

1 Introduction

It is more than 15 years since South African schools have effectively become 'open'. In the mid-1980s, following the lead of the Sacred Heart College in Johannesburg, many schools, often in defiance of the apartheid government, took the decision to open their doors to children of all races. In 1994, when South Africa became a democracy, this process was completed with the abolition of apartheid education and the establishment of a single, unified and non-racial education authority.

The question that this study seeks to answer is: what forms is inequality taking in schools in the new and democratic South Africa? The purpose of this article, therefore, drawing on a medium-scale study on inclusion and exclusion in 12 schools spread across three provinces in South Africa, is to begin the process of developing an understanding of what is happening in schools with respect to issues such as race, class, gender, religion and language. How are these issues being re-articulated in the new South Africa?

The article is by definition tentative. While the studies in each school were relatively intensive, the scale of the work is limited and must be seen as suggestive of what is happening in the country as a whole. In seeking to understand the schools' policies around inclusion and exclusion, the article focuses on their access and governance practices.

The understanding of difference used in this article is based on the work of scholars such as McCarthy and Crichlow (1993; see also Sayed and Soudien, this volume), who have argued that differences are social constructs that emerge within the contingent realities defined by ideology, economics and culture. In this study, recognising South Africa's past, race is the major focus, but is analysed in relation to and with the factors of class, religion and language.

The focus of inclusion and exclusion in South Africa's education has traditionally fallen on white schools. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, the apartheid government bestowed on its white schools inordinately generous resources and attention, which made them among the best anywhere in the world, and second, it assiduously policed admission processes in white schools. The effect of these policy stipulations was to turn white schools into objects of

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both desire and dislike. White schools were able to call on state and community resources, which allowed them to provide their children with immensely privileged school experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Black children could only gaze from afar at what they were denied and dream of what they were being denied. At the same time, symbolically, white schools came to represent the worst ideological excesses of the apartheid system and so were forced to bear the brunt of black people's anger.

When the apartheid system began breaking down, previously excluded African, coloured and Indian children moved in large numbers into the formerly white schools. African children began to move into formerly Indian and coloured schools. For African schools, significantly, this amounted to a flight of the more economically stable elements within their midst, leaving those schools largely with the poorest members of the community. The effect of these developments has yet to be studied.

While empirical evidence of the nature and the extent of the movement of South African children across their apartheid divides is not available, the assumption that the strongest movements have occurred from African to white schools is open to question. Based on anecdotal evidence, it would appear that the movement from formerly African schools to Indian and coloured schools has been as strong as, if not stronger than, that of Africans into formerly white schools.

The approach taken in this article is to study schools across and between racial lines to show the complexity of the processes of inclusion and exclusion. Former African schools are included in the study, despite the fact that they have not become sites of 'integration'. The approach taken in the article is that as subjects of social forces and as agents able to generate their own social constructions, all people, irrespective of their colour, race, class or gender, are as susceptible to oppression as they are to oppressive behaviour. It is important, therefore, to see African schools as places where inclusionary and exclusionary processes are playing themselves out.

2 Context and overview

This article is based on a study of 12 schools located in three different provinces. The schools

were previously classified white (House of Assembly schools – HOA and also called Model C schools), coloured (administered by the apartheid ex-House of Representatives – HOR), Indian (administered by the House of Delegates – HOD) and African (ex-Department of Education and Training). For ethical reasons, all the schools are given fictitious names.

For purposes of analysis the major category used to understand the schools is their apartheid origin. Schools are described as being formerly white, African, Indian and coloured. This approach is racial and could be argued to sustain the very divisions of which the study is critical. Because, however, of the depth of race in South Africa and the hierarchialisation which went with it, it was felt that it would be short-sighted not to work with this history.

This article, therefore, argues that there are three distinct communities of race experience in South Africa. Formerly white schools operated within a resource-rich infrastructural environment and an ideological mind-set of white supremacy, which was distinctly different from black schools. Coloured and Indian school were worse off than white schools, but, on the other hand, better-off than African schools. Most of these schools were better resourced, and often less scarred by the turbulence of the student uprisings of the 1980s and the 1990s than their African counterparts. African schools, on the other hand, were generally overcrowded, badly resourced and bureaucratically neglected. Also, in the 1980s and 1990s, many had become dysfunctional as a result of the political struggle.

Having said that the schools could be placed in one of three broad categories, it is important to acknowledge that the categories themselves are far from homogeneous. Formerly white schools are by no means all alike, as indeed is the case with African schools. The contexts of schools are strikingly different, as are their histories. They have very distinct spatial locations, very distinct histories and, as the collection of schools in this study show, may be located at opposite ends of the privilege spectrum in South Africa. As groups, however, they do occupy distinct places on the privilege ladder with formerly white schools being regarded as being the best in terms of their

resources and the quality of their teachers and coloured and Indian schools are perceived as being 'better' than most African schools.

