

**THE MANAGEMENT OF PATIAL ABSENTEEISM AND LATE COMING AT FOUR
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE TSHWANE WEST (D15)**

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the subject

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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January 2012

Declaration

I declare that: **The management of partial absenteeism and Late coming at four public secondary schools of the Tshwane West (D15)**, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

Date

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following people who have helped me to make it over the hump:

- My supervisor Dr P Mafora for his expert guidance.
- My beloved wife Nnyadi Boitumelo Lydia, for her patience and understanding that I had to complete this study. The solitude you endured was worth it Morategi!.
- To my beloved children: Mpho, Lesego and Baarabile, Dikolobe ga di lape ebile ga di šitwe ke selo! May God continue to shower you with blessings wisdom and opportunities to realise all that you are yearning for in life!
- To my wonderful handsome grand children: Tlotlego, Zenzozothando and Sentle. This is for you guys. Thuto ga e golelwe!
- To Dr J Lotz, thank you for reading the first drafts of the proposal and your words of encouragement. You believed in me Friend! The project has been accomplished.
- To the Gauteng Provincial Department of Basic Education, The Tshwane West Educational District (15) and all four SMTs of public secondary schools that participated in this project, Thank you! Your assistance is highly appreciated.

May the Good and Merciful God Bless you all!

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my dearest mother Josephina Mmatemane Ngwa' Mashile, who was recently recalled to the world of my ancestors. I will always love and cherish your memories Mama! Ke tsotsone ngwana mmane! Ke kene ke sa tšhuta Motau!

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to determine the management of the phenomenon of learners' partial absenteeism and late coming at four public secondary schools of the Tshwane West (D15), in the light of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Circular 13 of 2002.

Respondents targeted for data collection were members of the School Management Teams (SMTs) of the four public secondary schools (n35). To address the initial propositions of this study, a qualitative case study research design and its techniques for data collection and analysis were used.

The emergent findings indicated that: absenteeism during school hours (partial absenteeism) and late coming, which also applies to educators, are rife across the four participating public schools. SMT members' limited knowledge of school management in general, and the GDE's Circular 13 in particular, were found to be the main barrier to the effective management of partial absenteeism and late coming. Additional contributory factors were learner's attitude and conduct and poor school infrastructure. Recommendations to help address the problem under investigation are also made.

Key terms: authorised/unauthorised absenteeism; circular 13 of 2002; discipline; implementation; late coming; partial absenteeism; school management team; Tshwane West Educational (D15), truancy.

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Chapter 1

General orientation to the study

1.1 Introduction and Background

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the focus of this study, which seeks to investigate: the management of the phenomenon of learners' partial absenteeism and late coming at four public secondary schools of the Tshwane West (D15), in the light of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Circular 13 of 2002. The study is evaluative in nature, as it attempts to ascertain the experiences, views and ways of School Management Teams (SMTs) in regard to the implementation of the circular's regulatory measures concerning the disciplinary challenges posed by such learners. In this study, 'learners' partial absenteeism is understood to refer to those learners who come to school and are registered as present for the day, but later bunk classes or even leave the school premises without permission or visit their homes during lunch break, and never return at all to complete the school day. Furthermore, late coming refers to learners who arrive at school later than the official stipulated starting times especially in the morning (GDE, 2002:2).

As a regulatory tool, the circular contains guiding measures meant to assist SMTs in monitoring and controlling late coming and partial absenteeism or bunking of class. The assumption is that measures, as promulgated in the circular, will inculcate discipline in learners, thus ensuring that school times, especially the arrival and starting times in the morning, and after breaks, are observed (GDE, 2002:2). Over and above the circular contains imperatives that SMTs need to

consider when exercising their managerial duties, as stated that: “In order to ensure the safety of learners at public schools at all times during the school day the Department will be strictly ensuring the implementation of the relevant legislation and policies to attain this purpose” (GDE, 2002:2).

To guarantee safety, from the year 2002, all the GDE schools were mandated to lock the school gates at all times during school hours including breaks. In other words, once learners have entered the school premises, they must remain put and attend all classes for the rest of the school day. Therefore, the study will also look into the safety measures as guaranteed in the circular, and into how they apply in the schools under investigation. Pertaining to late coming, the circular mandates that: “... the school code of conduct must deal with the issue of late coming and a system must be put in place to monitor late coming” (GDE, 2002:2). The systems referred to include, among others, the use and keeping of registers to register latecomers and visitors to the school, the purpose being to keep records, particularly of regular latecomers, and to build a history of how the school goes about dealing with cases of indiscipline among its learners, for future reference (Squelch, 2000:46).

It should also be borne in mind that, as a regulatory procedure, Circular 13 of 2002 focuses on partial absenteeism during school hours as opposed to total absenteeism, where a learner is absent from school for the entire school day (Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) & Joint Education Trust (JET), 2007:3).

The circular has a three pronged purpose, which is aimed at:

- ensuring that no learner leaves the school property during school hours;
- providing the conditions under which a learner may leave the school property during school hours; and
- indicating the processes that must be followed should a learner be required to leave the school property during school hours (GDE, 2002:2).

The three prongs, which suggest how learner' late coming and absenteeism from school during school hours could be managed, are the subjects of Chapter 2 where they will be described in detail. What follows is the conceptual framework which encapsulates the source of interest to undertake the study.

1.2 The conceptual framework

The impetus to undertake this research was provoked by an article that appeared in the *Daily Dispatch* (5 October, 2007) in which the then deputy president of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, lamented the problem of learners who roam the streets of South Africa, in full school uniform, during school hours. He acknowledged learner indiscipline as a serious challenge to education and the South African society in general. He further suggested that learners who are found doing so should be arrested. Thus, the article reminded the researcher of the GDE Circular 13 of 2002. Furthermore, the interest was provoked by the measures, provided for in the circular, to:

- contain learners within the school property during school hours;
- foster class attendance;
- stop late coming;
- prevent learners from roaming the streets during school hours; and
- ensure the safety of the school community and property.

The five themes mentioned above led to the formulation of the problem statement as it appears below. These themes constitute the conceptual framework within which the literature review will be structured. The overriding conceptual framework will be school management, learners partial absenteeism and late coming. Accordingly Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2010:12), views the process as a conceptual structure built by scientists to explain human behaviour. This view befits the purpose of this study, which

deals with behavioural problems of learners within the social context of teaching and learning. Furthermore (ibid), these scholars argue such a framework to be a composition of interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the sole purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena being studied (Kerlinger, 1986: 12).

