School choice: challenge to Sharpeville public school principals

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According to Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa everyone has the right to education. It specifies further that everyone has the right to equal education. Prior to 1994 education was segregated. Every group had its own educational system, administration and schools. Very little school choice existed and learners had to attend the school closest to their residence and the one designated to their racial group. New directions have been considered in white papers concerning education, which have resulted in various new laws. These include the South African Schools Act , which has heralded a new era in the management and control of schools. Parents and learners now have a choice to attend any school they wish. Affordability is a minor concern because the South African Schools Act ensures that learners cannot be rejected if parents are not in a position to pay the school fees. Learners from Sharpeville have left their schools for ex-Model C schools in the towns of Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark. The numbers in Sharpeville primary schools have dropped drastically. Some schools have had to merge in order to cover the required enrolment by the Department of Education. Principals of Sharpeville primary schools are faced with the challenge of turning their schools into learning organisations that produce quality education.

Introduction

South Africa has experienced unparalleled changes since the transformation to a democratic form of government in 1994 (Pretorius, 1998:iii). The structure of education has been changed. All the different departments have been streamlined into one National Education Department and nine provincial administrations. These changes are a matter of concern to public schools, since there is a lot of movement of learners from township schools to former Model C schools. However, this movement of learners brings a challenge to the principals of township schools.

Background to the research problem

According to Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996(a): Section 29) everyone has the right to education. It specifies further that everyone has the right to equal education. Prior to the year 1994 education was segregated. Every group had its own educational system, administration and schools (Behr, 1994:163). Very little school choice existed and learners had to attend the school closest to their residence and the one designated to their racial group. New directions have been considered in white papers concerning education, which have resulted in various new laws. These include the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), which has heralded a new era in the management and control of schools (Pretorius, 1998:1). Parents and learners now have a choice to attend any school they wish. Affordability is a minor concern because the South African Schools Act ensures that learners cannot be turned away if parents are not in a position to pay the school fees.

Learners from Sharpeville have left their schools for ex-Model C schools in the towns of Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark. The numbers in Sharpeville primary schools have dropped drastically. Some schools have had to merge in order to cover the required enrolment by the Department of Education (Principals meeting, 19 February 2003 at Mohlodi High School). Principals of Sharpeville primary schools are faced with a challenge to turn their schools into learning organisations that produce quality education.

The debate on school choice has many sides (Gorard, Taylor & Fitz, 2003:14): First, there is the libertarian notion of choice for its own sake. People tend to appreciate choice as consumers in most areas, so why not in the case of schools? Second, there is an argument for equity. Choice of school extends the privilege to all, which was previously available only to those able to afford houses in desirable suburban areas, or, as the case was in South Africa, of the right race. School choice enables children from poor families and different race groups to break the "iron cage of zoning" (Gorard, Taylor & Fitz, 2003:15). The third side is that market forces will drive up educational standards. Successful schools will be popular. Weaker schools will be unpopular, progressively losing their per capita funding until they either improve or close. Over time, therefore, the general standard of schools will be higher (Gorard, Taylor & Fitz, 2003:15).

The following assumptions apply to this research. In the case of education as a service "consumed" by parents/learners (rendered to parents/learners), it is important to note that education is not a matter of free choice but a legal obligation. Second, education is a very complicated service and it is difficult to make an objective comparison between schools. Third, education is, by its nature, very personal, depending a great deal on human concern. Choosing a school is very different from going to a supermarket. Fourth, schools are not always able to respond to the demands of the education service to be rendered (Karsten & Teelken, 1996:22). The problem is therefore how school choice can be managed in Sharpeville primary schools.

Statement of the research problem

The problem can be encapsulated by means of the following questions:
1. What makes learners move from Sharpeville primary schools close to their residences to other schools outside their area?
2. What guidelines can be provided to assist principals of Sharpeville public primary schools to manage school choices?

Aim of the research

The aim of the research was to gain knowledge regarding learner migration to schools in more affluent areas. In order to accomplish this, the following objectives had to be realised:
• To clarify what is meant by learner mobility and school choice within the Sharpeville primary school context
• To develop guidelines on how school principals can manage learner mobility in the Sharpeville area.