The five previously ex-HOD and HOR schools in this category are an Afrikaans-medium former HOR (for people classified coloured) school in Alice, in the Eastern Cape called Ruby Primér; Lagaan Primary School, a former HOD School (for people classified Indian) in Cape Town in the Western Cape and three former HOD schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, called Bass, Amazon and Marula. Of the latter three, Marula was the only primary school. Four ex-DET schools were examined for the study, one of which was a primary school in Alice, in the Eastern Cape, called Basildon; Bongalethu High School in the township of Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape; Divinity Technical Secondary School in an African township in Durban and another high school in the township of Kwadebeka, also in Durban, called Siyafika Secondary School. Apart from Basildon, which was started by lecturers at the University of Fort Hare, all the schools had previously been located within the Department of Education and Training system, which administered urban African schools in the apartheid era. The three ex-Model C schools studied were Eastdale School in the Eastern Cape, Valley Primary School (VPS) in the Western Cape, and Oasis School in KwaZulu Natal (KZN). In KZN two other ex-Model C white schools were studied, though not in detail as the major three sites.

Significantly, the coloured and Indian schools in the study had attracted large numbers of African students. The school with the smallest number of African students was Lagaan in Cape Town. Interestingly, however, all the others had become African majority schools. Apart from Ruby, all the schools were English medium. Ruby was the only Afrikaans medium school in the area of Alice. The pupils who graduated from it, if they wished to continue their education in Afrikaans, were forced to go to East London, 130 km away. Of some importance about Ruby was that even though the school community was bilingual (Xhosa and Afrikaans), Xhosa did not feature at all in the official curriculum of the school. The interest of Lagaan for this study was the school's Muslim identity. The staff of the school was predominantly Indian with many of the staff members having been brought to the

school from Durban by the former House of Delegates administration. Like Ruby, Marula Primary in the township of Cato Manor, Durban drew its pupils from a context characterised by poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Significantly, the school's enrolment appeared to be declining. The fourth school, Bass Secondary was located in an area consisting of Indian and African working-class families who owned their homes. The final school in this group was Dover High School located in the Overport area of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The suburb of Overport is relatively affluent and was established as an Indian group area, and many of its residents belonged to the Muslim religion. When the Group Areas Act (which decreed that areas would be racially defined) was abolished, more affluent families moved out and the poorer families moved in.

The four African schools gathered together in this study were strikingly different from one another. Like their coloured and Indian counterparts, they drew on histories and experiences, which set them apart from each other. However, running through their narratives were the constant theme of being less than their counterparts in the former white, coloured and Indian schools. Pervasive in each of the schools was a discourse of race and class that was hard to avoid.

Class was a distinct issue for Basildon Preparatory Primary School. Its establishment could be traced to 1990, when a group of five Fort Hare lecturers, who did not wish to send their children away from the town to boarding schools, and who were unhappy about the state of the local schools, came together to start the school. The second school in this group, the Divinity Technical High School, is one of the two township Durban high schools looked at in this research. The school is interesting, essentially because it represents what one might describe as an *elite* African school. It had produced between 1996 and 2001, unlike most other African schools, a very high matriculation pass rate (above 80 per cent pass rate in the senior certificate examination). The physical quality of its buildings and campus were in sharp contrast to the neighbouring school. Located in two different cities, the next two schools, Siyafika and Bongalethu, were more typical of the kinds of secondary high school which were to emerge in

African townships in South Africa. Both of them were located in relatively poor and straitened communities and both struggled with their identities as academic places. Siyafika Secondary was located in an African township school in Kwadabeka in Durban. Of interest for the study is that most of the teachers in these schools chose to send their own children to schools outside the township schools. At the time of undertaking this research, the average class size at Bongalethu was 59, suggesting an overcrowding problem.

The three ex-Model C schools in the study display markedly different patterns of racial intake (for example, Oasis school had enrolled significant number of Indian learners and VPS still remained mainly white, while Eastdale had become majority African). More significant, is the fact that the three schools typify very different approaches to inclusion within an explicit overall commitment to inclusion. Eastdale College is a prestigious school with a long tradition of academic excellence. Located in the town of King Williamstown's Town, the school has become an important site for the production of the new black elite in the Eastern Cape. Valley Primary School is a relatively young school, only being 13 years old. The school did not always enjoy the best reputation, but under the dynamic leadership of the current principal has come to be recognised as one of the best primary schools in the Western Cape. Oasis Senior Primary (pseudonym) in KZN is situated at the juncture of an upper-class white suburb and a middle-class Indian residential area close to a historically disadvantaged institution of higher education. The school has a reputation for delivering quality education and its family-orientated approach has attracted learners from former disadvantaged communities.

Significantly, while the schools in the study had all become integrated, with some, such as Oasis completely changing their pupil profile, the teaching staffs at all the schools remained largely what they had been during the apartheid era. At former Indian schools, the staff held their original profile as did the former white schools, which only appointed a very small number of teachers from other groups. This fact is important in understanding how processes of inclusion and exclusion work.

A key concern of the research is to identify the different ways in which schools deal with inclusion at an institutional policy level. What is of interest, is to mark out the dynamics of change within a policy context in which inclusion (or to put it differently a commitment to non-racism, non-sexism, non-discrimination), plays itself out at the institutional level. The interest is to examine how institutional policies articulate with national initiatives and ideals. It is an attempt to understand the gap, but more importantly to engage with the constructions of policy at micro levels.

