

**A STUDY OF CURRENT PROCESSES FOR THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS IN WENTWORTH, CITY OF DURBAN, DISTRICT OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that '**A Study of Current Processes for Selection of School Principals in Wentworth, KwaZulu-Natal**' is my own work and that all sources consulted and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references. The views expressed in this study are those of the writer and are not those of the **University of Natal** or the **KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture**.



.....

H Small

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The success and completion of this research study would not have been possible without the professional and efficient assistance, continuous motivation and guidance of many people. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the following people who assisted me at all times:

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The Wentworth principals, whose warm reception and responses were overwhelmingly gratifying and encouraging.

My friend, Bob, who encouraged, helped and motivated me throughout my research.

My niece, Delene, who so tirelessly did the typing for this project.

For me this has been a rich experience and I trust that you will reap benefits from this study.

Hilda Small

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

THIS MINI-DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED WITH/WITHOUT MY APPROVAL.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Thurlow", is written over a horizontal dotted line. A solid horizontal line is drawn below the dotted line, extending from the left edge of the signature to the right.

Professor M Thurlow

A single, short, slightly curved horizontal line drawn in the lower half of the page.

ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that an effective school owes much of its success to the caliber of its internal management, particularly the principal, and it therefore follows that the selection of the principal is a critical task. Not only does literature suggest that selection processes for principals generally tend to reflect an inefficient 'selection technology', but also draws attention particularly to the limitations of such processes in respect of their ability to provide insight into how candidates are likely to perform in contexts very different to their work experiences.

South African education has undergone many changes since the 1994 democratic elections. The trend is a move towards self-management at the school level. These, changing demands, which the principals have been subjected to, require a new style of management.

This study involves an assessment of the current selection process for the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and draws attention to the weaknesses identified together with suggestions for improvements.

The current selection process has been found to be lacking in what is termed 'good practice' in the light of international research and literature, which is based on principles of human resource management. It has been found that, selection committees have to follow prescribed guidelines set by the Education Department, which leaves them with very little

flexibility. Since the process of selection is fairly new in KwaZulu-Natal, selection committees have not been adequately trained to conduct the process of selection, particularly in selecting the right person for the post of principal. The current curriculum vitae for principal posts lacked in certain topic areas, which would reveal more detailed information to enable further comparison when describing ones abilities. At no stage were referees contacted to validate information of the applicants C.V. although reference was required. It has been found that too much weight is attached to the interview as part of the selection process, and no other means of assessing candidates are used, therefore placing applicants who cannot 'market themselves' in a disadvantaged situation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

Introduction

In contrast with the situation prior to 1994, since the election of a democratic government in that year personnel matters in the education sector have become uniformly regulated both through general and specific regulation. The obligations of the State, as employer, are set out in section 195 and 197 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), and the obligations of employers more generally are prescribed through the Labour Relations Act (1995), and the employment of Educators Act (1998), the selection and recommendation of appointment of educators has become a function of the governing bodies of all public schools in South Africa. While the management of the selection process must be carried out in a legislative and regulatory framework, and to this end an attempt has been made to accommodate the obligations of the employer against the role of the governing bodies, in making recommendations for the appointment of educators through Resolution 5 of 1998 of the Education Labour Relations Council. This resolution establishes broadly agreed parameters within which the advertising and filling of education posts shall take place.

Riches (1997:23) has argued that:

The underlying principles of any selection of any process be based on equity (fairness), Effectiveness, (it does what it purports to do) and efficiency (the selection process can be over extended and create unreasonable costs).

While the new regulatory framework for the appointment of educators in South African public schools, nested within more comprehensive employment legislation, it might be argued to promote greater equity, effectiveness and efficiency in the process of (recruitment and) selection, than was the case previously. Ultimately quality in selection will only be achieved if the processes are well managed at the point of implementation; the schools themselves.

In short, quality selection depends on quality management at the school level.

Middlewood (1997:139) has argued that:

Given that people are the most important resources in an educational organisation it is a truism to say that appointing such people is the most important task that managers undertake.

He says that, in this connection managers may be described as encouraging the best people to apply and then as choosing the best people for the jobs and the tasks. This raises a special concern in the selection of school principals. While the principles of equity, effectiveness, and efficiency, necessarily should underpin the selection of all educators, the principle of effectiveness is especially critical in the selection of principals. It is widely acknowledged that effective schools owe much of their success to the calibre of their principals, and it follows therefore that the selection of principals is an especially critical task. However, the literature suggests that one of the major challenges in the selection of principals is to ensure and assure the predictive validity of selection processes, (see, for example, Morgan, Hall & Mackay, 1983). Not only does the literature suggest that selection processes for principals generally tend to reflect an inefficient 'selection technology', but, also, it draws attention, particularly to the limitations of such processes in respect of their ability to provide insight into how candidates are likely to perform in contexts very different to their work experiences. This is a real problem, but, is not unsolvable.

The proposed research arises out of the context broadly sketched above. In particular, it is proposed first to assess the broad parameters for principal selection, as laid down by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture in the light of a theoretical and technical literature. Secondly, it is intended to supplement this assessment through an investigation of the experiences and opinions of a selection of those who have been involved in the process at the point of implementation. Although the evidence base obtained is likely to be restricted due to the scale of the project, it should be possible to make some recommendation as to how the present process might be improved minimally at the level of the school.

The selection of Wentworth as the area, in which the study will be conducted, may be explained in two ways. The first reason is a pragmatic one in that, Wentworth is the area in which the student works, and accessibility to the schools is made easier. The second reason is that circumstantially, of the ten schools in Wentworth, nine have recently appointed

principals. Thus, recall of the process will be fresh in the minds of both the principals and the chairpersons of the selection committees.

The topic of the study is therefore **a study of current processes for the selection of school principals in Wentworth, City of Durban, district of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture.**

Questions for research

Introduction

In the absence of any local literature to guide and govern the selection of principals to ascertain the choice of the best persons for the post of principal, the study is guided on international literature on 'good practice' which then resulted in the following key questions being used in the study:

- 1 What is the current scale of knowledge in relation to 'good practice' in principal selection, with particular reference to structural approaches?
- 2 What are the current procedures for the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, and how may these be assessed in relation to, what is known as 'best practice' in this connection?
- 3 What have been the experiences of chairpersons of school selection committees in, carrying out their duties, in relation to the prescribed procedures?
- 4 What have been the experiences of the selection process of the selected principals in the target group?
- 5 In the light of the findings related to the above questions, what viable recommendations could be made for improving practice in principal selection?

Research methods

The proposed methods are relatively standard and relate to the 5 questions identified earlier, which deal with 'best practice' and will be addressed through the review of the literature. The current procedure in KwaZulu-Natal Education Department will be addressed by reference to locally produced official documentation, which will be referred to the above. The experiences and opinions of recently appointed principals, will be addressed initially via self- completed questionnaires, which, as opposed to interviews is pragmatic as the student has only limited time available to research a scattered population. In each case, however, should the need arise interviews may be conducted with a very limited sample, largely for purposes of further clarification. Viable recommendations will be addressed through a synthesis of findings derived from information obtained through the questionnaires. Analysis of data in the empirical element of the study will involve content analysis of open- ended items, from the questionnaire, and the development of empirically derived classification of responses.

Access to the nine schools has been granted with no sampling decisions required. As indicated earlier there are ten schools in Wentworth, and the nine, which have recently appointed principals, constitute the population for the study.

Limitations of the study

The major problem with the proposed research is one of scale. Ideally in order to investigate the underlying principles of selection (equity, effectiveness and efficiency), within any given provincial department of education, let alone South Africa as a whole, would require a study far more comprehensive than the one presently proposed. It would require a much more extensive sample base and apart from newly appointed principals themselves, would involve a substantial involvement of selection committees. The present study is very restricted in its scope and design, and involves no more than nine recently appointed principals, and an equal number of chairpersons of selection committees, consequently the results obtained from the study in no way may be regarded as

generalisable. However, it is suggested that the scale of the present study is appropriate for a mini-dissertation and the results might be regarded as illuminative. They are likely to provide pointers, which could provide useful guidelines for any further, more comprehensive study on the subject.

While the above constitutes a limitation in respect of the empirical part of the study, the more theoretical part, which involves an assessment of current procedures in relation to published guidelines for 'good practice' in selection is not subject to any such limitation. Treatment of this aspect of the study is not likely to differ substantially from that which would be included in a larger scale project.

Structure of the report

This study comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the work and outlines what is to follow. Chapter 2 describes the central importance of people in an organisation in accordance with the principles of human resource management. The chapter also emphasises the nature and relevance of human resource management in education. Whilst writers may differ in their approach, all emphasise the expedient use of people in organisations. While organisations are increasingly adopting human resource management approaches, the apparent advantages and disadvantages of personnel management versus human resource management are explored. The importance of the selection procedure in organisations is looked at. Reference is made to the importance of not isolating the staff selection process, as this process is part of the human resource continuum, which includes recruitment, induction and mentoring, appraisal and staff development. The chapter deals with linkage with recruitment, technical and functional aspects of candidates, the halo effect, equal opportunities and the actual management of the selection process. Chapter 3 examines the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal, the added responsibility placed on current principals, it details with procedure used in the selection of school principals provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department. The chapter concludes by informing on how, successful candidates are notified. Chapter 4 is devoted to a specification of the directions for research and description of the research methods employed in the study. Chapter 5 deals with a background to the current selection

procedure in KwaZulu-Natal, methodology used in gathering evidence, an assessment of the tools used for selection, then follows an analysis of interview responses and an interpretation according to international recommendations, citing the work of Morgan et al., (1984) Bush & Middlewood (1997) & Thurlow (2000)

Chapter 6 provides answers to the questions that guide this assessment, select the more relevant problems, and offers recommendations to improve the selection process.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the whole study and the next chapter will focus on a discussion of selected sources on human resource management and a selection as out of the major applications in human resource management.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

People are the most central resource in any organisation and human resource management, which focuses on skills and abilities of people, is essential for effective and efficient management of organisations. Human resource management is current and topical.

Although it is an emerging field in terms of both the staff functional role and the day-to-day utilisation of human resource through out the organisation, human resource management is being viewed in some quarters as the panacea for all organisational ills.

Human resource management has been given much prominence in the management of staff in organisations.

It has been revealed in a study of the job requirements of principals that a principal's job is challenging, diverse and highly specialised in both technical and interpersonal skills Morgan et al., (1983). The principal either makes the school an exciting, vibrant learning centre, or a stagnant, regimented building; they are the measure of its achievement or the cause of its failure. The work of a principal is different to other senior posts, as they are accountable to both internal and external bodies. Being responsible for the school will require different skills, and the selection of this leader must, therefore be done with the utmost care since most principals who are appointed to principalship have not been principals before. This chapter begins with definitions of human resource management by the different writers, although they may differ slightly in their descriptions, they all emphasise the advantages in the use of people in organisations. Some of the disadvantages of human resource management have been highlighted. Emphasis has been made on the importance and appropriateness of human resource management, its nature and relevance to education.

