination of their concerns, both of which risk getting lost in a statistical description of the situation, or if a researcher enters with a pre-conceived theory to substantiate or disprove.

3.1.2 Hypothesis-Generating Research

Two theories created a research framework that fit well with what I was finding, or rather not finding, during a preliminary literature review on school fees in South Africa. It seemed that, despite the crucial role principals play in the running of schools and the implementation of policy, very few, if any, studies were found that included principals' experiences and views: information which could be vital to the success or failure of any policy or programme. In fact, there appeared to be very little knowledge about what is happening with regard to the application of the school fee policy in schools.

Along the same lines as grounded theory, Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) use the term "hypothesis-generating" to describe qualitative research based in grounded theory and contrast it with the "hypothesis-testing" research they hold to be typical. Hypothesis-generating research begins by reading the literature for research *issues* instead of research *problems*: instead of a specific question or problem, the aim is to find "perspectives that are left out and assumptions that need to be challenged" (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003, 15). Once research issues are identified, research concerns are developed. Research concerns are different from hypotheses in that their aim is broader and researchers endeavour to learn about a phenomenon instead of trying to identify and test a specific idea about a part of the phenomenon.

The research issues which emerged for this study were: 1) To study the experiences of principals with regards to school fees; 2) To investigate if the policy was being implemented uniformly; and, 3) To examine how, if at all, this policy was having an effect on school quality.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Choice of a Case Study

By interviewing principals at a number of schools within a small, homogenous, geographic area, differences between schools can be more easily attributable to the interpretations and perceptions of individual principals about the school fee policy. If there are great differences between these schools, it could be fairly safe to assert that schools from a diverse set of geographic locations, levels of community wealth, size of student population or other distinction, are likely to also be interpreting and implementing the school fee policy in different ways.

3.2.2 Choice of Location

It is widely accepted that rural and urban schools face very different types of challenges in their quest to offer a quality education. The KwaNdengezi township is neither urban or rural but 'peri-urban', meaning it is close to the Durban metro and therefore affected by the typically urban issues of high population density and crime, while simultaneously remaining fairly undeveloped and isolated from the resources and infrastructure of the city by expensive and time-consuming taxi rides. This suggests that, while also having its own distinct reality, its residents face some of the challenges seen as unique to urban areas, as well some of those experienced by rural communities.

The schools in KwaNdengezi are in a similar situation to the wider community: they have some of the issues of their urban counterparts, such as overcrowding and the threats of theft and vandalism, but many also face problems similar to those of rural schools, such as lack of electricity and students being forced to travel long distances between their homes and school.

This combination made it an ideal location to study schools as the principals are tackling problems from both sides of the rural/urban 'divide'.

KwaNdengezi is situated relatively close to the Durban area and there are nine schools within close proximity whose children come from a fairly homogenous community within a small geographical area. These facts made both the community and the schools accessible for multiple visits within a relatively short period of time, and the group of schools ideal for a case study. Furthermore, my involvement in KwaNdengezi as a volunteer for the past two years with a local crisis centre and some of the schools allowed me to become acquainted with the principals from the schools in the area. I hoped this relative familiarity would allow me easier access to interviewees, accurate information and sincere answers.

3.2.3 Data Collection Methods

In grounded theory research, unstructured or semi-structured interviews are typically utilised as the main form of data collection. Unstructured or semi-structured interviews are considered most appropriate as questions can be designed to encourage participants to elaborate and introduce unanticipated topics, and the researcher can respond to what the participant is saying with new questions or issues instead of following a pre-set list of questions. However, generally researchers have certain kinds of information they need to gather that requires them to at least partly guide the interview. Merriam (1998) suggests having a structured section of the interview while still allowing the majority of the interview to be guided by a loose set of questions or issues to be explored. The combination of structured and unstructured sections permits the researcher to collect the information she needs while still allowing her to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam 1998, 74). This kind of qualitative research allows for a more complete and diverse picture to emerge through the narrative and experiences related by participants than what might have been achieved if researchers apply numerical analyses or restrict questions to only the specific issue within a phenomenon about which they have hypothesised.

The main data collection method for this study was the face-to-face interview. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine principals in the KwaNdengezi community during in the first round of data collection (Appendix IV). Consistent with grounded theory methodology, the questions were not necessarily phrased exactly the same for each participant, nor were they in any particular order. Questions were also reviewed after each interview. If new information was gained, or new ideas introduced by a participant, the questions were modified for the remaining participants. The majority of the interview was composed of open-ended questions and participants were given full leeway to digress, but time was limited so if an interview got too far astray from the issue a new question was introduced to try and bring the interview back to one of the main topics. To ensure I was able to gather the information critical for the study, I tried to guide interviews so the same topics or issues were raised with each principal to allow them to react and give his or her individual perspective. Having various questions already developed and structured parts of the interview deviates slightly from grounded theory methodology, but was necessary with the given constraints.

During the first round of interviews I found many of the principals mentioned Pinetown or “white schools”, both as being competing schools against which they compared themselves, but also they felt the schools were abiding by different rules. This generated some new questions that would not be answered by the original planned case study, so a second set of interviews was planned with two principals of Pinetown schools. The same ideas and questions were brought up in these interviews in order to gain insight on the topic from a different perspective.

In addition to the interviews with the principals, I utilised supplementary data in this study including an additional in-depth interview with a community leader who works closely with schools, a desktop study and a short questionnaire.

The questionnaire acted as a background form and allowed me to gather specific data (numbers of students, etc.) that would have interfered with the interview process due to their closed-ended and numerical nature (Appendix V). The questionnaires were not analysed for

statistical purposes, but rather served as an illuminating source of basic information which helped to create a more full contextual background against which data from the interviews could be analysed.

I conducted an in-depth, semi-structured interview with a very active community leader who works with children and families at risk and is familiar with all of the principals and the situation at each school. As with the questionnaire, this interview was for background purposes.

Furthermore, various documents and reports were gathered before and during fieldwork about the school fee policy, its recorded impacts thus far, KZN's education policies, and the Ward 12 area.

3.3 Concerns and Limitations

A few issues, both theoretical and personal were sources of concern and may have limited this study. Of considerable concern are the issues raised when a white, foreign researcher conducts interviews in an otherwise predominantly Zulu community. First, while all of the participants spoke English, there is miscommunication that can occur between the interpretation of the question by the participant, their choice of words and then the researcher's interpretation of the response. Although I have spent a good amount of time with native isiZulu-speakers and feel I understand some of the common translation idiosyncrasies made between isiZulu and English, the potential exists for questions to have been interpreted differently than they were designed, or for the participants to have difficulties expressing themselves fully in their non-native language.

Secondly, there are potential issues with regards to the level of comfort and openness the participants might feel in my presence. While this is not something I sensed as a problem during the interviews, I am still an outsider by both race and nationality and they may not have felt fully comfortable voicing all of their concerns. It could also be argued that my being from outside of the community may have made me less threatening, allowing them to

open up in a way they might not have done if the interviewer had been someone they would have to interact with in the community after the interview.

Thirdly, while I tried to make clear the separation between my research work and the other work I do in the community, in some of the interviews principals may have had expectations about what I could do to help them and their schools. This may be related to the wide economic inequalities in the South African society as wealth is still mostly divided along racial lines. In other experiences in KwaNdengezi and elsewhere I have noticed that when a white person of any nationality enters a predominantly Zulu community, they are generally assumed to be there for charity work. As they are of the few white people who do visit predominantly African areas, they are seen as being more approachable and are frequently asked for various forms of help and support. The fear is that the expectations of the principals was raised with regards to what solutions I might be able to find to the concerns they raised in their interviews, and may become disillusioned or angry if these do not materialise.

While there are a number of benefits to using qualitative, inductive methodologies like grounded theory and hypothesis-generating research, certain disadvantages should also be considered. The first is that, like most qualitative research, the process is still considered to be very subjective and dependant on the researcher's ability; grounded theory in particular tends to be difficult for beginning researchers to apply. The data analysis process also takes considerably longer than other methods and the generalisability of data collected may be questioned as the focus is on individual subjective experiences (Carvalho *et al.* 2003). While I followed a well-defined adaptation of the grounded theory developed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), which might mitigate some of the potential problems, these concerns should not be minimised.

Finally, the research was explicitly designed to gather data from a small area to investigate if the way policy was interpreted and implemented within that area varied or was similar across schools. There is always a risk that this community or area is an anomaly from the standard experience that might be found by interviewing a greater number of principals across a much

broader spectrum of types of schools. Therefore, conclusions drawn from these interviews cannot necessarily be said to speak for the country, or even the KZN province, as a whole. This concern was mitigated somewhat by the fact that the findings of this study did not contradict, and often corroborated, the findings of other studies pertaining to school fees in South Africa.

3.4 Data Analysis

An integral part of grounded theory research is the interrelated nature of the data collection and the data analysis process. Unlike other kinds of qualitative research methodologies where a researcher might try to collect all of the data before beginning analysis, in grounded theory evaluation and analysis are necessary from the start of data collection as they are used to inform the evolution of the interview issues and questions (Cavalho *et al* 2003; Corbin & Strauss 1990). Despite its importance to the theory, there are few places in the literature where specific guidance can be found about the intellectual process of coding and categorising with the grounded theory method. However, Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) give thorough instructions about the research process for hypothesis-generating research (based on grounded theory) from design and data collection to coding and analysis, which I used as a strategic guide for this study.

An important aspect of any research is ‘triangulation’, which means the utilisation of multiple data collection methods in an attempt to make the data more trustworthy. The idea is that if an assertion is corroborated through multiple, diverse sources, the researcher can have more confidence in its accuracy. Within this study, triangulation was pursued in two ways. First, triangulation of perspectives was sought by the inclusion of participants from different levels of schools (primary, junior primary and secondary), from two distinctly different socio-economic communities (KwaNdengezi and Pinetown) and from a community leader from outside the education system. Secondly, triangulation of information was used by employing multiple data collection methods.

The phases presented by Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) were the basic steps taken for analysis of the data in this study. First, the data was cut down by discarding any tracts of text which were not relevant. Next, repeating ideas were identified in the relevant text, both within and across interviews. Nvivo software²⁰ served as a useful tool during this step. Third, repeating ideas with common elements were grouped together in themes. Finally, in a similar process to the way repeating ideas were developed into themes, the themes were organised into larger, abstract ideas: findings or theoretical constructs. These findings are the basis for much of the information presented in the next chapter.

Though it is described as typical in the literature, I was still surprised to find how my ideas were continually changing about what was relevant or important in the text throughout the process as I re-examined the interviews and ‘listened’ to what the participants were saying. Through this, new repeating ideas and themes emerged that I would not have identified initially. I found this step to be the most challenging and frustrating as it was often tedious and time-consuming, but it was also the most rewarding to find new pictures emerging and evolving from the data.

²⁰ Nvivo software is designed to assist researchers in the organisation and analysis of qualitative data. It is particularly useful in that it allows the researcher to select tracts of text from different and classify them into themes which can be viewed together in one document.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It will first discuss the information received from principals in the KwaNdengezi area²¹, examining the official policy and realities of implementation of the school fee policy. Then, it will look at the ways in which the Pinetown principals' experiences were similar to those of the KwaNdengezi principals, and the ways in which they differed. The next chapter will examine the implications of these findings both for the schools in this study and for the education system as a whole.

4.1 KwaNdengezi Schools

Before beginning the description of the findings, it is important to have a basic picture of the schools in which the principals worked. All nine of the KwaNdengezi schools are considered to be in Quintile 4 on the 2008/09 resource targeting list (KZN DOE 2007). While considered to be relatively wealthy, all of the schools had visibly broken down infrastructure, such as multiple broken windows and doors, old desks and worn supplies. The two Pinetown schools are considered Quintile 5 schools and were both in good physical condition and in possession of a number of other physical assets (i.e. tractors, buses, computers, etc.).

While in comparison with the Pinetown schools the ones in KwaNdengezi were in similar physical condition, however there were some visible differences between them. Two were obviously serving a poorer segment of the population. The fee levels of these schools were lower, they were running without electricity and the physical states of the schools were worse than that of the other schools. While the principals of these schools seemed more discouraged about the situation, their experiences with the implementation of the policy did not diverge significantly from those of the other principals, so the schools were not considered separately in the analysis.

²¹ In order to protect the identity of specific participants, for citations KwaNdengezi Principals have been randomly assigned letters A-I and Pinetown Principals are identified as P1 and P2.

Additionally, it is important to note that while the principals had very distinct personalities, personal histories and approaches to school management, the experiences they related with regards to the school fee policy were surprisingly consistent, thus the relationship between a school's physical state or success in fee collection and the personal attributes of its principal is not explored in this study, though this would be an interesting issue to explore in future research.

4.1.1 Budgeting and Fee Setting

The decision about whether or not to charge fees is meant to be made by parents, not by PDOE officials or school administrators²². The principal and department heads in a school are meant to estimate budgetary needs for educational resources. Then, they bring the budget to the school governing body where it can be discussed, potential school-fee levels set, and approved. Finally, it is brought to the parents for their questions and ideas about fundraising, or for an approval of the level of school fees for the coming school year. In the end, it is supposed to be the parents deciding whether to charge school fees, and then paying them. It is also up to the parents and SGB to decide on who will be exempted (within the rules of the NNSSF), while it is the responsibility of the school to collect the school fees from parents.