The research highlights an interesting pattern in the way schools respond to the inclusion policy thrust in South African education. The ex-Model C school's inclusion takes as its starting point an explicit commitment to inclusion at the institutional level. The ex-DET, HOR and HOD schools in the study did not have formal policies with regard to inclusion and exclusion. None of the schools had given particular thought to the question of inclusion and exclusion as an issue of importance for themselves as learning and teaching communities. There were of course, approaches in the school to these questions, which amounted to what one might call a school approach. These approaches, however, as the discussion under the categories *Access*, *Governance* and so on reveal, are heavily informed by what one might call common-sense or everyday understandings of race and racial differences. This is both surprising and significant in so far as it talks of the ways in which the schools understand themselves and their relationship to their local communities, their broader communities and to the nation-state.

While this issue will be returned to in the conclusion, it is important at this point to highlight how limited the perspectives appear to be which circulate within these categories of schools around issues of inclusion and exclusion. For whatever reason, these schools are not, in the first instance, seeing the process of inclusion and exclusion (or integration as some might see it) as one which they specifically need to develop school-based policies for, and secondly, there is a perception amongst them that the macro policy of the state is sufficient for their needs. Like their coloured and Indian counterparts, none of the African schools perceived

inclusion and exclusion to be an issue that particularly applied to them. Symptomatic of this was the attitude of a teacher at Bongaletu who made the comment that 'school has no culture but [only] rules'.

From the evidence gathered in this study, it is clear that access and inclusion were regulated at all of the schools. Implicit in each of the schools was an attitude to who had rights to admission, what constituted valid reasons for exclusion and so on. In some schools, pragmatics demanded that schools have an approach to these questions. Examples of these included the issues of pregnancy, age gaps between children, the rights of young men who had gone through circumcision rituals, repeaters who sought admission from other schools and many others, which are discussed below. As with the coloured and Indian schools, the absence of explicit policies said much about how the schools saw themselves. The degree of responsibility they had to take for their schools, particularly that of turning them into hospitable and teaching and learning-friendly environments, was not something which they considered a priority. That job belonged to the state. The state made policy.

Unlike the above schools, the research on the 'white' schools suggests that they have all taken on board the inclusionary thrust of the state's educational policy. It is almost a case of ensuring that the school is recognised as having embraced the new policy ideals of post-apartheid South Africa. Beyond this level of compliance, however, are three distinct institutional responses to inclusion policy.

The first type of response is from VPS that anchors its institutional policy about inclusion onto its existing Christian ethos. The particular take it has on inclusion is to project a pro-family culture, which it perceives as an extension of its Christian identity. Thus, much of the symbolic work and practices at the school engender an inclusionary climate by emphasising the Christian values of family, care, and belonging. Integration and inclusion are thus effected by creating a 'family' in which all belong, but with differing roles. The notion that underpins this is the idea that 'each child is created by God as a unique, special individual with individual gifts, talents and abilities. The school seeks to recognise and capitalise on them.'¹

By contrast Oasis underpins its inclusion approach on the basis of what it considers to be the knowledge of the learners. The knowledge of the learners in the case of Oasis refers to the different cultural backgrounds of learner. This process began before the changes and involved the school and staff developing what in essence was a stereotypical view of black learners (see Table 1). The acquisition of *strategic knowledge* operated as a diffuser of probable conflict and was acquired during the early years when the number of black learners was low. In admitting black learners before the major changes, the school skewed its admission in favour of Indian students. Moreover, the learners were already then buying into the notion of '*quality education*'. What was strategic about Oasis' approach was the realisation that this knowledge could be translated into a useful set of practices that circumvented conflict. The knowledge was disseminated among members of staff and school rules were changed to accommodate black learners. The benefit for Oasis was that it attained the reputation of a school that '*respects all religions and cultures*'; a site of peaceful co-existence. What is important in this regard is to see the acquisition of knowledge as a strategic response which reinforces particular (and some would say stereotypical) identities of the other.

The approach of Eastdale College was essentially to focus on the maintenance of standards. The school has an approach, common to many formerly white schools, that its traditions and past were sufficient to carry it in its relationship with its new constituencies. Black people wish to come to it because it is what it is. In the case of Eastdale, inclusion at the school level takes on a pragmatic orientation with a view that people must get on to ensure that school can function.

It is in the context of this that it is appropriate to ask, who is gaining access to schools?

4 Access to school

In this section, attention is given to the approaches of each school, to admission. The section looks at who gains access to school, (local communities versus bussed-in) what the barriers to access are in terms of race, class and gender, and what conflicts exist around access (legal and others).

