

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL  
AS PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER  
IN HOUSE OF DELEGATES SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
IN THE GREATER DURBAN AREA

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DURBAN

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on public relations as a significant aspect of the functions of the principal as the manager of a secondary school. A review of selected literature suggests that a large number of the daily administrative and managerial tasks performed by principals require public relations skills.

Research was conducted, by means of questionnaires and structured interviews, among principals and teachers at House of Delegates secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

The research analysis examines principals' qualifications and in-service training in public relations. The public relations practice at schools used in the sample are evaluated in terms of selected public relations issues, viz. fund-raising, communication with the school's publics, coping with crises and image-building.

The results of the study indicate that few principals have received training in public relations and that public relations practice at House of Delegates secondary schools in the greater Durban area is weak and inadequate. In the view of the researcher, principals should be given special

in-service training, to develop their public relations skills and to teach them sound public relations practice, so that they will become better managers of their schools.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Context of the study

Public relations as an organized, planned system of activities may be regarded as still being in its infancy, particularly in Second and Third World countries, since its birth and rearing only emerged in the latter half of the Twentieth Century.

Formally acknowledged and planned public relations practice at State schools is virtually non-existent, being ignored or overlooked by educational authorities. Indeed, there is a general lack of literature on school public relations and, in fact, little research seems to have been done on the subject. A computer print out from the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) revealed that, as at October 1989, no research projects (either current or completed) has focused on the public relations functions of the secondary school principal in South Africa.

This research is therefore intended as a pilot study to explore, describe and evaluate school public relations

practices. It is hoped that problems and weaknesses highlighted by this research will be a valuable source of identifying aspects of public relations practice which need to be included in a programme for training principals in public relations practice. Since the study is limited to House of Delegates (HoD) secondary schools in the greater Durban area, the findings are not intended to be a reflection of public relations practice in all secondary schools in South Africa.

#### 1.2. Statement of the problem

A superficial study of public relations practice at secondary schools familiar to the researcher suggests that while many principals are engaged in tasks which involve public relations skills, few principals take these tasks seriously or view them as being of significance. Public relations practice at these schools seem to take place on an ad hoc basis and few principals seem skilled at dealing with their public relations responsibilities. Moreover, there seems to be a general apathy among principals about public relations practice. It would seem that since most secondary schools in the greater Durban area are State-funded and State-controlled, few principals feel they should concern themselves with public relations matters such as fund-raising and promoting the image of the school.

This point is expanded in greater detail in the discussion that follows.

### 1.3. Issues related to the problem

Hypothetically, the following issues seem to relate to the problem: apathy among principals owing to the fact that HoD schools are mainly State controlled; the impact of socio-economic and political trends and changes in South Africa; the fact that few principals seem to have received adequate training to meet the demands of their public relations responsibilities as managers of secondary schools.

#### 1.3.1. State-control of education

Central to the problem seems to be issues arising from the State-control of education in South Africa. In the main, HoD secondary schools are State-owned and are dependent on the State for their human and financial resources.

On the one hand, since schools have, in the past, relied on the State for funding, principals have been mainly concerned about pleasing the upper echelons of the educational bureaucracy and have not considered seriously fund-raising and image-building as part of their public

relations functions. Fund-raising is unlikely to be viewed as crucial to the survival of a school so long as education is funded by the State. Moreover, since State secondary schools receive their pupil populations from State primary schools (feeder schools), principals have felt little need to develop public relations strategies to attract a greater number of pupils to their schools.

On the other hand, State control of education seems to have had the concomitant effect of fostering apathy among parents of secondary school pupils. Parents have had little power in determining the type of education their children receive at secondary schools. This is so because the syllabus is determined by the State, textbooks are prescribed by the State and the teachers are selected and employed by the State. For this reason, to date, particularly in House of Delegates (HoD) schools, parent bodies such as education committees and parent-teacher associations (PTA's), have been viewed by parents themselves as being ineffective and often non-functional since these bodies have no power to make any significant changes to the type of education offered to pupils at State schools. As a result, even interested parents seem to have become apathetic since they are unable to make any meaningful contribution to the education of their children.

### 1.3.2. Socio-economic and political trends and changes

Socio-economic and political trends and changes since the 1980's, and particularly developments in the first three years of the 1990's, have seen shifts in emphases in the demands made on the public relations responsibilities of the South African secondary school principal. Such trends and changes include the following:

i. In facing the national and international demands for equality in education for all racial groups, and in finding itself in a position of possessing insufficient funds, the State has come to the point where it has to rely, to an increasing extent, on the community (parents in particular) and, to a lesser extent, on donations from private enterprise (as is the case in some First World Countries, e.g. the U.S.A.) to meet the financial needs of schools.

ii. There has been an increasing involvement of pupils and teachers in the general state of unrest in South Africa. These include the lengthy pupil boycott of classes following the 1980-1981 Soweto riots and the "1991-1992 crisis in education" which has witnessed teachers embarking on "chalk-down" campaigns as a means of airing their grievances. In the face of

problems of this nature, there is a need for special crisis public relations strategies including the development of contingency measures as a means of coping with problems arising from such crises.

iii. Since educational *integration*<sup>2</sup> was officially permitted in 1991, schools, which had formerly catered for the separate educations of White, Coloured and Indian pupils, opened their doors to pupils of all races. For the public relations manager in a school this involves a variety of multi-cultural concerns, such as fostering respect for other cultures among pupils and developing the language competency of pupils experiencing difficulty with the medium of instruction at the school.

iv. As a result of the growing industrialization of the country and with the advent of the age of the computer and the electronics revolution since the 1980's, it has become necessary for schools to meet the rapidly changing demands of industry, particularly with respect to the need for technical education rather than the traditional academic subjects offered at schools. Principals should liaise with local commercial and industrial organizations and make public the services their schools have to offer in



response to these demands.

### 1.3.3. Training of principals

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the problem lies in the absence of developing public relations skills in the training of principals. Prior to their appointments, principals receive no formal training to prepare them for their roles as principals nor are their public relations skills taken into account in the evaluation procedures used to promote them to posts as principals of secondary schools.

Since a great number of tasks performed by the principal require public relations skills, it would be reasonable to expect that a significant proportion of in-service training for principals should focus on aspects of good public relations practice. If principals do not receive adequate training in public relations practice then the problem would be compounded.

The foregoing discussion of the problem and related issues thus raises concerns for managers and administrators of secondary schools about the need for school public relations. It is in this light that the present study

focuses on the role of the secondary school principal as public relations manager of his school.

#### 1.4. Objectives of the study

The purposes of this study may be listed as follows:

- i. To establish the extent to which HoD secondary school principals have received formal training or in-service training in public relations;
- ii. To determine the degree to which HoD secondary school principals feel they are competent in meeting the demands of their public relations functions;
- iii. To determine the degree to which HoD secondary school teachers perceive their principals as being competent in their public relations functions;
- iv. To establish the extent to which principals have co-ordinated public relations activities at their schools in the form of carefully planned, written public relations programmes;
- v. To assess the degree to which principals are

prepared to deal with crises which involve public relations issues and activities.

It is hoped that this study will highlight some of the weaknesses and problems in current PR practices in HoD schools and suggest how these may be overcome.

#### 1.5. Methods used in the study

It was intended to include participant observation and interviews with principals as methods of data collection. However, the researcher's intention to collect data for evaluative analysis during 1991 was thwarted owing to two main problems:

Firstly, there were two major disruptions resulting in loss of academic teaching time at HoD schools in 1991. The first was the defiance campaign, called by the Teachers' Association of South Africa (TASA), against the HoD promotional and merit evaluation systems. This led to the loss of five weeks' teaching time in the first term. The second crisis arose in the second term as a result of the Sneller Services Cleaners' strike when some schools had to close for up to two weeks owing to unhygienic conditions developing at the schools. Since much school time had been lost,

principals who had been approached were reluctant to allow the researcher into their schools, with or without permission from the HoD. Some principals expressed the concern that research activity was likely to hamper their efforts to implement strategies to make up for lost teaching time and restore order at their schools;

Secondly, the researcher could not obtain two month's study leave, which was needed for participant observation, as he had been given standard ten teaching allocations. (The HoD grants teachers study leave with the proviso that they should not be teaching senior classes in the year or term in which leave is requested.)

Consequently, the intended research methodology had to be revised to include a questionnaire survey and structured interviews:

Questionnaires (Appendix 3) were sent to 61 principals and acting-principals in HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area. An 88,5% return was received of which a random sample of 20 (roughly one third of the total population sample) was selected for analysis.

Structured interviews (Appendix 4) were held with ten teachers, each from different HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

Owing to the problems outlined above, the number of interviewees was limited to ten and the interviews were arranged informally and unofficially as the occasion presented itself.

#### 1.6. Definition of terms and abbreviations

For the purpose of this study, the following terms and abbreviations need to be established:

he: the universal pronoun 'he', in all its forms, is used throughout this dissertation for the purpose of expediency and is not intended as a slight on the feminist view on the need for gender-neutral pronouns.

HoD: House of Delegates.

House of Delegates: One of the three administrative houses in the racially-segregated tricameral parliamentary system in South Africa. This house, among other functions, controls the provision for education of pupils of Indian descent.

Image-building: The concern of public relations practice to develop and maintain the reputation of an organization. In the context of education, this would refer to the school's reputation in the community as an educational institution in terms of its co-curricular achievements (e.g. sport) and its curricular (academic) standards and achievements.

principal: refers to the heads or principals of HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

PTA: Parent-Teacher Association.

PTSA: Parent-Teacher-Student Association.

publics: In the context of PR practice, this refers to significant people both within (internal public) and without (external public) the organization.

The internal public of a school would include all levels of staff, as well as the pupils of the school.

The external public of the school would include all interested persons outside the school such as parents, community leaders, ex-pupils, managers of local industrial and commercial enterprises, subject advisors, superintendents of education, and other officials from the education department all of whom need to be concerned about management and administration in schools.

Public relations (PR): "Public relations practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization and the public's interest."

school: refers to the House of Delegates secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

secondary school: refers to schools which provide education for pupils who have completed at least seven years of education at a primary school. Pupils complete standards six to ten at a secondary school.

SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers' Union.

TASA: Teachers' Association of South Africa.

teacher: refers to level one educators teaching at HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

### 1.7. Outline of the study

In this Chapter the problem and related issues were discussed. The objectives and methodology of the study were outlined and the definition of terms and abbreviations used in the study were given.

The focus in Chapter 2 is the practice of school public relations through a review of related literature. Specific attention is drawn to the training of the principal for his role as the public relations manager of his school. The need for a written, well-planned school public relations programme is explored in relation to school public relations issues such as communication with the publics of the school, fund-raising, coping with crises and image-building.

The methodology of the study is discussed in Chapter 3. The issues to be researched are outlined and the choice, design and administration of the research instruments, viz. the Questionnaire and Structured Interview Schedule, are discussed.

In Chapter 4 the research findings are analyzed and the results of the research are reported. The researcher's conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter 5.



ENDNOTES

1. Although at present it is primarily the House of Assembly schools (catering largely for the White population group) which have begun this trend, it is very likely that the House of Delegates schools will also need to follow suit in the near future.

2. *Integration* of pupils was one of the steps taken by the Nationalist government in its efforts to dismantle *apartheid* in South Africa. Schools under the respective controls of the tricameral parliamentary Houses of Assembly, Representatives and Delegates officially permitted their schools to enrol underprivileged pupils of other races, in particular, Black pupils.

3. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1989): E.C. Circular Minute A1 of 1989, Annexure A.