In the first step, the HODs and principal design a budget that will cover the educational expenses of the school for the following year. When they have a draft they take it to the SGB where it is discussed and, once agreed-upon, it is presented to the parents. The parents are then meant to ask questions and discuss the budget and fees, then vote. If a majority vote in favour of the fee level, then it is accepted. The idea behind the fee policy is that, in a limited-resource government budget, communities are able to augment government funds. If wealthier communities contribute more, then a greater amount of government funds can be

²² The 1998 National Norms and Standards for School Funding stipulates: "Whether or not to charge school fees is a matter for the parents of the school. The Act links the question of fees to the budget of the school, which the governing body must present to a general meeting of parents for approval. The intention is that the governing body will give the parents all necessary information about the school's income, from the state and other sources, and its educational needs. Parents will then decide what additional revenue the school needs for educational purposes, and how that revenue is to be raised, including whether or not fees are to be charged" (DOE 1998b, 50).

allocated to poorer communities. Simultaneously, this step is meant to promote parental involvement in, and oversight of, school activities.

While almost all of the principals interviewed described a procedure similar to that which is stipulated by the DOE, in most cases the process was not seen as being functional. The ways in which the principals described why the process did not work varied, but a few issues emerged as common themes across the interviews.

Lack of Parental Involvement in Process

All of the principals mentioned an overwhelming disinterest on the part of the parents to be part of the process; they said that only a small minority of parents would come to meetings about finances.

The fact that parents do not come to the meetings causes different problems. First, the small minority of parents present to vote on the levying of fees and the amount would suggest that the first purpose of the process, creating a sense of ownership for the decision amongst parents, is not being achieved. While a few of the principals initially said they felt involving parents in the decision-making was positive because it gave them parental support for the fees, all of them later disclosed that very few parents would actually pay the agreed-upon fees (around thirty percent on average, some as low as ten percent). Support for fees within the wider parental community could actually be quite low.

Second, the fact that few parents come to the meeting has implications for the exemption and collection processes. Under SASA, schools are required to inform parents of the rules and process to receive an exemption from having to pay school fees. Almost all of the principals felt they complied with this rule by holding a meeting and explaining the rules there; however, if most are not present, many of those parents may not know about the existence of exemptions or about how to get one, or both. While they could send letters, this is costly and time-consuming as many of the schools do not own their own copy machines or funds for paper and ink. Furthermore, principals have incentives to not publicise the exemption

process beyond the meeting as the fewer people who apply the more potential there is to get money for the school.

A third finding which emerged was that, regardless of how many parents showed up, it did not seem the parents would, in general, oppose or question the principals or SGBs about the budget or suggested fee levels. Staff would submit their requests, the principal and SGB would discuss the requests and draw up a budget. Then it seemed to be just a matter of convincing parents to agree:

We call a meeting and give the budget to the parents. They agree or sometimes they make suggestions as well, but it's very rare that they oppose whatever we have decided upon. Normally they take whatever we have budgeted for. They just need explanation, and they want to know whether there aren't other ways of doing things (Principal C).

None of the principals seemed to face much opposition from their SGB or parents to the budgets they prepare. The principals appeared to feel their job was to make sure parents were convinced to approve the budget, and fee level, as it had been drafted.

Albeit to different degrees, each of the principals felt that they, and perhaps their SGB, were the only ones who had sufficient knowledge about the school and its needs to make a budget, and so their decisions shouldn't really be called into question:

It is procedure that we call the parents meeting, the SGB, but it doesn't work: I have to tell them because I'm the one who knows better (Principal B).

At times, the process seemed to be led and, sometimes forced by the principal, from start to finish:

You go to the parents with a plan, so it's just a question of twisting their arm and making sure they accept it (Principal G).

This lack of a substantive role may be a reason many parents do not attend the meetings. They may be disillusioned with the process and decide they have more valuable uses of their time than the "rubber-stamping" of the principal's/SGB's decisions.

Impractical budgeting exercise

Fees collected from parents are meant to cover the cost of electricity, water, maintenance of the school's physical infrastructure, teacher conferences and travel costs and supplies, such as cleaning materials, erasers, copy paper, ink, etc. However, whether or not that budget is approved by the parents may be irrelevant since an issue frequently raised is that the creation of the budget is itself impractical.

First, principals feel restricted from creating a budget that accurately depicts the needs of the school because they feel unable to raise sufficient amounts of money to cover it. While a principal may be able to calculate the cost of electricity and water, estimate maintenance costs or itemise the supplies needed for the next school year, they do not feel they are able to raise the per learner fee amounts to the levels needed to support that budget. In fact, the fees have been kept at the same level for years, despite the fact they no longer (if they ever did) cover for what they are required.

The principals gave two main reasons for the level of fees remaining unchanged. The first one was that the community could not afford to pay any higher fees since it is a poor community:

[How much we raise] the fees? Very little, very little. At coming here it was R40, perhaps after five or six years it was R70, then I think it's the eighth year now that we've just added R10 to make it R80. Fees are going up gradually but I can't raise them too quickly because much of the community is not working (Principal F).

Or, even if principals felt parents could afford more in fees, the fear was so few were paying now that if the fees were raised higher, fewer would pay and the school would have less money than with what it started:

We've been paying this R100 for 7 years, and it's not working. But we have no other alternative. At least somebody must pay something (Principal B).

The second argument for not raising fees was that competition for students from other schools inhibited any one school from raising their fees much above the others. The number of students enrolled in a school is what determines the amount of government funding, and

government-allocated teachers, it will receive. The close proximity of schools in KwaNdengezi means parents have a choice about which schools they would like their child to attend, and many principals are afraid they will lose students to nearby schools if they raise their fees too high above those of other schools:

Our budget [is] also guided by neighbouring schools because if we increase way beyond other schools then parents take learners elsewhere, so it is many years since we've increased the fees. Principals are not united by coming together and saying, 'okay let us increase our fees by R200'. Just across the road the school has the same grades as us, so if we increase parents will take their students to the next school (Principal A).

Even once they create a budget and establish fee levels, principals still do not know the amount of money they will be able to collect. A differing number of parents pay fees each year, so the sum available for the budget can vary greatly year to year. Principals know from past experience that not all parents will pay. However, they are still required to submit a budget to the PDOE which includes predicted revenue from fees and which assumes all parents who are not officially exempted from paying school fees will pay.

4.1.2 Exemption

To be considered officially exempt, parents are meant to request an application form from the school or district offices, fill it out and submit it along with proof of household income to the school governing body. If parents are receiving a grant on behalf of their child, they are automatically exempt. Otherwise, the school governing body applies a formula to determine what kind of exemption should be awarded to the parent, if any. Equation 1 below shows the school fees exemption equation and the chart that must be used by SGBs to exempt households from having to pay school fees.

Equation 1: Equation used to determine exemption from school fees

$$E = 100 (F+A / C)$$

Where -

E = school fees as a proportion of the income of a parent.

F = annual school fees, for one child, that a school charges in terms of section 39 of the Act.

A = additional monetary contributions paid by a parent in relation to a learner's attendance of, or participation in any programme of, a public school.

C = combined annual gross income of parents. 100 = the number by which the answer arrived at in the brackets is multiplied so as to convert it into a percentage (DOE 2006b).

Once "E" is determined, the number is compared to a chart (Appendix III) which then gives the percentage of the school fees the parent must pay. As an example, if parents were earning R600 per month, or R7200 per year, and had two children in a school which charged R100 annually, and paid R300 for a required school uniform and class trips, "E" would be 5.5 percent. Using the chart, one would look under column "2" (representing the number of children from the family in the school) to the row "5.5%" and find that the parents should be exempted from 67 percent of the annual school fees for each child (so payment should be R33 per child per year or R66 total per year). If that same family's annual income was reduced to R5040 (R420 per month), the parents would be exempted from 90 percent of the school fees and pay R10 per child per year.

Process

The major frustration expressed by all of the principals was not the fact that they had to charge fees, but that parents were not paying the fees they had decided upon and agreed to. Each school's process for exemption differed slightly, but there were few exemptions that were not automatic²³, as few parents officially applied through either the government-authorised or informal methods. While some schools had automatically exempted around 200 children, in any given school only a handful of parents, or fewer, would ever request consideration for exemption.

While each of the principals indicated knowledge of how the official exemption process is meant to work, it was not always apparent whether the principals had a clear idea of the way

²³ Refer forward to the "Automatic Exemption" subsection on page 62.

the exemption equation should be applied. A few seemed to be confused, but either way the official equation was nearly irrelevant as all the principals deemed the process impossible to implement and instead had fashioned a less formal process whereby parents came to their office, related their story and the principal made the decision:

We don't follow this [official procedure], we invite the parents in and interview them (Principal A).

Overall they felt the official rule was inapplicable in their schools. First, the principals felt the rules were meant more for richer schools and, as their school fees were so low, very few parents would be considered exempt under the official policies:

Here we're talking about R230 for school fees. If you take R230 x 10 it is R2300, there is no parent that is making less than R2300 per annum. The parent selling at the gate makes about R5000 per year. Very few parents can't pay that amount (Principal G).

Secondly, there are issues with requesting proof of income. Parents may not have any proof of income because of jobs in the informal economy, or because they do not earn money (if they receive grants this was generally considered income by the principals). In the principals' adapted process, in order for a family to be deemed exempt, parents must either get a letter from the social worker or crisis centre or, particularly if they were illiterate, they could make an affidavit at the police station stating their situation and why they could not pay.

Third, there is the issue of pride. Parents often do not want to admit they cannot pay the fees, which leaves principals in the awkward position of not being able to exempt the parent since they have not applied, yet not being able to collect the fees either.

We say 'if you have a problem come forward and discuss it'. But they come and say, 'No, the father will be getting his money soon,' and they keep on promising. They never say "I won't be able to pay", they keep on promising. So it's not easy for me to say you are exempted because they don't request it (Principal F).

Some of the principals would handle this by simply exempting certain families without the parents even needing to apply simply if the family was known within the community to be struggling:

Some don't have to come, some cases are well-known and so clear. Like, if you go to Ethembeni [local crisis centre] and you find a parent being supported by them. That information is enough for the child to be exempt. Why make them apply when you know the situation? I ask Ethembeni write a letter confirming the situation, then I write 'exempted' (Principal G).

If a parent were to apply and is able to show proof of income, they still have a big incentive to lie or not disclose the full income if it means they would be not be exempted from paying fees. Principals felt they were at a disadvantage in the situation as they do not have a way to force parents to show income:

Parents never want to tell us about their income, so we can never know. They won't give us the actual amount, they won't give out any information regarding the payment they get and they won't give us proof as to how much they get per month. Others have businesses they are hiding in order to avoid tax, so you can never be sure (Principal C).

Furthermore, some principals did not even attempt to obtain proof of income. One was afraid to request information about incomes from parents as they felt parents saw it as an invasion of privacy:

Salary? Ooh, it's confidential! I can't even ask that, they'll beat me up. To ask for their salary, their pay slips? I've never tried it. Eesh, it's a bit confidential don't you think? I'm convinced by what the parent is saying, further than that I don't think I can pry (Principal F).

Automatic Exemption

According to SASA regulations regarding the exemption of parents from school fees, there are certain people who are automatically exempted from having to pay school fees. Any person who is either caring for an orphan, or receiving a social grant on behalf of a child is automatically exempted from paying school fees (DOE 2006b). Grants which qualify recipients for automatic exemption include the Foster Care and Child Support Grants; pension grants are not considered valid for an automatic exemption as they are not received

“on behalf of the child,” though various studies have found they are often used for school-related expenses. About half of the principals knew about this automatic exemption, but were frustrated since it left them with no way to raise funds:

The government says if a parent is getting the grant there's no need for us to ask for the school fees, 'money from the government should not go to another government'. Poor children ages six to fourteen receive that grant. In our grade 1 there are 245 learners and they are all getting the grant. Even most grade R's as well. So, how are we going to get the school fees?(Principal D).

Worryingly, the other half of the principals seemed confused about this aspect of the policy and mentioned they expected parents receiving grants to pay fees (although it seemed most grant recipients did not) since they considered it part of the cost of caring for the child.

The most problematic thing is you'll find a child is getting a grant, only the child is not well-cared for: she's dirty, hungry and the school fees aren't paid. It's a problem if the child is not paying school fees but she's getting a grant (Principal F).

Partial and “Un-official Exemption”

All of the principals said they would consider requests for partial exemptions, though it was rare they were asked for or approved since fees were already low; more frequently principals would give parents permission to pay in instalments. Despite this accommodation, a small percentage of parents actually followed-through to pay the full fee amount each year.

We do get certain people who we make plans for, like they must pay part each month. But even if the parent is supposed to pay five R20, you'll find that they pay once or twice and then stop. It's not an official exemption, a parent just doesn't finish paying the money (Principal C).