Table 1: School details

Name of school	Ex-dept	Enrollment					Method of instruction	Social context
		Total (%)	African (%)	White (%)	Coloured (%)	Indian (%)		
Ruby Primér	HOR	300	60	40			Afrikaans	Poor working class
Lagaan Primary	HOD	800	15		5	80	English	Middle class
Bass Secondary	HOD	1200	80			20	English	Stable working class
Dover High School	HOD	±900	80			20	English	Middle class
Amazon Secondary	HOD	±1000	80			20	English	Stable working class
Marula Primary	HOD	520	60		10	20	English	Poor working class
Basildon Primary	DET	414	90				English	Middle class
Divinity Technical	DET	±700	100				English	Stable working class/ lower middle class
Bongalethu Secondary	DET	1001	100				English	Working class poor
Siyafika Secondary	DET	1020	100				English	Working class poor
Easdale Primary	HOA	±600	60	40			English	Upper middle class
Oasis Senior Primary	HOA	±700	20	10		70	English	Middle class
Valley Primary	HOA	600	90		10		English	Middle class

Following on from the previous section, in which it was seen that very few schools had explicit policies for dealing with inclusion and exclusion, apparent in looking at access to schools is how strong state policy is in shaping this process. The South African Schools Act features strongly in how schools present themselves. The Act stipulates that all schools are open and that the school is not allowed to discriminate in terms of race, class, culture, language, etc. These stipulations are evident in the ways in which the schools deal with access.

Each of the HOR and HOD schools declared themselves to be compliant with the Schools Act. In practice, even though schools were following the SASA, evident in some schools were specific interpretations of what schools thought was in their remit. This produced a situation in which schools varied from the Marula model, which was entirely an open-door one, to the approach of Amazon, which used admissions and access to improve the school's matriculation pass rate profile and admitted learners on the basis of their ability to pass the matriculation examination.

At the more open-end of the spectrum in the former HOR and HOD systems were schools like Lagaan and Ruby. At Ruby, for example, the principal reiterated that the school did not exclude anyone except those who, as he said, were 'problem learners'. At Lagaan in the Western Cape, based on the interviews with teachers, parents and pupils, it became apparent that admission was largely unproblematic. Lagaan, unlike other schools in the Western Cape and the Bass Secondary School described below, did not enforce what some believed its right to give preference to children who lived within a 2 km radius of the school. It did not, also as some schools did, give preference to children who had had siblings or relatives at the school and it did not, again like some schools, subject applicants to an entrance examination. The official policy of the school was to accept all pupils no matter where they were from, provided there was place in the grade.

In direct contrast to this openness, the access at Amazon was based on where one came from. The school had made a conscious decision to improve its matriculation results and so used learner admissions as a means of effecting this.

Management believed that accepting large numbers of low-income learners from many different areas had contributed to the high attrition rate of learners. In effect, this meant a greater intake of Indian learners. The reason given was that this would alleviate some of the problems experienced in the classroom in terms of the continuity of standards. It was believed that by admitting learners from local schools, it would be easier to check the learners' track record, continuity of standards, personal details, etc. and that this would eventually improve the pass rate. A less stringent version of this approach was used at Bass. Committed as the school was to the SASA, the main criterion for admission was residence in the area. While no learners were turned away on the basis of race, language, finance or previous examination results, prospective applicants had to produce proof of their residence of the township of Bonela. Local in this situation, and it is apparent to some degree also at Ruby, is having to conform to the ideal of what the school's traditional sources of admission are. This means that even though the child may be non-coloured or non-Indian, he or she has to present him or herself at the school as a coloured or an Indian. Thus, while these schools are not practising racial discrimination in the legal sense, they are practising a form of it in privileging the admission of children who are most like them.

Even the relatively open schools, such as Ruby and Lagaan, however, found it difficult to evade the issue of class. As a result of interviews with parents, it became apparent that there were discomforts around the question of school fees. Ruby, acknowledged by the principal as being in a poor township, did not exempt parents from paying school fees. At Lagaan where school fees had increased from R120 in 2001 to R450 in 2002, parents reported a feeling of embarrassment about the fact that they did not pay school fees. While they were not excluded, the fact that they did not pay led them to hold back in certain respects at the school.

Language was a major discriminator in many schools. At Ruby a parent reported that her son was demoted to a lower grade since he did not have an Afrikaans background. Parents of Xhosa-speaking learners had what one might call 'conditioned or restrained' access (see Sayed 1997).

The ex-DET schools approach to access was marked by their diversity. At one end of the privilege spectrum was Basildon, which operated like a former Model C school, and at the other, were Siyafika and Bongaletu. In the middle came Divinity, which attracted a more stable aspirant middle-class community.

Basildon saw itself as an open school. In reality, however, entry was determined almost entirely by class. The annual school fee was R2750 per child. One male parent (black) reported that he paid R340 per month and per child. Once parents signalled an ability to pay, a prospective learner was required to fill in an application form and supply a report from his or her former school. This procedure was not followed rigorously at the junior end of the school, but came strongly into effect in the higher grades where a prospective student had to undergo an interview. If the English of a child was not good, he or she was made to repeat the previous class. Many children, especially the Grade 3s, indicated that they were required to show their reports and a few claim to have been interviewed. One parent whose child had to go through an interview reported that the child was ultimately demoted to the class she had been in the previous year. It emerged that this interview was actually a test.

