A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR SECONDARY PRINCIPALS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

BY

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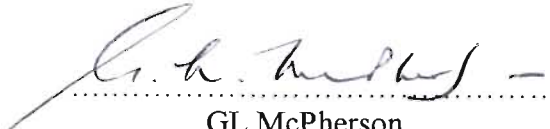
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DECLARATION

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

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that effective schools owe much of their success to the calibre of their principals. Notwithstanding the central role played by these executive officers, very little attention has been given to the selection of secondary school principals internationally and more so in South Africa. The South African education system has recently undergone a not so silent revolution and all former departments of education have combined. The national Department of Education determines policy and local education is administered by provincial authorities. The State's policy of transformation, which is being implemented in all public schools, is bringing about many changes in schools and these have to be satisfactorily managed. Because of the complexity of the school as an organisation, the principal is subjected to changing demands especially in respect of his/her management tasks. Despite these changes requiring a new style of school management, the selection of secondary principals has, up till very recently, been done in a fairly arbitrary manner. Consequently, this project involves an assessment of the current selection procedures for secondary public school principals in KwaZulu-Natal. While it is accepted the selection procedure is relatively new and still evolving, it is hoped that this project will alert educational authorities to the salient weaknesses of the selection procedure and offer recommendations for its improvement.

CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

CV	Curriculum vitae
DRC	Dispute Resolution Committee
HDP	Head of Directorate for Promotions
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
KZNDEC	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture
NASSP	National Association of Secondary School Principals
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
SASA	South African Schools Act (1996)
SSC	Staff Selection Committee
SEM	Superintendent of Education (Management)
VSP	Voluntary Severance Packages

CHAPTER 1
Introduction to the Project

Introduction

The year 1994 marked the onset of a period of transformation in all sectors of South African life and especially in the education system. Thereafter, the various departments of education, some sixteen in all, were combined under a centralised national Department of Education. However, centralisation of education also entailed devolution of educational authority to the nine provinces in South Africa, and this meant that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC) became responsible for education in this province. Each province was tasked with the responsibility of executing national policy and, among other things, developing its own selection procedures for educators according to the norms and standards dictated by central government.

Within the context of firstly, a new provincial department of education with a largely untested administration, secondly, fiscal austerity and alleged mismanagement of funds, and thirdly, educator rationalisation and redeployment, the current selection procedure for secondary school principals was negotiated within the Education Labour Relations Council by the KZNDEC, teacher organisations and various other stakeholders.

This project attempts an assessment of the same selection procedure on the grounds of its relative 'newness' and relevance to the needs of education in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It is also suggested that in view of the critical role of the school principal in respect of effective implementation of emerging national policy initiatives and in leading the restoration of the 'culture of learning and teaching' in schools, together with the fact that the Education Department is confronted by a need to make a large number of appointments at the level of principal, a critical assessment of current practices and procedures for the selection of principals is a timely imperative and workable alternatives to current practices are needed urgently. In addition, the project can be justified from a human aspect because the new selection procedure determines the appointment of

principals – a job requiring extraordinary abilities and responsibilities, as well as accountability. In addition, it determines the future careers of people who are vital to the well being of education in the country.

While this small-scale project is confined to a single circuit within the North Durban Region of KZN, it is illuminative of selection procedures that apply throughout the province. Furthermore, the salient advantages and disadvantages discovered during the assessment will be highlighted and possible solutions will be recommended. These recommendations should have relevance for KZN and for other provinces and their selection procedures.

The topic of this study is therefore: **A Critical Assessment of Current Selection Procedures for Secondary School Principals in KwaZulu-Natal.**

Aims and purpose of the project

The purpose of this research is firstly, to assess critically, prevailing procedures and practice in the light of the literature on 'good practice', and secondly, to identify practical solutions to any procedural problems identified. By so doing, it is intended to draw attention to defects and strong points in the procedure, with the expectation of improvements being made. During the assessment the following will be addressed:

- A review of the legislative and policy context which impacts upon, or has implications for, personnel decision making in South African schools.

- An overview of the literature on human resource management in educational organisations, with particular reference to that element which focuses on selection procedures and practices associated with the appointment of school principals and other senior staff.

- A description and evaluation of current policy, procedures and practices for the selection of school principals in KwaZulu-Natal, with particular reference to public secondary schools.

- Drawing both on the literature reviewed and the products of the critical assessment of current practice, to make practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the selection process.

Limitations of the study

At the outset, it is acknowledged that:

- Complexities such as guiding adolescents in their career choice and managing a school offering varied curriculums differs from the tasks of primary school principals. This study, therefore, is confined to secondary school principals because their job is regarded by some writers (Morgan et al., 1984; Day et al., 1985; Bell, 1988) as distinctly different from primary school principals;

- There is a general shortage of relevant literature on the selection of principals, particularly in the South African context;

- The study is confined to the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal and no attempt is made to compare selection procedures in the rest of South Africa;

- The study is limited to one circuit, namely Inanda/Newlands East in the North Durban Region, but it is illustrative of perceptions that may prevail throughout KZN;

- The study confines itself to discussions with the Head of the Directorate for Promotions (KZN), teacher organisations in KZN, Superintendents of Education (Management), and a sample of principals who have experienced the selection procedure.

These limitations correctly imply that this assessment will not examine secondary school principal perceptions throughout KwaZulu-Natal, thereby omitting the richness that a fuller investigation would provide. However, at a later stage the writer intends doing an in depth investigation of the selection procedure for principals in the whole of KZN.

Method of study

Essentially, the methodology employed involves an analytical criticism of documentation pertaining to the selection of secondary school principals against a background of international literature and the results of discussions held with various stakeholders.

Structure

This investigation comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 is essentially an introduction to the work and outlines what is to follow. Chapter 2 describes the centrality and importance of workers' skills and abilities to organisations according to the principles of human resource management. The chapter begins with the origins of human resource management and its place in current management philosophy. Following this, are succinct definitions and elucidatory observations of human resource management, which illustrate that writers on management theory, while differing in their approach, all emphasise the expedient use of people in organisations. While organisations are increasingly adopting the convictions of human resource management, the debate between personnel management and human resource management proceeds unabatedly. This debate is explicated and follows with some of the apparent advantages and disadvantages of human resource management. In concluding the chapter, the position of education in the human resource continuum is explained. The chapter concludes by stressing the importance of implementing human resource principles in all contemporary organisations and of adopting the same tenets in the selection procedure of employees.

Chapter 3 looks at the importance of the selection procedure to organisations. Throughout the chapter, reference is made to the importance of not isolating the selection process, and it is stressed that this process is part of the human resource management continuum, which includes recruitment, induction and mentoring, appraisal and staff development. The first section of the chapter deals with the specific influences on the selection process such as linkage with recruitment; acknowledgement of the technical and functional aspects of candidates; the need for objectivity; and, the influence of state legislation. The second section focuses on the actual management of the selection process and ends with a brief contextualisation of the education system in KwaZulu-Natal and the demands made on contemporary principals.

Chapter 4 examines the current selection procedure in KZN, which forms the basis of this assessment. It details the procedures used in the recent (1997/1998) selection of

secondary school principals in KwaZulu-Natal, published by the KZNDEC. The relevant procedure is outlined in detail and includes descriptions of all the documentation required of prospective principals. The chapter concludes with a reminder that the current procedure is undergoing redaction and its concomitant problems will be highlighted and explained in the next two chapters.

The first section of Chapter 5 provides a more detailed background to the recent selection of secondary principals in KwaZulu-Natal that should enable readers to better understand the discussions held with the various stakeholders. Against this background, an explanation is given of the methodology used in gathering evidence for the assessment. Thereafter follows an analysis of interviewee responses, and an assessment and interpretation of the current KwaZulu-Natal selection procedure according to international recommendations and the work of Morgan et al. (1984). The chapter concludes with suggestions from the principals interviewed for improvements to the selection procedure.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, attempts answers to the questions that guide this assessment, selects the more pertinent problems, offers recommendations to improve the selection procedure, and concludes with a brief summary of the project.

Conclusion

While this chapter provides an overview of the whole project, the next chapter will focus on human resource management.

CHAPTER 2

Human Resource Management

This chapter will demonstrate that people are the central resource in any organisation and that human resource management, with its focus on the skills and abilities of people, is essential for effective and efficient management of organisations. The chapter begins with a brief history of human resource management and its place in current management philosophy. Following this are succinct definitions and elucidatory observations of human resource management, which illustrate that writers, while differing slightly in their descriptions, all emphasise the expedient use of people in organisations. While organisations are increasingly adopting the principles of human resource management, the debate between personnel management and human resource management proceeds unabatedly. This contention is expounded and includes some of the known shortcomings of human resource management. In concluding the chapter, an attempt is made to show how human resource management is applied in education.

Introduction

The term 'human resource management' began to appear regularly in mainstream management literature during the 1980s[1]. In essence the term offers a broader, strategic and more dynamic interpretation of the role of effective staff management in organisations than had been the norm for the past decades. Human resource management is current and topical. Although it is still an emerging field in terms of both the staff functional role and the day-to-day utilisation of human resources throughout the

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[1] For a chronological overview refer to Armstrong, 1991 and Beaumont, 1993.

organisation, human resource management is being viewed in some quarters as the

panacea for all organisational ills.

History of human resource management

Human resource management has greatly expanded its scope since its beginnings in the

first few decades of this century. Peterson & Tracy (1979), in describing a typical

personnel department early in the twentieth century, claim that it usually had the

following characteristics:

- It was small, being the portfolio of one staff member assisted by clerks.
- In some cases, it acted as the initial screening stage for job applicants, but the foreman or line manager made the final hiring. The personnel staff did not have veto power regarding line decisions to hire, transfer, promote, or fire employees.
- When the firm selected employees, the decision seemed to be based on intuition and simple yardsticks rather than any systematic procedure. Personnel testing came later.
- It was rare to have any systematic method of compensating employees. The owner or top executive made these decisions.
- It was unusual to find any system of appraisal in the firm. Where the employees stood at any one time depended on how well the work was done and their relationship with the boss.
- Training programmes, if they existed at all, were confined to instruction in basic factory skills and on-the-job technical training. It was assumed that most employees already had the requisite skills before employment or that the job was relatively easy to learn.
- Finally, few firms had a labour union. The personnel staff was not involved in employee appeals, since no system for appeal existed. There was no formal grievance procedure ending in binding arbitration by a neutral third party, nor were there formal negotiations between employees and management.
  (Peterson & Tracy, 1979, pp.3-4)

From the above, it is clear that personnel departments were seldom at the centre of

decision making. The function of the personnel department was seen as 'merely a staff

activity with an advisory role' (Peterson & Tracy, 1979, p.4).

The last forty years have witnessed an increasing role for human resource management. During this time, a large number of activities have been added to the personnel function. According to Peterson & Tracy (1979) personnel departments have become larger and an increasing percentage of the personnel staff has academic specialisation in personnel. A major firm today employs specialists in employment and testing, wage and salary administration, training and management development, and labour relations. Recent decades have witnessed the development of many tools and techniques intended to introduce a degree of systematic method to employee selection, appraisal, compensation, training, and other areas of the personnel function. It is clear that a paradigm shift has seen the emergence of human resource management to a position of prominence in staff management.

Definitions of human resource management

An examination of the literature reveals many definitions and interpretations of human resource management. However, all the definitions emphasise the correct use of human resources in an organisation. By its very nature, human resource management can be customised to suit all organisations.

Human resource management has been described as:

> ...the activities within a given firm that deal with the recruiting, selecting, appraising, rewarding, and developing of employees (including managers), as well as negotiating with labour unions.
> (Peterson & Tracy, 1997, p.3)

The emphasis in this definition is on activities that relate to people within the organisation, rather than other activities that deal with finance, marketing or accounting.

Peterson and Tracy explain that 'the prime responsibility for carrying out human resource activities, in many organisations, is normally assigned to a specific department' and not to an individual (Peterson & Tracy, 1997, p.27). In larger organisations, a number of specialists with narrowly defined personnel and industrial relations duties are often employed. While human resource management writers acknowledge that specialised knowledge is increasingly required, they also believe that specialists alone in an isolated department cannot handle personnel management. Effective human resource management, to them, means joint effort between line management and functional specialists to attain the objectives of the organisation.

In the next definition, the focus is on strategic objectives and human resources in the organisation. Riches & Morgan (1989) claim that:

> The human resource management approach seeks to start from a consideration of what the strategies of an organisation might be and then asks how the human resources can help formulate and accomplish those strategies, and what human development and motivation is required to meet those ends.
> (Riches & Morgan 1989, pp.2-3)

Accordingly, the role of human rather than material resources is given prominence in attaining organisation objectives. Riches & Morgan (1989) suggest that human resources differ from other resources in the manner of their deployment and development. An employee's performance 'depends not so much on his innate ability, rather on the extent to which the organisation can enable him to perform at his best' (Riches & Morgan, 1989, p.3).

To continue, Rebore (1991) describes human resource planning as 'translating the organisation objectives into people requirements'(Rebore, 1991, p.24). He believes that human resource planning, as a process, ensures the smooth development of an organisation (Rebore 1991, p.24). Given that an organisation needs financial, physical, and other resources to achieve its objectives, the importance of an organisation's human resources cannot be ignored. The writer argues that 'too often people in an organisation are taken for granted, and yet this is the force that directly affects the main objectives of the organisation' (Rebore, 1991, p.24). In addition, he emphasises good planning as an important aspect of human resource management, because it ensures that the present and future human resource needs of the organisation are seen to:

> We assess where we are; we assess where we are going; we consider the implications of these objectives on future demands and the future supply of human resources; and we attempt to match demand and supply so as to make them compatible with the achievement of the organisation's future needs.
> (Robbins, 1982, p.76 as quoted by Rebore 1991, p.24)

Human resource management is also perceived 'as a branch of learning; a phenomenon for exploration by sociologists, psychologists and the other social sciences' (Tyson 1995, p.165). He claims that to explain what has happened in human resource management requires an explanation of the social context of economic relationships in a given society. He suggests that social influences that are presently being experienced 'will have long-term effects on the human resources function, and thus have consequences that will influence the theoretical stance taken by those who study it' (Tyson, 1995, p.165).

The above definitions of human resource management are attempts at constructing a set of coherent principles to explain changes in the employment relationship. In general, the word 'change' has come to mean 'improve' in management literature; that is, to be 'modern' or relevant, and suitable to present needs. Human resource management as a concept has a particular virtue, according to this perception, since it is defined as being centred on organisational change. Thus the paradigmatic shift towards human resource management can represent all the new approaches to management experienced in the last two decades.