Research design

The nature and the research problem dictated the research method to be used and the choice between the known research designs, qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative research methodology is an inductive and exploratory tool, because it is characterised by observing and sensing what is occurring naturally in a non-contrived situation. It is therefore an in-depth analysis of a problem in order to understand the "what" and "why" of human behaviour (Hatch, 1998:45). On the other hand, quantitative research methodology is more highly defined and relatively close to research in the physical sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1994:155-156).

In this study individual interviews were conducted. These interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. Learners in ex-Model C schools and township schools residing in Sharpeville were interviewed. The population therefore includes learners residing in Sharpeville attending ex-model C schools (in towns like Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging and Sasolburg) and township schools. A purposive sampling method (Creswell, 1994:14) was used by targeting the designated learners that live close to the research assistant in Sharpeville and were willing to participate. Six learners attending ex-Model C schools and six learners attending schools in Sharpeville were inter-

viewed. The researchers were prepared to interview additional learners, but there were indications that the data were saturated when the same themes were mentioned by the interviewees.

Schurink (1996:314) describes interviews as a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics taking place between the researcher and an individual.

Trustworthiness of the research
Le Compte and Preissle (1992:256) indicate alertness to coherence of background assumptions (see background to research, specifically the four assumptions indicated by Karsten & Teelken, 1996) as one of the criteria for rigorous research. The research assumptions must be internally and externally consistent; they must be supported by the data in the research and should not be contrary to existing knowledge.

The objectivity of this research is evaluated in terms of the reliability and validity of its observations. These two aspects are referred to as the "trustworthiness" of the research. According to Dyer (1995:127), reliability and validity are key concepts in research as they provide the assurance that the research instrument is capable of providing accurate and meaningful answers to the research question.

Ensuring trustworthiness
All research is rightly open to criticism and there are criteria by which qualitative research can be evaluated (Holloway & Wheelers, 1999: 162). For qualitative research objectivity, validity, and reliability are some of the most important criteria by which the researcher is judged. Validity is the extent to which any researcher's tool measures what it is supposed to measure and reliability is the extent to which the instrument, when used more than once, will produce the same results or answers in the research (Holloway & Wheelers, 1996:162).

Issues concerning validity and reliability are viewed differently in qualitative or quantitative research and different criteria and concepts have been introduced. Holloway and Wheelers (1996:163) make a case for alternatives to develop effective evaluation for qualitative research. The four alternatives provided are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These alternatives provide the foundations for demonstrating trustworthiness. Krefting (1991:215) states that qualitative researchers need alternative models (contrary to quantitative researchers) to ensure rigour without sacrificing the relevance of the research.

In this study Guba's model (Krefting, 1991:217) for trustworthiness of qualitative research was used. Based on this model, there are five strategies for trustworthiness namely: credibility (truth value); applicability; consistency using dependability; neutrality using confirmability, and ethical measures (Krefting, 1991:24). These are discussed below:

Credibility
Krefting (1991:215) asserts that credibility is obtained from the findings of the research as authentic experiences, as lived and perceived by informants. It demonstrates that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described.

A qualitative study is credible when it represents accurate descriptions or interpretations of the experiences to such an extent that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the description (Ely, Anzul, Fiedman, Garner & Steinmetz, 1997:54). Research findings should therefore be tested against various groups either from the data that were drawn or with persons who are familiar with the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1991:56). The main procedure of producing high quality data that is accurate, credible and true to the phenomenon under study is through systematic data collection, multiple data sources and triangulation (Krefting, 1991:216). The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the counter balancing strength of another will compensate the weaknesses in each single data source or data collection method.

Credibility strategies in this research comprised the following:

- Prolonged engagement. The research assistant who conducted the interviews ensured that the respondents were at ease so as to enable them to verbalise their experiences (both interviewer and respondent were fluent in the vernacular). This situation enabled the respondents to reveal even uncomfortable facts about their experiences.
- Reflexivity. Burns and Grove (1995:385) postulate that this is a process whereby the researchers explore personal feelings and integrate their understanding into the study. As the researchers were part of the research and could not be separated from it and in order to minimise their feelings and experiences from influencing the study, reflexivity was promoted in this study. To give evidence to the reader about the findings that are presented in this study, reflexivity will be achieved through the use of audio-tape and interview notes that are readily available.