Attention has been drawn to the specific influences on the selection process of school principals, viz. linkage with recruitment, acknowledgement of technical and functional aspects, influence of State legislation, and management of the selection process, with five key issues prominent viz. the people handling the selection process, the criteria against which candidates are assessed, the importance of different assessment criteria, the

instruments used to measure a candidate's performance, and deciding which person is best suited for the post of principal

Definitions of human resource management

There are many definitions and interpretations of human resource management. However, all these definitions emphasise the correct use of human resources in an organisation. Human resource management by its very nature can be adopted to suit all organisations.

Peterson & Tracey (1997) in McPherson (1999:8) describe human resource management as:

the activities within a given firm that deal with recruiting, selecting, appraising, rewarding, and developing of employees (including managers) as well as negotiating with labour unions.

Peterson & Tracey in this definition emphasise the activities that relate to people within the organisation rather than other activities, which are crucial, that deal with like, finance marketing and activities. They, Peterson & Tracey, further explain that 'the prime responsibility for carrying out human resource activities, in many organisations is normally assigned to a specific department' and not to an individual. However, in larger organisations specialists are employed with narrowly defined personnel and industrial relations duties. Human resource management writers acknowledge that specialist knowledge is required, they also believe that specialists alone cannot handle personnel management. Effective human resource management to them means joint effort between line management and functional specialists to attain the objectives of the organisation. Riches & Morgan (1989:2-3) focus their definition on strategic objectives and human resources in the organisation. They suggest that:

The human resource management approach seeks to start from a consideration of what the strategies of an organisation might be, and then asks how the human resources can help formulate and accomplish those strategies, and what human development and motivation is required to meet these ends.

Human rather than material resources are given prominence in attaining the goals of the organisation. Riches & Morgan stress that human resources differ from other resources in the manner of their deployment and development – An employee's performance 'depends not so much on his innate ability rather on the extent to which the organisation can enable him to perform at his best' Riches & Morgan (1989:3)

Human resources management ensures the development of an organisation – People in an organisation are taken for granted, and yet, this is the force that affects the organisation directly. Organisations need finance and physical resources to achieve their goals but without human resources the organisation will not achieve those goals – it is people who drive the organisation. Good planning is a crucial aspect of human resources management to ensure that present and future human resource needs of the organisation are taken care of.

The role of human rather than material or physical, resources is given due eminence in the pursuit of organisational objectives.

Effective human resource management will incorporate both strategic and operational level activities; it is a dynamic management process rather than a set of administrative procedures.

These definitions help to illustrate that people are the central resource in any organisation.

The success/survival of the organisation will depend largely on the extent to which people's skills and abilities are effectively used. Human resource management focuses on developing and using to the full the talents and abilities of the employees it, therefore differs from other managerial philosophies. Human resource management is concerned with issues of performance in organisations focusing on the effective utilisation of people at work. It considers strategies of recruitment and selection, training, socialisation, appraisal, incentives and development and deals with current issues in labour relations.

The major areas of human resource management include employee relations, selection, compensation and training. Although expertise in these areas is necessary major changes in

the field have led to a more strategic role for the human resource professional. Human resource managers today must be skilled in job and organisational design, innovative career planning and taking the lead in effecting internal change.

There must be a partnership amongst human resource professionals, labour relations negotiators, wage and salary analysts and operation line managers for the successful management of human resources. The importance of human resource management has increased dramatically in recent years with the challenges brought about by an increasingly diverse work force and rapid international expansion. Human resource management professionals design and manage participative work systems, comply with equal opportunity laws, and institute affirmative action procedures.

Personnel management versus human resource management

Amongst proponents of human resource management approaches, personnel management, seem to carry largely negative connotations.

Personnel management approaches are concerned with the following:

- Separating personnel function and work place management
- Emphasising administration, record keeping and procedures
- Advocating procedural approaches to negotiation and conflict
- Being prescriptive rather than analytical in support of line managers
- Promoting a reliance on personnel specialists

O'Neill et al.,(1994) in Thurlow (2000 : 30)

The above criteria demonstrate that personnel management is criticised because it appears removed from the immediate concerns of managers. It suggests that disagreements and conflict be dealt with through standardised procedures conducted by specialists rather than line managers. It emphasizes clear-cut staff management administrative procedures as opposed to customised processes geared towards the active motivation and involvement of individuals within the work place.

Guest (1987); Goss (1994) argue that the move towards human resource management approaches is attributable to the notion that traditional specialist personnel provision:

- Is unsustainable in financial and human terms,
- Is highly bureaucratic,

- ❑ Leads to lengthy delays between identification of needs and intervention,
- ❑ Offers solutions which work in artificial situations but are difficult to apply in reality,
- ❑ Threatens the relationship between manager and subordinate and
- ❑ Is reliant on and perpetuates the mystique of the perceived expertise of personnel specialists rather than focussing on the development of manager capacities.

O'Neill et al., (1994:81)

Use can be made of Outcomes Based Education to further illustrate the personnel management versus human resource management. In Outcomes Based Education the teacher is the facilitator of learning in a classroom. The teacher identifies learner difficulties, intervenes when necessary, and institutes solutions. The role of the principal is seen as a consultant who fosters the basic relationship between learner and educator, to offer support, expertise where appropriate and to suggest strategies. The new relationship is therefore based on three premises:

- ❑ The consultant supports both educator and learner,
- ❑ The educators redefined role requires the development of higher order interpersonal and professional skills ; and
- ❑ The educator needs to be encouraged to actively access the consultant whenever needed.

O'Neill (1994) in McPherson (1999:14)

This redefined relationship emphasises the central importance of the educator as manager of the learning process and the principal as manager of the organisation (school). The educator has to manage the relationship between (themselves) and the learner and also to actively seek guidance and support from the principal. The human resource management (approach) has been adopted with enthusiasm in many mainstream organisations. Its supporters argue that the approach offers significant benefits to organisations. Human resource management approaches offer the following features. They:

- ❑ measure actions against the strategic objectives of the organisation as a whole,
- ❑ emphasise the central importance of the line manager,
- ❑ advocate customised individual responses to intervention;
- ❑ focus on positive motivation rather than negative control;
- ❑ use process rather than standardised procedures;
- ❑ are considered proactive rather than reactive;
- ❑ are fully integrated into the day-to-day management of the organisation; and
- ❑ encourage purposeful negotiation and the resolution of potential conflict between manager and managed.

O'Neill et al., (1994:12)

As with the change to Outcomes Based Education the concern is with proper relationship, human resource management theory affirms on the principles of concern for the quality of relationships. This assumes a desire to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and a concern to see staff management issues as being the specific responsibility of the line manager, and should be addressed in the workplace.

Fowler (1988) in McPherson (1999:15) summarises this rationale by applying the human resource management approach to a local government context. He suggests that in any organisation:

- People are the primary resource.
- Personnel policies and practices need to be integrated with the total direction and management of the authority.
- Strategic planning, and a matching of the style of employment practice to the authority's culture, is necessary to maximise the effectiveness of the human resource.
- Human resource management is a prime responsibility of all managers, not a specialist role.

However human resource management approaches have their own shortcomings as Lundy and Cowling (1996) in Lumby (1998:34) point out, 'applied perspectives are in their infancy'. In other words however attractive the theory, we do not as yet have much idea to put the theory into practice. Also to abandon the bureaucratic procedures of personnel would sacrifice the safety net, which offers protection to staff in aiming to ensure that all will be treated equally within a transparent system. These are all areas in which human resource management falls short.

O'Neill et al., (1994) lists serious shortcomings asserted by critics of human resource approaches:

1. The choice between either a 'hard' approach, which views people as just another resource to be managed efficiently in order to meet organisational objectives, or a 'soft' approach, which emphasis staff involvement awareness and commitment in order to motivate staff to perform better than they otherwise would.
2. A focus on process and relationships marginalises the bureaucratic administrative infrastructure, which is needed to manage necessarily standardised personnel procedures.

3. There is limited empirical evidence which demonstrates that human resource management specific approaches work in practice...
 4. HRM approaches rely heavily on the commitment and active participation of line managers.
 5. HRM approaches focus on individual rather than collective bargaining arrangements and, as such, offer little protection to traditionally disadvantaged or exploited sections of the workforce, in particular, women.
- Adapted from O'Neill (1994:13-14) in Lumby (1998 : 35)

Despite these criticisms, there has been an increased focus on human resource management approaches.

Human resource management in education

The major concern of any organisation is the management of its human resources.

Human resource management is crucial in educational organisations given that educational organisations are 'service organisations' O'Neill in Bush and Westburnham (1994: 199)

Service organisations provide a service to their community, parents and learners. The quality of service will depend largely on commitment, motivation, and capability of its members.

Druker (1998) in Thurlow (2000: 2) maintains that the purpose of an organisation is to enable ordinary human beings to do extra-ordinary things. No organisation can depend on genius, the supply of which is always scarce and unreliable. It is the test of an organisation to make ordinary people to perform better than they seem capable of, to bring out whatever strength there is in its members and to use each person's strength to help the other members perform. It is the task of the organisation at the same time to neutralise the individual weaknesses of its members. The test of an organisation is the spirit of its performance.

The focus of management should be on human resources in order to obtain the goals of the organisation.

The report of the Task Team on education management asserted that:

The principal purpose of education management development is to improve organisational performance of structures in the education system, primarily that of schools, school effectiveness, schools efficiency and school relevance. Department of Education (1996: 64)

It is therefore evident in these writers that the performance of people in the organisation is crucial for its success. The selection of the right principal for the school is of paramount importance as the success of the school and its vision depends to a large degree on them. Bush & Middlewood (1997:5) suggest that:

A skilled workforce depends largely on the achievements and outputs of schools, colleges and universities.

Bush & Middlewood imply that for a workforce to be skilled they need to be empowered and provided for by the institutions with the necessary tools and skills to be able to perform their relevant tasks wherever they are needed.

In order to raise educational standards a major thrust in the legislation has been the development of self-managing schools in other countries.

Caldwell & Spinks (1992) in Bush & Middlewood (1997:5) define this concept:

A self-managing school is a school in a system of education where, there is a significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority, to make decisions related to the education of resources... The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated.

In educational organisations, most of the personnel management functions have traditionally been the work of a national, provincial or local education authority, with the role of schools until very recently, being limited to the deployment of staffing establishments already decided elsewhere. Human resource management has been practiced in countries such as England and Wales, Canada, Australia, America and in particular grant-maintained schools (autonomous schools), which have full employer responsibilities and obligations.

In England and Wales the contribution of the staff to the success of the organisation has resulted in many government's initiatives being designed to enhance teaching and

management performance. These include a broadening of entry routes into the teaching profession, improved support for educators at different stages in their careers, greater funding for professional development activities and the increasing role of the education service.

With the devolution of greater responsibilities to governing bodies this suggests that some schools in the United Kingdom are now actively engaged in the full range of what is traditionally perceived as human resource management O'Neill (1994) in McPherson (1999: 17)

It is therefore important that schools develop human resource management policies, which have a bearing on recruitment selection, staff development, induction, mentoring and appraisal to reflect their own priorities. Parallel conditions and changes are becoming increasingly evident in other countries.

There has been a change in South Africa since the passing of the South African Schools Act in 1996. A new era of democracy in education has emerged and the change from traditional patterns of school governance and appropriate provincial legislation has compelled all public schools to establish school governing bodies, which comprise of parents, teachers, non-educator staff, local community, the principal, departmental representative and learners in secondary schools, who will participate in the governing of their school.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 empowers governing bodies to determine policy and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled, the forming of staff selection committees for appointing educator staff, supervising the school's finances and fundraising. Staff Selection Committees are involved in selecting staff, and the secretary for education in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education endorses their recommendation. It is therefore crucial for them to select the correct candidates for the job, and more importantly, the best person for the post of principal.