These definitions help illustrate that human resource management begins with the presumption that people are the central resource in any organisation. A second assumption is that organisational survival depends on the extent to which people's skills and abilities are effectively used. What really differentiates the human resource view from other managerial philosophies is its focus on developing and using to the full the talents and abilities of the employees. Human resource management is thus concerned with the issues of creating and sustaining cultures of learning and performance in organisations. Human resource management considers strategies of selection, training, socialisation, appraisal, incentives and development, and deals with current issues in labour relations.

As is already evident, human resource management focuses on the effective utilisation of people at work. Traditionally, the major areas of human resource management include employee relations, selection, compensation, and training. Although expertise in these

areas is necessary, major changes in the field have led to a more strategic role for the human resources professional. Today, human resources managers must be skilled in job and organisational design, innovative career planning, and taking the lead in effecting internal change.

The successful management of human resources calls for a partnership among human resources professionals, labour relations negotiators, wage and salary analysts, and operating line managers in an organisation's functional areas (marketing, finance and production). With the challenges brought about by an increasingly diverse work force and rapid international expansion, the importance of human resource management has increased dramatically in recent years. Human resource management professionals now ensure that their organisations comply with equal opportunity laws, institute affirmative action procedures, and design or manage participative work systems.

Personnel management versus human resource management

The advocates of human resource management tend to feel that traditional personnel management approaches are too bureaucratic and carry many negative connotations. A brief comparison of the two management approaches will clarify many of the differences. Personnel management approaches are concerned with the following:

- separating personnel function and workplace management.
- emphasising administration, record-keeping and procedures.
- advocating procedural approaches to negotiation and conflict.
- being prescriptive rather than analytical in support of line managers.
- appearing reactive rather than proactive in response.
- promoting a reliance on personnel specialists.
  (Guest, 1987, p.79)

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

Some writers (Guest, 1987; Goss, 1994) argue that the move towards human resource management approaches is attributable to the idea that the provision of specialist personnel:

- is unsustainably expensive in financial and human terms;
- is highly bureaucratic;
- leads to lengthy delays between identification of need and intervention;
- offers solutions which work in artificial situations but are difficult to apply in reality;
- threatens the relationship between manager and subordinate; and
- is reliant on, and perpetuates the mystique of, the perceived expertise of personnel specialists rather than focusing on the development of manager capability.
  (O'Neill et al., 1994, p.81)

To further illustrate the personnel management versus human resource management debate, use can be made of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). In OBE, the educator is a facilitator of learning in the classroom. The educator identifies learner difficulties, intervenes when necessary and institutes solutions. The school principal is seen as a consultant whose role is to foster the basic relationship between the learner and the educator, to offer support and expertise where appropriate and to suggest strategies. It can therefore be claimed that the new relationship is based on three key premises:

- the consultant supports both educator and learner;

- the educator's redefined role requires the development of higher order interpersonal and professional skills; and
- the educator needs to be encouraged to actively access the consultant whenever needed.
(O' Neill, 1994, p.204)

This redefined relationship emphasises the central importance of the educator as manager of the learning situation and the principal as manager of the school. The educator is encouraged to manage the relationship between him/herself and the learner and also to actively seek guidance and support from the principal. This is precisely what human resource management advocates.

The human resource management approach has been adopted in many mainstream organisations. Its supporters argue that the approach offers significant benefits to organisations. Characteristic of human resource management approaches is that they:

- measure actions against the strategic objectives of the organisation as a whole;
- emphasise the central importance of the line manager;
- advocate customised, individual responses to intervention;
- focus on positive motivation rather than negative control;
- use process rather than standardised procedures;
- are considered proactive rather than reactive;
- are fully integrated into the day-to-day management of the organisation; and
- encourage purposeful negotiation and the resolution of potential conflict between manager and managed.
(O, Neill et al., 1994, p.12)

As evidenced by OBE's concern with proper relationships, human resource management theory is posited on the principles of concern for the quality of relationships. This assumes a desire to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and the belief that staff management issues are the specific responsibility of the line manager and should be addressed in the workplace.

This rationale underpinning human resource management is summarised by Fowler

(1988) who applies the human resource management approach to a local government

context. He suggests that in any organisation:

- People are the primary resource.
- Personnel policies and practices need to be integrated with the total direction and management of the authority.
- Strategic planning, and a matching of the style of employment practice to the authority's culture, is necessary to maximise the effectiveness of the human resource.
- Human resource management is a prime responsibility of all managers, not a specialist role.
  (Fowler, 1988, p.1)

Although Fowler's context is local government, his rationale has applicability to other

mainstream organisations as well as to education. Nevertheless, human resource

management is not the panacea for all management problems - it also has its

shortcomings.

Shortcomings of human resource management

Fowler's theoretical stance appears rational and highly commendable but the perceived

gap between academic rhetoric and organisational practice has caused some writers to

question the validity of human resource management as a feasible, practicable approach

to management of staff, particularly in large and complex organisations. According to

these critics human resource management approaches have serious shortcomings.

Armstrong (1991), Beaumont (1993) and Goss (1994) summarise the main objections to

human resource management approaches thus:

1. The first criticism concerns the name: Human Resource Management. The gist is whether it is a 'hard' approach - which views people as simply another resource to be managed efficiently, or a 'soft' approach - with emphasis on

staff involvement in decision making, staff awareness and staff commitment in order to motivate staff to perform better than they otherwise would.

2. The second criticism focuses on the processes and relationships that marginalise the bureaucratic, administrative structure that is needed to manage standardised personnel procedures in large organisations, often within a framework of statutory requirements or 'local custom and practice'.

3. There is limited empirical evidence to demonstrate that human resource management specific approaches work in practice. The model is normative and experience, to date, fails to provide data in support of academic rhetoric.

4. Human resource management approaches depend heavily on the commitment and active participation of line managers.

5. Human resource management approaches focus on individual rather than collective bargaining arrangements. As such they offer little protection to traditionally disadvantaged or exploited sections of the labour force, in particular women.
(Beaumont, 1993, p.83)

Despite these criticisms, there has been an increased focus on human resource management approaches in the last decade. This demonstrates a high degree of similarity between the performing priorities of educational and other types of organisations (Riches & Morgan, 1989). In addition, there is a growing realisation that optimum, rather than merely adequate, levels of organisational performance depend on the effective management of human resources.

In concluding the debate between personnel management approaches and human resource management approaches, the main points are summarised:

- Personnel management approaches are perceived to stress administration and standardised responses to situations, and highlight the role of personnel specialists; human resource management approaches advocate customised responses and highlight the importance of line managers.

- Human resource management approaches are considered normative; they emphasise staff motivation, commitment and involvement but there is limited empirical evidence to illustrate their effectiveness in practice.

- Personnel management approaches rely on the credibility of personnel specialists; human resource management approaches rely on the active participation of line managers.

- Personnel management approaches are seen as reactive and operationally oriented; human resource management approaches are considered proactive and strategically oriented.
- Human resource management approaches provide a background against which the rapid and complex changes within education can be managed.
  (O' Neill et al., 1994, p.14)

Human resource management in education

In educational organisations, most of the personnel management functions have traditionally been the work of a national, provincial or local education authority with the role of schools, until very recently, being limited to the deployment of staffing establishments already decided elsewhere. Understanding the strategic role of human resource management in educational organisations is best illustrated by an examination of education in countries such as England and Wales (where human resource management is practised), and in particular, the role of the autonomous (grant-maintained) school.

With the development of autonomous educational institutions in England and Wales, the role of the school has expanded rapidly in terms of scope and complexity. In these grant maintained or autonomous schools, 'the school has full employer responsibilities and obligations' (Warner and Crossthwaite, 1992).

In England and Wales, the increased focus on the contribution of staff to organisational success has resulted in many government initiatives designed to enhance teaching and management performance. These include a broadening of entry routes into the teaching profession, improved support arrangements for educators at different stages in their careers, greater funding for professional development activities and the increasing

importance of the role played by non-teaching staff (O' Neill, 1994). These initiatives

are of major significance for the education service in many ways.

1. The pattern of entry, or re-entry to the teaching profession in the 1990s is fragmenting. Schools will have to develop flexible management responses to cope with diverse groups of recruits from different backgrounds, with different work experiences, different career expectations, and needing differing degrees of professional support.
2. The introduction of school based models of Initial Teacher Training suggests that schools may have more direct control over the type and style of initial teacher training and the criteria used to select recruits at the point of entry into the profession. This is significant because teachers in England and Wales are becoming facilitators instead of deliverers of education.
3. Governmental support has enabled the introduction and maintenance of teacher support and reorientation programmes to update teacher skills. This will alleviate some of the problems caused by 'teacher wastage'.
4. Attempts to develop guidelines for professional and managerial competencies reflect:
   a) the increased awareness of the importance of optimum employee involvement;
   b) the need to identify appropriate standards of performance for individuals;
   c) the importance of creating manageable agendas for individual employee development; and
   d) recognition of the value of early identification of potential for promotion.
5. Staffing curricular activities need to be so managed that:
   a) professional expertise, which is expensive and in short supply, is employed directly in the management of student learning; and
   b) administrative or support duties be delegated to non-teaching staff.
6. Schools, as the autonomous employers of educators, will be exercising much greater control over terms of pay and conditions of service, and, to this extent, will have to acquire technical and/or legal expertise.
   (O' Neill, 1994, p.205)

The gradual devolution of greater responsibilities to governing body level suggests that

certain United Kingdom schools are now 'actively engaged across the full range of what

is traditionally perceived as human resource management' (O' Neill 1994, p.206). In this

sense schools need to develop customised human resource management policies which

reflect their own priorities in terms of recruiting, selecting and developing staff.

Similarly, parallel conditions and changes are becoming increasingly evident in schools in other countries.

In South Africa, the passing of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996 heralded a new era of democratisation in education, and changed the traditional pattern of school governance. SASA (1996) and appropriate provincial legislation compelled all public schools to establish school governing bodies comprising relevant stakeholders. The democratisation of education includes the idea that stakeholders, representative of the school and the local community, including the principal, educators, non-educators, learners (in secondary schools only), and parents will participate in governing the school. SASA empowers school governing bodies with determining the policy and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled, supervising school finances, and forming Staff Selection Committees (SSCs) for selecting teaching staff. SSCs are involved in selecting staff, and the Secretary for Education in KZNDEC endorses their recommendation. It has therefore become crucial for them to select the correct candidates for the job and, more importantly, the best person for the post of principal. Public schools in South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal are becoming semi-autonomous and seem to be on the road to becoming self-governing institutions.

As service organisations, schools depend for their success on the commitment and capability of staff – both teaching and non-teaching. More effective recruitment, selection, induction and mentoring, and a consideration of career advancement would help alleviate the impact of high staff turnover, staff shortages, and competition from

other sectors offering employment. Autonomous and semi-autonomous schools should enjoy greater freedom and responsibilities in all areas of human resource management. As a result they should be able to develop customised approaches to management of staff geared to the needs and circumstances of individual schools.

Conclusion

The above commentary emphasises the increasing importance and appropriateness of human resource management, its nature and relevancy, its shortcomings, and its advantages over personnel management. That it has a place in educational management is becoming increasingly evident. The focus, therefore, on one aspect of the human resource management continuum, viz. the selection process, is warranted and will be continued in the next chapter.

The next chapter will demonstrate the importance of the principal to the success of the school and the need to give greater attention to the careful selection of the principal. The link between recruitment and selection of principals – two important aspects of the human resource management continuum - will be explored, and careful attention will be given to the actual selection process. In addition, the chapter will explore the context in which the selection of principals has been done in KwaZulu-Natal, while emphasising the need for the appointment of the best person to the job.

CHAPTER 3

Human resource management and the selection of principals

Introduction

A study of the job requirements for principals reveals that a principal's role is diverse, challenging and highly specialised in both technical and interpersonal skills (Morgan et al., 1983; Riches & Morgan, 1989; Southworth, 1990). The principal either makes the school an exciting, vibrant learning centre, or a stagnant, regimented building; he/she is the measure of achievement or the cause of failure. Most people who are appointed to principalships have not been principals before, and the job is very different from other posts in the schools (Morgan et al., 1984). The work involved in heading a school and being accountable for it, both within and external to the school, is very different from less senior posts; being the person responsible for the school is likely to require different skills. The selection of this leader must, therefore, be done with utmost care.

Overall, this chapter focuses on the selection of high school principals. The first section deals with specific influences on the selection process viz. its linkage with recruitment; its acknowledgement of the technical and functional aspects of candidates; the need for objectivity; and the influence of state legislation. The second section focuses on the actual management of the selection process and includes five key issues viz. people handling selection; standards used to assess candidates; the importance of different assessment criteria; techniques used to measure a candidate's performance; and deciding which candidate is best suited to the post. The chapter ends with a contextualisation of

the education system in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the demands made on contemporary principals.

Throughout, it should be remembered that the selection process cannot be isolated and that it is part of the human resource management continuum, which includes recruitment, induction and mentoring, appraisal, and staff development.

Human resource management and the process of selection

The 1990s produced numerous reports regarding the principal's increased responsibility and critical role in both school effectiveness and school improvement (Morgan et al., 1984; Van der Westhuizen, 1991; Bush & West-Burnham, 1994). While human resource management strategies are used to select the new principal, it is necessary for the new principal to also be an exponent of human resource management and to effectively manage human resources within the school. Conditions today are changing, both within schools and in the broader society, creating new problems and challenges for principals. New principals have to contend with internal pressures such as managerial philosophy, educator values, and technology as well as external influences such as national and provincial governmental demands, parent expectations for their children, and educator union pressures. In other words, the principal's ability to manage effectively is going to be questioned. As the principal's responsibility and accountability increases, so too will the pressure on the education system i.e. school governing bodies, Staff Selection Committees (SSCs), and Heads of Department to make the best appointments when

vacancies occur. Vast resources are tied up in the appointment of a school principal and mistakes can be costly (Morgan et al., 1984).

The human resource manager or, in the local context, the Co-ordinator of Selection in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC) overseeing the selection process has to consider four broad issues that impact on the selection of principals. They are:

> Linkage with recruitment.
> Acknowledging the technical and functional aspects of the staff.
> The need for objectivity in a potentially subjective process.
> Equal opportunities.

Linkage with recruitment

The whole process of appointing a principal to a post begins when a potential vacancy is identified. Selection processes are managed within the context of the education system's recruitment policy because the general procedures for appointing staff will be outlined when a recruitment policy is established. Briefly, schools and Superintendents of Education (Management) (SEMs) in the province notify the KZNDEC of vacancies for principals. Vacancies for principals are advertised in an official bulletin, inviting applications for the posts. The actual procedure will be defined in the ensuing chapter.