Applicability
Applicability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts and settings within groups, which includes the ability to generalise from the findings to a larger population (Poggenpoel, 1993:349). Generalisation is often not possible in qualitative studies because every research situation constitutes an environment with a particular researcher in a particular interaction with particular individuals/respondents (Ely *et al.*, 1997:12). Campbell and Stanley (in Carre, 1994:688) suggest that a more appropriate perspective would be transferability as the criterion against which applicability of quality data is assessed. The researcher does not necessarily have to transfer the findings to other settings, but must present sufficiently descriptive data so that it is possible for another researcher to make a comparison to his/her situation.

The strength of qualitative method is that it is conducted in natural settings. Each situation is defined as unique and is less amenable to generalisation. The emphasis in this research is on exploration and description of the phenomenon and not generalisation.

Dependability
Dependability refers to whether the findings of the research would be consistent if the study was repeated with similar subjects in a similar context. Researchers should be in a position to "trace" each other's method of research (Kock, 1994:977). The strategy here is to learn from the informants rather than to control them. Techniques to enhance consistency in this research include triangulation of data sources. Audio-tape recordings of proceedings were made for this research and transcriptions of the interviews were done immediately after they were concluded.

The following are criteria for a dependability strategy:
- Auditable. This is when another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the original investigator in the study (Krefting, 1991:225). The relevant data will be kept to promote an audit trail.
- Code-recode procedure. The researcher and coder will discuss the collected data to reach consensus about the learners' perceptions.

At the end of the research the results are comparable with existing theory as shown in the literature.

Confirmability
Confirmability or neutrality ensures freedom from bias in the research procedures and results (Poggenpoel, 1993:350). It is the degree to which the research findings can be confirmed by another researcher (Krefting, 1991:217). In qualitative research, the value of findings increases when the distance between the researchers and the informants decreases (Vockell & Asher, 1995:89). Guba (cited by Krefting, 1991:200) suggests that confirmability is the criterion of neutrality, which is achieved when truth-value and applicability of data are established.

The confirmability audit is the auditing of the data or information that can be confirmed by informants. Data include the following:

- All raw data, including audio-tapes, transcriptions, field notes and results of analysis
- Theoretical notes
- Process notes, including notes on methodology, trustworthiness and the audit trail

If all data are available, an external "auditor" will be able to determine whether the findings are in accordance with the data of the research, and other researchers will be able to judge whether the findings may be applicable to their circumstances.

Demarcation of the research

The research focused on public primary school learners residing in Sharpeville. A tape-recorder was used to record the discussions from the interviews. Three learners from different ex-Model C schools and three learners from different Sharpeville schools were interviewed individually at their homes in the presence of their parents. During the interviews field-notes were taken. Field-notes relieve a researcher from remembering incidents during interview sessions (Kruger, 1994:126). An individual interview guide/schedule was compiled to ensure that the same questions were posed to each interviewee.

Ethical aspects

The following ethical principles, in accordance with the standards set by the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU, 2002), were adhered to:
- Right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity
- Right to equality, justice, human dignity and protection against harm
- Right to freedom of choice, expression and access to information
- Informed consent was obtained from participants in writing with the clear indication that they could at any stage request the termination of the interview.
- Participants were not coerced to participate or harassed because they refused to participate.
- The participants' right to withdraw or terminate participation in the study at any time was acknowledged by the researcher.

Clarification of concepts

The following concepts need clarification:

School choice

According to the Oxford dictionary the word choice means the right of choosing or selecting (Pollard & Liebeck, 1994:140). Therefore the word school choice means that parents and learners have the right to select the school of their choice.

School choice is about opportunities for children. School choice exists from either a policy or legal standpoint (Bolick, Komer & Berry, 1991:1). According to section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a: (2) Section 29), everyone has the right to receive education in a public educational institution where the education is reasonably practicable and in languages of their choice.