4. This definition was adopted at the first World Assembly of Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico City in December 1978. Quoted in Skinner, J.C. & Von Essen, L.M. (1988): South African handbook of public relations, p.1. and in Newsom, 'D. et. al. (1989): This is PR: The realities of public relations, p.7.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN SCHOOLS

#### 2.1. Introduction

For decades public relations practice has been loosely defined as deliberately planned activity which attempts to develop and sustain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Public relations practice involves activities such as fund-raising, communicating with the publics of the organization, dealing with crises and promoting a positive image of the organization.

Unfortunately, however, public relations practice has been viewed with suspicion as it has often been incorrectly associated with propaganda, publicity stunts, false advertising, gimmicks and deliberate attempts to hide the truth by creating a falsely glorified image of the organization.

At the first World Assembly of Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico City in December 1978, the following definition of public relations practice (PR) was adopted:

"Public relations practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizations' leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization and the public's interest."<sup>1</sup>

This is the definition which will be used for the purposes of this dissertation.

In identifying an institution's "publics" D. Newsom et al. state that "There is no such thing as the 'general public'. It is collections of publics that create an environment of 'public opinion'." They define publics as referring to, "...audiences for public relations...any group of people tied together , however loosely, by some common bond of interest or concern."

In public relations practice, the term "publics" refers to individuals and other organizations that have a vested interest in the organization. The publics of an organization may include all those with whom it comes into contact both within and without the organization.

Educational institutions need to develop co-operative relationships with their publics both within and without the organization. "In the kind of open society we live in today, secondary schools cannot exist as islands unto

themselves. They are at the centre of a web of intricate relationships with outside bodies...." <sup>3</sup> such as higher educational authorities, parents (PTA's, PTSA's and Education Committees), alumni or ex-student societies, primary feeder schools, other secondary schools, tertiary institutions (universities, colleges and technikons), the media (local press and radio), local industry and commercial organizations. These outside bodies constitute the school's external publics.

Furthermore, secondary schools have to consider their relationships with their internal publics, namely, staff (such as teachers, clerks and caretakers), pupils and pupil bodies (such as Pupil Representative Councils, clubs and societies).

Owing to this diversity of the school's relationships with its internal and external publics there is a need for planned, preferably written, public relations programmes in secondary schools as a means of sustaining meaningful relationships with these publics and as a means of promoting school effectiveness. Reasons for this are discussed in greater detail in the next section of this Chapter.

Moreover, this also raises concern for the training of the

principal as Public Relations Manager of a secondary school. Meaningful and purposeful public relations practice at a school can only be possible if the principal has been adequately trained to fulfil his public relations responsibilities. Adequate training would ensure that the principal takes informed public relations decisions so that public relations practice does not take place on an ad hoc basis in reaction to circumstances.

## 2.2. School PR as a planned strategic programme

A school public relations programme needs to be well-planned because, without clear guidelines, activities may overlap or even contradict each other. Every effort ought to be made to examine the short-term and long-term needs of both the school and its publics. G. McCloskey asserts that, "Effective effort to create and maintain public understanding requires careful, long-range planning. Since attitudes and opinions evolve slowly and modern communication is so complex, poorly planned effort will be misdirected and may even contribute to public misunderstanding."

Public relations should be intentional, not a haphazard series of activities. Canfield and Moore state that,

"Effective PR is not an emergency or transitory activity, but a continuous effort to interpret an institution to the public , to secure its understanding and goodwill....PR is not a substitute for good management or a cure-all for poor policies, products or services."

In other words, sound public relations practice is an on-going process. It involves the careful planning of a public relations programme. Aims and objectives are identified and activities are organized in accordance with these aims and objectives. This process also requires that the programme of activities is monitored and evaluated regularly so that activities may be adjusted or adapted to fulfil their purpose.

A public relations programme should be clear and accessible to staff members of an organization. It should be seen as a means of fulfilling the principle aims and objectives of the organization. A sound, well-planned public relations programme would be a significant tool in the hands of a manager, who is responsible for ensuring that the machinery of his organization operates effectively.

For this reason the public relations programme at a school needs to take the form of written strategies and plans of action.

### 2.2.1. Identification of a school mission

Central to a school's PR programme is the identification of a school mission or guiding sense of purpose. J. Higgins claims that, "Because many of our schools had lost --- or never clearly defined --- a unique, guiding sense of purpose, they ended up making decisions not from a response to eloquent arguments, or a sense of mission, but out of a response to sheer pressure --- internal or external." <sup>6</sup> Therefore, the school mission should be intentional and not a response to pressure, and the mission should be highlighted in a written plan of action.

C.A. Schoenfeld identifies the following four main types of missions in public relations practice:

- i. general support: the continuous release of public information about an institution so as to develop a broad interest and understanding;
- ii. specific support: the concentrated release of materials publicising a particular project or achievement;
- iii. reinforcing: the co-ordinated promotion of a previously established point of view;

iv. interdictory: calculated attacks on misunderstandings, present or potential.

Schoenfeld adds that these missions are mutually supporting and mutually exclusive, and an institution may be engaged in all four types simultaneously.

In the context of the secondary school and for the purposes of this dissertation, other more specific school missions, related to the promotion of school effectiveness, may be identified. These include:

- i. securing financial support to ensure the maintenance of standards of education and the very survival of the school;
- ii. in the face of environmental turbulence, developing strategies to meet crises that may confront the school;
- iii. in considering socio-economic and political changes in South Africa, meeting the educational demands of these changes and developing strategies to deal with multi-cultural issues resulting from educational *integration*.



These specific issues which may constitute school missions are discussed in greater detail in the last section of this Chapter.

#### 2.2.2. Developing a school PR programme

McCloskey suggests the following steps for developing an educational public relations programme:

1. Establish a policy (mission);
2. Define objectives in terms of:
  - current and future needs,
  - criticisms and misunderstandings which need to be addressed,
  - what information people need to be given in order to clear criticisms and misunderstandings,
  - which members of staff can best perform various communication functions for the fulfilment of individual objectives;
3. Differentiate between long-term and short-term objectives;
4. Gather facts about what the publics know or believe and organize this information into themes;

5. Formulate plans of action based on these themes;

6. Set dates for implementation of plans of action. -

In addition to these suggestions, the researcher feels that the following two crucial considerations should be included in the development of a school PR programme:

Firstly, establishing written contingency plans to meet the needs of a variety of possible crises;

Secondly, establishing methods of monitoring public relations activities as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the PR programme.

### 2.3. The principal as public relations manager

"Whereas the job of public relations may someday be assigned to a specially trained person, today's principal is still held accountable for it in his or her school. The principal is the major source of information regarding school programmes and activities."

Public relations in the secondary school is an important managerial function of the school principal. The successful

fulfilment of this managerial function, however, impinges on a variety of leadership qualities that principals need to develop through training and practice. These include:

- i. human relations skills to manage adults;
- ii. the art of communication (verbal and non-verbal) which also includes his being open to communication from staff, pupils and parents;
- iii. the ability to manage resources (human, financial and time);
- iv. the ability to conceptualise, implement and monitor a school mission; <sup>10</sup>
- v. predictability or consistency in leadership style so that staff know what he does or does not expect of them;
- vi. the ability to provide strong instructional leadership particularly if the context is such that staff morale is low or if the school is situated in a turbulent environment; <sup>11</sup>
- vii. the ability to conduct meetings successfully;

xvi. facilitate structured development programmes as a means of enhancing the quality of teaching, encouraging professional growth of teachers <sup>15</sup> and guiding teaching staff to the fulfilment of the school mission.

#### 2.4. Training principals for their role as PR managers

The diversity and complexity of the principal's public relations functions suggests that training, both formal and informal, is vital if principals are to develop appropriate public relations skills.

Brandwie et al. suggest that there are several areas of preparation for the prospective school principal. The following list is illustrative rather than all inclusive:

- change, innovation, diffusion;
- curriculum instruction;
- effective communication;
- human relations;
- learning environment;
- negotiation;
- organization and development;
- political science;
- problem solving;

- research and evaluation;
- school law;
- social awareness;
- systems analysis for educational planning. <sup>16</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that, nationally and internationally, secondary school principals receive little or no training in public relations skills. Many principals are promoted to their posts on the basis of an evaluation of their curricular efficiency and administrative skills; and in-service training programmes provided for them usually focuses on administrative matters to the exclusion of important managerial concerns such as public relations.

Arnold Jennings asserts that, "...people are usually appointed to this position (as principals)...without one minute's training or preparation for the job. Learning on-the-job is all very well, but the proverb, seldom quoted in full, is *experientia stultos docet*; it is only fools who learn by experience, wise men do not have to learn of the existence of every brick wall by banging their noses into it." <sup>17</sup> If every principal is expected to learn on-the-job, without any training, then the management of schools and, indeed, public relations practice at schools, is likely to be rather haphazard.

The present criteria for evaluation of candidates for promotion to posts as principals of HoD secondary schools excludes an evaluation of the public relations skills of these candidates. <sup>18</sup> It would follow that, seeing that prospective principals receive no formal training prior to their appointments, there is little likelihood of their having received training in public relations (unless self-initiated) prior to their appointment as secondary school principals.

## 2.5. Public relations for school effectiveness

For the purposes of this study, attention is focused on the following areas of concern for public relations as a means of promoting school effectiveness in HoD secondary schools, namely: financial public relations, crisis public relations and issues related to image-building.

### 2.5.1. Financial public relations

Central to the survival of any educational institution is sufficient funding being available for the day-to-day running of the institution. For many decades, education has been largely funded by the State in varying proportions

according to the four main race groupings in South Africa.

A study by the South African Institute of Race Relations on State expenditure on education for various financial years between 1969/70 and 1991/92 revealed the following:

Education expenditure on Blacks improved substantially between 1969/70 and 1991/92. Whereas expenditure on African education constituted 16% of the total education budget in 1969/70, it constituted 48% of the total education budget in 1991/92. White expenditure decreased from 70% of the education budget in 1969/70 to 33% in the 1991/92 budget. Between the 1990/91 and 1991/92 financial years, expenditure on African education increased by 33%, compared to an increase of 12% for Coloured education, 17% for Indian education and 8% for White education. <sup>19</sup>

Despite this evidence of endeavours by the State to address inequalities in education, regular reports in the media suggest that vast disparities in State expenditure on the education of pupils of different race groups still exist. For instance, The Weekly Mail quotes the following 1990 figures on what the State spends per annum (quoted in South African rands) on each secondary school pupil for each of the race groups:<sup>20</sup>

WHITE - R4170

INDIAN - R3340

COLOURED - R2630

BLACK - R1300

As a result of national and international calls for equalisation in State-funding of education, it seems unlikely that the State would be able to bring its allocation of education funds for the Black, Coloured and Indian race groups in line with its allocation of funds for the White race group.

According to projections made by the Education Foundation and the Research Triangle Institute, "equalizing State expenditure per pupil at present White levels will consume over fifty percent of the entire national budget by (the year) 2000...." <sup>21</sup>

It seems obvious that the State would not be able to afford such an expenditure and the burden for funding of education is likely to shift to parents, who would be required to pay rapidly escalating school fees,<sup>22</sup> and to schools, which would need to engage in fund-raising drives, so that standards are maintained and the institutions of learning survive a lengthy economic drought.

At present fund-raising at schools is cursory. Popular methods of fund-raising include organizing debutantes'



balls, variety concerts, fairs, fetes, fun-walks, cake sales and raffles. However, with the prospect of diminishing financial resources, schools will have to look to new sources of income and organize a larger variety of fund-raising activities on a regular basis. This, in turn, will require schools to develop innovative financial public relations programmes.