1.3 Problem statement

It is almost a decade since the promulgation of Circular 13 of 2002, yet learners in school uniform, roaming the streets during school hours, are still a common sight. The observations brought the researcher to share the view that such learners are ill-disciplined class bunkers or learners who just refuse to adhere to school rules (Hallam & Roaf, 1995:6; Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes, 2008:11). The phenomena of absenteeism from school during school hours and learners arriving late, are current topical issues often reported by various media in South Africa as issues of national concern, (cf. 1.2; Sunday Times, 14/08/2011), and thus represent some of the serious challenges that SMTs are grappling with at the moment in the quest to create conducive teaching and learning environments in the schools. However, as Carlier, Voerman and Gersons (2000:88) would argue, problems evoke special kinds of questions for which knowledge is sought in order to resolve them.

It is against this background that the following question which gives guidance to the researcher's thinking and reasoning, based on the five themes mentioned above (cf. 1.2), is posed to derive answers to the problem at hand (Pellissier, 2010:21):

- Why do learners, of the GDE, continue to arrive late for school, bunk classes, and why are they frequently seen roaming the streets during school hours, irrespective of the presence of the GDE Circular 13 promulgated in 2002?

To facilitate the research process the question asked above was broken down into the following specific questions:

- What are the experiences and perceptions of the School Management Teams (SMTs) regarding Circular 13 of 2002?
- What are the challenges to the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?
- What are the disciplinary procedures employed by the sampled schools' SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?

It needs noting that for the convenience of this study, the above three specific questions were each further divided into sub-questions to facilitate the interview process, (see the interview schedule, Appendix list). It also needs noting that in its explications of learners' partial absenteeism the study borrows much from the literature on total absenteeism, mainly because not much research, particularly in South Africa, has been done in this area.

Subsequently, the above research questions led to the formulation of the research aims and objectives of the study.

1.4 The research aims and objectives

The main aim of this study is to investigate the implementation of the GDE' Circular 13 of 2002 by SMT's of selected public schools of the Tshwane West (D15). The focus therefore falls on the intended or the desired outcomes that reflect the aspirations and expectations of the study (Pellissier, 2010:23). Thus, to clarify the topic and to accomplish the aim, of this study, the following related objectives were formulated to:

- determine the experiences and perceptions of the School Management Teams (SMTs) regarding Circular 13 of 2002.
- identify challenges to the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002.
- evaluate disciplinary programs and procedures employed by the sampled schools' SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002.

The above listed objectives are steps to be taken in the endeavour to answer the research questions. In order to achieve this, the correct choice and use of a particular research design and methods of data collection, were critical.

1.5 Research Design and Methods

Although research design and methods applicable to this study are the subject of discussion in Chapter 3, it is important to introduce them, in this introductory chapter, as the researcher maps out the strategic approaches and procedures that the study intends following. Thus, the following paragraphs briefly introduce the research design adopted for the study and the data collection techniques.

1.5.1 Research Design

Cohen, et al (in Maree, 2010:33) define the research design according to its utility, in describing procedures for conducting a study, the purpose being to assist to find appropriate answers to the research questions. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the appropriate research design is the qualitative case study research design, adopted

because of its idiographic character that focuses on understanding individual behaviours. The choice was also influenced by the notion that a case study can, characteristically, be qualitative and thus, "... best studied as a separate type of qualitative research" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:345).

Furthermore, researchers such as Creswell (1998:2) define research design in a qualitative context to be, "the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem, to writing the narrative". Mouton (2001:55) also posits that a research design, qualitative or quantitative, is the blueprint, a detailed plan, a map of the various elements of research and how they relate to each other (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2009:268). Thus, this study, views the research design as the framework that details how a researcher intends conducting his/her investigation (Chabalala, 2005:9).

These views are in line with Pellissier (2010:12) who further explains research design as, "an arrangement that allows for the collection and analysis of data that combine relevance of research with economy in procedure; a plan that allows for plausible conclusions or inferences from systematic observation". Therefore, the qualitative case study research design is regarded as appropriate, as the study seeks to employ the qualitative research method and its strategies for data collection in assessing the above mentioned phenomenon.

1.5.2 Sampling

In a qualitative case study such as this one, the research process of sampling is important for data collection, interpretation and presentation of findings (Flick, 2009:115). Etymologically, the process of sampling is derived from the noun sample, which denotes a specimen, a selection of a small representative part of what is being studied (Maree, 2010:79). Regarding sampling, the emphasis is on the detail and quality of individuals or small group's experiences (van Wyk, 1996:147). Accordingly, Mothata,

et al (2000:150) describe a sample as, "... consisting of individuals selected for the purpose of research from a large group of persons called the 'population'". Thus, adding to the explanations Maree (2010:79) argues the sampling decisions as "... made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions". In this study the decision is to research the SMTs of four selected public schools of the Tshwane West Educational District, as implementers of Circular 13 since the year 2002, which thus define them as bearers of the data needed for this study.

Among the most commonly used sampling strategies this study adopts a combination of purposive, convenient, criterion, etc, as tenets of sampling, because of their overlapping characteristics such as: selecting participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Maree, 2010:79). Their selection is also due to, the participants being most likely to possess the experience and knowledge or having insight into the research topic (Maree, 2010:79). Participants do not represent the wider population and findings are thus not generalisable (Cohen, et al, 2010:115).

Explanations about how the sampling strategies were utilised for data gathering purposes are the subjects of chapter three of this study. Therefore, what follows are brief notes on the data collection and processing techniques adopted by this study.

1.5.3 Data collection techniques and processing

In this study data will be collected and processed in terms of the following qualitative research techniques:

1.5.3.1 Observations

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010:362), the technique of field observation is fundamental to qualitative research. As some scholars argue, in field observation, the researcher's involvement means that s/he enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know, be known and trusted by them, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed (van Wyk, 1996:131; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982:3). The importance of this technique lies in its usefulness, as the researcher is simultaneously a member of the group s/he is studying, and a researcher carrying out the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:314). When it comes to reporting, the researcher tells the story from the point of view of the participant rather than that of a bystander expert who passes judgement on participants (Creswell, 1998:16).