Primary school

Since the introduction of the new national curriculum for South African schools, a primary school is now comprised of grades which are grouped into phases as follows:

Foundation phase (Grades R, 1, 2, and 3)
These grades have three learning programmes, which are:
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Life skills

Intermediate phase (Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7)
These grades have five learning programmes:
- Language literacy and communication
- Human social economy and management sciences
- Mathematical literacy, mathematics and mathematical science

- Natural science and technology
- Arts and culture and life orientation (Pretorius, 1998:46)

Presentation and interpretation of data analysis procedure

The raw data from all the individual interviews were transcribed from audio-tape to a written format. According to Kvale (1996:168) the transcribed interviews make analysis more amenable. Comments relating to non-verbal behaviour were added when the specific source was being analysed.

The transcribed interviews were analysed with the purpose of identifying categories. A spreadsheet was formulated where each participant featured in the respective rows. Themes or categories were entered in the specific row and they were colour-coded. This facilitated interpretation of the data. The broad categories and sub-categories derived from the analysis are given in Table 1.

Table 1   Categories

	Broad categories	Sub-categories
1.	External influence	My parents
		Other relatives
		My ex class teacher or educator in the community
		My friends
2.	Pastoral care	Caring
		Counselling
		Good communication
		Respect
3.	Discipline	Bullying
		Theft
		Corporal punishment
		Security
4.	Opportunities in learning	Maths, science and technology
		Art and music
		Languages
5.	My ideal school	Affordable fees
		Specific religion schools
		Sufficient resources
		Sports facilitators

Five broad categories emerged from the analysis of the twelve interviews and each one of them presented sub-categories.

Research findings

The following findings were made from analysis of the 12 interviews conducted.

External influence

It emerged from comments by learners, from both ex-Model C schools and township schools, that some parents do not see the importance of choosing a school for their children. They depend on other people in the community to do so. Figure 1 clarifies this statement. The statement is supported by the following quotes:

Question: "Whose choice was it for you to be in this school?"
Answers: "*My pre-primary school teacher chose the school for me.*"
   "*My aunt chose the school for me.*" (The aunt is more educated than the parents of the learner)
   "*I was influenced by my friends.*"
   "*It was my Granny's choice.*"
   "*It was my mom and dad's choice.*"
   "*I chose the school for myself.*"
   "*My mother's choice.*"

When children are in pre-primary schools their educators usually have specific primary schools that they prefer. This is how the educators influence parents to send their children to certain schools that they recommend.

Sometimes when the family has relatives who are more educated they rely on them for advice on school matters.
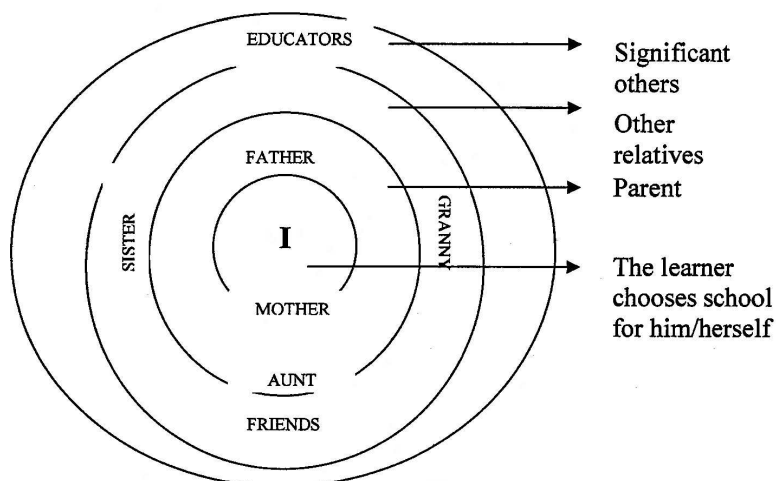
Figure 1 School choice, as influenced by different stakeholders

Some learners, whose parents are unemployed, live with their grandparents. The grandmothers keep to the traditional ways by choosing schools at which their grandchildren will learn about their culture. The choice is therefore for a township school with learners and educators from their ethnic group. Apart from the cultural aspect, school fees are also low in Sharpeville — on average R50 per learner per year (Principals meeting, 19 February 2003 at Mohlodi High School) — as compared to suburban schools and therefore more affordable for the grandparents who are dependent on pension incomes.