Technical and functional aspects of the roles of prospective principals

The technical attributes include the knowledge, skills and abilities of a prospective principal. The degree of commitment, motivation and effort with which he/she applies these attributes constitutes the functional aspects. Both these aspects must be considered

when managing the selection process. However, the difficulty for selection committees or managers lies in the extent to which both the technical and functional aspects of roles can be determined. The technical aspects of a candidate are easily assessed by means of the candidate's stated qualifications. Functional aspects, on the other hand, are more complex since they involve judgements about the candidate's personality that include whether a candidate will 'fit in'; his/her ability to work in a team or the factors that will motivate him/her as an individual.

The need for objectivity in a potentially subjective process

Selection committees comprise various people with a vested interest in the outcome of the procedure and, because the selection process involves people, it can never be free of subjectivity. Some of the traditional practices that can distort a selection process show evidence of subjectivity. These practices include:

- basing judgements upon intuition rather than facts
- making 'snap' judgements
- insisting on a stereotype of what is a 'good' candidate
- comparing a prospective principal with the previous post holder or with other candidates rather than the agreed criteria, and
- preferring a candidate in one's own image.
  (O' Neill et al., 1994, p.57)

Selection interviews do not always give a good indication of a candidate's potential. Often interviewers have preconceived ideas about the type of candidate they are looking for. The following citation includes individual prejudices that may occur during the selection process, as well as human factors such as memory and concentration:

- Interviewers often make up their minds about a candidate within the first five minutes of the interview and – consciously or unconsciously- spend the rest of the interview trying to justify their judgement.
- Interviewers' judgements of candidates can be affected by their

> appearance, speech, gender and race either positively or negatively; people tend to favour others whom they perceive to be like themselves.
> - It is very probable that few interviewers have undergone training in interview skills.
> - Research on memory shows that one remembers information one hears at the beginning and end of an interview and, thus, tends to forget vital details and facts given in the middle.
> - It is impossible for the human brain to concentrate at the same level over a prolonged period; thus if several candidates are being interviewed successively on the same day, they may not receive equal amounts of the interviewer's attention.
>
> (Thomson, 1993, p.30)

The interview is, more often than not, the focal point of the entire selection process. After researching the interview aspect of the selection process, Hackett (1992) noted some common forms of unconscious intuitive responses, which are listed below:

The Halo Effect

This occurs when one feature of the candidate becomes an over-riding factor that governs the selector perception.

a) Prejudice

Selectors may pre-judge a candidate, either favourably or unfavourably, because the candidate belongs to a particular group or remind selectors of a particular person. Common prejudices include the assumption that members of one race are more hard working than those of another.

b) Stereotypes

Selectors may mentally construct an image of what a good worker is like, and then use the interview as a means of finding someone who matches that image rather than the personnel specification initially agreed upon. Selectors tend to be more favourably disposed towards those candidates who match that image. Other

selectors may identify one physical characteristic and assume that everyone who possesses that trait will be alike in character.

c) Unfavourable information

Selectors tend to be more heavily influenced by a candidate's bad points and once an adverse impression has been formulated, they are slow to change their minds (Hackett, 1992). On the other hand, selectors often select a candidate according to their preconceived image of what a 'good' principal should be.

All these elements of subjectivity clearly indicate the need for the selection process to be managed as objectively as possible. Any process involving humans can never be completely free from some form of subjectivity. A possible solution is to accept this fallibility and to try to limit it as far as possible by informed management of the selection process.

Equal opportunities

Managing recruitment and selection must be carried out within the framework of the relevant legislation, which includes legislation involving discrimination. In England and Wales the Sex Discrimination Act, the Race Relations Act and the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act all have to be adhered to. In the United States of America (USA), law forbids discrimination on the basis of age at the recruitment stage. Many other countries, such as South Africa, have similar legislation in particular, the Employment of Educators Act, (No. 76 of 1998) and the Labour Relations Act (No. 76 of 1998). Both protect the rights of educators in that they forbid discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity,

religion and political association. Indeed, staff selection committees in KwaZulu-Natal were instructed to pay special attention to gender balance and demographic representivity (KZNDEC, 1997a, p.4). All parts of the selection procedure have to be managed to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged.

Managing the process of selection

Many writers on staff selection procedures (Day et al., 1985; Bell, 1988; Southworth, 1990) adopt what might be called the traditional approach (i.e. application, reference, shortlist, interview) while stressing the need to manage the process as professionally as possible.

Selection should be seen as a two-way process i.e. one that places equal emphasis on allowing candidates to determine that a post is suitable for them and on the organisation being able to select the most appropriate person. An organisation that puts pressure, to accept an offer, on the person whom it sees as the most suitable, when that person has significant doubts, runs the risk of appointing someone who may quickly become demotivated (O'Neill et al., 1994).

In managing the selection process O'Neill et al. (1994) suggest that there are five key issues that must be considered. These, which shall be examined in greater detail, are:

Personnel - the people handling the selection process.
Criteria - the standards used to assess candidates.
Weighting - the relative importance of the different criteria.
Instruments - the tests or exercises used to measure a candidate's performance.
Matching - deciding on which candidate is best suited to the post.
(O'Neill et al., 1994, p.59)

1) Personnel

The involvement of personnel on the selection committee may be determined through the organisation's selection policy. In KwaZulu-Natal, Departmental officials do the initial sifting of application forms before the forms are despatched to SSCs. The SASA (1996) requires the formation of a SSC that handles the selection process at school level. A Superintendent of Education (Management) represents the KZNDEC on the selection committee. He may nominate someone to represent the KZNDEC or even co-opt outside expertise. A head of department or curriculum area may be included when the vacancy is in his or her own area. Likewise, a deputy principal may be involved in some or all of the processes, whilst particular heads of department may be included to gain experience.

The involvement of lay personnel on the selection committee may be obligatory in other countries, but in KZN the participation of parents on the SSC is compulsory. In some cases, this may be advantageous because of the new perspectives and expertise brought onto the selection committee. The disadvantages are that lay people are often inexperienced in selection procedure or that they may not have a thorough knowledge of the organisation – its ethos, culture or objectives. In any event, training for the entire selection committee needs not only to be considered, but also to be introduced as a matter of urgency in KZN for the following reasons:

- the current selection procedure is new and deviates sharply from past personnel appointments, and

- school governing bodies and SSCs, who recommend candidates for appointment, were established very recently in 1997 and still require capacity building.

2) Criteria and Weighting

The criteria for shortlisting and selection may include:

> Biographical data (qualifications and experience etc.)
> Skills (technical and/or managerial etc.)
> Knowledge (curriculum requirements, current legislation, etc.)
> Attitudes and values (personal ambition, loyalty, etc.)
> Others such as interests etc.
> (Bell, 1988, p.110)

It is in the weighting of the relative importance of the various criteria that the analysis of the job requirements will bear fruit. Bringing together the job description and person specification enables the drawing up of a checklist of selection criteria for all selectors to use consistently (Bell, 1988, p.109).

3) Instruments

Instruments are used to structure the selection process. In this sense, the term includes interviews, tests, exercises, and assessment centres as part of the selection process.

a) Interviews

The effective management of interviewing should acknowledge the following key principles:

- Interviewing is a two-way process and candidates must be given the opportunity to relate their past experience of the job, as well as their future expectations of the prospective job.
- There must be consistency in approach by interviewers. This has management implications for the choice of selection personnel, training of interviewers, and a clear organisational policy on selection.
- Interviewing involves specific skills, e.g. listening and questioning.
  (Bolton, 1983, p.19)

Questioning is a vital skill that interviewers have to acquire since it is by questioning that selectors obtain knowledge about candidates. Consequently, Southworth (1990) believes that selectors need to be trained in asking questions because 'a good question is one that encourages the interviewee to answer freely and honestly; a bad question is one that inhibits answering freely or produces distorted information' (Southworth, 1990, p.134). In everyday communication, questions are used to obtain knowledge, but in a selection process the knowledge that an applicant has can be more easily ascertained through instruments such as written processes or exercises. Questions at an interview should be 'concerned more with what [the candidates] have learned from experience and with their particular skills and qualities than with mere knowledge' (Day et al., 1985, p.68).

Interviewing, however, is only one part of the selection process. Traditionally, interviews have been the most important part of the process and, in some cases, all-important. The danger is that the person appointed might be the person who performs best at the interview, not the person who will perform best in the job. In managing the selection process, therefore, it is important to have an idea of the relative importance of the interview compared with the other evidence upon which the assessment for selection will be based e.g. application letter, references, informal discussion, exercises etc. Unfortunately, in KZN, the entire selection process seems to focus entirely on the interview and for many candidates, being interviewed may not be their particular strong point.

b) Tests

Psychometric tests (including sampling, tests of ability or of personality) can be more

reliable than interviews as long as two important conditions are fulfilled; first, that the

test is relevant to the job and, second, that the people using the test are trained in its use

(O'Neill et al., 1994, p.62). In education, psychometric testing is not used as widely when

compared to sales jobs and the transport industry but their use is growing (Smith et al.,

1989).

c) Exercises

The use of exercises of various kinds is increasing in the educational world and examples

include:

In-tray exercise: candidates are required to sift, prioritise and decide action upon a

sample of documents.

Written report: candidates are required to write a report for a particular audience after

being given certain information.

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

situation.

Oral presentation: candidates are asked to present formally to the selection

committee a brief synthesis of their views or approach to a particular issue.

Leaderless group discussion: candidates are grouped together to discuss a topic or

reach a decision on a question. Selectors observe individuals' performances and the

group's success.

Assessment centres: an assessment centre is a variety of testing techniques designed to allow candidates to demonstrate, under standardised conditions, the skills and abilities most essential for success in a given job. Assessment centres can greatly improve selection for jobs requiring a variety of skills in a variety of situational contexts e.g. teaching. The centres involve a series of individual and group exercises observed by trained assessors. All the exercises are set within a common frame of reference. Claims have been made that 'good assessment centres can greatly improve a selection or promotional process particularly for jobs requiring a variety of situational contexts [such as being a secondary school principal]' (Joiner, 1989, p.173).

These are samples of tests available to selection committees but it should be stressed that selection is a person to person exercise, subject to human fallibility. No progress has been made in KZNDEC[2] regarding the introduction of some of these tests and exercises into the selection process. At present, technical assessment methods are becoming more readily available and offer scope for greater impartiality, yet the entire process needs to be overseen by the organisation.

4) Matching

This stage of the selection process involves making a decision about which candidate best matches the requirements of the job. Selectors need to be assessing the performance of the candidates through the instruments used. The evidence derived from the instruments

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[2] This was ascertained in a personal interview with M.M. Moodley, Head of the Directorate for Promotions, in Durban, on 12 October 1998.

'has to be appraised for adequacy, integrity and appropriateness' (Southworth, 1990, p.117). Only then can the selection committee come to a decision as to the best candidate. This very confidential part of the selection process is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter. However good the selection process has been, the new appointee has to be helped to understand the practice and culture of the school and be offered opportunities for further development. Therefore the emphasis on good human resource management is clear because the human resource management continuum allows for staff (principal) development.

The present school context in KwaZulu-Natal

However good the selection process has been the new secondary school principal has to be helped to understand the practice and culture of the organisation and be offered opportunities for further development. The new principal needs a reasonable settling-in period and may be dependent on the guidance of his immediate superior, in this instance the Superintendent of Education (Management).

After 1994, the new national Department of Education radically transformed the education system. Firstly, seventeen former departments of education were amalgamated into one. Secondly, the administration of education passed down to provincial departments of education. Thirdly, a series of policy frameworks, white papers, education review committees and education commissions culminated in the South African Schools Act (1996) which had a host of implications and innovations for schools, notably the establishment of school governing bodies.

The newly appointed principal will be working in an era of democratisation where the implementation of the state's policy of transformation of the education system is the ruling paradigm. Principals are expected to implement national policy and to assist with bringing about equity and redress in education. The present context demands that the principal is knowledgeable about his school, has a vision and mission statement that he/she shares with all stakeholders, and that he/she has goals as part of a development plan to which he/she and other stakeholders can aspire.

Certain local conditions have supplied the imperative for the careful selection of new principals and the consequent need for an assessment of selection techniques. The many changes that have occurred in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) schools have forced established principals to rethink their management styles and decision-making strategies, and new principals to prepare themselves adequately for their jobs. Principals 'must learn to overcome barriers and cope with the chaos that naturally exists during the complex process of change' (Fullan and Miles, 1992, p.749).

Some of the changes include:

1. One Department of Education - the combination of fragmented former departments of education into one body, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC), has led to administrative upheavals.
2. The establishment of school governing bodies - the concept of joint ownership of schools and school-based management has, in some cases, been perceived as an emasculation of the principal's authority.
3. Accountability - the emphasis is currently placed on accountability to parents, community, learners and educators, and not solely to the education authority.
4. School's Image - the need to 'sell' one's school to attract paying learners.
5. Finance - the need to budget satisfactorily at a time of fiscal constraints and decreasing monetary allocations to schools.

6. Labour Laws - recognition of labour laws and acknowledgement of the rights of educators and non-educators.
7. Trade Unions – the recognition of educators' and non-educators' trade unions.
8. Learner Composition – acceptance of ethnically mixed learner populations and devising strategies to cope with language and cultural differences.
9. Educator Composition – acceptance of changes in the composition of educator staff.
10. Curriculum - the change in the school curriculum to an Outcomes-Based Education system.
11. Planning – recognising the need for short term and long term planning.
(Mcpherson, 1997, p.17)

Furthermore school governing bodies, of which the principal is an *ex officio* member, are responsible for fund-raising, budgeting and basic accounting at a time of financial constraints. The SASA (1996) also empowers governing bodies to take ownership of and manage schools in areas such as staff selection and school maintenance. This places an additional burden on the leadership and managerial skills of principals who often have to guide governing bodies because the parent component lacks the necessary expertise to perform these duties. All these functions require the principals' involvement, his/her expertise, and most of all his/her leadership and managerial abilities.

In addition, principals have inherited the results of the struggle against apartheid. These include:

- lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities
- lack of legitimacy of principals, school management teams and inspectors
- poor working conditions and physical resources
- inappropriate management structures and systems support
- lack of experience of good management practices
- uneven levels of experience and capacity in school governing bodies
- lack of understanding in the community about the role of governance in education management
- inequalities and disparities in resources and capacity
(Department of Education, 1996, p.20)

The challenge to contemporary principals is how to overcome all these shortcomings, how to manage the change process, how to ensure effective teaching and learning, while simultaneously assisting in the transformation of education in South Africa. This is typified by the claim that:

> New education policy requires managers who are able to work in
> democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure
> efficient and effective delivery.
> (Department of Education, 1996, p.25)

In other parts of the world, particularly the USA, Canada, England and Wales, schools are experiencing a greater devolution of autonomy and there is a growing tendency towards self-management of schools. Caldwell (1994) has reviewed developments in a number of western countries and claims that there is a significant increase in authority and responsibility at the school level. He states further that this has serious implications for schooling systems and that educational authorities should be considering ways of preparing leaders with a capacity for self-management at the school level.

Autonomy has not devolved to KZN schools to the extent that it has in other parts of the world. However, there is a growing tendency towards self-management that is evident in the authority entrusted to principals and school governing bodies by SASA (1996). It is claimed that:

> At the heart of the policy and legislative initiatives is a process of
> decentralising decision making about the allocation of resources to
> school level, and a significant process of democratisation in the ways
> in which schools are governed and managed.
> (Department of Education, 1996, p.29)

Changes brought about by SASA (1996), the legacy of the apartheid education system, and world-wide trends in education represent challenges to be managed by contemporary

principals. Principals, who will be expected to manage their schools effectively and efficiently, will have to be innovative in establishing interdependent relations with internal and external agencies for the benefit of the learner.

In keeping with Government's policy of democracy and transformation in education, new principals will have to shift away from traditional authoritarian styles of management and adopt a more participatory style. This will involve all stakeholders in shared decision making and thereby the running of the organisation. Through the implementation of democratic processes within the administrative structure of schools, not only is organisational democracy placed in harmony with political democracy but also the political ideology of the democratic state gains legitimacy (Simpkins et al., 1987). This is in keeping with the state's intention of transforming education in public schools so that it reflects the democratic nature of the state.

Human resource management accommodates these human requirements and adequately provides for them by placing emphasis on the selection of the right people for the job. In this sense recruitment and selection of principals are merely the first two elements of a human resource management process that also includes induction, mentoring, appraisal, and staff development. The completion of the selection process should initiate an intense period of induction and mentoring for the new principal.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the importance of human resource management strategies in selecting high school principals for KZN schools. In addition, the importance of making the right choice, particularly in the contemporary context of change in South African schools, is clearly demonstrated. Not only are national and local education systems undergoing change, but it has also become necessary for new and old principals to change their management styles in accordance with the national policy of transformation, equity and redress. It has been established that human resource management is important in the selection process. What remains is to examine current selection procedures in the local context i.e. KwaZulu-Natal.

The next chapter will describe the current selection procedure for secondary school principals in KZN. The chapter begins with a brief description of the development of the procedure. It thereafter describes the process in greater detail while emphasising that transparency of the procedure is paramount, and concludes with a description of all documentation necessary for completion of the procedure.

CHAPTER 4

The current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)

An examination and description of previous selection procedures of secondary school principals in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) would, of necessity, entail a detailed and time-consuming study of at least five former departments of education. This assessment of the selection procedure for secondary school principals, given its limited scope and particular focus, has neither the extent nor the resources for such an exercise. Therefore, the focus in this chapter is on the current selection procedure for secondary school principals in KZN.

The current selection procedure is new and is still in the process of being developed. Every addition or change to it had to be negotiated with diverse role-players such as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC), teacher organisations and associations of governing bodies. Every feature of the procedure is the result of highly contested negotiation and any amendment to the procedure entails renegotiation and a referral to current labour legislation. It is hoped that this research, by highlighting advantages and disadvantages and recommending improvements, will help to hasten development of a satisfactory selection procedure.

This chapter describes the complete selection procedure. It begins with applications for the post of principalship, shortlisting, interviewing, nominating applicants, and includes descriptions of the documents necessary for completion of the process. Assessment and

criticism of certain features of the procedure, as well as recommendations for improvement, will be done in the next chapter.

Introduction

For many years, public schools in KZN were controlled by at least five separate departments of education, each with its own criteria for the appointment of secondary school principals. After 1994, these departments of education were combined and brought under the authority of a single provincial administration, viz. KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC), which introduced its own procedure and practice for selecting principals. This current procedure is still evolving with many interested stakeholders contributing to its refinement.

It is a matter of public record that the salary bill for educators represents the major area of expenditure (more than 90%) in KZNDEC. In the prevailing local context of educator rationalisation, educator redeployment and increased educator/learner ratios, it becomes imperative that educators, the most expensive asset, are managed effectively. It is equally important that the selection of a secondary school principal or chief executive of a school receives greater attention since he/she is responsible and accountable for the effective and efficient management of these expensive human resources. It has been argued that 'the task of management ... is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and their students are able to achieve learning' (Department of Education, 1996, p.8).

Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that educator rationalisation and severance packages created situations where many secondary school principals were internally appointed in temporary or acting capacities. These temporary principals would also have to apply according to current selection procedures and their appointment should not be seen as a *fait accompli*.

The following description of current selection procedures in KZN, out of necessity, draws heavily on the document/guideline issued to schools and chairpersons of school governing bodies viz. 'School Based Posts, Shortlisting and Interviewing, Procedures and Practices' issued by KZNDEC, Directorate: Promotions, in October1997. While every effort is made to be original and not to expropriate, out of necessity, certain statements are copied verbatim. Unless otherwise indicated, all information is derived from the aforementioned document.

The procedures and practices for the selection of principals and deputy principals were negotiated and agreed to by the Employer and Employee Sectors of the KZN Education Labour Relations Chamber in terms of Resolution 13 of 1995. This agreement is contained in Resolution 11 of 1997 of the KZN Provincial Chamber. To familiarise senior Department officials, observers and members of school governing bodies with these procedures and practices, the KZNDEC runs workshops in various centres throughout the province. The aim of the workshops is to equip senior officials, notably Superintendents of Education (Management), (SEMs), so that they can cascade the information down to Staff Selection Committees (SSCs). In this way, members of

governing bodies will be informed and also empowered, as they are involved in the selection process.

Sifting of applications

The process of selecting principals/deputy principals begins when public schools in KZN inform the KZNDEC of vacancies for principals. The KZNDEC advertises these posts in a provincial education bulletin/gazette and applications from interested parties are invited. In an attempt to synchronise the procedure throughout the province a schedule of deadlines for every phase of the procedure was introduced, beginning with the closing date for applications to be submitted to the Department and ending with the closing date for the acceptance of nominations. Completed application forms and curricula vitae (CVs) are sent, by the applicants, to the administration offices of the KZNDEC and not to the school where the vacancy exists.

In the education sector, the province of KwaZulu-Natal is divided into eight administrative regions, each possessing a *nucleus of staff* to deal with promotions. The Regional Co-ordinator together with selected administrative personnel could comprise this nucleus. They could co-opt additional administrative staff to assist with sifting through all the applications. Certain applications were immediately discarded from the selection process for the following reasons:

- The applicant does not meet the minimum qualification of M+3 (this is usually a Senior Certificate and a 3-year teaching diploma) and the appropriate relevant experience.

- The application forms are incomplete e.g. unsigned application forms (EC1)[3] or the required curriculum vitae (EC2) is not enclosed.
- The application forms (EC1 & EC2) are received after the closing date, notwithstanding allowances made for mail that is correctly postmarked before the closing date.
- The applicant was granted a Voluntary Severance Package (VSP) and is therefore excluded from applying for the post.
- The applicant is retired from the State and is in receipt of a State Pension.
- The applicant is retired on medical grounds.
- The applicant is not a serving educator.

The remaining application forms are then sent to the appropriate SSCs for further

processing.

The Application Form

At this stage, it is appropriate and necessary to describe, in greater detail, the official

application form (EC1) and the official Curriculum Vitae (CV) form (EC2) because they

are vital to the entire selection procedure.

Application Form (EC1)

The application form is a three-page document that solicits detailed and relevant

information about the applicant. Section A of EC1 requires particulars about the vacant

post such as post number, post description, name of the school where the vacant post is,

as well as the district and region into which the school falls.

Section B requests personal information about the applicant. The onus is on applicants to

assess their own language proficiency in Section C. This is done by grading their ability

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[3] A summary of the relevant forms appears at the end of the chapter, and samples of the forms are contained in Appendix B.

to speak, read or write three of the eleven official South African languages viz. isiZulu, English and Afrikaans without order of preference.

In Section D applicants fill in their professional and academic qualifications; proof of certification is not required. Employment details and a brief history of the applicant is required in Section E. This includes information such as the applicant's present employer, the applicant's current post, and the capacity and classification of the post. The last part of Section E requires detailed information about the applicant's career as an educator - where he/she has taught, the capacity of the various posts held, and the reasons for leaving each post. The number of years teaching in a primary and/or secondary school is required together with the phase (field/direction), the subject(s) and grades (form/standard) taught at each named institution. Space for other work experience, employer's name, positions held and the periods employed are also provided.

Finally, the applicant has to declare, with his/her signature, that all the information furnished on the form is *true, correct and complete in every respect*. He/she also accepts that supplying false information may render his/her application invalid and could lead to prosecution.

The Curriculum Vitae (CV) Form (EC2)

Together with the official application form, applicants are required to submit their CV on an official form i.e. EC2 provided by the Department. Page one of this form requires detailed personal information about the applicant. *Outside applicants*, i.e. applicants who

are not employed as educators by the Department are expected to furnish details of two referees. Page two is essentially a blank page on which the applicant is required to comment about him/herself in the light of the following prescribed topics:

- Leadership: Administrative, Management and Related Experience.
- Organisational Ability and Experience.
- Professional Development, Educational Experience and Insight.
- Leadership: Community Related.

The applicant is reminded that this section (Item 18) should not exceed 1000 words and that SSCs are instructed to disregard anything written after the first 1000 words. This was subsequently altered to 1200 words by KZNDEC. SSCs are further instructed to validate information obtained from referees, or from *other approved sources*, if they have any doubt about information on the CV. After administrative personnel complete the sifting process, vetted application forms are sent to SSCs at the school where the vacancy exists for shortlisting and interviewing.

Staff Selection Committee (SSC)

Composition and Constitution

According to the South African Schools' Act (1996), governing bodies have to be established at all public schools in the country. Governing bodies at each school have to establish a standing committee for staff selection. This Staff Selection Committee comprises three or five members from the governing body's parent and/or co-opted sectors, the school principal and the SEM. The governing body thus supplies three or five members of the SSC and one of them (a full governing body member or a co-opted member) will be the chairperson of the SSC. If the chairperson is not available, another member of the SSC has to deputise. In such an instance, a new governing body member

must be brought in to replace the member standing in for the chairperson. The principal/acting-principal is an *ex officio* member, except in the case of he/she being an applicant for a specific post at the same school. The Education Department's representative is the SEM or his/her nominee. The acting-principal or the SEM is required to hold a substantive post of at least one post level higher than that of the applicant.

The SSC may utilise outside expertise, by co-opting one or two additional members. The deputy principal of the school, and/or a subject expert from the Department or from an outside institution may be co-opted. A member of the SSC has to be nominated as secretary. With the exception of the school principal/acting principal, and possibly the deputy principal, educators are excluded from the SSC at the school where they are employed. Educators, who have a child/children at another school, may be elected to the SSC of that particular school-provided he/she is not an applicant for a post at that school.

Functions of the Staff Selection Committee

The SSC is responsible for shortlisting applicants, interviewing the shortlisted applicants and assessing them for possible nomination to the prospective post. To this effect, the SSC must ensure that accurate records are kept of all proceedings dealing with shortlisting, interviewing and nomination of candidates.

Shortlisting

The SSC at each school will shortlist applicants for the post on the basis of post requirements, qualification, curriculum vitae and related experience in order to obtain a manageable number of applicants. For this purpose, form EC3 has to be completed. On this form, each member of the SSC records salient details under each criterion to motivate the score assigned to the applicant. All SSC members and observers have to sign this form. In this way the applicants will be graded and the shortlist (to be completed on form EC4) should include *the top ± eight applicants in merit order*. It is further stipulated that if there are only ten, or less than ten, applicants for a post, there is no need to assess the CV, as all applicants must then be interviewed.

Interviews

Thereafter, the Staff Selection Committee invites shortlisted applicants to an interview where *approved procedures* would be applied for interviews and assessments. Applicants have to be given five working days notice to attend the interviews. Interviews would preferably be conducted at the school to which the applicant is applying. Interviews are conducted in English but this requirement has subsequently been changed to a language agreed to by all parties. Each member of the SSC assesses the applicant in respect of each of the five approved criteria by scoring numerically on the prescribed form EC5 and by providing the necessary motivations in the remark column. The five criteria for the interview are:

- Leadership: Administrative, Management and Related Experience.
- Organisational Ability and Experience.

- Professional Development, Educational Experience and Insight.
- Leadership: Community Related.
- Personality and Human Relations.

After reaching consensus, the chairperson completes a final assessment for each interviewee on a separate form EC5, which has to be signed by all members and observers of the SSC.

Criteria for shortlisting and interviews

Staff Selection Committees are reminded that the KZNDEC, in keeping with national policy, is an *equal opportunity affirmative action employer* and to this effect, SSCs should make every effort to *ensure gender balance and demographic representivity*. In the event that the shortlisted applicants do not reflect gender balance or demographic representivity, SSCs are required to examine applications that are marginally below the cut-off score to see whether they could be included on the shortlist.

An official document "Guidelines for interviewing candidates for Principalship and Deputy Principalship by Staff Selection Committees' (1997a) has been issued to chairpersons of SSCs. This guideline contains detailed advice on how to conduct interviews, including examples of questions that interviewers could use during the interview. SSCs are permitted and encouraged to formulate their own *appropriate and topical* questions provided that the new questions are in line with those suggested by the Department.

Observers on Staff Selection Committees

The Education Labour Relations Act in general, and Resolution 13 of 1995 in particular, provides for teacher organisations to play a participative role in the promotion process. Therefore, all recognised teacher organisations in KZN have the right to appoint one representative as an observer to each of the SSCs. Chairpersons of SSCs would give at least three working days written notice to teacher organisations to enable them to arrange for observers. In addition, the non-attendance of an observer would not inhibit the selection process, as long as chairpersons had formally informed the relevant organisations.

Observers are compelled to represent a teacher organisation recognised by the KZNDEC. Educators are excluded from observer status at a school where they are applicants. The observer, like other SSC members, has to sign a declaration of confidentiality and is required to be present at all SSC meetings, including shortlisting and interviewing. While the observer would not be directly involved in the actual shortlisting and interviewing, he/she has to sign all the relevant documents indicating that correct procedures were followed. Thus the main function of the observer is to ensure fairness and consistency in the selection procedures. The observer can not question the applicant but can intervene when he/she deems that there has been an infringement of the procedures. If, after consulting with the chairperson, agreement on an alleged infringement can not be reached, the observer declares a dispute and the matter is referred to the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC).

Dispute Resolution Committee

The Department has made allowance for grievance procedures. Each of the eight regions

in KZN has to constitute a DRC. This committee comprises:

- Chairperson: Superintendent of Education (Labour Relations).
- Secretary: Superintendent of Education (Promotions).
- Member: Chief Superintendent of Education (Regional Co-ordinator).
- Member: Superintendent of Education (Management).
- Member: District Manager of the School.
- Member: One representative from each teacher organisation.

Grievances may be lodged by educators, in writing, through their teacher organisations or

directly to the Superintendent of Education (Promotions) in the region in which the post

is located. A recognised observer may also declare a dispute. This may be done through

the observer's teacher organisation or directly to the Superintendent of Education

(Promotions) in the region in which the disputed post is located. A dispute must be

lodged within fourteen days of the alleged infringement of official procedure. The

declaration of a dispute will not prevent the selection process from continuing unless the

SSC is instructed to halt all proceedings by the DRC.

The procedures and practices of SSCs are confidential. SSC members are instructed not

to discuss them beyond the confines of the meetings. All SSC members, as well as the

observer, are required to sign a declaration of confidentiality i.e. form EC8. At the

beginning of each day's business, the chairperson has to stress the provisions regarding

recusal to members. Members of the SSC must recuse themselves from the selection

procedures in respect of applicants in whom they have personal stakes. Members of the

SSC may be disqualified for the following infringements:

- A SSC member who solicits support for a particular candidate by contacting or discussing such a case with other members outside the interview situation disqualifies him/herself from the SSC.
- An applicant, who contacts any member of the SSC or the observer for support shall, if the information can be collaborated, be disqualified.

While emphasising transparency, the procedure also contains checks and balances in an attempt to eradicate subjective human failings such as nepotism and breaches of confidentiality and clearly defines grievance procedures.

Nominations by the Staff Selection Committee

After all interviews are completed, the rank order of the nominated candidates for the post must be finalised by the SSC. The SSC has to consider suitability for the post, specialised qualifications, and relevance of experience, expertise, and the overall impression of each candidate *using the score only as a guide*. Furthermore, the SSC is advised that where a candidate with a lower score is preferred over one with a higher score, the following factors should be strictly observed:

- There should not be a difference of more than five points between the affected candidates.
- Sound educational reasons must be advanced for such supersession.
- There must be sufficient evidence recorded on form EC5 of the affected candidates to justify such a decision.
- Factors that may be advanced for such supersession are gender balance and demographic representivity.

After discussion and consensus, the names of the nominated candidates are recorded, in order of preference, on form EC6. The SSC thereafter forwards the completed form EC6, together with forms EC1 to EC5, to the chairperson of the School Governing Body.

One of the functions of the governing body is to recommend candidates to the Head of Department (Secretary for Education) for appointment to the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994) and the Labour Relations Act (Act No. 66 of 1995). In pursuance of these regulations, the chairperson of the governing body convenes a special meeting of the full governing body to consider the nominations made by the SSC. If the governing body disagrees with a nomination, a detailed written report should be submitted to the SSC for reconsideration of its nomination. The SSC may amend its recommendation or reaffirm its position by supporting its view with appropriate motivation. The governing body will then ratify the nominations with all members signing form EC6. The minutes of the governing body meetings where nominations are ratified should be recorded and kept for possible future use.

The selection process continues with the governing body offering the candidate who is nominated number one, the vacant post. The onus is on the nominee to accept or refuse the nomination. In the event that the first candidate refuses the offer, the governing body offers the vacancy to nominee number two and so on. All correspondence between the nominee and the governing body is in writing and for this purpose form EC7 is used. Once the acceptance of a nominee is obtained, all the relevant documents pertaining to the candidate, forms EC1 to EC7, should be forwarded to the Chief Director of Education of the region in which the school is located.

The Regional Chief Director validates the acceptance of the nominated candidate. If the correct selection procedure has been followed and the documents for selection are in order, the Regional Chief Director supports the nomination and sends all relevant documents to the Secretary for Education (KZN). In terms of the amendment to Section 4[1], [2] and [3] of the Educators' Employment Act (No. 138 of 1994), as reflected in Schedule 2 of the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), the Secretary approves the appointment of the nominated candidate. The newly appointed educator is expected to assume his/her post on a date determined by the Secretary of Education and communicated to him/her in a letter of appointment. If it can be determined that the promotion was acquired using incorrect information, then the appointment will be withdrawn.

Summary of relevant forms

EC1 Application Form

> This form is to be completed by the applicant and returned to the KZNDEC. It requires information about the vacant post, personal details of the applicant and his/her career history.

EC2 Curriculum Vitae

> This form accompanies the application form (EC1). Both have to be completed by the applicant and returned to the KZNDEC. The form requires personal details of the applicant and written comments, not exceeding 1000 words, on the five prescribed criteria.

EC3 Shortlisting: Assessment of Curriculum Vitae

Each member of the SSC records relevant details for each criterion to motivate the score assigned. All members and observers must sign this form.

EC4 Schedule of Shortlisted Applicants

After all the CV's have been assessed, the top eight applicants are listed in order of merit of their scores. All members and observers are required to sign this form.

EC5 Interview: Assessment

Each member of the SCC must assess the applicant in respect of the five prescribed criteria by scoring on EC5 and providing the necessary motivation in the remark column. At the end of each interview, and after reaching consensus, the chairperson will complete the final assessment on a new EC5, which must be signed by all members and observers.

EC6 Nominations by Governing Body

The SCC records all nominations in order of preference and submits this form to the governing body for ratification.

EC7 Offer of Nomination

The governing body offers the vacancy to the first nomination on form EC7. If he/she refuses the nomination, the vacancy is offered to the second nomination. When an applicant accepts, the chairperson processes the documents for rectification by the governing body and, thereafter, submits them to the Regional Chief Director for the promotion to be finalised.

EC8 Declaration of Confidentiality

All members and observers of the SCC must sign this declaration and adhere to the code of secrecy.

Conclusion

As stated earlier in the chapter, the selection procedure for secondary school principals in KZN is new and marks a paradigmatic shift away from previous selection procedures. With the introduction of a new model, concomitant problems and challenges are to be expected as departmental officials, SSCs and applicants adapt to the change. Any new selection model has strong points, such as transparency, and weaknesses, such as its complex nature. These will be explained and examined in more detail in the next chapter where it is also hoped to recommend improvements to the selection procedure. What also remains to be seen is how the selection procedure compares with the principles of human resource management and to internationally accepted selection procedures.

The following chapter will assess and interpret each step in the current selection procedure for secondary school principals in KZN. This will be done against the background of the recent selection of principals in KZN and in the light of interviews conducted with successful candidates. Finally, the next chapter will conclude with suggestions for improving the procedure.

CHAPTER 5

Assessment of the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal

Some selection procedures evolve slowly as certain features are amended and additions are made. In KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) a radical shift to a new selection procedure for principals was developed very recently and came into effect in 1997. This selection procedure is dynamic because it is constantly adapting to local changes in education. This assessment will reveal whether it meets the current needs of education and educators in the province.

Introduction

The importance of the principal to the overall success of a school has been generally accepted, yet there has been negligible discussion or local academic literature on how a principal should be selected. Bearing this in mind, one has therefore to assess the KwaZulu-Natal selection procedure according to internationally accepted practices and using international literature. It is, therefore, intended to draw heavily on the seminal work of Morgan, Hall and Mackay (1984), who conducted research on the selection of secondary school headteachers in England and Wales in 1983 and 1984, and to make comparisons and suggestions where possible. While the work of these writers may seem dated, it still has relevance for selection procedures in KZN. In addition, empirical evidence will be produced to highlight problems occurring in the recent (1997/1998) selection of secondary school principals in KZN.

This chapter begins by describing the background to recent selections of principals in KwaZulu-Natal. The background provides the context in which discussions with various role-players in the selection process were held and is described to enable a better understanding of statements made by discussants. Following this is a description of the methodology used to acquire evidence for the assessment and interpretation of the whole KZNDEC selection procedure. The chapter concludes with suggestions from principals interviewed for improving the selection procedure.

Background to the 1997/1998 selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal

At this juncture, it is appropriate to define the context in which this assessment of the KZN selection procedure for secondary school principals is performed, thereby providing a better understanding of interviewee responses.

Since a Government of National Unity came into being in 1994, education has been plagued by the same problems that confront other state departments - a lack of financial resources and a dwindling supply of material resources. In an effort to cut costs and enable more funding for education, the national minister has used a variety of approaches that are essentially variations of a theme.

As has been already stated, the greater part of provincial education budgets (in some cases more than 90%) is used for educator salaries. Consequently the national Minister of Education believed that by reducing the total number of educators, provincial educator salary bills would in turn be reduced and more money could be allocated to other aspects

of education. To this effect new teacher/pupil ratios were introduced in schools, excess teachers were to be redeployed to schools where their services were needed, and some teachers were offered Voluntary Severance Packages (VSPs). One of the qualifications for VSP was twenty years of continuous service as an educator and this qualified many experienced educators in senior school management positions. Principals, deputy principals and heads of departments applied for the VSP, received it and subsequently surrendered their public school posts in 1997 and 1998. This created a large number of vacant principal and deputy principal posts to which appointments had to be made. The posts for principals and deputy principals were advertised in Education Bulletin Volume 1, dated 19 September 1997, a summary[4] of which is shown below:

REGION	POSTS	APPLICATIONS
Durban South	305	85 000
Empangeni	222	10 000
Ladysmith	292	7 000
North Durban*	387	103 276
Pietermaritzburg	246	14 355
Port Shepstone	240	12 105
Ulundi	188	3 986
Vryheid	165	3 568
TOTAL	2045	236 059

Applications for vacant principal posts in KZN
*Principals in one circuit of the North Durban Region were interviewed.

It was in this context that the current selection procedure was used to appoint principals to secondary schools in KZN, and in which interviews were conducted with both successful candidates.

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[4] Adapted from Education Bulletin Volume 1, 19 September 1997.

Collection of data

1. Literature survey

A search for literature on selection procedures in the South African context met with limited results. Apparently, very little research has been done on the selection of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and in South Africa. Nevertheless, the international literature examined, especially 'The Selection of Secondary School Headteachers' by Morgan, Hall & Mackay (1983) and 'A Handbook on Selecting Senior Staff for Schools' by Morgan, Hall & Mackay (1984), provided various insights into the nature of the topic, the advantages and disadvantages of using a human resource management approach, as well as the practise of selecting secondary school principals, albeit mainly in foreign countries. It is not the writer's intention to expound greatly on these works, rather to utilise them in assessing the KZN selection procedure and draw on them when making recommendations.

2. Data Collection

Because of the nature of the topic, it was decided to use semi-structured personal interviews as a means of collecting data. It was felt that face-to-face interviews would enable the interviewer to elicit additional information and to understand the context in which responses were given. The personal interview method offers flexibility. It lends itself to prompting and it provides the opportunity to rephrase questions, thereby ensuring that respondents understand the questions. In contrast, other research methods such as observations, survey interviews and questionnaires, appear to be too inflexible and do not provide the opportunity to establish a sense of rapport with respondents. It was decided to

use semi-structured interviews to obtain the data because they are non-standardised yet enable the collection of equivalent data. They are also sufficiently flexible to allow the use of different approaches for different people. By using semi-structured interviews, it was hoped to enlist interviewee co-operation and confidence, while still providing flexibility for a variety of questions.

The lack of time and other resources also determined the data collection method since surveys, questionnaires and observations are time consuming, involving extra work and extra costs for what is essentially a small-scale investigation.

It was not necessary to obtain permission to conduct the interviews because the targeted interviewees had sufficient positional authority in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC) to grant these. Because of the small scale of the project it was decided to limit interviews to a mixed gender group comprising the Head of the Directorate for Promotions, one local Superintendent of Education (Management) and seven recently appointed secondary school principals, all from one area in the North Durban region. In addition, discussions were held with representatives of the major teacher associations in the region. In this way it was anticipated that a fair cross-section of opinions would be obtained, both at departmental level and from principals. The interviewer was guided by a prepared list of questions (Appendix A) and responses were recorded by means of notes.

All the prospective respondents were interviewed. A small problem surfaced because, with teacher rationalisation, principals are also expected to teach and are often unavailable for interviews. The schedule of interviews was therefore compromised and interviews were conducted as opportunities presented themselves. Interviews were conducted in the offices of the interviewees where the respondents were at ease. Interviewees were informed about the purpose of the project viz. to assess the current selection procedure in KwaZulu-Natal and a report-back on the findings was promised. Rapid notes were made during the interview. These were written up immediately afterwards and later checked by interviewees. Interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes and the very busy schedules of all interviewees made extensions impracticable. Interviewees were reminded at the outset of their right to control evidence supplied by them and their contributions were double-checked with the draft report before it was submitted. Interviewees were assured that all identities would be kept anonymous. This was appreciated by all except the Head of the Directorate for Promotions, MM Moodley, who did not mind being cited because he was proud of the Directorate's achievements.

Assessment and interpretation of findings

Because the interview questions posed to all interviewees were similar, a discussion on the classification and comparison of the responses will be done simultaneously with due attention to rank differences where relevant. For the sake of brevity, continuity, and to avoid repetition, related questions and topics are grouped under appropriate sub-headings. similar to those of the previous chapter. These are:

   The application form (EC1)
   Curriculum vitae (EC2)

Staff selection committees
Validation and shortlisting of candidates (EC3 & EC4)
Observers
Interviews
Interview techniques
Interview format and procedure (EC5 & EC6)
Specific procedures (EC7 & EC8)

The Application Form (EC1)

The main principles to be followed in compiling an application form are that it is

adequate and appropriate to the post for which it is intended, and that it provides relevant

information about the candidate. This means that it should:

- allow selectors to differentiate between candidates on job related factors;
- allow the candidates' answers to be assessed on some questions at least;
- provide selectors with relevant information about candidates' previous experience and responsibilities;
- provide candidates with an adequate opportunity to make available all the information required by selectors; and,
- be specific to the type of job to be filled.
    (Morgan, Hall & Mackay, 1984, p.30)

An examination of the KZNDEC application form reveals that it complies with what is

deemed good 'good practice' by Morgan et al. (1984), and that it provides all the

necessary information required by the selection committee. The principals interviewed

agreed that the application form requested relevant but detailed information, that it was

neatly set out, and that it was succinct. Principals stated that the information required was

both of a personal and professional nature. However, they acknowledged that the same

data would be required for most jobs in the public and private sector. It was interesting to

note that a letter of application was not required to accompany the application. This

would have entailed, firstly, writing a separate letter for each post applied for, and

secondly, the open-ended nature of such letters do not easily facilitate comparison and assessment in a systematic manner.

On the question of time, all principal interviewees, teacher organisation representatives, and the Head of the Directorate for Promotions (HDP), agreed that sufficient time was allocated for the submission of application forms. The HDP felt that '...*many educators procrastinate and leave it* [the submission of theform] *till the last minute*'. He informed the writer that steps had been taken to disseminate the information, consisting of the official advertisement and other relevant documents, as soon as possible, first to regional heads and thereafter to schools, using the Superintendent of Education (Management) (SEM) network.

One contentious matter became evident during discussions with interviewees and this was that they all had mixed feelings about the minimum qualification of M+3[5], and relevant experience ranging from three to seven years, as a prerequisite for the post of principal. All the principals interviewed believed that the minimum qualification was sufficiently low to enable formerly disadvantaged candidates to apply. However, half felt that the status and responsibility attached to a principal's position demanded higher academic qualifications and more experience. One principal was adamant that '*a minimum age qualification of 35 years*' should pertain, and that the present minimum qualification should be raised. The HDP believed the low minimum qualification to be the '*the root of his [MM Model's] problem*' because it led to an inordinately large

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[5] This qualification usually comprises a Senior Certificate and a three year teaching diploma.

number of applications for principalship (over 180 000 applications for 692 posts in the

North and South Durban regions)[6]. The HDP felt that:

> *...the minimum qualification has to be raised. It cannot be done*
> *via degrees or diplomas because some sections of the teaching*
> *fraternity have been disadvantaged. Teachers unions are not*
> *prepared to budge on this issue. Some applicants are clearly not*
> *principal material but it was a case of applying and hoping for*
> *the best.*

Although interviewees regarded the minimum qualification as too low, and did not want

it retained for future selection of principals, only two interviewees (29%) offered possible

solutions. Firstly, the HDP believed that more emphasis should be placed on teaching

experience. Secondly, one principal advocated the *'systematic progression of candidates*

to principalship'. The first suggestion is inappropriate because a secondary school

principal spends only part of his time teaching – the rest is devoted to managing the

institution. It may be argued that the principal with greater teaching experience could

provide better guidance to teachers. However, providing guidance is a very small element

of a principal's job and at secondary school level, subject advisors are available for

guidance. The second suggestion is a return to the past with its 'step-by-step' progression

up the promotion ladder. One disadvantage of this system is that it confines selection to

deputy principals only and is tantamount to advocating ring fencing or selection from a

'closed shop'. It does seem imperative that the minimum qualification be raised for future

principal selections. The main argument that some sections of the teaching fraternity

were disadvantaged in the past cannot forever be used as justification for low academic

qualifications and inadequate preparation for principalship. Instead, a prerequisite for

principalship could be an appropriate qualification in school leadership and management.

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[6] A claim made by the Head of Directorate for Promotions (HDP).

According to the literature, all the information supplied on the application form should be 'comprehensive, easily retrievable, appropriate to the past, with key facts on the front page, and with details in tabular form' (Morgan et al., 1984, p.31). In general, the KZNDEC (EC1) application form differed very little from those used in other employment sectors. It was adequate and appropriate for the prospective job and was unanimously regarded as *'user-friendly'*.

Curriculum Vitae (EC2)

The KZNDEC requires a curriculum vita (CV) of 1000 words, later increased to 1200 words, on prescribed topics and on a form provided, to accompany each application. The topics are:

- *leadership: administrative, management and related experience*
- *organisational ability and experience*
- *professional development, educational experience and insight, and*
- *leadership: community related.*

Firstly, it would seem that the prescribed topics are restrictive and exclude items such as staff development, decision-making or leadership style. Secondly, descriptives required in the curriculum vitae are not time-limited and candidates could describe events over a number of years. According to Morgan et al., (1984), it is important for selectors to set a candidate's biographical data alongside answers to certain structured topics when shortlisting. Their suggestion of topic areas include a candidates knowledge and experience of:

- comprehensive education
- curriculum planning
- pastoral care

- staff development
- public and external relations
(Morgan et al., 1984, p.32)

They contend that candidates' answers will reveal more detailed information and that this information will enable further comparison in a systematic manner. They suggest that the main purposes of describing ones abilities are:

- to reveal a candidate's analysis and understanding of key educational issues or matters of school management
- to identify a candidate's educational values
- to provide a basis for systematic assessment
- to provide selectors with a common basis of information upon which to distinguish between candidates
- to ensure candidate responses to all issues are identified as relevant to the post in the job description
(Morgan et al., 1984, p.32)

The principals interviewed were unanimous that the prescribed length was inadequate and that the prescribed topics limited the scope of an applicants abilities and activities, especially for candidates with many years experience in teaching. The HDP adopted a contrary stance and stated that *'...some applicants are under the impression that the more one writes, the higher the score or grading will be. In a thousand word CV, one has to be succinct, which is a good quality for a prospective principal'.*

On consideration of the above topic areas and purposes, it does appear that the KZNDECs curriculum vitae form is lacking in what is regarded as good practice. The topic areas need to be improved and the length of the curriculum vitae needs to be increased to adequately provide candidates with an opportunity to 'sell themselves'.

Staff Selection Committees (SSCs)

According to the current procedure, the Staff Selection Committee comprises three or

five members from the governing body's parent and/or co-opted sectors, the school

principal and the SEM, and excludes teachers from being on their own school's SSC. The

SEM is an *ex-officio* member of the SSC and his/her functions are to advise the SSC on

the official selection procedure, to alert the SSC to improper procedure, and to protect

employer rights.

Because the proceedings of selection committee meetings are confidential, it was

impossible to obtain official records of meetings - indeed it would have been illegal.

Therefore, the writer can only speculate that proceedings went according to regulation

and that procedure was based on what is considered good practice. In this instant, good

practice is taken to mean that the selection procedure was based on sound human

resource principles.

It is therefore assumed that the SSC met before any shortlisting was done and considered

what Morgan et al. (1984) view as four vital questions for selectors. They are:

- What is the job to be filled?
- What competencies are needed to perform the job successfully?
- How will the necessary knowledge and skills be assessed?
- How will the evidence as a whole be treated to reach a final decision?
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.5)

Careful consideration of the above questions will greatly facilitate a more knowledgeable

and better prepared SSC because:

- All selectors would then know the nature of the post and could agree

on what it involves.
- Each selector would know the part he/she would have to play in the procedure as a whole, and how his/her role relates to the whole process.
- Selectors would get a better understanding of how each stage of the procedure fits in with the other stage, making a consistent whole and generating an accumulation of evidence on candidates according to the knowledge and skills to be assessed.
- Selectors would be in a position to agree the procedure for elimination and final decision.
(Morgan et al., 1984, p.6)

Only one out of the seven principals (14%) was satisfied with the composition and function of the SSC. He/she believed that parental input and co-opted expertise enhanced the quality of the selection committee. The other principals (86%) were dissatisfied for a variety of reasons, which included:

- The parent component is inadequately trained, or not trained at all, in interview techniques.
- Parents are uninformed about education matters and management issues in particular, and are therefore unable to satisfactorily ask questions or to follow through with questioning.
- Parents with vested interests in particular candidates were nominated to the SSC.
- The lack of educators on the SSC, and principals in particular, because they have a greater knowledge of the attributes required by a new principal.

The HDP agreed that principals' claims were valid and reported that where there were irregularities, department officials intervened and ousted members with vested interests from SSCs. In unreported cases, candidates declare a dispute through their teacher organisation. Nevertheless, it is the writer's contention that at all times the selection committee should be above suspicion, free of blemish and possess a high degree of credibility if it's decisions are to be accepted by candidates, the teaching profession, and the community at large.

It was also acknowledged by the HDP that SSC members' lacked interview techniques and required training. By using a cascading model and the expertise of SEMs, it was hoped that a one-off workshop would be adequate to train SSC members. Clearly this was insufficient. The HDP agreed that this was the case but financial constraints and a lack of human resources hindered further training. The KZNDEC's intention is to train cores of SEMs in interview techniques. These SEMs could then workshop selection committee members on an on-going basis in preparation for future selections. In addition, it is imperative that the appointing authority provides adequate selection manuals and ongoing workshops for standing committee members, in order to keep all stakeholders informed about changes to educators' employment conditions and selection procedures.

At this stage it would be pertinent to comment on the role of the Department's representative, the Superintendent of Education (Management), on the SSC. According to Morgan et al. (1984), the duties of this officer should be:

1. To assist selectors in their definition of the job and the competencies required to perform the job;
2. To be familiar with and able to deploy a range of means of gathering evidence of candidates' possession of these competencies;
3. To assemble and accumulate the evidence of candidates' strengths and weaknesses across these competencies.
    (Morgan et al., 1984, p.20)

The functions of this official are crucial to the success of the entire procedure and his/her presence should not simply be viewed as that of custodian of the employer's rights. In fact it is expected that the SEM be:

- Someone well versed in the tasks and responsibilities of principalship
- Someone who has been given the opportunity, through training,

> to become familiar with and keep abreast of developments in
> selection principles and techniques
> - Someone who has formal involvement in all principal appointments
> - Someone who has responsibility for the co-ordination of all the
>   activities that make up a principal appointment procedure
> - Someone who is able to ensure that all assessment techniques are
>   properly executed and recorded in the correct manner.
>   (Morgan et al., 1984, p.22)

In the complex selection procedure for principals, the work of the selection committee

and, in particular, the SEM, is of utmost importance in ensuring fair and legitimate

proceedings. Indeed, it would not be amiss to suggest that a professional adviser from an

external agency be appointed to monitor and guide the selection procedure. While it is by

no means claimed that external advisers are free from accusations of favouritism, 'their

external status appears to give them much greater credibility as impartial advisers to lay

selectors and their training much greater insight into the technical demands of selection'

(Morgan et al., 1983, p.93)

Validation and shortlisting of candidates (Forms EC3 and EC4)

Principals were pleased that the initial sifting and validation was undertaken by

KZNDEC officials, whom they regarded as *'neutral'*, and not by SSCs who often

comprised untrained parents, possibly with vested interests in certain candidates.

Shortlisting, on the other hand, was carried out by SSCs at the schools and according to

criteria agreed upon in negotiations between the Department and teacher organisations.

The criteria are contained in form EC3 and do not differ from that appearing on the CV,

in fact shortlisting is essentially an evaluation of the CV.

The shortlisting process was done on the basis of post requirements, qualification, CV and related experience to obtain a manageable number of applicants. In the event of any doubt arising from the information presented in the CV by the applicant, the SSC could seek further validation from referees. Selectors were required to score each candidate on the five standardised criteria to a maximum of fourteen points. These were then tallied and the eight candidates with the highest score were shortlisted for the interview stage. Without identifying and standardising the criteria for SSCs, the possibility existed of candidates being eliminated according to different, changing and even arbitrary criteria. When requesting a reference pertaining to a candidate's past performance in task areas that are related to the prospective job, it is suggested that a standardised form be used for the reply. Standardisation of the form ensures that:

- the referee provides an authentic appraisal of the candidate in relation to the prospective job
- the information made available by referees allows selectors to differentiate between candidates on job-related factors;
- the form in which the information is provided allows comparisons between candidates along the same knowledge and skill dimensions;
- the source and date of the information are clearly identified.
(Morgan et al., 1984, p.33)

Adoption of this format decreases the referee's control over the content of the reference, limits the opportunities for superficial statements, and provides a framework for the referee's comments. In this way the systematic collection of equivalent information about the candidate's ability is enhanced.

Observers on staff selection committees

The presence of recognised teacher organisation observers at meetings of the SSC is legislated in Resolution 13 of the South African Education Labour Relations Act (1995). Both principals and teacher organisations reported that a recognised teacher organisation observer (sometimes two) was present during most of the interviews. Newly appointed principals reported that the presence of observers provided them with a *'sense of security'* and imbued the interviews with an air of transparency. While observers attended the majority of SSCs meetings, in particular the interviews, in the rural areas there were problems. Long distances and a shortage of qualified staff thwarted teacher organisation plans to be present at all interviews. The Department recognises the value of observers and appreciates their assistance in settling disputes.

However, criticism has been levelled against teacher organisation observers for being selective in their attendance. Claims were made that they target certain schools and certain sections of the selection procedure, and avoid the hard work such as the shortlisting'[7]. A possible solution to this problem may be found in presenting teacher organisations with an ultimatum to either attend all the proceedings or none at all. Failing which, their continued and unjustified absence from specific aspects of the selection procedure will decrease the credibility of the entire process and may result in the unnecessary renegotiation of the entire procedure.

Interviews

The names of shortlisted candidates were entered on form EC4 and the candidates were notified of the time, date and venue for the interview. For some candidates, this was the first time they were being interviewed for a job and the prospect of an interview created anxiety. Most interviewees regarded the interview as *good and acceptable selection procedure* and were able to confidently cope with it. SSCs were provided with an interview booklet, compiled by the Department, which contained advice on arranging and conducting interviews

However, some writers (Morgan et al., 1984; Southworth, 1990) feel that too much emphasis is placed on the interview and it has been recommend that the weight of the interview be reduced. It should rather be 'combined with evidence from other forms of assessment' (Morgan et al., 1984, p.37). Their carefully researched reasons for this are:

- trained interviewers, at the best of times, can only achieve a modest level of validity,
- the vast majority of education selectors are not trained in interview techniques, and,
- interviews are fairly limited in what they can achieve. (Morgan et al., 1984, p.38)

Morgan et al. (1984) believe that the negative aspects of an interview far outweigh the positive. In their opinion, the few positive aspects of interviews include confirming biographical factors and assessing their significance, assessing technical knowledge and experience, assessing verbal communication skill, and throwing light on intellectual ability. Furthermore, interviews may inform about a candidate's personal attitudes, personal energy, and range of interests that may have some relevance to the job. On the

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[7] A statement made by the Head of Directorate for Promotions (HDP).

negative side, they feel that interviews cannot assess many job-related skills that need to be observed in situation analogies. They argue that interviews can mislead and falsify because the 'whole interaction maximises visual and impression factors and hence decisions tend to mirror the values of selectors' (Morgan et al., 1984, p.38). While their opinions are valid, the interview still remains the most widely used and acceptable tool for selection, by both employer and prospective employee. Given the context in KZN, the choice of the interview as a selection instrument seems appropriate and is a decision agreed to by all parties, including teacher organisations.

In KZN most candidates regarded the interview as the focus of the whole selection procedure and the one aspect of the selection procedure on which their careers hinged. Therefore a candidate turning up for an interview was crucial to his/her success. After the selection process, principals were asked if sufficient notice was given to attend interviews, if they experienced any difficulties attending interviews, and whether they were comfortable with being interviewed. Respondents all agreed that sufficient notice was given and that SSCs were very accommodating in allowing candidates, with conflicting interview appointments, to reschedule. This enabled all candidates to attend interviews and allowed the process to continue in a satisfactory manner.

Interview techniques

The interview represented the 'black box' of the selection procedure and it was essential to establish if what happened in the interview represented good selection practice. Good

practice requires that the following five aspects of the whole procedure are thoroughly

worked out beforehand:

- interview setting;
- interview length and timetable;
- interview order;
- information for candidates;
- interview format and questioning.
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.38)

Interviews were held at the prospective 'new' school in a relaxed and informal setting.

Candidates were informed that the expected duration of the interview would be forty-five

minutes and letters containing details about the interview and interview order were sent

to candidates timeously.

The selection procedure required that SSCs ask each shortlisted candidate a set of

questions drawn from a prescribed list supplied by the Department. According to Morgan

et al. (1984), selection committees should avoid the use of 'yes' or 'no' question, leading

questions, and irrelevant questions. According to them an effective interview will:

- use existing documentary evidence about each candidate as
  a basis for questioning;
- allocate interview question areas according to selection expertise,
  ensuring that the required knowledge, skill and task areas of the
  job are covered with each candidate;
- use a standard form of assessment for recording interviewer
  responses for each candidate.
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.40)

On the first count, the selection committee failed because they utilised a prescribed list of

questions – although there is evidence that they deviated from it - and not one based on

candidates' documentary evidence. This failure can be attributed to, firstly, their lack of

experience on selection committees, secondly, to their lack of training in questioning techniques, and thirdly, to their eagerness in complying with the Department's request. On the second count, there was considerable success in allocating questions to different committee members; however, most of the questioning was still done by the chairperson. On the last count, a standardised assessment sheet was provided by the Department and used by the committee for individual scores (refer EC5).

All the principals interviewed agreed that the questions they were asked were thought provoking and pertinent to their prospective jobs. Only one principal criticised the time limitation and complained of *insufficient time* because three minutes per question was allocated to answering the questions. Considering that the aim of interviewing candidates is to prompt them to talk about themselves, time allocated should be sufficient to achieve this. Samples of questions were supplied by candidates and included:

- As a principal, how would you improve the low morale of your staff?
- How would you handle a teacher who is intent on disrupting staff meetings?
- Describe how you would go about acquiring greater financial and material resources for your school.
- Describe the steps you would take to improve the culture of learning and training at your school.
- What steps would you take to eradicate drug abuse among adolescent learners at your school?

These were not leading questions; they were satisfactory, open-ended, relevant, and descriptive of real situations at secondary schools in the province. Furthermore, the questions had the potential to provide selectors with more information about the candidate's abilities and suitability for the job.

However, as the highlight of the selection procedure, the interview fell short in a few

respects. The biggest criticism of the selection procedure in general, and the interview in

particular, was that candidates were not required to undergo any analogous tests in order

to demonstrate their capabilities as prospective principals. At no stage during the

interview were candidates asked to perform analogous tests, such as in-tray exercises,

role-play simulation, leaderless group discussion, or to give a verbal report. It can be

argued that most people who are appointed to principalship have not been principals

before and the job of the principal is very different from other posts in schools (Morgan

et al., 1984, p.2). Being a different job, it is obvious that a candidate requires different

skills – some of which have, as yet, not been called upon. Selectors need to know how the

candidate might exercise such skills in the completion of future tasks. The most reliable

way of gauging a candidate's ability to do the present job, and his/her potential for future

principal tasks, is by conducting a range of test exercises that are job related. These

analogous tests are written or oral exercises, or a combination of both, which simulate, as

far as possible, real work situations. They are designed to test specific skills on a

systematic basis and replicate some aspect of a principal's job, for example in-tray,

committee and delegation exercises. Assessors rate the skills displayed by a candidate in

terms of observed behaviour and not on their previous knowledge of the candidate. The

advantages of these tests are:

- Candidates are assessed on their performance in realistic work tasks
- Analogous tests provide evidence of a candidate's latent ability in tasks for which it can be expected that they have limited previous experience.
(Morgan et al., 1984, p.49)

Although unstated in the literature, the main disadvantage of these tests is that they are time consuming, especially when dealing with a large number of applicants. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, the importance of the principal has been amply demonstrated, and it is a serious drawback to the selection procedure that the abilities of this person have not been adequately tested. These sophisticated technical assessment methods are becoming more readily available and are regarded as good human resource practice. Both teacher organisations and the HDP confirm that *analogous testing could be very instrumental in measuring a candidate's present and potential ability* and, when combined with the candidate's other information, *it would definitely enhance the quality of decisions made by the selection committee.*

Interview format and procedure (EC5 & EC6)

During the interview, each member of the SSC assessed the candidate in respect of the five approved criteria and entered scores on the prescribed form EC5. After debate, and once consensus among all members was reached, the chairperson completed the final assessment on form EC5 that was signed by all SSC members. The names of the nominated candidates were entered on form EC6 in order of preference. This form, together with all supporting documentation, was forwarded to the chairperson of the school governing body who convened a special meeting to consider the nominations. As soon as the governing body reached agreement on the nominations, they ratified them and made an offer of nomination to the first candidate on the list. When a candidate accepted the nomination for principalship of the school, form EC7 was completed. All the relevant documentation (forms EC1 to EC8) was then sent to the Regional Chief Director for

validation and submission to the Secretary for Education. After approval by the Secretary

for Education, letters of appointment were sent to the respective candidates advising them

when to assume duties at the school. This procedure was the subject of negotiation

between the Department and teacher organisations and represents the necessary

formalities that accompany most selection procedures.

However, the procedure used by selectors in arriving at their final decision is unknown or

very confidential. Two approaches could have been used by selectors to arrive at a

decision. These are, firstly, the statistical approach that eliminates intuition or judgement

entirely and relies solely on a statistical assessment, and secondly, the judgmental

approach that uses both statistics and selector judgement. It is assumed that the

judgmental approach was used because the advantages, such as combining all

documentary, statistical and oral evidence, outweigh those of the statistical approach.

Nevertheless, good practice demands that a decision be taken beforehand on the approach

to be used to obtain a final decision on the most suitable candidate.

In this respect, Morgan et al. (1984) recommends the following:

- selectors should meet prior to the interview to arrange the details of
  the event, right down to who is to ask questions of an agreed
  format on a particular topic;
- the physical setting of the interview;
- the use of an assessment sheet to record the suitability of each candidate
- a review of all the evidence to reach a final decision.
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.73)

Most principals and teacher organisations indicated that the prescribed procedure was

adhered to throughout. However, principals drew attention to certain shortcomings. Most

principals interviewed (86%) reported that they were not

- given a job description,
- conducted on a tour of the prospective new school, or
- given a prospectus/brochure for the school.

While it is acknowledged that there are generic aspects to any job, the specific aspects of

the job provide information about the situational aspects unique to a particular post.

Therefore, candidates need to know as much information about the new school as

possible. The Department requested chairpersons of SSCs to spend approximately five

minutes welcoming the candidate to the interview and supplying him/her with a pen

picture of the school. Only one of the seven principals (14%) reported that the

chairperson of the SSC complied with this instruction. In addition, the candidate regarded

the description as inadequate to enable him/her to get a good idea of the *whole school*.

In order to prevent a high turnover of principals, the school prospectus and in particular

the school visits, should be used to inform candidates about the specific nature of the

post. These are important items in the selection process because candidates are provided

with the opportunity to:

- meet and question key members of staff
- see the school in operation
- see and assess the management needs of the school's buildings
  and other physical resources
- receive information about distinctive policy objectives of the school.
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.36)

The lack of a school brochure and lack of an invitation to visit the school means that

candidates were being interviewed for a post about which they probably had little

knowledge.

Another criticism of the selection process was the lack of a job description in the official provincial gazette. Furthermore, the advertisement was very brief and lacked details on, for example, learner population and location of school. At the interview, the SSC should have supplied further particulars about the job, e.g. physical condition of buildings, number of staff, etc. They should have provided indications of any special quality employers were seeking in prospective principals. This additional information would have possibly led to a degree of self-elimination among some candidates, thereby making the task for SSCs a little easier.

While the Department correctly instructed SSCs to supply a pen-picture of the school, the suggestion that *candidates who aspire to principalship should know what is expected of a principal* (Moodley, 1998) is unsatisfactory. Just as there are many commonalties regarding a principal's job, there also many differences. Each school is different and has it's own staff problems, its multicultural learner population, and its unique ethos. Thus it is imperative that advertisements include as much essential information as possible. Furthermore, chairpersons are obliged to provide candidates with further information to enable candidates to make an informed choice.

Likewise, a tour of the school and a copy of the school prospectus, including its mission statement, would better inform candidates about the kind of principal sought by the SSC. A well worded advertisement, the provision of additional information by SSC chairpersons, and the availability of a school prospectus, would help the process by

eliminating opportunists and thereby relieving some of the pressure on SSCs caused by too many applications.

Specific procedures (EC7 & EC8)

According to Departmental regulation, all members of the SSC, including observers, were sworn to secrecy (form EC8 – a declaration of confidentiality - had to be signed by all participants on the selection committee). Confidentiality of the selection proceedings is required in the event of a dispute being declared. The fact that only 29% of the principals interviewed could claim that the entire selection proceedings were confidential is not good practice. Any breech of confidentiality in the selection procedure is a serious default that detracts from the legitimacy of the whole selection procedure. Such a breech has the additional disadvantage of creating feelings of angst and mistrust in candidates who have yet to be interviewed and discredits the commendable work done by other selection committees.

All the candidates interviewed queried the poor communication between themselves and the SSC. Two candidates (29%) were informed telephonically that they had been nominated for principalship. Two out of the seven (29%) were telephonically summoned to a SSC meeting where they were formally offered principalship of the school. Despite the fact that form EC7, informing candidates of nomination for the post, was made available to SSCs, it became apparent that SSCs preferred verbal communication. Such practice is condemned and SSCs should be called to task over not following proper procedure. On the other hand, the Department exemplified acceptable selection procedure

by notifying all candidates, successful and unsuccessful, about the outcome of the selection proceedings. Their formal communication to applicants was standardised, in writing, and on official stationery that imbued the communication with a sense of authenticity.

All candidates reported that there was too long a delay between the interview stage and the official outcome of the selection process. Considering that applicants are required to respond to official deadlines, the same should be expected of selection committees. This type of delay is unacceptable when one considers that promotion to a new school often involves an upheaval in a candidates personal life and work schedule.

Improvements to the selection procedure

All interviewees were asked what they particularly appreciated about the selection procedure and what they disliked and whether, in their opinion, the process was fair. Responses reveal that the procedure was satisfactory and that it was a marked departure from past selection procedures and appointments. Overall, the KZN interview procedure compares favourably with international practice and that recommended by Morgan et al. (1984). Interviewees stated that:

- Essential documents were user friendly (100%).
- Deadlines were reasonable (100%).
- The procedure was fair and candidates were chosen on merit (71%).
- The selection procedure at most schools was objective (71%).

Lest one tends to believe that the whole procedure was without faults, principals and teacher organisations supplied the following criticisms:

- It was possible for a candidate at one school to be a member of a SSC at another school and thereby gain prior knowledge of interview questions or interview techniques (100%).
- Too much emphasis was placed on interviews (100%).
- Some SSC members were blatantly biased towards candidates from their own schools (71%).
- At some interviews the atmosphere was very tense and candidates were not made to feel at ease (57%).
- The stipulated time in which candidates were required to answer questions was too short (43%).

While agreeing that the current selection procedure was an improvement on that of the past, interviewees felt that the following needs should be considered for future selections:

- SSC members are urgently in need of capacity building (100%).
- Educators need to be included on selection committees (86%).
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on day-to-day or generic management aspects of principalship during the interview (71%).
- The minimum qualification for principalship in KZN needs to be increased (71%).
- The selection process needs to be streamlined to eliminate delays caused by opportunist's applications, thereby reducing the workload for all (71%).

Interviewees also complained about incidents of nepotism and bias towards certain candidates. The HDP replied that such cases were investigated and, more often than not, were dismissed as hearsay. These complaints are included because they serve to highlight the fallibility of SSCs and emphasise the need to carefully nominate members to selection committees in order to enhance their credibility.

Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the current selection procedure for secondary school principals in KZN against a background of recent principal selections in the province. Throughout, emphasis has been placed on 'good practice' and the need for transparency if principal appointments are to be acceptable to candidates, the teaching profession and the school

community. The lack of training for selection committees has been highlighted, and so too have the advantages and disadvantages of the current selection procedure.

The following chapter will discuss the implications of the main issues resulting from the current selection procedure in KZN. The advantages and disadvantages of the selection procedure will be highlighted and recommendations for an improved procedure will be made.

CHAPTER 6

Recommendations and conclusion

Introduction

This chapter discusses the implications of the main issues resulting from the assessment of the selection procedure for secondary school principals. The recommendations made are based on the assessment, and are situated within the context of current selection procedures in the education sector in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). While no specific importance should be attached to the length and order of the recommendations, it should be noted that all the recommendations are significant and that they should be perceived as an attempt at highlighting weaknesses in the procedure and providing possible solutions for improvements. The recommendations focus on analogous tests; job description; selector bias; interviews; training for selection committees; the role of the Superintendent of Education (Management), SEM; senior management courses; and peer selection. With each recommendation, an explanation is offered outlining its need, how it can be implemented, as well as the advantages that accrue with its adoption.

