South Africa's Decentralized Education Market and its Implications for Democracy

Ethan Chang

University of Redlands

Follow this and additional works at: https://inspire.redlands.edu/proudian

Part of the Education Economics Commons, Education Policy Commons, and the International and Comparative Education Commons

Recommended Citation
SOUTH AFRICA’S DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION MARKET
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

Ethan Chang
Assoc. Professor Steve Wuhs
University of Redlands
Proudian Interdisciplinary Honors Program
Spring 2010
“I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends.”

Preface

American philosopher and educator, John Dewey, is widely regarded as the father of modern pragmatism. In the early 20th Century, Dewey expanded the field of philosophy to include anthropology, social behavior, and the study of institutions.\(^1\) His understanding of philosophy is best captured in the statement: "Philosophy should be considered not as a system of curious and idle speculations, but as a practical principle of discipline firmly possessing the heart and incessantly exerting itself in the life."\(^2\) Now nearly a century later, Dewey’s work continues to have important implications for how we ought to incorporate philosophy in addressing contemporary social issues. Among Dewey’s many contributions, his seminal works on education and democracy are perhaps his most marked accomplishments.

This essay follows a similar approach to Dewey’s work by applying Elizabeth Anderson’s “The Ethical Limitations of the Market” to an analysis of South Africa’s education system. In constructing a research question, I found philosophy constantly “possessing the heart” and “exerting itself in the life” of each interaction and observation that was made during my brief month of field research. In the pages that follow, I hope to offer an analysis of education and democracy that identifies the utility of philosophic inquiry. I look to encourage a problem-solving approach that is less discipline-bound and more apt to include (what I consider) important ethical considerations. I argue that this normative approach to understanding social problems can have real and valuable meanings for how we respond to the pressing issues of our time.

---


\(^2\) Ibid.
Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Johan Wassermann, whose guidance and sense of humor made the research process a truly rewarding experience. This project would also not have been possible without Gerhard van Rooijen’s warm acceptance and support for my research interests. I would also like to acknowledge the passing of Reinhard van Rooijen, who, like his father, made the Bluff a second home for me during my brief stay. In assembling this project, I am indebted to my advisor, Steve Wuhs, who encouraged me to travel to South Africa, and upon returning, convinced me to continue developing this project. At the time, I did not anticipate the meaning this work would have for my future academic and career interests. This project would also not have been possible without the help of Eric McLaughlin, who served as a reader in this lengthy project and helped me to refine and clarify the argument that was buried within the original draft. I am also grateful for the assistance of Jeffery Smith, who introduced me to the work of Elizabeth Anderson and taught the principles of market ethics with such clarity and enthusiasm that the lessons learned in his classroom have become a permanent part of my world view. Finally, I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Khoza for making South Africa an understandable reality for me and for demonstrating the values of compassion that I continually strive to emulate.
Table of Contents

1. The International Trend toward Educational Decentralization 5
   Education and Democracy
   Why Equal Access to Education is required for Democracy
   The Political Appeal of Educational Decentralization
   Central Government Arguments for Educational Decentralization
   Financial Incentives to Decentralize
   Local Governments and the Introduction of User Fees
   Assessing Local Markets for Education
   Recap of the Trend toward Educational Decentralization

2. Ethical Framework for Research 15
   The Apartheid Context
   Anderson—Ethical Concerns over Market Systems
   Is Education Better Valued by Market or Non-Market Norms?

3. Educational Decentralization in South Africa 25
   People’s Education for People’s Power
   The NP Perspective—Unilateral Restructuring and the Model C Plan
   CODESA and the ‘Selling’ of School Fees to the Democratic Movement
   The South African Schools Act—Successes and Failures of School Fee Implementation
   Returning to the Ideals of People’s Education

4. Research Logistics 37
   Research Aims
   Selecting a School—Durban Academy

5. Findings

   Community IA—School Governing Bodies as ‘Cost and Budgeting Centers’ 41
   Meeting the Needs of the Wider Community—SGB Admissions Policy
   Why Market Norms Come into Play—the Demands Placed on SGBs
   Egoism and the Offer System
   Business as SASA Dictates—Recap of SGB Community

   Community IB: Teacher Motivations and the Preservation of Social Norms 50
   Prioritizing Student Needs over Teacher Wants
   Preserving Personal Relations in the Classroom
   Opting to Stay—Teachers’ Absence of Exit
   Recap of Teaching Community
Community 2—Parent and Student Choice in the Educational Market
Township Exit and the Selection of Durban Academy
Commuting Learners—Explaining Low Levels of Parent Voice through Learner Exit
Non-Commuting Learners—Want Based Explanations for Low Parent Involvement
Egoism, Exit, and Indoctrination—Concerns over Market Norms in Bluff Community
Recap of Parent/Student Community


Limitations
Recalling People’s Education
Recentralizing Education Policy in South Africa
International Perspective on Educational Decentralization

7. Conclusion

8. Bibliography
Abstract:

Based on the essential role of education in sustaining democracy, policymakers have searched for the most equitable and efficient way to provision this important public good. In an effort to remedy the injustices of apartheid and Bantu Education, South Africa passed the South African School Act of 1996 (SASA), which decentralized education policy and placed control in the hands of local communities. But educational decentralization is ripe with contradictions, often resulting in a system where genuine decision making remains highly centralized, while only fiscal responsibilities are delegated to local governments. Like municipal governments in other developing nations, local governments in South Africa have relied on the use of market mechanisms (viz., user fees) to fund public schools. The goal of this essay is to establish a link between South Africa's decentralized market provisioning of education and its effect on the social norms that undergird democracy. Through field research at a public school in South Durban, I apply Elizabeth Anderson’s (2005) “The Ethical Limitations of the Market,” in order to identify the normative concerns arising from a local market distribution of education. I conclude that the decentralized education market undermines important social values and that democratic processes in the provisioning of education may be required to ensure long term sustainability of democratic principles.

Equal education is one of the most important policy issues in the establishment of a fair, democratic society. In Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court observed that “Education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments” and held that it was a public service that “must be made available to all on equal terms.” Since education equips young learners with knowledge of what it means to be a citizen, it is an essential good for democracy. Education encourages citizens to take ownership of contemporary social issues, to hold government officials accountable, and to engage critically in communal problem solving. For these reasons, the state has traditionally assumed primary responsibility in provisioning public education.

But following the centralization of government power in the 1940s and 1950s, a push for decentralization arose from formerly oppressed groups in society. In the 1980s, a second wave of decentralization occurred after the fall of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and the weakening of centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe. Decentralization was seen as an efficient means of service delivery and an effective ‘self-help’ approach to

---

empowering the poor.\textsuperscript{2} Caught in the international tide of decentralization demands, education became a locally provisioned good. Ensuring equal access to public schools was no longer one of the central government’s primary responsibilities.

Perhaps nowhere in recent history were the demands for decentralization more prominent than in South Africa. Previously excluded from the decision-making process under apartheid, black South Africans viewed decentralization as a means to creating the new South Africa they envisioned: one that was accountable, transparent, and inclusive. Kauzya (2007) observes that South Africa’s radical departure from apartheid governance was aimed at “rebuilding local communities and environments, as the basis for a democratic, integrated, prosperous and truly non-racial society.”\textsuperscript{3} But while the rhetoric supporting decentralization offered a response to the abuses of power under apartheid, the state’s failure to recognize education as a precondition for democracy signaled the ensuing shortcomings of decentralization. Complicating the state’s decision to decentralize education was local governments’ reliance on market mechanisms to fund public schools. Beard and Miraftab (2008) note one of the paradoxes of the post-apartheid state by observing its combination of “political liberation and economic liberalization.”\textsuperscript{4} Education was no longer a good valued in a democratic society, but an exclusive, market provisioned service based on one’s ability to pay.

This essay focuses on this narrow aspect within the greater decentralization debate by assessing the effectiveness of decentralized markets for education. I assume that an educated public is required for democratic principles to flourish. What I seek to understand is whether a democratic provisioning of this important social good is required to secure the democratic ends of education. Put negatively, can the ends of education be secured via a non-democratic, market provisioning of education? In bridging educational decentralization and democracy, I focus on the process of provisioning this essential public good, and more specifically, I assess the norms that guide participants’ actions and decisions within the decentralized education market.


\textsuperscript{4} Victoria A. Beard and Faranak Miraftab and Christopher Silver, Planning and Decentralization (New York: Routledge, 2008), 221.
My critique stems from this normative foundation by looking at the ways a decentralized market for education corrupts important democratic values. I turn to Anderson’s notion of “sphere differentiation” to substantiate this point. Anderson suggests that the market, an inherently egoistic and exclusive institution, corrupts the way we value public goods. Based on the corruptive influence of the market, Anderson cautions that we must limit the market’s role in order to preserve important social norms required for democracy. By using her ethical framework as a foundation for my case study, I proposed the following question: do market norms evidence themselves in South Africa’s decentralized education system, and do these norms corrupt important social values required for democracy?

During the field-research phase, I interviewed members on both sides of South Africa’s education market: “producers of education,” which included members of the Durban Academy’s School Governing Body (SGB), the teachers, and principals; and the “consumers of education,” which included the parents and learners. Based on the data collected, I discovered a relationship consistent with Anderson’s theoretical discussion, which suggests that markets in education undermine important social values (e.g. norms of inclusion, personal interaction, and an exercise of voice to promote change) required for democracy. I suggest that the entangling relationship between educational decentralization and the market may require a democratic provisioning of education in order to secure the conditions required for sustaining a genuine participatory democracy. The general structure of this essay is as follows:

**Section 1** explains how education promotes norms of civic responsibility and encourages moral development. I argue that these factors are required for democratic institutions to function. Also included in this section is a general overview of the political and financial reasons central governments have supported educational decentralization and a brief discussion on how local governments have coped with added financial responsibilities by relying on user fees. The final segment of this section offers a brief assessment on the impact school fees have had on learner access and community participation in developing nations.

**Section 2** relates the theoretical framework for my case study by addressing the ethical concerns of market distributions of education. The primary goal of this section is to outline Anderson’s argument of “sphere differentiation.” In order to place Anderson’s argument in context however, I introduce this section with a brief overview of the history, ideas, and legacy of apartheid as it relates to the current socio-economic and political context in South Africa.
With this theoretical understanding of education markets in mind, Section 3 opens with an overview of Bantu Education and then assesses the goals of the People’s Education movement. In addition, the unique factors driving educational decentralization in South Africa are discussed. The primary aim of this section, however, is to outline the central tenets established by SASA. In particular, I observe the legislation’s stipulation for SGB control over school fees and assess what this stipulation has meant in terms of educational redress.

Section 4 marks a break with the overall structure of the essay, as I shift toward the field research phase of the project. In this section, I specify the goals of my research, offer a brief description of Durban Academy, and explain the reasons why the school was selected.

Section 5 reports the findings of my case study. Included in this section is qualitative and quantitative data on the impact school fees have had on both producers and consumers of education.

Section 6 draws conclusions from the case study and returns to the question of educational decentralization. This section critically evaluates South Africa’s neglect of public education financing, but acknowledges the state’s recent efforts to remedy the market’s effects through a re-centralization of education policy.

Section 7 offers final concluding remarks on the ethical concerns of South Africa’s decentralized education market. I conclude that while the ends of education in sustaining democracy are well understood and accepted, the particular methods for provisioning education continue to be debated. What the case study suggests is that a market provision of education should be removed from this debate based on its subversive impact on the norms required for democracy.
1. The International Trend toward Educational Decentralization

**Education and Democracy**

Education is widely regarded as a necessary background condition for social equality and democracy. The potential for citizens to participate on equal footing with their peers hinges upon equal access to education. According to a 1993 UNICEF document on the international state of public schooling, "Education is the single most vital factor for the realization of fundamental rights, and promotes a civil society committed to transparency, good governance, and social inclusion."¹ Education enhances civil society's ability to work collectively in resolving social issues and their capacity to hold government officials accountable.

An important aspect of education is its role in encouraging values of civic responsibility through intellectual and moral development. In Colby *et al.'s* (2003) *Educating Citizens*, the authors cite Lawrence Kohlberg's research on the stages of educational development to describe the process of moral development in young students. Commenting on the development of learners' sensibilities toward their peers, Kohlberg observes, "They begin to approach moral questions from the perspective of a member of a community rather than only in individual terms and also begin to comprehend the idea of shared norms."² This shared understanding of contemporary social problems is an essential precondition for democracy. Implicit in Kohlberg's statement is an acknowledgement that children are not passive recipients of culture and social norms, but rather, active participants in the construction of their own moral sensibilities.³ It is through interaction with their peers, parents, and social institutions that learners can develop into complete citizens.

Education is thus a collective good with positive externalities accruing to everyone in society. We all have a stake in the education of our future community members and leaders. In addition, education promotes social stability by encouraging values of inclusion, removing barriers to integration, delegitimizing cultural myths and stereotypes, and uprooting traditional views of inferiority and exclusion. By emphasizing the role of the community and by encouraging students to recognize their role within a larger societal context, education allows for

---

³ Ibid., 101.
democratic institutions and practices to flourish. Based on these reasons, Colby et al. contend
that it is at “the heart of democracy’s future in America.” As important as education is to
democracy in the U.S., it may hold far greater importance for transitioning democracies,
especially those with a history of past injustice.

**Why Equal Access to Education is required for Democracy**

Based on the importance of education in sustaining democracy, the absence of equal
education can severely constrain the realization of this end. Geo-Jaja (2006) observes the
harmful effects that result from a lack of equal access to education by stating, “Social justice is
manifest in unaffordable and poor quality education as well as in denial of education that might
lead to complete citizenship.” The denial of education undermines the fundamental principles
of democracy by allowing the government to pursue its own agenda, free from public scrutiny
and majority interests. Without education, the public can never realize the ends of “complete
citizenship.” In addition, if limited education results in limited power, then unequal education
allows privileged groups in society to dominate the interests of others. Colby et al. and
Anderson (2007) elaborate on the importance of equal access to education.

Both Colby et al. and Anderson argue that in order to respond to contemporary social
issues, learners must not only develop a sense of moral judgment, but must also be willing to act
upon this judgment. In order to create a “responsiveness” to social needs, the authors argue that
equal education across the racial and economic spectrum must be established. On one end of the
spectrum, Colby et al. lament the ailing sense of political efficacy for learners forced to attend
poorer schools. According to the authors, lower socioeconomic groups and racial minorities
score lower on measures of political efficacy, which contributes to feelings of being “further
immobilized by the apparent hopelessness of the situation.” On the other end of the spectrum,
students attending higher quality schools succumb to what Anderson refers to as, “knowledge

---

6 Reference Secretary General, Kofi Annan’s position on education: “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. 
Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” (Source: http://www.un.org/sg/annan.shtml).
7 Colby *et al.*, define political efficacy as a genuine belief in what one does will lead to success or chance of making
an impact.
8 Ibid., 125.
deficits on the part of the advantaged. Anderson suggests that economically stratified access to education deprives elites of social capital by limiting their awareness and responsiveness to the pressing issues facing society. Critical of economically stratified access to education, she concludes, “I claim that possession of academic knowledge alone is not sufficient to qualify a segregated, multiply advantaged elite for positions of leadership and responsibility in a democratic society.”

Consistent with Colby et al. and Anderson, John Adams emphasizes the importance of an equal provision of education in sustaining democracy. In drafting the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, John Adams spoke of the importance of the state’s equal provision of education:

Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of people being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates in all future periods of this commonwealth to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them. Adams’s understanding of education, as more than simply a training ground for intellectual development, identifies the essential aspects of education in encouraging civic responsibility. Adams is correct to observe that education ought to diffuse “among the different orders of the people.” In order to ensure long-term sustainability of democracy, education must be a good provisioned equally among all groups of society.

**The Political Appeal of Educational Decentralization**

Understanding the importance of education, what is the state’s role in the provisioning of this essential good? Weiler’s (1990) comparative analysis of educational decentralization suggests that politicians desire to avoid the contentious policy area and are inclined to delegate responsibilities for this ‘third-rail’ issue. According to Weiler, education is a source of conflict because it plays a pivotal role in determining a society’s social hierarchy and is the principal means through which values and norms are passed between generations. Acknowledging the potential pitfalls of an ineffective delivery of this important social good, central governments are

---


10 Ibid., 609.

disposed to devolve educational decisions to lower levels of government, or at least make the appearance of devolving important decisionmaking power.