Industrial corporations are a source of financial assistance that have been greatly neglected by State controlled schools. Corporates can play a significant role in assisting schools financially. It is for the school to find ways of showing an industrial company how financial investments in the school can be mutually beneficial to the school and the company. Examples of industrial "gifts" may include the following:

- i. The school can offer special courses designed to meet the future manpower needs of a company. Funds provided by this company to support the teaching of these special courses can be arranged on a contractual or endowment basis;
- ii. Some companies may be willing to sponsor scholarships for the children of their employees or even provide additional grants to the school their

employees' children attend. <sup>23</sup>

Schools should also look to foundations, educational trusts and individual donors as sources of financial assistance. L.R. Blumenthal suggests that there would be much appeal in naming a project after a donor. It not only appeals to the donor's vanity but it also reminds the donor of his mortality and appeals to his desire to be remembered after death. <sup>24</sup>

Clearly, fund-raising will be an important aspect of the school's public relations programme in the years to come. Without careful planning and concerted efforts to raise funds, a school is unlikely to survive the impending financial drought that is affecting the South African economy and, indeed, the funding of education in South Africa.

#### 2.5.2. Crisis public relations

"Since the dawn of history, social institutions responsible for education of children and youths have been prime targets of criticism, particularly during times of social unrest or upheaval such as an economic depression, loss of face from not being the first in something, embarrassment

from a propaganda disadvantage, or internal civil rights or interracial conflicts." 25

South Africa is indeed in troubled times. Since the pupil boycotts of the 1980's the education crisis has steadily worsened and seems to have peaked with teacher action campaigns in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

In addition to the effect political unrest has had on the crisis in education, there are a variety of other crises a school may face. These include:

- i. natural disasters such as floods and fires where the school premises may have to be evacuated;
- ii. police investigations involving staff or pupils of the school, for instance, assault charges being laid by a parent or pupil against a teacher, or pupils being involved in gang warfare;
- iii. accidents both in and out of school involving staff or pupils e.g. sport injuries sustained at a school-organized event or pupils being injured while being transported in a bus hired by the school;
- iv. outbreaks of contagious diseases which may require staff or pupils to be quarantined;
- v. life-threatening situations such as bombs being planted in the school;
- vi. occurrences which may require the closure of school, for instance, cuts in the supply of water or

electricity.

It is at times like these that schools need to mobilise and respond rationally in accordance with clear plans of action. For this purpose there is a need for written public relations strategies and contingency measures.

B.W. Hunter asserts that crises generally do not appear suddenly, they can be anticipated:

"Crises are not just the lightning that strikes without warning. Storms don't strike without warning. There are rumblings on the horizon. There is a dark cloud of threat...thunder of mounting criticism...flurry of sparks and lightning attacks...pounding hailstones of accusations... and sooner or later, the soaking --- financial or public opinion-wise --- from outpourings of negative sentiment." <sup>26</sup>

Schools should anticipate possible crises and plan appropriate contingency measures to deal with these crises. In planning a crisis public relations programme some consideration should be given to the following:

- i. the appointment of a school spokesman, ideally the principal himself, or a senior member of management staff in the absence of the principal. The spokesman should be well-informed, responsible and capable of

responding to outside enquiries from parents and the media;

ii. the development of a good communication structure with open lines of communication to emergency support organizations and concerned publics, such as parents, to minimise delays and avoid misunderstandings;

iii. halting speculation and conjecture and releasing confirmed information to interested parties such as parents and the media;

iv. dispelling public misinformation or rumour about causes or consequences when the crisis has passed.

#### 2.5.3. The image of the school

"Every institution that prospers does so in part because it possesses a unique identity, a coherent sense of self, and a unified purpose." <sup>27</sup> A school should be concerned about the image it creates amongst its publics. This image should emphasize the school's uniqueness and should include the school's reputation as an educational institution.

The image of the school as an educational institution should include its reputation for producing consistent high academic standards. The publics of the school should be made aware of the school's concerted efforts to further the

quality of academic education by motivating staff and pupils to improve and maintain high standards of teaching at the school.

Moreover, the image of the school as an educational institution should also focus on its extra-curricular achievements in sport, academic olympiads, speech contests, etc. The school should be seen as being regularly involved in extra-curricular activity in order to develop and broaden the 'all-round' education of its pupils.

In 1991 HoD schools became racially integrated. Traditionally, HoD schools catered for the education of pupils of Indian descent. It is anticipated that racial integration will create new demands on the public relations skills of the principal as manager of his school owing to the following:

Firstly, the legacy of apartheid practices and racial discrimination is still prevalent in society and, indeed, amongst pupils today. A principal may have to contend with dealing with sensitive issues relating to racial tensions amongst pupils at his school.

Secondly, many of the non-Indian pupils, in particular Black pupils, presently enrolled at HoD schools have previously studied English as a second language and are now required to study English as a first language.

Many of these pupils had previously attended primary schools where the mother tongue, such as Zulu, was the medium of instruction as well as the first language studied. At HoD secondary schools these pupils will be studying a variety of courses where English is the medium of instruction. The principal will have to consider addressing shortfalls in these pupils' language skills to ensure that these pupils learn effectively at his school.

Thirdly, many of the Black pupils presently enrolled at HoD schools seem to come from indigent backgrounds and it is possible the principal may have to take into consideration specific problems peculiar to these pupils. For instance, some pupils travel great distances by train, bus and taxi to come to school and lose several hours in travel time. In some cases, many pupils cannot afford to purchase the full complement of the school uniform.

In dealing with the new dynamics of multicultural concerns stemming from racial *integration* the school should be actively involved in:

- i. creating programmes, such as cultural workshops, to promote cultural understanding among pupils;
- ii. identifying educational problems being experienced

by new pupils, for example language competency problems of Black pupils, and developing assistance programmes, such as special language competence classes, as a means of addressing these problems;

iii. meeting parents of new pupils to discuss their expectations and the progress their children may be making;

iv. setting up welfare, scholarship and bursary funds to assist pupils coming from indigent backgrounds who may require financial assistance.

The diversity and sensitivity of issues which relate to the image of the school require careful planning in the implementation of image-building. Image-building should involve a process of self-examination before a school's strengths are highlighted by its image-building programme.

## 2.6. Summary

This Chapter has focused on the practice of school public relations through a review of related literature. The need for careful planning, and written strategies and plans of action for a school public relations programme, in accordance with the "mission" of the school, was emphasized. The role of the school principal as the public relations manager of his school was discussed and emphasis



was placed on the training of principals to improve their public relations skills. Finally, public relations practice was discussed in terms of being a means of promoting school effectiveness. Special attention was devoted to financial public relations, crisis public relations and the process of image-building.

In the next Chapter, the methodology employed in the study will be discussed with reasons.

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20. Maurice, P. (1992): "Educational Review: The rands and cents of schooling" in The Weekly Mail (July 10-16), p.28.

21. Cited in Bradock-Walters, P. (1992): "Educational Review: Insights into tomorrow" in The Weekly Mail (July 10-16), p.34.

22. April 1992 figures show that House of Assembly schools, operating under the 'Model C' form of educational *integration* system, require parents to pay exorbitant school fees ranging from R800 to R1750.

Cited in Maurice, P. (1992): "Educational Review: It's pay up, pay up, pay up for parents" in The Weekly Mail (July 10-16), p.29.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

Responsible research requires a researcher to make every possible attempt to verify his findings and to provide reliable results.

Cohen and Manion advise that *triangulation*, that is, "the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour", is one means of verifying and securing greater reliability of results. <sup>1</sup>

The term *triangulation* is derived from the maritime navigational practice of using two or more location markers or points to map out a third. By analogy, educational research may use triangular techniques "...to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one stand point..." This may include a multi-method approach using both quantitative and qualitative data. <sup>2</sup>

The researcher intended to adopt the descriptive and evaluative approaches to analyze data collected. For this reason, it was the intention of the researcher to include

as many sources of data available to him by means of:

- i. participant observation of the public relations practices of at least three HoD secondary schools;
- ii. interviews with principal and staff at these schools;
- iii. an examination of accessible documentary evidence such as staff circulars, newsletters, bulletin reports, minutes of meetings and other forms of written documents relating to public relations (PR) practice;
- iv. observation of meetings held at the school such as staff meetings and Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) meetings.

It was hoped that these methods of data collection would meet the need for *triangulation* for verification of the findings of the study. However, for reasons which have been outlined in the first Chapter, these intentions were not possible to fulfil. It was finally decided that the most feasible research instruments for the study were the Questionnaire (Appendix 3) and the Structured Interview Schedule (Appendix 4).

The questionnaire survey was effected between August and September 1990 after permission had been granted by the HoD for Questionnaires to be administered to principals and

acting-principals at 61 secondary schools in the greater Durban area (Appendix 1).

The structured interviews were held in the first six months of 1992. The interviewees were ten teachers teaching at ten different HoD secondary schools.

### 3.2. Issues to be researched

Central to this research is the spotlight focused on the school principal as the public relations manager of his school. As the head of his institution, the principal is directly responsible for communication to all the publics of his school to whom he is held accountable for all matters concerning the school. In this respect, the study is intended to:

- i. establish the extent to which HoD secondary school principals have received formal training or in-service training in public relations;
- ii. determine the degree to which HoD secondary school principals feel they are competent in meeting the demands of their public relations functions;
- iii. determine the degree to which HoD secondary school teachers perceive their principals as being



competent in their public relations functions;

iv. establish the extent to which principals have co-ordinated public relations activities at their schools in the form of carefully planned, written public relations programmes;

v. assess the degree to which principals are prepared to deal with crises which involve public relations issues and activities.

The study focuses on four issues that may be broadly viewed as important considerations for public relations practice at the level of the school. These include:

i. financial concerns such as fund-raising;

ii. the probability of unexpected crises and the extent to which principals have planned contingency measures in the event of a crisis arising;

iii. communication with the publics of the school to keep them informed about school activities and to dispel any rumour or misinformation;

iv. the image of the school as an educational

institution with respect to the quality of education it provides to its pupils to cater for their needs and the needs of the community and industry. The image of the school will also be studied with some focus on multi-cultural concerns, <sup>3</sup> which may have arisen since HoD schools became officially *integrated* in 1991.

### 3.3. Choice of research instruments

The research instruments selected for this study were the Questionnaire (Appendix 3) and the Structured Interview Schedule (Appendix 4). The former, it was felt, would provide information and data of a factual nature, while the latter was likely to verify findings and provide some basis for an evaluation of research findings.

#### 3.3.1. The Questionnaire

There is much evidence in literature of the many limitations of the mailed Questionnaire. However, Cohen and Manion recommend the mailed Questionnaire as an instrument for conducting educational surveys where there are constraints on finances and resources available to the researcher. <sup>4</sup> Since this study was personally funded by the researcher, the mailed Questionnaire seemed the most

economical means of data collection.

A second reason why the mailed Questionnaire was favoured was that it was likely to ensure the anonymity of respondents, since they were not required to identify themselves in the Questionnaire nor were they expected to personally submit their completed Questionnaires to the researcher, who would be able to identify them.

Thirdly, it was felt that since most respondents were likely to be well-educated, and since the Questionnaire would be pretested for clarity and the elimination of ambiguities, respondents would experience little difficulty in understanding instructions and answering questions in the Questionnaire.

### 3.3.2. The interview

There were four reasons for the inclusion of interviews as a research instrument in the present investigation:

Firstly, the interview method of data collection, it was felt, would provide meaningful information which would allow for evaluative interpretation of the public relations practice of school principals.