While not quite a high fee-paying institution, Divinity traded on its good academic standing. In terms of this, the school sought to institute the practice of only admitting learners at the eighth grade, and who were of an average age of 14 years. This policy was adopted because it was believed that the school would be able to control the average age and maturity level of the various class cohorts within the system. School fees were moderately high, R485 per annum. Parents who were not able to pay the fee felt that their children would somehow be identified and perhaps isolated in the school. Unlike Divinity, access was organised much more haphazardly at Siyafika and Bongaletu. While the school could account for the entry process of 85 per cent of the entrants into Siyafika (into Grade 8), they were unable to explain how the remaining 15 per cent (46 learners) were admitted into the school. Admission was, therefore, a considerably more unstructured event in the life of the school. Bongaletu High School in Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape is an historically

African school, and to all intents and purposes, its intake community is understood to be homogeneous. Within this homogeneity, however, patterns of access exist and admissions were determined by a number of factors, the most important of which was the location of a prospective applicant in relation to the school. While the school did not discriminate in terms of age and language, local students, however, were accepted on a priority basis. Access was also facilitated by applying early and the presentation of a good report from one's primary school. How these were actually operationalised was, as in Siyafika, somewhat inconsistent. Parents from the local community, for example, whether they were late or not, insisted on having their children admitted. This often resulted in tension and conflict between the teachers and parents. Significantly, also, there was a strong consciousness at Bongaletu of clan affiliation. Clan affiliation conditioned entry and participation in the life of the students on an everyday basis. Rituals of manhood, for example, and as shall be shown below, were a critical factor in determining who was to be included and excluded. There were also, in addition to this, practices associated with one's social and leisure interests, one's gender and one's attitude to criminality, which shaped patterns of inclusion and exclusion within the school.

As in many other African schools, fees were not used as an exclusionary device. The school drew its learners mainly from poor families. While the school fees were low, failure to pay was not used as the basis for withholding schooling rights from a child.

Like the other schools, the ex-Model C types all manifested an explicit commitment to SASA. Thus, while many would argue that finances are constraints, they would in general agree that something should be given to obtain quality education. The analysis suggests that what is being bought is the idea of schooling as a modern commodity which, to obtain value, has to be paid for.

In the case of Eastdale school, parents have to be able to 'afford' to be part of the school. Many black parents chose Eastdale based on the view that the school offered a better quality of education. Thus, there are students, for instance, who live as far as Alice – 60 km away from KWT. The process of

applying to Eastdale took the form of a standard application, which importantly asked parents whether they could afford the school's fees. Learners who were in arrears with their school fees were suspended. Some of the learners were interviewed before being admitted at the school and in some instances, the students were required to write entrance exams for them to be accepted at the school. Learners who failed the interview or entrance test were excluded from the system. Open as VPS was, what emerged as a barrier similar to Eastdale were the fees. All pupils at VPS were required to buy the school uniform. The school was not willing to compromise on this as they believed a neat uniform led to good discipline and a sense of pride and identity.² On the other hand, the family ethos of the school was invoked to help such people.

What emerged from the data was how racialised the issues of fees was. A white parent complained that black parents want what goes on in white schools: 'they are not prepared to pay for it nor willing to make the necessary sacrifices.' At Oasis in 1991, the school accepted the first persons of colour, 22 Indian and three African learners. These children were carefully selected: 'We took the cream of the crop'. Selection was done on the basis of competency (written test), past performance (previous school report) and parent interview. As more learners sought places at this school, Oasis introduced proof of residency in the immediate neighbourhood as an additional criterion. Residential proof legitimised four purposes. First, it allowed the school to limit the number of learners of colour admitted. Second, it allowed the school to control the pace of desegregation. Third, it enabled the school to refuse admission to '*weak*' learners of colour living beyond a radius of approximately 1.5 km. Fourth, it ensured the inclusion of learners of affluent backgrounds, while simultaneously excluding those from nearby townships and working class areas. The selection process succeeded in ensuring that these newly admitted black learners would be achievers, speak the language of instruction and come from economic backgrounds similar to white learners. Black learners thus selected did not create additional challenges for the teaching community.

What is clear in the case of Oasis is that fees had configured a specific racial composition for the

learning body. The school fee of R4,300 per year privileged the entry of Indian learners at the expense of African learners.

What emerges across the conditionally 'open' schools, and these are important to highlight, is that processes of obstructed admission are occurring through:

- *English language proficiency*: if the learner has not been taught through the medium of English, admission is denied. If the learner has not studied Afrikaans before (as is usually the case of some isiZulu medium schools and as the Ruby school illustrates), then admission is denied. However, at Amazon there have been a few cases where the child has not done Afrikaans in Grade 6 but has done Afrikaans up to Grade 4. In such cases, the head of department interviews the learner and determines whether such a learner can be admitted. At least three such learners were admitted to this school in the last two years.
- *Special curriculum needs*: admissions of such learners are denied on the basis that the school does not have the capacity to accommodate them.
- *Admission documents*: the school has stopped accepting baptismal certificates as proof of birth. This comes from the schools' experience in finding a large number of fraudulent baptismal certificates.
- *Finance*: the school insists on deposits or half the school fee on registration.
- There is also a sophisticated system of verifying school reports of learners seeking admission. Proof of residence is also called for.