Weiler explains the two motivations accounting for politicians’ desire to devolve education policy. First, politicians desire to contain and isolate educational policy conflict. Weiler describes the benefits of devolving decisionmaking power in education: “It allows the state to diffuse the sources of conflicts and to provide additional layers of insulation between them and the rest of the system.” In line with the insulating benefits acquired through a devolution of education policy, Weiler explains that the complexity of locally-specific education demands constantly threatens the government’s legitimacy. Decentralization allows central governments to reign in whatever political legitimacy they can.

But in decentralizing educational policy, central governments are confronted with an ultimatum: how to appear legitimate in the eyes of the public, while still maintaining control over the essential policy area of education. Again, decentralization offers a solution to the state’s contradictory aims. Here, Weiler’s division between the regulatory and allocative aspects of decentralization is helpful. Weiler explains that central governments are willing to devolve “allocative” responsibilities (funding of education), but are often unwilling to surrender “regulatory” responsibilities (e.g. national standards, accreditation rules, and national curriculum). Weiler agrees that a degree of central control over education may be required and observes, “Curricula, qualifications, and examinations need to be reasonably similar across the national or sub-national unit so as to facilitate mobility, the exchange of personnel, and the mutual recognition of diplomas across different regions.” But despite the importance of national standards, the appearance of devolving power while off-loading financial responsibilities for education is one of the principle factors accounting for the failure of educational decentralization.

---

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 442. An important underlying assumption is that politicians may not be concerned so much with the effective delivery of education inasmuch as they may be concerned with how the public perceives of their efforts to deliver education.
14 Ibid., 435-36.
15 Ibid.
Central Government Arguments for Educational Decentralization

In order to achieve the contradictory aims of educational decentralization, central governments rely on two arguments: first, that decentralization will resolve the inefficiencies of a centralized provision by incorporating locally specific information; and second, that decentralization improves communal participation in the running of schools. In the first case, central governments argue that improved familiarity with local conditions results in a more accurate meeting of supply and demand and a more economic utilization of resources. Although decentralization sacrifices potential benefits in economies of scale, this cost is outweighed by the efficiency benefits that accrue from improved information at the local level. Decentralization, they contend, creates an education system with national curricula and standards that is flexible to local variations.

In terms of the second argument, central governments promise enhanced decision making authority in the running of schools. Geo-Jaja explains that in an ideal setting, decentralization extends power and increases community participation by removing centralized control over management and administration of public education. But realizing this ideal of effective communal participation is highly dependent on the motivations leading to decentralization in the first place. Clarifying his criticism of the state’s position on education funding, Geo-Jaja explains, “The grim reality is that the depth and, ultimately, the outcome of decentralization reforms depend on the motives, the political commitment, and the centrality of the state in the funding and distribution of resources to education.” Geo-Jaja’s observation suggests that the rift between the ideals of effective decentralization and the reality of ineffective decentralization are largely attributable to the motives behind central governments’ decisions. We return now to an analysis of the allocative functions devolved from the center to the local governments.

Financial Incentives to Decentralize

While central governments may believe in decentralization’s ability to improve efficiency and to empower local governments, one of their primary motivations to decentralize education policy is to off-load financial responsibilities. Weiler describes the central government’s logic

---

16 Ibid., 437.
18 Ibid., 311.
by observing decentralization’s potential to incorporate “untapped local and private resources into the overall resource pool available to education.”

Decentralization increases the possibility for revenue-sharing not available under a centralized education system. Central governments argue that since decentralization increases power sharing, local governments should assume added financial responsibilities as well. Weiler clarifies this relationship:

This expectation is directed particularly at the local community, which, in return for a greater role in the making of educational decisions, is expected to express a stronger sense of commitment to the overall educational enterprise by generating added resources for school construction and maintenance, teacher salaries, and the like.

But the pivotal assumption here is that educational decentralization results in the genuine incorporation of local voices. But how much power is truly devolved to the local level?

Geo-Jaja, Weiler, and Sayed agree that national government control over education is never completely surrendered. National governments are unwilling to relinquish genuine control over education, while concurrently devolving financial responsibilities to local governments. In defending his observation, Sayed cites the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales and Australia’s “Tomorrow’s Schools.” Both cases of educational decentralization occurred within a centralized structure where complete devolution was never realized, but only a decentralization of fiscal responsibilities.

Supporting Sayed’s analysis, Geo-Jaja describes the contradictions of educational decentralization by observing, “Hence, centralization of educational-outcomes requirements is accompanied by decentralization of the costs of achieving those outcomes.” Thus, educational decentralization is an attempt by the state to operate at a distance, reaping the legitimacy benefits of appearing to empower local communities, while maintaining control over critical aspects of education policy. Educational decentralization amounts to nothing more than a “cost-cutting exercise,” which leaves local government responsible for generating their own sources of revenue to fund public schools.

---

19 Weiler, 437.
20 Ibid.
23 Sayed, 360.
Local Governments and the Introduction of User Fees

In assuming financial responsibility of education, local governments have relied on user fees to generate revenue. Wehner (2000) describes the advantages of user fees for generating local revenue by noting, “All levels of government can use user charges and license fees, but they are especially appropriate for local governments to the extent that costs and benefits are ‘internalized’ to the local taxpayer.”24 Similarly, Bahl et al. (2003) argue that user fees at the local level promote efficiency in consumption by making costs of public services explicit to local consumers.25 The authors add that user charges are an “attractive feature” for funding decentralized policies.26 Supporting both Wehner’s and Bahl et al.’s observations, Bardhan (2002) argues that user charges are a useful means for local governments to meet local needs without placing a substantial burden on the poor, since “no user is compelled to use the service.”27

But here, Bardhan adds an important disclaimer that the other authors overlook, namely that “User charges cannot, however, be used to finance antipoverty programs such as targeted public distribution of food, education or health services.”28 Although no user is compelled to “use” education, the treatment of education as a trade-good (e.g. waste removal, paving roads) can have a devastating impact on the poor, who may be unable to pay the user fees required for their child’s education. Bardhan’s distinction between local ‘trading’ goods (e.g. water, cement) and social goods (e.g. education and health care) adds an important element to the fiscal decentralization of education. Despite Bardhan’s warning, user fees have become local government’s primary means of funding education.

Local governments have accepted the arguments in favor of user fees and have relied extensively on school fees to fund public education. Proponents argue that school fees will make costs for education apparent to the ‘consumer,’ resulting in a more economic utilization of resources. In the education market, school fees operate as a function of quality in which the higher the school fees the greater the educational product received. Sayed describes the way

---

26 Ibid., 89.
28 Ibid., 194.
school fees have become the new basis for assessing quality in education: "User fees secure market logic by engendering commitment to monetary transaction as a basis for the determination of educational quality and worth." Such emphasis on school fees has redefined how both schools and their "consumers" operate in decentralized systems of education.

As in markets for trade-goods, the market in education has encouraged competition among its producers. Sayed coins the phrase, "school-as-educational-producer" to describe the emerging, dual-identity of schools. Since schools rely on user fees to maintain school quality and to pay for various educational expenses that include teacher salaries and classroom resources, schools compete to 'sell' their product to those consumers who are able to afford their services. By actively recruiting those consumers with the ability to pay, the school-as-educational-producer has redefined the role of parents as well. Extending his analogy, Sayed explains how parents' roles have shifted from "citizen-parents" to one of "consumer-parents." Sayed's observation suggests that the market in education does not operate according to normal supply and demand curves because school-producers' preference for more affluent parents limits the consumers' choice. Thus, the market promise of improved parent choice is limited by the soliciting behavior of schools who favor parents with a demonstrated financial capacity to pay for their child's education.

Assessing Local Markets for Education

If decentralization is the norm for education internationally and if it is the most widely supported form of educational delivery in terms of international aid from the World Bank and IMF, what has been the effect on the delivery of public education? Lessons from Asia suggest that the effective decentralization of education is unlikely without genuine transfer of decision making power to local governments and strong central provision. Educational decentralization in Zimbabwe, Mali, Ghana, and Nigeria suggest a similar financial commitment by the national government to secure equal access to public schools. Issues of class stratification have also been evidenced in Ghana and Cote d'Ivore where increases in school fees have negatively

29 Sayed, 359.
30 Ibid., 361.
31 Ibid., 362.
32 Ibid., 354.
35 Ibid., 316.
affected learners’ access to quality, affordable education.\textsuperscript{36} A common effect of decentralized education markets is the forced option scenario, where poor households must decide which of their children will attend school. The international trend in educational decentralization has seen a reproduction of inequalities by extending economic disparities to the education sector. But even in developed countries, decentralization has failed to pass the equity test. Decentralized allocation of funding in Norway for instance resulted in an educational report identifying, “potential difficulties in decentralization with regard to both equity and standards.”\textsuperscript{37}

Supporting international research on educational decentralization, Geo-Jaja’s extensive research into Nigeria’s funding for educational decentralization identifies the limitations of school fees. Geo-Jaja observes that the implementation of school fees has excluded a substantial segment of school-age children from accessing schools and was the primary reason for parents to remove their children from school.\textsuperscript{38} According to Geo-Jaja, Nigeria’s central government allocates a mere 3 percent of current national expenditure, while claiming to have devolved decision making power to local governments.\textsuperscript{39} With reduced central provision and the onus of school funding placed on local governments, school fees have become the most widely accepted method for local funding of education. Consequently, school fees have expanded the education gap in Nigeria, especially in terms of per-student spending and student-teacher ratio.\textsuperscript{40} Nigeria’s education market has transformed access to public education into an economically based selection process where learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are often denied access and where under-resourced communities are continually penalized for their inability to generate funds.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, educational decentralization has had a limited and negative impact on issues of social justice and equity in most developing countries.

\textit{Recap of the Trend toward Educational Decentralization}

Despite the importance of equal access to education in sustaining democracy, central governments have supported educational decentralization to insulate themselves from criticism and to shirk financial responsibilities for education. Although promising greater decision

\textsuperscript{36} Geo-Jaja, “Educational Decentralization,” 137-38.
\textsuperscript{37} Welier, 436.
\textsuperscript{38} Geo-Jaja, “Decentralisation and Privatisation,” 317.
\textsuperscript{39} Geo-Taja, “Educational Decentralization,” 138.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 129.
\textsuperscript{41} Geo-Jaja, “Decentralisation and Privatisation,” 315.
making power to local governments, central governments have maintained policy control over education, while reaping legitimacy benefits of apparent power-sharing. Weiler summarizes the impact of educational decentralization on local power by remarking, “Decentralization and community participation are frequently just a model to which it is fashionable to pay lip service.” Decentralization entails a process of disruption in the social relationships surrounding education, communities, and the state. The promises of decentralization are made meaningless by the perverse nature of fiscal decentralization and the introduction of school fees. As a result, education’s ability to equip students with a sense of civic responsibility is threatened by the market’s exclusive method of provisioning access based on an ability to pay. With this general overview of educational decentralization, the next section introduces Anderson’s theoretical framework for understanding how the market can undermine important social values.

---

42 Weiler, 438.
2. Ethical Limitations of the Market

Since our primary concern is the relationship between educational decentralization and its implications for democracy, one way to assess the interaction of the two fields is to identify the norms required for both institutions to function effectively. This section addresses the concerning implications arising from markets in education by contrasting market values with the social norms required for democracy. Part 2 contains three sections. The first section provides a context for the discussion on education markets by relating the history of apartheid and the current social conditions in post-apartheid South Africa. The second section outlines Elizabeth Anderson’s argument in the “Ethical Limitations of the Market,” which will serve as my ethical lens in organizing and understanding the qualitative data acquired through my case study. The final segment pulls together scholarly evidence explaining why education is better valued by nonmarket norms.

The Apartheid Context

Before addressing the ethical concerns of a market provision education, we first need to consider the context of our case study and the way that the apartheid past has shaped the public’s demands for equal education. In his comparative essay, “Race Making and the Nation State,” Anthony Marx (1996) identifies the central role of the state in creating racial categories. According to Marx, “Race is not found, but ‘made’ and used.”1 In South Africa, Dutch and British colonists emphasized racial differences to suppress intra-white conflict and to strengthen white dominance over the ‘inferior’ black race.

The arrival of the Dutch East India Company in 1652 established the fundamental pattern of white supremacy that would later be institutionalized in 1948.2 Labor shortages in the nascent Dutch establishment in Cape Town led to the enslavement of the Khoikhoi population. Marx observes, however, that while Afrikaner slavery did not preclude segregation, it fostered attitudes of black inferiority and established patterns of racial domination.3 The so-called “proper relations between master and servant” developed primarily through white compromises made at the expense of the black majority.

3 Marx, 184.
In the early 1830s Afrikaners left the Cape Colony in protest of the British’s’ liberal treatment of slaves.\(^4\) Disagreement culminated in the Boer Wars (1\(^{st}\) Boer War from 1880-1881 and the 2\(^{nd}\) Boer War from 1899 to 1902).\(^5\) But the costly British victory in the 2\(^{nd}\) Boer War encouraged the British to prioritize white unity over their commitment to a more liberal treatment of slaves. As Marx describes, “Union was achievable only on the Boers’ terms, contrary to expectations among the colored and African populations that a British victory would consolidate reforms.”\(^6\) The new white coalition was formalized in the 1902 peace treaty. Peaceful relations were founded upon a common goal of maintaining white privilege and sustaining dominance over the blacks.

Coinciding with the rise of formal apartheid was the industrialization of South Africa, which was fueled by the discovery of gold in the early 20\(^{th}\) Century.\(^7\) While capitalism encouraged a race-neutral economic policy, the government was intent on protecting the interests of the white labor force. In his economic discussion of race, Marx describes the roots of apartheid in “an effort to protect whites from black competition.”\(^8\) The white minority justified racial exclusion by relying on the disclaimer that “Disorder and violence destroys business altogether.”\(^9\) According to the white officials, separate development was the only way for the nation to advance economically. Marx phrases the paradoxical relationship of capitalism and apartheid well, when he states that business was forced to ‘comply’ with state-sanctioned segregation.\(^10\) Despite the tremendous cost of regulation and manifold inefficiencies, the Afrikaner party moved to formalize apartheid in 1948.

\(^4\) Dissatisfied with British rule and notions of equality in Gelykstelling principles, the Boers decided to leave the Cape Colony in the early 1830’s (Fredrickson, 176). During the Great Trek, the Boers viewed themselves as pastoral people wandering through an unholy land. By invoking the “Curse on Ham,” the Boers argued that nonwhites were damned to endure a life of servitude. With the incorporation of the Pauline doctrine, which stated that “obedience to masters was a Christian duty” (Fredrickson 84), the Boers harmonized the policies of black subjugation with the Bible’s teachings. Slowly, race replaced religion as the overriding factor to justify white supremacist views. Fredrickson describes the evolution of Boer-nonwhite relations by noting, “It was no longer religion and race but race alone that was the essential distinguishing mark of the slave class” (Fredrickson, 84).

\(^5\) Marx, 194.

\(^6\) *Ibid.*

\(^7\) *Ibid.*, 189.

\(^8\) *Ibid.*


Once in power, the NP began implementing their 'separate development' agenda. Between 1949 and 1970, the NP passed 25 laws designed to further the goals of apartheid. Steve Biko, black activist leader and one of the founders of Black Consciousness, describes the social and psychological impact of apartheid on the everyday lives of black South Africans by stating, "No black man can ever be absolutely sure he is not breaking the law." Consistent with Biko’s observation is Justice John Marshall Harlan's rhetorical question, which emphasizes the devastating effects of state sanctioned racism: "What can more certainly arouse race hate, what more certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races than state enactments?" But it was the central role of the state in magnifying racial differences ultimately led to the countermobilization efforts from the black resistance movement.

The creation of the apartheid-state, while beneficial to the white minority in the short-run, created a black identity that would eventually mobilize against the injustice of apartheid. Marx argues that the establishment of apartheid forged, what he calls, "group self-consciousness among blacks." Apartheid policies emphasized racial categories, creating a black group identity that would mobilize in opposition of white supremacy. Marx cites the evolution of the ANC to further this point. When apartheid was in its formative state, the ANC was a small, elitist, organization. But when the NP institutionalized segregation under apartheid, the ANC gained massive public support. In addition, the starker definition of races and brutality of legal statutes encouraged more militant offshoots of the ANC, like the Pan Africanist Congress.

With escalating economic costs, mounting internal pressure, and increasing international resentment of apartheid, the NP opened negotiations for a post-apartheid, democratic society. In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections and elected Nelson Mandela as the nation’s first black president. But post-apartheid South Africa has struggled to satisfy the conflicting policy aims of the black majority’s demands for social reform with the need to stabilize the

---

11 According to David Harrison’s *The White Tribe of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 159, one of the NP’s first measure however was to ensure their reelection by disenfranchising the black majority’s right to vote and limiting the immigration of English immigrants. These voting regulations made it virtually impossible for a competing party to overtake the NP. A few of the most corrupt laws included, Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Group Areas Act. Of the remaining 22 apartheid acts that were passed between 1949 and 1970, the most prominent include: the 1952 Pass Laws, the 1953 Bantu Education Act, and the 1967 Terrorism Act.