In this connection Bush & Middlewood (1997:139) suggest that:

Given that people are the most important resource in educational organizations, it is a truism to say that appointing such people is the most important task that managers undertake. In the task of

recruitment and selection, managers may be described as encouraging the best people to apply and then choosing the best person for the jobs or tasks.

Public schools in South Africa have become semi-autonomous because they have to work within given parameters. Since schools are service organisations they depend solely on the commitment and capability of their staff for their success. Therefore the need for more effective recruitment, selection, induction and mentoring and a possible consideration of career advancement and rewards would help alleviate the impact of high staff turnover, staff shortages and competition from other sectors and countries offering lucrative employment packages and benefits.

Principals have been given diverse challenging roles, which require them to be highly specialised in technical and interpersonal skills, since it is people who make organisations work. Education equality and the process of change and redress therefore depend on the competencies of everyone in the education service. It is in managing and developing people appropriately, that will facilitate continued improvement in any organisation.

Human resource management and the process of selection

The selection of a principal must be done with the utmost care since the principal is accountable to both internal and external bodies. The dawn of our new democracy produced numerous reports regarding the principal's increased responsibility and critical role in both school effectiveness and school improvement. While human resource management are used to select the new principal, it is necessary for the new principal to also be an exponent of human resource management and to effectively manage human resources within the school. Conditions today are changing both within and in the broader society, creating new problems and challenges for principals. New principals have to contend with internal pressures such as educator apathy, the increasing demand of technology and other external influence such as parent expectations for their children, provincial government demands and educator unions. As this pressure increases so too will the pressure on governing bodies, staff selection committees to make the right appointments when vacancies occur.

The context with recruitment

There are four basic issues, which impact broadly on the selection of principals.

Linkage with recruitment

Acknowledging the technical and functional aspects of the staff.

The need for objectivity in a potentially subjective process.

Equal opportunities

Linkage with recruitment

The whole process of appointing a principal begins when a potential vacancy is identified. Selection processes are managed within the education system's recruitment policy. Schools notify the Superintendent of Education (Management) who notifies the Department of Education of the vacancies. The vacancies are advertised in the official bulletin/gazette inviting applicants for the posts.

Technical and functional aspects

The technical attributes include knowledge, skills and abilities of prospective principals. The technical aspects are easily assessed by the candidate's qualifications. These will be evident in the manner to which motivation, effort and commitment is applied. The functional aspects of a candidate are more complex to assess since they involve judgements about the candidate's personality, that is whether a candidate will 'fit in,' their ability to work in a team or the factors that will motivate the individual. Selectors must consider both these aspects when managing the selection process.

The process of selection is bound to be subjective since it is made up of various people with a vested interest and some of these traditional practices are:

- Basic judgements upon intuition rather than facts.
- Making 'snap' judgements.
- Insisting on a personal stereotype of what is a good candidate.
- Comparing candidates with the pre-post-holder or with other candidates rather than the agreed criteria.

- ❑ Preferring a candidate in one's own image.

Middlewood & Lumby (1998) in Thurlow (2000 :11)

Staff selection interviews have been perceived to be unreliable predictors of performance, as they do not give a good indication of a candidate's potential.

Thomas (1993) in Thurlow (2000:10) cites the following prejudices that may occur during the selection process, as well as human factors such as memory and concentration:

- ❑ Interviewers often make up their minds about a candidate within the first five minutes of the interview and consciously or unconsciously spend the rest of the interview trying to justify their judgement.
- ❑ Interviewers judgements of candidates can be affected by their appearance, speech, gender and race either positively or negatively people tend to favour others whom they perceive to be like themselves.
- ❑ Research on memory shows that we remember information we hear at the beginning and end of an interview and, thus, tend to forget vital details and facts given in the middle.
- ❑ It is impossible for the human brain to concentrate at the same level over a prolonged period, thus if you are interviewing several candidates on the same day, they may not receive equal amounts of your attention.
- ❑ Finally, the British Psychological Society has found that even well conducted interviews are only 25 percent better than choosing someone by sticking in a pin in a list of candidates.

An interview is an artificial, situation and interviewers may be subject to logical error by which the assumption is made that anyone with one characteristic for example, politeness must automatically have another for example, intelligence. The interview is more often than not, the focal point of the entire selection process. Hackett (1992) in McPherson (1999 : 25) noted some of the common forms of unconscious intuitive responses:

The halo effect

This occurs when one feature of the candidate becomes an over-riding factor that governs the selector perception. Prejudice may also occur where selectors may prejudge a candidate either favourably or unfavourably because the candidate belongs to a particular group. Common prejudices include the assumption that members of a particular race are more

hardworking than those of another race. Stereotypes may also be formed where a selector constructs a mental image of what a good worker is like and then uses the interview as a means of finding someone who matches that image. Hackett (1992) in McPherson (1999:26) suggests that :

Most people are more heavily influenced by people's bad points than their good ones and once we have formed an impression we are slow to change our minds.

All these elements of subjectivity indicate the crucial need for the selection process to be managed as objectively as possible since any process involving humans can never be completely free of subjectivity.

Equal opportunities

Legislation must be taken into account when managing recruitment and selection. All parts of the selection have to be managed to be sure that no candidate is disadvantaged on grounds of race, gender, religion or disability. Legislative emphasis will vary, for example the United Kingdom does not legislate against age discrimination, and the United States of America does. The Labour Relations Act of 1998, the Employers Act of 1998 protects the rights of educators in South Africa in that they forbid discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, political association and religion.

In KwaZulu-Natal the selection committees were instructed to take into consideration affirmative action for designated groups (which includes Indians, Coloureds and Africans) women and educators with disabilities and representivity.

Managing the selection process

Although the management of the selection process has been delegated substantially to school governing bodies, the process must be carried out within a legislative and regulatory framework. The functions of school governing bodies for the selection process have been set out in the South African Schools Act (1996) and broad parameters of the

process having been agreed through Resolution 5 of the Education Labour Relation Council of 1998, which must accommodate the obligations of the employer. The governing body must also take into account the requirements of the post as determined by the Minister of Education and the Head of Provincial Education Department.

O'Neill et al., (1994) in Thurlow (2000:12) suggest five key issues when considering the management of the selection process, these are:

Personnel – who shall be involved in the selection process?

Criteria – against which standards shall candidates, be assessed?

Weighting – the relative importance of the different criteria.

Instruments – how shall the candidate's performance be assessed?

Matching – deciding on which person is best suited to the post?

Selection should be seen as a two-way process i.e. one that places equal emphasis on allowing candidates to determine that a post is suitable for them and on the organisation being able to select the most appropriate person. An organisation which puts pressure to accept an offer on the person whom it sees as the most suitable when that person has significant doubts, runs the risk of appointing someone who may quickly become demotivated.

A brief comment will be made on the five key issues:

1. Personnel

The involvement of personnel on the staff selection committees in South African public schools is to a large extent prescribed in the Government Notice 222 (33:b1). A public school's selection committee is made up of members of the school governing body (excluding educator members who are applicants) a departmental representative (as an observer and resource person) or his nominee and one union member per union that is a party to the provincial chamber of the Educator Labour Relations Council (in observer capacity). A head of department or curriculum area may be involved when the vacancy is in their own area. In KwaZulu-Natal the governing body component of the selection committee includes three to five members from the parent and /or co-opted members from outside the governing body. The co-opted members may include the deputy principal

whilst particular heads of departments may be included to gain experience. The involvement of lay personnel could be of benefit for their outside expertise if brought on to the selection committee, on the other hand the disadvantages are that lay people are often inexperienced in selection procedure, or they may not have a thorough knowledge of the organisation- its ethos, culture or objectives.

In countries like Australia there is much debate about the involvement of parents in the appointment of principals. The current selection procedure is fairly new in South African public schools, therefore the need for the training of the entire selection committee since it deviates from past appointment procedures. School governing bodies were established recently and require capacity building.

2. Criteria and Weighting

Criteria relate closely to the job and person specifications and these might include:

Biographical data (e.g. qualifications and experience, etc.).

Knowledge (e.g. current legislation and policy).

Skills (e.g. technical and managerial)

Attitudes and values (e.g. the extent to which the individual's values fit with the school's values – personal ambition, loyalty)

And any other relevant factors.

The Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal has issued a manual prescribing a set of criteria to be used in the selection process. Selection committees can include their own criteria relevant to the school's needs. The relative importance of each criteria will differ. This requires the selection committee to establish the weightings of the criteria at the outset.

Bush & Middlewood (1997:147 –148) argue that:

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

3. Instruments

Instruments are the methods used by which an assessment is made to measure a candidate's performance. These can be in the form of tests, exercises, interviews and assessment centres. These four important instruments will be discussed briefly.

a) Tests

Psychometric tests can be used to assess ability and personality. These can be more reliable than interviews provided that the test is relevant to the job, and the people using them are trained. It is not suggested that they replace interviews. These have not been widely used in education in the past but their use is growing e.g. in Great Britain.

b) Exercises

The use of various exercises is developing in the education world and examples include:

In-tray exercises: candidates are asked to sift, prioritise and decide action upon a sample of documents.

Written report: candidates are asked to write out a report for a particular situation.

Role-play simulation: candidates are asked to enact the job applied for in a particular situation.

Oral presentation: candidates are asked to present formally to the interviewers a brief synthesis of their views or approach to a particular issue. Candidates may use visual aids in support of their oral presentation.

Leaderless group discussion: candidates are grouped together to discuss a topic or reach a decision on a question. Selectors are involved only as observers of individuals' performances with the group's processes.

Situations in which the groups are placed are usually co-operative (e.g. the

group must come to a consensus on an issue), but operate within a competitive framework.

Assessment Centres:

Assessment centres have been widely used in business, industry and military. They have been used in the United States and in England and Wales and have all made claims for their effectiveness. In South Africa there is one assessment centre, which is operated through the Faculty of Education at the University of the Orange Free State. (Joiner 1989) in McPherson (1999:32) defines an assessment centre as

‘a variety of testing techniques designed to allow candidates to demonstrate under standardised conditions, the skills and abilities most essential for success in a given job’.

Thurlow (2000: 15) says that:

Assessment centres involve candidates in a series of group or individual exercises observed by trained assessors.

There are many advantages to assessment centres but the major disadvantage of assessment centres is that of high cost in terms of money and time.

c) Interviews

Middlewood & Lumby (1998) in Thurlow (2000:14) suggest that effective management of interviewing acknowledge the following key principles.

- Interviewing is a two-way process since candidates can only be appointed on the basis of past performance and potential for future performance, it is important that they have the opportunity to relate to their performance to the proposed job... to what is needed for the post available.
- Consistency in approach by interviewers. This has management implication for choice of personnel involved, training of interviewers, and a clear organisational policy of selection.
- Interviewing involves specific skills. Since face-to-face interviewing is obviously a communication process, the skills involved are primarily those of communication.

- Interviews play a significant part in the selection process; it should however not be the only part of the selection process. Great skill is required in successful interviews.