It seemed across all of the schools there was a large number of parents who would neither pay the fees nor apply for an exemption. This was referred to by a few of the principals as “un-official exemption”, since parents would not go through the official process, they would simply not pay:

The law says if you want to be exempted, you apply. There are partial and total exemptions but they don't apply for it – they just exempt themselves (Principal E).

4.1.3 Collection

Collection of school fees is the responsibility of the SGB and school administrators. Approximately half of the KwaNdengezi principals reported taking on the collection duties themselves, while the other half had delegated those tasks to a deputy principal or clerk. In the end, all of them acknowledged that they, not other administrators or the SGB, had the responsibility to ensure fees were paid by parents.

[SBG members] take an active part, but the responsibility comes to the principal. They'll never ask the teachers where is the money, they'll never ask the clerk, they'll say, "Principal, where is the audited statement?" (Principal I).

One of the principals said that how much work she was required to do with regards to collection depended in part on the resolve and social status of the SGB chairman. The chairman is meant to be in charge of collection for her school, but at times was too busy, or too low on the 'social ladder' to enforce the rules about collection of fees.

An additional concern for principals was crime. Due to a nearby school being targeted for robbery during fee-collection time, all of the schools requested parents pay fees directly to the schools' bank account in Pinetown (approximately a 20 minute drive). Parents complained this was too expensive since the taxi fee is R12 – R15 for the return journey to Pinetown, but only a few of the schools continue to allow parents to pay in cash at the school. Oftentimes in those schools this would be prohibited during 'prime' times in the beginning and end of the year, but accepted in the middle when thieves would not suspect there to be a large amount of cash at the school. One principal mentioned he asks police to come at the beginning of the year and stand guard and accompany him to the bank during the days when the school collects the cash.

The Collection Process

As noted, a small percentage of parents apply for exemptions so, technically, the remaining parents should pay fees, but few do so willingly and none of the schools reported having more than a fifty-percent payment rate, and most reported payment as extremely low. Considering the parents who come to meetings are the ones who make themselves easily

accessible and are generally the ones who pay without complaint, collecting fees from the remaining parents is often a time-intensive and often expensive endeavour. The following is a good example of the common process by which schools try to collect school fees from parents:

The percentage of non-payment is so much. We call meetings for the parents, we discuss the issue. They don't come to the meetings also, or when they are late we write letters. We begin by writing a general letter that if you know that you haven't paid the school fees, or you have paid a certain percentage, please respond, we need the money. They don't reply, they don't come to the school, they do nothing. We write the second one. Now, directed, "parent of so and so, you are owing school the money". Okay, there is no response. Third letter: "parent so and so come to the school and pay the money". There is no response the third time, then we call the parent and the parent doesn't come to the school. At the end it's like that most of the time (Principal B).

Almost all of the principals reported sending letters home with children to the parents requesting payment as the main method used to collect fees, followed up by phone calls or text messages. This seemed ineffective for the most part, though it may be partly due to children never delivering the letters, or to parents who are unable to read the letters in order to reply.

Additional Collection Methods

In addition to the letters, principals employed different tactics for getting parents to pay. First, a few of the principals try to call parents to meetings, though generally there is low attendance if parents know the meeting is about fees. Unsurprisingly, it seems parents who have not paid do not want to attend meetings about non-payment of fees. To solve this, one of the principals mentioned he would hide the real reason for the meeting, or announce the superintendent was meant to attend in order to scare parents into paying.

Unfortunately, when you say it's a meeting for parents who haven't paid, it's embarrassing to come, they won't come. But sometimes you tell them the superintendent is here he wants to see all those who haven't paid. Then they will come, or pay (Principal A).

Another principal used a similar ploy. He also believed parents at his school would be embarrassed to attend a meeting for parents who have not paid fees, but he felt this could be

used to his advantage. He reported he uses a meeting that is solely for parents who have not yet paid as a threat, with the hope that parents will pay to avoid having to attend.

Surprisingly, I issued these letters on Monday and I have already received more than R5000. They are avoiding coming to the meeting, because I gave them that allowance that if you can pay before the meeting you cannot come because the meeting is strictly for those who haven't paid. Now the money is coming in (Principal G).

These principals' tactics seemed to work well, though it appears to depend on the extent to which parents believe in the principal's authority. It is interesting to note only male principals mentioned using this sort of tactic.

Second, some principals used "scare tactics" to try and oblige parents to pay fees. Government regulations prohibit principals from denying students any part of their education due to their parents not paying. Despite this, many of the principals revealed they try other kinds of 'scare' tactics, even while acknowledging they couldn't follow through with their threats. The most common approach used was to send a letter to parents towards the end of the year threatening to hold back reports (student's marks) if parents didn't make the final payments before a certain date.

I even mention I will hold up the reports, the results, but I cannot – I knew, I was just trying to make them alert that they need to pay the school fees (Principal F).

This seemed to work on some of the parents as most of the principals mentioned they receive a large portion of total fees paid towards the end of the year which they attributed to parents' fearing their children not receiving their marks, even if the principals hadn't necessarily threatened to withhold reports. This may be due to the fact that new policies are not very well communicated to parents and, until a few years ago, principals were allowed to hold back reports, or at least they were not prohibited from doing so.

Another approach was to send the child home from school to tell their parents they must pay. The principals seemed mixed in their feelings toward this tactic, with some believing it to be fully wrong as it might either interfere with the child's education, or just embarrass them

enough that they would not want to return. But others thought it the only way to reach hard to convince parents:

Some parents you can tell as much as you like, but they only respond when you send the learner home to fetch them – then they start moving or the money comes (Principal C).

This tactic is likely not approved by the DOE, but none of the principals would keep children out of school, or even prevent them from returning the same day, they just needed to go home and warn their parents that they must pay school fees. Whether or not the practice is fair depends on if one considers children are being discriminated against based on ability to pay and this may be more attributable to how it is done than the practice itself; for example, calling children out publicly versus privately speaking with them so teachers and other children do not know.

Third, when funds are close to running out, principals reported using “emergency” fundraising to try and raise enough money to cover daily operational expenses of the schools. One principal mentioned when the situation is dire and the electricity or water will be shut off without payment of the outstanding balances, she sends home new letters to parents explaining the dire situation and requesting parents send in R10 or R20 to help avoid the school being cut off from either of those basic services. Another principal reported that when funds are low he creates special days such as “Welcome Spring Day” where kids are invited to wear a certain colour and asked to bring a R2 coin to donate to the school coffers.

A few of the principals mentioned that there is a high school which requests parents pay half of the fees up-front before the child is enrolled. These principals felt demanding payment at the time of enrolment was against the law “*because admittance can't be based on ability to pay*” and they felt it was likely the school would not accept those children whose parents had not made the payment. It is unclear whether the practice would actually be against regulations since, on the one hand, it is true the school cannot only accept children whose parents are able to pay, and cannot keep enrolled children out of school; but, on the other hand, if the parents have not applied for exemption they are required to pay the fees agreed upon by the SGB and majority of parents. It seems the only way this would be illegal is if a

child's parents' ability to pay fees was a factor in determining whether or not the child would be admitted to the school.

Professional collectors

The rules about school fees stipulate that if the majority of parents approve school fees, then all parents who are not exempt are required to pay whether they agreed with the fees or not. Recognising some parents might not pay willingly, the DOE gave SGBs the right to sue parents for school fees should non-exempt parents not pay.

None of the KwaNdengezi principals felt this was a realistic policy for their schools. First, they felt fees were too low to merit hiring a lawyer as it is likely the school would pay more for the lawyer or collector than the fees were worth and it would be a waste of the principal's time:

If the parent doesn't pay and can afford to pay then the school is allowed to take that parent to court, but now at the end of the day you look at it and think 'I'm going to take these parents for only R150, and I'm going to go to court, waste my time, for R150?' (Principal G).

Second, even if they could hire a collector, a few of the principals mentioned the act of using one would create hostility in the community amongst parents and non-parents alike. This would likely cause the schools more problems than it was worth in the long-run, particularly considering the small sums of money being collected.

Alternative forms of payment

The literature about school fees, both international and South African, often mentions the possibility of poor parents paying their fees through "in kind" services to the school. Examples of this include: cleaning, general maintenance, grounds maintenance and working in the school's garden, among others. Within KwaNdengezi, only one school allowed parents to pay school fees in this way. Some schools found this was actually overly popular with parents and, given the choice, many of them would pay in this manner. However, KwaNdengezi, as most poor communities, there are a few skilled workers, an abundance of

unskilled workers and only so many services a school needs. One principal described the underlying issue well:

Many parents wanted to clean and fix things, but now at the end of the day Telkom wants money, Metro water wants money for water and the school ends up without money (Principal A).

It would be unfair for a principal to allow one parent to pay in kind and tell the next with the same skills and same income they must pay cash, so most simply did not offer any parents the opportunity.

Another issue which arose is that several principals found parents expected to be paid for their work. Two explanations were hypothesised for this situation. It might be because, as one principal noted, this is a “*capitalist country and people expect cash for labour*” (Principal G). Alternatively, it might be parents do not completely understand the concept of in kind payment and expect to be paid by the school for their labour and then pay the school fees from the money earned.

One principal related a worrying experience with regards to non-paying or cash-paying parents influencing or ridiculing parents who were paying fees in kind:

I once used that system as an alternative, if you are unable to pay the school fees then you come with your bushknife and cut grass, you come with and fix broken glasses, you come and work in the garden. It worked the first time but at a later stage those who were not coming to work started mocking those who were coming. So those who were coming stopped coming to work because they were getting mocked, they became the laughing stock to the others (Principal I).

For these reasons, all except one school did not accept payments in kind despite the low percentage of cash payments. It is interesting to note the school that did accept in kind payments reported a slightly higher percentage of payment than the other schools. It is unclear whether this is because parents who would not have paid otherwise were being counted as ‘paid’ due to their in kind services, or if qualities of the principal and the environment she created generates higher rates of payment regardless.

4.1.4 Additional Findings

Perceptions about why parents do not pay

As discussed, principals in the KwaNdengezi schools have a difficult time collecting school fees from parents. In a low-income area such as KwaNdengezi, the obvious assumption with regard to why parents do not pay school fees is that parents are too poor. It was surprising, therefore, to find that not one of the KwaNdengezi principals felt this was the main reason most parents don't pay fees. They expressed concern about the fact that most wealthy families in the area send their children to more expensive schools outside of the community leaving only less-wealthy families to attend their schools and acknowledged that there are many destitute families in the area (even some not earning enough to comfortably afford school fees). Yet, all of the principals believed the *majority* of parents can afford the fees and simply choose not to pay for various reasons. This is likely to be true if one judges affordability by the official percentage of income: it is likely very few households survive on less than R800-1000 per year. On the other hand, if a household's monthly income is stretched and one must purchase essentials like food and pay water bills, it seems understandable that even R10 per month for school fees can seem unaffordable.

An explanation for the low payment rate is what one principal called the "culture of non-payment". Those who expressed this fell into two groups. First, those who believed parents see the schools as wealthy government institutions and do not view school funding as their responsibility. Second, there were principals who felt community members saw themselves as victims of history and the political system who are too poor to pay. These principals lamented the fact that parents often did not see education as a way to help their children achieve a better life.

While the rationale behind non-payment was seen in different ways by individual principals, almost all of the principals believed the real reason for the low payment rate is the lack of consequences for parents if they do not pay school fees. Whether parents believed they should pay or not, if there were negative consequences for not paying fees then they would likely pay.

Our government says you cannot chase a child away and you cannot be strict and say everybody should pay excluding the orphans. So even people who can afford to pay just keep quiet because they know they are protected, overprotected (Principal B).

Since principals are not allowed to negatively influence the education of the child due to parents' non-payment, and because in KwaNdengezi it is not worthwhile to pursue individual parents legally for unpaid fees, in effect, the principals' hands are tied: if parents do not pay of their own volition there is little to no recourse SGBs can take.

Whichever reason they gave for non-payment, almost all of the principals mentioned they felt their beliefs were proven by the fact that younger grades, particularly Grade R in the schools and Grade 8 in the secondary schools, paid in far higher rates than the upper grades. Principals felt this indicated that, since parents paid in the first year they could afford fees, it was only once parents realised the schools could not force them pay they stopped paying. Interestingly, quite a few of the principals also mentioned they felt it was often the poorer parents, especially the "gogos on pensions", who pay while others who are earning a salary do not. They found this frustrating for themselves, and problematic in a larger sense since when poorer parents discover wealthier parents are not paying fees, they are likely to stop paying themselves as they feel taken advantage of by the wealthier parents.

What I've noticed is those people who can afford are the people who don't pay. I mean, old gogos from their pension come to me and say 'My son I'll pay R10 this month, then R10 next...' You then find parents who are working and making substantial amounts who don't pay (Principal I).

External influences on payment

In addition to the aforementioned individual reasons for non-payment, principals cited a few other external influences on parents' payment of school fees. To begin with, almost all of the principals felt the media, and political statements and rhetoric in particular, had a negative effect on parents' willingness to pay school fees:

Some can pay, some are taking a chance. They can pay but they don't because they know the child cannot be chased out of the school. The people up there, in the cabinet, they say children must get into the classroom no matter what – uniform or no uniform, school fees or no school fees they must get into the classroom. So parents just relax (Principal F).