What this discussion has shown is how nuanced the question of open admissions is. Given the above, it is not surprising that while the official policy in the school is that of being open, in reality this openness is conditioned by finance, location and language. These point clearly to new ways in which South Africa's racial past is being re-articulated through social class. Language, as cultural capital; the ability to pay fees, as economic

capital; and location, as social capital, show that race no longer operates in its crude form but is being mediated through class.

5 Governance and inclusion

This section of the report moves on to look at the ways in which the schools have involved their parents, their learners and other stakeholders in the school in an equitable way in the governance of the school. How democratic is governance in the schools? What are the problems in making schools more democratic and transparent? Who participates in the governance structures and why?

Central in understanding governance issues in South Africa, is the South African Schools Act (SASA) passed in 1996. By the time the new government came into power in 1994, governance infrastructures in black schools had all but collapsed. As part of the process of rebuilding the school system, the government passed the SASA as an attempt to give parents the responsibility of managing the schools their children attend and of officially legitimating parental participation in the life of the school. The Act required that schools establish School Governing Bodies (SGBs), which were to be composed of parents, teachers, students (in the case of secondary schools) and members of the school support staff. This structure was required to develop school policy across a whole host of areas and to ensure that the school managers would carry out this policy. Achieving this, however, was compromised by the way in which the new legislation framed identities in the schools, particularly parental identities. The Act projected parental identity around a restrictive middle-class notion of who parents were and how they functioned. Central to this notion were particular understandings of how time is used, what domestic resources are available for the schooling process, how much cultural capital parents can draw on in relating to school and so on. The result was that in black schools, SGBs continued to be dominated by their principals or their teachers. In formerly white schools, middle-class white parents dominated.

Before entering the substantive discussion, a point of qualification is necessary. Much of the discussion which is to follow, it can be argued, relates to the

perennial debate in South Africa around standards, where standards have become proxies for thinking about issues of diversity and of inclusion and exclusion. At the heart of much of the dynamics within governing bodies is the question of what parents, white, Indian, coloured, and often African, think are appropriate standards for their children's education. For the first three groups, it is a matter of protecting what their (apartheid) schools had achieved and which democracy was now threatening. African parents, on the other hand and interestingly so, it would seem, are happy with their children being assimilated into the existing standards of the schools into which their children are being admitted. At Marula, for example, both Indian and African teachers felt that Indian parents complained more than African parents. African parents 'hardly ever' complained and instructed the teachers to 'beat' and 'punish' their children if it was necessary.

In terms of this discussion, important to understand is that while there were active School Governing Bodies at all the institutions referred to in the study (with the exception of Marula Primary School, where the SGB had been dissolved in 1999 and not been reconstituted), most SGBs struggled to govern effectively and equitably. Given the disjunctions between the race and class nature of South Africa, particularly its large working-class community and the middle-class orientation of the SASA and the SGB process, governance turned out to be a process that was flawed and exclusionary in one way or the other. In considering how well SGBs have managed, the report focuses on the pivotal issues of race and social class. These issues find expression in the SGBs in terms of a range of issues, each of which is a site in which inclusion and exclusion occur and are played out.

5.1 The 'racial' presence

A key way in which the issue of race was being negotiated in the schools is through the question of standards. Standards, as many parents and schools in the study were to argue, were non-negotiable. The schools felt that they had much to stand on and resisted attempts to change the identities of their schools. Their governance actions, therefore, were intensely preservative. The schools sought to preserve the levels of 'excellence' they thought they

had attained. This was very evident in three schools in this study and present in all of the others. Oasis, for example, worked hard to maintain its pre-1994 shape and ethos, and found a pliant parent body, including black people, who were in strong support of this approach. Ruby resisted the appointment of a non-Afrikaans teacher and struggled to achieve the withdrawal of this teacher's appointment. Amazon, interestingly, sought to increase its African enrolment, but looked upon those new entrants to the school as dragging their school down.

The interesting aspect of the case of Oasis school is how much the strategic approach to inclusion results in what could be termed a 'non-change' scenario. The parent and learner body had been largely replaced in terms of race, but not class. The parent body had become almost 90 per cent black. Structurally, however, the school remained relatively unchanged, its core intact, unshaken by the turbulence of change. One way in which 'conservative stability' was effected was by buying parents into the discourse of 'quality and excellence', a strategic marketing ploy that most ex-Model C schools have taken. Among parents there was agreement about what constituted a good education and where good education was available. It followed then that a priority would be to preserve the character and traditions of the school for continuance of quality. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the actions of the SGB, the orchestrating organ of parental consent. The SGB set the fee structure, which structurally excluded poorer communities. The SGB paid for additional teachers (mostly white) to uphold what it thought were its excellent standards.