13 Marx, 192.


15 *Ibid.* As in Brazil’s case of “racial democracy,” where no formal system of apartheid or Jim Crow was instituted, but de facto racial superiority stemming from Portuguese colonialism remained unchallenged.
economy and attract foreign capital. Louw describes the ANC’s position within this tangled political and economic context by remarking, “This state is characterized by a balance of power that sees the ANC constrained by a (mostly white) internal corporate sector that is allied to the powerful external forces of globalized capitalism.” While Mandela focused on issues of reconciliation and reconstruction, his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki, aligned more closely with business interests and neoliberal economic policies. This shift in policy agendas has led to high unemployment, continued uneven development among the races, and a continued struggle to attract foreign capital due to a largely unskilled labor force. The legacy of apartheid is very much apart of life in contemporary South Africa.

Understanding the history of apartheid and the pervasive inequalities throughout contemporary South Africa, the goal of equal education gains an added importance to the country’s attempts to establish a multiracial democracy. With this context in mind, we return to our discussion on the merits of the education market. The following section offers a theoretical discussion on the limits of market provisions of public goods and outlines the ways in which the market can limit freedom and autonomy.

**Anderson—Ethical Concerns over Market Mechanisms**

In “The Ethical Limitation of the Market,” Anderson explains the important role of the state in limiting the scope of the market in order to preserve citizens’ freedom and autonomy. Anderson’s argument is based on an assessment of market exchanges as transactions guided by self-interested norms. She is concerned with the state’s reliance on markets as a mechanism to distribute public goods and argues that failing to regulate the market can undermine the way we value shared goods by allowing market norms to corrupt the values within nonmarket domains. By reducing the options through which a citizen can value a particular good and replacing social norms of valuation, the market limits individual freedom and autonomy.

Since Anderson’s argument centers on the protection of individual freedom and autonomy, a proper conception of these terms, as understood by Anderson, is required. Anderson defines freedom as having a wide range of options through which one can express freedom. 

---


17 Ibid., 198-99. Around 41.5% unemployed at 2001 (see Louw, 179). Louw notes that most of the blacks are trapped in an expanding underclass, characterized by township living, menial labor jobs, and a reliance on labor unions to preserve whatever earnings and benefits presently accruing to them.

18 Anderson, 144.
their diverse valuations. Autonomy is understood as the ability to govern oneself according to the principles one reflectively endorses.\footnote{Ibid.} Anderson is concerned with freedom and autonomy in relation to the corruptive influence of market norms. She argues that market norms stand in contrast to nonmarket norms in five ways: they are impersonal, egoistic, exclusive, want-based, and provide ‘exit’ instead of ‘voice’ as a means to influence policy outcomes.\footnote{Ibid., 144-45.}

In the first instance, economic transactions are impersonal, since as Anderson notes, “Money income, not one’s social status, characteristics, or relationships, determines one’s access to commodities.”\footnote{Ibid., 145.} Relationships in the market are formed in virtue of another’s capital, not upon their personal characteristics. Second, market exchanges are guided by egoism, which Anderson defines as, “When each party defines and satisfies her interests independent of the other.”\footnote{Ibid.} One involved in market exchanges rarely considers the well-being of the other, so long as their individual wants are satisfied. In the third case, economic transactions are exclusive since access is limited to the purchaser.\footnote{Ibid.} Property rights are acquired through the purchase of commodities, which grants the owner the freedom to exclude whomever he/she chooses. Fourth, economic transactions are want-based in that they satisfy “desires backed by the ability to pay.” Anderson clarifies her description of want-based norms by noting that the market does not draw a distinction between one’s “urgent needs” and “intense desires.”\footnote{Ibid., 146.} Finally, economic transactions promote exit over voice in that a consumer uses the practice of exit, or ending business, to enact change. A customer has no right to directly participate in the design of the product or to determine how it is marketed.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is worthwhile to make a brief aside and expand upon Anderson’s notion of exit and voice since these norms weigh in heavily on the effectiveness of democracy. Hirschman (1970) focuses specifically on the practice of exit and voice as it relates to firms’ and states’ ability to recuperate from setbacks or failures. Hirschman defines exit from a management perspective, by stating that exit, “Keeps consumers from complaining.”\footnote{Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 27.} Firms who emphasize exit practices, encourage a take-it or leave-it approach to problem solving. In contrast, voice involves “interest
articulation,” and involves more of an attempt to change rather than escape from an objectionable state of affairs. Hirschman specifies his notion of voice by comparing it to exit practices:

It is a far more ‘messy’ concept because it can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest; it implies articulation of one’s critical opinions rather than a private, “secret” vote in the anonymity of a supermarket, and finally, it is direct and straightforward rather than roundabout. Voice is political action par excellence.28

While exit is a clear-cut either or decision, voice comes in many degrees and forms. Of particular importance to our discussion on education as it relates to democracy is Hirschman’s acknowledgement of the essential role voice plays in political settings. Voice is “political action par excellence” because it ensures political effectiveness and state accountability.

Returning to Anderson’s discussion on market norms, she argues that the nature of economic goods and the ‘use’ mode of valuation we associate with these goods conflict with personal and social valuations common to civil society and required for democracy.29 Values of cooperation, personal communication, and voice are replaced by economic norms of impersonality, egoism, and exclusiveness. When market norms undermine social values and limit the range of significant options one can pursue, individual freedom is limited as well. Similarly, autonomy is compromised when market valuations replace the options by which one can reflectively endorse.30

Based on the corruptive influence of market norms, Anderson argues for a system of “sphere differentiation.”31 Sphere differentiation involves the separation of goods into multiple spheres, which preserves each good’s distinct modes of valuation. She argues that the practice of boundary setting will protect individual freedom and autonomy by preserving a range of diverse opportunities for one to value a particular good.32 Soule (2003) succinctly summarizes Anderson’s theory: “Anderson’s aim is freedom and autonomy through protective spheres that

27 Ibid., 30.
28 Ibid., 16.
29 Ibid., 155.
31 Anderson, 141.
32 Ibid.
allow goods to be properly valued.” Preventing the infiltration of market norms enables individuals to freely and autonomously pursue those values they deem important.

Understanding Anderson’s theoretical framework, she proposes a three-step methodology to determine whether the state is permitted in regulating market systems. The first step involves determining whether a particular good is better valued according to market or nonmarket norms. If a good is better valued by nonmarket values, step two asks whether market norms undermine important social values belonging to a particular good. If market norms corrupt social values, then state regulation is permitted. The next section looks to satisfy Anderson’s first requirement and argues that education is better valued according to nonmarket norms.

Is Education Better Valued by Market or Non-Market Norms?

Since the goal of education is to prepare learners for civic and democratic participation, it is proper that the norms guiding education reflect these values. Anderson argues that education is best valued by social norms of democratic values and fraternal relations:

Democratic ideals strongly inform our conception of elementary and secondary education. A principal purpose of education at this level is to prepare children for responsible citizenship, exercised in a spirit of fraternity with others of diverse class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Since markets promote competition by dividing learners according to the ‘ability to pay’ standard, learners receive an education without first-hand encounters with learners of different economic classes. Since class is closely tied to race, especially in the South African context, markets undermine the larger aims of education by confining the “spirit of fraternity” to a homogenous pool of affluent, white learners or a distinct pool of poor, black learners.

Supporting Anderson’s assessment of democratic conceptions of education, Strain (1995) expresses a similar concern over the state’s increasing reliance on markets as a vehicle to distribute educational goods. Basing his argument off of the UK’s Education Reform Act of 1988, Strain argues that markets encourage schools to manage their affairs like businesses in competition with neighboring schools. Schools compete to sell education to parent and child consumers. According to Strain, the ERA conceives of education as a packaged commodity,

---

33 Soule, 58.
34 Anderson, 144.
35 Ibid, 162.
void of any intrinsic worth. By distributing education according to economic standards of production and consumption, the market removes forums of communal participation. The lack of local democratic organs undercuts the goals of schooling by promoting individualism over cooperative fraternal values.

Corresponding with Anderson’s analysis of market norms, Strain emphasizes the importance of ‘voice’ and ‘need-based’ values in underpinning our understanding of education. He argues that democratic platforms are necessary to give individuals a voice to express their educational concerns or needs. When deliberations focus on satisfying the needs of the least advantaged instead of promoting competitive individualism, education can realize its promotion of democratic ideals.\(^\text{37}\) But since the market distributes education in terms of price mechanisms, those with the larger incomes will consume more, even though their needs may be less.\(^\text{38}\) Strain’s analysis expands on Anderson’s assessment of markets as mechanisms that do not discriminate between ‘urgent needs’ and ‘intense desires.’\(^\text{39}\) Again, we see how the market fails to provide for the least advantaged. Instead of education operating as a mechanism to even out class barriers, the introduction of markets into schooling deepens these inequalities. Based on the market’s role in limiting voice and need-regarding ideals, Strain concludes, “Markets, even when heavily regulated and administered, induce effects contrary to the values of individual and social freedom upon which public education is understood to be founded.”\(^\text{40}\)

Like Strain’s support for removing markets from the provision of education, Ranson’s (1995) critique emphasizes the inherently self-interested nature of markets and their role in undermining the larger social aim of education.\(^\text{41}\) Though Ranson’s criticism is directed at the UK’s 1993 Education Act, which calls for a stronger centrally administered market in education, his critique of market norms speaks to South Africa’s decentralized education market. As in Anderson’s assessment of markets as egoistic, Ranson argues that the “individualism of markets” erodes democratic values of cooperative deliberation.\(^\text{42}\) The promotion of market mechanisms is thus inversely related to the promotion of democratic values.

\(^{37}\) Ibid, 17.
\(^{38}\) Ibid, 16.
\(^{39}\) Anderson, 146.
\(^{40}\) Strain, 4.
\(^{42}\) Ibid, 36.
Unique to Ranson’s assessment of markets is a holistic understanding of education as a social institution designed to prepare learners to address contemporary social ills. Describing the current problems of our society, Ranson states, “The problems we face [...] cannot be resolved by individuals acting in isolation.” Since markets promote individualism instead of cooperation, students graduate with a hollow understanding of what it means to engage in collective action. Markets fail to realize what democracy alone can establish. Ranson concludes that if we are committed to preparing learners to address the predicaments of our time, we cannot rely on markets as a vehicle for distributing access to education.

Perhaps the most formidable obstacle confronting the arguments set forth by Anderson, Strain, and Ranson, is the libertarian commitment to economic freedom. Philosophers of the libertarian camp argue that removing the role of markets in education infringes upon a parent’s freedom to invest in their child’s education. They argue that state involvement limits parent choice by prescribing which school their child must attend and confining parents to restrictions in locality. They argue additionally that free markets are morally superior in that it creates a system whereby free and voluntary choices in education are secured through individuals acting according to their own moral and prudential interests.

But this narrow conception of freedom fails to recognize how an unregulated market can severely limit the freedom of poorer individuals. For instance, Ranson describes markets as, “formally neutral but substantively interested.” In other words, though the market appears to increase parent choice by ‘freeing’ parents from poor local schools in their catchment area, this increase in economic freedom assumes each person entering the market has the same package of capital upon entering the market. In South Africa, centuries of black oppression have tipped the scale against the black community. When market mechanisms enter the education sphere, it complicates inequalities in income with inequalities in educational opportunity. As a result, markets fail to offer disadvantaged communities a fare shake in the educational market. Similarly, Strain argues that markets assume that society operates within a ‘moral vacuum.’ But as Ranson describes, social agents are differentiated by virtue of their differences in income,
ethnicity, religion, and culture. Libertarians assume that the actual market is reflective of the ideal market where individuals deliberate on an equal playing field and naturally sort themselves among various choices in public schools.

A final complication arising from market systems in education is the conservative perspective of voluntariness with regard to the least advantaged in society. Describing the market perspective of educational distribution, Ranson notes, “The market can parade under the guise of neutrality while any ensuing inequality can hide beneath the illusion that, because the agents have acted, they must also have assented.” Simply because poorer parents choose to send their children to poorer schools does not mean that their choices are made voluntarily. Inequalities in education cannot be justified simply because parents ‘assented’ to sending their children to lower quality schools. This shallow understanding of voluntariness fails to consider the background conditions that may coerce parents to choose and to act in a certain way. For rural and township learners, the ‘choice’ in attending poor local schools is not an expression of consent or acceptance of the market system, but simply a decision made within a forced-option scenario confined by the limitations of school fees and transportation costs.

Based on the democratic aims of education and the corrupting effects that the market has on the social norms education is designed to promote, I conclude that education is better valued according to nonmarket norms. Understanding that education is best provisioned according to a non-market, democratic process, the next section relates the primary aspects of South Africa’s decentralized education market and the historical forces that led to its creation.

---

48 Ranson, “Markets or Democracy,” 339.
3. Educational Decentralization in South Africa

With a general understanding of apartheid and the ethical limitations of education markets, this section focuses specifically on South Africa's education policy. One interesting aspect of South Africa’s transition toward educational decentralization is the way the nation’s unique history led to a strong centralized support for equal education for all. Unlike the international data that identifies central governments’ financial motivations for decentralizing education, the ANC demonstrated a willingness to assume financial responsibility for the post-apartheid education system. But despite the ANC’s support for central funding and control over education policy, negotiations during the CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) process allowed for two distinct groups, the black grassroots movement and the National Party, to promote their decentralized agenda. In the first segment, I trace the historical forces that led to South Africa’s transition to a decentralized system of education. I then explain South African education policy under the South African Schools Act of 1996 and outline the role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in providing local platforms for community involvement. In particular, an analysis of the reasons why school fees were introduced is explained and contrasted to the previous discussion on educational decentralization in developing countries.

‘People’s Education for People’s Power’

When the Nationalist Party passed the Bantu Education Act in 1953, the black resistance movement became increasingly fearful of a centrally controlled education system. The “gutter education” administered by the apartheid regime was, as Giliomee (2004) observes, “designed to prepare blacks for a marginal place in life.”1 The lack of resources, medium of instruction, and poor quality of teaching worked to reproduce the apartheid notion of a subservient black population. In response to the oppressive Bantu Education system, the democratic movement mobilized under the grassroots organization—People’s Education for People’s Power.2

According to Soobrayan (1990), although the People’s Education movement prioritized efforts to end Bantu Education, they began outlining a general framework for a post-apartheid

1 Hermann Giliomee, The Afrikaners Biography of a People (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 509.
education system during the struggle.\(^3\) In particular, the movement sought to replace the strong central apartheid authority with local structures for community involvement. They reasoned that the only way to ensure that local voices would be heard was to decentralize the educational policymaking process. Soobrayan describes the rationale behind the People’s Education movement’s emphasis on local control:

> Under Nationalist control education is used to further subservience and oppression. Whereas in the hands of the people it becomes a weapon for liberation. Therefore, for education to serve the interests of the majority, the majority must not only control it, but the people must also participate in its conception, formulation and implementation.\(^4\)

Soobrayan’s assessment identifies the ways in which the guiding principles of People’s Education were a response to the abhorred centrally controlled apartheid system. Supporting Soobrayan’s observation, Fiske and Ladd (2004) argue that the majority viewed schools as “instruments of the apartheid government,” and that the only way they could overcome their deep-rooted distrust over apartheid institutions was to devolve the decision-making processes to the local level.\(^5\) Similarly, Dieltiens et al. (2007) describe the movement’s commitment to local control as an attempt to “undermine structural hierarchies.”\(^6\)

Perhaps the clearest indication of the movement’s aims is expressed through the words of the leaders themselves. In 1996, Walter Sisulu voiced the demands of the People’s Education by stating, “We are not prepared to accept any ‘alternative’ to Bantu education that is imposed from above.”\(^7\) Sisulu’s comment identifies the merging of liberation ideology and a growing emphasis on local control. According to Sisulu, education policy would be decided from the ground up through local involvement. But the notion of People’s Education was not only an appealing euphemism, it was a principle embedded in the Freedom Charter’s message that, “The people shall govern.”\(^8\) The movement’s rejection of Bantu Education spurred a demand for a decentralized system of education. But while the People’s Education movement was forced to

\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Education Policy Unit, *Democratic Governance of Public Schooling in South Africa* (Natal: Education Policy Unit, 1994), xiv.
\(^8\) Sibusiso Sithole, “Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs): Present State and Future Prospects,” *Democratic Governance of Public Schooling in South Africa* (Natal: Education Policy Unit, 1994), 47.
divide its focus between efforts aimed at constructing a post-apartheid education system and efforts to topple Bantu Education, the NP was busy constructing their own version of post-apartheid education policy.