Secondly, since the interviews were intended to glean information from the perspective of teachers, such information would probably be given more honestly and candidly than the responses of principals to the Questionnaire. Principals' responses were likely to be limited because of personal bias and the highly structured and closed nature of the Questionnaire. Principals and teachers are likely to be more open in interviews, than in their disclosures of personal values and attitudes to questions in impersonal questionnaires. T.M. Kitwood asserts that:

...in an interpersonal encounter people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values, than they would in a less human situation. At least for some purposes, it is necessary to generate a kind of conversation in which the 'respondent' feels at ease. In other words, the distinctively human element in the interview is necessary to its 'validity'. 7

Thirdly, since it was not possible to include participant observation in the study, the interview method was seen as the most suitable alternative.

Isaac & Michael suggest that the interview method permits a select number of schools to be viewed as case studies. 8 Each interviewee could provide the researcher with valuable

insight into the ethos that prevails at his school. Data gathered from the interview may be analyzed against the backdrop of the school ethos.

Fourthly, the inclusion of the structured interview would be a means of providing *triangulation* for verification of the findings from the questionnaire survey.

#### 3.4. Design of the research instruments

The Questionnaire and Structured Interview Schedule were designed to complement each other for purposes of verifying the findings in each method of data collection.

Since the interview was designed after data had been collected from the questionnaire survey, points that needed clarification were included in the Interview Schedule.

A step-by-step description of each question in the Questionnaire and Interview Schedule has been excluded from this discussion since they are considered to be self-explanatory.

In broad terms, the Questionnaire was designed to elicit information pertaining to the following:

- i. personal particulars such as the principal's

qualifications and managerial training and experience;

- ii. public relations practice at the school with specific reference to the means of communication with both the internal and external publics of the school;
- iii. fund-raising activities undertaken by the school and the purposes for which these funds were raised;
- iv. crisis public relations and the types of contingency measures that have been planned;
- v. whether a planned, written public relations programme exists at the school and, if so, its nature and scope;
- vi. the present image of the school as an educational institution and steps taken to improve or maintain this image.

The interview was structured so that it was similar to the Questionnaire in form and content. The Structured Interview Schedule elicited the same types of information as listed above with, however, the following exceptions:

Firstly, interviewees were not expected to know the personal particulars and qualifications of their principals; instead, they were asked to give their impressions of their principals as managers of their schools;

Secondly, there were two new inclusions which had not been included in the Questionnaire, viz. multi-

cultural problems that might have arisen as a result of racial integration at schools, and the nature of the school's relationship with parent bodies such as the PTA or the PTSA.

### 3.5. Administration of the Questionnaire

#### 3.5.1. Description of the population to be surveyed

In 1990 there were 141 Indian secondary schools controlled by the HoD in South Africa, 62 of which were situated in the greater Durban area.

The population, to be included in the questionnaire survey, was all secondary school principals and acting-principals in the greater Durban area, that is, all those HoD-controlled schools which fall under the "031" telephone dialling code.

Of the 62 Indian secondary schools in the greater Durban area, one school was excluded from the sample. This exclusion was the school at which the Questionnaire Pretest was conducted.

Therefore, the total population to be included in the questionnaire survey sample were the principals (or acting principals) of 61 HoD-controlled secondary schools in the

greater Durban area.

### 3.5.2. The Questionnaire Pretest

The Draft Questionnaire was pretested. Nisbet and Entwistle advise that the pretest or pilot sample should be similar to the group from which the sample will be selected. <sup>9</sup>

The pretest sample included a retired secondary school principal, a senior deputy principal and a principal of a secondary school. All these responses were excluded from the sample to be used in the study.

The pretest proved useful in identifying ambiguities in the questions and instructions and these were subsequently modified for clarity.

### 3.5.3. Procedure for data collection

A letter requesting permission to conduct research was sent to the HoD, Department of Education and Culture, on 6 December 1989. Permission was granted on 12 June 1990 (Appendix 1).

On 10 August 1990 questionnaires (Appendix 3) were mailed to the principals of 61 HoD secondary schools in the



greater Durban area. In the letter (Appendix 2) attached to the Questionnaire, principals were invited to assist in the research and were requested to submit their completed Questionnaires by 7 September 1990.

In order to ensure a high response rate, the following measures were adopted, some of which have been previously alluded to:

- i. respondents were assured of anonymity;
- ii. every possible attempt was made to produce a questionnaire that was clear, unambiguous and presentably neat in its layout;
- iii. respondents were given 30 days in which to complete and return the questionnaires;
- iv. respondents were supplied with stamped, self-addressed envelopes to submit their returns.

By 30 August 1990, 44 completed questionnaires had been returned (i.e. a response rate of 72,1%). After telephonic reminders were made, ten further responses were received by the end of September, resulting in a total of 54 questionnaires having been returned (i.e. a response rate of 88,5%).

Only one return was found to be not usable. This left a usable return of 53 (86,8%).

#### 3.5.4. Sampling procedure

As a measure of expediency, it was decided that the size of the sample to be used for analysis would be twenty, that is, roughly one third of the total population of the area surveyed.

The usable returns from the questionnaire survey were each allocated a number ranging from 1 to 53. Twenty numbers were drawn at random and these were to form the sample for analysing of the questionnaire survey.

#### 3.6. Administration of the interviews

Owing to the difficulties outlined in the first Chapter, each interview was conducted on an ad hoc basis as the occasion presented itself, and was restricted to teachers who were either friends or acquaintances of the researcher. Only two teachers in the sample were not formerly known to the researcher: one he met at a sports meeting and the other at a SADTU (teachers' union) meeting; both agreed, without reservation, to be interviewed.

In the course of the first six months of 1992, ten

interviews were conducted among teachers teaching at different secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

The only prerequisite was that the interviewee had taught at his present school for a minimum of four years. This prerequisite was felt to be necessary, since interviewees had to have taught at their schools long enough to be able to comment on the issues tested in the interview.

All the interviewees participated unofficially, that is, without consulting their principals or the Department of Education. Individual interviews were conducted informally over luncheon or dinner at either a restaurant or at the researcher's home.

Every attempt was made to make the interviewee feel comfortable and at ease. All interviewees were assured of anonymity and that the information they provided would be treated as strictly confidential and would be used for research purposes only.

Owing to their informal nature, interviews ranged in length from two hours over luncheon to five hours over dinner. Data was collected in the form of field notes and, in the case of open-ended questions, answers were elaborated by the researcher on the day following the interview.

### 3.7. Procedure for analysis of data

Data derived from the questionnaires, sent to principals, will provide the basis for the research findings since the main focus of this study is the public relations role of the school principal from a management perspective. These research findings will be verified by data gleaned from the structured interviews with teachers wherever possible.

Moser and Kalton state that:

... a glance through a selection of survey reports will show that analysis often does not go much beyond descriptions, percentages, averages and measures of dispersion, supplemented by suitable diagrams. <sup>10</sup>

Since this study is descriptive and qualitative in nature, the only method of quantitative analysis of data will be the use of percentages and where appropriate these will be presented in tables.

### 3.8. Summary

In this Chapter the issues to be researched were outlined. The choice, design and administration of the research instruments, viz. the Questionnaire and the Structured Interview Schedule, were discussed.

Questionnaires were sent to the principals of 61 HoD secondary schools and interviews were conducted with ten teachers, each teaching at different HoD secondary schools. Twenty randomly-selected questionnaire responses and data collected from all ten interviews will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter 4.

# ENDNOTES

1. Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1989): Research Methods in Education, p.208.

2. Ibid. p.208.

3. The multi-cultural issue had not surfaced until 1991 and had not been included in the 1990 questionnaire survey. Since the researcher felt that it was a significant issue it was included in the 1992 structured interviews.

4. *Integration* refers to HoD schools officially opening their doors to enrol pupils of all races. HoD schools had previously catered for the needs of pupils of Indian (Asian) descent.

5. Moser, C. & Kalton, G. (1971): Survey Methods in Social Investigation, Chapter II.

6. Op. cit. p.84.

7. Kitwood, T.M. (1977): Values in adolescent life: towards a critical description, in Cohen & Manion, op. cit. pp.252-253.

8. Isaac, S. & Michael, W.B. (1972): Handbook in research and evaluation, p.147.

9. Nisbet, J.D. & Entwistle, N.J. (1970): Educational Research Methods, p.39.

10. Op. cit. p.44.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 3 it was stated that the research was conducted by questionnaires mailed to 61 principals and structured interviews with ten teachers at HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area. In this Chapter the results of the research will be reported.

The issues to be analyzed and discussed pertain to public relations as a managerial function of the school principal.

These issues include:

- i. academic qualifications;
- ii. criteria used in evaluating principals;
- iii. in-service training;
- iv. communication with the publics of the school;
- v. fund-raising;
- vi. crisis public relations;
- vii. the image of the school.

The analysis will focus on the random sample of 20 questionnaire responses made by principals and, wherever necessary, comparisons will be made with teacher responses



to similar questions in the structured interviews so that findings may be verified.

#### 4.2. General descriptions of the samples analyzed

The first five items in the Questionnaire were intended to provide a description of respondents with respect to their personal particulars, positions presently held, and their length of service in the teaching profession. It is felt that this data will be of significance in the analysis of responses to questions posed later in the Questionnaire.

The questionnaire sample consisted of 20 respondents, all of whom were male. Fourteen respondents were principals and six were acting principals. All respondents had been in the teaching profession for at least 16 years. Fifteen respondents (75%) had between 26 and 35 years of experience in the teaching profession. Three respondents (15%) had over 35 years of experience and two respondents (10%) between 16 and 25 years of experience.

The structured interview sample comprised 10 secondary school teachers, each teaching at different schools. Six interviewees were male and four interviewees were female. All interviewees had taught at their present schools for more than four years. It was felt that these interviewees

had taught for a satisfactory length of time to be able to comment on public relations practice at their schools.

In response to the question on how long an interviewee had served under the leadership of his present principal (Question 4. in the Interview Schedule):

six interviewees (60%) indicated that they had served under their principals for four years or longer;

three interviewees (30%) had taught under their principals for two completed years;

one interviewee indicated that his principal had been newly appointed to the school and he, therefore, could not comment fully on questions relating directly to his present principal as he had only known him for a period of five months. He did, however, indicate that he could comment about the general public relations practice at his school in the previous four years under the leadership of his previous principal.

#### 4.3. Academic qualifications

The purpose of ascertaining the academic qualifications of the questionnaire respondents was two-fold: firstly, to determine whether they had studied public relations and secondly, to consider their qualifications in relation to other criteria used in the evaluation of prospective principals for promotion. The full academic qualifications

of principals in the sample are presented in Table I. Since some respondents had completed more than one degree or diploma the total percentage of responses exceeds 100%.

TABLE I  
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SAMPLE

DEGREE/DIPLOMA	n	%
Bachelor of Arts	17	85
Bachelor of Education	16	80
Honours (Arts)	8	40
College Education Diploma	6	30
University Education Diploma	5	25
Bachelor of Science	3	15
National Teachers' Diploma	3	15
Bachelor of Commerce	2	10
Diploma in Library Science	2	10
Remedial Education Diploma	2	10

None of the respondents had studied public relations. With regard to subjects, which the writer considers may be of assistance to principals in fulfilling their roles as public relations managers, none of the respondents had studied Marketing; one respondent (5%) had completed a course in Human Relations and another respondent (5%) had

studied Communication as part of a teaching diploma.

It is apparent from this data that respondents were lacking in formal public relations education and training. This seems to suggest that they were expected to fulfil their public relations responsibilities despite their lack of training in public relations practice.

#### 4.4. Criteria used in the evaluation of principals

Prior to their appointments, principals receive no formal training to prepare them for their roles as principals, nor are their public relations skills taken into account in the evaluation procedures used to promote them to posts as principals of secondary schools.