Other learners again are able to convince their parents about the kind of schools they would like to attend. In some cases they are influenced by their friends.

Pastoral care

All schools are supposed to be safe places for children during the day. This places tremendous pressure on school communities to offer integrated and holistic pastoral care programmes within the educational environment. This statement is supported by the following quotes:

"*At my school, gates are locked against strangers. We are safe.*"
"*My parents say the school is safe.*"

It emerged from the township schools that during lunch time, children get food from the school. This means learners do not leave the school premises; which ensures their safety. The government feeding scheme focuses on individual children whilst yielding tangible results for society as a whole. Using food to get the poor learners to come to school is a simple way to maintain learner enrolment. The following quotes are from ex-Model C schools:

"*At my school we share feelings with our teachers.*"
"*After my mother's death I was counselled by my principal and school manager. Now I feel better.*"

Discipline

Good discipline is the result of good management and committed educators. Most ex-Model C schools set an example for some township schools when it comes to teaching and learner control. Educators teach effectively and learners learn. Educators respect learners and attend to their learning problems. This statement is supported by the quotes in Table 2. The following quotes are from township schools:

"*Children are very naughty in my school*".
"*They make noise and we are always punished for that.*"
"*The teacher beats us with a stick.*"

When learners are kept busy in class with school work they are bound to be noisy as they discuss and share ideas. If they work individually in the workbooks and they are expected to be silent, the educator should be going around supervising, guiding and checking on whether

Table 2 Discipline

Ex-Model C schools	Township schools
We are well taught at my school We are always kept busy in class	*We do not get homework for weekends and school holidays*
We share our problems with friends and teachers	*My class teacher is not good to me. She refuses to explain difficult things to me in class. She says I do not listen. Therefore I know nothing.* (The learner showed sadness close to tears)
At my school we respect one another (One sees beautiful smiles on faces of learners as they speak)	*There is bullying in my school and theft is a common practice. Children fight one another and teachers do not care about it. Teachers beat us with sticks.*

each one is doing the right thing. Therefore there will be no reason to punish them if the educator is fully involved in activities of the class.

All of the above comparisons give rise to the decrease of numbers in the township public primary schools and an increase in the school role of ex-Model C schools.

Opportunities for learning

It emerged from ex-Model C schools that learners are keen to acquire knowledge and skills and to keep up the pace with forces of change. They dearly want quality education. This statement is supported by the following quotes:

"*We get a lot of homework. I enjoy science. We do things practically.*"
"*We get a lot of homework. We learn English, Maths and we have computer classes.*"
"*I love my school. We are well taught. It helps us to speak good English and Afrikaans.*"
"*I like art.*"
"*I enjoy singing at school.*"

My ideal school

From the research, it became evident that learners regard a school as ideal if it has:
• Affordable school fees;
• A specific religion;
• Sufficient resources; and
• Sports facilities.

When the school fees are high, a school governing body is in a better position to develop the school where necessary, for instance, building up the new library or computer class. They can improve the premises by erecting proper sports facilities and supplying the staff with sufficient resources. But when the fees are low there is nothing major that can be done except to maintain the basic school services such as paying levies, telephone, and electricity.

Learners are attracted to schools with inviting environments, which are more easily attained with sufficient funds than without. Specific religion schools are usually the most expensive and attractive ones. Although quality education is part of their religious ethos and the values underlying the ethos strengthen the values and faith learned at home, some parents cannot afford it. This is supported by the following quote:

"*Yes, I would like to be in school X* (religion) *but my parents have no money for it, cannot afford it.*"

Faller (2003:8) contends that the policy, religion and education are the outcomes of a vigorous engagement between the Department of Education and the religious sector of South African society. It affirms the rights to religious freedom and to the equitable treatment of all religions, while recognising different spheres of competence for the school and for the religious community with respect to religion. At the same time it reflects clear support for the promotion of religion and religious activities in schools.