**The NP Perspective—Unilateral Restructuring and the Model C Plan**

Unlike the democratic movement, the state was in an advantageous position by virtue of its presiding control over the education system. Pampallis (1993) uses the term, “unilateral restructuring,” to describe the NP’s last-minute attempts to entrench white privilege. As in the case of the People’s Education movement, the NP advocated for a more decentralized system of educational decision-making, but for radically different reasons. The NP’s conversion of public schools to Model C schools marked the first of its efforts to decentralize education policy and empower local white communities.

Beginning in 1991, white public schools were allowed to select from three different models from which to begin integrating black students. Initially, three models were proposed: Model A converted former state schools to private institutions, Model B allowed state schools to remain public institutions, and Model C converted state schools into semi-private state aided schools. In April of 1992, the Department of Education and Culture in the House of Assembly announced that all white state schools would become Model C schools. While the government granted white state schools the alternative to remain Model B through a two-thirds majority vote from the parents, schools selecting Model B faced severe funding cutbacks. In addition, these schools were not allowed to charge school fees to supplement government funds. As a result of the NP’s unilateral restructuring, 96% of white state schools became Model C by the end of 1992.

Dolby’s (2001) case study of Fernwood High identifies the rationale behind parents’ decision to support the Model C option. According to Dolby, the appeal of Model C rested in the considerable control parents had over the integration process. Dolby describes the one of the reasons motivating Fernwood’s decision to become a Model C school by referencing the words

---

of Fernwood’s SGB chair: “If we go Model C we’ve got control and we just up the school fees and we will only take the nice blacks.”12 Under Model C, parents were in a powerful financial gate-keeping position, which allowed them to prevent a mass learner migration to their children’s schools through the adjustment of school fees. In the negotiations over post-apartheid education, white constituents would remain committed to SGBs’ power to set school fees. The NP’s unilateral restructuring began the decentralization process and marked the first instance of government incorporation of market based approaches to the financing of public education.

**CODESA and the ‘Selling’ of School Fees to the Democratic Movement**

Once it became clear that apartheid was no longer sustainable, the NP began assembling policy alternatives to build upon the newly established Model C framework. Describing the NP’s response toward the end of apartheid, Pampallis notes, “The National Party has been busy putting together new policies which it hopes it will be able to sell to the liberation movement, but which will effectively result in the maintenance of white privilege.” One such policy alternative was the creation of SGBs and the provision of financial responsibilities to these local organizations.

But even the negotiation process was a strategic opportunity for the NP to shift the majority’s support in favor of their policy recommendations. Nzimande (1993) argues that the NP used the CODESA negotiation process to divide the ANC from the democratic movement. Having struggled for decades against closed-door negotiations, advocates of People’s Education argued for talks to take place “on the ground” as opposed to “around the table.”13 Describing the concerns of the People’s Education movement, Nzimande writes,

> The constitutional negotiations at the moment are largely about creating formal structures of representative democracy. Important as this may be, there is a grave danger that the debate around the struggles to build and institutionalize participatory democracy may be lost. It is within this framework, for instance, that the issue of the role and location of PTSAs/PTAs should be approached.14

The CODESA agreements managed to link black fears to white aspirations by strengthening the movement’s support for local governing bodies. While the ANC recognized how local control

---

12 Ibid, 35.
14 Ibid, 70.
over education could entrench apartheid divisions and inequalities, the majority became increasingly committed to a decentralized system of educational governance. Pampallis (1998) compares the ironic merging of interests between the NP and the mass movement as, “a coincidence of the interests of the two most powerful, if usually antagonistic, constituencies.” With the social and political climate treading in its favor, the NP began its attempt to sell its version of post-apartheid education.

Based on the historic role of Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs), selling the idea of school governing bodies was not difficult. During the resistance struggle, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) established PTSAs in order to coordinate parent and student protests. PTSAs gained widespread support and were lauded for their ability to wrest control from the state. Sithole (1994) argues that the masses’ support for PTSAs stems from a widespread “fear of victimization.” Unlike the distant, centrally controlled Bantu Education system, PTSAs were local, transparent organizations that looked to include the people’s voices rather than exclude them. Embodying the mass movement’s support for PTSAs, Nzimande notes, “The only way to guarantee a thoroughgoing transformation is to develop organs of people’s power now.” Selling the idea of SGBs blended well with the democratic movement’s support for PTSAs.

While the merging of the black PTSAs and white SGBs of the Model C system satisfied both the ANC and the NP, debate over the particular roles and responsibilities of the SGBs were difficult to harmonize. In particular, conflict between the ANC and NP centered on the issue of school fees. In order to convince the ANC and the democratic movement that SGBs should be granted the power to set school fees, the NP relied on three arguments: 1) there was a need for supplementary funds to accommodate the massive influx of black learners, 2) allowing white schools to set school fees would “free up public funds” and allow the government to focus its

---

18 Sithole, 46.
19 Nzimande, 68.
resources on those schools with the greatest need, 3) and school fees would prevent another bifurcated education system by retaining policy makers’ support within the public domain.20

In the first instance, the Hunter Committee estimated that the education budget would double from R25.6 billion to R62.4 billion if school fees were not introduced.21 In addition, supplementary funds from the private sector would allow the government to channel its resources to the rural and township schools. Concerning the flight of influential policymakers and professionals from public schools, the second White Paper on education argues that failing to allow SGBs to set school fees would make it impossible for the government to maintain the quality of former white schools. This in turn would cause professionals to move their children into private institutions, resulting in a bifurcated education system resembling that of the apartheid past. Though the ANC acknowledged the arguments presented by the NP, the movement’s lifelong commitment to ‘free education for all’ made accepting school fees a difficult task.22 And as stated earlier, the ANC recognized how SGB control over school fees would inhibit integration efforts by creating a loophole in the non-racial admissions policy. Negotiations over school fees would continue until 1996.

**The South African Schools Act—Successes and Failures of School Fee Implementation**

Although initially opposed to school fees, the ANC eventually conceded to the NP’s demands. In 1996 the government passed the South African Schools Act, which remains the most fundamental piece of legislation on post-apartheid education.23 Included in the Act is the stipulation for SGB membership and their particular roles and responsibilities in school governance. Under SASA, SGBs must include a parent majority with representation from the principal, teachers, staff, and learners. In addition to membership stipulations, SASA outlines the responsibilities of SGBs, which include: adopting a constitution and mission statement, determining admission policy, overseeing school property, recommending the appointment of

---

20 Fiske and Ladd, 64.
21 John Pampallis, “School Fees,” *Issues in Education Policy* 3 (Bloemfontein: Centre for Education Policy Development, 2008): 10. This dramatic increase in public expenditure for education provides insight into the deplorable, “gutter education” previously allotted to the black majority (i.e. assuming that per-student spending is an adequate assessment of education quality, the massive hike in required education increases is telling of the quality of education under apartheid).
22 Ibid., 8.
23 Ibid.
teaching staff to the Department of Education, and developing a budget for the school, which may include school fees.\textsuperscript{24}

Pampallis’s “School Fees” provides a general overview of the successes and failures of SASA. Perhaps the greatest success resulting from the Act was the integration of black urban learners into former white schools. Describing the new multiracial Model C schools, Pampallis remarks, “They have absorbed children of the emerging black middle class (African, coloured and Indian), as well as a limited number of poorer black families.”\textsuperscript{25} Supporting Pampallis’s observation, Karlsson’s case study of former Model C schools in Durban identifies a similar increase in the enrollment of middle class applicants irrespective of the learners’ race.\textsuperscript{26} Another success of SASA has been its ability to retain the support of the professional class. Since SASA allows SGBs to set school fees, former white schools have continued to offer quality education, which has prevented the flight of professionals from the public school system. Thus, independent schools account for less than 5\% of all South African learners.\textsuperscript{27}

But while former Model C schools have continued to thrive under SASA, the vast majority of black township and rural schools have remained severely impoverished. Consistent with Pampallis and Karlsson’s observations, Tikly and Mabogoane (1997) observe that the provision of school fees has benefitted only a small minority of urban middle class black learners, while ignoring the majority of disadvantaged learners. The authors observe that the effectiveness of SGBs is dependent on the wealth and social capital of the surrounding community. As a result, SGBs in poorer areas have lacked the capacity of SGBs in more affluent areas, deepening the divide between former white and former black public schools.\textsuperscript{28}

Recent amendments to SASA like the Norms and Standards for School Funding (NSSF) attempt to address SGB inefficiencies in poorer communities. Under the NSSF, the poorest 20\% of schools receive the highest level of government support.\textsuperscript{29} Despite the government’s renewed focus on poorer schools, the overall quality in these schools has not improved.\textsuperscript{30} As a result of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Dieltiens} Dieltiens \textit{et al.}, 14.
\bibitem{Pampallis} Pampallis, “School Fees,” 13.
\bibitem{Pampallis2} Pampallis, “School Fees,” 14.
\bibitem{Pampallis3} Pampallis, “School Fees,” 12.
\bibitem{Ibid} \textit{Ibid}, 14.
\end{thebibliography}
minimal government support, 98% of schools in poor township and rural areas charge school fees despite their inability to collect these payments.\(^{31}\) Since the introduction of school fees has placed the burden of funding education on SGBs, local community members are forced to demand payment from parents in order to maintain school operations.\(^{32}\) A recent study by the Nelson Mandela Foundation observes SGB members have resorted to physical violence and humiliation tactics to acquire school fee payments.\(^{33}\) In addition, Pampallis argues that since attaining funds from the central government is often a difficult and lengthy process, SGBs turn to local parents to address their financial needs. While targeting these “softer targets” is a faster and more reliable method, it has fragmented parent participation and local community involvement.\(^{34}\)

Complicating the financial challenges of poorer families is the fact that SASA does not legally bind SGBs to inform parents of their exemption status. Since it is in the best interest of the school to collect a high percentage of fees from the community, SGBs have avoided disclosing information concerning qualification for exemption status. As a result, even in areas of absolute poverty, fee exemptions are not often used.\(^{35}\) In addition to withholding information from parents, SGBs have used screening tests and application fees to exclude learners who may be unable to meet the cost of fees at a particular school.\(^{36}\) Moreover, the exemption requirements enumerated in SASA rarely apply to the vast majority of poorer families. Under SASA, a family’s annual income must be less than ten times the cost of school fees in order for the family to gain at least partial exemption. Based on the high threshold under SASA, exemption applies primarily to poor families who send their children to wealthier schools, not the vast majority of poor families sending their children to poor schools.\(^{37}\) Even if parents understood the requirements for exemption, very few parents, including those living in extreme poverty, would qualify for school fee exemption.


\(^{32}\) Diehtiens et al., 21.

\(^{33}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{35}\) Fiske and Ladd, 70.

\(^{36}\) Pampallis, “School Fees,” 17.

\(^{37}\) For instance, school fees in poorer areas average R100. Parents would only be exempt from paying fees if their annual income was less than R1,000 / year, but any family receiving social grants is already above this income bracket.
Returning to the Ideals of People’s Education

Although the People’s Education movement has seen their dreams of “local organs for peoples power” become a reality, the NP’s unilateral restructuring and the attachment of school fees to SGBs has undermined the efficacy of these local democratic institutions. Although SGBs were designed to serve as inclusive platforms for local decision-making, their financing role has transformed them into school-fee collecting business centers. Pampallis (1998) describes the ironic result of South Africa’s shift to a market based decentralized educational system:

The irony is that the very decentralization that has led to greater democratization of schooling by giving all the main stakeholders a powerful voice in the schools’ affairs, is also contributing to the perpetuation of inequities among our schools. The new inequalities, however, are increasingly being drawn on class rather than racial lines. 38

Pampallis is right to observe the increasing importance of class instead of race in determining access to education. The devolution of financial powers to local SGBs has inhibited integration by framing access as a matter of income and wealth. Rich schools have maintained their quality, while poor schools are unable to extract even marginal fees from the poor communities they serve. On the other hand, Pampallis suggests that the increase in decentralization is consistent with an increase in democratization. But Pampallis’s observation assumes that having the legal right to a ‘powerful voice’ is equivalent to one’s ability to exercise a ‘powerful voice.’ Although SASA stipulates the creation of SGBs, the Act does not automatically result in local communities’ immediate and effective use of these new democratic platforms. The data drawn from Fiske and Ladd, Karlsson, Tikley and Moboagane suggest that the voices of local communities remain unheard to a great extent. In addition to the conclusions these authors draw, the data produced by the Nelson Mandela Foundation explains how the introduction of school fees has undermined the principle of inclusivity in access to public education, which the People’s Education movement sought to establish.

Returning to Pampallis’s discussion on the introduction of school fees, he notes, “Although school fees need not be part of a self-governing package, they were seen as a way of giving local governing bodies both discretionary funds and a major incentive to use funds wisely.” 39 School fees are viewed as an effective market incentive in increasing efficiency and competition among schools. According to Chaka, the considerable pressure on SGBs to fund

39 Fiske and Ladd, 64.
schools explains why SGBs are more concerned about fundraising and financial matters and less concerned with educational issues.\textsuperscript{40} The use of market mechanisms in the distribution of education has extended economic inequalities to the educational sphere.

\textit{Unique Aspects of South Africa’s Decentralization of Education}

In describing the negotiations on education policy that took place after the fall of apartheid, we have seen how South Africa’s unique history motivated a push for decentralization that was unique in many respects to that of other developing nations. Unlike the international data that identifies central government’s willingness to shirk responsibility for funding education and, the ANC exhibited a tremendous willingness to assume responsibility for funding post-apartheid education. Simeon and Murray (2001) note that the ANC advocated a strong, non-racial, unitary state and feared that educational decentralization would give rise to a form of neo-apartheid. The authors also suggest that the ANC feared that local control over education policy would allow for the perpetuation of cultural-specific education that would inhibit racial redress and national unity.\textsuperscript{41}

To clarify the unique motivations explaining South Africa’s decentralization of education it is helpful to draw upon Kathleen O’Neill’s \textit{Decentralizing the State}. In her research on decentralization in Latin America, O’Neill discovered that parties favor decentralization when the future prospects for maintaining power are unfavorable. For unpopular governments, the biggest gamble is maintaining a highly centralized state when an upcoming election may exclude one’s party from the political process.\textsuperscript{42} For O’Neill, decentralization is a political maneuver where parties engage in a less attractive power sharing while in control of the state, in order to secure footholds at sub-national levels in future elections. O’Neill’s central argument is thus, “Parties give today in order to receive tomorrow.”\textsuperscript{43}

Using O’Neill’s political interpretation of decentralization, we can better understand the factors driving educational decentralization in South Africa. Since no decision occurs in a political vacuum and education policy and societal values are closely intertwined, the decision to decentralize education had certain costs and benefits associated with each unique cultural group.

\textsuperscript{40} Chaka, 26.
\textsuperscript{42} Kathleen O’Neill, Decentralizing the State. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 16.
in South Africa. If we recall Weiler’s observation that education is the “principle means through which values and norms are passed between generations,” it is not surprising that the NP supported local control over schools as a means to perpetuate Afrikaner culture (not excluding a similar support for other powerful sub-national entities like the Zulu in Kwa-Zulu Natal).

Like the authoritarian regimes in Latin America, the NP faced an inevitable future of power-sharing and looked to protect both their political and ethnic interests. Giliomee (1995) observes that the primary motivation for decentralization in South Africa came from the NP, who looked to reserve their seat in the post-apartheid governance structure. De Klerk’s decision to relinquish power and shift toward a decentralized post-apartheid structure was motivated by a desire to preserve Afrikaner culture and political interests, or what O’Neill might refer to as “securing long-term horizons.” De Klerk described the crossroads that lay ahead of the NP: “The greatest risk that we are taking today is not taking any risks. The will to survive as Afrikaners and our faith and energy will serve as our greatest guarantee.” Decentralization offered the NP a framework through which white power could be secured at sub-national levels of government. The “risk” of compromising with the ANC was less of a gamble than trying to hold onto a waning, illegitimate power.

It is not a stretch to apply O’Neill’s logic to educational decentralization, as schools were one of the historic means through which the NP disseminated Afrikaner values and suppressed those of other cultural groups. Likewise, the ANC’s support of a centralized education system is consistent with O’Neill’s research since the ANC did not foresee a future where its strength would be threatened. With such overwhelming national support, central control over education policy presented an opportunity for the ANC to promote a national education policy, not locally specific educational agendas.