Emmerson & Goddard (1993:84) suggest that:

A well-run interview can provide much information about a candidate's strengths and weaknesses and poor interviews may result in a loss of good candidates and appropriate appointments.

As mentioned earlier that literature findings about interviews demonstrate the unreliability of the interview as a predictor of future performance. To a large extent in South Africa, the interview has been considered as the most important part of the selection process, unfortunately for some candidates this might not be their strong point. The danger here is that the person appointed might be the person who performs best at the interview, but not the person who will perform best in the job. Two skills are required for interviews that is, questioning and listening. A good interviewer does much more listening than talking. The candidate should be encouraged to answer freely and honestly. Questions in an interview should be more concerned with what the candidate has learned from experience, their skills and qualities. The knowledge that an applicant has can be obtained through written processes and exercises.

4. Matching

The final stage in the process is selecting the candidate who best matches the requirements of the job. The selectors now match all the evidence which has been derived from the variety of instruments used to assess the performance of candidates e.g. application forms, references, a range of analogous tests and other tests and interviews.

Southworth (1990:144) stresses the importance of applying three notions to the evidence, that is:

- Adequacy (or how sufficient is it?)
- Integrity (or how truthful and accurate is it?)
- Appropriateness (or how relevant is it?)

Morgan et al., (1984:17) maintain that:

How the final decision is to be made is a matter, which all selectors should have decided before hand.

If a final stage is not carried out systematically and purposefully the benefits of an otherwise well organised selection process can be wasted. Although the selectors will feel that the process is complete, Southworth (1990) discusses a final stage in the selection process, which he calls 'after care'.

Thurlow (2000:18) states that:

New appointees need to be assisted in understanding and coming to terms with the school's culture and to be afforded opportunities for future development.

It is therefore crucial that human resource management is well managed since it allows for staff development for the new appointees.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the importance of human resource management strategies in the selection of principals in schools. The importance of principals to change their management styles in accordance with the context of change in South African schools has been clearly demonstrated. Chapter 3 will focus on the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 3

THE CURRENT SELECTION PROCEDURE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Introduction

In South Africa, public schools must inform the provincial department of education of vacancies for principals. The education department then advertises the posts in a provincial education bulletin or gazette and interested people are invited to apply. A management plan is then set up by the department to oversee the procedure, beginning with the closing date of applications to be submitted to the education department, to the submission of recommendations. The deadlines have to be strictly adhered to, to ensure the smooth running of the selection process.

In the United Kingdom where a free market system exists, there are no regional boards to advise and no formal process for passing on information about appropriate candidates. Each school is responsible for its own process when appointing new principals.

Bush & Middlewood (1997:140)

The applicants must send complete application forms, curriculum vitae and preference lists to the education department and not directly to the school where the vacancy exists as is the case in other countries. To familiarise senior department officials, observers and members of school governing bodies with these procedures and practices, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education runs workshops in various centres throughout the province. The aim of the workshop is to equip senior officials so that they can cascade the information to Staff Selection Committees, in this way members of governing bodies will be informed and empowered since they are involved in the selection process.

This chapter informs of the previous methods of employment of educators in the various education departments prior to the birth of democracy in our country, together with the added responsibilities of principals, also adapting to the new system of education. The chapter describes the complete selection procedure of principals, beginning with

applications for the post of principal, sifting of applications, composition and constitution of the interview committee, functions of the interview committee, shortlisting, interviews, observers on the interview committee and includes a description of the documents which are necessary for applicants.

The present school context in KwaZulu-Natal

Policy and practice of employment of educators between the various education departments varied during the apartheid era. In the former Model C schools governing bodies were responsible for the employment of educators, while in non-white schools educators were appointed by education departments.

There have been drastic changes in education since the 1994 democratic elections. The administration of education was passed down to provincial departments, which saw the merging of seventeen education departments. With the introduction of the South African Schools Act (1996) came a host of implications for schools, namely, the establishment of school governing bodies as stated in the Task Teams Report (1996) that:

Schools will increasingly come to manage themselves.

Principals were faced with the task of implementing the new policy and to assist in bringing about equity and redress in education. This trend is in line with other developed and developing countries. The present school context demands that the principal be knowledgeable about his school, and have a vision and mission statement that is shared with all stakeholders. The principal must set goals as part of the development plan to which others can aspire. The many changes that have occurred in South African schools have forced principals to rethink their management styles and decision-making strategies and new principals have to prepare themselves for the task at hand. However good the selection process has been, the new principal has to be assisted to understand the practice and culture of the organisation and be offered opportunities for further development. The new principal will need a reasonable settling-in period and may be dependent on the guidance of his immediate superior, the Superintendent of Education (Management). Further possible challenges that face new principals are:

- ❑ Lack of clarity with regards to roles and responsibilities due to lack of guidance from the education department.
- ❑ Poor working conditions and physical resources.
- ❑ Inappropriate management structures and support systems.
- ❑ Lack of experience of good management practices.
- ❑ Uneven levels of experience and capacity in governing bodies.
- ❑ Lack of understanding in the community about the role of governance in education management.
- ❑ Inequalities and disparities in resources and capacity.

Department of Education (1996:20)

This places an additional burden on principals who often have to guide governing bodies because they lack the necessary expertise to perform these duties. All these functions require the principal's involvement, expertise and most of all their leadership and management style. The challenge to principals who have consistently been at the receiving end of top-down management structures is to manage the change process and ensure effective teaching and learning whilst assisting in the transformation of change in South Africa. Autonomy has been devolved to KwaZulu-Natal public schools not to the extent it has in other countries. However, there has been a growing tendency towards self-management that is evident in the authority entrusted to principals and school governing bodies by the South African Schools Act (1996) who suggests that:

Real transformation will depend upon the nature and quality of its internal management. Self-management must be accompanied by an internal devolution of power within the school and in transformational leadership.

Department of Education (1996:29)

The new approach to management, must be driven by the values and mission of the school and these must be developed and owned by more than the principal or some outside authority. New principals will have to adopt a collaborative style of management, which involves all stakeholders. The emphasis is on selecting the right people for the position of principal.

Sifting of applications

The administration staff at the education department assists with the sifting of all applications. Certain applications are immediately discarded from the selection process for the following reasons:

- The applicant does not meet the minimum requirements of M+3 (with matric and a recognised teaching qualification) and appropriate experience.
- The application forms are received after the closing date notwithstanding allowances made for mail that is correctly post marked before the closing date.
- The application forms are incomplete e.g. unsigned application forms or the required curriculum vitae and preference list is not included.
- The applicant was granted a Voluntary Severance Package and is therefore excluded from the post.
- The applicant is retired from the State and is in receipt of a State Pension.
- The applicant is not a serving educator.
- Applicants from substitute or temporary educators.

The remaining application forms are then forwarded to the relevant school for further processing by the selection committee. The selection committee will sort and record all applicants. Applications are immediately discarded for the following reasons:

- Unsigned application forms.
- Personal details not complete.
- Missing pages from curriculum vitae.

The selection committee must acknowledge receipt of the application on return slips. The following application forms are vital to the selection process.

Application form ECI

Section A

The application form requires detailed and relevant information about the applicant, particulars about the post applied for, such as, post number, description of post, name of school where the vacant post is, the district and region within which the school falls.

Section B

Personal particulars of the applicant are requested including physical or mental defects, whether convicted of a criminal offence or dismissed from employment and to provide such details on a separate form.

Section C

The applicant is required to assess their own language proficiency, that is, IsiZulu, English, Africans or other.

Section D

Requires applicants to fill in their professional and academic qualifications, proof of certificate is not required.

Section E

Requires details of the applicant's employment and history. This includes the applicant's current employer, name of school, current post held, category classification, and date of initial appointment and reasons for leaving each post. The number of years in a primary/secondary school, phase and subjects taught at each institution. Finally the applicant has to declare with their signature that the information given is true and correct and accept that supplying false information may render their application invalid and could lead to prosecution.

Curriculum vitae C.V.1

Candidates are requested to submit their C.Vs on an official form, which is provided by the education department. The applicant is required to comment further on these topics:

1. *Leadership: Administrative, management and related experience: not exceeding 100 words. (Staff Selection Committees are instructed to disregard anything written after the prescribed number of words).*
2. *Organisational ability and experience: not exceeding 80 words.*
3. *Professional Development and Educational experience and insight:*

exceeding 80 words

4 *Leadership: community related*

Referees: to provide details of two persons, other than educator colleagues, who would substantiate information provided on the C. V.

Finally the applicant has to declare with their signature that the information supplied is correct and undertake to furnish any original documents on request.

Composition and Constitution of the Interview Committee (Selection Committee)

A governing body constituted by the South African Schools Act (1996) must establish an Interview (selection) Committee from its members and / or co-opted members. The interview committee is responsible for the sifting of applicants, shortlisting of applicants to obtain a manageable number, and thereafter interview and assess them for the purpose of making recommendations.

The interview committee comprises of three or five members from the governing body and / or co-opted members with expertise, the Superintendent of Education (Management) or his nominee. One of the members of the interview committee will be the chairperson.

Another member has to deputise if the chairperson is not available. In such an instance, a new governing body member must be brought in to replace the member standing in for the chairperson. The principal / acting-principal is an ex officio member except in the case of them being an applicant for a specific post at the school. The representative for the Education Department is the Superintendent of Education (Management) or their nominee. The Interview Committee may utilise outside expertise by co-opting one or two additional members. The deputy-principal of the school, and / or a subject expert from the department or from an outside institution may be co-opted. A member of the Interview Committee has to be nominated as secretary. With the exception of the school principal / acting principal, and possibly the deputy-principal, educators are excluded from the Interview Committee where they are employed. Educators who have children / child at another school may be elected on the Interview Committee of that particular school provided that they are not applicants for a post at that school.

Functions of the Interview Committee

The Interview Committee is responsible for the sifting of applications, shortlisting of applicants, interviewing the short listed candidates and assessing them for the possible nomination to the prospective post. Accurate records of proceedings must be maintained. Records must indicate the date, names of all attendees and the constituencies they represent, proof of invitation and transmissions to unions. Every effort must be made to document the relevant details in respect of the various selection processes such as sifting, shortlisting, interviews, decisions and motivation relating to the preference list submitted. The Interview Committee is responsible for the safe keeping of all documents for at least two years.

Shortlisting

The Interview Committee will short list applicants on the basis of requirements, qualification, curriculum vitae and related experience in order to obtain a manageable number. For this purpose EC2 (Assessment of C.V) has to be completed by each member of the Interview Committee. Each member motivates their score for each criterion. All members of the Interview Committee have to sign this form. The applicants will be graded and short listed (EC3 to be completed) and should include the top \pm 10 applicants in merit order. Procedures and practices are confidential. All members, observers, school governing body members must sign the declaration of confidentiality.

Interviews

After the short listing process the Interview Committee invites candidates to an interview. Applicants are given five working days notice to attend the interviews. The period could be reduced if all parties are available at shorter notice as to time, date, venue, when the interview will take place. Telephonic notification must be confirmed in writing. Interviews must be conducted at the school where the applicant is applying. Before the interview, the Interview Committee will have to agree on questions to be put to the candidates.

The five criteria for the interview are:

- ❑ *Leadership: Administrative, Management and related experience.*
- ❑ *Organisational Ability and Experience.*
- ❑ *Professional Development, Education Experience and insight.*
- ❑ *Leadership: Community Related.*
- ❑ *Personality and Human Relations.*

After reaching consensus the chairperson completes the final assessment on a new (EC4), which must be signed by all members and observers.