This appeared to visibly anger or frustrate almost everyone: while no one said it outright, it seemed they felt the government was undermining rather than supporting their efforts to improve their schools since the politicians used this rhetoric as a tool to get elected and to increase popularity, but without being specific it confused parents and many believe no one has to pay. It seemed they felt these statements get made without considering how they affect schools like those in KwaNdengezi.

A related issue, but with slightly different connotations, is the creation of the no-fee schools and all of the publicity the policy has received. Principals feel some parents use this publicity to their advantage because they are reluctant to pay, while other parents are simply not aware of the difference between a no-fee school and a fee-paying school.

Because now there are some schools that are no-fee schools, some parents think we've become a no-fee school because they don't want to pay. Or, some of their kids are attending no-fee schools, so they question why they have to pay here (Principal A).

Since KwaNdengezi is a relatively poor township, parents are confused as to why they would have to pay school fees when others no longer have to pay. Most hear 'free education' broadcasted on the various forms of media, and assume it includes them since they are poor. Sometimes, it seems that even if parents understand their school has not been designated as a no-fee school, they will sometimes not pay simply because they see it as unjust that they have to pay if other schools are not:

It sounds ridiculous, why are you paying when others are not? (Principal I).

An additional effect of the no-fee school policy in KwaNdengezi is that schools are losing learners, and thus government funding, to no-fee schools nearby. The poorer schools within KwaNdengezi seemed to be hardest hit by this phenomenon. This compounds their funding and quality problems by creating a self-reinforcing cycle: as learners leave, funding and teacher-allocations from the government fall, parents observe this and more learners leave for what are perceived as better-funded schools.

Since the introduction of no-fee schools we have lost a lot of learners because the no-fee schools are just across the Umlazi river. Last year we had 684 learners and this year we have only 587. I think next year most farm children will go to Dassenhoek [a newly designated no-fee school] and then we will lose even more learners (Principal A).

One issue which was not named directly by principals as a reason for non-payment, but may be affecting parents' willingness to pay is that, as mentioned, for most schools there are additional costs associated with paying. All except one school requested parents go to Pinetown and pay the fees directly into the school's bank account. This is a trip costing approximately R15 by local taxi, which when compared with the amount of school fees could add an additional 19 percent to the total annual fees.

A final influence on school-fee payment mentioned by principals was other parents' ridicule. Similar to the mocking of parents paying off fees by working at the school, two principals mentioned parents who paid, or their children, were sometimes mocked by other parents or children for paying fees. It appeared to principals that some parents were simply not paying for the sake of disobeying, since they knew they would not suffer any consequences and that they would then flaunt the fact that they were "getting away with it" to other parents who they saw as being gullible for obeying a policy that could not be enforced.

4.2 Comparison of KwaNdengezi and Pinetown Principal Experiences

A small additional component of this study was the comparison of the experiences of principals in the relatively poor area of KwaNdengezi with those of principals of wealthier schools in Pinetown. The Pinetown schools were added later when it emerged that almost all of the KwaNdengezi principals felt the Pinetown principals' experience with the school fee policy was dramatically different from their own.

Pinetown and KwaNdengezi are two very different areas in terms of physical infrastructure and demographics. As Pinetown was classified a white area under apartheid rule, its infrastructure, schools and local government are better established than in KwaNdengezi where funds were unavailable due to its status as a black township. As Pinetown is the

closest city to KwaNdengezi, the KwaNdengezi principals tend to compare their own schools' resources and quality of schooling to that of Pinetown. They judge progress against how closely their schools resemble those in Pinetown, and mostly they do not feel an adequate amount of progress has been made to equalise educational opportunities since the end of apartheid.

For the most part, the KwaNdengezi principals did not feel they could compete with Pinetown schools, and thought Pinetown principals must have distinctly different experiences while fulfilling the responsibilities of their position. Taken as a whole, these assumptions turned out to be fairly accurate, though some of the findings show their experiences to be curiously similar. This section looks at the similarities and differences between KwaNdengezi and Pinetown schools' experiences with regards to the school fee policy.

4.2.1 Similarities

Relationship with PDOE

The first striking congruence in experiences was found in the relationship principals had with the PDOE. Not one principal in either town felt supported by the PDOE, and all felt a great amount of frustration with what they described as a complete lack of communication, assistance and explanation from the PDOE:

The department of education should be supporting you in all aspects and developing the school, but instead the school tends to be an island and there is very little help coming from them (Principal P1).

At least one principal from both areas related they had written numerous letters in request of assistance or information over a lengthy period of time (sometimes for years) to the PDOE, but none had received any reply, much less a resolution to the issue. One KwaNdengezi principal has been without electricity for over three years, and exhibited multiple faxes she had sent to the PDOE, starting in 2003, requesting help in fixing the problem, which she believed would only involve a limited amount of repair work. She feels she has lost learners, and respect of parents, since she has not been able to provide electricity at the school. She

seemed at this point to have resigned herself to what she viewed as her fate and had not sent any new letters this school year and was instead talking about retiring.

A further issue for KwaNdengezi principals is the lack of communication from the PDOE about decisions related to them. While they filled out the necessary forms to be put into different funding quintiles, they were mostly unsure as to why they were designated in a certain quintile. There was a lot of confusion about how no-fee schools are chosen, and also about what a principal would have to do to become a Section 21 school.

Frustration with lack of parental involvement

Parental involvement in their children's education is widely considered to benefit learners. "Parental involvement" is defined broadly here as being any of a variety of different types of participation in education and with the schools²⁴. In both KwaNdengezi and Pinetown the principals felt the education received by their learners would improve if parents were to become involved and collaborate with teachers and school administrators in their children's education.

Many KwaNdengezi principals lamented the fact that parents of their learners were not involved in their children's education, and they were of the opinion that parents of students in ex-model C schools were more involved. They mostly still attribute this to racial differences and the lingering effects of historical inequalities:

In all black schools it's the problem we have. In the white schools when a meeting is called on a Monday or Tuesday at 7pm, all of the parents will show up. In fact the blacks are still having that in their mind, even my learners and my teachers. We have a problem: people are politically liberated but mentally colonised. When a meeting is called by a white man or a white woman, then they think it's a good thing. It's in here [points to his head], it's still in here (Principal E).

²⁴ Examples of parental involvement include: attending school functions and school obligations such as parent-teacher conferences; helping their children improve their schoolwork (e.g. monitoring homework, encouraging desired behaviour like reading for pleasure and tutoring when a child is experiencing difficulty in a subject; volunteering at school in the classroom or on outings; or, actively participating in the governance of the school (i.e. becoming a member of the school governing body or attending meetings regularly) (Cotton & Wikelund 1989).

Principals in Pinetown similarly lamented the lack of involvement of parents in students' education and reported a low rate of attendance at parents' meetings. Interestingly, though the Pinetown schools' staff remains mostly white, a majority of students are now black and Indian. One of the Pinetown principals reported she sends out all information about fees in letters that parents have to sign and return. While the school holds an annual parents meeting about the subject, not a single parent has shown up in quite a few years. The perception of KwaNdengezi principals that black parents were more likely to attend meetings called by white principals is not accurate in these Pinetown schools²⁵:

Usually write a letter and let them know and they have to sign the letter saying they see the school about the increase. And then we'll have a meeting and we usually don't have one parent...For years now...we sit here waiting and nobody comes (Principal P2).

Idealisation of "better" schools

It was striking that all of the principals in both areas looked to a school they saw as "better" than theirs, and tended to idealise those schools. For example, KwaNdengezi principals perceived Pinetown schools as being incredibly well-resourced, possessing better technology, having good parental involvement, an easier time raising fees and better rates of fee payment.

While some of those perceptions are true, Pinetown principals also felt they have to compete with schools whose resources are beyond what they can attain. Pinetown principals acknowledged they are much better off than the schools in KwaNdengezi, but, unsurprisingly perhaps, did not compare themselves to those schools in terms of quality. Instead, they tended to rate themselves against schools in even wealthier communities nearby, such as Westville and Kloof, as well as to private schools. When speaking of those schools, they referred to the even higher fees and better resources the schools have, such as more

²⁵ It was interesting to find Pinetown principals also felt there was a cultural difference between the races, with white parents tending to be more involved in their children's education while black parents are not. A variety of reasons for black parents non-involvement were hypothesised ranging from it being "the way they grew up" to current socio-economic differences leaving black parents with less time to focus on their children's education due to work demands. It is difficult in this context to identify whether these observations are actually due to racial differences or if it might be more to do with socio-economic class which, in South Africa, is tightly but not exclusively linked with race. It is not within the scope of this study to determine 'the truth' behind any potential relationship between race and parental involvement, but it is relevant to note the perceptions of the principals about this issue.

technologically-advanced learning tools (e.g. white boards that connect to the internet and are interactive), as well as the students being better disciplined and parents being more involved.

It is almost certain that, following this pattern, if one spoke with the principals in schools in Westville and Kloof, they would compare themselves with even wealthier public schools or private schools. It seems the system lends itself to all principals feeling they are, in some way or another, disadvantaged compared to other schools; all recognised the inequalities inherent in the system. For KwaNdengezi principals the problem is two-fold as, while they felt Pinetown schools with the wealthier communities were better funded, they also felt the new 'no fee' schools were better off, despite being in communities of similar or lower socio-economic status, due to the fact they do not have to count on the collection of fees for running costs.

4.2.2 Differences

Despite the similarities above, the KwaNdengezi and Pinetown principals' experiences were different in some key ways. This is perhaps best demonstrated by their divergent views on whether or not the school fee policy should be abolished. Most of the KwaNdengezi principals felt they would be better off without the policy, provided the government was sufficiently funding them, whereas the Pinetown principals felt they are likely able to offer better quality education than if they were to depend solely on government funds. Some of the biggest differences in their experiences are described below.

Total amounts school is able to raise

An obvious difference between the two areas was the amount of combined government and private money they were able to use in their annual budgets. While the Pinetown schools received a lower amount of government funds per pupil, they were able to more than make up for the difference through the levying of fees and other fundraising efforts. To compare, one Pinetown school raises around R8 million each year from student fees to cover its budget; fees are about R11,000 a year and the vast majority pay the full amount. A larger high school in KwaNdengezi receives about R1 million from the government, charges around R300 per student and has between 15 and 50 percent of students' parents paying in a good

year. While the Pinetown schools receive a significantly lower amount per learner from the government, the total difference in allocations is likely to be around R350,000 - less than five percent of what the Pinetown school raised in fees alone. On the other hand, the difference between a Pinetown and a KwaNdengezi secondary school in total public plus private funds raised is close to R7 million.

This vast disparity in annual budgets makes a big difference in terms of what schools can afford to offer students both academically and in terms of the learning environment. The differences in budget has consequences on almost all other aspects, such as the number of teachers and administration staff a school is able to employ, the ability to build a bigger and better physical infrastructure and maintain it, and the ability to offer extra subjects and extra-curricular activities. A Pinetown principal elaborated:

The actual running cost of the academic subjects is quite small, it's all the extras. We provide 15 different sports in this school, totally funded out of school fees. We have 17 subjects, run two buses, a tractor, two computer centres, internet 24 hours a day. All of these things you wouldn't have without fees (Principal P1).

The biggest share (R5.6 million) of this Pinetown school's budget is spent on additional teacher salaries: through fees, both Pinetown schools are able to double the number of teachers they are allocated through the government. The extra funds have a huge impact not only on the number and range of subjects offered, but also on the number of students in each class, the number and quality of teaching aids available, the quality and quantity of equipment and learning materials for students and the kind of environment within which students learn.

Financial management

Another difference was found in the ability of schools to make *meaningful* financial plans. Pinetown schools can fairly accurately predict each year how much money they will receive and are able to create annual detailed and even phased budgets. The government's money arrives at the beginning of the year directly into the schools' bank accounts and parents are met with individually to set-up payment plans for fees, to which they seem mostly to adhere. They are also able to raise the amount of fees annually by a meaningful amount to counteract

the effects of inflation. Put succinctly, they are able to both budget for what they need, and follow the budgets they create.

KwaNdengezi schools are not truly able to do either. They are not certain of the amount the government will allocate to them each year until late in the preceding year, and since the government funds make up the majority of their budgets, it makes it difficult to start planning until this is established. Additionally, they are not sure how many parents will pay school fees, or when they will pay them, which means any kind of phased budgeting is difficult to adhere to. As previously mentioned, most of the schools have not raised fees by any substantial amount in many years. With regard to the implementation of the policy, KwaNdengezi principals had a difficult time securing the information required from parents to determine exemption status, such as household income, while the parents at Pinetown schools accepted the policy and provided the information without complaint.