In the case of this study, this technique was adopted as it was convenient to observe the situation as it prevails in the sampled schools, whilst at the same time, the researcher used the opportunity to conduct a site inspection of the school grounds and properties. The main objective was to check on observance and adherence to stipulations of Circular 13 of 2002. Field notes were taken, for the purpose of corroborating the researcher's thoughts and observations of the field or environments that were researched (Flick, 2009:206).

1.5.3.2 Review of school documents

Owing to the research problem, the researcher found it essential to evaluate the *codes of conduct for learners* of the sampled schools, class and subject registers. Basically,

codes of conduct for learners, serve two important functions; to establish a disciplined school environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning, as well as to inform learners about ways in which they are supposed to conduct themselves (Squelch, 2000:19). On the other, class and subject or period registers are crucial tools for effective monitoring and management of class bunking and late coming.

1.5.3.3 Focus groups Interviews

As a data collection technique, the concept “interview” is defined by different scholars to be a process that occurs between two or more people who communicate, converse and negotiate for a specific aim linked to some agreed subject matter. The sole objective is to ascertain what other people feel and think about their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:1; Cormack, 2000:294).

In addition, McMillan, et al (2010:363-365) define a focus group as a qualitatively sampled homogeneous group, consisting of a small number of people gathered to be interviewed. The concept “small” here signifies five to seven members in a group, particularly when dealing with complex topics such as this one (cf. 1.1). Characteristically, the focus group technique furnishes primary evidence, as data is collected verbatim from the interviewees. The main purpose being to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Cohen, et al, 2010:129; de Vos, et al, 2009:272). That is the main reason why focus groups were considered for this study.

Two focus groups were identified per sampled school. The first group comprised the principal and his/her two deputies – top management, as this was found to be the arrangement with all the four sampled schools. The second group consisted of all

HODs, who differed in number per sampled school. Both groups constitute the SMTs of their respective schools, and are collectively responsible for the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002.

1.5.4 Ethical considerations

Ethics concern moral principles. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:15), the main focus of educational research is placed on human beings; therefore, it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. In this instance, permission to conduct the research was first sought from the GDE and the senior education managers of the Tshwane West Educational District. Permission letters from the two educational offices mentioned above were handed personally, by the researcher, to the principals of the four participating schools, upon which dates for the interviews were determined.

Before the commencement of every interview session, participants were duly made conscious of the voluntary nature of their involvement. The objective was to make them aware that though their participation and contribution to the research was valuable, if for any reason during the proceedings they felt uncomfortable, they were free to recuse themselves. The anonymity of their names is ensured by the use of numbers instead of actual names, which applies to the sampled schools as well (cf. Chapter 4). Participating schools, the GDE and the Tshwane West Educational District, were each promised a copy of the study on completion of the research.

What follows are the definitions and clarifications of related concepts in the study.

1.6 Definitions and clarification of related concepts

In the context of this study:

A *Regulation* is an authoritative pronouncement which serves as a prescribed rule governing an action. In this instance, it is the Gauteng Department of Education *Circular 13 of 2002*. As a regulation, it constitutes guiding measures to assist SMTs to manage the challenges indicated.

No fee schools: these are schools categorised as poor. Ranked at levels 1-3 on the national quintile system, as contemplated in circular 24/2008.

Fee schools: these are wealthy schools that have assumed the section 21 status. Ranked at levels 4-5 on the national quintile system.

The national quintile system: according to South Africa. Info (accessed from the internet: 20 June 2009) a quintile is a national ranking method used by the Department of Education to measure how poor a school is, with quintile one being the poorest of them all.

Implementation: a process of putting what has been planned into effect. In this instance, it is Circular 13 of 2002 which needs to be properly implemented by the SMTs to combat challenges of learners' absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming.

School Management Team (SMT): a team of educators charged with the day to day administration and management of a school. It is comprised of the principal as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Managing Director (MD) of the school, deputy/deputies, Heads of Departments (HODs) and senior educators. As implementers, they are expected to perform their administrative and managerial duties, in this case concerning absenteeism and late coming during school hours, following the dictates of Circular 13 of 2002.

Tshwane West (District 15): one of the Gauteng educational districts that geographically comprise public schools of Ga-Rankuwa Township, Mabopane, Winterveldt, North of Tshwane City including Pretoria North, Akasia and Hercules, and Soshanguve West.

Soshanguve: is one of the largest and most densely populated black townships in the Gauteng province of the Republic of South Africa. The residential areas consist of both formal and informal dwellings, characterised by socio-economic differences. The township is located forty kilometres north of Pretoria. Educationally it is divided into two districts, namely Tshwane North Educational District 3 and Tshwane West Educational District 15, where the study is based. Etymologically, the name Soshanguve is a derivative from:

- SO = Sotho (Tswana, North & South Sotho, grouped together according to their dialectic differences, but all linguistically classified as Sotho languages);
- SHA = Shangane (Tsonga speaking people);
- NGU = Nguni (isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele and isiSwati, grouped together according to their dialectic differences, but all linguistically classified as Nguni languages;
- VE= Venda.

Informal settlement or unauthorised housing: unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building municipality regulations, (Glossary of environment statistics, Studies in Methods, Series F, No.67, United Nations, New York, 1997: [http:// stats.Oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?id=1351](http://stats.Oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?id=1351)).

Discipline: is here defined in line with Rogers (1998:11) who considers it to be a teacher directed activity whose main objective is to lead, guide, direct, manage or confront a learner about behaviour that disrupts the rights of others (Squelch, 2000:2). Google Scholar (accessed: 2010/06/16) further explains it as a reference to students complying with a code of behaviour often known as the school rules. These rules may, for example, define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behaviour and work ethics.

Class bunking: the action of a learner who deliberately absents him/herself from class, or leaves the school property during school hours, without permission. This includes learners who visit their homes for lunch but never return to the school to finish the school day, (cf.1.1).

Truants: learners who, deliberately, arrive late at school, use drugs or gamble on the school premises, bunk classes or leave the school premises during school hours without permission.