Taking a less critical approach to analyzing the motivations for educational decentralization in South Africa, one cannot deny that a degree of decentralization may have been required. South Africa is, as Schwella (2001) describes, “a world in one country.” Desmond Tutu famously called South Africa the “rainbow nation” glorifying the many distinct cultural traditions and languages in South Africa. Adding to the mix of cultural variation, the

44 Weiler, 440.
45 O’Neill, 65.
46 Giliomee, 86-87.
legacy of apartheid created a context where local needs varied drastically between municipalities and even within local districts. While the ANC recognized the need to tailor education policy to meet local needs, they believed that the central state was the only government entity with sufficient strength and resources to deliver important social services like education, health, housing, and welfare. A fact most likely derived from the ANC’s Marxist origins.

But educational decentralization does not require fiscal decentralization. It is this key addition of school fees to SASA that has forestalled educational redress. The fact that race is intimately connected with socioeconomic status has made economic liberalization the new divisive factor. The application of market principles to education has stratified educational opportunity along economic lines and made SGBs meaningless platforms for citizens to voice their needs. Simeon and Murray describe the contradictory effects of educational decentralization by remarking that “formal democracy” has been created at the expense of a genuine “participatory democracy.”

For the purposes of our present inquiry however, we must return to our initial focus on the norms guiding education in the decentralized market. The literature identifies the failures of marketisation as a tool for redress. But the goal of my research is to extend this critique by assessing school fee policy from an ethical standpoint. In other words, does the market operate to the disadvantage of all learners across the racial and economic spectrum by corrupting social norms required for democracy? The next section describes the preliminary steps prior to my field research in which I attempted to apply the ethical concerns related by Anderson, Ranson, and Strain, to a case study of a public school in South Durban.

48 Simeon and Murray, 68.
49 Ibid., 89.
4. Research Logistics

To restate the goal of my field research, it is to answer Anderson’s second question: do market norms evidence themselves in the South African school system and do these norms corrupt important social values? Providing an answer to this preliminary question can help us achieve our ultimate goal in understanding the relationship between educational decentralization and its implications for genuine democracy. This section refines my general research question in terms of Anderson’s framework and then describes the reasons why Durban Academy was selected. Moreover, since recent developments in education policy are rooted in the apartheid past, I briefly touch upon the school’s history and transition to a multicultural school in order to provide insight into the underlying motivations of the Durban Academy staff. Included in this section is a description of the methodologies used and their accompanying limitations.

Research Aims

Since the goal is to determine whether market norms guide Durban Academy’s and the school community’s understanding of education, I framed Anderson’s five economic norms in relation to my specific education focus. Arriving at appropriate ‘community’-based questions simplified the field research phase by serving as a guide throughout the study. The table cross-lists the specific community type with the specific market norm under investigation (see next page).
For sake of clarity, the three communities were identified by the particular role in school operations and their relation to the two other communities. The available respondents for research presented an immediate conflict with Anderson’s framework, as the producers in the market equation are not a homogenous body, but comprise of two sub-communities: the SGB and the teachers. A new element of my research would have to consider the way these two groups interacted and the power-politics at play within the school-as-educational producer model. An additional complication arose when considering the role of the principal, who in this case, headed SGB meetings, but also taught two history classes. Based on the principal’s important role in the overall management of the school, his responses were categorized under the SGB community (though his responses were not reviewed as exclusively one community or another). Answering Anderson’s second question thus required a flexible framework that would need to consider the multiple actors charged with running overall school operations.

On the ‘consuming’ end of the education market are the parents and students. They are best characterized as ‘consumers,’ since they are required to pay a user fee in order to receive an
educational service. Labeling the communities assisted in the organization of data and in the construction of a holistic argument that related the challenges each community faces individually and in relation to the other communities.

In addition, by evaluating the data through Anderson’s ethical lens, I recognized that each community was only capable of exercising market norms in virtue of their particular role in relation to the other two communities. For instance, the power to exclude was not invested in the teachers or parent communities, but in the governing body, while the ability to exit was reserved to teacher and parent/learner communities. Understanding the broad structure of my argument, I searched for a school that would provide access to these three communities.

Selecting a School—Durban Academy

Durban Academy is a secondary school located in the working-class Bluff community. The school was founded in 1957 under the name, Dirkie Uys, in commemoration of the fifteen year-old Voortrekker hero who died protecting his father in the Battle of Italeni. For forty-years the school carried a strong Afrikaner tradition. In 1997, the school became a dual medium Afrikaans-English school, which marked an initial step toward integration. Under pressure from the SGB, the school changed its name to Durban Academy / Akademie on the 1st of April 1997. Today, the school website states, “The staff and students reflect the rainbow nation.”

In addition to the political pressure to integrate Model C schools, the declining numbers of Afrikaner students fueled Durban Academy’s transition in becoming a multiracial parallel school. By 1997, the school enrollment leveled off at around 400 students due to the ‘white flight’ from navy, air force, army, and railway personnel whose children comprised the majority of enrollees at Durban Academy. As one respondent explained, “The survival of the school depends on the learners... and what good is a school without students.” The added pressure to maintain enough students in order to continue employing the teaching staff resulted in the

---

1 The identifying labels were drawn from Strain’s discussion on school competition and parent consumers (For more information see Strain (1995), 5. See also, Sayed (1997), 351.
2 These labels were not used in any way during the data collection phase in order to prevent respondents from supporting the Anderson framework. Labels were used purely as a way to organize research post-data collection.
4 Durban Academy Homepage <http://www.dbnacademy.co.za/index.html>
school’s decision to become a dual-medium school. DA officials chose not to amalgamate with Port Natal, an Afrikaans school in Pinetown.

Although respondents praised the school’s transition to a dual-medium school, preliminary interview data revealed mixed explanations on the motivations behind Durban Academy’s decision to integrate. While respondents argued that the former principal had the vision to open enrollment to black township learners, the former principal himself described the transition process as a “numbers game.” Another respondent who participated in the decision-making process during the transition phase explained, “Our problem started when the availability of space in the school got too big. So we had to take in and fill up to keep the teachers. There was just no way to keep that school Afrikaans and survive.” In addition to Durban Academy’s genuine goal to integrate, the data suggests that the external political pressures and the internal ‘numbers game’ required Durban Academy to open access to non-Afrikaans speaking learners.

But to discount Durban Academy’s management as bitter-enders opposed to the integration process would be to overlook the courageous steps the staff took in defying the culturally conservative Bluff community. One respondent described the social climate immediately following Durban Academy’s decision to integrate by remarking, “All those people that are struggling now at that time wanted to crucify us. They would say, ‘How can you do it? How can you do that?’” Other respondents related enduring feelings of resentment towards Durban Academy as a school that “sold out to the black community.” Regardless of the motives behind Durban Academy’s decision to integrate, its current student body is indeed reflective of the rainbow nation with a majority of learners commuting from the surrounding black townships.

The history behind Durban Academy’s transition to a multicultural school is important in imagining how education is perceived from the respondents and helped to locate their positions on race and integration in terms of a larger, historical process. Though my research focuses on the concerning effects of market valuations that ignore references to race, since economic status and race are closely connected in the South African context, understanding one without the other would fail to provide a complete picture of the South Africa’s education market.
5. Findings

As indicated by Figure 4.1, research findings are organized by community as opposed to the market norm under question. Explaining Anderson’s notion of sphere differentiation becomes clearer when arranging the argument by community type. Under each community are subheadings corresponding to the particular market norm under investigation. We begin with an assessment of the SGB community.

Community 1A—Market Norms in the ‘Cost and Budgeting’ SGB

Since SASA places the onus of school financing on SGBs, one would expect Durban Academy’s SGB to demonstrate each of Anderson’s five norms. Based on interview data, the SGB community demonstrated mixed valuations of education consistent with both market and nonmarket norms. Though the SGB community was neither exclusive nor want-regarding, the inclusive admission policy required the SGB to adopt an impersonal and businesslike approach in dealing with non-fee paying parents. The practices of blacklisting and the “offer system” were used to compensate for the lack of funds received from township learners. Thus a local platform for community voices was transformed into an impersonal cost-budgeting center.

Meeting the Needs of the Wider Community—SGB Admissions Policy

Based on Durban Academy’s diverse student body, one immediately recognizes the inclusive admissions policy set by the SGB. In contrast to other former Model C schools, Durban Academy works to set school fees at a level that best approximates the wealth of the enrollees. Principal van Rooijen described the makeup of Durban Academy students and the challenges that inclusive admissions policies often bring:

Money wise we have problems. We don’t serve an affluent community. We serve people from all over the board. You know from rural areas from townships, which means you can only get so much money and you have to live with that.

By prioritizing the needs of poorer learners over financial efficiency, Durban Academy has defied the norms of typical market producers. But Durban Academy has done more than simply survive the challenges of integration and has raised a new standard of acceptance that even the neighboring middle-class Grosvenor schools have not been able to meet. Describing Durban
Academy’s inclusive admissions policy, one parent remarked, “Durban Academy will take the kid no other school will take.”

Accepting non-fee payers has come at an expensive cost however, by upsetting Durban Academy’s more elite and conservative support base. The former principal remarked that during the transition phase, even long-term faculty grew increasingly upset with his decision to admit poorer black learners. Notice the sincere devotion to including disadvantaged learners expressed in the former principal’s discussion on whether to exclude township learners:

But where does he go? Where is he going to get a chance in life? We always said, ‘give him a chance, give him an opportunity.’ Because it is like closing a door, if that door is closed and you can’t come in, and there is no opportunity elsewhere, where do you go? Where do you go? Because at other schools, they won’t even take him. If we can’t change them, then nobody will.

The principal’s closing remark suggests that it was not only a learner’s inability to pay school fees, but the undisciplined behavior that sparked resentment toward a more inclusive admissions policy. This observation identifies the courage required by Durban Academy to include township learners.

In tandem with the SGB’s inclusive admissions policy is the exercise of the need-regarding norm. Discussion on school fees reflected a similar commitment to maintaining admissions costs that included disadvantaged learners. Again adopting an inclusive approach, Principal van Rooijen remarked, “There are suggestions of putting it up a lot, but it’s unfair.” While some schools prioritize quality concerns over fairness, Principal van Rooijen has opted instead to sacrifice quality gains for a more diverse student body. Once again, Durban Academy’s needs-based approach is even more admirable when considering the mounting opposition the SGB faced during the transition process. One SGB member described the wider community’s perception of Durban Academy’s school fees: “So many parents and even the teachers are on our backs because our school fees are so low. I’ll say about 50% of our school children come from Umlazi because our school fees are so low.”

Due to a lack of quality education in the townships and the higher cost of school fees at the neighboring Grosvenor Boys and Grosvenor Girls, township learners flock to Durban Academy. In comparison to the nearby Grosvenor schools enrollment, which averages 600 learners, Durban Academy has a student

---

¹ Umlazi is a black township located southwest of the Bluff.
enrollment of 800 learners with school fees priced at around R2000 less than the Grosvenor schools.

Why Market Norms Come into Play—the Demands Placed on SGBs

While Durban Academy has committed itself to addressing the needs of township learners, accommodating students from poorer families has come at a heavy cost by increasing the financial burden on its SGB and finance committee. According to the SGB secretary, only 40% of learners pay school fees. In order to offset the majority of learners who attend Durban Academy, the SGB is forced to adopt a strict, businesslike approach to retaining funds. Since the school’s survival depends on the effectiveness of the SGB to collect school fees, it is without surprise that interviews with SGB members revealed an impersonal and egoistic approach in handling non-fee paying parents. The methods of blacklisting and the “offer system” are two means that have been adopted by the SGB community in order to ensure the school’s survival.

What was initially referred to as “the cycle” was later identified as the blacklisting process. Blacklisting involves removing the ability of non-fee paying parents to receive a future loan. According to the school’s bursar, 95% of non-fee paying parents are blacklisted. Section 41 of SASA stipulates, “The governing body of a public school may by process of law enforce the payment of school fees by parents who are liable to pay in §40.” Section 40 outlines exemption status for eligible parents. If a parent is not exempt from paying school fees and refuses to pay, the SGB begins blacklisting parents through affiliated private debt collectors. The school’s bursar estimates that “old school fees,” which are funds obtained through blacklisting parents five to ten years after their child has matriculated, account for approximately R60,000 of the school’s annual budget.

While blacklisting is an efficient and arguably necessary means for Durban Academy to retain sufficient funds to maintain school operations, it is a practice dominated by impersonal and egoistic norms. When asked if blacklisted parents ever approached the SGB, one SGB member replied,

They sometimes do. But the thing is you don’t take them off that. Because as soon as you break that

---

2 The percentage is a rough estimate calculated by adding the sum total of school fee payments and divided by the total number of learners. Thus, more than 40% of learners are likely paying, but not at the total cost of school fees (i.e. 100% of learners could be paying, but at a rate subsidized by 60%).

cycle, you have to restart the cycle. So if he doesn’t pay, the debt collector will come knocking on his door.

For this SGB member, the need to collect school fees forces him to prioritize financial needs over parent concerns. Instead of cooperating with parents and working to accommodate their specific issues in a personable manner, the SGB must adopt an iron façade to ensure the school’s survival. It is what one SGB member described as, “running a tight ship.”

An exact figure of the number of parents who are blacklisted each year was not discovered, but when asked how many parents were handed over to the debt collectors each year, the finance secretary replied, “A lot, a lot. I can’t even think. We hand over every year.” The demands placed on SGB members demands a stringent approach to working with non-fee paying parents. Again describing the inability of the SGB to make exceptions, one member replied, “A lot of people will phone us and say, ‘Hey I want to borrow money, but I’m blacklisted.’ ‘Pay, pay, pay your accounts! We can’t take them off until they’ve paid.”

But particularly troubling to the blacklisting process is the mixing of private interests in the funding of schools. Durban Academy’s relationship with a private debt collecting company is best explained in the words of one SGB member:

We need that money, so if people don’t pay our school fees then Ms. _____ jacks them up and says listen, ‘Why didn’t you pay your school fees.’ Once we can’t get it out of her then we just hand it over to debt collectors. But obviously we also pay for the debt collectors. Any money we collect, we have to pay them 20%. They are helping us, but we are helping them as well. That’s their job . . . they just collect money all the time. So when we hand over, they try to get as much as they can from us because it means money for them.

Let us consider first the demands placed on the SGB. The opening line, “We need that money,” relates the difficult task burdened upon SGB members to collect school fees. Since an inefficient SGB equates to a poorly funded school, and a poorly funded school is often (though not always) a poor quality school, each SGB member is forced to approach non-fee paying parents from a business perspective. In the interviews conducted with the SGB community, each member related an understanding of their important role in sustaining school operations. Let us consider next the mixing of private interests. If a company’s profitability is dependent on blacklisting parents, then private debt collectors’ chief incentive is to maintain a large pool of non-fee paying parents. Instead of working to decrease the number of blacklisted parents, private companies like Durban Academy’s debt collectors, incentivize low levels of school fee payment for their
personal interests. Thus, funding is complicated by individuals who “just collect money all the time.”

In spite of their market approach to dealing with non-fee paying parents, SGB members presented a dual personality: on the one hand an impersonal and rigid persona demanded by their profession, and on the other, a sincere sense of compassion for those blacklisted parents who returned asking for exemption. The finance secretary described her feelings on blacklisting parents:

I’ll be quite honest with you, we don’t like handing over our parents. But then again, you can help the parents so far and no more. And then they have just got to face the consequences after that. There is nothing we can do. We’ve tried to help them.

SGBs operate within a financial straightjacket, which forbids personal relations and the exercise of voice. In a case study of Gauteng SGBs, Dieltiens et al. note a similar observation of the burdens placed on SGB members: “For schools serving impoverished communities, the burden of establishing, retrieving, and exempting parents from paying fees is particularly onerous. SGBs have become cost and budgeting centers.” As Dieltiens et al. suggest, the cost and budgeting requirements of SGBs force SGB members to prioritize a professional role over a personal role.

Two responses from two different SGB members elaborate on Dieltiens et al.’s observation. One SGB member described blacklisting as the most difficult and trying aspect of her profession:

The hardest part is handing people over. We’ve had people come here crying and saying, ‘I can’t get a loan, I need to pay my debts, but I can’t because I’m blacklisted.’ So it is very hard when they come and say, ‘Please take us off the blacklist.’ But you can’t do that. You do it for one and you have to do it for everyone.

For this SGB member, it is as if she strives to exercise social norms, but is trapped inside the impersonal and egoistic domain of market relations. Similarly, the head of the SGB stressed how unfortunate it was to be forced to blacklist parents: “We have to be rigid and it’s unfortunate. It is so unfortunate really.” In running a “tight ship,” the SGB is forced to blacklist non-fee paying parents in order to keep the institution afloat.