Secondly, since Pinetown schools have been designated as Section 21 schools they receive the full amount of their government funds (as well as private funds) directly into a bank account, after which time they are free to withdraw money as they see fit, needing only to justify at the end of the year that the government's money was spent on the items the funds were designated for. KwaNdengezi schools are all Section 20 schools, meaning they receive a paper allocation of their funds. Since they do not receive cash from the government, but yet are still required to pay the running costs of the school in cash, they do not have the same freedom to spend the school fees they do collect on 'extras' since they are generally needed immediately to cover the basics. To complicate matters further, almost all of the KwaNdengezi principals reported that when they utilise the 'paper' funds from the government, the price of items is generally two or three times the amount they feel they would be able to buy them for in a store

Section 21 schools are also less dependant on the PDOE for things like minor repairs or additions as they are able to request quotes and contract directly with contractors without needing to go through the bureaucracy and paperwork required of Section 20 schools to gain approval for any work done at the school. A few KwaNdengezi principals report having

waited years for their requests for repair work to come through, even when there had been major damage from a storm that had limited the number of classrooms available for teaching.

Principal's direct responsibilities

All of the principals spoke of the great amount of time and effort that had to be put into collecting fees from parents. They all described the numerous letters, text messages and phone calls that were required to obtain payment from parents. However, the extent to which the principal had to be personally involved in the process was extremely different. In KwaNdengezi, a few of the schools had clerks who worked on the fees issue, and one reported that his deputy principal took care of the oversight of the collection process. The rest of the KwaNdengezi principals all had to involve themselves personally by writing letters, making the phone calls and/or meeting with parents. The Pinetown principals, on the other hand, had finance departments which dealt with most everything that has to do with fees. One of the Pinetown schools had a department within the finance unit which was “*totally dedicated to fees*” and the other reported that, other than initial interviews, the principal did not get involved with financial issues. Overall it seemed KwaNdengezi principals had to undertake many more of the tasks related to school fees than the Pinetown principals.

This chapter has discussed the research findings of interviews with nine principals from KwaNdengezi and two from Pinetown. Chapter 5 will analyse these findings within the equity framework presented in Chapter 1, drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2. It discusses the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for ways the policy could be improved.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The original SASA was designed with equity, redistribution and redress in mind, but the legislation did not turn out to be as ideal as its creators thought it would be for the South African context. Instead of a new system, the legislation has allowed for the “deep continuities with the past” to which Chisholm (2005) refers. Part of the problem is that the policy is based on assumptions which are not consistent with the reality of the South African context. This chapter will look first at disconnects found through this study. Next, it will return to the literature with an analysis of the findings within the equity framework developed by Fiske & Ladd (2002) that is discussed in Chapter 1. From this analysis, there are some clear issues with the way the current school fee policy is designed and recommendations will be outlined for ways the DOE could move forward and improve its funding policies. Finally, potential future research opportunities that emerged during the course of this study are described, and the chapter concludes with final critical insights.

5.1 Policy Assumptions and Realities of the SA Context

One way to discern whether or not a policy is well-designed and clearly communicated is to observe its implementation across sites to see if it is uniformly applied. As noted, the experiences of KwaNdengezi principals were consistent with regard to the school fee policy, but they contrasted significantly with the experiences of Pinetown principals.

Pinetown schools seemed to implement the policy ‘to-the-letter’ and had allocated enough resources to set up systems to ensure all rules were properly followed. While the policy was applied fairly consistently across all of the KwaNdengezi schools, they had adapted it to better fit their situation. For example, they allowed parents to apply for an exemption by simply discussing their circumstances with the principal, or by obtaining an affidavit from the police instead of filing an official application. Another example is the diverse number of tactics used to try to collect fees from learners. While it is not possible to generalise with any certainty from a small study of one area, the contrast between KwaNdengezi and Pinetown schools, particularly with regard to the exemption policy indicate the policy is best suited for

well-resourced schools that can afford to hire staff members to implement the exemption and collection processes, and where the parents of learners are less poor and likely to pay the fees. As “no-fee” schools do not have to deal with these processes, it is likely mostly Quintiles 3 and 4 schools which struggle to implement the policy as it is written.

To complicate matters further, the current policy contains a number of adverse incentives which mostly affect poor schools. First, principals do not have an incentive to inform parents of the exemption policy or encourage them to apply, as this will mean lower overall funding for the school since they do not receive additional funding for exempted learners. Second, parents do not have an incentive to pay school fees in poorer areas since there is no true consequence of not doing so, unless a parent believes it will truly improve the quality of education their child receives. Those parents who do officially apply for exemptions have incentive to obscure financial information in order to appear poorer. Also, it is not currently advantageous for provincial governments to investigate whether schools in lower quintiles are actually attaining the budgets submitted as this might mean the province is required to put more funds into education, further straining limited financial resources. Given that the national government is ultimately responsible for ensuring children’s education, the current method of funding for education (through equitable share) should be reviewed and possibly modified or replaced.

These significant contrasts in experience and the adverse incentives built into the policy suggest the right question to ask may not be whether or not schools are implementing the policy correctly, but whether the policy is correctly designed to achieve the goals of the South African education system within the current context. There seems to be a breakdown between the reality the policy assumes and what is actually happening in schools, given many schools find parts of the policy’s processes to be impractical or irrelevant at best, and actually decreasing the quality of education they are able to provide at worst. Some of these disconnects are explained below, including: the implications of the distribution of income in South Africa on school financing; the power and access to information of parents and SGBs, and the ability or desire of parents to pay fees and/or be involved in the oversight of their

children's education; and, the ability of provincial Departments of Education to properly support poor and/or section 20 schools.

True Distribution of Income in South Africa

The idea behind the progressive funding is that poor children will require more funds to arrive at the end of secondary school with the same 'educational opportunity' as children from wealthier backgrounds. The current national resource targeting system ranks the country's schools using the income of the surrounding community, and then divides the schools into five quintiles of approximately even numbers of learners. While this does allow the government to target resources towards the poorest learners, this is problematic in a context where there is not an even continuum of income distribution.

While SASA was designed to promote a more equitable distribution of resources, the current resource allocation plan appears to be disadvantaging many poor students, mostly because it does not consider the reality of income distribution in South Africa. The Gini²⁶ coefficient for the country as a whole was 0.69 in 1996; the poorest quintile received 1.5 percent of total income while the wealthiest quintile received 65 percent: the richest ten percent of the population received 48 percent of total national income (UNDP 2003). Since then, the inequality has actually increased to 0.77 in 2001 - one of the highest inequality ratios in the world. This means the wealthiest quintile receives an even larger percentage of total national wealth, leaving the other four quintiles with less to divide amongst themselves (Keller 2005; WIID2 2007). The extreme inequality suggests a quintile system does not correspond with the reality of income distribution, and may not be the ideal way of determining funding allocations when such a large percentage of the population shares such a small percentage of national income.

Parental Involvement and Oversight

The design of the fee policy was influenced by theories of cost-sharing supporters such as Bray (1996), who believe school fees allow communities to augment government funds and,

²⁶ The Gini coefficient uses the Lorenz curve to calculate the percentage of population vis-à-vis percentage of wealth. It can range from 0, which represents everyone having an equal share of wealth, to 1, which represents one person having all of the wealth. The closer to 1 it is, the closer a population is to perfect inequality.

simultaneously, promote a feeling of ownership amongst parents, which is hoped will increase their involvement in, and oversight of, school activities. This study finds the policy neither augments government funds in poor communities nor increases parental oversight in any of the schools.

The government funds quintiles 3, 4 and 5 schools at lower rates, counting on parents in those 'wealthier' communities to augment to funds. But, the quintiles to which schools are assigned do not always seem to correspond with the actual poverty and income levels of the families of learners attending specific schools; so, 'wealthier' communities as defined by their schools' quintiles may still be too poor to supplement government funds in a significant way. Additionally, to be effective at augmenting government funds, parents have to actually pay the fees. KwaNdengezi schools reported such low rates of payment that the amount fees contribute to the school coffers was minimal, so the assumption that the policy uses to justify lower per learner allocations does not hold.

At no school in KwaNdengezi or Pinetown did the fact that the school charged fees seem to increase parental involvement in the school fee process or other school activities. Few parents attended meetings and, for the parents who were present, their involvement seemed to often be limited to 'rubber stamping' of the decisions the principal or SGB has already made. This may partly be due to the reluctance of parents who have not reached a high level of education themselves, to question principals or SGBs about budgeting and finances. This would support the idea that parental involvement is hindered by relationships between school administrators and parents in poorer communities being "marked by extreme asymmetries in power and access to information" (Watkins 2000, 177). This could also be seen in the low numbers of exemption applications, because if parents do not come to meetings they are most likely not aware of or knowledgeable about the exemption policy. If anything, the fee policy detracted from involvement in other areas as parents who might have come to school activities often did not attend due to fear of being reproached for not having paid fees.

Support from the Department of Education

The exemption clause specifically states that schools have the right to be assisted by the PDOE when they have problems with applying the school fee policy. Yet both Pinetown and KwaNdengezi schools reported a complete lack of communication from the PDOE. The lack of oversight and support with the implementation of the policy corresponded with Wildeman's study which noted the implementation of the policy at the provincial level was inhibited by a severe shortage of staff, particularly those with the technical skills needed to monitor and accurately evaluate the process. Subsequently, the implementation at the school-level by provincial departments was only monitored in terms of expenditure reporting, and even within this task the lack of personnel impeded the departments' ability to ensure the veracity of the financial statements submitted by schools (Wildeman 2008).

These findings are problematic at a systemic level. If the provincial departments do not request information about, and are therefore unaware of, any issues or concerns schools have with the school-fee policy and its implementation AND the integrity of the financial information received for monitoring and analysis is questionable, then the DOE almost certainly does not have a clear picture of what is happening at the school-level with regards to the implementation of the policy. It would be difficult, then, for the DOE to accurately assess whether or not the policy is achieving the intended objectives, or what unintended consequences might be.

5.2 Implications for Equity

The findings of this study support the conclusions of other researchers (Hall & Monson 2006; Fiske & Ladd 2004, 2003, 2002; Roithmayr 2002, among others) that the current system is perpetuating historical inequalities established under colonial and apartheid rule by continuing to provide affluent communities with better schools. Thus, the already wealthy have better chances at learning and acquiring skills and, later on, of being economically successful.

Van der Berg (2002) and others discussed in Chapter 1 show how achieving equity within the education system is critical if South Africa is to make real gains in the struggle to decrease poverty and socio-economic inequality in society as a whole. This is a complex issue which is affected by other socio-political factors and there is no easy answer. However, the findings from this study would indicate that the current system is neither equal nor equitable, and if South Africa is to make gains in increasing economic equality, growing the economy and reducing poverty, changes will have to be made in the way the education system is financed. This section analyses the findings within the equity framework developed by Fiske and Ladd described in Chapter 2.

5.2.1 Distributional Equity

The explicit objective of much of South African education policy has been the achievement of distributional equality through the re-allocation of public resources (human, physical and resource inputs) to poorer schools (Lewis & Motala 2004; DOE 2003a; DOE 2003b; Fiske & Ladd 2002). By this definition, the democratic government has achieved limited success in creating a more equal education system by the targeting of state funds to previously disadvantaged schools (e.g. the majority of recurrent cost funds going to the bottom two quintiles). However, if the KwaNdengezi schools are typical, then it seems there are schools serving poor learners that are not receiving an equal amount of funds per learner as schools that may be similarly poor but are classified 'no fee' schools.

Wildeman (2008) found KwaZulu-Natal to be on-par with the national norms and standards targets. The national per learner funding target for quintile 3 learners was R554 and the quintiles 2 and 1 were R677 and R738, respectively (DOE 2006d, 31). While not all of the principals were certain of in which quintile their school was placed (problematic in and of itself), the KwaNdengezi schools have been receiving a maximum of a quintile 3 level per-learner funding allocation from the government and are classified as quintile 4 schools for the 2008/09 school year. Even if 100 percent of learners are paying in full they do not make up the difference between a quintile 3 and quintile 2 per learner income from fees, and do not even come close to the level of a quintile one school, much less the levels of quintile 5 schools like those in Pinetown which are receiving up to R11,000 per learner.

This is consistent with Wildeman's (2008) study, which found that schools across the country are 'clamouring' to be classified as being a quintile 1 or 2 school as an ever greater number of poor schools are being pushed into the less-poor quintiles due to demarcation changes and re-ranking of poverty scores. Wildeman asserts the exclusive focus on putting additional funds in the poorest two quintiles has left a smaller amount available with which to fund schools in quintiles 3 and 4, but many of those schools serve a majority of poor learners. Additionally, while the distribution of state funds may be skewed towards poorer schools, the overall amount of funding, government plus fees, is miniscule at poor schools compared to the amount wealthier schools are able to obtain via fees and other fundraising efforts. The situation in KwaNdengezi supports the argument that quintiles 3 and 4 schools are disadvantaged income-wise to both 'no fee' and quintile 5 schools since they receive a lower allocation from the PDOE and also do not benefit from other compensatory spending from the government or community.

Additionally, it is troublesome that when some poor schools are not able to fulfil their budgets, principals and teachers pay for learning materials, transport, training conferences and other miscellaneous costs out of their own pockets. This is not fair to the staff of poorer schools, nor is it sustainable practice in the long-run. The DOE cannot, and should not, expect or depend on staff to finance essential school expenditures.