In 1989, a Seven Point Scale was introduced and the following are the criteria used to evaluate principals, senior deputy principals and deputy principals in House Delegates secondary schools:

- teaching experience (no points as this would have already been used for the purpose of determining seniority for candidates to qualify to apply for promotion);
- curricular efficiency (84 points);
- co-curricular efficiency (28 points);

- character and personality traits, including human relations (28 points);
- professional pride, attitude and activities (28 points);

(TOTAL POINTS = 168) <sup>1</sup>

From a total of 168 points, only 14 points (8,3%) were awarded for human relations skills, while public relations skills were not in the least considered in evaluating senior management staff of the school. This instrument of evaluation of principals and prospective principals clearly overlooks the importance of the public relations skills principals should develop to fulfil their public relations responsibilities.

The fact that prospective principals have to qualify, in terms of their seniority in service years, before they can apply for a post seems to suggest that teaching experience is the main criterion in the promotion of candidates to posts of principals. It would seem then that other qualifications of candidates are not taken into consideration initially since even a candidate, with the highest possible qualification, will be ineligible to apply for promotion if he is not regarded as suitably 'senior' in comparison with other candidates.

Moreover, few of the points awarded to candidates seem to relate directly to their future function as principals. For example, awarding 84 points to a candidate for curricular efficiency seems out of proportion in comparison with the points awarded in the other categories; a principal's curricular efficiency bears little relation to his abilities as either an administrator or a manager. With the exception of a scant reference to human relations skills, what is conspicuously absent from these evaluation criteria is an evaluation of the candidate's managerial and administrative skills.

#### 4.5. In-service training

In the absence of newly-promoted principals having received adequate formal preparation for their role functions prior to being appointed, the researcher felt it necessary to ascertain the nature and scope of the in-service training principals receive. This was the purpose of Question 8 in the Questionnaire. Did principals receive adequate in-service training or were they expected to learn on-the-job? The results of the questionnaire survey, which tested this issue, are presented in Table II and Table III.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS ATTENDED BY PRINCIPALS  
IN THE SAMPLE BETWEEN 1985 AND 1990

NO. OF WORKSHOPS	n	%
None	1	5
One	2	10
Two	-	-
Three	1	5
Four	4	20
Five	4	20
Six	3	15
Seven	2	10
Eight	1	5
Nine	-	-
Ten or more	2	10
TOTAL:		<u>100</u>

TABLE III

FREQUENCY OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING WORKSHOPS HELD FOR  
PRINCIPALS IN A SPECIFIC ZONAL AREA IN DURBAN

FREQUENCY OF WORKSHOPS	n	%
Annually	8	40
Irregularly	7	35
Twice a year	2	10
Quarterly	1	5
When the need arises	1	5
Not at all	1	5
TOTAL:		100

The data reflected in Table II and Table III suggest that in-service training for principals in all zones<sup>2</sup> in the greater Durban area is not held uniformly for all principals, nor are training workshops held regularly. Since the principals in the sample had received no formal training as principals, prior to their appointments to their posts, it may be concluded that they were expected to learn on-the-job, without a regular in-service training programme being provided for them.



In Question 8.3. respondents were asked to state the theme and indicate the approximate duration of the last five in-service training workshops they had attended. Two respondents did not answer this question. The responses of the remainder of the sample (18) is presented in Table IV.

The length of in-service training workshops attended by the sample ranged from two hours to four days in one instance. However, the majority of respondents (72,2%) indicated that the average length of workshops they had attended was between three and six hours.

While it is not within the scope of this research to evaluate the full nature and depth of these workshops, it should be noted that the main emphasis of the workshops, cited by the sample, was on administrative matters, especially pertaining to issues such regulations. Moreover, the public relations responsibilities of the school principal was clearly absent as a theme in these workshops.

TABLE IV

FREQUENCY OF THEMES OF THE LAST FIVE IN-SERVICE TRAINING  
WORKSHOPS ATTENDED BY SAMPLE

THEME	FREQUENCY	
	(n = 18)	
Administration (e.g. regulations)	15	83,3
Staff evaluation	10	55,6
Staff development	8	44,4
Leadership	5	27,8
Supervision	4	22,2
Human relations	4	22,2
Teamwork	3	16,7
Discipline	2	11,1
Crisis in education	2	11,1
Stress management	1	5,6
Communication	1	5,6
Teacher power	1	5,6
Peoples' Education	1	5,6

In Question 8.4. of the Questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they would find workshop discussions on public relations practice helpful to them, in their roles as secondary school principals. Fifteen respondents (75%) indicated that public relations workshops would assist them in their managerial duties; three respondents (15%) replied negatively, while two respondents (10%) indicated that they were uncertain.

These results are corroborated by similar findings in the interviews with teachers. In response to a similar question (Question 8 in the Structured Interview Schedule) nine interviewees (90%) indicated that their principals needed in-service training in public relations practice. One interviewee (10%) was uncertain.

From the foregoing discussion it may be concluded that both teachers and principals in the samples are in agreement that there is a need for public relations to be included as a significant topic in future in-service training workshops for principals. It has also been noted that in the absence of adequate training of principals, prior to their promotion, there is a need for an extensive in-service training programme for principals. The experiences of respondents in the questionnaire sample suggest that the present in-service training programme for principals in the

greater Durban area is inadequate and that training workshops are held infrequently.

#### 4.6. Communication with the publics of the school

In Questions 15, 16 and 17 of the Questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate how the news of the school's activities or achievements are conveyed to alumni, parents and staff of the school. These results are presented in Table V.

Questions 16, 17 and 18 in the structured interview elicited the same information from teachers. The results are presented in Table VI.

TABLE V

COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLICS OF THE SCHOOL  
(THE QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE)

Means of Communication	Target Audience/Publics					
	Alumni		Parents		Staff	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Annual newsletters	15	75	19	95	9	45
Staff meetings	-	-	-	-	19	95
Education Committee meetings	8	40	15	75	1	5
Staff bulletin board	-	-	-	-	14	70
Staff circulars	-	-	-	-	11	55
Announcements at assembly	-	-	2	10	6	30
Press releases	2	10	4	20	2	10
Letters	-	-	2	10	-	-
Messages sent via pupils	1	5	-	-	-	-
Radio	-	-	1	5	-	-
Quarterly newsletters	-	-	1	5	-	-
Monthly newsletters	-	-	-	-	-	-
No communication at all	4	20	-	-	-	-

n = 20

TABLE VI

COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLICS OF THE SCHOOL  
(THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SAMPLE)

Means of Communication	Target Audience:					
	Alumni		Parents		Staff	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Annual newsletters	1	10	9	90	6	60
Staff meetings	-	-	-	-	8	80
Education Committee meetings	-	-	4	40	-	-
Staff bulletin board	-	-	-	-	7	70
Staff circulars	-	-	-	-	9	90
Announcements at assembly	-	-	1	10	5	50
Press releases	-	-	-	-	-	-
Letters	-	-	4	40	-	-
Radio	-	-	1	10	-	-
Messages sent via pupils	1	10	2	20	-	-
Quarterly newsletters	-	-	-	-	-	-
Monthly newsletters	-	-	-	-	-	-
No communication at all	8	80	-	-	-	-

n = 10

#### 4.6.1. Communication with alumni

Tables V and VI suggest that there is a discrepancy in the results obtained from each sample concerning how schools communicate with alumni. Although 75% of the questionnaire sample indicated that the school communicated with alumni through annual newsletters, only 10% of the interview sample indicated that this was the case at their schools. Further analysis of the interview sample suggests that the result obtained from the questionnaire sample is refutable, since few schools keep mailing lists to send newsletters to alumni. None of the schools, at which the interviewees taught, kept such mailing lists nor did any of the interviewees know of other schools that did keep alumni mailing lists. Two interviewees indicated that their schools mailed newsletters to the education authorities only. It was assumed that some alumni would be afforded the chance to peruse newsletters taken home by pupils for their parents, though none of the newsletters were sent directly to alumni.

While 40% of the questionnaire respondents stated that they communicated school news to alumni at education committee meetings, none of the interview sample stated that this was so at their schools. Several interviewees stated that at their schools education committees had met infrequently in

the past, in some cases only once or twice a year. More significantly, however, 60% of the interview sample indicated that the education committees at their schools had become defunct and were in the process of being replaced by Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSA's).<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, since 80% of the interview sample and 20% of the questionnaire sample indicated that their schools did not communicate with alumni at all, it would seem that many schools pay scant regard to alumni as a significant public of the school. Yet this would not seem to be the case at the majority of private schools and tertiary education institutions, which pay greater attention to communicating with alumni and which rely on alumni for both moral and financial support. It seems probable that a reason for this apathy towards alumni at HoD secondary schools is that education is funded by the State and that these schools are therefore not dependent on their alumni and, consequently, do not view alumni as a significant public.

#### 4.6.2. Communication with parents

Tables V and VI clearly identify annual newsletters as the most favoured means of communicating with parents. However, it is questionable whether the frequency of annual



newsletters is an adequate means of keeping parents informed about school activities on a regular basis. In the view of this researcher, a solitary annual report on the school's activities for the year is likely to be filled with stale news that lacks immediacy or direct relevance. A comment by one of the interviewees is worthy of mention here:

"...they (the newsletters) are absolutely boring. I don't think parents, let alone pupils, bother to read them. We send them out because it is the tradition, because we are expected to."

If schools view issuing newsletters as a perfunctory obligation rather than a necessity, one wonders whether such publications do fulfil their purposes.

While 75% of the questionnaire sample and 40% of the interview sample indicated that news was communicated to parents at education committee meetings, this finding is dubious, since it has already been pointed out that such meetings are held infrequently and in many schools the education committee has ceased to exist.

It seems then, that many schools can improve communication with parents. At present, this communication is infrequent, cursory and often ineffective.

#### 4.6.3. Communication with staff

The results suggest that at most schools there is a fair balance of verbal and written communication between management and staff.

In both samples staff meetings were the most frequently used at schools to verbally communicate news to staff. In some instances, news was conveyed verbally to staff and pupils at the school assembly.

Both samples also indicated a high level of written communication between management and staff, the staff bulletin board and staff circulars being the most favoured methods.

The variety of methods employed to communicate news to staff seems to suggest that staff are kept informed about activities at the schools in both samples. Such communication is done frequently and, in many cases, as the need arises. Seventy percent of the interview sample indicated that the frequency of communication between management and staff at their schools was satisfactory. However, 30% of the interview sample felt that staff were not consulted often and called for greater consultation as a means of democratizing the decision-making process at their schools.

#### 4.7. Fund-raising

This section of the analysis focuses on the methods schools use to raise funds and the purposes for which these funds are raised. The discussion also considers to what extent educators feel schools should raise funds and for what purposes.

##### 4.7.1. Methods used to raise funds at schools

In Question 18.1. of the Questionnaire and Question 19.1. of the Interview Schedule, respondents were asked to indicate the methods used by their schools to raise funds over the last five years. The results are presented in Table VII and Table VIII respectively.

TABLE VII

METHODS USED TO RAISE FUNDS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS  
(THE QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE)

Fund-raising method	n	%
Debutantes' ball	19	95
Variety concerts	16	80
Fairs or fetes	10	50
Cash donations	10	50
Sponsored fun walks/races	9	45
Company sponsorships	3	15
Competitions (e.g. lucky draw)	2	10
Cake sales	1	5
Film shows	1	5

n = 20

TABLE VIII

METHODS USED TO RAISE FUNDS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS  
(THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SAMPLE)

Fund-raising method	n	%
Debutantes' ball	9	90
Variety concerts	5	50
Fairs or fetes	3	30
Cash donations	1	10
Sponsored fun walks/races	1	10
Company sponsorships	-	-
Competitions (e.g. lucky draw)	2	20
Cake sales	1	10
Film shows	-	-

n = 10

The results presented in Tables VII and VIII suggest that many schools are involved in fund-raising activity, even though education is State-funded. However, further analysis of the interview sample, suggests that these results may

not be acceptable at face value for reasons which are discussed below.

Firstly, 90% of the interviewees stated that fund-raising activity had diminished in recent years at their schools, primarily because in 1989, the then Minister of Education and Culture in the House of Delegates, Dr Kisten Rajoo, publicly criticized the practice of using pupils to raise funds for the school. Following this, E.C. Circular No. 44 of 1989 was sent to schools in the hope of curbing excessive fund-raising drives.

Clause 3 of E.C. Circular No. 44 of 1989 reads as follows:

In cases where funds need to be raised specifically for the financing of costly projects such as the provision of swimming pools, tennis courts and other facilities for the school, principals must refer such matters to their Superintendents of Education (Management) who will in turn refer the matter to the Chief Executive Director with supporting recommendation. Under no circumstances must principals proceed with fund-raising activity for these purposes without the prior written approval of the Department.\*

Although this clause does not entirely bar schools from

raising funds, many interviewees stated that their principals felt intimidated by the Circular. Consequently, many principals became more cautious and limited fund-raising activities at their schools. In one instance, an interviewee reported that his principal had cancelled the Debutantes' Ball scheduled for 1989.

The second reason for regarding the results in Tables VII and VIII with some scepticism is that although many of the respondents, in both samples, indicated that Debutantes' Balls and variety concerts had been organized by their schools, these activities may not have necessarily been intended to raise funds. Six interviewees (60%) stated that, since 1989, their schools had complied with the Circular requirements and organized these activities, not to raise funds, but to continue the school's tradition of organizing them.

There seems little doubt then that E.C. Circular No.44 of 1989 has had a significant effect in limiting fund-raising activities at HoD schools. Consequently the results presented in Tables VII and VIII may not be wholly reliable.

#### 4.7.2. Purposes for which funds were raised

In Question 18.2 of the Questionnaire and in Question 19.2. of the Interview Schedule respondents were asked to indicate the purposes or projects for which funds had been raised at their schools.

There was a similarity in the results from both research samples. The most common purpose for fund-raising activities were:

- i. To upgrade sport facilities (75% of the questionnaire responses and 80% of the interview responses);

- ii. To purchase sport equipment (80% in both samples);

Other purposes cited by respondents ranged in frequency from 5% to 30% of the samples. These include: to purchase a photocopier; garden landscaping; to purchase books for the library; to purchase awards (books or trophies); to provide transport for pupils; to purchase an inter-communication system; community charity; to purchase a public address system; to purchase audio-visual teaching aids; to provide refreshments at school functions; to purchase a carbon duplicator; to make provision for a pupil



welfare club; to bolster the school fund and to create a bursary fund.

The fact that a high proportion of the schools, in both samples, needed to raise funds to upgrade sports facilities and purchase sport equipment suggests that State-funding of sport is not entirely adequate at HoD schools. If this is a problem common to most HoD secondary schools then it seems that E.C. Circular No.44 of 1989 should be reconsidered and either amended, so that it is less of a hindrance to principals, or withdrawn altogether.

#### 4.7.3. Should schools engage in fund-raising?

Only the interview responses are discussed here. This question was deliberately omitted from the final questionnaire used in the survey as the initial pretest sample indicated that, as a consequence of E.C. Circular Minute No. 44 of 1989, many principals would be reluctant to candidly answer such a question.

In Questions 20.1 and 20.2. of the Structured Interview Schedule, interviewees were asked whether they felt schools should be involved in fund-raising activities and provide reasons for their answers.

Seventy percent of the sample stated that schools should be actively involved in fund-raising. The collective respondents' reasons are listed below in rank order:

- i. Facilities (especially sport) are inadequate or non-existent;
- ii. Existent shortages in funds need to be addressed;
- iii. In difficult economic times, schools need to provide a bursary fund for their disadvantaged pupils;
- iv. Each school may have its own particular problem that may not be addressed by State-funding of education;
- v. The involvement of pupils in fund-raising drives may inculcate good social values among pupils and make them aware of their social responsibilities.

Thirty percent of the sample stated that schools should not be involved in fund-raising activities. The general reason cited was that education is the responsibility of the State. In the words of one interviewee: "Education is a right, not a privilege. Parents must demand their right for the State to provide their children with free, proper

education."

Two interviewees blamed apartheid practices for the present financial problems in HoD schools and stated that it was the responsibility of the State, not individual schools, to rectify this problem. While this may be true, it would seem that the present reality of increasing shortages in State funds makes rectification of the problem by the State highly improbable. Schools will have to learn to help themselves.

#### 4.8. Crisis public relations

Questions 19.1 to 21.6. in the Questionnaire and Questions 21.1 to 23.6. in the Structured Interview Schedule were intended to test to what extent schools are able to deal with potential crises. Respondents were asked whether a planned public relations policy existed at their schools; whether this policy was available to staff in the form of written plans of action; whether these plans of action included contingency measures to be adopted in the event of a crisis arising.

In the questionnaire sample, 19 respondents (95%) stated that a written, planned public relations programme did not

exist at their schools. The findings were similar in the interview sample where eight interviewees (80%) indicated that their schools did not follow a public relations policy with written plans of action for staff to follow. Two interviewees (20%) were uncertain whether their schools had a public relations policy.

Consequently, all these respondents in both samples did not answer Questions 21.1 to 21.6 in the Questionnaire and Questions 23.2 to 23.6 in the Structured Interview Schedule as these questions were not applicable to their schools.

Only one respondent (5%) in the questionnaire sample indicated that his school followed a written, planned public relations programme which was co-ordinated by the guidance counsellor of the school. This programme was evaluated and revised annually and did attempt to analyze new trends in education in relation to the new demands of commerce and industry. However, there was no clear indication that this respondent's school included crisis public relations strategies in its programme.

Question 20 in the Questionnaire elicited information about whether the school has planned contingency measures to be adopted in the event of a crisis. Respondents were given five examples of unexpected crises. Abbreviated terms to be used in Tables IX and X are given within brackets. These

included fire requiring evacuation procedure (fire); pupil stayaways or boycotts (boycotts); pupils involved in criminal activity (pupil crime); misuse of corporal punishment by a teacher of the school (corporal punishment); press reports on formal complaints laid by a parent about a member of staff (complaints against staff). These results are presented in Table IX.

Questions 22.1 to 22.5 in the Structured Interview Schedule elicited similar information from the ten interviewees. These results are presented in Table X.

TABLE IX

CONTINGENCY MEASURES PLANNED BY SCHOOLS IN THE  
QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

TYPES OF CRISES	DO CONTINGENCY PLANS EXIST?					
	Yes		No		Uncertain	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fire	19	95	1	5	-	-
Boycotts	3	15	17	85	-	-
Pupil crime	7	35	13	65	-	-
Corporal punishment	16	80	4	20	-	-
Complaints against staff	1	5	19	95	-	-

n = 20

TABLE X

CONTINGENCY MEASURES PLANNED BY SCHOOLS IN THE  
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SAMPLE

TYPES OF CRISES	DO CONTINGENCY PLANS EXIST?					
	Yes		No		Uncertain	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fire	6	60	3	30	1	10
Boycotts	-	-	7	-	3	30
Pupil crime	2	20	5	50	3	30
Corporal punishment	5	50	4	40	1	10
Complaints against staff	-	-	9	90	1	10

n = 10

The results presented in Tables IX and X suggest that a large number of schools in both samples have planned contingency measures to deal with a fire crisis as well as a crisis arising from a teacher misusing corporal punishment.

However, since 1990, corporal punishment has been officially abolished at HoD schools.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is questionable whether the latter contingency measure has been planned because of a perceived need or because new

regulations require schools to do so.

Further analysis of the Interview sample's results revealed that, while schools claim to have planned contingency measures to cope with an outbreak of fire, few schools were well prepared to deal with such a crisis. Sixty percent of the Interview sample indicated that, in the last few years, evacuation drills were no longer practised and clear evacuation rules and procedure were not readily available to staff and pupils.

It would seem then that schools in both samples view crisis public relations with scant regard. Those contingency measures which form part of school regulations are likely to have been drawn up superficially, not because of a perceived need, but because it is compulsory.

#### 4.9. The image of the school

This section of the analysis focuses on the present public image of the schools in both samples and attempts to ascertain whether managers at these schools have tried to improve the school's public image.

Since the Structured Interview Schedule was drawn up a year



after the questionnaire survey had been completed. two new issues, relating to the image of the school, were tested in the interviews which had not been included in the questionnaire survey as these issues had arisen after the survey had been completed. These issues were:

- i. the collaborative relationship between the management of the school and parent bodies such as PTSA's in working together to improve the image of the school and,
- ii. multi-cultural concerns or problems which may have arisen since schools became racially integrated in 1991.

Question 22 in the Questionnaire asked respondents to assess the overall public image the community has of their schools. The results were as follows:

Excellent:	5% of respondents
Good:	85% of respondents
Average:	10% of respondents

The same information was elicited from interviewees in Question 25 of the Structured Interview Schedule. The results were as follows:

Good:	20% of interviewees
Average:	60% of interviewees
Fair:	20% of interviewees

Clearly, there is a large discrepancy in the results. It is questionable whether the responses of the questionnaire sample reflect the true perceived image of the school, or whether they are a reflection of the type of image principals in the sample would like their schools to project.

The results in both samples show that most schools can still improve the general public image of the school. Yet neither samples provided any tangible evidence of managers attempting to improve the image of their school.

For example, 65% of the questionnaire respondents stated that parents were either apathetic or not interested in being involved in the activities of the school; yet, in answer to Questions 23 and 24 in the Questionnaire, not one of these respondents indicated that they had made any concerted effort to change parental apathy or lack of

interest.

Questions 15.1 to 15.3. in the Structured Interview Schedule were intended to establish what type of parent body was affiliated to a school in the sample and to evaluate the working relationship between the school management team and the parent body.

All the respondents indicated that education committees had either been dissolved or had ceased to function at their schools. Twenty percent of the interviewees stated that there was no official parent body affiliated to their schools; eighty percent of the interviewees stated that unofficial Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSA's) had been established at their schools.

However, at six schools (60% of the interview sample) there were no clear working relationships between the PTSA's and the management teams of the schools. Several interviewees attributed this to the fact that the PTSA is not officially recognized by the HoD as a legitimate parent body: the main objection of the Education Department is that the PTSA includes in its membership pupils, who are minors without the legal right to cast votes.

Twenty percent of the interview sample stated that the

management team at their schools had turned a blind eye to the Education Department's objections and had established a cordial relationship with the PTSA at their schools. However, since these PTSA's had been recently formed, and were still in the process of overcoming teething problems, they had not yet contributed, to any large extent towards the activities of the school.

Concerning the issue of racial integration, the responses of interviewees to Questions 12.1 to 14 suggest that most schools in the sample have made little attempt to address problems that have arisen.

All of the schools in the sample had Black pupils registered at their schools. One interviewee (10%) stated that most of the Black pupils had adjusted well and that his school had experienced few problems since it became racially integrated. However, 90% of the sample indicated that several problems have arisen since Black pupils had registered at their schools. These problems include:

- i. poor comprehension and communication as many of these pupils were not used to English being the medium of instruction at school;

- ii. high failure rates as many pupils were unable to

adjust to the pace and scope of academic work;

iii. increasing apathy owing to repeated failure:

iv. little cultural intermingling as pupils banded together amongst their own race group;

v. high absenteeism and late coming as many pupils had to travel long distances to school and public transport was not always available.

Forty percent of the interview sample stated that no attempts were made at their schools to address these problems.

Thirty percent of the interview sample stated that stringent entrance tests, such as language competency tests, were being administered to Black pupils wishing to enrol at their schools. It was hoped that these tests would allow only those whose English language skills were of an acceptably high standard to enrol at the school. At the time when this research was conducted, it would have been premature to ask the interviewees to measure the success or failure of this policy as their schools had only just begun implementing it.

Two interviewees (20% of the sample) indicated that their schools had organized cultural workshops to promote greater cultural awareness and understanding amongst their pupils. However, the success of the workshops was limited as they were one-off events held early in the year.

#### 4.10. Conclusion

The results of the study indicate clearly that few principals at HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area have received training in public relations practice. It is disturbing to note that public relations skills are given scant regard when principals are evaluated for promotion and, moreover, that principals receive little training in public relations practice in the in-service training programmes provided for them.

The study also suggests that public relations practice at HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban takes place on an ad hoc basis, without much prior planning having been done, and that it is, therefore, inadequate in several aspects: most schools have no clear public relations policy or written plans of action; communication with the schools' publics, especially alumni, is poor and often ineffective; fund-raising is lacklustre; schools are not prepared for

unexpected crises and contingency measures do not exist; few schools make attempts to improve their image.

These conclusions will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

#### 4.11. Summary

In this Chapter the results of the research were reported. The academic qualifications of principals in the questionnaire sample were analyzed. The research examined the criteria used in the evaluation of prospective principals and briefly evaluated the in-service training principals in the sample received in the last five years.

The research finally focused on four broad public relations concerns for the school, namely: communication with the publics of the school; fund-raising; coping with crises; and the image of the school.

In the final Chapter an overview of the research will be provided. Conclusions from the research will be examined and the researcher's recommendations will be presented.

ENDNOTES:

1. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1989): E.C. Circular Minute A1 of 1989, Annexure A.

2. The greater Durban area includes the central city as well as the suburbs of Durban which fall under the '031' telephone dialling code. Suburbs are grouped together to form zones or circuits. Each zone or circuit is supervised by a different circuit inspector or superintendent of education. Consequently, in-service training occurs at the zonal or circuit level rather than a wider level.

3. At present PTSA's are still not officially recognised by the House of Delegates, the primary objection being the empowerment of pupils under the age of 18 in such a body. Despite the absence of official recognition, PTSA's have been established at a large number of HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

4. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1989): E.C. Circular No. 44 of 1989.

5. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1990): E.C. Circular Minute EB of 1990.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction: Restatement of the problem

The decision to explore aspects relating to public relations practice at House of Delegates (HoD) secondary schools was two-fold: it was based on not only the researcher's interest in the public relations field of study, but also on the fact that both locally and internationally there has been little research on school public relations.

A superficial study of public relations practice at secondary schools familiar to the researcher suggested that while many principals were engaged in tasks which involved public relations skills, few principals took these tasks seriously or viewed them as being of significance. Public relations practice at these schools seemed to take place on an ad hoc basis and few principals seemed skilled at dealing with their public relations responsibilities. Moreover, there seemed to be a general apathy among principals about public relations practice; the researcher attributed this to the fact that these schools are State-funded and State-controlled and, consequently, few

principals feel they should concern themselves with public relations matters such as fund-raising and promoting the image of the school.

This research may be classified as being exploratory, as a pilot to further research undertaken on a broader scope. The focus is on public relations practice as a significant managerial function of the secondary school principal. The research attempts to ascertain the following: to what extent principals at HoD secondary schools are qualified in public relations or have received in-service training in public relations; to what extent these schools follow written plans of action in accordance with a planned public relations policy; to what extent these schools are addressing public relations matters such as communication with the publics of the school, fund-raising, being prepared for unexpected crises, image-building and dealing with issues relating to racial integration at HoD schools.

## 5.2. Description of the procedures used

Since, as previously mentioned, this research was intended to be exploratory in nature and as a pilot to research encompassing a broader scope, it was limited to include all HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area for two

reasons: firstly, being an employee of the House of Delegates: Department of Education and Culture, the researcher was familiar with practices at HoD schools: secondly, since the researcher resides in Durban, confining the research to this geographic area facilitated easier access to data collected from interviews, without requiring the researcher to pay for excessive travel expenses.

The research instruments used to gather data were the Questionnaire and the Structured Interview Schedule. Motivation for the choice of these research instruments has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

In 1990, questionnaires were mailed to principals and acting- principals at 61 HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area. From the returns, twenty questionnaire responses (roughly one third of the total survey sample) were randomly selected for analysis.

In 1991, structured interviews were conducted with ten teachers, each teaching at different HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area. The interviews were informal and interviewees included teachers the researcher had either formerly known or met at SADTU and inter-school sport meetings.

Data collected from the questionnaire survey and the structured interviews were analyzed and presented in detail in Chapter 4. The researcher's findings and conclusions are presented in the section that follows.

### 5.3. Principal findings and conclusions

At the outset, it should be pointed out that the following findings and conclusions are based on data collected from the relatively small samples used in the research.

Following from the discussion of the results, which were presented in Chapter 4, the researcher's findings and conclusions may be summarized as follows:

1. Few principals have formally studied public relations as part of their vocational education. Only 10% of the sample in the survey had remotely studied some aspect related to public relations, viz. Human Relations (5%) and Communication (5%). Despite this lack of formal public relations education, principals still have to fulfil their public relations responsibilities. In the absence of formal public relations education, principals should receive public relations training as part of an in-service training programme.

ii. An examination of the instrument<sup>1</sup> used for the evaluation of candidates for promotion as principals revealed public relations skills is conspicuous by its omission as one of the criteria used for the evaluation of candidates. Instead, the criteria listed in the evaluation instrument, placed the main emphasis on curricular efficiency even though, as a future principal, the candidate would be involved in little teaching and would, in fact, be expected to perform functions as the head manager and administrator of the school. It follows, therefore that in the evaluation of a prospective principal, greater consideration should be given to the candidate's managerial and administrative skills, in general, and to his public relations skills, in particular.

iii. Data pertaining to in-service training workshops attended by principals in the questionnaire sample revealed that in-service training for secondary school principals in the greater Durban area is held infrequently and is not uniform for all principals in all zonal areas. More significantly, 83.3% of the workshops cited by the sample dealt with administrative matters while scant regard was given to matters pertaining to public relations. The fact that 75% of the questionnaire sample, and 90% of the

interview sample, felt that principals need training to improve their public relations skills. suggests that public relations education should be incorporated, as a significant aspect, in the in-service training programme for secondary school principals in the greater Durban area.

iv. The research analysis revealed that the schools' communication with their publics is infrequent and often ineffective. In particular, it was noted that alumni were overlooked as a significant public of the schools, while communication with parents was cursory. In the view of the researcher, no institution should marginalize any of its publics; moreover, any form of communication that is cursory, or viewed as being perfunctory, is unlikely to fulfil the purpose of communicating relevant, meaningful information to a public.

v. In recent years, fund-raising activities have been curbed at many HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area. The interview sample suggested that the main reason for this was the implementation of E.C. Circular No. 44 of 1989.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of the present economic climate and depleting State funds for the provision of education, schools should be involved in

fund-raising, to ensure their own reserves of financial resources, in the event of further financial cutbacks in State-funding of education. It would, therefore, seem advisable for the aforementioned Circular to be amended, so that it would appear less threatening to principals, or withdrawn altogether, so that schools may engage actively in fund-raising, in preparation for their pending fight for financial survival.

vi. Ninety-five percent of the schools in the questionnaire sample, and 80% of the schools in the interview sample, did not follow a planned public relations policy, nor did co-ordinated, written plans of action for public relations practice exist. Few schools have planned contingency measures to deal with unexpected crises. In terms of the definition adopted in Chapter 2 for the purposes of this research, good public relations practice should analyze trends, predict their outcomes and implement planned programmes of action to benefit both the school and its publics. It would, therefore, seem that sound public relations practice is yet to be established at HoD secondary schools in the greater Durban area.

vii. Analysis of the questionnaire responses suggests

that many principals are complacent about the image their respective schools project to their publics. Results from the interview sample suggest that many principals are apathetic about the image of their schools and make little effort to improve this image. In particular, it was noted that few attempts are made to address multi-cultural concerns arising from racial integration at HoD schools.

It is probable that a reason for this complacency and apathy, among HoD secondary school principals in the greater Durban area, is that schools are State-regulated and State-funded: so long as the State education authorities are satisfied with the image of the school, principals may see little need to embark on a programme of image-building.

#### 5.4. Recommendations for further research

Bearing in mind the nature and scope of this research there is a need to broaden the scope of further research to include South African secondary schools controlled not only by the House of Delegates, but by other Education Departments as well. Furthermore, research should not be confined to public relations practice at secondary schools; investigation should be conducted at primary schools where



public relations practice may be just as important as it is at secondary schools.

Research is needed to identify the public relations skills principals learn on-the-job, and subsequently, in-service training programmes should be developed to avoid on-the-job learning being piece-meal, or being the product of a potentially dangerous process of trial-and-error.

In developing in-service training programmes for principals, basic corporate public relations principles should be contextualized for educational institutions.

In the context of the present socio-economic and political tensions in South Africa, particular attention should be focused on developing the skills of principals to raise funds and deal with unexpected crises effectively.

It would seem then, that training principals in public relations and honing their public relations skills is the key to effective public relations practice at schools. How this should be done is, indeed, a challenging prospect, worthy of further research enquiry.

ENDNOTES

1. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1989): E.C. Circular Minute A1 of 1989. Annexure A.

2. House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture (1989): E.C. Circular No. 44 of 1989.

The relevant contents of this Circular has been discussed in Chapter 4.

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S. Pillay

1990-06-12

Mr. D. I. S. Purmasir  
P.O. Box 204  
DURBAN  
4000

Sir

## REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your letters dated 1989-12-06 and 1990-05-18 have reference.

1. Permission is hereby granted to you to administer your questionnaire at the schools as indicated in your letter provided that :
  - 1.1 prior arrangements are made with the principals concerned;
  - 1.2 participation in the research is on a voluntary basis;
  - 1.3 the questionnaire is completed at a time suitable to the principal; and
  - 1.4 all information obtained from the principals is treated confidentially and used for academic purposes only.
2. Kindly produce a copy of this letter when approaching schools.
3. The Department wishes you every success in your research and looks forward to receiving a copy of the findings.

Yours faithfully

CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

0937G

P.O. BOX 204  
DURBAN  
4000  
Tel. 455795

10 August 1990

The Principal

#### PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROGRAMME

I am currently researching the public relations functions of principals in House of Delegates secondary schools.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would spend 15 to 20 minutes of your time to fill the enclosed questionnaire.

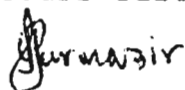
Permission to conduct research has been granted by the Department of Education and Culture. Please find attached herewith a copy of the letter from the Chief Executive Director of Education.

Your valued participation in this research study is completely voluntary and all information supplied will be treated as strictly confidential.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by 7 September 1990 or at your earliest convenience.

In the interest education, and in the hope of fostering an empathetic understanding of the complex role of the school principal, I look forward to your co-operation.

Yours faithfully



---

D.I.S. PURMASIR

QUESTIONNAIRE

INDICATE YOUR CHOICE OF ANSWER BY MEANS OF A CROSS (X).

PLEASE FURNISH FURTHER DETAILS, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, IN THE SPACES PROVIDED. SHOULD YOU REQUIRE MORE WRITING SPACE, PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR ANSWER ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE PAGE.