---

4 Dieltiens et al., 21.
Egoism and the Offer System

In addition to blacklisting, Durban Academy’s SGB is forced to adopt a second alternative to ensure a sufficient amount of school fees are retained. What will be referred to as the “offer system,” concerns a single line attached to the national school fee-exemption form that allows Durban Academy to acquire funds from families who are completely exempt from paying school fees. This section outlines the exemption process and then provides an analysis of the school bursar’s role in transforming the offer into a legal statement. In addition, I offer a description of the bursar’s particular role in school fee policy and contrast his position in the education market with Anderson’s ethical concerns.

At the beginning of the year, exemption forms are sent home with the learners and are reviewed by the finance secretary. The sooner exemption forms can be administered and returned, the earlier the school can begin collecting offers for the school year. In addition to providing pay slips and disclosing their entire financial background, parents applying for exemption must respond to the question: “If you are not able to pay the full school fees, state the amount that you are able to pay.” The provision is not apart of the national exemption form, but could be considered an extension of SASA’s elastic clause as noted in §36:

A governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the schools to all learners at the school [emphasis added].

When the exemption forms are returned, the finance department sends the forms to the school bursar who computes a legitimate offer on the basis of the applicant’s income. The bursar then sends an “acknowledgment of debt agreement” back to the parents with the adjusted offer. Once the document is signed, it is an official legal document whereby the school can take parents to court if they fail to comply.

The offer system is guided by impersonal and egoistic market norms. It is impersonal in its handling of exempted parents and egoistic in terms of prioritizing the school’s financial needs over a parent’s financially exempt status. The underhanded methods behind the offer system are clarified in one SGB member’s statement:

In other words, what happens here is that he doesn’t have to pay a cent. But he has offered to pay R50 per month. We are a little bit cheeky, I’ll tell you why. On the form we put there, ‘If you are not able

to pay the full school fees, state the amount that you are able to pay.’ And then we hold them against it. We will accept that offer because they actually don’t have to pay us a cent. We just try to get something out of them.

This particular SGB member approached exempted parents as a trading partner in a business transaction and attempted to maximize profit on behalf of the school. Another SGB member described the offer system according to market norms:

That one line, we put it in because there are a lot of kids that are actually exempt from paying school fees. But you think to yourself, ‘Why must the others carry them?’ If they are prepared to pay R50 a month, let them pay R50 a month.

Cooperation is submerged beneath competition, as local governing bodies are forced to fund schools and take “all reasonable measures” to supplement state funds.

But the offer system is not a passive mechanism that asks parents to voluntarily follow through on an offered payment. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the offer system is the way legally exempt parents can be legally bound to pay their offered amount. So while a parent may be exempt from paying R5720 a year, he/she can be bound to pay whatever amount is offered in the exemption form. Describing the conversion of a parent’s offer into a legally binding document, the school bursar stated,

It’s voluntary, but I turn it into a legal document. They, I didn’t, they make the decision. I then drew up a legal document, which they signed, so they are committed to that amount. There is no escape from that. No escape.

But how is the offer voluntary if the proposed amount is adjusted to the bursar’s computed sum of what should constitute an ‘appropriate offer’? The SGB’s twisted notion of voluntariness penalizes exempt parents, but is based once again, on the considerable demands placed on SGBs.

The rigid impersonality and egoism of the offer system only sinks deeper as the details are brought to light. The bursar described the process that takes place if a parent offers more than the calculated amount:

So if the offer is more I hold onto the offer. I don’t show them that they actually should pay less. Because the Schools Act [SASA] allows me to negotiate with parents. So that amount they put in there, I assume they’ve worked out their budget. That is the amount I claim from them in court if they don’t pay it.

SASA legalizes SGBs’ attempts to legally bind exempted parents to pay an offered amount. Interview data identified cases of pensioners who received R800 a month being held legally accountable to pay a R150 offer.
Business as SASA Dictates—Recap of SGB Community

In review of Community 1A, the SGB operates according to a mix of market and nonmarket norms. As the blacklisting and offer methods relate, Anderson’s five market norms are not mutually exclusive, but often operate in a web of relationships. The SGB’s inclusive admissions policy demands an impersonality and egoism in the handling of non-fee paying and exempted parents. With the obligation of retaining school fees placed on the SGB, market norms are required for the successful upkeep of school operations. As one SGB member stated, “You know a school is a business. You can’t run a school without capital.” And if building capital is the SGB’s responsibility, operating along business norms is a necessary extension of their role. Ranson describes the way market systems elicit economic norms in individuals: “The point is not that individuals are by nature possessively self-interested, but that the institutions of the market make them so.” The demands that are placed upon SGBs and financial secretaries manifest within these financiers, the egoistic and impersonal norms that should have no role in local platforms in the running of schools. It is the system, not the individuals that needs restructuring.

The most alarming finding within the SGB was how its role as an inclusive democratic organ has been subverted by market norms. Instead of serving as an inviting platform for communities to decide collectively on school-related issues, the financial and managerial role of the SGB divides the school and the surrounding community. One SGB member related stories of parents who refused to answer their cell phones and who changed their SIM cards to avoid calls from the SGB. Another SGB member explained that parents often “hop” from school to school in order to avoid debt collectors. Finally, one SGB member described the common response from parents who are blacklisted by stating, “You try to tell them that it is for the school, but they take it personally.” The attachment of school fee policy to SGB responsibilities has undermined the freedom of SGBs to value education as a public good. Personal interactions between SGB members and parents are replaced with exemption forms, which is as one SGB member remarked, “[This is] how we get to know the parents.” The impersonal and businesslike

---

6 Ranson, “Markets or Democracy,” 335.
7 Reference Soobrayan’s account of the People’s Education Movement’s emphasis on local control, which states “people must also participate in its conception, formulation and implementation.”
relations between the SGB and the parent community may account for the low levels of parent involvement.  

Considering our market assessment of Durban Academy’s SGB, we can estimate how finances are handled by SGBs in richer and poorer schools. For former Model C schools still offering top-quality education, market norms of exclusion and want-based ideals are likely to inform their admissions policies. Quality public schools like Glenwood and Durban High School have been criticized for catering solely to the emerging black middle class, while ignoring the greater needs of poorer township learners. Though the number of non-fee paying parents may be lower in institutes with higher school fees, Durban Academy’s SGB members related that blacklisting and the offer system were used more readily in these schools. In fact, one SGB member described the perspective of non-fee paying parents by remarking, “We heard a lot of parents say, ‘We send our children here because we reasonable.’” If Durban Academy’s blacklisting and offer methods are considered reasonable, one can only estimate what SGB operations may be like in more affluent schools.

At the other end of the spectrum are the SGBs in poorer schools. Here, we can return to Hirschman’s understanding of voice and exit as it relates to the effectiveness of local democracy. Hirschman identifies a prerequisite for voice by stating, “a customer must expect that he himself or other member-customers will be able to marshal some influence or bargaining power.” For members of poorer SGBs, their commitment to school operations is likely plagued by a feeling of powerlessness. The wealth of the surrounding community and the limited capacity of SGBs place an added burden upon their ability to serve as democratic platforms for school policy debate. Moreover, the blacklisting “cycle” requires a minimum of five to ten years of steady recordkeeping in order to yield any benefits from “old-school funds.” Similarly, the offer system is moot without the hiring of a school bursar who can aggressively assess exemption forms, transform offers into legal documents, and attend court trials when necessary. One SGB member described her perception of finances in poorer schools by remarking, “I don’t think they got systems that really run. If they have computers, I don’t think they know how to run them. You can still get away in your cash books, but I don’t know I haven’t been there.”

---

8 Discussed further in Community 3, subsection “Commuting Learners—Explaining Low Levels of Parent Voice through Learner Exit.”
9 Hirschman, 41.
Though this case study is limited in its scope and knowledge of SGBs in poorer communities, the analysis of Durban Academy’s SGB identifies the complexity of SGB operations—a capacity that may be beyond what SGBs in poorer communities are capable. Understanding the ways in which market norms guide SGB operations, the next section assesses whether these valuations flow into the teaching community and what impact teachers might have on the identity of schools as an educational-producer.

Community 1B: Preserving Social Norms in the Teaching Community

Although the SGB community demonstrated a reliance on market norms, this preliminary finding need not extend to the teaching or student communities. One SGB member mentioned the SGB’s separation from “in-house” classroom operations stating, “We don’t get involved in the day to day running of the school. It is not our responsibility.” So while the dominance of market norms in the SGB community is a concern in and of itself, perhaps its deleterious effects are confined to the SGB. But in order to offer a conclusive assessment of teacher valuations of education, an assessment of school fees from the teachers' perspective is required to qualify SGB observations. Based on data gained from eight teacher interviews, the teaching community revealed little to no reliance on market norms. In terms of Anderson’s framework, the teachers emphasized three social norms: an absence of egoism, prioritizing student needs over better resources and smaller class sizes; a personal approach to education that looked to provide guidance and support for struggling learners; and finally, exercising voice instead of exit by opting to stay at Durban Academy and grapple with the challenges of teaching at a multicultural school.

Prioritizing Student Needs over Teacher Wants

In the first instance, teachers prioritized student needs over a better resourced school and smaller class sizes. While they admitted their preferences for overhead projectors, dry-erase boards, new desks, and air-conditioning, only one of the eight teachers recommended an increase in school fees to make these changes possible. Egoism, understood as “teacher’s wants,” was placed beneath the students’ needs. One teacher described her preferences in relation to wealthier public schools, but acknowledged the feasibility of new resources considering the financial status of learners’ families:
You know it would be nice. If you look at a school like Glenwood, and they pay astronomical amounts of school fees and what makes it nice is they have got all the resources of a private school. And it would be nice to have it here, but I don’t think that the people that enroll here can afford more than that actually.

Teachers were hesitant to raise school fees based on the economic background of a majority of their learners. While school fee increases could relieve them of large class sizes and under-resourced classrooms, teachers were willing to cope with these inconveniences in order to accommodate township learners.

Preserving Personal Relations in the Classroom

Regarding personal relations within the classroom, teachers expressed a desire to spend more time with their learners, but were forced to deal with the practical constraints of large class sizes. Personal relations within the teaching community were expressed more as a desire, than an actual exercise of personal norms. For the purposes of our study however, teachers’ motivations and valuations of education are equally important to their actual practices. The teachers’ personal approach to learners is best captured in one educator’s statement: “Being a teacher you can’t do as much as you would like. You would like to go around and ask each child, ‘Do you have a problem?’ But you don’t get the chance to go and do something like that.”

Although time constraints and class size limited teacher-student interactions, these obstacles did not undermine educators’ desire to reach through to their learners.

In addition to teachers’ desire to spend more individual time with learners, they expressed a willingness to assume a parenting or social worker role in the learners’ lives. Educators described the “several roles” of teachers in filling the void in parent guidance, counseling students after working hours, and assisting them in future career or job opportunities. Teachers were distressed by the inability to assist children in need. One respondent described the most difficult part of her job as her inability to counsel students:

You know, when we had smaller classes, we knew more about the kids. You know, now you could see them sitting here, but you wouldn’t know that they are being abused all the time because you don’t have that kind of knowledge. There are a lot of kids who need help, but you never know unless they come to you.

10 This observation does not discount the presence of personal interactions between teachers and students.
Stories of student rape victims and suicide attempts were related in teacher interviews. Each time these cases were referenced, teachers expressed a longing to assist students and offer whatever support or parenting guidance they could provide.

**Opting to Stay—Teachers’ Absence of Exit**

Perhaps the most important social norm concerning teacher valuations of education was the teachers’ exercise of voice instead of exit. Though the motivations underlying Durban Academy’s transition to a multiracial school are debatable, educators’ reactions to the changes revealed a commitment to improving the quality of the school and the lives of the students it serves. Principal van Rooijen’s description of his own personal challenges teaching in a multiracial school reveal his unwillingness to exit: “I think I took about six months to adapt and to feel free and happy . . . in the beginning it was hard because I had been teaching so long, for so many years in my own language, but everybody learns.” Supporting the principal’s exercise of voice, another teacher remarked, “I am very happy that this school became a multi-racial school. And I feel blessed that I teach in a school where there is a cross-section of the community. Yes, it is hard at times, but you learn to adapt.” While white flight from the conservative Bluff community was common in the 1990s, Durban Academy teachers not only decided to stay on the Bluff, but chose to continue teaching at an institution undergoing drastic changes in student demographics, resources, and school ethos.

Supporting teachers’ commitment to improving the quality of education at Durban Academy is the low salary that they receive. One respondent expressed her frustrations with the pay, but then retracted her comment by describing her commitment to teaching: “The salary is pathetic. It’s peanuts. But we are not working for the money. It is your love for kids that makes you stay.” The willingness of the staff to grapple with Durban Academy’s transition to a dual medium school and to devote their time and energy to develop successful learners demonstrates the social norm of voice over exit.

**Recap of Teaching Community**

The preservation of social norms in the teaching community correlates with their low involvement in financial affairs. One teacher described her involvement with school finance issues by remarking, “Not at all. You don’t have to be involved with payments and that is nice.”
If a child doesn’t pay his school fees, you don’t get involved with that, you don’t even know if he is behind on his payments.” Each teacher interviewed reflected a similar detachment from finance issues, which was consistent with Principal van Rooijen’s statement that teachers are employed to teach, not to collect school fees. Moreover, teachers who provided assessments of school fee statistics were often incorrect, which strengthened the conclusion that teachers are separated from school financing issues.

In terms of identifying Durban Academy’s position within South Africa’s education market, we are forced to ask whether the SGB’s or the teaching community’s norms guide the overall running of the school. Based on the interview data, it is apparent that teachers defer their views of equal education to the SGB. Although teachers exercise non-market norms, they recognize the important role of the SGB in collecting school fees. Their inaction of choosing not to become involved in school fee operations can be understood as an endorsement of market norms. Within the education market then, we can conclude that teachers do not exercise market norms and teach their students to the best of their ability. But these social norms exist only within the walls of teachers’ classrooms and assume secondary importance to SGB needs in the overall running of the school.

The presence of non-market actors within the school-as-educational producer offers a more refined understanding of Anderson’s notion of sphere differentiation. Here, market and non-market actors co-exist and even recognize the important role each plays in school operations. It is evident however that the larger pressures of the education market, within which Durban Academy operates, causes teachers to defer ultimate decision making power to the SGBs. Market norms prevail not out of a clear absence of non-market norms, but as a result of practical necessity for what the school needs in order to operate.

As in the recap of the SGB community, based on our analysis of the social norms in the teaching community at Durban Academy, we can postulate the roles of educators in both richer and poorer communities. In the first case, since more affluent schools have strong parent involvement, powerful governing bodies, and a steady supply of school fees to employ additional financial secretaries and governing body educators, teacher involvement with financial issues is likely to be even less than at Durban Academy. In addition, additional staff members would allow teachers to develop personal relations with students in smaller classes.
The “several roles” of teachers would likely decrease to a few specialized roles as educator and mentor.

Teachers in poorer schools are likely to demonstrate the opposite effect. Since poorer schools lack the capital to hire additional staff members to manage the school’s finances, teachers will be required to fill this financial responsibility. Complicating matters is the capacity of SGBs in poorer areas to fill the void. Chaka observes that teachers are often the most vocal members in SGBs due to the incapacity and lack of involvement from the parent community. So if SGBs are governed by market norms in virtue of their financial roles, and if SGBs in poorer areas are predominantly led and sustained by teachers, what values are learners in townships and rural areas exposed to within the classroom? The barriers between SGB and teacher roles crumbles in poorer schools. In addition to the mixing of market and nonmarket norms, large class sizes in poorer schools inhibit teachers’ abilities to develop personal student-teacher relations.

Returning to the case study of Durban Academy, in order to determine whether regulation of South Africa’s education market is necessary requires a final analysis of student valuations. The aim of the following section can be understood in terms of the preliminary conclusions we have made thus far: do the market norms of SGBs (which take precedence over the teaching community’s reliance on democratic norms) affect parent and student valuations of education?

Community 2—Parent and Student Consumers

Parent and student valuations demonstrated a reliance on market norms linked to the financial role of the SGB. Due to the wide variation of socioeconomic status within the parent community further differentiation was required. For instance, for black township families, exit equates to entrance into Durban Academy, whereas for wealthier Bluff families, exit means leaving Durban Academy and enrolling in alternative public schools or elite private schools. In both cases however, the learners suffer by means of long distance commutes and limited interaction with learners of different socioeconomic backgrounds. But the massive learner migration has had a detrimental impact on parents’ voice as well. For black township parents, voice is constrained by public transportation limitations. Learner exit also draws concerns between Bluff parent’s freedom and their children’s autonomy. In the post-apartheid education

---

11 Chaka, 27.
market, parents are capable of exercising exit and enrolling their child in a school reflective of their particular values, thus filtering the types of knowledge that is transmitted to their child. The first two subsections entitled, “Township Exit” and “Explaining Low Levels of Parent Voice through Learner Exit” focus primarily on the poorer, black commuting group of learners. The following two subsections entitled, “Want Based Explanations for Low Parent Involvement” and “Egoism, Exit, and Parent Socialization” are more specific to the affluent, white, non-commuting parent/learner community.

**Township Exit and the Selection of Durban Academy**

While much attention has been devoted to the white flight from former Model C schools into private institutions, a similar migration of learners has occurred from township and rural schools to urban, former Model C schools. Since SASA’s provision of school fees has maintained the divide in school quality between former black and white schools, parents and learners often enroll in the highest quality schools they can afford. For poorer black learners, selecting a school in South Africa’s education market is a matter of finding an affordable school beyond the townships. For poorer learners, exit is directly linked to their parent’s wealth. While democratic values may be taught in the classroom, these norms are undermined by learners’ first-hand experiences of what money can buy (see graph on next page).

*Commuting Learners* include those learners residing in: Umlazi, Lamontville, KwaMashu, Isipingo, Mobeni Heights, Newlands, Austerville, Clairwood, Woodlands, Sea View, Wentworth, and Merewent.

**Non-Commuting Learners** include those learners from: Bluff, Brighton Beach, Fynnlands, Ocean View, Marlboro, and Grosvenor.

Dividing learners into “Commuting” and “Non-Commuting” camps is subject to interpretation. While subjective limitations are acknowledged, researcher’s break-down of learners was drawn from interview data and cross-checked with approval of SGB members to determine an appropriate boundary between “Non-Commuting” and “Commuting” learners.

Figure 3.2 above identifies the mass-learner migration occurring at Durban Academy. Of the 798 enrollees, 544 (68%) commute from townships located off the Bluff. Only 254 learners (32%) reside on the Bluff. The most common explanation interviewees provided for the massive influx of learners was the poor quality of education in the townships. SGB members, teachers, parents, and students each related the problems of township schools by making a reference to either one of the issues that include: poor structure of the school, limited resources, overcrowding, violence, unqualified teachers, lack of teacher motivation, teacher union strikes, and corporal punishment.

Figure 3.2 identifies the geographic breakdown of Durban Academy learners.

---

12 Due to time constraints, secondary sources were used to develop a conception of the “township school.” While the essay lacks empirical research at township schools, teacher perspectives were assessed in combination with commuting learners’ impressions of their local schools.
Teachers who commented on the quality of township schools often lacked first-hand accounts, but managed to construct an image of schooling based on second hand experiences from educator colleagues. In a discussion on transportation issues, one Durban Academy teacher described why he believed learners' exited from township schools:

You know, but a lot of people will argue, 'Why don't you go to schools closer to your own neighborhood?' But you find that a lot of those schools aren't functioning at the level that they should be functioning. So you find a parent is looking for a school where they know their child will be taught proper.

A majority of the respondents' explanations for township exit resonated with the above-mentioned statement. One Durban Academy teacher remarked that learners commute to the Bluff simply because at township schools, "nothing happens there." The parent's observation echoes Tikley and Mabogoane's description of township schools and the 'choice' these parents have:

"For many black communities living in black areas, 'choice' of school has been severely limited (to the point of becoming almost meaningless) by overcrowding and by a shortage of accessible schools. [ . . . ] It is these glaring inadequacies of the historically black system that have made historically white schools the only meaningful choice open to many black parents despite the long distances and rising transportation costs often involved."

Based on Tikley and Mabogoane's assessment of township schools, Durban Academy is not a unique case, but a school reflective of the greater learner migration occurring throughout South Africa.

Returning to the case study data, parent and student motivations were again limited by the ability to meet and interact with these communities due to informed consent form limitations and the inability to establish meetings or interviews with these parents. To substitute for the gap in data, teacher perspectives were used based on an assumption that teachers have insight into their students' lives that extended beyond the academic setting. For instance, one teacher described learner decisions to exit by recalling an encounter he had with a township learner:

---

13 Tikley and Mabogoane, 167.
14 While principal van Rooijen located potential student respondents, time limitations convinced me that I would not be able to gain a reasonable cross-section of the students. In weeks two and three, I decided instead to focus on teacher interviews while administering student surveys to batting classes (free periods in teacher absences). Survey limitations developed as a result of unclear explanations of the variables I was testing. A revised survey was construction to avoid the problem.
They are in a sense running away from the schools nearby their homes. I call it ‘runaway’ because they know that the teachers are either not there, or they do not do the work properly. I mean . . . I can name learners who came here from other townships who said, ‘Please sir, I can’t carry on like this. I want to do something with my life.’

In addition to student desires to exit township schools, parent preferences played a decisive role in student’s decision to enroll in Durban Academy. In response to a survey questionnaire question which asked students whether their parents’ preference determined their decision to attend Durban Academy, 70% of the learners responded “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” with the statement.  

Assuming the student responses are an accurate representation of the factors determining which school they chose, it then became important to assess parent motivations in selecting Durban Academy as well. Interactions with the parent community revealed several variables behind their selection of Durban Academy: discipline, school’s history, languages offered, cost of school fees, and the poor quality of local schools. Again, the quality of education in local areas was one of the primary reasons parents were willing to send their children long distances to public schools in the suburbs.

Teachers’ comments regarding parent motivations supplemented data from the informal parent interviews. Describing the mindset of township parents in selecting a school, one teacher stated, “They want their kids to be better. They don’t want their kids to be domestics. They are not getting them in the black schools, so they bus them out.” Similarly, another respondent assumed that parents immediately consider the Bluff when looking to exit township schools. She described the selection process from the perspective of a poor black parent: “If you are a black parent, you get a low wage, and you are looking for a high school. You go to Grosvenor Boys then to Grosvenor Girls, then to Durban Academy. And since we have the lowest school fees, you come here.” The quality and affordability of Durban Academy explains the school’s high percentage of township learners.

But what does the selection of Durban Academy mean for commuting learners? In response to the open-ended survey question, which asked, “If you were headmaster of Durban Academy, what would you change, if anything?” students commented on solutions to their daily

---

15 Survey was a random sampling survey. Data is taken from commuting learners only (which comprised of forty-eight learners commuting from locations referenced in Figure 1.1).  
16 Parent responses from parents’ evening are limited by the cross-section of parents who were able to attend. The next section goes into greater detail regarding the way student exit has decreased parent voice.
transportation difficulties. One learner expressed his concerns over the wasted hours spent commuting and stated, “I would get a skool bus so that we don’t have to use public transport an waste time.” In addition, parents living on the Bluff often related stories of commuting learners waiting at the bus stop from two o’clock when school ended, until five o’clock when the bus fares were cheapest. While the SGB staff acknowledged the transportation difficulties, funding a school bus was beyond the school’s budget.

On a final note, long hours of commuting might explain the lack of student motivation. One teacher’s comment illustrates the additional challenges a commuting learner faces: “They travel an hour maybe an hour and a half just to get to school. And they come here and they are tired. I can’t blame them for that. Now they’ve got a full school day and they get home when it is almost turning dark again. There is a vicious circle and it is just going to get bigger and bigger.” Students would describe their week-day routine, which begins at 4am and ends at 8pm. Homework was an afterthought for most of the learners commuting from Isipingo, KwaMashu, and far sections of Umlazi, where commutes could take up to two hours each way. Student exit thus presents practical time and educational challenges in addition to the ethical concerns involved.

**Commuting Learners—Explaining Low Levels of Parent Voice through Learner Exit**

While long distance commutes have placed an extra burden on township learners’ social and academic growth, the school’s distance from the township communities has hampered parents’ exercise of voice. Although SGBs were designed to foster local democratic participation, since 68% of the students do not live in the surrounding Bluff community there has been a fragmentation of communal involvement. Distance would not be an obstacle to township parents had it not been for South Africa’s poor transport system and the inability of poorer parents to find time between multiple jobs.

Understanding low levels of parent involvement requires insight into the daily routine of poorer township parents. One SGB member described the low parent involvement as a result of parents’ larger social and economic problems: “Maybe ten percent of parents might be involved, but even that is high. And I think it is also because they are struggling to survive.” Supporting the SGB member’s statement, one teacher described what he believed was the average working day of a township parent:
I mean if you take parents that work in Umlazi in this modern time of ours, he still has to get up at four o’clock in the morning and be at work by seven o’clock. So, just track the time . . . if he leaves at half past four or five o’clock in the evening . . . once he’s finished working, he gets home at seven o’clock or half past seven in the evening. Who’s going to come to school still [for parents’ evening]? Where is he going to have the time for that? It is actually a very sad thing to see . . . the involvement of the parents.

Student exit is thus inversely related to parents’ voice. Of the sixteen parents questioned during parent’s evening only five were from commuting locations. The overall atmosphere during parents’ evening was one of frustration expressed from the teaching community. Conditioned to the low parent involvement, teachers related the common problem of parents’ evening and remarked, “And the parents you need to speak with are the ones that never show up.” The problems township learners face in the classroom are aggravated by the inability of parents to support their children outside of the classroom.

Low parent-involvement presents autonomy concerns as well when assessing the decision-making process within SGBs. Durban Academy’s 2009 SGB is entirely Afrikaner, but not out of an exclusionary policy. Explaining his failed attempts to recruit township parents, the SGB chairperson stated, “We try to get the black demographics on the governing body, but it is just too hard. You just don’t get them . . . it is difficult for them to get there unfortunately because our meetings are at nights and there is no public transport to the Bluff at night.” Principal van Rooijen’s assessment of township parent involvement resonated with the chairperson’s statement: “I think the day to day living and staying alive and getting money took over so much of their time that they don’t really get involved. So the parents are allowing people to make decisions for them and that’s unbelievable.” The parents’ autonomy is compromised in virtue of their inability to attend meetings and voice their opinions. Decisions are made for them not by them.

As a transition to the more affluent Bluff community, it is interesting to note the student responses to the survey question, which asked learners to rank their parents’ involvement in school activities. According to the survey, 41% of commuting learners argued that their parents were “Not Active” with school affairs. Similarly 37% of non-commuting respondents related the same level of parent non-involvement. The data suggests that distance might not be the only factor contributing to low levels of parent involvement.
Non-Commuting Learners—Want Based Explanations for Low Parent Involvement

For non-commuting learners then, what explains low parent involvement? Within the non-commuting parent community, market norms evidence themselves through want-based norms. SGB members explained that increasing parent participation among Bluff parents was equally as difficult, since parents expected some type of recompense for their participation in parents’ meetings. On one occasion, the SGB purchased food to increase parent involvement, which did in fact improve parent turnout. One SGB member described low parent involvement in terms of parents’ want-based norms:

Because of the culture we have in this country, I call it, ‘I want . . . I want . . . Everybody I want. Because the culture is what can you give me, before I give you something. Part of the challenge is to get this mindset to change. I mean you can’t go to Pik ‘N Pay and say, ‘I want bread, or I want the money.’ It’s the same thing, you have to give to get.

Want-based norms were evidenced from both parents and the SGB members. While parents expect a reward in return for their participation, the SGB is unwilling to offer anything in exchange without the parents support. Even if the SGB had the funds to purchase rewards for each parents’ meeting, parent involvement would only increase on the basis of market exchanges of want-based norms.

Although SASA’s decentralized system of educational governance was designed to promote local voice, we find that both township and the Bluff parents rarely participate in democratic forums due to exit and want-regarding norms. One SGB member explained that although there are 800 students at Durban Academy, roughly twenty parents show-up for parent meetings. Teachers and SGB members agreed that the general attitude of parents is one of no involvement.

But complicating matters are teachers’ response to low parent involvement. Although the majority of teachers preferred stronger parent involvement, a few teachers noted that low parent involvement made their day to day work easier. Describing the advantages of an uninvolved parent community, one teacher stated, “The nice thing for me is that the parents in general don’t really interfere what happens in the school. They come in when they have a problem with the

---

17 Want-based norms are used in the description of non-commuting parents’ lack of involvement, but not exclusively. According to SGB members and teachers, township parents abide by the same culture of ‘I want.’ For clarity purposes however, since Bluff parents are not challenged (or challenged to a lesser extent) by long-distance commutes and multiple jobs, the discussion of want-based norms is used in the discussion of Bluff parents’ involvement since the other market norms do not pertain to them.
child, but generally they accept what you are doing.” As in the autonomy concerns arising from low parent involvement in SGB affairs, a similar autonomy compromising affect stems from low parent involvement with the teaching community. What is troubling here is the teacher’s acknowledgment and even preference for low parent involvement. Again, despite the decentralization’s aim of providing parents a voice in the running of schools, decisions are made for parents, not by them.

_Egoism, Exit, and Parent Socialization—Concerns over Market Norms in Bluff Community_

Beyond want-based explanations for low parent involvement, Bluff parents active in school affairs were similarly governed by market norms. Egoism and exit were the most common methods of market practices in parents’ approaches to education. Regarding egoism, one parent described her involvement narrowly in terms of her child’s development: “I don’t do it for myself. I do it for my child’s education.” Though the parent downplayed her personal egoism, valuing education solely for her child’s benefit reveals the egoistic tendencies of the market. Corresponding with Ranson’s assessment of the individualism of the markets, one parent remarked, “The motto I tell my child is: just remember, if you don’t do it for yourself nobody else is going to do it for you.” The market’s promotion of competitive values fuels egoistic norms in parents’ approach to education. Cooperation and fraternal relations are undermined by parents’ narrow concerns for their own children.

As in the case of township parents, Bluff parents extended their egoistic understanding of education by considering the practice of exit. During parents’ evening, one parent admitted to his intentions of pulling his son out of Durban Academy and sending him to a private school or the Afrikaans school, Port Natal. Describing his approach to education reform, he remarked, “I am not going to be a Bluff patriot.” The respondent explained that he was not going to send his child to one of the public schools on the Bluff simply because he was a resident there. He expressed a feeling of powerlessness and inability to affect change, arguing that he was only one man and was unable to improve the quality of the school. Again, the data identifies the way market norms interact with each other, forming more complex issues. Here egoism becomes entangled with parent motivations of exit. Another parent accompanying a friend at parents’ evening admitted to sending her daughter to Grosvenor Girls even though she lived across the street from Durban Academy.
As a final comment on Bluff parents’ exercise of market norms, Bluff parents’ practice of exit gives rise to legitimate concerns regarding reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. One of Anderson’s primary concerns with markets in education is the relationship between the “freedom of parents” and the “autonomy of children.” While SASA and its stipulation of school fees increase parent choice, it reduces learners’ autonomy. Instead of education teaching learners to exercise their own judgment, schools become centers for parents to indoctrinate their children with their own ideals. Since, according to the student survey, students strongly agreed that their parents’ preference determines which school they attend, parents are able to determine the types of values and knowledge they want transmitted to their child through the practice of exit. One teacher described the process of white flight from township schools in the suburbs by referencing parent preference for schools with a particular ethos:

Now you bus these people in and the school now becomes a poor inner town school. So suddenly the whole school’s ethos changes. The white parents of the kids in that school now, who can afford it, take their kids out and they send them off to another school where there is an ethos that they want for their children.

While a parent may opt out of a poorer school simply to provide a higher standard of education for their child, in the post apartheid context, more extreme cases are common in which parents exercise exit in order to indoctrinate their children with particular values.

Even though Pampallis observes that school fees have prevented a white flight from public schools, the 5% statistic of private school enrollees does not account for learner migration within the public school system. The varying types and quality of schools within South Africa’s public education system allows for parents to select schools that reflect their own value systems. In the case of Durban Academy, Bluff parents often mentioned Port Natal, an Afrikaner school in Pinetown, as one of their ideal-options.

As noted in the section on Durban Academy, Port Natal was one of the schools that Durban Academy considered amalgamating with during the 1997 transition period. While the quality of education and athletics remains strong at Port Natal, teachers and SGB members at Durban Academy expressed their concerns over the types of knowledge that was being taught at the Afrikaans-only school. One SGB member explained his concerns by describing the types of learners who matriculate from Port Natal:

18 Anderson, 163.
But the kids that are coming out of that … where are they going to go? The environment they are growing up in is not healthy. The kids’ minds get indoctrinated with one side of the story. In that way I am so glad that the school went this direction. And like I said in the beginning when the people go out to the workplace or to the university or into some real situation, he can concentrate what he really needs to concentrate on and not these other issues.

Considering South Africa’s apartheid past, the market encourages a repeated cycle of racial and economic segregation and normalizes parents exercise of exit strategies. Anderson offers a final assessment of the relationship between parents’ freedom and children’s autonomy by observing, “Parental rights to freedom of educational choice do not extend to holding their children in perpetual subjection to their own ideals.” 20 We have to ask whether South Africa’s education market respects the autonomy of children in terms of their own moral development and growth in post-apartheid society.

**Recap of Parent/Student Community**

In the education market, children recognize the power of money at a young age. Stratifying access to education according to wealth subverts Anderson’s notion of fraternal relations as, “a valuation of participants as equals engaged in a common cooperative project.” 21 When markets determine issues of school access and quality, learners are separated by economic status, which limits their ability to associate with peers of different social and economic backgrounds. As a result, markets in education eliminate the ability for learners to experience and realize the meaning of fraternal and democratic values.

Moreover, the initial assessment of SGBs as need-regarding institutions must be reconsidered in light of our examination of learner exit. Since Anderson defines the want-regarding norm as, “desires backed by the ability to pay,” we see how the SGB satisfies the wants of ‘better-off’ township learners. Motala’s (2007) observation on the internal differentiation within poor township and rural communities clarifies this relationship: “Evidence is also provided of internal differentiation within the poor, with ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ being apparent.” 22 The exiting ‘winners,’ are those learners whose ‘ability to pay’ allows them to attend former white schools in the suburbs. Market values teach them the acceptability of

---

20 Anderson, 163.
21 Ibid., 158.
“running away.” For township learners unable to afford exit, the freedom to value education as a shared good is undermined by a strong desire to exit. From the perspective of these ‘losers,’ one’s future success is understood as a matter of attaining enough money to exit and join the winners in life beyond the townships and rural areas. Since, as Ranson suggests, the problems of our time cannot be solved in isolation, how can we expect our future leaders to engage in collective problem solving and address the needs of post-apartheid South Africa if they grow and mature in an environment governed by individualistic market norms? An acceptance of the education market thus equates to an acceptance of the contemporary social ills present throughout South Africa, since we are making no meaningful effort to prepare our future leaders and encourage values of civic responsibility.

Finally, we can return again to Hirschman’s analysis of exit and voice. In describing the relationship between exit and voice, Hirschman observes, “The decision whether to exit will often be taken in the light of the prospects for the effective use of voice.” Hirschman’s observation applies to the education market. Parents exiting township schools may opt to leave township schools not solely because of the poor conditions, but as a result of their inability to articulate and muster any change through the SGBs. But the relationship between exit and voice is cyclical, as Hirschman observes, “The presence of the exit alternative can therefore tend to atrophy the development of the art of voice.” As more township parents continue to leave, SGBs in poorer communities continue to disintegrate into meaningless formalities.

Moreover, Hirschman’s discussion on exit and voice as in relation to public goods is especially pertinent to our analysis of South Africa’s education market. Hirschman argues that in cases of public goods, citizens feel an obligation to stay even as deterioration in the ‘product’ increases. In other words, since public goods benefit all members of society, one is less inclined to exit and more likely to exercise voice, since the good at hand is of benefit to all in society. Hirschman describes the relationship between deteriorating public goods and exit succinctly: “the worse it gets the less I can afford to leave.” Here, Hirschman introduces a third concept, loyalty. According to Hirschman, loyalty is an exit-neutralizing concept that locks

---

23 Hirschman, 37.
24 Ibid., 43.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 103. Hirschman uses the useful analogy, “Right or wrong my country” (104). The individual sees the decline of the nation-state as a public good that requires his loyalty and service.
members into their firms or organizations.\textsuperscript{27} It imposes a social cost on would-be exiters, whose actions are considered as reflections of defection, desertion, or even treason.\textsuperscript{28} Thus, Hirschman observes, “As a rule, then, loyalty holds exit at bay and activates voice.”\textsuperscript{29}

In terms of the parents and students and Durban Academy, the education market has undermined both their natural tendency to exercise voice in terms of public goods and the feelings of loyalty one has to his/her community. By weakening the role of the community, the market diminishes the social costs of exiting.Exiting is the norm, rather than the exception. The market alters Hirschman’s understanding of voice in public goods that is more accurately described in the phrase: “the worse it gets the more I can afford to leave.” The individualism of the markets precludes the exercise of voice and diminishes feelings of loyalty as well.

In retrospect, for parents operating within the education market, the freedom to value education according to the democratic ideals of People’s Education is reduced to a competitive and egoistic approach in the selection of schools. What was once a collective struggle for “Equal education for all,” has been transformed by market values into a society governed by individualistic norms. Parents prioritize educational opportunities for their own child with little consideration of the well-being of other learners.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 78.

Figure 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Norms</th>
<th>School as Educational-Producer</th>
<th>C. Parents &amp; Students as Education Consumers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. SGB</td>
<td>B. Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Impersonal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Egoistic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Exclusive</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Want-based</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exit &gt; Voice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is community “comprehensively governed” by market norms?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure 6.1 corresponds with Figure 4.1 on pp. 38)

**School Governing Body:**
A1: Blacklisting—old school funds and maintaining “the cycle.”
A2: The offer system—prioritizing schools funds over parent concerns.
A3: Inclusive admission policy (contrast with Glenwood, DHS).
A4: Differentiation among the poor, ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in virtue of students’ ability to pay.
A5: SGB platform for voice, but practical inaccessibility challenges facing township parents.

**Teachers:**
B1: The desire for personal relations.
B2: Unwillingness to raise school fees and ability to cope with changes.
B4: Recognizing learners’ challenges and assuming multiple teacher roles.
B5: Opting to stay and to grapple with evolving ethos at Durban Academy

**Parents / Students:**
C2: Individual perspective and focus on their own child.
C4: Culture of want and the economic approach to education.
C5: Commuters exit township schools and non-commuters decline of Bluff patriotism.

The introduction of school fees has created a market for public education in which SGBs have become local debt-collecting organs feared by the non-fee paying community. Since
educational decentralization relies heavily on the use of market mechanisms, a reevaluation of the fiscal decentralization attached to educational decentralization must be reconsidered. Based on the multiple avenues through which students acquire knowledge, South Africa’s local education market holds concerning implications for the future and sustainability of democracy. This final section looks to achieve three goals: first, to identify the limitations of the case study and define a relative scope of the observations drawn; second, to reflect on the aims of People’s Education and offer a way forward; and third, to present a brief comparative assessment of education markets in other countries.

**Limitations**

The merits of the case study are subject to several criticisms. One of the primary limitations of the study is that it assumes market norms only operate in the presence of market institutions. The norms of exclusion, self-interest, or exit may exist prior to the introduction of market mechanisms and may be an aspect of school institutional settings in general. The very nature of education, as a good highly valued by society, supports this interpretation. Since education defines the social hierarchy and determines a child’s future opportunities, parents are likely to be interested in their child’s own education. This observation suggests that both egoism and the want-regarding norms are a fact of education and may not require the influence of market norms. Moreover, especially in the South African context where wealthy communities sought the exclusion of black learners to preserve their schools’ culture and ethos, practices of exclusion may not require the introduction of the market. It can be argued then that school fees are not the issue, but underlying racial tensions that are cloaked behind the race-neutral, ability-to-pay criteria. But an immediate response to this critique is that while market norms may have existed prior to the introduction of the market, the local market for education has exacerbated these individualistic norms. If anything, parents’ egoism in their child’s education and/or their cultural motivations to exclude are complicated by these financial incentives. Moreover, this case study offers compelling evidence of financially exclusive policies (i.e. blacklisting and the offer system) even in the presence of a racially inclusive admissions policy.

Another potential criticism concerns the presence of social norms in the teaching community. It may not be the case that the absence of market responsibilities explains teachers’ social norms, but that the profession requires and attracts individuals with certain characteristics
or attributes. There may be something internal to the teaching profession that explains their desire to include disadvantaged learners and to address student needs. But once again, even if we acknowledge the validity of this criticism, the fact that teachers were not burdened by financial decisions allowed for them to exercise the social norms their profession requires. Unlike the SGB members who lamented the demands of running a “tight ship,” teachers were allowed to value education in a way they saw fit.\(^1\)

Another limitation concerns the section on learner exit. Certainly, a degree of inter-district transport is required to desegregate schools in post-apartheid South Africa, as was and still is the U.S. experience in the aftermath of slavery and segregation. While this essay does not deny present social realities in South Africa, it emphasizes the norms guiding the transport of students between districts. What the education market adds to the notion of learner migration is the acceptability of leaving one’s poor local school and framing learner commutes as a matter of wealth. Of added importance is the way the market limits the ability for parents and learners seeking an integrated education to select a different school for non-economic reasons. For instance, township parents who value an integrated education may be viewed as self-serving wealthy parents who do not care about their local community. The same logic applies to wealthier Bluff parents, who in the process of sending their children to a private school, may be perceived by the community as want-regarding, egoistic parents.

*Recalling People’s Education*

Returning to the original goals of the People’s Education movement, we see how the introduction of school fees has undermined these education ideals. Let us recall Soobrayan’s assessment of the movement’s core values: “It must be aimed at overcoming negative social values such as elitism, individualism, authoritarianism and competitiveness—and in their place instill democratic values, collectivism, and a wider social consciousness.”\(^2\) While the movement succeeded in establishing platforms for parent and student voice, the attachment of financial responsibilities to SGBs has undermined genuine efforts to include parent and student concerns. The “fear of victimization” from a central authority is replaced by a “fear of debt collectors” at

---

\(^1\) But again, teachers’ freedom to value education according to social norms extended only insofar as their classroom walls, i.e. overall school operations are decided by SGBs and the market incentives that drive it.

\(^2\) Soobrayan, 33.
the local level. As a result of school fee policy, voice for the majority of parents is exercised to such a limited extent to be considered meaningless.

Based on the case study of Durban Academy, the answer to Anderson’s final step is apparent: state regulation of the education market is permitted. Anderson explains why the goals of education can only be realized through non-market mechanisms:

Some goods can be secured only through a form of democratic provision that is nonexclusive, principle-and need-regarding, and regulated primarily through voice. To attempt to provide these goods through market mechanisms is to undermine our capacity to value and realize ourselves as fraternal democratic citizens.3

Democracy, not markets, is best suited for parents and learners to realize themselves as democratic citizens. Democratic provisioning of education secures collective community based deliberations and fraternal values necessary to achieve the ends of education. Hence, the way forward may require a reassessment of the past and reflecting on the original goals of People’s Education may be a worthy place to start the restructuring process.

**International Perspective on Educational Decentralization**

Despite the shortcomings of educational decentralization, central governments have been reluctant to recentralize policy. In addition to the political and financial burdens of assuming responsibility for education, one of the primary hurdles to recentralization has come from international organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. Bray’s (2008) World Bank Report on community financing for education is guided in part by the assumption: “People who pay directly for services are likely to take a stronger interest in them than are people who receive services free of charge.”4 Indeed, while educational decentralization has had its success in select nations (e.g. India and Singapore), the general trend has been one of state failure to provide quality schooling.

To Bray’s credit however, he does acknowledge the failures of educational decentralization in other developing countries. For instance, Bray notes the burden of community financing for education placed on Uganda, where in the aftermath of an education collapse in the 1970s, communities were required to meet 65 to 90 percent of total costs for

---

3 Anderson, 159.
public schooling. Similarly, Togo experienced an education crisis in the mid-1980s and community financing amounted to nearly two-thirds of the resources required to operate public sector schools. In the early 1990s, local communities in Chad, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Kenya were similarly dealt new financial responsibilities for education.\(^5\) As in the South African case, these nations have relied on the use of school fees, which in turn, has amounted to the same divisive effects. In Zimbabwe, one school official remarked, “In short, management committees were concerned with maintaining former colonial privileges and standards.”\(^6\) In Kenya, parents felt exploited by management committees (SGB equivalents) who they claimed were “demanding and unsympathetic to the burdens they impose.”\(^7\)

Despite the universal impact of school fees on local communities, the international push for educational decentralization has not halted. Wekwete references the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the international emphasis on “shrinking government.”\(^8\) Similarly, Bardhan describes with much more force that “Decentralization is the rage,” and that it is sometimes used as “a synonym for privatization.”\(^9\) The link between markets for education and the demise of local autonomy and democracy must be brought to the forefront in order to temper the blind push for educational decentralization. Offering a final recommendation to address failing education policies in developing nations, Geo-Jaja observes, “Decentralization strategy cannot be implemented in development without crucial central-government budgetary support to education.”\(^10\) If we are intent on ensuring long-term sustainability of democratic initiatives, we must consider the merits of a more central provision of education.

**Recentralizing Education Policy in South Africa**

South Africa has recognized the inefficacy of a decentralized education market and has attempted to recentralize education policy.\(^11\) In 2007, South Africa adopted a policy of no-fee

---

\(^5\) Bray, 3.
\(^6\) Ibid., 17.
\(^7\) Ibid., 18.
\(^8\) Wekwete, 247.
\(^9\) Bardhan, 185.
\(^11\) Decentralization reflects the challenge of unfunded mandates: that is, devolving financial responsibilities without central assistance, while holding local public schools accountable to national standards. While decentralization is not necessarily synonymous with privatization, local governments increasingly rely on user fees to fund social services. In this same vein, a solution to the decentralized education market need not require a recentralization of education policy. Perhaps there is a solution to the market effects that can be remedied through increased central
schools. Looking to uphold a child’s constitutional right to education, the government removed school fees for the lowest 40% of schools. In 2008, the government extended no-fee schools to include Quintile 3 schools as well, making public education free for the poorest 60% of schools. In addition, the government looks to compensate 10% of non-fee paying learners in Quintile 4 and 5 schools.

But to place matters in perspective, Durban Academy is a Quintile 4 school untouched by the no-fee school policy. Limiting a market for education to richer schools still impacts the values richer and poorer students learn to endorse. In a partially regulated education market, exiting ‘winners’ still learn the acceptability of running away, while ‘losers’ compete for entrance into the winning, richer schools. Confining the market to Quintile 4 and 5 schools does little to address the ethical limitations of South Africa’s education market. Supporting this observation is the Ministry of Education’s recent initiative called, “Policy on Learner Transport.” While the legislation looks to provide equal learner transport across the nine provinces, it perpetuates the use of market norms of exit. Especially in catchment areas including a mix of no-fee schools and Quintile 4 or 5 schools, it is likely that students will compete for entrance into higher quality schools. This practice of exit threatens community solidarity and the realization of democratic principles.

Finally, while the government recognizes the limited capacity of SGBs, little has been done to address this difficulty. The 2008 country report by Education for All states, “Findings of the Ministerial review on School Governance indicate that, while the vast majority of schools (98 percent) have SGBs, established in accordance with legal requirements, many experience problems in sustaining active participation in SGBs.” While the report cites lack of time, literacy, costs, and other competency related issues, school fee responsibilities and SGB-parent interactions should also be considered as an explanation for limited participation. The government must recognize these ethical limitations of even partially regulated education markets if it seeks an effective system of decentralized education.

---

provisioning within a decentralized structure. Yet again, this proposal challenges our understanding of politics, for which politician would willingly supply capital for local programs that he/she will not be accredited for?


13 Ibid., 46.
7. Conclusion

The international trend in educational decentralization asks us to return to the basic question: education for what purpose?¹⁴ This essay challenges the decentralization of education by emphasizing the central importance of education in sustaining and enhancing democratic life. If this essay can offer one suggestion to inform the educational decentralization debate, it should be this: that if we are intent on securing the ends of education—to cultivate the democratic norms and civic responsibility required to sustain democratic practices—the provision of education cannot be meted out by the market and may require democratic processes in the delivery of education. Further studies should focus on the merits of a democratic provisioning of education and whether a non-market provisioning is possible in a decentralized system. Although this essay does not offer much comment on the merits of a more centralized financing of education, it has demonstrated the very important and concerning implications arising from a market distribution of education.

By addressing the ethical limitations of educational decentralization, I attempt to add an important and often under-studied area of concern to policymakers’ cost-benefit analysis of education policy. It seems logical, that if our own moral views and perspectives on society guide our actions, an assessment of these normative ideals can help to clarify the principle causes behind failing democratic institutions. In retrospect, this essay stresses the important role of the state in ensuring the equitable provisioning of public schooling and suggests that while education can establish the conditions required for democracy, the market for education severely inhibits the realization of this end.

Bibliography