It emerged from the individual interviews that one of the things that attract the township learners to ex-Model C schools, is the inviting environment one sees from a distance. The beautiful nature rich premises, the sports facilities (soccer fields, basketball fields, tennis courts, swimming pools), and multipurpose halls are extremely inviting. So are the resources such as textbooks, computer classes, laboratories, and libraries. These statements are supported by the following quotes:

"*I like my school for its beautiful buildings and beautiful toilets. We have lots of sports activities and facilities. My mother also likes it.*"

"*My school is the best because it is clean and has beautiful playgrounds and hall for prayer and hymn singing. We receive medals and certificates in the hall.*"

The department must ensure the timeous provision of textbooks to schools. Then educators and learners are responsible for using them properly and keeping them safe. At the end of each year learners are expected to bring books back to school as they move to the next standard. Sometimes the learners fail to comply with the rule as they become careless and lose them. Possibly schools should use a policy of book hire. Learners could hire textbooks each year for an amount set by the school governing body. That would train children to keep their schoolbooks neat, tidy and safe. They would be more responsible in caring for school property. Book hiring would also help the school to raise funds and buy more necessary resources. These remarks are supported by the following quotes:

"*In my school we do not have enough text books. Therefore we have to share the few that are left.*"

Question: "Why do you have the shortage of books?"

Answer: "*Some of the ex pupils of our school did not return the books at the end of the year.*"

"*I want to learn how to use computer, therefore I want to change my school to X* (ex-Model C school)."

An ideal school brings all these aspects to the attention of prospective learners and parents by way of a strategic marketing plan.

Limitations of the research
- The researcher conducted the individual interviews with learners in the presence of their mothers. Fathers were not available.
- Limited literature is available for school choice in South Africa.

Recommendations
From the research, the following recommendations are made to improve the situation in township public schools (see Table 1).

External influence
Some parents did not take the initiative to find schools for their children. Some respondents were expected to find schools for themselves. Parents depended on other relatives like aunts, grannies, sisters, and other significant others, such as friends and educators.

The involvement of both parents in the education of their children is essential. Parents must find out how a school operates before they decide to choose it. They should visit the school and see the environment, feel the atmosphere, and be satisfied with a number of things before they make a choice.

On the other hand the school could have a logo, placed in a conspicuous position, so that the community can see it and read it on their letterhead, for example:
- Setjhaba Primary School for happiness
- Naledi Primary School for excellence
- 10/10 school for all
  (Bisschoff, Du Plessis & Smith, 2004)

Schools should market themselves by sending brochures, prospectuses, fliers and posters to the community before the end of a year. Parents of the school could be invited together with their friends and neighbours on the day of prize-giving for outstanding achievements of learners. At this occasion learners could entertain the audience by rendering some cultural items such as *Mokgibo* and *Mokorotlo* (typical South Sotho dances). These are some of the things that will guide the parents to make rational school choices based on facts.

Pastoral care
It emerged from the study that learners prefer schools that are caring and educators who are thoughtful. They want to be loved, to be respected, and to be listened to.

Caring
A Sharpeville school should cater for the needy children in the school. Besides the food supplies all disadvantaged schools receive from the government (feeding scheme), they should provide clothes and books. Learners should be encouraged to share and to help one another. For instance, giving away old uniforms and used books to the school in order to help needy ones would be a fine gesture. All this will make a Sharpeville school a caring school and would project educators as thoughtful.

For pastoral care to be more successful in schools, the governing body and the school management team could involve other community services in school matters that are beyond their control. For instance there may be representatives from social services, health services, Home Affairs, HIV/AIDS, non-governmental organisations, community groups, Child Protection Unit, police, legal advisors, and counsellors. These people would render assistance when there are problems at the school that concern their field of speciality. Particulars of these representatives should be available at the school, such as name, address, contact telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address and the name of the organisations they serve. These particulars will be helpful when any of these organisations are urgently needed by the school.

Counselling
With the high level of child abuse in South Africa, educators could be in a situation where learners might want to confide in them as educators. It emerged from the study that learners chose a specific school, because it was helpful during the time of sorrow of a friend of relative. After deaths of family members they receive counselling from the principal of the school. It is essential and therefore recommended that some educators in each school be trained in basic counselling skills.

Table 3   Regulations for learners

Expected standard of conduct	Alleged misconduct or infringement	Recommended disciplinary action	
		First incident	Repeated or second incident
1. Learners will behave honestly and conduct themselves with integrity.	Tampering with possessions of others Dishonesty, lying or unfair play	Counselling Counselling and detention	Parental contact Parental contact
2. Learners will be punctual and observe time keeping practices of the school.	Late coming Playing truant	Break detention Detention	Parental contact Parental contact
3. Learners will maintain sound relations with others and respect the dignity of other persons.	Swearing and use of bad language Verbal or insulting abuse of others Racial comments or insults	Counselling Counselling/Detention Counselling/Parental contact	Detention Parental contact Suspension

Good communication

Catholic Education News (1999:8) covers skills such as listening skills for good communication with learners at school, as well as hints for dealing with violence and reconciliation on a regular basis. Some of the worthwhile hints to ensure a caring environment in the school are:

- Find somewhere safe and quiet where you can speak to the child without being interrupted.
- Put a sign on your door saying "DO NOT DISTURB" and if there is a phone take it off the hook.
- Listen with your "inner" ear and feelings.
- Control your own reactions.
- Eliminate hasty judgements.
- Never interrupt.
- Listen to feelings.
- Assume nothing about the learner.
- Keep your language simple and allow for silence.
- Do not touch the learner if he/she feels uncomfortable.

Respect

Learners will always feel comfortable at a school where they are respected by educators and other learners. Educators, who respect children, get respect from learners in turn. Learners always want to imitate their educators. Learners must be taught how to respect one another and how to respect the property of others; not to steal or destroy it, not to be a bully, not to use vulgar language, and not to hurt others in any way. They must be taught how to love one another and how to care for others. It would be wise to restore the qualities of culture among learners, such as "I am sorry", "Thank you" and "Good morning". Such practices make a difference and would show a good sign of respect among learners. All of this makes the school more attractive to the prospective learners and their parents and therefore influence school choice.

Discipline

Under this category the following sub-categories will be discussed: theft, corporal punishment, and security.

Theft

Some schools operate in a disciplined manner because of the influence of effective educators. The learners therefore get the opportunity to be attended to individually by educators without disturbances. When learners do not behave well at school, much time is wasted by solving problems instead of concentrating on school work. For instance, some learners lose their property such as pens, books, or money through theft. Stealing causes unhappiness among learners and it also shows lack of discipline among learners.

Schools must have policies drawn up for the management of the school. At the time of registration or admission of learners the parents should receive the code of conduct for learners with alternative measures that will be taken by the school to control discipline. Parents and learners must sign the admission form, thereby committing themselves to adhere to the school regulations. Table 3 gives examples of regulations that could be included in the Code of Conduct to control discipline in primary schools.

Corporal punishment

It emerged from the study that there are educators who still inflict corporal punishment on learners by using a stick.

The Schools Act (RSA, 1996b: Section 10) makes it clear that corporal punishment may no longer be used in public or independent (private) schools as a means of punishment. In addition, Section 12 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. It is therefore illegal for anybody to apply corporal punishment. In addition to formal corporal punishment, non-formal uses of force such as slapping and rough handling are also prohibited. Anybody who ignores this regulation and applies corporal punishment at a school, commits an offence and can be charged in a court of law and punished.

Security

The Constitution (RSA, 1996a) states that everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person. It emerged from the interviews that parents prefer to take their children to schools with safe environments.

Proper fencing for the school is strongly recommended. Gate control by a qualified security person would be appropriate. Visits by appointment is also recommended. Identification of visitors should be formal and a visitor's book must be kept. Alarm systems for all schools are necessary. The above hints could help the school to prevent harmful elements from entering school premises.

Opportunities for learning

Primary school learners know what they want from schools. Their expectations are high and if these are not met by the school, they will consider moving or changing to another school. Some learners commended their schools for the quality education they received.

Mathematics, science and technology

These are foremost subjects of their choices. They are aware of how important mathematics and science are in their lives. They want to learn how to use a computer and therefore would prefer to be in a school that has computer classes.