5.2.2 Educational Adequacy

The 2007 norms and standards for funding specify 'adequate' funding as being R554 per learner (the same as the recommended quintile 3 allocation), but if KwaNdengezi schools are typical, then this is clearly not considered by principals to be an 'adequate' amount of funds to provide for all of the essential teaching, learning and management needs.

Wildeman (2008) contends that the 'adequate' level of funding published in the national norms and standards, was determined using "approximate input indicators and is not based on the resources required to deliver a fixed number of outputs" (Wildeman 2008, 60). This is corroborated by the DOE which, in its 2003 Review of Financing report, estimated a 'basic

minimum package' of educational inputs should cost somewhere between R600 and R1000 per student, but that "given the overall budgets of provinces, and what one could reasonably expect provinces to spend on education...we arrive at an amount of about R500 for the average learner (in 2002 Rands) (DOE 2003b, 15). The KwaNdengezi schools are not likely reaching even R500 per learner between government and private funds combined.

Many, including the DOE itself, argue this is the approach the South African government must use to determine funding if all children are to enjoy their constitutional right to education: "adequacy of state funding should be measured in terms of what level of resourcing is required to attain a particular level of learner performance" (DOE 2003b, 3). However, 'adequate' needs to be defined in terms of resources required to attain a certain quality of education, not by the amount of funds at the disposal of the DOE/PDOE in any given year.

5.2.3 Equal Educational Opportunity

South Africa has high enrolment rates compared to other developing countries, and fairly equal enrolment of boy and girl children. This suggests the school fee policy may not fulfil the fears of those who criticise fees (such as Bentaouet Kattan (2006), Sperling (2005), Blackmore (2001) and Watkins *et al.* (2001)) in terms of fees acting as a barrier to access of education in South Africa. However, the question remains if the kind of education poor learners have access to is equal and equitable. The findings of this study support the conclusion of the DOE (2003a), which found: "the distribution of knowledge wealth in our youth is at best a little better, but maybe worse, than the distribution of their parents' incomes" (DOE 2003a, 10).

This study suggests that certain children are provided a lower quality of education than others, thus perpetuating historical inequalities and indicating that the 'educational opportunity' provided by the different schools is anything but equal. A few different findings highlighted the differences between the poorer and wealthier schools.

Financial Administration

The design of the school fee implementation procedures complicates the work of principals, and in poor schools the current rules negatively affect the financial processes and final budgets. Schools must go through a budgeting process and send in information to the PDOE to show they are properly accounting for funds (and presumably, to ensure all schools have a sufficient amount of funding). However, the budgeting ends up being a “futile exercise” rather than actual financial management for a few reasons.

First, the principals in KwaNdengezi cannot request from parents what they estimate is truly needed in terms of funds due to poverty in the community and parents’ inability or refusal to pay.

Second, the principals cannot budget properly even at the lower amount requested from parents since not all parents pay. Consequently, the budget will not be filled, and furthermore the principal does not know at the beginning of the year how many parents will pay, so it is impossible to determine with any precision how much income the school will receive.

Third, the process itself, from budgeting through collection, is costly to schools due to the immense amount of time, attention and resources it requires. Just the composition and production of letters for parents takes up a significant portion of the small cash budget of poor schools. Exacerbating this problem is that poorer schools are less likely to have their own computers or copiers on which to compose and copy letters, meaning additional resources are needed to travel to a photocopy centre and pay the higher printing costs.

Principals in less-resourced schools are often required to oversee, or implement themselves, all of the stages of the fee policy, from budgeting to collecting of funds. Considering the massive amount of time and energy the principals reported this takes, it is likely detracting from principals’ focus on the rest of their responsibilities, such as staff management and support, discipline, planning and other fundraising. When asked what she thought would change if there weren’t a school fee policy, one KwaNdengezi principal explained:

I wouldn't be worried about school fees but about the problems of the school. I wouldn't be worried about where to buy this, I'd be worried about what good to buy and what good to do with the children instead of telling them all the time go and tell your parents they haven't paid. I wouldn't be making them pay (Principal B).

Finally, the rules in terms of collection, specifically the allowance for school governing bodies to sue parents for unpaid school fees, has little relevance to the situation of poor schools since the costs associated with contracting a lawyer, prosecuting and hiring a collector are far higher than the original fee debt of parents.

Financial Resources and Quality

There are various definitions of 'educational quality' used across the literature on the topic, and most require detailed quantitative information about the number of inputs (i.e. educational resources) and the output (e.g. test scores, number of graduates, number of learners accepted to college, etc.). The kind of data collected does not lend itself well to determining quality in any of these strict senses, but a few findings about the links between financial resources, quality and equity did come through.

The fees themselves do appear to improve the quality of education at a given school, which support the assertions of advocates of cost-sharing, like Bray (2004), Crouch & Vinjevold (2006) and Murphy *et al.* (2002). All of the KwaNdengezi principals said being able to collect fees does help them to provide a better quality education. However, this seemed to be more in the sense that they did not receive an adequate amount of funds from the government and so they felt they needed the additional money, rather than because the policy itself was beneficial to them.

The idea behind the progressive funding is that poor children will require more funds to arrive at the end of secondary school with the same 'educational opportunity' as children from wealthier backgrounds. However, when over half of South African children live in poverty, funding only the poorest of those ignores the needs, and rights, of the remaining children who were not quite 'poor enough' for their schools to receive the necessary additional funds on their behalf. The principals in KwaNdengezi all said they would prefer

to simply be 'no fee' schools and allocated their full budget directly from the government. Besides being administratively easier, this sentiment is financially justified as the combined funds from the government and the fees are likely lower than that of no fee schools.

These findings support the theory of Weber (2002) that "access and expenditure cannot be separated from quality" (Weber 2002, 279). It was quite obvious from the stark differences in learning environments, school 'campuses' and teaching and learning resources available at the different schools, that, at some level, the quality of education that could be offered at the Pinetown schools was higher than that of the KwaNdengezi schools. Even if the teachers and teaching methods were of the same quality, the environment and learning tools available in Pinetown schools (e.g. computers, small class sizes, numerous books, etc.) would positively affect the quality of education they provide. The stark differences between the Pinetown schools and those in KwaNdengezi indicate there are still huge disparities in the educational opportunities accessible to learners of different income brackets in South Africa. These findings are consistent with the findings of Fiske & Ladd (2004) and theories of other scholars (Bentaouet Kattan 2006; Bentaouet Kattan & Burnett 2004; Roithmayr 2002; Blackmore 2000) which contend that fees will create a situation in which the quality of education to which students' have access, and the level to which they progress, is highly correlated with their family income level.

Economic Disadvantages of Non-section 21 Status

While originally developed to protect schools from graft and mismanagement of funds, the continued division between Section 20 and Section 21 schools disadvantages poor schools and makes principals' management responsibilities more difficult.

First, Section 20 schools receive a 'paper allocation' from the government and only a small amount of cash throughout the year. As cash is needed for daily operating expenses, a good portion of principals' time is used problem-solving and '*putting out fires*' caused by insufficient funds instead of managing the staff and administration of the school. This is exacerbated if any type of physical damage is inflicted on the school, from natural causes or through vandalism, as they do not have the cash-on-hand to maintain or fix their physical

infrastructure and are left to wait for their request to be handled by the PDOE, which has in some cases taken years.

Second, all of the KwaNdengezi principals felt their schools' status as Section 20 meant they had to pay more for materials and resources than if they had been given the cash like the Section 21 schools. They reported paying double or triple the price when ordering from the PDOE than the price at which the school could buy that same item for at stores. If they are paying more, this puts poor schools in quintiles 3, 4 and 5 at a double disadvantage since they are not receiving the highest level of funding from the PDOE, and their money does not purchase as many resources.

Third, the Section 20 classification also means a school must spend their entire allocation each year or it will be returned to the PDOE as surplus. This rule also disadvantages poorer schools as they are unable to save over longer periods to afford larger items or to make capital expenditures to improve school infrastructure.

While there did not seem to be a difference between the support given to KwaNdengezi and that given to Pinetown schools from the PDOE, it is not necessarily a positive finding for equity considering that the amount of support is almost nil. Despite being 'equal' in this regard, it actually seemed the support was still inequitable and problematic in that, since the KwaNdengezi schools depend on the PDOE's assistance or approval for everything from supplies to maintenance, they actually require more support to complete certain activities than schools that have undertaken all of the section 21 functions. KwaNdengezi principals are therefore hampered in their ability to efficiently and effectively manage their school in a way that their Section 21 school counterparts are not.

5.3 Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to provide a picture of what is happening on-the-ground in schools with respect to the implementation of the school fee policy and its effects. In the analysis of the findings, a few major issues emerged as systemic which need to be addressed

by the DOE and South African government if goals of their stated goals of equity, redress and quality are to be achieved. These, along with potential ways to tackle them, are discussed below.

5.3.1 Review of Processes

The processes, particularly those of the exemption and collection procedures, need to be reviewed and revised to better fit with the concrete realities. The majority of schools in South Africa are serving poor students and it is likely they are facing some, if not all, of the same issues with implementation that the KwaNdengezi schools experience. Further research should be conducted into how consistently these problems with implementation are found in poor schools in different areas. Then, the official procedures should be amended taking the findings into account. If the policy is not relevant to schools, it will not be implemented as designed and will be unlikely to have the desired effects. Again, the correct question is likely whether the policy is suited for application to the wide range of realities schools face rather than whether or not schools are implementing it properly.

In particular, the exemption process needs to be examined. Has the exemption formula been correctly designed? It could be that the economics of the policy need to be adjusted depending on the relative wealth of the parents. For example, is it different for a parent earning 30 times the level of the school fees different when the annual fee is R100 than when it is R1000 or R10,000? While the percentage is the same, it may be that paying R100 annually is a greater burden for a household living on just over R3000 for the year than it is for a household earning R300,000 per annum to pay R10,000 in school fees each year.

5.3.2 Dispose of the Sections 20 and 21 classifications

The division of schools into Section 20 and Section 21 more or less corresponds with the division previously established between ex-Model C schools serving white learners and the schools that previously served learners officially classified as coloured or African. As mentioned, there were justifiable reasons for the separation when it was developed, specifically a concern about the financial training and skills of principals in schools serving coloured or black students considering the way apartheid policies purposefully under-trained

staff in these schools. However, fourteen years past the inception of democracy, there is no longer any excuse for not having trained Section 20 schools' principals and, if they are trained, for continuing to deny them the responsibilities and privileges granted to the Section 21 principals. Most of the KwaNdengezi schools have their financial statements audited by external companies meaning their finances are examined as closely as any Section 21 school.

As most of the KwaNdengezi principals believed they had applied numerous times and been denied for unknown reasons, the first step in tackling this issue would be to clarify and publicise the prerequisites required for schools to be considered Section 21, the process schools need to go through, and the basis on which the change is granted.

In addition to decreasing the disadvantages facing poor schools, this would also relieve some of the pressure on the PDOEs, as the amount of oversight and administration needed for Section 21 schools is lower than that needed for Section 20 schools since the schools will do their own procurement of materials and contracting of services. Considering the finding of Wildeman (2008) that the PDOEs are overloaded with tasks and under-staffed, eliminating the Section 20/21 distinction could free up staff for the provision of support to schools for other matters (e.g. processing claims for damage to physical infrastructure).

5.3.3 Re-evaluation of the national budget and resource targeting system

This study did not include a review of the national budget, but the fact is that South Africa is better off than many developing countries in terms of the total amount of money it has to work with. While education does receive a considerable share of the budget, considering its great importance to the achievement of other national development goals, and the fact that the constitutional right to education is not qualified by a progressive realisation clause, the case could be made that education's share should be increased as high as is necessary to achieve the stated goals, rather than trying to meet the goals with whatever happens to be available. The increased share could take the place of other line items that are not likely to make as big of an impact on the national goals of redress, redistribution.

If South Africa is not financially resource-poor, and education is a guaranteed right that is not restricted with a progressive realisation clause, a re-evaluation of where the money the government does control is being spent should be undertaken. The percentages allocated to spending on military equipment or weapons, as recommended by Bentaouet Kattan (2006) could be one place to start, as well as the salaries and 'fringe benefits' spending for government employees. Also, the decision to host an event such as the 2010 World Cup might be questioned in terms of spending priorities. While it may bring international attention and even a significant amount of foreign money during the tournament, the extremely unequal distribution of income makes it unlikely the distribution of any foreign capital would benefit the poor majority. The percentage of the population that is poised to benefit from any increased economic activity is thus likely to be quite small, yet the amount of money the government has committed itself to spending on the tournament is substantial. Education might be a better investment choice in terms of transformation of the national economic and social status quo, and the likelihood of reducing the poverty and inequality in future generations.

As discussed, the way the funds are apportioned once the education budget is determined is also problematic, particularly considering the extreme income inequality in South African society. Studies should be undertaken to determine where the true 'break off' points are between different levels of poverty. The funding curve should be similar to the income distribution curve instead of using the arbitrary 20 percent cut offs. In a country with as high of inequality as South Africa, it may be that the bottom 40 percent are all similarly poor, the next 40 percent slightly less poor, the next ten relatively comfortable and the final ten percent extremely wealthy. Or, it could be that the bottom 70 percent are all similarly poor while the top ten percent extremely wealthy. Whichever the case, the funding should follow the same pattern as income distribution to ensure schools serving equally poor communities receive an equal amount of funds per learner. This recommendation is consistent with that of Wildeman (2008) and others who found many poor schools in the higher quintiles. The classification of schools into more homogenous groups which are notably distinct from one another would make it easier to determine an equitable resource targeting plan.