## 1. PERSONAL PARTICULARS:

AGE:	under 30	31-39	40-49	50-59	60-65	over 65
------	----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------

SEX:	male	female
------	------	--------

## 2. What is the present position you hold at your school?

Principal	Acting Principal	Senior Deputy	Deputy
OTHER (specify)			

## 3. How many years have you been in the teaching profession?

under 10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	over 35
----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------

## 4. How many merit awards have you received since you started teaching?

none	one	two	three	more than three
------	-----	-----	-------	-----------------

## 5. What specialist subjects have you taught in your experience as a teacher?

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6. Which of the following degrees and/or diplomas do you have to your credit?

B.A.	B. Paed.	B. Sc.
B. Comm.	B. Mus.	UHDE
UED	College Diploma	B. Ed.
B.A. (Hons)	B. Sc. (Hons)	B.Comm. (Hons)
M.A.	M. Sc.	M. Ed.
D. Ed.	Ph. D.	OTHER (specify)

7. Have you attained qualifications in any of the following subjects? (If yes, please specify course and institution)

7.1. Public Relations

Yes	No
-----	----

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7.2. Human Relations

Yes	No
-----	----

---

7.3. Communication

Yes	No
-----	----

---

7.4. Marketing

Yes	No
-----	----

---

8. Principals sometimes receive in-service training by means of group workshops (eg orientation courses & group discussions) :

8.1. How many workshops for principals have you attended in the last five years?

none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more
------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------

8.2. Briefly state the theme and approximate duration of the last five workshops you attended:

THEME:	DURATION:

8.3. How often have these workshops for principals been held in your zone/area?

annually	quarterly	monthly	fortnightly	weekly
irregularly	OTHER (specify)			

8.4. Do you think that you would find workshop discussions on the following subjects helpful to you in your role as secondary school principal?

PUBLIC RELATIONS	Yes	No	Uncertain
COMMUNICATION	Yes	No	Uncertain
HUMAN RELATIONS	Yes	No	Uncertain

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PERTAIN TO THE NATURE OF YOUR SCHOOL AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT OPERATES.

PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS CANDIDLY AS ALL ANSWERS WILL BE TREATED AS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.

9. For how long has your school functioned as a secondary school? (indicate in years by using a cross)

1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31 or more
-----	------	-------	-------	-------	-------	------------

10. What is the present pupil population at your school?

under 500	501 - 1000	1001-1500	1501- 2000	over 2000
-----------	------------	-----------	------------	-----------

11. Indicate how the pupil population at your school has changed over the last five years.

The pupil population has:

decreased	increased	remained constant	fluctuated
-----------	-----------	-------------------	------------

12. How many members of staff (including the management team) are there in your school?

under 25	26-30	31-35	36-40	40-45	46-50	over 50
----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------

13. Is there any member of your staff who has attained a qualification in Public Relations?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

14. What position does this person qualified in Public Relations hold in your school? (if applicable)

Principal	Senior Deputy	Deputy	HoD	OTHER (specify)
-----------	---------------	--------	-----	--------------------

15. By what means does your school communicate news to its alumni (ex-pupils)?

none	newsletters	Education Committee meetings	OTHER (Specify)
------	-------------	------------------------------	-----------------

16. By what means does your school keep parents and other interested members of the community informed about the activities and accomplishments of the school?

publicity launches	Education Committee meetings	press releases
annual newsletters	monthly newsletters	radio
none	OTHER (specify)	

17. How is news of the school's activities and accomplishments conveyed to members of staff as a means of motivating them and keeping them informed?

staff meetings	Education Committee meetings	press releases
annual newsletters	monthly newsletters	circulars
staff bulletin board	none	OTHER (specify)

18.1. Indicate the methods by which your school has raised funds in the last five years:

variety concert	sponsored fun walk	deb's ball	cash donations	fair/fete
company sponsorships	OTHER (specify)			

18.2. For what purposes (projects) were these funds raised?

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Schools sometimes have to deal with unexpected CRISES such as fires, pupil boycotts/stayaways, bad publicity about fights on the school premises or other such criticism of incidents which may occur at school functions.

19.1. In the event of a crisis, who would be the appointed spokesman to answer queries from the press (or other media)?

Principal	Senior Deputy	Deputy	HoD	Senior Teacher
Guidance Counsellor	Person to be Appointed			No one
OTHER (specify)				

19.2. Briefly state the criteria by which the school spokesman has been/will be selected:

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20. Does your school have written plans of action to cope with the following unexpected crises?

20.1. FIRE

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.2. PUPIL STAYAWAY

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.3. PUPILS INVOLVED  
IN CRIMINAL  
ACTIVITY

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.4. MISUSE OF CORPORAL  
PUNISHMENT BY A  
TEACHER AT THE SCHOOL

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.5. PRESS REPORTS ON FORMAL  
COMPLAINTS LAID BY A PARENT  
ABOUT A MEMBER OF STAFF

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.5. OTHER CRISES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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21.1. Does your school management team follow a written, planned Public Relations Programme?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

21.2. How often is this written Public Relations Programme revised or evaluated? (if applicable)

annually	quarterly	monthly	OTHER (specify)
----------	-----------	---------	--------------------

21.3. Who is in charge of co-ordinating this Public Relations Programme at your school? (indicate position of co-ordinator if this question is applicable)

Principal	Senior Deputy	Deputy	HoD	Senior Teacher
Guidance Counsellor		Person to be appointed		No one
OTHER (specify)				

21.4. Does this written Public Relations Programme attempt to analyze new trends in education in relation to the new demands of commerce and industry? (if applicable)

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

21.5. Does this Public Relations Programme attempt to predict possible outcomes/results of the public relations strategies outlined in the programme? (if applicable)

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

21.6. Briefly outline some of the strategies (plans of action) included in your school Public Relations Programme:

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22. What, would you consider, is the overall public image the community has of your school?

Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
-----------	------	---------	------	------

Possible reasons for this image: \_\_\_\_\_

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23. How would you describe current attitudes of parents towards greater parental involvement in the activities of your school?

Parents are generally:

Interested	Apathetic	Not Interested
------------	-----------	----------------

24. Briefly outline what attempts have been made to change parental apathy or lack of interest: (if applicable)

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25. Which of the following do you think is the general image the public has of your school?

That the school produces:

Academic excellence	Outstanding Sportsmen	Competent Technicians	Mainly Dropouts
Pupils of average abilities		OTHER (specify)	

Possible reasons for this image: \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX 4  
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## 1. PERSONAL PARTICULARS:

AGE:	under 30	31-39	40-49	50-60	over 60
SEX:	male	female			

2. Length of service (in completed years): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Present status as teacher:

L.T.	Temporary	Permanent	Other:
------	-----------	-----------	--------

3. How many years (completed) have you taught at your present school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------

4. How many years have you served under the leadership of your present principal?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------

5. How would you describe the management or leadership style of your principal?

autocratic	democratic	consultative
OTHER (specify)		

REASONS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you consider to be the strengths of your principal as a manager of a secondary school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What do you consider to be the weaknesses of your principal as a manager of a secondary school?

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8. Do you think your principal needs to acquire training in any of the following?

8.1. Public Relations	Yes	No	Uncertain
8.2. Human Relations	Yes	No	Uncertain
8.3. Communication	Yes	No	Uncertain
8.4. Marketing	Yes	No	Uncertain

9. What is the present pupil population at your school?

under 500	501-1000	1001-1500	over 1500
-----------	----------	-----------	-----------

10. Over the last five years, has the pupil population:

decreased	increased	remained constant	varied
-----------	-----------	-------------------	--------

11. How many members of staff (including the management team) are there in your school?

under 30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	over 50
----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------

12.1. Approximately how many Black pupils are enrolled at your school?

none	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	over 50
------	------	-------	-------	-------	-------	---------

12.2. Discuss what procedures were adopted by management for the enrolment of Black pupils: \_\_\_\_\_

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13. What are some of the problems arising from the enrolment of Black pupils at your school? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Describe what attempts the school has made to solve these problems:

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15.1. Which of the following co-operative parent bodies has been established to assist with matters pertaining to your school?

education committee	PTA	PTSA	OTHER (specify)
---------------------	-----	------	-----------------

15.2. Has this body been officially recognised by the education department of the House of Delegates?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

15.3. Discuss the working relationship between this body and the management team of your school?

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16. By what means does your school keep parents and other interested members of the community informed about the activities and accomplishments of the school?

publicity launches	Ed. Comm. meetings	PTA meetings
PTSA meetings	press releases	annual newsletters
radio	monthly newsletters	quarterly newsletters
none	OTHER (specify)	

17. By what means does your school communicate news to its alumni (ex-pupils)?

publicity launches	Ed. Comm. meetings	PTA meetings
PTSA meetings	press releases	annual newsletters
radio	monthly newsletters	quarterly newsletters
none	OTHER (specify)	

18. How is news of the school's activities and accomplishments conveyed to members of staff as a means of motivating them and keeping them informed?

publicity launches	Ed. Comm. meetings	PTA meetings
PTSA meetings	press releases	annual newsletters
radio	monthly newsletters	quarterly newsletters
none	OTHER (specify)	

19.1. Indicate methods by which your school has raised funds in the last five years: e.g. Concerts, fun walks, deb's balls, cash donations, fairs, fetes, company sponsorships etc.

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19.2. For what purposes (projects) were these funds raised?

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20.1. Do you think schools should be involved in fund - raising activities?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

20.2. Give reasons for your answer:

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\*\*\*\*\*  
 Discuss examples of potential crises a school may face (as a means of defining crisis public relations for the interviewee).  
 \*\*\*\*\*

21.1. In the event of a crisis, who do you think would be the appropriate person on the staff to answer queries from the press (or other media)?

Principal	Senior Deputy	Deputy	HoD	No one
Guidance Counsellor		Other (specify)		

21.2. Give reasons why this person would be an appropriate spokesman for the school.

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22. Does your school have written plans of action to cope with the following crises?

22.1. FIRE

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

22.2. PUPIL STAYAWAY

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

22.3. PUPILS INVOLVED  
IN CRIMINAL  
ACTIVITY

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

22.4. PRESS REPORTS ON  
FORMAL COMPLAINTS LAID  
BY A PARENT ABOUT A  
MEMBER OF STAFF

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

22.5. OTHER CRISES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23.1. Does your school management team follow a written, planned Public Relations Programme?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

23.2. How often is this written public relations programme revised or evaluated? (if applicable)

annually	quarterly	not at all	Other (specify)
----------	-----------	------------	-----------------

23.3. Who is in charge of co-ordinating this public relation programme at your school? (indicate position of co-ordinator if this question is applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

23.4. Does this P.R. programme attempt to analyze new trends in education in relation to the new demands of commerce and industry? (if applicable)

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------



23.5. Does this public relations programme attempt to predict possible outcomes/results of the public relations strategies outlined in the programme? (if applicable)

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

23.6. Briefly outline some of the strategies (plans of action) included in your school public relations programme:

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24. Discuss what attempts your school has made to determine the needs of commerce and industry in relation to the courses offered to pupils:

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25. What, would you consider, is the overall public image the community has of your school?

Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Other (specify)
-----------	------	---------	------	------	--------------------

Possible reasons for this image: \_\_\_\_\_

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26. How would you describe current attitudes of parents towards greater parental involvement in the activities of the school?

Parents are generally:

Interested	Apathetic	Not Interested
------------	-----------	----------------

27. Briefly outline what attempts have been made to change parental apathy or lack of interest (if applicable):

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28.1. Which of the following do you think is the general image the public has of your school?

That the school produces:

Academic Excellence	Outstanding Sportsmen	Competent Technicians	Mainly Dropouts
Pupils of Average abilities		OTHER (specify)	

28.2. Possible reasons for this image: \_\_\_\_\_

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28.3. Discuss what attempts management has made to improve the general public image of your school:

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