The issue of standards was very evident in the appointment of teachers. At two schools, Marula and Ruby, the appointment of African members of staff produced intense conflict. At Marula, an African principal was appointed and this caused immense dissatisfaction among some Indian parents who were deeply unhappy about the perceived lowering of standards at the school that the appointment would produce. Some parents expressed the view that if they had the finances, they would have moved their children to a 'better' school, preferably a white school because at Marula Primary the 'principal does not know what he is doing'. The same matter at Ruby came to a

head with the removal of a Xhosa-speaking teacher. The teacher had been removed because, as one parent put it, she was 'unfit' for the school. A variation of this theme of race was picked up at Lagaan, where some parents felt that the Muslim members of the school community were dominating the management and governance of the school. A particularly sore point for some pupils and parents was the tendency, as they saw it, of the Muslim-oriented staff and governing body to exclude non-Muslim parents when it came to the organisation of school activities and functions. Food, particularly its preparation, was a contentious issue.

At Amazon, it was not so much the race of the teacher which was at issue but being able to employ the current staff complement. The school's enrolment had fallen in the early 1990s and so to keep its staff, it had to go out to find a new pool of students to draw from. Learner admissions dramatically influenced and shaped the nature of the school's governance. In the flush of democracy and led by a group of long serving level 1 educators at the school, admission to the school was opened to all. To facilitate this open admission policy, educators, with the support of the education department and the educator union (SADTU), were instrumental in bussing large numbers of African children from the townships. Management, on the other hand, was aggrieved because they did not feel that the school was adequately prepared to cope with large numbers of learners from other race groups. On the face of it, the school was leading the race in addressing learner diversity. The learner profile had quickly transformed with Africans as the majority. In practice, the school was doing little to address the admissions of African learners to their new schools in a serious way. The children were used as cannon fodder, and could be argued to have been, once again, the victims of racism.

5.2 The presence of 'class'

Like the issue of race, class was a strong factor in how the school governing bodies and the schools presented themselves. The most complex illustration of the school asserting its privileged identity was found at VPS, where the school sought to preserve its special Christian character. This character, one could argue, obscured the fictive, and

often extreme, ways in which the school sought to preserve its middle-class and white identity. As with race, sometimes gender was mobilised to maintain the school's essential identity. This was the case with VPS. Sometimes, class merged into the question of race, as was apparent at Divinity.

While VPS had all the formal trappings of democracy (for example, democratically elected schools governing body, weekly newsletter for keeping the school community informed), what the research revealed was the anxiety of the school of losing its identity. This anxiety was embodied in the school's fear of losing its 'family' character. In this school, the metaphor of the family powerfully subsumed all the complex differences within the school within a harmonious construction of inclusiveness. Elaborating the implications of living within a happy family environment, the principal projected himself as a benign father. This approach pervaded the management and governance style of the school. When, for example, a parent who had recently qualified as a Waldorf teacher and had very set ideas about education, for example, such as that children should not wear uniforms, she was politely steered away from the *Uniform Committee*.

The school's 'family' character was strongly reproduced through the invocation of gender and the deployment of gender identities within the school. These allowed the school to draw on existent and strongly encoded social structures within the school, many of which were not as familiar to and accessible to parents who were not white and middle class. For example, *The Mother Programme* and *The Catering Committee* were exclusively run by women. This assumed that most mothers who had children at the school were not working/should not be working. Projecting these approaches as 'family orientated' allowed the school to assimilate newer parents, and even non-middle-class parents into its social project. Parents of children of colour thus had access and rights of way in the school, but decidedly so on the school's terms.

The situation at Eastdale College was similar. The school had effectively assimilated parents into a middle-class settlement, based on a particular image of what the school stood for. This was particularly clear in the consistent and seamless representations of parents of their 'responsible parent' identities. All

the parents mentioned that they helped their children, as was expected, with their school work and made the necessary parental comments on the children's work. They also fulfilled, as was the expectation at school, of the concerned and civic-minded parent. These images were powerful in maintaining the identity of the school.

Meetings took place regularly at all the institutions. At Basildon, parent meetings were held quarterly and specifically at a time in the evenings when it was assumed that working parents could participate. Similar arrangements were made at Siyafika and at Bongaletu. At Basildon, however, even this arrangement did not work. Parental participation was weak and, according to two teachers who were interviewed, parent meetings seemed to be attended only by parents who were concerned with their children's poor academic performances. Even when the discussions shifted away from individual parents' concerns about their children, parents tended to cede their rights to participate to the teachers. As a result, even though the meetings were regular, they were one-sided events, dominated by the teachers.

The governance climate at other schools was similar. Teachers took the lead. At Divinity, learners reported that they were told that the attendance of their parents at parent day meetings was mandatory. Failure of parents to attend would lead to the learners' reports being withheld at the end of the year, or the learners not being granted permission to sit for the examinations. The learners were aware that this was a veiled threat to encourage parents to attend the parents' meeting. Confirming what the Basildon teachers said, the interviews with the Divinity parents revealed a strong deference to the authority of the teachers and the school. The teachers were afforded an elevated status and respect. Given the respect that parents showed teachers they tended not to participate actively in the school governance structures even though they were represented on the SGB. The school management team described parental participation as minimal. While there was undoubtedly a deference to teachers, many parents felt that they were not being treated properly. Parents at Bongaletu, however, complained that they did not attend parents meetings because they had not been properly informed. At Divinity, some

parents made it clear that they found the approach of the school to parents' meetings somewhat oppressive. A few parents reported that they had been coerced into participating in the parents' meetings. They felt that if they did not participate, they were making themselves vulnerable to times when they would need the school to be sympathetic, such as, for example, negotiating late payment of school fees.

The issue of fees was definitely controversial. A parent (Parent 18) at Ruby confirmed this, saying, 'Some parents reported "they call us only when they want money"'. If Hillcrest in Alice was as poor as parents and teachers reported it to be, then it is small wonder that poor parents decide to stay away from meetings. At Lagaan, at least three parents referred to the governing body and the types of decisions that they made which benefited some while others simply had 'go with the flow'. This comment was made with reference to the drastic increase in school fees from 2001 to 2002. Ironically, Marula, the one school where an SGB did not exist, where only 20–25 per cent of pupils paid their school fees in full, appeared to be coping with the question of fees more successfully than the other schools. Teachers and management felt no learner was excluded in any way, nor were parents embarrassed in any way. Those who experienced difficulties with school fees were encouraged to make arrangements with the school for part payment of fees.

A further exclusionary, and what one might term, class effect, arose from the structural realities in which the SGBs were set. Structurally, the way in which most SGBs operate is around timetables and schedules that working parents are unable to manage. These schedules have the effect of excluding them from the working governance of their children's schools. Many parents, as a result, know very little about the SGBs. Very few SGBs took the trouble to deal with these matters. They did not see the structural realities surrounding the SGBs. What happened, as a result, is that the principals dominated the structures. At Ruby the principal made it clear that he took the initiative to draft policy. This was, in any event, what he thought all his colleague-principals were doing. He drafted policies as other principals did and took them to the SGB for endorsement.

6 Conclusion

What emerges from an analysis of practices in the 12 schools is significantly different to the image of schools as sites of rampant racism, which have been allowed to gather momentum in the pages of the press. The realities are considerably more complex.

One can argue that South African schools have made major strides in their commitments to the new inclusionary policies of the government. In none of the schools looked at for the purposes of this study were there examples of overt racism. That is not to say that these did not exist. They did not, however, arise in the course of the work. What did emerge was that the schools were using a range of devices to maintain their identities. This was particularly the case with the white and to a large degree the coloured and Indian schools. Present in all of these schools was an awareness that they had entered new phases of their histories. The white schools, in particular, were explicitly putting in place mechanisms to deal with their new constituencies. Critically, however, none of the schools gave any indication that they had thought critically about their pasts. Their pasts were seldom the subject of any reflection. Instead in all of the non-African schools, these pasts were celebrated and were held up as commodities upon which the schools could trade. And trade on them, as is apparent from this study, these schools did.

They instituted mechanisms to maintain the ideological characters of their schools. In the white schools these mechanisms included the use of ideological devices projected in the language of 'family' and 'standards'. The effects were to maintain the white and often middle-class ethos of these schools. The coloured and Indian schools too found it difficult to give up their traditions, and as in the case of Ruby, refused to open up their pedagogical and social spaces to include the experiences of African people. The African schools themselves operated in the constant shadow of the more privileged schools and had difficulty in seeing themselves outside the frameworks of reference provided by these schools. It is in this sense that exclusion emerges as a powerful reality in the new South Africa. The new South Africa is an environment, judging by the schools, including the black schools, which remains profoundly entranced by racialised identities. These identities

hold up whiteness as an unproblematised good. Anything which does not either resemble whiteness in appearance or in performance is punished and is used as the basis for exclusion. The extent to which language and socio-economic class are used as signifiers of this whiteness is important to recognise.

What emerges from this study, this article seeks to argue, is the re-articulation of race in South Africa. Race has been sublimated by class. While schools can no longer use race as the means by which they will determine their learner profiles and what they will teach, they will resort to proxy mechanisms to achieve the same ends. In the end, the schools have changed but hardly in a way which has changed their identities. Given this analysis, one can argue

that the major levers of change in the new South Africa have been compromised. This is particularly the case with SGBs, which have been historically and structurally compromised as instruments of inclusion. They have invariably had to enter school contexts, which are profoundly imprinted with the fissures of South Africa's past – race, class and in some cases religion. The way in which the SASA has sought to bring them to life, moreover, has been naïve. While some schools, as the discussion above has hopefully shown, have attempted to work with their pasts, most have not. Instead, they have simply transposed the new state policy, using their traditional social structures, attitudes and practices, directly onto their changing environments, invariably neglecting and subordinating the interests of their new constituencies.

N o t e s

1. This is also a reflection of the Christian influence in the school. A well-known proverb on child rearing is Proverbs 22:6, which reads as follows: 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it'. This is commonly interpreted to mean that each child has been created uniquely with individual gifts and talents for a particular purpose or destiny. It is therefore the role of the parent (and educator) to recognise this, draw it out and develop it.
2. Some pupils made comparisons between the uniform and dress code of schools in Ocean View and VPS. It was a point of pride that pupils at VPS wore a neat uniform, while pupils at Ocean View could wear 'civvies' if they could not afford the uniform. VPS is in transition from one uniform to another. They have allowed parents to buy the new uniform only when they can afford it and when their child grows out of the old uniform.

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