The names of the nominated candidates are recorded in order of preference, on a recommended candidates list (EC5). The Interview Committee forwards the completed (EC5) form to the chairperson of the governing body who convenes a special meeting to consider and ratify the nominations. The Interview Committee may amend its recommendations or reaffirm its position with justified reason and motivation.

Observers on the Interview Committee

All officially recognised teacher organisations, have been provided for in the Education Labour Relations Act and Resolution 13 of 1995 in particular to play a participative role in the promotion process.

The officially recognised teacher organisations (NAPTOSA, SADTU, SAOU) each have a right to appoint one representative as an observer to the process of shortlisting, interviews and drawing up of a preference list. The chairperson shall give at least three working days written notice to the regional office of the teacher organisations. The non-attendance of observers will not prohibit the selection process from proceedings, so long as chairpersons have informed teacher organisations of scheduled meetings.

Applicants may lodge disputes in writing through their teacher organisations or directly to the Superintendent of Education (Promotions) if they feel that they have been discriminated against in whatever form. A recognised observer may also dispute the process and make comments in the relevant section. This however, will not prevent the

process from continuing. The procedures and practices of the Interview Committee are confidential and therefore cannot be discussed outside the Interview Committee or the school governing body meeting. All the documents are forwarded to the Chief Director of Education of the region within which the school is located. The successful candidate is notified in a letter of appointment and, is also notified in writing of the date to resume the post.

Conclusion

As stated earlier in the chapter the selection procedure of principals in KwaZulu-Natal is fairly new and marks a paradigm shift from previous selection procedures. With the introduction of the new model it is expected that problems and challenges are to be experienced in the familiarising of the new process. What remains to be seen is how the selection procedure compares with the international selection procedure principles of human resource management. Chapter 4 will focus on the reasons for the research study of the selection procedure of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and the collection of evidence.

CHAPTER 4

COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the selection process in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture was reviewed as objectively as possible in its 'ideal' form. This chapter is devoted to a specification of the directions for research and description of the research methods employed in the study. The main purpose of the empirical part of the study was to test the 'ideal' selection process operating in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education against the opinions of a group of school principals and staff selection chairpersons in Wentworth.

Directions for research

International literature suggests in many parts of the world, the processes for selection of school principals, and other senior staff have received very little attention, and where attention has been addressed to the process, many weaknesses have been identified. When the current selection process was examined in the previous chapter, it was found either by direct evidence or inference, that, when weighed against the evidence and suggestions derived from international research the selection process in KwaZulu-Natal also appeared to be characterised by considerable limitations.

The empirical study was intended to explore further the limitations of the selection process in KwaZulu-Natal by seeking the opinions of key role players about the process. In particular, opinions were sought from a section of recently appointed principals and also from selection committee chairpersons as recall would still be fresh in their minds either as selectors or selectees.

The ultimate aim of the study is based on international literature and research, and the experiences and opinions of principals and selection committee chairpersons, to assess critically the current selection process and to recommend adjustments to the process, which might result in improvements.

In this broad context, the specific directions of the empirical part of the study focused on the following aims, which derived largely from concerns addressed in the post project, which was conducted in England and Wales as cited in Morgan et al., (1983) and were considered in this study.

- To investigate the occurrence of vacancies in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
- To establish the nature and composition of the selection committees in KwaZulu-Natal
- To establish how school principal vacancies are advertised
- To establish who the target group is for principal appointments
- To establish what procedures are followed once a post of principalship has been advertised
- To establish what documents are used during the initial assessment of candidates, constituting the 'short list'
- To establish what procedures are followed during interviews in order to elicit as much relevant information as possible for each candidate
- To establish how successful and unsuccessful candidates are informed of the decision of the selectors

The method employed to assess opinions of principals and selection chairpersons related to the above issues are now described

Research methods

Considering time and the availability of school principals and the fact that the student is in full time employment it was decided that a questionnaire was the most appropriate method

to access the opinions and experiences of principals and chairpersons of staff selection committees.

Sample

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2001: 92) suggest that quality of a piece of research not only falls or stands by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of sampling strategy that has been adopted.

In the present study, the ideal approach to the acquisition of data in respect of opinions of principals and chairpersons of staff selection committees would probably have involved drawing a representative sample from amongst a vast number of schools in KwaZulu-Natal. However, due to constraints experienced by the student in respect of time, and the work situation, the decision was taken to restrict the focus of research to the Wentworth principals since nine were recently appointed, thus recall of the process will be fresh in the minds both of principals and chairpersons of the selection committees.

It is acknowledged that, by restricting the research to principals and chairpersons of staff selection committees within Wentworth, considerable limitations are imposed in respect of the generalisability of the findings and recommendations emanating from the study may be regarded as no more than tentative. However, the more theoretical part, which involves an assessment of current procedures in relation to published guidelines for 'good practice' in selection, is not subject to any limitation. Treatment of this aspect of this study is not likely to differ substantially from that which would be included in a larger scale project.

Data collection

Because of time constraints it was decided to address experiences and opinions of recently appointed principals and chairpersons of selection committees through self completed-questionnaires and where the need arose interviews were conducted with a very limited sample, largely for purposes of further clarification. It was felt that one – on -one

interviews would not be practical as the student is in full time employment and time would not be available.

It was not necessary to obtain permission to conduct the research because of the small scale of the project since it was only limited to the Wentworth principals and selection committee chairpersons. There were a few problems however, as principals have very busy schedules and were not able to complete questionnaires at the expected date. The majority of the selection committee chairpersons did not respond to the questionnaires. Respondents were assured that all identities would be kept anonymous. Data was collected from school principals and selection chairpersons respectively in the form of questionnaires.

The interview

A one- on- one interview was conducted with one principal who indicated that he had not found the time to respond in writing. The interview was unstructured and referred to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed, taking into account the guidelines for the construction of mailed questionnaires and methods of enhancing response rates as identified by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2001). The structure of the questionnaire is discussed later in the chapter.

Pre-testing the questionnaire

In view of the researcher's intention to administer the questionnaire to the nine principals in Wentworth, it was not considered to pre-test the instrument on the target group. However, the researcher did discuss the content and structure of the questionnaire with the principals on delivery.

Response

The researcher succeeded in conducting an interview with one member of the principals and received returns from eight of the nine principals and four of an equal number of the selection committee chairpersons. The response rate from some in the groups was good, although in some cases not every item in the questionnaire received a response. One of the principals did not respond at all

The questionnaire

A full version of the questionnaire sent to principals and selection committee chairpersons appears in appendix 1 & 2 respectively. Appendix 1, which is to be answered by principals comprises six pages and is subdivided into four parts. Part A contains four questions related to applications. These were not entirely open-ended as they required yes/no answers and requested that the respondent elaborate. The underlying intention of the questions in part A was to elicit the opinions of respondents in relation to identified aspects of the current selection process. These questions related to the following:

- The nature and usefulness of the prescribed C. V.
- What references if any were required and their usefulness
- The interview, whether sufficient time was given to prepare
- Familiarity with the school where the vacancy occurred; school visits
- The interview quality and effectiveness
- Composition of the selection committee; suitability of questions asked
- Were any other methods used to test the suitability of candidates
- The availability of specific job descriptions
- Method and timing of being informed about outcome of application
- Were any methods of induction followed
- Strengths and weaknesses of current selection processes
- Practical recommendations that might be made to the current selection process

Appendix 2, which was to be answered by the selection committee chairpersons comprises three pages. The first and fourth questions were not entirely open-ended as they required a yes/no answer. The questions related to the following:

- ❑ Whether selection committee received any training for the task
- ❑ The quality of guidelines provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for the selection process
- ❑ Whether preparation was undertaken in the school for the selection process
- ❑ Strengths and weaknesses of interviewing process
- ❑ Was sufficient and reliable information assembled to make a sound decision as to who to appoint
- ❑ Were candidates given sufficient time to justify themselves
- ❑ Overall impression of the nature and effectiveness of the current selection process

The above items were derived as a result of consideration of international research and a review of the current selection process operating in KwaZulu-Natal.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to summarise the main focus of the empirical part of the study and the direction the study will take, a review of international literature and a consideration of the process of selection of principals as it operates in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. This chapter gives a brief review of the choice of research methods used to obtain data required to address the issues raised under directions for research. In the next chapter the product of the research will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The current selection procedure for principals came to effect in 1997 in KwaZulu-Natal, adapting to our democratic government requirements.

The extent to which effective teaching and learning is achieved becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be assessed. The importance of the principal to the overall success of the school has been generally accepted, yet there has been negligible discussion or local academic literature on how a principal should be selected.

The current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal will be assessed according to internationally accepted practices and using international literature and comparisons and suggestions will be made where possible. A search for literature on selection procedures in the South African context met with limited results, very little research has been done on the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and in South Africa. Nevertheless, the international literature examined, provided various insights into the nature of the topics, the advantages and disadvantages of using a human resource management approach as well as the practice of selecting school principals, albeit mainly in foreign countries. The works of these writers Morgan et al., (1984) have been utilised in assessing the procedure in KwaZulu-Natal and to draw on them when making recommendations.

This chapter contains the current selection process and will reveal whether it meets the present needs of education and educators in the province. Empirical evidence will be produced to highlight problems experienced by the recently appointed principals in (Wentworth) KwaZulu-Natal.

Nature and usefulness of prescribed Curriculum Vitae (C.V. 1)

It would seem that the prescribed C.V. is restrictive and differed from the traditional C.V. Some respondents felt that the new C. V. form allowed the candidate to be precise, and to

the point, which is a good requirement for a prospective principal, whilst others felt that, the C.Vs were not a true reflection of the candidate's capabilities, since they had been done professionally by outside sources.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education requires the following curriculum vitae (C.V.) on prescribed topics on a form provided to accompany each application. The applicant is required to comment about themselves on these topics:

- ❑ *Leaderships: Administrative, management and related experience: not exceeding 100 words.*
- ❑ *Organisational ability and experience: not exceeding 80 words*
- ❑ *Professional Development and Educational experience and insight: not exceeding 80 words.*
- ❑ *Leadership: Community related*
- ❑ *Referees: to provide details of two persons, other than educator colleagues, who would substantiate information provided on the C.V.*

Candidates could describe events over five years.

Morgan et al., (1984) suggest that, it is inappropriate nor adequate for example, in the case of principals to use general teaching application forms which make no distinction between applicants for their first teaching post and those who are reaching the apex of their school careers. In KwaZulu-Natal Education Department teaching forms for promotion posts (middle and senior managers) differ from those of applicants for their first teaching post however, they state that it is important for selectors to set the candidates biographical information along side answers to certain structured topics when shortlisting. They suggest topic areas, which include a candidate's knowledge and experience of:

- ❑ comprehensive education
- ❑ curriculum planning
- ❑ pastoral care
- ❑ staff development
- ❑ public and external relations

Morgan et al., (1984:32)

They suggest that candidates' answers will reveal more detailed information, which will enable further comparison in a systematic manner. The purpose of describing ones abilities is:

- ❑ to reveal a candidate's analysis and understanding of key educational issues or matters of school management
- ❑ to identify a candidate's educational values
- ❑ to provide a basis for systematic assessment
- ❑ to provide selectors with a common basis of information upon which to distinguish between candidates
- ❑ to ensure candidate responses to all issues are identified as relevant to the post in the job description

According to the suggested topic areas and purposes by Morgan et al., (1984) it would seem that the curriculum vitae form of the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department is lacking in what is regarded as 'good practice.' It is obvious that the length of the curriculum vitae needs to be increased so as to provide candidates with an opportunity to 'market themselves' and the topic areas need to be improved.