Rent a parent: a fraudulent practice, common among truanting learners, whom the school will send home to bring parents along for their disciplinary hearings but will instead enter into an agreement with strangers to masquerade as their parents by paying money, buying them liquor or through sexual favours.

Public secondary school: refers to any education institution registered, administered and funded by the state. In the Republic of South Africa, this category of schools admits learners in Grades 8-12.

1.7 Delimitation of the field of study

The effective implementation of the provisions of Circular 13 of 2002 is an essential responsibility of all public schools under the jurisdiction of the GDE. However, as this is a qualitative case study in design, the investigation is limited to the SMTs of four public senior secondary schools of Tshwane West Educational District. The motivation for sampling these is based on the fact that, with case studies, the selection of small groups gives the researcher a chance to make a detailed examination of one setting (Mothata et al, 2000:150), or conduct an in-depth analysis of unique single entities or cases (McMillan, et al, 2010:102). In this instance therefore, the purpose of small groups is to help the study to have a better understanding of the problem at hand and to

postulate recommendations aimed at resolving the problems as contemplated in this study, (cf.1.3).

1.8 Limitations of the study

The Gauteng DoE Circular 13 of 2002 is meant for all public schools in the province. The circular is directed to the following categories of educational managers: principals and staff of all public ordinary schools and schools for learners with special education needs; all divisional managers and senior managers at head office and district offices; members of school governing bodies; teacher organisations and unions and relevant non-governmental organisations (GDE, 2002). However, this study focuses on School Management Teams (SMTs) of four public senior secondary schools only, out of the total sum of 55 public senior secondary schools found in the Tshwane West Educational District, thus excluding others such as public schools meant for learners with special education needs.

1.9 Chapter division

Chapter 1

Chapter one orientates the reader to the study, in which a background to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Circular 13 of 2002 is provided. Also appearing in this chapter are: the problem statement, research aim and objectives, research design and methodology, clarification of key concepts, delimitation of the field of study, limitations, chapter division, and the conclusion.

Chapter 2

This chapter contains the literature survey. Thus relevant literature including supporting legislative frameworks is reviewed in order to: provide a theoretical framework for the study; define partial absenteeism in terms of authorised and unauthorised absenteeism and late-coming; discuss the main purpose of this circular according to its three phases; and consider factors contributing to the absence of learners from school during school hours and late-coming; as well as review international and local trends in managing the phenomenon under study.

Chapter 3

This chapter contains the study's research design and methodology. It defines both case study and sampling as designs adopted for this study. The rationale for the adoption. The data collection strategies: observations, review of school documentation and focus groups interviews adopted are explained in detail. Ethical considerations and the approach to data presentation and analysis are also explained.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the research data which will then be subjected to critical analyses, and empirical postulations advanced. The analyses will be supported by relevant citations, which serve as control mechanisms to mirror or to refute the effectiveness (or the ineffectiveness) of the implementation and management of the said Circular 13.

Chapter 5

This is the concluding chapter that will contain: a summary of the study per chapter, a summary of the key findings and conclusions, recommendations for their implementation, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introductory overview and background to the study. It was argued that notwithstanding the promulgation of Circular 13 of 2002, learners' late coming and partial absenteeism persist. The problem statement, aim and objectives, as well as the research design and methodologies, for data collection, were also outlined.

The next chapter on literature review is premised on Whitney' (1998) argument that learners cannot learn if they are not at school. Further arguing that one of the most important tasks for educators today is to ensure that learners attend school and are thus able to receive education. Thus, among others the next chapter looks into both the local, South African, and international best practices on the management of partial absenteeism and late coming.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Following the introductory overview of the study outline in the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter will be presenting the literature review, as suggested in the closing sentences of the previous chapter. The rationale for compiling a literature review is to provide a theoretical framework for this study; to expose values that underline the importance of such a review; to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under the spotlight; and to discover views of other scholars concerning the management of the disciplinary challenges mentioned (Strauss & Corbin, 1995:52; Leedy, 1997:71). It is hoped that information emerging from this literature review would clarify the research questions and subsequently resolve the research problem of the study (Hofstee, 2006:85).

In the light of the above objectives, the literature review also assesses prevailing theories and studies on safety at public schools, both local – South Africa - and international, the purpose being to learn how other people go about managing the challenges of learners' partial absenteeism or absenteeism during school hours and lateness. These, in the context of this study, are viewed as threats to the processes of teaching and learning within the formal educational framework (Cohen, et al, 2010:48). Furthermore, the study will comparatively assess the prevalence, management and monitoring of these two aspects, across the schools sampled.

Furthermore, the study adopted “the investigator’s enabling values”, suggested in Seaman and Verhonick (1982:82-88). These are explained as of assistance to the researcher in:

- determining the extent to which scholarship has developed in the field, as well as what remains to be learned;
- establishing the context, nature and significance of the research problem;
- distinguishing what is relevant or irrelevant to the study; identifying different perspectives towards the research problem, and interpreting the findings (Heckroodt, 2002:14).

To facilitate the literature review and discussion processes, the contents of this chapter are structured as follows:

- the conceptualisation of learners’ partial absenteeism and late-coming;
- learners’ partial absenteeism and late-coming: the perspective of Circular 13 of 2002;
- the purpose of Circular 13 of 2002;
- managing learner’s partial absenteeism and late coming;
- contributory factors to the challenges of: learners’ partial absenteeism and late coming.
- The conclusion.

2.2 The conceptualisation of learners’ partial absenteeism and learners’ late-coming

Despite the extensive literature which has emerged around issues of learners’ absenteeism and late coming internationally (Hallam & Roaf, 1995:6; Thambirajah, et al, 2008:11), the researcher concedes that, at the present moment, in South Africa, researched information on the phenomenon is very limited. The few educational reports

and dissertations available tangentially touch on these two concepts, merely including them in their discussion as factors that contribute to school discipline, truancy, and so on. This is apparent in, for example, studies by researchers such as; Mashiane (1997), and Moseki (2004) on *learners truancy*, Subbiah (2004) on *discipline* and Dlamini (2004) on *the learning culture of resilient schools*.