5.3.4 Education and social grants

Currently, regardless of the quintile, there are no additional funds allocated to schools for children who are required to be automatically exempted from paying fees. While the number of partial and full exemptions presumably depends on the level of fees set by the school compared with the average level of income of parents in the community, automatic exemptions are determined by factors beyond the control of principals. If a significant proportion of a school's households are receiving a Child Support Grant (CSG) on behalf of learners, the school's ability to raise additional funds through fees is greatly compromised. Furthermore, many households' primary income source is a pension for elderly people and to be a recipient of the grant one must be poor, yet receipt of the grant does not count for automatic exemption from the payment of school fees since it is not received on behalf of a learner. Despite not being eligible for automatic exemption, the need to pay school fees does not figure into the determination of the amount of money awarded via the pension.

There are a few different options of ways to resolve this issue. Schools could be compensated at the 'no-fee' per learner allocation by the government for all learners automatically exempted from paying school fees. Alternatively, a school could simply be automatically classified as a 'no-fee' school if it has above a certain percentage of its learners who are supported by CSGs. These options would resolve the issue of schools in quintiles 3, 4 and 5 that serve large numbers of poor, automatically exempted, students being unable to raise enough funds to match the minimum 'no-fee' per learner allocation level.

Even if one of these options is pursued, the issue of pension recipients not qualifying for exemption while the pension amount is not sufficient to cover school fees will need to be resolved as well. From grant administration side the government could try to figure fees and other school costs into the pension and automatically increase the level of the grant across the board. Another option would be for a supplementary amount to be awarded when pension recipients can show they are the primary caregivers of school-aged children. Both of these are problematic and likely impossible to implement. First, they would require the government to determine an adequate amount for school costs, a task it has avoided doing within the DOE in the first place. Second, if grants from the government include money to

pay public school fees it would be an inefficient way of funding schools as money would be awarded to individuals for the purpose of transferring funds from one government department to another. The government would be better off simply giving the money directly to the schools as the amount transferred would be diminished by both increased administration costs and the fact that, inevitably, some of the money given to pensioners for school fees would not actually make it into school coffers but be used for other household expenditures.

The best option would likely be for pension recipients to automatically qualify for a CSG if they are the *primary* caregivers of children in public schools. The rationalisation being that they have already been determined to be poor by a means test, so if they are the primary caregivers they should receive the CSG since the old-age pension was not designed to cover the costs of caring for children. If they receive the CSG, pensioners would then be automatically exempted from having to pay school fees. While solving the issue from the household side this would, of course, further disadvantage schools in areas where many pension recipients are the primary caregivers of learners. Thus, this option would require the issue of compensating schools for automatically-exempted learners to be resolved before this solution could be expected to improve the situation in schools.

5.4 Further Research

This study was small in scope due to time and resource constraints, as well as the limitations placed on the length of Master's degree dissertations. While contributing to the information available about what is happening on the ground with regards to school fees, at times the research seemed to raise more questions than it could answer and inspired numerous ideas for further research.

First, are the perceptions and experiences of the principals in KwaNdengezi and Pinetown common amongst principals from a wider area? As mentioned, the principals might have had incentive to exaggerate the negatives of the situation to me in the interviews. Are their experiences corroborated by other principals across a wider area? The processes could also

be explored from the PDOE perspective. It could be these schools were unsuccessful in their applications for section 21 status for specific reasons. A study looking at the section 21 application processes to discover which schools are approved or denied and why would help to clarify some of the questions and misgivings about the selection criteria.

Second, there were differences between even the relatively similar KwaNdengezi schools in terms of academic performance and financial success. It would be useful to look at how principals' attitudes, experience or other personal characteristics affect the overall success of the school, and the amount of funds it secures from parents and other private sources. This could also include an analysis of school budgets and spending patterns to see if the assertion that having a paper allocation actually disadvantages schools in terms of what they are able to acquire. Also, it would be interesting to see if when schools are similarly funded spending on certain kinds of items versus others can be related to a school's performance.

Third, why are parents not paying school fees? There are a few studies which have surveyed parents to learn about their knowledge of the school fee policy (in particular their knowledge of the exemption policy), but otherwise perceptions of parents are largely missing from literature on this topic in South Africa. Do South African parents perceive there to be significant positive returns to education? Are they aware of the school fee rules, including the fact that there are 'no-fee' and fee paying schools? Do they know about their rights in terms of being able to voice opinions about the level of fees at their school and to apply for an exemption?

Fourth, another issue to take into consideration is the fact that teacher salaries take up the lion's share of education funding, yet these are not funded regressively. Since wealthier schools tend to have a wider range of special subjects and, often, teachers with higher qualifications or more experience, they still tend to receive more government funds than poorer schools despite the progressive funding for non-personnel and non-capital expenditures. More research and discussion needs to take place around the division of educator and non-educator funding and how this is affecting schools across the quintiles.

5.5 Conclusion

The reform of the South African education system was initiated in a context of major national political transitions and international disagreement about education financing. The stated goals of the post-apartheid education policies include equity, redress and world-class quality. On some fronts, large strides have been made towards achieving these objectives, while in other areas it seems progress has stagnated.

By gathering information about the experiences of different principals, the present study was able to further contributions to the understanding of how the school fee policy is being implemented at the school level and the implications for equity across the system. This study found that principals serving schools of different levels of wealth had diverging experiences with regard to the school fee policy; this may be because the policy benefits wealthy schools and, in many ways, multiplies the disadvantages endured by poorer schools. In this way, the study has corroborated the conclusions drawn in previous studies examining the issue from different angles; specifically, that the current policies are perpetuating historic inequalities. The implication of the findings of the present study is that the provincial and national government must undertake to review and amend the current legislation to ensure equal access to quality education for all of its children. An equitable education system is essential to South Africa's future as it is both the fulfilment of a fundamental human right and instrumental in the creation of future economic growth and sustainable poverty alleviation.

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Appendix I: International Context of Education Rights

This Appendix is an expanded version of section 1.1.1. It is still an overview of the historic right to education in an international context, but goes into more depth than what was possible in the main text.

Education has been recognised internationally as a universal human right since the 1948 inception of the United Nations (UN). Article 26(1) of the original UN Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory” (UN 1948). In addition to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, five other major international treaties on human rights were signed between the 1960s and 1990s that guaranteed basic education for all²⁷. Almost every country in the world is a signatory to at least one of the international treaties (Tomasevski 2003, 7) and, as early as the 1950s and 1960s, a number of international conferences were convened on the issue of education, including: Bombay (1952), Cairo (1954), Lima (1956), and Karachi and Addis Ababa in the early 1960s (Torres 1999, 6). In spite of these efforts UNESCO statistics showed that in 1990 there were still over 100 million out-of-school children, and over 900 million illiterate adults in the world.

The first Education for All (EFA) conference, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, revitalised and united earlier efforts for education reform. The original EFA commitments were developed by delegates from 155 countries and over 150 organisations. Participants agreed to undertake a mutual and concerted effort to reduce illiteracy and extend basic primary education to all of the world’s children. The widespread participation set the EFA Conference apart from previous conferences, as did its far-reaching goals and, perhaps most importantly, its organisers’²⁸ great influence and ability to garner international media attention and funding.

Ten years later at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, there was fair consensus that sufficient progress had not been made towards the goal of universal education

²⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, in force 1976); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, in force 1976); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, in force 1969); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women (1979, in force 1981); and, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, in force 1990).

²⁸ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank were the four sponsors of the conference and also formed an Inter-Agency Commission for post-conference follow-up of the initiative.

(Watkins 2000, 10). The second EFA forum produced the Dakar Framework for Action which was adopted by all 164 attending countries (1,100 participants). The Dakar Framework opens by reiterating and confirming commitment to the 1990 declaration, but it goes further by adding a deadline: 2015 was the year by which the world should achieve universal primary education. Additionally, a clause was added which states "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources" (UNESCO 2000, para.10). This clause was added to try and firm the international commitment to aid to poor countries financially in their realisation of EFA goals.

The Dakar EFA goals were designed to work hand in hand with another significant UN-sponsored international commitment signed in 2000: The Millennium Development Goals (UN 2000). The MDGs include seven essential indicator goals (and one goal of a global partnership for development) agreed upon by almost all of the world's countries: universal primary education is goal number two. Like the Dakar Framework, the deadline for achieving these goals was set as 2015.

While accomplishment of the goals set by these international commitments is not assured (in fact, the "midway" 2007 reports for both EFA and MDGs report much of the work is yet to be done), there is a significant amount of research being conducted around the completion of these goals and a considerable amount of media attention surrounding the campaigns' progress. The publicity and academic interest has intensified pressure from the coordinating organisations and other donors for countries to make an effort to reach their goals. There has also been a significant funding increase (particularly in loans from the World Bank) and technical assistance given to participating countries. UNESCO has helped each country do EFA evaluations of its progress and develop country-level plans for reaching the goals. Despite its participation having been delayed by the international isolation endured under apartheid, South Africa was immediately a willing and enthusiastic participant in EFA and proved its commitment by conducting an EFA evaluation with UNESCO for the 2000 EFA conference²⁹. The resulting evaluation report explains that:

²⁹ The 2000 EFA evaluation of South Africa's education system explains the history of South Africa's EFA participation: "South Africa did not participate in the Jomtien World Conference in 1990 because of its international isolation due to its apartheid policies. After its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa was invited to participate in the EFA process, and was welcomed at the Mid-decade Review on Education for All which was held in Amman, Jordan, in 1996.

Though [South Africa] has no explicit EFA National Plan of Action it has...embraced the EFA principles, goals, targets and guidelines contained in both the Declaration and the Framework. As such, policies and programmes developed after 1994 to facilitate the transformation of the education system of South Africa are to a large degree consistent and compatible with the EFA Framework.

(DOE 2000, 17)

Support and pressure has also been given to developing countries, including South Africa, by other major aid donors and signatories. This is potentially due to the fact that a focus on education is considered necessary to achieve not only the education-related targets, but also those relating to economic growth and health and other key indicators (UN 2007; UNESCO 2007).

Appendix II: Instrumental Role of Education

The following is the expanded version of section 1.1.2. These sections explore the instrumental value of education in more depth than what was possible within the main text. They have a special focus on how the achievement of universal primary education is critical for the achievement of other crucial goals of development, particularly: economic growth, poverty reduction and improved health.

Education's Role in Economic Expansion

Today, a substantial body of research exists on the relationship between investments in education and economic growth. Studies have found that investments in the expansion of primary and secondary education have significant positive effects on economic growth and poverty reduction (Tokman 2004; Weber 2002; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2002, 1994; Betts 1999; Becker *et al.* 1990).

For individuals the returns to education seem fairly obvious: the higher one's level of educational attainment, the higher one's earnings are likely to be. Psacharopoulos & Patrinos (2002, 1994) have done the most widely quoted review of research on returns to investment in education and found that in all countries there are returns to the individual for each additional year of school, but that low and middle-income countries show the highest rates of return. They also found that the average rate of return to another year of schooling is ten percent, with the highest rates of return found in low and middle-income countries (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2002, 1994).

While fewer studies have been done on a macroeconomic level, it is widely agreed that education (along with health, infrastructure, and other social and institutional variables) plays a critical role in both the creation of economic growth and the reduction of poverty and inequality. It aids in the creation of economic growth because the better-educated a society is, the more likely its citizens will have the skills needed to adapt to changing market needs, make innovations and be entrepreneurial. Becker's analysis of studies analysing historical economic data have discovered that "although on average third world nations grew a little less rapidly than richer ones, poorer nations with more educated and healthier populations managed to grow faster than average" (Becker 1995, 3). The Department of Education of South Africa (DOE), in its 2003 *Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools*, names education as the most powerful transformation lever for society, and argues the majority of national wealth is contained in the knowledge and skills of individuals and institutions (DOE 2003b).

As the world economy becomes more integrated and more knowledge-intensive, overall educational attainment in any country gains added significance – determining which countries will be able to participate in the benefits of globalisation and which will be left behind. As global educational attainment averages rise, it will be necessary for countries to attain ever higher average levels of education to participate and succeed. While it is currently competitive to have a high percentage of citizens graduating from primary school, it is likely technological changes will increasingly demand secondary-school level skills and knowledge. As a result, countries will need to expand access to secondary and, subsequently, tertiary education in order to stay competitive in the global market.

The main criticism of this theory questions whether it is inclusive enough of all of the factors. Education may be necessary, but it is not sufficient (Chisholm 2004; Weber 2002; Watkins 2000). Of particular relevance for South Africa is Watkins' (2000) comment about the ability of economies to absorb newly educated workers:

It cannot be assumed that increasing educational attainment automatically generates higher growth. Improved access to good-quality education has the effect of increasing the supply of skilled labour. But the growth generated as a result will be determined by the ability of the economy to absorb that labour at rising levels of productivity.