Submission of references

References give information on a candidate's past performance in areas, which are related to the job to which the applicant is applying. Therefore the request to referees for information about candidates must be formulated in a way, which ensures that:

- ❑ the referee provides an authentic appraisal of the candidate in relation to specified aspects of the post to be filled,
- ❑ the referee has full information about the knowledge and skills required for the post,
- ❑ the information made available by referees allows selectors to differentiate between candidates on job-related factors,
- ❑ the form in which the information is provided allows comparisons between candidates along the same knowledge and skill dimensions,
- ❑ the source and date of the reference are clearly identified.

Morgan et al., (1984:33)

It must be made clear to referees what the job related factors are, and that is:

- ❑ it must not be left to referees to determine the main areas for comment;
- ❑ don't allow the quality of a reference to depend on the literary skills of its author;
- ❑ referees should not be allowed to conceal their lack of knowledge of a candidate behind bland, superficial statements;

- ❑ don't rely on the use of a 'code' to indicate strength of recommendations
- ❑ take up LEA and school reference for all applicants, if at all possible;
- ❑ tell the referee the areas of information on which he/she should comment;
- ❑ provide a framework for the referee's comments;
- ❑ encourage the referee to make the strength of his/her recommendation explicit;
- ❑ take up references on internal candidates in the same way as you would for external applicants

Morgan et al., (1984:33)

According to the responses by the principals it is clear that no guidance related to the above was given to referees neither contact made by the selection committee to validate the information on the applicants' C.Vs. One principal made mention that most of the referees seemed to have photocopies of the submitted C.Vs. Current C.Vs require names and details of two referees, that is, name and contact number only which falls short of international standards.

The interview situation

The interview is still the most influential technique used in appointing senior staff to schools. Morgan et al., (1984) suggest why the weight of the interview should be reduced and 'combine it with evidence from other forms of assessment' as research studies point to serious defects in the interview as a selection technique and show that its continuing popularity is misplaced.

Of the survey conducted amongst the parents 25% (4 out of 9) responded by saying that there was no flexibility by the Education Department allowing for a broader questioning of the applicants to enable for a thorough and more informed information resource.

Morgan et al., (1984:38) in McPherson (1999:73) give reasons for this, which are:

- ❑ trained interviewers at the best of times, can achieve a modest level of validity;
- ❑ the vast majority of education selectors are not trained in interview techniques, and;
- ❑ interviews are fairly limited in what they can achieve.

Most principals regarded the interview as an acceptable selection procedure and confidently coped with it but, felt it should not, be used as the only means of selection. For some of the principals, this was the first time they were being interviewed for a job, as

previously, educators were placed by the Education Department without being interviewed and this process (interview) was intimidating and created much anxiety.

Morgan et al. (1984) believe that the negative aspects of an interview far outweigh the positive. In their opinion, the few positive aspects of interviews include confirming biographical factors and assessing their significance, assessing technical knowledge and experience, assessing verbal communication skills and throwing light on intellectual ability. Furthermore, interviews may inform about a candidate's personal attitudes, personal energy, and range of interests that may have some relevance to the job. On the negative side, they feel that interviews cannot assess many job-related skills that need to be observed in situation analogies. They argue that interviews mislead and create a false impression because the 'whole interaction maximises visual and impression factors and hence decisions tend to mirror the values of selectors' Morgan et al., (1984:38).

The principals interviewed felt that the interview was the focus of the whole selection process and the one aspect, which was crucial for their success, was based mainly on how well the candidates were able to 'market themselves'. On the question of whether principals were given sufficient time, all agreed that sufficient notice was given to prepare for the interview,

Morgan et al., (1984:38) state that general principals of good interview practices are:

- interview setting;
- interview length and timetable;
- interview order;
- information for candidates;
- interview format and questioning.

On the question of the suitability of questions most principals agreed that the questions asked were generally fair and of a suitable nature as these were drawn from a prescribed list supplied by the Education Department, which pertained to leadership and management. One (11%) of the principals stated that, questions were still 'pigeon-hole', there was no flexibility. According to Morgan et al., (1984) an effective interview will:

- use existing documentary evidence about each candidate as a basis for questioning;
- allocate interview question areas according to selection expertise, ensuring that the required knowledge, skill and task areas of the job are covered with each candidate;

- ❑ use a standard form of assessment for recording interviewee responses for each candidate.

Morgan et al., (1984:40).

In accordance with the above, the selection committee failed because they utilised a prescribed list of questions. This failure attributed to lack of experience on selection committees, lack of training in questioning techniques. One principal questioned the capacity of the selection committee in evaluating responses. Of the parents interviewed only one (11%) had not received any training of any sort, which rendered him disadvantaged? The other three (33%) who had received training in a one day workshop set up by the department, felt that the training they had received was adequate to enable them to make meaningful and correct decisions. However, the interview fell short in a number of respects. The biggest criticism of the selection procedure in general, and the interview in particular, was that candidates were not required to undergo analogous tests such as in-tray exercises, role-play simulations, leaderless group discussions or give verbal reports in order to demonstrate their capabilities as prospective principals.

Analogous tests are designed to test 'specific skills on a systematic basis' Morgan et al., (1984:49). At no stage apart from the interview were other means used to test the suitability of candidates.

Principals were not asked to demonstrate their capabilities. It can be argued that most people who are appointed to principalship have not been principals before and the job of the principal is very different from other posts in the school. Being a different job, a candidate requires different skills. Selectors need to know how a candidate might exercise such skills in the completion of future tasks. The most reliable way of gauging a candidate's ability to perform the tasks of a principal is by conducting a range of test exercises that are job related. Analogous tests are written or oral exercises, or a combination of both which simulate as far as possible, real work situations. Assessors rate the skills displayed by a candidate in terms of observed behaviour and not on their previous knowledge of the candidate. The advantages of analogous tests are:

- ❑ Candidates are assessed on their performance in realistic work tasks
- ❑ They are appropriate for providing evidence of candidates' latent abilities in tasks for which it can be expected that they have limited previous experience.

Morgan et al., (1984:49)

However analogous tests are time consuming but their importance in the selection of principals is crucial.

Preliminary school visits

At no stage were principals given a specific job description of the post, conducted on a tour of the prospective new school, or given a prospectus / brochure for the school. The school prospectus and school visits should be used to inform candidates about the specific nature of the post. These are important items in the selection process because candidates are provided with the opportunity to:

- meet and question key members of staff
- see the school in operation
- see and assess the management needs of the school's buildings and other physical resources
- receive information about distinctive policy objectives of the school.

Morgan et al., (1984:36)

The lack of a school brochure and an invitation to visit the school means that candidates were interviewed having very little knowledge about the post or school for which they were applying for. Some relied on their own views and those gained over the years to formulate an idea of what the job entails. It would appear that the only job description available to applicants is those prescribed by the Department of Education. Only one of the nine principals reported that the S.E.M. and other principals assisted him with what the job entails. All the selection committee members (44%) agreed that none of the applicants were given job descriptions or any other information concerning the school with one of the parents stating that the applicants knew what post they were applying for.

Two (22%) of the selection committee members stated that applicants were given a brief run down of the school and environment before the interview.

Morgan et al., (1984) suggest that all selectors agree to a job description at the beginning of a selection procedure. By this is meant a summary of the job that is to be filled, based on an analysis of the job. They consider school posts especially the more senior ones as having two aspects:

- tasks which have to be performed and,

- ❑ relations with various individuals and groups, which have to be maintained in carrying out those tasks.

Morgan et al., (1984:27)

Selectors will draw up a detailed description of the post to be filled which they feel has specific aspects and the specific circumstances of the post i.e. nature of school environment etc. This detailed description will be used as the basis for the elimination of candidates at all stages of selection procedure. These particulars would serve two purposes:

- ❑ to maximise candidates knowledge of the job, so that their resources and those of the LEA are not wasted by applications that would not be made with a fuller knowledge of the post; and
- ❑ to provide selectors with details of the school's situation so that they might be in a better position to match applicants to the school.

Job advertisement

It is evident from these writers that the selection committees fall short in these requirements. Another aspect, which needs more emphasis, is the job advertisement in the official provincial bulletin/gazette.

Morgan et al., (1984:29) provide as:

- ❑ the job title;
- ❑ school group size and salary range, LEA and any special features of LEA policy;
- ❑ name and type of school, age-range, number on roll,
- ❑ location of school; date of vacancy
- ❑ any special features of the school;
- ❑ any special criteria to be applied in considering applicants;
- ❑ where application forms and further particulars can be obtained;
- ❑ closing date for applications, and/or whether criteria such as graduate status, age or current position are to be used must be made clear as this would save time and resources to eliminate some applicants immediately.

It would appear that the current job advertisement posts in KwaZulu-Natal would be lacking in some of these aspects. This additional information would most probably lead to a degree of self-elimination among some of the candidates, thereby making the task of the selectors a little easier. It is therefore crucial that job advertisements include as much essential information as possible.

Composition of the selection committee

The composition of the Staff Selection Committee comprises three or five members from the governing body and/or co-opted members, the school principal and the S.E.M. or his nominee and excludes educators from being on their own school's selection committee. The Superintendent of Education (Management) or their nominee is an ex-officio member and their functions are to advise the interview committee on the official selection procedure and guard against improper procedure. The interview committee meets prior to the selection process to discuss questions drawn from a prescribed list by the Education Department. The Superintendent of Education (Management) conducts a once-off training workshop for all members of the Interview Committee on interview procedures and techniques. Morgan et al., (1984:5) cites four vital questions for selectors, which are:

- What is the job to be filled?
- What competencies are needed to perform the job successfully?
- How will the necessary knowledge and skills be assessed?
- How will the evidence as a whole be treated to reach a final decision?

All members (44%) of the selection committee met at their schools prior to the interview to prepare for the selection process. One (11%) met with their selection committee members to elect a chairperson, secretary and to agree on criteria for sifting and short listing. Another (11%) met with their selection committee to formulate questions to be asked, how to obtain scores, and to decide on the needs of the school in order to be able to make an informed decision. The other two members (22%) undertook preparation in their schools but failed to mention the type of preparation.

If these vital questions are considered this would facilitate a better-prepared and knowledgeable Interview Committee because:

- All selectors know the nature of the post and are agreed on what it involves.
- Each selector knows the part they have to play in the procedure as a whole, and how their role relates to the whole process.
- Selectors would get a better understanding of each stage of the selection procedure, which fits in with the other stage making a consistent whole, which generates an accumulation of evidence on candidates according to the knowledge and skills to be assessed.
- The candidate who is most likely to do the job best is the one who is appointed.