A report titled: “Learner absenteeism in the South African schooling system”, a joint study conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) and the Joint Education Trust (JET), was published in December 2007. As the title suggests, it concerns absenteeism in South Africa, in general. The main focus falls on the incidents and frequency of learners’ absence from school for the entire day. Although it does not specifically say much about late-coming, which forms an integral part of this study, it is thus far, the most important contribution available on this topic. Therefore, this study will draw some relevant information from this document as well as those previously mentioned, to strengthen its arguments.

Internationally, the literature that deals with school absenteeism, is substantial and varied (CASE & JET 2007:8). However, most of these studies also concentrate largely on full absenteeism and barely discuss the subject of learners’ lateness. Absenteeism is generalised, with researchers showing varied preferences for discussing the concept under themes such as: school non-attendance, disaffection, school refusal, school phobia, etc (Whitney, 1998:11; Hallam & Roaf, 1995:67, Reid, 1986:17).

Of importance to this study are those works that delimit and categorise their discussions into authorised and unauthorised absenteeism. The concept *authorised* is elaborated in terms of the situation where the school, with the knowledge of the parent, is responsible for granting permission for leave of absence to the learner. On the other hand, *unauthorised* absence is defined as absence where, firstly, neither the school nor the parent(s) have granted such permission to the learner and secondly, where there are no reasonable reasons why the learner, during school hours, bunked classes or left the school premises without permission. Accordingly, Thambirajah, et al (2008:11) link this indiscipline learner’s behaviour to truancy (cf. 1.3).

2.2.1 Authorised absence

According to Thambirajah, et al (2008:12) “school non-attendance” carries the same meaning as “school absenteeism”. Their argument is that the usage of the term is necessary as an umbrella term to include all those pupils who fail to attend school. Appropriate is the way they define authorised absence, which they opine is absence from school, during school hours, with permission from an educator or from any other authorised representative of the school, therefore meaning that the school has given approval in advance for the learner to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered as reasonable justification for the absence. For example: emergencies such as sudden illness or unavoidable cause (Reid, 2007: 22).

However, the notion that an authorised approval must be obtained in advance from school is well in line with Section 4.4(1), of Circular 13 of 2002, which lists the following procedure as the only one acceptable when a learner intends to leave the school property for any reason, and adds that such a learner must provide the school with a letter from the parent clearly indicating:

- the reason for leaving the school;
- attached proof (doctor’s note, etc), and/or phone numbers to confirm appointment;
- time of departure and return to school; and
- the letter bearing the signature of the parent (GDE, 2002).

Like their counterparts above, Hallam & Roaf (1995:68) categorise absenteeism according to the expectations of the school management. These and the acceptable authorisation standards are described as:

- the learner was absent with permission from an authorised person within school;
- the learner was ill or was prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;

- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious group to which the learner's family belongs;
- reason for late coming as, the school is not within a walking distance from the home of the learner, and no suitable arrangements have been made for transport to school;

The mention of the family, in the third expectation above, reminds one of the importance of family involvement, particularly that of the parents, in the life of a learner: more especially, the supportive and influential role the family plays (White Paper, Department of Education, 1996a:17; van Wyk, 1996:120; van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). In instances such as these, cooperation between school and learners' families or parents is crucial. Their good working relationship may not only save the situation but also ensure that the educative purpose is actualized (Government Gazette, No 33150). In a school where these kinds of monitoring systems exist, and the learner's absence is sanctioned based on good reasons, chances of reduction or total eradication of absenteeism and late coming are possible (Whitney, 1998:63).

2.2.2 Unauthorised absence

Unauthorized absence is defined as a situation where a learner is absent from school, during school hours, without acceptable permission from an educator or any other authorised representative of the school (Whitney, 1998:18). This includes all unjustified absence such as lateness, absence from the classroom during school hours without reason and especially truancy, wherein the learner's whereabouts is totally unknown (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:12). The latter denotes an absence which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no prior permission for leave of absence has been given. This will include instances where learners arrive late at school after the registers have been marked (Whitney, 1998:63).

In consonance with the above definition are Hallam and Roaf (1995:67) who are of the opinion that, where a learner is absent, during school hours, without prior permission, an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming the absence should be treated as unauthorized. Declaring an absence as unauthorised because the learner is unable to furnish the school with a reasonable explanation is tantamount to suggesting that the learner has been truanting. However, sometimes this may not be the case as, for instance, with respect to gender issues, the learner may feel embarrassed to disclose the reason to the educator confronting her/him at that time.

Emerging clearly from the aforementioned definitions is the aspect of the school registers, as some schools prefer marking their registers, for the day, within the first 30 minutes of their opening time (Hallam & Roaf, 1995:69). Such a registering system could be problematic. For example, in instances where the school's feeder area is very large and learners depend on public transport with its whims to get to and from school, such learners will generally be registered as absent or even worse, absent without authorisation, just because they are always late for school. Thus, schools that determine unauthorised absence by sticking to marking their registers only in the first 30 minutes of school time, may find themselves unable to keep an authentic record of attendance.

Interesting though, is the fact that absenteeism is generally treated in full, that is, a learner being absent for the whole day, and not partial, as is the case with Circular 13. In this instance, its scope has been delimited, as already indicated (cf. 2.2). One should note at this juncture that matters pertinent to a partial absenteeism will be discussed extensively in subsequent paragraphs.

2.2.3 Learners' late-coming

Whitney (1998:34) defines "late coming to school" in terms of the circumstances in which the learner finds him/herself. These are then categorised by way of: issues of transport to school, walking distance between the school and the learner's home, truancy, and so on. Further Whitney (ibid) suggests that, where the above circumstances obtain, schools will need rigorous mechanisms put in place to monitor and to evaluate learner registration (GDE, 2002:2). The emphasis here is placed on the school management's clear and constant school policies on learner attendance registration (cf. 2.2.1). In this regard, the truth is that, if school policies are not clear and constant but keep altering now and then, both learners and parents become confused.

Concurring with the preceding opinions are Hallam and Roaf (1995:69), who are emphatic about the fact that schools should discourage lateness (Government Gazette No: 33150, 2010), and should not rush the marking of registers but rather keep their registers open for a reasonable time (recommended maximum 30 minutes). They further (ibid), indicate that, where pupils miss registration and fail to provide an adequate explanation, this constitutes truancy, and they should be marked absent for that session.

Although this method of dealing with learners is another way of discouraging late coming, some kind of flexibility becomes necessary in this regard. Where possible, schools need to devise systems whereby registers are marked per lesson or after every break (Hallam & Roaf, 1995:69). In instances where learners have to commute between home and school, traffic problems may be a factor contributing to lateness. Therefore, schools will need to be sympathetic towards such learners instead of being punitive. Moreover, legally, where a learner does arrive but has missed registration, s/he must not be turned away from school for the day (GDE 2002:2; Hallam & Roaf, 1995:69).

Not turning the learner away from school means that to an extent he/she is present and the register should indicate this as such for the day. The learner's name should then be

recorded among all other latecomers and the record must be maintained by the school (GDE, 2002:2). However, it needs to be clarified that the kind of lateness being described here, usually occurs in the morning when the school day starts. During the course of the day, the concern is those learners who visit their homes during lunch break and return to school late after the resumption of school activities. What needs noting is that the Circular 13 of 2002 forbids the practice of learners visiting their homes during lunch. However where it is allowed, rigorous monitoring of the observance of starting times after break is encouraged (GDE, 2002:2).

Here again, cooperation between the school and parents is crucial if school managers are to accomplish the task of reducing and subsequently eradicating learners' late coming to school (South African Schools Act, Act No.84 of 1996).

The following paragraphs describe the given phenomena from the perspective of the circular.

2.3 Learners' partial absenteeism and late coming: the perspective of Circular 13 of 2002

As has already been indicated in preceding paragraphs, this circular concerns partial absenteeism and late-coming. Contextually, it deals with those learners who are, for instance, marked as present for the day in class registers, but for some reason known to them, leave the school premises during school hours without permission. Further, it refers to those learners who are late for school, as they have arrived after the stipulated official starting times, and have found that class registers have already been marked. Thus, they appear in the class registers as absent for the day. It also refers to learners whose schools break the law by allowing them to visit their homes during lunch break (cf. 2.2.3), with results already described (Hallam & Roaf 1995:6).

Put in its correct perspective, this circular relates more to unauthorised absenteeism and deliberate late-coming, which are linked to learners' truancy. Hence it proposes a number of disciplinary measures that should guide SMTs (cf. 1.2) in the implementation of the circular and the management of the challenges under investigation. Learners marked as present for the day but go home for lunch break but fail to return to complete the school day, or fail to turn up for a lesson or lessons, are absent without permission. Stoll (1990:23), simply classifies such learners as truants (Moseki, 2004:12).

As Whitney (1994:49) similarly argues, truancy manifests itself in, "... absence that has not been authorised by the school and where leave has not been given or approved". In consonance with this argument is the notion that explains truancy, particularly of class bunking, dodging, skipping-off, going missing or lesson picking, as occurring when the learner comes to school, is marked present in the class register for the day, but fails to turn up for a lesson or lessons (Stoll, 1990:23; Reid, 1999).

Moseki (2004:2); and Reid (2007:39) also acknowledges that truancy, in the form of absence during school hours and late coming, is a growing challenge worldwide. Nevertheless, where these kinds of misbehaviour do occur, such schools are frequently perceived as places associated with harm (Casella & Potterton, 2006:216), due to such learners who, because of their tendencies to indiscipline, affect the safety of the well behaved fellow learners. As Reid (2007: 40) would argue, it is axiomatic that truants often fall behind with their learning and similarly engage in high risk behaviour that eventually entangles them in the juvenile justice system.

Perhaps Mr Zuma was beginning from the above premise when he suggested that, learners who roam South Africa's streets during school hours, should be arrested (cf. 1.2). This suggestion, particularly from a politician, is thought provoking since it prompts questions such as: what implications would arresting children have for their constitutional rights? Would that not criminalise them? Does their roaming the streets not reflect a glaring weakness in the education system itself, as far as regulation, control and discipline are concerned? Of interest though, is that Zuma calls for introspection on the part of government. As he further argued: "is what we are doing in government

creating the right environment for education? How do you teach respect? How do you create leaders out of students of that nature?" These questions are indicative of the magnitude of the problem in the South African schooling system.

As Hallam & Roaf (1995:3) remark, learners' "truancy is complex and requires careful and thoughtful consideration", furthermore (ibid) warning that there are no quick fix solutions to these challenges. Thus they advise that it is necessary for each school, in its development plans, to consider its own situation and thus adopt appropriate strategies, to deal with the disciplinary issues at hand.

Truancing learners disrupt the smooth flow of the educative tasks of teaching and learning. They discredit the very basic national wish, that "education may not take place in a hostile, unsafe environment where learners, educators, parents and departmental officials are not safe" (*Government Gazette*, 19 January 2001). Hence the call for "the incumbent Minister of Education to devise measures which will ensure the safety of everyone at school" and the consequent promulgation of this regulation in Circular 13.

To assist schools in monitoring as well as managing the implementation of this regulation, a supporting legislative framework has been suggested in the circular. This consists of the following components:

- South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84,1996), regulation 60(1) and (2).
- State Liability Act, 1957 (Act 20, 1957)
- Regulation for Safety Measures at Public Schools, 2001 (Government Notice 1040 of 2001)
- Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985)

Each of these Acts are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

2.3.1 The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No.84, 1996), regulation 60 (1) and (2)

Regulation 60(1) of this Act stipulates that, “the State is liable for any damage or loss caused as a result of any act or omission in connection with any educational activity conducted by a public school and for which such public school would have been liable but for the provisions of this section”. Meanwhile, subsection (2) of the same Act declares that, “the provisions of the State Liability Act, 1957 (Act No.20 of 1957), apply to any claim under subsection (1).”

By means of this regulation, the State acknowledges and accepts responsibility for all liabilities on behalf of public schools in the Republic of South Africa. These liabilities are explained as including, “damages or losses caused as a result of acts or omissions related to any educational activity by a public school”. The understanding here is that the State will accept responsibility only where the liabilities are found to have occurred not because of some irresponsible and negligent acts by any school official, which includes members of the SGB, or a learner. More specifically, liability is accepted only if it has occurred during a public school activity, taking place within or outside the respective public school premises, and within official school time.

This Act becomes clearer when read in conjunction with a provision in the said Circular, which categorically warns its implementers about the seriousness of the provisions of this circular and its implications, in terms of the liability of the state. It further explains that, in cases where liability is proved, action would be taken against the principal in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No.76, 1998). In this regard the understanding is that the principal as the department’ representative is central to the school management as compared to other members of the SMT.

2.3.2 State Liability Act, 1957 (Act 20, 1957).

Provisions of the State Liability Act, 1957 (Act No.20 of 1957) are based on Regulation 60(2) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No.84 of 1996). As already explained in the preceding paragraphs, its provisions are applicable to any claim under subsection (1) of the same regulation.

What implementers of Circular 13 of 2002 need to understand is that, acknowledgement and acceptance by the State of these liabilities is no licence to be ignorant of the educational laws that govern them (Netshitahame and Van Vollenhoven, 2002:313). To act irrationally and negligently, when involved in any educational activity, may result in the official concerned being charged with misconduct (Act No 76, 1998). On the other hand, liabilities concerned are explained as damages or losses that result from acts or omissions related to any educational activity carried out by a public school. Matters such as liabilities are better clarified when this Act is read in conjunction with Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, 2001 (Government Notice 1040 of 2001). This Notice also contains definitions of “school activity and supervision”, as well as the regulations pertinent to the do’s and don’ts expected to be observed by educators and parents, as school officials, and learners alike, during any given school activity.

During school hours, school officials and learners need to be aware of as well as act according to the regulations that govern school property and activities so as to exonerate themselves from any possible liability that may arise. Otherwise, they may come to find themselves on the wrong side of the law, and may well be punished. They also need to have an understanding of “school activity” as not limited to their respective school premises but as taking on a broader meaning which involves any school time including any educational, cultural and sporting or social activity of the school within or outside public school premises (Government Notice, 1040, 2001). This Notice is now discussed.

2.3.3 Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, 2001 (Government Notice 1040 of 2001)

Government Notice No.1040 of 2001 contains the amendment of regulations 1 and 4 respectively.

Regulation 1 deals with the definitions of:

“School activity”, which means, “ any educational, cultural, sporting or social activity of the school within or outside the premises;” and “Supervision”, which denotes, “reasonable management and control of learners at school and during tours or sporting activities.” These definitions complement the concept of “public school premises”, which is explained as “including a building structure, hall, room, office, convenience, land, enclosure or water surface which is the property of or is occupied or used by, or is under the control of a public school to which a member of the public has right of access, or is usually admitted, or to which he may be admitted” (Government Gazette, 7 July 2006; Government Gazette, 19 January 2001; Act No.84 of 1996). Circular 13 of 2002 defines “public school premises” similarly. It also lays down conditions which need to apply in instances where the learner takes part in school activities and stipulates how the process needs to be supervised.

Regulation 4, which is an amendment, concerns prohibitions that forbid educators, parents or learners possessing or using “alcohol; drugs; any legal substance containing alcohol; dangerous weapons during any school activity or tour.” All these, put into perspective, indicate that school activities or tours are regarded as taking place within school time and therefore are official. If for example, as mentioned, a learner is injured or suffers some other loss due to the negligence of a school official or a parent member of the SGB accompanying the learner, the department is liable to pay the costs or even be sued for the injuries incurred. Hence these regulations which may assist the department to take recourse against those who may have acted negligently.

Besides the discussions on school activities in this regulation, other contents include advice on how to organise school tours, obtaining parents' consent, transport arrangements, harmful activities, dealing with emergencies, and early release of learners from school. Some of these issues are provided for in Circular 13 of 2002, regarding the processes that need to be followed.

2.3.4 Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985).

In terms of section 2(a) of this Act, “the owner of any public premises or any vehicle may take such steps as he may consider necessary for the safeguarding of those premises or that vehicle and the contents thereof, as well as for the protection of the people therein or thereon.” The same Act also promulgates that, “Education may not take place in a hostile, unsafe environment where learners, educators, parents and departmental officials are not safe. It is therefore incumbent on the Minister of Education to devise measures which will ensure the safety of everyone at school” (Neser, 2005:62).

Furthermore, it continues to explain the departmental expectations with respect to keeping public schools as violence and drug free areas, searches for drugs and dangerous weapons being conducted regularly at schools, the observance of regulations governing access to school premises, and the administration of visits to school by anyone, including parents (*Government Gazette*, 19 January 2001).

The above issues are precisely the focus of this study on the implementation of this circular in managing the disciplinary challenges mentioned (cf. 1.1). Descriptions of the supporting legislative framework lead to the following discussion of the main purpose of this circular.

2.4 The main purpose of Circular 13 of 2002

As has already been indicated in the preceding chapter (cf. 1.1), the intention of this circular is here considered, in terms of the following three prongs:

2.4.1 The first prong

Section 29(1)(a) and (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), is categorical in its promise to South African citizens that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible (Act 108, 1996: 14; Government Notice 218 of 2001:3). In support of this notion, Kollapen (2008:107) reflects as follows: “the right to basic education is a central right that unlocks access to many other rights and it determines whether or not we are able to free the potential of each person.”

Essential, though, is to note that these Constitutional promises can only be attained through the fulfilment of the imperative that education may not take place in a hostile and unsafe environment for learners, educators, parents and departmental officials. It is therefore incumbent on the Minister of Education to devise such measures that will ensure the safety of everyone at school (Government Notice 218 of 2001: 3). The truth of the matter is that effective teaching and learning can take place only in a safe and secure space, encompassing the total learning environment, which entails learners, classrooms, educators, parents, the school property and the community at large (Xaba 2006: 566; Lundberg 1994). See also (1.2).

Furthermore, section 2(a) of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles Act, 1985 (Act No. 53 of 1985), reemphasises the above stipulations, laying down that the

owner of any public premises or any public vehicle may take such steps as s/he may consider necessary for the safeguarding of those premises or that vehicle and the contents thereof, as well as the protection of the people therein or thereon (Government Notice 218 of 2001:3).

The owner of the public premises or public vehicles, mentioned above, is here understood to refer to the national education ministry which provincially is represented by the provincial departments of education. Contents comprise the school grounds, buildings, furniture, and all other public school amenities, while, in the case of this study, the people concerned would be principals as well as teaching and administrative staff, learners, parents and education officials. The Minister of Education, at provincial level, would be the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education.