Arts and music

Learners of all levels enjoy arts and music at schools. If they develop and become skilled in these subjects, they could follow a variety of careers in different disciplines and be able to make a living for themselves.

Languages

Learners at primary schools, whose first language is English or Afrikaans, are attracted by ex-Model C schools . Some learners who are in ex-Model C schools want to change their English schools to Afrikaans schools, because they want to speak good Afrikaans and others from public primary schools want to be in ex-Model C schools in order to

improve their command of the language.

Educators of different races in one school would make a difference as far as languages are concerned. Some African educators are employed in some ex-Model C schools, but it is not common to see white educators coming to teach in the township schools. That is one thing that would stop learner mobility from township schools, since they would receive first-hand exposure to English and Afrikaans from real sources.

My ideal school
Affordable fees
The parents of learners attending the ex-Model C schools earn sufficient incomes to afford the school fees. According to the Schools Act (RSA, 1996b: Section 36), every school community must determine its school fees. Suburban schools are more expensive. One would assume that parents from townships would not be able to afford this, but it is not always the case. Many parents from townships send their children to the suburban schools irrespective of the costs involved, because they can afford to pay. Some learners who are still in township schools are willing to be in ex-Model C schools, but their parents experience financial problems, due to the fact that they are unemployed. This implies that the problem of learner mobility from the township schools is urgent and requires the serious attention of the department of education. Serious precautions need to be taken concerning the restoration of proper schools for effective teaching and learning.

Specific religion schools
Faller (2003:8) portrays the policy for religion in schools as follows:
> The policy Religion and Education is the outcome of a vigorous engagement between the Department of Education and the religious sector of South African society. It affirms the rights to religious freedom and to the equitable treatment of all religions, while recognising different spheres of competence for the school and for the religious community with respect to religion.

The religion schools are mainly kept for their faith. Most of them are private and operate independently from the government. They have to raise their own funds to maintain themselves. The Government offers a certain percentage of subsidy that does not cover all the costs of each school. Therefore school fees in the private religion schools are very high and for this reason they can only serve the historically advantaged learners. In that sense they remain elitist. Many children would love to attend these schools for the quality education they offer. Unfortunately these schools are out of reach for parents of limited means.

It is recommended that Government seriously take heed of the contributions of the religion schools to society and to our country. The Government must support them fully and unconditionally with finance. There is always a significant difference between the public and religion schools with the latter scoring higher than public schools in matric results. If they were more affordable that would make more choices available to parents and learners about schools.

Sufficient resources
The insufficient supply of textbooks in township schools is a possible reason why learners choose to be in ex-Model C schools. In an attempt to solve this problem school principals should supply the department with the estimated learner enrolment figures (requisition) for the following year. Books are the first and foremost resources that would promote a culture of learning and teaching in township schools. It would also prevent learners from moving to ex-Model C schools.

Educators are human resources in schools and they play a leading role in education. The department of education should motivate them to do their work professionally by supplying schools with the necessary physical resources. Township schools need to be developed. The department of education should make money available for construction of the schools' infrastructure. Many township schools do not have laboratories, libraries and computer laboratories. These schools were disadvantaged during the previous dispensation. These schools are not attractive in any way to learners who live close to them. That is why they choose to attend schools that are well resourced.

Sports facilities
It emerged from the study that learners from township schools are attracted by beautiful premises of ex-Model C schools in suburban areas. These schools have a variety of sports facilities such as basketball, soccer and netball fields; tennis courts and swimming pools. Learners enjoy sports at schools. They get a chance to develop their potential in sport activities. The department of education should consider erecting these types of facilities in township schools. Parents should also assist by lobbying companies to put up these sport facilities. Qualified trainers for different sports activities should be employed by school governing bodies for learners, on a part-time basis. For instance, a person who has had training for life-saving could be employed to teach the learners how to swim.

Conclusion
These recommendations can serve as a whole school development plan to make township schools more attractive to prospective learners and parents so that these schools can play their rightful place in the public school system of South Africa. In this endeavour the department of education must play a supportive role, not only on the level of expertise, but also on the level of funding.

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