(Watkins 2000, 48)

Critics, such as Watkins (2002, 2000) and Chisholm (2004), maintain that there is not a simple, straightforward connection between education and economic growth as a nation's history and social context will greatly affect outcomes, even with better access to quality education.

Economic Growth, Inequality & Poverty Reduction

Countries which have educational inequalities tend to have similar inequalities in wealth distribution³⁰. While economic growth may be necessary for the elimination of poverty, education is often what will determine how efficient the growth is at poverty reduction, measured by whether it is increasing the share of wealth captured by the poor. Educational deprivation limits access to information and markets, hinders awareness of economic opportunities and reduces a person's ability to adapt to changes in skills required to

³⁰ I.e.: countries with substantial inequalities in educational attainment generally also have a high measure of economic inequality, and vice versa.

participate in the job market. This increases economic inequality since those who are educated continue to reap benefits while those who are not drift further behind.

The connection between inequality (income and educational) and economic growth greatly affects the relationship of inequality with poverty in multiple ways. Initial levels of inequality have been shown to be especially hard on the poor. This is likely because inequality's impact on economic growth has a double effect on poverty: it both slows economic growth (making the whole pot smaller than it could be) and it also may reduce the share of that growth poor people are able to obtain (Wodon & Yitzhaki 2002; Birdsall & Lodoño 1997). Education is an equalising force, allowing those who have grown up in poverty to overcome the barriers facing them and improve their economic status, thereby both cutting their likelihood of getting caught in the intergenerational 'poverty trap'.

In his paper for the conference of the Centre for the Study of African Economies on Economic growth and poverty in Africa, van der Berg (2002) explores the 'expanding literature' which shows educational inequality to be a determining factor in the unequal earnings distribution in South Africa. While there is not extensive information about wage differentials and education in South Africa, van der Berg explains how evidence from Moll (2000) and others shows that, in South Africa, "even where education was not directly responsible for changes in earnings, its distribution determined who could benefit from the new opportunities for blacks in the labour market" (van der Berg 2002, 4).

The Relationship between Education & Better Health

Health and education are not only interrelated, they are essential components of one another. Literate individuals with multiple years of schooling are more likely to safeguard their personal health and to better promote that of their children (Sperling 2005; Watkins 2000; Whitman *et al.* 2000). This is especially true for the education of women. Strong correlations have been shown between the increase in educational-achievement levels of women and almost all of the health indicators used to measure the 'human development' of a nation. A commonality across very different societies is that the welfare of children is typically the responsibility of the mother, including their nutritional intake and the type and frequency of contact the family has with health service providers. A woman who is educated is more likely to seek treatment and feel empowered in her interactions with health service providers, enabling her to ask questions and demand better service and diagnoses (Sperling 2005; Anderson, Case & Lam 2001; Watkins 2000).

Educated people are more likely to maintain their health, but the health of individuals also affects their capacity to learn and therefore the likelihood of benefiting from education they receive. Malnutrition or hunger decreases energy levels, hinders the ability to concentrate and diminishes the capability to process information or perform complex tasks (Del Rosso 1999; Pollitt 1990). Malnourished children are more likely to have irregular attendance and less likely to stay in school than healthy children. If education is linked with future earning power, the implication is malnourished children are more likely to be poor, or stay poor, for the rest of their lives.

The poor health of students also decreases the effectiveness of an education system as a whole. “Wastage” in an educational system refers to “various aspects of the failure of an educational system to achieve its objectives...[particularly] the combined effects of repetition and drop out” (Pollitt 1990, 28 [quoting UNESCO]). Chronic malnourishment, or even temporary hunger, among children in schools contributes to a large amount of wastage of both human and financial resources within an educational system as their physical effects can lead to widespread declines in enrolment and attendance, endemic poor performance on exams, increased incidence of grade repetition and of children dropping out altogether (Whitman *et al.* 2000; Del Rosso 1999; Pollitt 1990). This, in turn, increases the financial burden on schools as it means more money is required to move a particular child all the way through the system.

Appendix III: Exemption policy chart

The chart below is used with the official exemption equation (found in section 4.1.2, p.56) to find the percentage of school fees from which the learner of a parent should be exempted based on the household's annual income and the number of learners in public schools

Exempted percentage of school fees per learner (%)

		Number of Learners =									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
E= (%)	2	0	0	0	0	0	11	20	27	33	38
	2.5	0	0	0	14	25	33	40	45	50	54
	3	0	7	22	33	42	48	53	58	61	64
	3.5	7	26	38	47	54	59	63	66	69	71
	4	25	40	50	57	63	67	70	73	75	77
	4.5	39	51	59	65	69	73	76	78	80	81
	5	50	60	67	71	75	78	80	82	83	85
	5.5	59	67	73	77	80	82	84	85	86	87
	6	67	73	78	81	83	85	87	88	89	90
	6.5	73	78	82	85	87	88	89	90	91	92
	7	79	83	86	88	89	90	91	92	93	93
	7.5	83	87	89	90	92	93	93	94	94	95
	8	88	90	92	93	94	94	95	95	96	96
	8.5	91	93	94	95	96	96	96	97	97	97
	9	94	96	96	97	97	98	98	98	98	98
9.5	97	98	98	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	
10	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

DIRECTIONS:

Use exemption equation from section 4.1.2 to find "E"

Identify the family's number of learners in public schools

Cross-compare "E" row with the "Number of Learners" column to find the percentage of the school fees per learner a family should be exempt.

EXAMPLE FROM TEXT:

If parents in one family were together earning R600 per month, or R7200 per year, had two children in a public school which charged R100 annually, and they additionally paid R300 for a required school uniform and class trips, "E" would be 5.5 percent.

Using the chart, one would look to the row "5.5" under column "2" (representing the number of children from the family in the school) and find that the parents should be exempted from 67 percent of the annual school fees for each child (so payment should be R33 per child per year or R66 total per year). If that same family's annual income was reduced to R5040 (R420 per month), the parents would be exempted from 90 percent of the school fees and pay R10 per child per year.

Appendix IV: Principal Interview Schedule

These questions were developed to guide the semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 principals in the KwaNdengezi and Pinetown areas. The questions were not necessarily posed as they are phrased below, nor were all questions asked of each principal or always asked in this order.

Background Information

For how many years have you been working as a principal? Where were you before this school? For how long?

How far do you have to commute to come to school?

Do you have children? Where do they go to school? Why did you choose that school? Do they have fees at that school?

What is your favourite part of your job? What do you think are your biggest challenges as principal of this school?

School Fees

How much funding does the government allocate to your school each year? Does this amount cover the school's expenses? (If no, what does it not cover?)

Does your school charge fees to supplement the government-allocated funds? If yes, what kinds of fees are charged? How much is each and how frequently are they collected?

Around what percentage of the total budget do fees comprise? For what are the fees used? (ie: Are they used for teacher salaries? For supplies? Building maintenance? Supplementary activities and excursions?) If the funds collected from fees are not sufficient, where else do you get money to cover the costs?

Do you or teachers ever buy things out of your own pocket to supplement the budget? What kinds of things? How often? Has this process changed at all since you began at this school? How? When?

Are parents supportive of your school? What kind of involvement to parents have with the school?

Can you tell me about the process through which fee levels are set? Who is involved with that decision-making process?

Do you feel it is an efficient, fair and democratic process? Why or why not (and should it be)?

Does your school have a process which is different from other KwaNdengezi schools? Can you think of any ways schools might have a different process of setting fees?

How do children enrol?

How is it decided how fees are spent? Does all funding go into a single account and then it is divided out? Or is parental fee money kept in a separate account?

How are fees collected? How many children are exempt from fees?

Is it sometimes difficult to collect all of the fees the school is owed? How? Why do you feel that is the case? Why don't parents come to tell their story?

Do the parents who attend meetings tend to be the ones who pay the fees?

Do parents ever contribute in ways besides cash, like cleaning or fixing broken windows, to cover their school fees?

What is the process by which the school can collect fees from households that are reluctant to pay?

Who is in charge of following up / collecting fees when parents do not pay them on time?

What are the consequences if the school is unable to collect fees from a certain household? Have you ever had to send a child away because their parents continually failed to pay fees? Have you heard of other schools trying that?

Does it make your job harder if you can't send a child home for not paying fees? Do you think it's a good policy?

How much does a collector cost and what do they do? Are there any schools in KwaNdengezi that can afford to have a collector?

Do you think the school fees are affordable for the parents in the community? Why or why not?

Does your school grant partial exemptions or only full exemptions? Are any children attending your school exempt from paying fees?

How do parents/guardians find out about their exemption status?

What is the process by which exemption is granted?

What information must be provided by the households in order to qualify?

Are teachers able to help remind students to bring in the fees? How are they able to do this?

Do you think that children who can pay should have priority over those who cannot pay?

What are the approximate amounts of other costs to parents of sending children to school? (e.g.: uniforms, transport, etc.)

Equality

Have the recent changes to the school fee policy (in terms of no-fee schools) affected your school at all? How?

What kind of role, if any, do you think the media plays with relation to school fees? Does it affect parent perceptions? Do you think it's a positive force?

Does anyone check to make sure you are following the school fee policies put forth?

Do you think the government could change the school fee policy in ways to be more supportive and beneficial for schools? How?

What do you think would happen if the government abolished school fees altogether? Do you think this would have a positive impact on your school?

Do you think the current fee policy is fair to parents, fair to schools?

Do you think the current national fee policy helps to promote equality across schools and amongst children? Why or why not?

Are you able to serve everyone who wants to attend school? What other factors are keeping children from attending school, in your opinion?

What are the top three things you would like to change at your school?

Do you think everyone should be able to attend school?

Quality

How would you rate the quality of education that is provided in your school?

How does the quality of education at your school compare to the quality provided by other public schools? In KwaNdengezi? In Pinetown, Durban, etc.?

Do you feel the fees increase your school's ability to provide a quality education to your students? How and why?

Do you feel it would make your job easier if there were no school fees? Do you think these make it harder for your school to provide a quality education? What are they?

If your school were to be made a no-fee school, how do you think your school would change? Do you feel it would be easier for you to provide a quality education if there were no school fees?

Would your school be different in terms of who would enrol or attend?

If you were allocated additional money to run your school, what kinds of changes would be your top priority in order to improve the quality of education you are able to provide?

What is your biggest dream for the school or what would you most like to do before you retire/leave?

Appendix V: School Data Questionnaire

This data questionnaire was distributed to each school before the interview and the principal or an administrative staff member was requested to fill it out. The information was not analysed but rather used as valuable background information.

YOUR SCHOOL:

School Address:

School Phone:

SCHOOL DATA

How many children are enrolled in your school?

How many children, on average, are in attendance on a daily basis?

How many girls are enrolled? How many boys? Do you see a difference between the attendance of boys and that of girls (e.g. Do boys or girls attend more consistently, or do they attend in equal percentages?)?

How many children are in each of the grade levels?

Does your school have statistics about the income-levels of its students? (If yes, could you tell me about the average household income levels, members per household, etc.?)

How many full time staff members does your school employ? Part time?

How many teachers are there for each of the grade levels (i.e.: How many teach Grade R, 1, 2, etc.)?

How much funding does the government allocate to your school each year? How many teachers do government funds allow you to hire?

SCHOOL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE (continued)

How many children are there, on average, in each of the classrooms? How many teachers are in each classroom?

Do you feel you have a sufficient number of classrooms for the number of children attending? If not, how many more do you think you would need to have a sufficient amount of space?

How far must children travel to arrive at school? Do they walk, take a taxi or bus or are they driven by caretakers (approximate percentages of each)?

Is your school part of the Primary School Nutrition Programme? Do you offer meals to children during the school day? Are these meals free or do parents contribute somehow? Which ages receive meals?

How many people are on your School Governing Body (SGB)? How many are parents? Teachers? School staff?

How often does the SGB hold meetings?

Appendix VI: Informed Consent Form

Each interviewee signed this informed consent form. The form was read aloud before the beginning of the interview. One copy of the form was left with the respondent; one copy was signed by the respondent and kept by the researcher.

My name is Erin Raab (UKZN student number 206512376). I am doing research on a project entitled 'Does the school-level implementation of the South African school fee policy affect educational equality?: Perspectives of principals and policymakers'.

This project is supervised by Ms. Francie Lund at the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am managing the project and should you have any questions my contact details are:

cell - 084 677 6169;

email - erin.raab@gmail.com;

School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal – Howard College Campus, Durban

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the project. Before we start I would like to emphasize that:

- your participation is entirely voluntary;
- you are free to refuse to answer any question;
- you are free to withdraw at any time.

The interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to members of the research team. Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final research report but identities will be kept confidential unless you give your consent for it to be used. Do you give your consent for: *(please tick one of the options below)*

Your name, position and organisation, or	
Your position and organisation, or	
Your organisation or type of organisation <i>(please specify)</i> , or	
None of the above	

to be used in the report?

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you.

----- (signed) ----- (date)

----- (print name)

Write your address below if you wish to receive a copy of the research report: