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# From The Horse's Mouth: School Principals' Leadership Challenges in Fee and No Fee Paying Schools

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**ABSTRACT** There are multiple school categorisations in the South African schooling system. One such categorisation is fee paying and no fee paying schools. This qualitative study explores the leadership challenges of principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools. Four schools were purposively sampled and four school principals were interviewed. Two principals were from fee paying schools and two were from no fee paying schools. Document reviews were used to supplement data generated from interviews. The findings revealed that delays in compensation for school fee exemptions and insufficient resources and infrastructure are some of the challenges school principals had to deal with. Similarly in no fee paying schools, insufficient funding and funding delays and poor resourcing are some of the challenges school principals had to contend with. The study recommends that penalties be incurred for delays in the transfer of funds and the policy of ring fencing allocations be revisited.

## INTRODUCTION

In South Africa schools are subject to many categorisations. Some of the *de jure* categorisations include public and independent schools (also known as private schools in some contexts); primary and secondary schools; rural and urban schools (in terms of geographic location); and section 20 and section 21 schools (in terms of governance) (Republic of South Africa 1996b). With regard to financing of schools, schools in South Africa are categorised into one of five quintiles based on two key criteria: the poverty of the community in which the school is located and the quality of school infrastructure (Republic of South Africa 1998). The schools in quintile 1 are the poorest schools and the schools in quintile 5 are the least poor schools (Wilmot and Dube 2016). The poverty of the schools decreases as one moves from quintile 1 to quintile 5. The promulgation of further legislation declared schools in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 as no fee schools and quintiles 4 and 5 as fee paying schools (Republic of South Africa 2006; Mestry and Berry 2016). This further ingrains school categorisations in the South African education system. It is the premise of this study that fee paying and no fee paying schools in the public schooling system contend with different day-to-day school leadership realities.

A survey of the literature on fee paying and no fee paying schools reveals that scholarship tends to focus on the implementation of these policies rather than the experiences of school leadership in leading and managing the schools (Pampallis 2008; Ahmed and Sayed 2009; Nordstrum 2012; Sayed and Motala 2012; Naong 2013; Mestry and Berry 2016). This, therefore, exposes a gap in the literature regarding the trials and tribulations school principals experience in leading such schools. Hence, this study seeks to explore the leadership challenges that school principals experience in fee and no fee paying schools. This study is significant in that it may contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the practical realities facing fee paying and no fee paying schools from a school leadership perspective. Such understandings may lead to targeted interventions to assist such schools in overcoming the challenges they encounter.

Given the importance ascribed to leadership in this study, its definition and that of a related concept management is explored. Leadership is

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a contested concept. De Pree (1989: 11) asserted that "leadership is not an easy subject to explain". This notwithstanding, Clarke (2007) clarified that leadership is about direction and purpose. This may be manifested in and articulated by the mission statement and vision of the school. Key to various definitions of leadership is that it involves an influence process (Bush 2011). It is about motivating and persuading people to traverse a particular path in order to accomplish a set of school outcomes. Leadership shares a close relationship with the term management. Leadership together with management are critical ingredients for the success of a school (Clarke 2007). Management is that facet of leadership which entails the efficient operation of the school (through activities such as planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling) in the face of internal and external environmental factors that impact the school (Davies 2009). Further, it is focused on the attainment of particular educational objectives in schools (Bush and Middlewood 2013).

This study commences by making explicit the objectives of the study. Thereafter the policy landscape is presented to show how policy discourse shapes the categorisation of schools into quintiles and subsequent categorisations into fee paying and no fee paying schools. An account on the research methodology is then provided. The findings are thereafter presented under categories generated from an inductive analysis of the data. Analytical interpretation and discussion of the data is injected into the findings. The researchers conclude by presenting their learnings about leadership challenges in fee paying and no fee paying schools and make recommendations in terms of addressing some of the challenges experienced by school principals.

## Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the leadership challenges experienced by school principals in fee paying and no fee paying schools.

## Fee Paying and No Fee Paying Schools: A Policy Perspective

The right to education and the responsibility of the state to finance such a right are enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 108 of 1996*. This supreme law of the country stipulates that "everyone has the right to basic education … which the state, through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible" (Republic of South Africa 1996a: Sec 29). The *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996,* which draws it legitimacy from the Constitution, stipulates that the state should equitably finance public schooling from public funds to ensure that the inequalities of the past are redressed (Republic of South Africa 1996b: Sec. 34). To give effect to this, the *National Norms and Standards for School Funding Policy* came into effect in 1998 (Republic of South Africa 1998). The main thrust of this policy was the attainment of redress and equity in the financing of education with the intention of increasingly enhancing the quality of education, particularly in previously disadvantaged schools (Republic of South Africa 1998). Although this funding model targets redress and equity, the funding provisions seem to have benefitted public schools enrolling learners predominantly from middle class and affluent parent communities (Republic of South Africa 2006; Mestry 2013). Notwithstanding the redistributive approach to resource allocation, the levels of resourcing at the previously disadvantaged schools are still not on par with those of their previously advantaged counterparts (Mestry 2014).

In order to operationalise this funding policy to attain redress and equity, the financial allocation to public schools from the state was done through the ranking of schools on a poverty index which translated into national quintiles for public schools ranging from quintile 1, which are the poorest schools, to quintile 5, which are the least poor schools (Republic of South Africa 2006; Nordstrum 2012). What this quintile ranking provides for is that schools in quintile 1 would receive a greater allocation of funds per learner compared to schools in the higher quintiles (Mestry and Dzvimbo 2011). The allocation of funds to schools per learner progressively decreases as the quintile rank increases. In order to supplement funds allocated to public schools, School Governing Bodies (SGB's) are empowered to levy school fees (Republic of South Africa 1996b). The amount charged as school fees is determined by the SGB in consultation with parents of the learners at the school. The levying of school fees to top up government school allocations blurs the line between a public and private schooling system (Ahmed and Sayed 2009). This may create differentiated access to public education for the poor and for the least poor learners thereby minimising the potential of substantive redress of past inequalities (Ahmed and Sayed 2009). In 2006 the policy on the *Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding* (ANNSSF) ushered in a new categorisation in terms of school funding. Schools in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 were declared no fee schools and schools in quintiles 4 and 5 were declared fee paying schools (Republic of South Africa 2006). No fee schools were not allowed to charge mandatory school fees and were funded largely through state allocations (Republic of South Africa 1996b: Sec 37; Republic of South Africa 2006). Fee paying schools, on the other hand, could continue to levy school fees to supplement the state's allocation to the school.

School fee exemption regulations were passed in 2006 for parents who were not able to afford paying school fees subject to a means test. In instances where parents were unable to pay fees and qualified for fee exemptions, the state compensated the schools for the exemptions (Mestry 2014). According to *KZN Circular, 3 of 2014*, fee paying schools were allowed to apply for compensation for exemptions granted if the exemption beneficiaries exceed 5 percent of all full time registered learners (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education 2014a). Notwithstanding the noble intentions of the exemptions provision, Sayed and Motala (2012) observed that the fee exemptions policy disincentivises schools to educate parents about this provision particularly since there are no guarantees that they may recoup all the money lost through exemptions granted.

## METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative study which sought to describe, understand and make meaning of the leadership challenges of school principals in fee and no fee paying schools within their natural settings namely the schools themselves (Nieuwenhuis 2013). The researchers wanted to elicit from the schools principals' narratives their meanings and experiences in their "own written or spoken words" (de Vos et al. 2011: 74). Methodologically, this study employed a case study research design. Case studies are used to examine real life social phenomena in their natural settings (Yin 2009). To this end, Yin (2009) maintained that rich and detailed narratives are key components of case studies. This suggests that this methodology may provide thicker data and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being researched. In this study the case is fee paying and no fee paying schools. It is a case of schools principals serving in public schools. The focus within the case is on the leadership experiences. Given that a case is a bounded system (temporally and spatially), the case is limited to two fee paying schools and two no fee paying schools. The study of the case spans a two-year period (2014 to 2015).

Site and participant selection for the study was done through purposive sampling because of selection of specific school sites and participants that were considered to be in possession of data relevant to the study (de Vos et al. 2011; Maree 2013). Two fee paying schools and two no fee paying schools were selected from the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The school principals in each of the schools were selected as participants. Mr Lingisa was the principal selected from Green Secondary School, a fee paying school in the Pinetown District. He has twenty four years experience as a teacher and eleven years' experience as a school principal. Green Secondary School is located in a township surrounded by informal settlements. Mr Confidence was the principal selected from White Secondary School, a fee paying school in the Umlazi District. He has been a teacher for twenty-five years with nine years as a deputy principal and six years as a school principal. White Secondary School is situated in a middle income suburb bordered by a low cost housing settlement. Mr Doubt was the principal selected from Grey Secondary school, a no fee paying school located in the Pinetown District. He has been a teacher for thirty-five years. He has served three years as deputy principal and twenty-six years as a school principal. Grey Secondary School is located in a township adjoined by a number of informal settlements. Ms Reluctant was the principal selected from Red Primary School, a no fee paying school in the Umlazi District. She has twenty-seven years' experience as a teacher, nine years as a deputy principal and seven years as a school principal. Red Primary School is located in a low cost housing area.

This study utilised both semi-structured interviews and documents review as methods of generating data. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researchers to obtain rich descriptive narratives from participant constructed meanings describing the phenomenon being examined (Kvale 2007; de Vos et al. 2011). The four school principals were interviewed at their schools. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. The audio recordings of these interviews were transcribed *verbatim* for data analysis. The document reviews focussed on written texts which were considered to speak to the phenomenon being researched (de Vos et al. 2011; Nieuwenhuis 2013). This study examined minutes of staff committee meetings and school governing body meetings for the period 2014 to 2015. These documents were reviewed because they contained evidence of the leadership experiences of the principals commensurate with the categorisation of their school.

In terms of data analysis, this study employed qualitative content analysis. This process involved inductively generating broad themes and patterns regarding the principals' leadership experiences in fee free and fee paying schools (Cohen et al. 2011). Similar units of data were tagged into themes to depict the overall picture of the school principals' leadership realities in fee free and fee paying schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study and discussion of the data is presented under two broad headings namely, leadership challenges in the fee paying schools and leadership challenges in the no fee paying schools. Under each heading, themes are presented which emerged from an inductive analysis of the data.

### Fee Paying Schools: Principals' Leadership Challenges

The following are the themes that emerged from the data generated: compensation for school fee exemptions, school resources and infrastructure and limited fiscal resources.

#### *Compensation for School Fee Exemptions*

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence pointed out that the processing of compensation claims for fee exemptions granted was a challenge. They complained about the protracted delays in the payment of compensation by the Provincial Department of Education. Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence respectively, had this to say:

*We submit the forms by 30 June for the previous year's claims … we will only be paid by 30 June of the following year … this year schools ought to have been paid during the month of April. We have not yet been paid.*

*It [the compensation] comes in very late. You make an application for this year because you have budgetary needs but it will only be paid the next year.*

Mestry (2014) observed that schools are required to submit their applications for compensation to the Provincial Department of Education not later than 30 June annually for exemptions processed during the previous financial year. This consequently delays payment of compensation to the schools which may impact on service delivery at the school. The school principals added that such delays constrained the capacity of the schools to provide both teachers and learners with the requisite resources timeously. This in turn compromised the mandate of the schools to deliver quality public education. Mr Lingisa explained:

*Money is everything. For the institution to function normally and effectively we need income … if the institution does not have income it impacts on many things. It impacts on results because we can't provide what teachers need timeously … that is the biggest challenge.*

The participants' experiences resonate with studies conducted in South Africa, Uganda, Malawi, Ghana and Kenya which found that the delay in the transfer of school allocations culminated in delays in service delivery which in turn compromised the delivery of quality public education (Nishimura et al. 2009; Sayed and Motala 2012).

Mr Confidence also revealed that if one contested the amounts reimbursed one was only afforded a hearing after twenty-four months which rendered the processes futile. Hence his perception was that fee exemptions was money one could not recover fully. Mr Confidence stated:

*It's really, really a serious problem. You contest and your contestation will be attended to after two years. Sometimes you would have even forgotten about it … its water under the bridge … it's money you can't recoup.*

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence further revealed that they did not know the formula that the Department of Education employed in determining the amount for compensation for fee exemptions granted in each school year.

*We really don't get the formula they [Department of Education] are using … the formula that they use does not always meet the needs of the institution. (Mr Lingisa)*

*We don't know the formula … the parents were owing more than R100 000 we were compensated only for R46 000. (Mr Confidence)*

There is thus a lack of transparency regarding how the Provincial Department of Education reimburses schools for the school fee exemptions granted in a school year. Mestry (2014) observed that schools are compensated based on a formula determined by the Department of Education which does not necessarily guarantee full compensation on the amount claimed. Given that transparency is associated with accountability and promotes good governance (Erkkila 2012), a lack of transparency on the formula utilised by the Provincial Department of Education may therefore contribute to irresponsible governance and poor financial planning on the side of both the state and the school. Of serious concern, however, is that some school principals may resort to unethical and illegal practices and not inform the parent community of their right to partial or full school fee concessions if delays in payment and lack of full compensation to schools continue (Hall 2010). Rather than contend with loss of revenue, some SGBs may deliberately avoid representing the voices of the disadvantaged through the exclusion of learners from poor socio-economic contexts at their schools (Nordstrum 2012).

### *School Resources and Infrastructure*

In a study conducted in Rwanda, Bizmara and Orodho (2014) found that teachers associated ineffective teaching and learning processes, class management and curriculum delivery with a lack of resources. In noting this, Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence highlighted that their resources were far from adequate. They pointed out that their personnel was not adequate to meet the needs of the school. Mr Lingisa indicated that while he had sufficient teaching staff he did not have the requisite number of support staff. He revealed that the school only had one administrative clerk and one cleaner who were paid by the state. This is what Mr Lingisa said:

*Staffing is adequate when it comes to teachers. But the non-teaching staff is not adequate. The school is too big. We have only one clerk but the school requires at least three clerks. The school requires at least five cleaners but we only have one cleaner that is paid by the state.*

Both Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence lamented that their schools did not have adequate floor space. Their classrooms were not large enough to cope with their current enrolments. Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence had this to say:

*We had to reduce our enrolment. In 2010 we had about 1343 learners but because of a lack of classrooms we decided to reduce the enrolment … ultimately we want to have 1100 [learners] because of floor space.*

*The school may look like it's a huge school but some of the classrooms are specialist classrooms. Only when you do the necessary audit in terms of the actual number of classrooms, I would say the classrooms are not sufficient.*

Fee paying schools in quintile 4 and 5 receive less state funding (irrespective of the poverty index of the communities they serve) than their no fee paying counterparts in quintile 1, 2 and 3 (Sayed and Motala 2012). This also means that fee paying schools receive allocations that are less than the adequacy benchmark (Ahmed and Sayed 2009). Such a policy provision may stunt the development of some schools' resource and infrastructure capacity particularly if the private revenue base of the school is not strong and sustainable due to, *inter alia*, the inability of some parents to pay school fees. Given the correlation between a schools' available facilities and learner performance (Vandiver 2011), such a challenge may compromise the schools' potential to maximise learner achievement.

Motala (2009) observed that the private revenue base is comparatively stronger in schools that serve affluent communities. Consequently, the fee paying schools located in a township may charge school fees that are relatively far less than what their counterparts in affluent communities are charging. This therefore may create funding disparities and entrench an unequal quality of education should the generated private revenue (school fees) fail to provide these fee paying schools with the capacity to meet the adequacy benchmark requirements. It is in this context that the minutes of the School Management Team (SMT) meeting of White Secondary School (22 July 2014) confirmed that the procurement of LTSM was on the basis of priority since financial constraints prevented them from buying everything for all grades and all learning areas in one year.

### *Limited Fiscal Resources*

Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence also pointed out that the state funding per learner was not adequate to meet the many financial obligations and mandates the school had to fulfil. Mr Confidence and Mr Lingisa respectively stated:

*They [financial resources] are not adequate. They will never be adequate. Two hundred and thirteen thousand that we are getting from the government is not enough. That is one and half months' expenses … it can't sustain us for the rest of the school year.*

*It is R18000 for water and electricity … this does not cover us. Even for all other categories this state funding is not enough.*

These comments must be seen against the backdrop that adequate funding for education in emerging economies is constrained by lack of fiscal capacity (Motala 2009). It is within this context that Ahmed and Sayed (2009) asserted that the funding of public schooling systems is still a global challenge particularly the capacity to balance the policy imperatives for free education with the intention of enhancing access to quality education and the reality of constrained fiscal resources. Mr Lingisa and Mr Confidence also appeared to suggest that the ring-fencing of public funds and the culture of non-payment of school fees respectively, compounded the realities of the inadequacy of funding. This is what they had to say:

*From the Department [of Education] each and every category has its own spending percentage.*

*You will have parents who find ways and means so that they do not pay … the culture of non-payment is rife in South Africa.*

Given this, Mestry (2016) posited that for schools to sustain their competitive edge and remain client-orientated, School Governing Bodies need to innovatively formulate methods of supplementing financial resources provided by the state.

Mr Lingisa further drew attention to the reality that they did not know the formula the Department of Education was utilising to determine the funding per learner allocation for a fee paying school. Thus their calculations did not reconcile with those of the government. Furthermore, Mr Lingisa added that given the above, the school was provided with funds which were less than what they were entitled to in all the prescribed categories of the school allocation. This raises critical transparency issues regarding funding policies. Mitchell (2011) emphasised that transparency is based on disclosure or education. Disclosure-based transparency seeks to enhance the information the citizens have regarding the anticipated behaviour of the target group while education-based transparency seeks to enhance the information that the target group has about their own behaviour. Such policies may promote openness regarding how the Department of Education determines funding allocations per learner and enable the principals to accurately calculate what is due to their schools in order to make prudent financial projections. Mr Lingisa mentioned:

*At the end we do not know how they calculate [funding per learner], what formula they are using because we are told that as a fee paying school it is R300 but when we calculate we get more. As a result, they [Department of Education] are transferring less of what we are supposed to get in each and every category.*

This was exacerbated when they had to pay domestic accounts (water, electricity, telephone or internet) because the Department of Education deducted the due amount and transferred the difference to the school's account. Given the above predicament, the minutes of the finance committee meeting of White Secondary School (16 September 2014) reported that the SGB resolved to reduce the SGB-paid cleaning and teaching staff in a bid to alleviate their financial constraints. It may be for this reason (insufficient funding) that some SGBs in the South African context have a tendency to charge exorbitant school fees which are beyond the financial capacities of a number of poor parent communities (Orodho 2014). While such a tendency may alleviate the inadequacy of the schools' fiscal resources, inadvertently or deliberately, it may entrench exclusion of learners from poverty-stricken backgrounds. This notwithstanding, Mestry and Berry (2016) observed that even though enrolment patterns and learner demographics have substantially changed in advantaged schools, they are still categorised as quintile 4 and 5 and therefore qualify for significantly reduced government funding.

## No Fee Paying Schools: Principals' Leadership Challenges

The following themes emerged from the participants' responses: insufficient funding and funding delays, school resources and infrastructure and quality of education.

### *Insufficient Funding and Funding Delays*

Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant emphasised that state allocated funds were not sufficient to respond to the unique realities of their schools. Responding generally about school finances, Ms Reluctant stated:

*We are talking about money here … the amount of money that is allocated to this school is not enough.*

According to Mr Doubt, the policy of ring-fencing the financial allocation to schools for specific items removes the element of flexibility in the budget. Such prescriptions constrain the ability of the school to respond directly to their unique day-to-day operational needs. Consequently, some schools breached the ring-fencing provisions of the school allocation as was revealed in the SGB minutes of Grey Secondary School (9 and 11 June 2014). The LTSM funds meant for Consumer Studies were redirected towards paying security staff salaries. This shows that in some cases principals transgress policy provisions in order to respond to their unique set of school leadership challenges (Miller 2015). In the words of Mr Doubt:

*The school allocation has its own specifications … those specifications would not meet the needs of this school especially a school that has a high enrolment. So there will always be deficiencies …*

Fee free education thus constrains these schools in that it partly rescinds the financial autonomy these schools previously enjoyed (Nordstrum 2012). Ms Reluctant revealed that she sometimes uses her personal finances in order to keep the school afloat. At times she has to redirect payments to service priority areas. She marked:

*It gets to the extent where you use your money to do things that have to be done. You get into your own pocket because you cannot say you can't do it as a leader … sometimes you end up robbing Peter to pay Paul so that you keep the boat moving.*

What Ms Reluctant articulated resonates with a finding from a study in Kenya where some school principals had to borrow money which they later had to re-pay with interest in order to ensure that business of school did not grind to a halt (Akech and Simatwa 2010). Ms Reluctant understood that despite the financial constraints confronting her school, as a leader she had to ensure that the school continued with its core business of teaching and learning.

Both school principals complained profusely about delays in the transfer of state funding to their schools and the impact it had on the operations of the school. They declared that their funding was only paid into their bank accounts towards the end of the second term. Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant respectively revealed:

*The Department [of Education] would do the transfer [of the school allocation] into the school's bank account very late in the year. The allocation would come as late as June … at times it would be as late as early August.*

*It [transfer of school allocation] takes forever. The end of the financial year is end of March but you only get funds transferred into your account towards the end of June.*

The delays in the transfer of the school funding allocation inevitably breeds uncertainty and translates into delays in the procurement of learner-teacher support materials (LTSM) because no fee paying schools do not have a substantial private revenue base to mitigate such impact unlike their fee paying counterparts (Nishimura et al. 2009; Akech and Simatwa 2010). Consequently, in some contexts the Department of Education may be complicit in compromising the quality of education being offered. Ms Reluctant revealed that further exacerbating the delays was that the Department of Education deducted more than one hundred thousand rand from their school allocation for the outstanding school water account without them being given ample warning of this. She said:

*I have said that there are people that are building at the school … they have used water [but] without contacting me as the principal, they [Department of Education] deducted over R100 000 [from school allocation] … they take decisions on your behalf without even asking you.*

### *School Resources and Infrastructure*

Both participants pointed out that the quantity of human resources was inadequate to service the needs of the school. Mr Doubt emphasised that the number of language teachers had always been insufficient at his school. This impacted adversely in terms of compliance regarding the management plan of the school's teaching and assessment programmes thereby compromising the processes of quality educational service delivery. According to Mr Doubt:

*In terms of human resources there are always complaints from the language teaching staff. Language educators are not sufficient at this school … that is why they always made their submission of work, marks and schedules very late.*

Ms Reluctant accentuated that if they had adequate fiscal capacity this would allow them to create additional SGB paid posts including the hiring of the services of more security personnel. Ms Reluctant mentioned:

*When it comes to staffing issues we really have a problem. If you look at the numbers … we have 756 [learners], we have a principal, no deputy principal, two HODs, no admin clerk, no security that is state-paid, no cleaner that is state-paid … If I had more finances I would have more governing body paid posts*.

Both school principals maintained that their existing physical infrastructure needed maintenance and further development and extensions. The minutes of the SGB of Grey Secondary School (21 June) also highlighted their plight as it reported that they did not have sufficient land for sport 2015 and recreation infrastructure development. Ms Reluctant added that given their current fiscal realities, the issue of the maintenance of physical infrastructure was relegated to the background so that the day-to-day operational needs might be prioritised. Ms Reluctant and Mr Doubt respectively said:

*When you don't have enough money … maintenance becomes a challenge. You have broken windows, leaking water pipes … you cannot repair a broken window pane instead of buying photocopying paper.*

*There are 14 classrooms … they need repairs because some of them have broken window panes … no doors … the entire wing of old classrooms requires immediate repairs.*

The minimal resourcing levels in no fee paying schools is inadequate to bring them on par with their advantaged counterparts (Sayed and Motala 2012). This suggests that instead of narrowing the inequality gaps which the state's pro-poor policies seek to bridge, they are in reality continuously widening. Further, the adequacy benchmark which is determined by the Department of Education refers to the minimum package of resources necessary to provide a satisfactory quality of education (Sayed and Motala 2012). This adequacy benchmark is pre-determined to exclude personnel expenditure because school financial allocations may not be used to pay salaries (Sayed and Motala 2012). This raises crucial questions regarding the adequacy of the adequacy benchmark if it excludes the human resources which are one of the critical ingredients in the delivery of the core business of the school namely teaching and learning. However, Bush et al. (2010) argued that irrespective of context schools need to effectively manage the limited educational resources available so that they optimise the learning processes. This suggests that in some cases schools operating in deprived resource contexts can achieve good results (Naicker et al. 2013). Therefore, it remains the principals' key responsibility to make certain that the limited resources are optimally deployed in the school to bolster learner performance (Bush and Glover 2009).

### *Quality of Education*

Gaddah et al. (2016) contended that if no fee schools are unable to maintain reasonable quality standards, parents may be reluctant to enrol their children at such schools. Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant admitted that the quality of education that their schools offered is not in keeping with the levels of quality they ought to be providing. Mr Doubt and Ms Reluctant respectively said:

*It [the overall quality] is satisfactory if I may put it that way. Every year we would have* *a below 60 percent pass rate … It's not what we really want to produce.*

*We had a challenge with the ANA [Annual National Assessment] … we didn't get good results … we were below 50 percent in Maths in grade 6. So the results are not good enough as we want them to be but we are trying. I am under pressure to deliver.*

The performance of no fee schools seems to resonate with other countries in Africa. For example, the educational quality in Ugandan fee free public schools are being questioned despite government attempts to provide improved funding to accommodate the costs of improved educational provision (Asankha and Takashi 2011). While fee free education may enhance physical access to education it, however, may also constrain the infrastructural capacity of the school (Omwami and Keller 2010) and may contribute to the relative decline in quality that the school provides (Somerset 2009). Invariably, it is the poorest learners that suffer and are left in a no better condition than they were prior to the advent of fee free schooling (World Bank 2009). Similarly, Mestry and Ndhlovu (2014) observed that it becomes ironic that the substantial increase in the funding of schools in quintiles one to three has not been commensurate with the level of quality they offer and the enhancement of the performance of learners. This resonates with the minutes of the SMT meeting of Red Primary School (4 March 2014) which reported that the District Director assigned an official to closely monitor the school owing to learners' poor performance in the Annual National Assessments (ANA).

## CONCLUSION

The leadership challenges stemming from the state funding processes and procedures of public fee paying and no fee paying schools seem to have triggered varying effects on both categorizations of schools selected for study. The effects on the schools seem to ultimately impact on the quality of learning and teaching at the schools. The delays in reimbursement for concessions granted to indigent parents in respect of school fee payment at fee paying schools impacts on school finances and eventually on the procurement of resources which are needed for effective teaching and learning. At no fee paying schools, the delays in the transfer of funds to the schools as well as the limited finances allocated to the schools handicaps these schools in terms of transforming their schools. Principals at these schools have to juggle finances in order to ensure teaching and learning takes place.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, the delay in the transfer of funds to the schools (be it reimbursement for school fee concessions granted or the total allocation to schools) cannot be allowed to continue. Policy needs to be revised to include a "penalty clause" which makes the state liable for the payment of a penalty for every month their payment is overdue to schools. Secondly, the policy of ring fencing school allocations needs to be revisited. There needs to be a negotiable and non-negotiable component to the allocations. For example, forty percent could be the non-negotiable component of the allocation which prescribes that schools use this money for LTSM and domestic accounts. The other sixty percent of the allocation could be left to the discretion of SGB as to how the funds must be expended.

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