Morgan et al., (1984:5)

Only one out of nine principals agreed to the composition of selection committee and felt that they were professional in their approach, which assisted the process. The other principals were dissatisfied for the following reasons, which are:

- The selection committee was not empowered to conduct the interview.
- Parents had no knowledge about management issues and unable to evaluate answers.
- Parents are easily influenced by external factors causing them to be prejudiced (biased) against some candidates.
- Parents have vested interests in certain candidates.
- The lack of professionals and principals in particular, because they have a knowledge of education matters and management and leadership issues.

For such a high profile position it is absolutely necessary to have people of a high calibre who will not create suspicion and be accepted by all candidates. Conducting a once-off workshop for the training of Staff Selection Committees is clearly insufficient. On-going workshops for standing committee members should be provided by the Education Department.

Suitability of selection process

The nine principals were asked whether they considered the selection process generally to be fair, four (44%) felt that it was fair, and the other four (44%) responded that they felt it was not fair, as it lacked credibility, and deadlines were unrealistic, and the one principal did not respond at all.

The overall impression of two (22%) of the selection committee members on the nature and effectiveness of the current selection process was that it was above board. One member (11%) stated that they needed longer time frames and the other (11%) said it was open to nepotism.

Manner of being informed

The majority of the candidates (67%) interviewed reported that it took \pm three months before the Education Department notified them after the interview that they were successful. Only one (11%) said that he was notified within one month. The one principal (11%) felt that the wait between the interview and notification was too long and that the department's management plans never seemed to be on track. One (11%) did not respond. Considering that applicants have to comply with official deadlines, the same should be expected of the department. The principals were not in favour of the delay. Four (44%) of the nine candidates were informed telephonically that they had been successful and the other four (44%) were informed in writing.

All the principals interviewed stated that after they had been appointed to principalship, no steps were taken by the Education Department to ensure that they were adequately inducted into the post. The onus was on them to seek assistance from other principals. On the question of induction, four (44%) of the selection members stated that no type of induction was provided for the successful applicant except for the usual formalities where the successful applicant is introduced to the staff, learners, and school governing body by the principal.

Induction of principals

Induction and mentoring are closely associated. Induction is making the new appointee to have the best possible start. Induction is most effective if it is planned to begin the moment an appointment is to be made, it therefore needs planning.

Trethowan and Smith (1984) in Bush and Middlewood (1997:156) identify induction as a process: 'which enables a newcomer to become a fully effective member of an organisation as easily as possible.' In order for this to occur the new appointee will need basic information about the school, the people in it and routines and procedures as was previously mentioned in 'school visits'. They will need to develop their skills and competencies in the job and should grow in their understanding of the culture and ethos of the school. The aim is to create a conducive atmosphere where the new recruit feels free

and unthreatened. It is the role of the school governing body to carry out an induction programme for the inductee. Tickle (1994) in Bush and Middlewood (1997:157) suggests the following framework:

- ❑ Opportunities to meet teaching and support staff to understand their roles.
- ❑ An introduction to the provision of resources.
- ❑ Opportunities for observation and to be observed.
- ❑ Knowledge of the locality including the link schools.
- ❑ Knowledge of the community aspect of the school including the pastoral system links with parents and support services.
- ❑ Understanding of the core values of the school and the arrangement for pupil learning e.g. assessment and record keeping.
- ❑ Appreciation of the quality of teaching, including planning, preparation, classroom management and evaluation.

Mentoring is part of the induction process but must be seen as an ongoing part of professional development. The role of mentoring is to support and train new principals. It is a way of 'making ordinary people do extra-ordinary things' Druker (1998) in Thurlow (2000:2).

In the view of the writer, mentoring of new principals is the role of the Education Department.

A review of research relating to mentoring of principals in the United States led by Daresh and Playko (1992) in Bush and Middlewood (1997:165) conclude that:

The use of mentors to assist leaders is a powerful tool that may be used to bring about more effective practice in schools. Structured mentoring programs, are effective strategies to help individuals into leadership roles more smoothly.

In Britain, experienced principals undertake the development of a programme of mentoring of new principals. In contrast to the in-service British programme, the mentoring of principals in Singapore and in the United States form part of a preservice training programme and qualification. An evaluation of the pilot scheme for mentoring new principals in England and Wales found that the benefits of mentoring are:

- ❑ the opportunity to talk through problems;
- ❑ being able to reflect on what it means to be a principal;

- ❑ reducing the sense of isolation;
- ❑ obtaining another perspective;
- ❑ improving self-confidence.

Daresh and Playko (1992) in Bush and Middlewood (1997:165).

The mentoring of principals differs from the mentoring of other new recruits, given the opportunity of regular mentoring, the new principal may then be able to use the mentoring process more extensively for reflection on both their role and the development of the school.

The selection members stated that the strengths of the interviewing process were:

- ❑ The members were able to understand the role of the applicants.
- ❑ The atmosphere was relaxed.
- ❑ They were able to see both sides of the applicant- the written C.V. and one-on-one interview.

There were no limitations noted by two (22%) of the selection committee members. The other (22%) reported that, there was no flexibility with questions, guidelines of the Education Department, were too restrictive.

Conclusion

An assessment has been made of the current selection procedure of school principals in (Wentworth) KwaZulu-Natal against a background of international literature on 'best practice' and the need for transparency if appointments are to be acceptable to candidates, the teaching profession and the community. The lack of training for staff selection committees has been highlighted and the strengths and weaknesses of the current selection process.

Chapter 6 will discuss the implications resulting from the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal, the advantages and disadvantages and recommendations, to improve the selection process.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter of the study comprises two main components. The first part of the chapter summarises the main findings of the research. These findings reflect the opinions of respondents concerning the selection process for principals in the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department and are derived from recently appointed principals and selection committee chairpersons.

The first question on the current scale of knowledge in relation to what is termed 'good practice' in principal selection, with particular reference to structural approaches has been dealt with extensively in the literature review Chapter Two of the study.

Question two which relates to the current selection procedures for the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and how it may be assessed in relation to what is known as 'best practice' has been addressed in Chapter Three. Answers to research questions three and four follow in the summary of the empirical research. Question five which sets out recommendations is answered in the second part of this chapter. The recommendations, which take account of the findings, are derived substantially from the 'ideals' of good practice in selection, to be found in the work of Morgan et al., (1984). These recommendations are an attempt to highlight some of the weaknesses of the selection process and to provide possible solutions for improvement.

These will focus on analogous tests, interviews, job description, school visits, and training for the selection committee, peer selection and training programme for senior managers. The current selection process is an improvement from the past as the applicants are interviewed, whereas previously, the Education Department merely made appointments by scrutinizing the letter of application and curriculum vitae. Although this is an improvement

from the past it can be viewed to have a very limited 'technology' as it relies heavily on the interview only.

Summary of main findings

The main findings of the research will be summarised and reviewed in the sections that follow from empirical research identified in Chapter Four. For purposes of summarization the findings derived from selection committee chairpersons are considered together.

Prescribed curriculum vitae

The research raised issues related to the documentation and sources of evidence to be submitted. In terms of the prescribed curriculum vitae it would appear that candidates are guided as to the number of words and topics on which they are required to comment about themselves. The application forms for middle and senior managers for promotion posts, differ from those of applicants for their first teaching post. However, the application forms for promotion posts for principalship, fall short of suggested topic areas, which include a candidate's knowledge and experience, which would reveal more detailed information to enable further comparison.

References

Literature states that most selection procedures make some use of the opinions of referees who might give useful supportive evidence. Some of the respondents indicated that they had to submit names of two references. Respondents indicated that at no stage were referees contacted by the selection committee to validate the information on the applicants' CVs, neither was any evidence obtained, which would suggest that referees were invited to respond in relation to predetermined categories. The literature states that references are sought from those whose knowledge and experience of the candidate is both recent and relevant to the job applied for. Literature also suggests that referees should be guided as to

the nature of the information to be provided, and it should not be left solely to them to determine the main areas for comment.

Interview

Research indicates that the interview is still the most commonly used method of current selection procedures, however the literature is critical of the interview as being the only, or dominant method of selection (of which reference has been made in this regard in Chapter Two.) In the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department, the research suggests that provision is made for interviews, and most of the respondents regarded the interview as an acceptable selection procedure, but felt that it should not be used as the only means of selection or deciding factor. Not only is the interview, on its own, a very weak technique as a predictor of potential, but its use is also greatly undermined if it is not carefully planned and properly structured.

There was however no evidence to suggest that these interviews were designed or conducted in accordance with what is termed 'good practice' and their use as predictors must be questioned, especially in view of the fact that the collection of evidence from other sources has been shown to be very limited in the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department's selection process.

School visits

Researchers of staff selection processes suggest that there are many advantages in the planning of formal school visits in any selection process for potential principals. Not only do school visits provide candidates an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school in function, but also those intimately involved in the school themselves are provided with an opportunity to meet potential principals. This research has shown that the practice of school visits, as part of the selection process in KwaZulu-Natal Education Department is non-existent.

Job description

The literature suggests that job descriptions are an essential element in any selection process, as candidates will be more informed as to what is required and expected of an incumbent, and selectors would be clear about the generic and specific requirements of the job for principalship. Selectors should contribute to the construction and formulating of job descriptions for the post of principal, as they would then be in a better position to select the best person for the job. Job descriptions constitute the benchmark against which all decisions are made.

Suitability of selection process

There is great concern about the suitability and composition of the selection committee as it is insufficiently representative of those who, it could be argued to be in a position to most effectively evaluate candidates. Although respondents reported that the process was generally fair and a vast improvement from past procedures, it was recommended that it be compulsory for professionals ie. principals, with good managerial skills, to be part of the selection process. Selectors responses to the researcher was, that long hours were spent during the selection process, resulting in them being overworked, but did not provide suggestions to this problem. There is no further evidence to show that the selection committee is informed about 'good practice' in selection and is trained to do the job. The panel basis its decision on limited evidence, in the absence of carefully structured job descriptions, and the interview which has been shown to have marked limitations in respect of assessing potential.

Manner of being informed

It is in the interest of the candidates and the school awaiting a principal, to be informed about the outcome of the selection process in good time. Respondents reported that they were informed of their success by a variety of means, of which, the letter was the most dominant mode. However the majority of candidates expressed concern at the long delay in

informing them of their success. It is recommended that candidates who have been unsuccessful should be provided with feedback, which would assist them when making future applications as part of ongoing professional development.

Induction of principals

Respondents reported that no provision was made for the induction of new principals, or of principals new to specific schools. The literature suggests that induction should be planned, and begin the moment an appointment is to be made. Although induction is not part of any systematic selection process, it would seem desirable to the process since this is a new situation for the appointee, who will need adjusting to the new post. The aim is to create an environment in which the new appointee feels free and unthreatened.

Summary

An attempt has been made to identify simply and summarise the main findings of the research, which was carried out with principals and selection committee chairpersons. Whereas each aspect of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education selection process, considered individually, is worthy of specific critical comment, it is probably when considered together that the major findings emerge. In short the evidence suggests a process of selection which is both inconsistently applied and is weak in its conception and operation, when measured against reported 'good practice'.

It is in the context of this somewhat harsh evaluation that certain recommendations are suggested, which might contribute to the development of a more effective selection process. The recommendations follow below:

Recommendations

Analogous tests

Since the selection of the principal is crucial in the effective functioning of the school, much care should be taken in the testing of candidates. Principals interviewed stated that at no stage apart from the interview were other means used to test the suitability of candidates and no analogous tests were done. The selection committee relied solely on their replies to prescribed questions and at most times based their decisions on how well candidates fared in the interview. The use of psychometric tests and exercises to assess ability and personality, provided that they are relevant to the job and the people using them are trained, have the potential to be more reliable than interviews. It is not suggested that they replace interviews, but should be used to assess qualities, which are not readily amendable to assessment in an interview. Although these are used in commerce and industry they can be adapted in education, such as in-tray exercises i.e. addressing a particular audience or written tests which simulate as far as possible real work situations. There are advantages to analogous tests, which are:

- they reveal more technical information about the candidate than would be obtained in an interview;
- they allow the assessment of a candidate's performance in specific job related skills;
- they reveal whether a candidate has the required skills to become a principal;
- they allow for the systematic comparison of candidates.

Morgan et al., (1984:50)

Morgan et al., (1984) argue that analogous tests create situations in which candidate's abilities in situations, which approximate closely to those in which they are, might be required to operate in the job. Information about a candidate's potential ability can be enhanced allowing the selectors to make the best decision.

Interviews

It is common knowledge that interviews form the basis of the selection process in KwaZulu-Natal and that too much weight is placed on the interview only with no other means being used. As previously mentioned there are disadvantages to interviews, and it is important that selection committees be made aware of the disadvantages of placing too much emphasis on interviews. It is recommended that selection committees base their final decision on all relevant documentary and verbal evidence.

Morgan et al., (1984:38) state that general principles of good interview practice are:

- interview setting;
- interview length;
- interview order;
- information for candidates;
- interview format and question.

The selection committee needs to be briefed on this prior to the interview

Job description

The vacancies for principals are advertised in the official provincial bulletin/gazette inviting applicants for the post. These are very brief with no detailed reference to job requirements. Additional information would enable potential applicants to decide to apply, or alternatively, 'de-select' themselves. The other aspect of clearly defining the vacancy is that carefully conceptualised definitions provide the basis for subsequent selection procedures and decision making.

It is recommended that selectors draw up a detailed description of the post about the nature of the principalship at the school. The advantages to this are two fold:

- (1) candidates will be in a position to make an informed decision and,
- (2) selectors will be in a better position to select the best person for the job.

Generic job descriptions for the various ranks of educators have been defined statutorily and making it obvious that, particular needs of schools in respect of individual vacancies, are to be accommodated, and defining the job, over and above the generic core, makes it very much the task of individual school's selectors.

Whilst the aspect of defining the vacancy may be complex, and possibly sensitive it is nevertheless crucial as Middlewood & Lumby (1998) in Thurlow (2000:8) say:

This sort of specification provides the criteria on which the selection will actually be based.

School visits

At no stage were candidates conducted on a tour of the school, except for the fact that interviews were held at the potential new school. Candidates should be given an opportunity to visit the school before the interview stage as a source of information and not as a source of assessment for selectors. The selectors must draw up a written timetable for the candidates, with specific components of the school visit, the times, the names and designations of people the candidates will meet. This information could be contained in the school's prospectus/handout for the candidate to take away. The lack of a school brochure/prospectus/handout and an invitation to visit the school means that candidates were interviewed having very little knowledge about the school or post that they were applying for.

The school visits should be properly organised and a timetable should be used to stagger the candidates' visits.

Training for selection committees

It was evident from the responses of principals that there was a lack of training for selection committees. The selection committee is very circumscribed in that they have to follow strict guidelines prescribed by the Education Department. It should be so structured that the people who are on the committee will be in a position to attend all selection proceedings and if needs be, such procedures to take place at hours convenient to all. Governing bodies and other members should be given training in interview skills and

techniques, with refresher courses on a half yearly basis, and in the eventuality of a drop out of any of the selection committee members, that a replacement can be sourced from the balance of the members who have been trained and are knowledgeable. The selection committee must be people of substance and integrity who will be able to uphold the quality standards and to draw the right person for the job and if necessary demand supporting documentation of proof. The possibility of a centralised interviewing system be investigated e.g. where in the event of ten schools in an area, the ten different governing bodies are trained in the skills and techniques of interviewing. These trained people to be divided into teams of 5, giving a total of ten teams (Team A, B, C, D, etc.) The suggestion is that these teams of people be employed on a semi-permanent basis at agreed rates and conditions and in the event of there being multiple interviews on any given day, these various teams be engaged for such interviews.

Morgan et al., (1984:73) suggest the following:

- Selectors should meet prior to the interview to arrange the details of the event, right to who is to ask questions of an agreed format on a particular topic;
- The interview should be small and the atmosphere relaxed;
- Selectors use an assessment sheet to record the suitability of each candidate;
- The final decision reached by reviewing the evidence accumulated on candidates from the start of the procedure.

References

Reference requests should be pursued, and a separate reference form should be provided and the request to referees about candidates must be formulated in a way, which ensures that the referee provides an authentic appraisal of the candidate about the specific aspects of the post to be filled. A sound reference is one that is written by someone who has evaluated the candidate's previous and present performance in all the relevant task areas.

Peer selection

It is recommended that consideration be given by the Education Department to make it compulsory for the inclusion for at least one principal on the selection committee. Such a person could be drawn from the ranks of experienced principals with good leadership and management skills. Selection committees would benefit from such input, particularly when issues relating to internal management are being systematically assessed by means of interviews and analogous tests.

Training programme for senior managers

In some countries like Canada, principals of schools complete an appropriate qualification and training process, and are allocated to regional boards of a particular organisation, for a fixed period before being moved to another. Because of the status of a principal much time should be spent preparing them for senior management. The amount of time spent on the selection process should not be a serious factor, and yet, in reality, the entire selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal does just that.

Morgan et al., (1984) in order to overcome this problem, the selection for appointment of a principal should only be made from candidates who have successfully completed senior management courses. These courses should involve potential principals in activities, which are related to principalship. In this way, potential principals could be exposed to the skills and demands of a principal in a realistic and practical way. This could be achieved by attending management courses run by the Education Department, universities, colleges and technicons, and non-governmental organisations. These courses could be run on a regional or individual basis for all who have reached senior management positions.

Morgan et al., (1983: 148) suggest that these courses would serve the following:

- ❑ to allow potential principal candidates to obtain in advance an accurate appraisal of the duties and responsibilities of a principal so that they may assess whether principalship is an objective for them;
- ❑ to provide the trainee with some structural assessment of their knowledge, skills and competencies so as to identify their strengths and any weaknesses for future training;
- ❑ to make training provision, which is verified by serving practitioners and the education department, relevant and realistic to the demands of principalship.

In the United States where the National Association of Secondary School Principals runs an assessment centre which concentrates specifically on skills and techniques of principalship and gives less emphasis on experience or track record.

Morgan et al., (1983) suggest that the National Association of Secondary School Principals was as a result of wide spread belief that candidates in conventional selection procedures were seldom observed or evaluated in accordance with their performance and skills needed for the job. The main purpose of the assessment centre was to ensure that elimination decisions would in future be based on skills, which are vital for principalship. The information gathered about the participant's state of readiness for principalship is available to school districts when an appointment is to be made.

It is obvious from the above that by adopting such practices the future selection for principalship would be confined to suitably qualified persons and would eliminate the arduous task of dealing with the many unsuitable applications received.

Conclusion

The current selection process could be viewed as being flawed, as its primary emphasis is on the interview and which evidence does not require any supporting documentation. It could also be argued that some people have the ability to 'market' themselves and yet prove disastrous in practical application, whereas you have the successful hands on type who is not as eloquent in 'marketing' themselves. Also in the current selection process is the heavy influence and interference of the Education Department, which as stated in the study leaves or gives no latitude innovativeness. Something that stands out as well is the inexperience of the people having to deal with critical issues such as the appointment of senior managers. It would be suggested that a revamp is made of the entire selection process, its impediments, and an improvement and reduction of the many forms used in the process, thus streamlining and easing of the administration. There is no ideal situation, and every organisation should develop its own procedures according to its own needs and objectives with sound human resource management policies, and strategies. The policies

advocated by human resource management should be applied to the selection procedure. Selection procedures are dynamic and should be constantly revisited and amended to comply with the ever-changing times. Human resource managers should realise that with the ever-changing times there will always be deficiencies in the selection procedures if no attempt is made to engage various sources and professional input. The selection process in KwaZulu-Natal is new, and much improvement needs to be done. It cannot therefore be expected to produce results, which are unchallengeable, although to its credit it is based on sound human resource principles, which compare favourably with those recommended in international literature. Some of the weaknesses and strengths of the current procedure also imminated from a recent study of principal selections in KwaZulu-Natal as quoted by McPherson (1999).

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PROCESSES FOR SELECTING PRINCIPALS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS

A APPLICATIONS

1. Do you have any general comments on the application procedures? **YES NO**
Please elaborate:

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2. All applicants are required to submit CVs. Do you have any comment about the nature and usefulness of the prescribed CV.? **YES NO**

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3. Were you asked to nominate referees? **- YES NO**

4. If your answer to the above was 'yes', please give your opinion on the usefulness of this (ie: were the referees asked to provide references- were they guided as to what sort of information was required?). **YES NO**

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B. INTERVIEWS

5. Was sufficient notice given to you to prepare for the interview? **YES NO**
Please comment:

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6. Did you obtain, or were you provided with, information about the school prior to the interview ? **YES NO**

Please comment:

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7. At any time in the process, were you helped to familiarize yourself with the school (i.e.: given printed material; shown around the school; permitted to speak with the staff?)

YES NO

Please comment:

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- 8 Do you have any comment on the composition of the selection committee?

Please comment:

YES NO

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- 9 Please comment on your view of the suitability of questions asked in the interview.

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- 10 Please comment generally on your impression of the quality and effectiveness of the interview.

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- 11 At any time, were you given a job description of the principal's post at the school?

YES NO

Please comment:

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12 Apart from the interview, were any other means used to test the suitability of candidates? **YES NO**

Please comment:

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C. OTHER MATTERS

13. Do you view the selection process generally to be fair? **YES NO**

Please comment:

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14. How long did you have to wait to learn of your appointment?

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15. How were you informed that you had been successful?

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16. After you had been told that you were to be appointed, what steps were taken by the school, to ensure that you were adequately inducted into the post?

Please elaborate:

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D. GENERAL

17 In your opinion, what are the strengths of the current selection process for principals?

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18. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of the current selection process for principals?

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

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20 Please use this space to make any further comment you might wish to make about your experience on the selection process.

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APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PROCESSES FOR SELECTING PRINCIPALS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SELECTION COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

1. Did you and/or members of your selection committee receive any training for the task? **YES NO**

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2. Please give your comments on the quality of the guidelines provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for conducting the selection process.

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3. What preparation was undertaken in the school for the selection process?

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4. Were applicants given job descriptions or any other information about the job/school prior, to the interview? **YES NO**

Please elaborate:

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5. What type of induction, if any, was provided for the successful applicant?

Please comment:

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6. Please give your views on the strengths and limitations of the interviewing process.

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7. Do you think that the selection committee was able to assemble sufficient and reliable information to make a sound decision as to who to appoint?

Please elaborate:

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8. Do you think that candidates are given sufficient opportunity to justify themselves?

Please comment:

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9. What is your overall impression of the nature and effectiveness of the current selection process?

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10. What do you think might be done practically to improve the present process?

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