Recommendations

Analogous tests

While it is generally accepted that the selection of principals is crucial to the effective functioning of schools, it is a matter of concern that greater care is not taken in the testing of candidates. Throughout the selection procedure and in particular, the interview, analogous testing was not carried out. Selectors relied solely on replies to prescribed questions and, for the most part, seemed to base their final selection on how well candidates faired in the interview. Technical tests (for example in-tray exercises,

committee exercises, and chairing a meeting) and procedures are available and used to a large extent in commerce and industry and could be adapted to suit education's needs. Some of the many advantages of these analogous tests are that:

- they reveal more technical information about the candidate than would be obtained in an interview;
- they allow the assessment of a candidate's performance in specific job related skills;
- they reveal whether a candidate has the required skills to be become a principal;
- they allow for the systematic comparison of candidates. (Morgan et al., 1984, p.50)

According to Morgan et al. (1984), analogous tests have been shown to have 'both good content validity and predictive validity for subsequent success in the job' (Morgan et al., 1984, p.49). This indicates that information about a candidate's potential ability for principalship can also reliably be assessed and such information enhances the final selection. While it is acknowledged that these tests are time consuming, the time and money spent should be weighed against the importance of selecting the best candidate for the job. It is therefore the firm contention and recommendation of the writer that analogous tests be introduced into the selection process to assist selectors in making the best decision.

Job descriptions

In KZN, advertisements for principal vacancies appear in the education gazette and are very brief, with no detailed reference to job requirements for a principal. It is acknowledged that the generic aspects of a principal's job require very little advertising because they are common to all principals. However, it is recommended that chairpersons of selection committees provide shortlisted candidates with detailed information about

the specific nature of the principalship at that school. The advantages of this are twofold: candidates will be better apprised and be in a position to make an informed decision and selectors will be in agreement as to the type of principal they are looking for.

Selector bias

In the selection procedure, candidates should be eliminated on the basis of their 'formal, systematic assessment in relation to job-related factors' (Morgan et al., 1983, p.145). In addition, all candidates should be assessed according to the same criteria and using the same methods. It has been noted that selectors often have affiliations to particular candidates even before the selection procedure begins, especially in the case of internal candidates i.e. candidates at the same school as the SSC. It is strongly recommended that the Department, together with chairpersons of SSCs, develop a clear policy regarding such applications and where these are accepted, they should be treated like any other.

Additional information

Arrangements regarding school visits by candidates were conspicuously absent, except for the fact that interviews were held at the prospective new school. Candidates should be given the opportunity to visit schools before the interview stage, in order to assess the whole school, including its strong points and weaknesses. This part of the selection procedure should be properly organised – a timetable could be used to stagger candidates' visits – and should not be used as part of the assessment process.

Interviews

It is acknowledged that Staff Selection Committee (SSC) interviews in KZN are structured and that final decisions are made on an appropriate basis. However, all selectors need to be briefed prior to the interview on:

- the format of the interview,
- each candidates performance up to that stage,
- the allocation and ordering of questions, and
- the strategy for arriving at a final decision.
  (Morgan et al., 1984, p.53).

It has already been mentioned that too much weight is attached to the interview as a part of the selection process. SSC members need to be mindful of the disadvantages of placing too much emphasis on interviews and it is strongly recommended that selectors base their final decision on **all** documentary and verbal evidence.

Training for selection committees

The lack of training for selectors was evident from the comments made by the Head of the Directorate for Promotions (HDP) and the principals interviewed. While it is acknowledged that the selection procedure is new to many participants and that, in the time given, the Department tried it's best to train selectors, an ongoing training programme should be instituted for all selectors. Selectors need to be made aware of the nature of the entire selection procedure and their role in the process. Emphasis should also be placed on questioning techniques and training should be an all year event in preparation for the next round of selections. Training could take the form of workshops or seminars and a selection procedure manual should be provided to all SSCs.

The role of Superintendents of Education (Management), (SEM)

Although no empirical evidence is available, it is generally accepted that SEMs themselves lack adequate training to confidently develop the capacity of selectors. These officials need to be trained to develop and use various selection instruments, such as analogous tests. Their training will also need to include basic knowledge and skills of:

- job analysis and job descriptions;
- the use of systematic selection procedures and instruments;
- the use of assessment techniques.
  (Morgan et al., 1983, p.147)

The Department should also consider recruiting external consultants to train officials who, in turn, could organise the briefing and training of selectors. Workshops and short courses could be held where knowledge is imparted about 'the full nature of a principal's job; the competencies sought during the selection procedure; the procedures by which these competencies are to be evaluated; interview techniques; and, methods for treating evidence and reaching a final decision' (Morgan et al., 1983, p.147).

Finally, the Department should have designated officials with special training in and knowledge of selection techniques for senior management, who would have responsibility for the selection of secondary school principals. The expertise of these officials should be developed to such an extent that they would be as professional as their counterparts in commerce or industry. Presently, professionalism in selection expertise is wrongfully interpreted as meaning that any Departmental official above a certain rank is automatically regarded as qualified to undertake selection duty. This designated official should have the expertise and authority to:

- lead the systematic determination of the job criteria i.e. an explicit

definition of the job and its related competencies;
- deploy multiple means of deriving evidence on the key competency dimensions;
- assemble and accumulate the evidence of candidates' strengths and weaknesses across skill requirements in the form of complete profiles which can be used by selectors for their final decision. (Morgan et al., 1983, p.150)

In the absence of trained officials, the Department should consider calling in outside assistance in the form of professional selectors. Precedents for professional selectors are already well established in the private sector and they have the added advantage of neutrality. Failing which, the quality of final decisions decline and the entire SSC as well as the selection procedure loses credibility.

Senior management courses

Because of the status of a principal, the amount of time spent on the selection process ought not to be a serious factor; however, in reality, the entire selection procedure is governed by time constraints. In an attempt to overcome this problem, Morgan et al. (1984) suggest that selection for appointment to principalship should be made only from candidates who have successfully completed a senior management course. On such courses, potential principals could be involved in activities that are typical of principalship. In this way, potential principals could be exposed to the skills and demands of principalship in a realistic and concrete way. These courses could be organised and run by the Department or external agencies such as technikons, universities and non-governmental organisations. Courses could be done on an individual or a regional basis for all that have reached senior management positions and would serve the following functions:

- to allow potential principal candidates to obtain in advance an accurate appraisal of the duties and responsibilities of a principal so that they may assess whether principalship is an objective for them;
- to provide the trainee with some structured assessment of his/her knowledge and skill competencies so as to identify strengths and weaknesses for future training;
- to make training provision, which is verified by serving practitioners and the Department, relevant and realistic to the demands of principalship. (Morgan et al., 1983, p.148)

According to Morgan et al. (1983) precedents for this type of selection already exist in the United States. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) runs an assessment centre which concentrates on specific skill dimensions for principalship and de-emphasises experience or track record. NASSP originated because of the widespread belief that candidates in conventional selection procedures were seldom observed or evaluated with respect to their performance or skills needed on the job. The underlying purpose of the assessment centre was to ensure that elimination decisions would, in future, be based on skills vital to the performance of principals. Although NASSP does not make decisions about selection for principalship, the information gathered about the participants' state of readiness for principalship is available to school districts when an appointment is to be made.

Finally, by adopting a policy of mandatory senior management courses, selection for future principalship would be confined to qualified trainees and this would forestall the unnecessary handling of too many applications for a single post.

Peer selection

While it is not suggested that a panel of principals alone carry out future principal selection, it is recommended that consideration be given by the Department to the inclusion of at least one principal on the selection committee. Such a person could be drawn from the ranks of experienced principals with good leadership and management skills. Selection committees would benefit from such professional input, particularly when issues relating to internal management are being systematically assessed by means of interviews and analogous tests.

Conclusion

In concluding this report, it is not presumptuous to claim that the aims set out at the beginning have been achieved. At this juncture, it would be prudent to begin the conclusion by stating that there is no ideal selection procedure. Good human resource management advocates that every organisation develops its own procedure according to its occupational needs and objectives. In other words, the organisation customises its selection procedure according to the principles advocated by human resource management. Furthermore, selection procedures are dynamic and have to be constantly amended to suit the changing needs of the organisation – human resource management suggests being proactive rather than reactive.

Human resource managers, trying to resolve the shortcomings of their selection procedures, should not expect simplistic solutions that can be implemented by one individual. Human resource management acknowledges that personnel problems are, in

most cases, far more complex than they appear to be. Invariably, solutions to these

problems lie within radical changes to personnel subsystems before new training courses

or attitude surveys can be instituted. Human resource management suggests that:

- successful resolutions to personnel problems often requires input, not only at managerial level, but also from affected workers and union officials;
- internal factors such as managerial philosophy, employee values, and technology tend to constrain possible remedies to personnel problems;
- constraining external factors, for example state legislation and cultural values, play a significant role in determining the options available in handling personnel problems.
(Peterson & Tracy, 1979, p.21)

It is therefore claimed that human resource management is an open system and is

dynamic - it can be changed to suit all eventualities and can be customised for all

organisations. It must work synergistically and act upon, as well as respond to, pressures

from within the organisation and broader society.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the current selection procedure is the result of long negotiations by

various stakeholders and the outcome is far from ideal. To its credit, the overall selection

procedure is based on sound human resource principles and compares favourably with

that recommended in international literature. However, the procedure shows evidence

that it is still in a developmental stage and various aspects need to be improved. Recent

principal selections in KwaZulu-Natal have provided a good opportunity to 'test drive'

the procedure and it was found wanting in certain respects, as was indicated in the report.

This assessment has highlighted some of the weaknesses as well as the strong points, and

made recommendations for improvements. In this way, it is anticipated that the

Department will be alerted to defects in the procedure and that appropriate remedial action will be taken. By so doing, it is hoped that this report will make a small but meaningful contribution to improving the selection procedure.

In conclusion, the choice of a secondary school principal should never be carried out in an arbitrary or amateurish manner because too much capital - financial and human - is invested in the post of principal (Morgan et al., 1984).

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Appendix A.1

Questionnaire for Selection of Principals in KwaZulu-Natal
General
1. What did you particularly appreciate about the selection process?

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2. What didn't you particularly appreciate about the selection process?

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3. In your opinion, was the whole process fair? Motivate.

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Application Form and CV
4. Was sufficient time allowed for the submission of application forms?

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5. Do you have any problems with department officials doing the initial sifting of application forms?

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6. How do you feel about the minimum teaching qualification of M+3 for principals?

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7. Should the minimum teaching qualification of M+3 be retained?

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8. How did you feel about the possibility of relatively junior teachers (in status/ in qualification/ in experience) being appointed above you?

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9. Were you satisfied with the prescribed length of the CV?

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10. Did the prescribed topics on the CV allow you sufficient scope to adequately describe your capabilities?

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    ....

11. Besides the CV, did you submit any other supporting documents with your application?

    ....

Interview

12. Was sufficient notice given to you to attend the interview?

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13. Did you experience any difficulty attending the interview? (Transport, distance, conflicting appointments, etc.)

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14. Was this the first time you were being interviewed for a promotion post and did you feel comfortable about being interviewed?

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15. Were you satisfied with the composition of the Staff Selection Committee?

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16. Do you think the questions asked during the interview were relevant to the prospective job? Can you give examples?

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17. During the interview, were you required to demonstrate you capabilities in any way? (Conducting a mock meeting, etc.)

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18. Was an observer, from a recognised teacher organisation, present during your interview?

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19. How do you feel about an observer overseeing all proceedings?

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20. To the best of your knowledge, was the prescribed procedure for the interview followed?

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21. During the interview, or at any other time, were you given a job description? If so, by whom?

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22. Were you, at any time, invited to 'tour' the school premises of the school you were applying to?

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23. Were you given a prospectus/brochure (including the school's mission statement), by the SSC chairperson, of the school to which you applied?

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Specific Procedures

24. According to you, were all proceedings confidential?

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25. How were you informed that you were nominated/not nominated for the post?

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26. How do you feel about the time elapsed between applying for the post and being informed about the outcome?

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27. To what do you attribute the alacrity/delay in being informed about the outcome?

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28. How can the selection procedure be improved?

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Appendix A.2

Questionnaire to teacher organisations and Department officials on the Selection of Principals in KwaZulu-Natal

General: For Teacher Organisation

1. What did you particularly appreciate about the selection process?

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2. What didn't you particularly appreciate about the selection process?

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3. In your opinion, was the whole process fair? Motivate.

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Application Form and CV

4. In your opinion, was sufficient time allowed for the submission of application forms? Were any complaints received?

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5. To the best of your knowledge did department officials cope with the initial sifting of application forms? Did they have any problems?

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6. According to your organisation should the minimum teaching qualification of M+3 be retained?

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7. What does your organisation think about making it compulsory for all candidates for principalship to have successfully completed a senior management course?

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8. How do you feel about the possibility of relatively junior teachers (in status/ in qualification/ in experience) being appointed above more senior educators?

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9. Why did the Education Department prescribe the length of the CV?

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10. Do you think that the prescribed topics on the CV allowed candidates' sufficient scope or latitude to adequately describe their capabilities?

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11. Besides the CV, why weren't candidates required to submit any other supporting documents with their applications?

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Interview

12. Was sufficient notice given to candidates to attend the interview?

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13. Are there any reported instances of candidates having difficulties attending the interview? (Transport, distance, etc.)

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14. For some candidates, being interviewed for a promotion post was a novelty. Was any allowance made for them?

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15. Were there any reported problems with the formation of Staff Selection Committees?

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16. Did the Department do capacity building with SSCs? Do you know if the Department intends doing formalised training for selection committee members?

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17. Do you think the questions asked during the interview were relevant to the prospective job? Did they allow the SSC to form a satisfactory opinion of the candidate's capability? Can you give an example?

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18. Were candidates required to perform any analogous tests during the interview? (Conducting a mock meeting, prioritising incoming mail, etc.) Do you know if the Department is thinking about doing so?

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19. Was there sufficient teacher organisation observers to cover all the interviews?

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20. Do you think that all the teacher organisation observers were qualified to observe at an interview?

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21. Were there any reported cases where the prescribed procedure for the interview was not followed?

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22. What does your organisation feel about professional input into the interviews e.g. existing principals who have had suitable training in selection?

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23. What is the status of the Department official on the selection committee? Has he received any training in selection?

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24. Were candidates, at any time during the selection process, given a job description? If so, by whom?

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25. Does the Department intend including a job description with future advertisements?

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26. Were candidates, at any time, invited to 'tour' the school premises of the school they were applying to?

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27. Were candidates given a prospectus/brochure (including the school's mission statement), by the SSC chairperson, of the school to which they applied?

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Specific Procedures
28. Does the Department have any policy regarding the selection of *in situ* principals or acting-principals? Should there be a policy?

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29. According to you, were all proceedings confidential? Are there any reported cases of proceedings being publicised?

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30. How were candidates informed that they were nominated/not nominated for the post?

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31. How do you feel about the time elapsed between applying for the post and being informed about the outcome?

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32. To what do you attribute the alacrity/delay in publicising the appointments?

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33. How can the selection procedure be improved?

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34. What is your reaction to claims that the entire selection process is lengthy and cumbersome?

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