Given the Constitutional imperatives as explained in the preceding paragraphs, it is quite evident that safety at public spaces such as at public schools must be guaranteed. Safety is a right and thus crucial as it enables the processes of teaching and learning to take place amicably in safe and peaceful school environments. As Neser (2005:62) cautions, “when the school system becomes unsafe, it is important that institutions and governments respond appropriately, given that such environments violate children’s rights and their quality of life”. Moreover, it is the right of all involved to feel safe within the school premises at all times (McCann, 2001:3).

In meeting these safety obligations, the MEC of Education in the Gauteng province published Circular 13 of 2002, popularly known as; *The Lockup Policy*. Its first prong is to restrain learners, truants in particular, from arriving late or leaving the public school premises whenever it suits them, without authorised permission, which is an act that compromises the safety of others. Often, such indiscipline behaviour calls for schools to develop plans to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the educational community (Bogden, Thomas, Barrios, & Collins. 2004:56-58).

In support of the preceding statements are Watt (2008:12) who opine that, “safety is ultimately about creating stable environments where students feel secure, welcome,

and able to learn". Similarly, Xaba (2006:565) notes, "a safe school is therefore a healthy school, in that it is physically and psycho-socially safe", and free from any danger and possible harm (Squelch, 2001: 138).

Desperate situations call for desperate measures. As Nesor (2005:62) observes, "when the school system becomes unsafe and schools become violent environments, it is important that institutions and governments respond appropriately, given that such environments violate children's rights and their quality of life."

To manage the situations mentioned above, proposed measures in this circular are as follows:

- with immediate effect, the school gates must be locked during the school day or rigorous control must be implemented;
- no learner must be turned away from school for the day, and a record of all late comers must be maintained; and
- the common practice of leaving the school property to go home for lunch must cease immediately (GDE, 2002:2).

These three measures (GDE, 2002:2) are regarded as possible actions that may help in the reduction or total eradication of the issues being investigated. However, some of the inherent challenges stemming from this regulation follow: do all public schools in the Gauteng province receive enough financial support, from the department and other stakeholders responsible for paying school fees, to meet their financial requirements to address the security concerns? This question arises from the understanding that educators are employed to teach, not to act as security personnel. Hence with the introduction of these regulations, for them to double as security guards manning school gates, would be cumbersome. Thus schools would need to employ more staff to assist with security matters: this costs money which the department of education and parents will need to provide (Bogden, Thomas, Barrios, & Collins, 2004:56-58).

Another challenge is, what would be the implications of locking the learners in for the entire school day? Would this practice not be viewed as punishment of all and thus

unfair to the well behaved learners? Locking the school gates is tantamount to caging learners, an action which may evoke feelings of unhappiness among them as all of a sudden their schools are turned into some kind of penitentiaries (Foucault, 1977: 74), and they are forbidden to visit their homes for lunch (GDE, 2002:2).

To the generally well behaved learners, locking the school gates may also provoke feelings of resentment towards school authorities and the school environment itself. In such a situation, this regulation may open itself to being viewed as defeating the school's fundamental interest in providing a secure environment conducive to learning (Blystone, 2007:199-200). In other words, a school environment is supposed to be free of any social, political or psychological hindrances. An important point to make, therefore, is that, once negative feelings develop among learners, schooling will become boring and unbearable, and disorder will flourish (Colgan, 2005:12).

However, Moseki (2004:2) reports that the practice of locking school gates during school hours, as a safety measure, has been and is still effective in the North-West and the Northern Cape provinces of South Africa. This measure is reported as having been in operation as early as the 1990s. Consequently, the Gauteng province is not the first to introduce this safety control measure in public schools. These 'forerunner provinces' are further reported to have adopted this measure with the sole objectives of: "truancy reduction, prevention of trespassing especially by gangsters, to control late coming, and to stop learners from dodging classes" (Moseki, 2004:2). It is important to note that these objectives are not different from those envisaged in Circular 13 of 2002, as well as those provided for in the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985), respectively.

As a compromise and an alternative to locking the school gates, the regulation mandates that, "...or otherwise, access must be rigorously controlled throughout the day, in order to ensure the safety of learners during school hours" (GDE, 2002). However, besides the actions of the school leadership and management, the success of implementing this measure depends on the availability of the necessary facilities such as financial as well as human resources. The reason is that, to meet the requirements in

the regulation, schools would be compelled to employ more staff or install metal detectors, video cameras, etc. (Watt, 2008:12), which to poor schools may be a daunting task and financially draining.

On the other hand, educators are employed to teach and, if they have to double as guards checking who comes on or off the school property notwithstanding the *in loco parentis* obligations, their educative task is bound to be compromised and their daily responsibilities wearisome to fulfil. However, Magolego (2003:67) concedes that, “there seems to be confusion amongst education and teachers about their responsibilities as educators. Some views their responsibilities as confined solely to teaching. They still consider themselves unaccountable when it comes to accidents and injuries at schools.”

The above argument is supported by a report in the *Sunday Times* (26 January 2003), of a school principal, in the Gauteng province, who categorically refused to accept liability for a learner injured at his school, during school hours. His/her argument was that the injury could not be blamed on the school as he could not be expected to look after every one of his 900 learners (Magolego, 2003:67). Interesting though is that the incident above occurred just eleven months after the promulgation of Circular 13 of 2002 by the GDE, which means that some schools received this circular but did not bother to implement its provisions or some measures in the circular are difficult or impossible to carry out. Unfortunately, the researcher did not come to know about the final court ruling on the matter.

However, in this regard, Trump (2008:66) posits that, “leadership is key to managing school safety, today school safety is not only a ‘money’ issue but a leadership issue”, furthermore (ibid) explaining that a good school manager should be the kind of administrator who “must prevent potential challenges to their safe school environments and their reputations, recognise safety gaps, plan and budget for security, and exercise caution in selecting consultants to strengthen their safety leadership.”

While some of the above explanations and suggestions, save for the leadership element, are ideal for the well financially resourced schools, they are difficult to adopt by

poor schools at the bottom of the financial quintile scale. Significant in the preceding quotations is the fact that they are cautionary, not to school managers and administrators alone but to the education authorities as well, the reason being that these all need to be proactive instead of reactive to situations. Being proactive simply means that, in their development plans (cf. 2.3), SMTs should ensure that effective management and prevention strategies, particularly regarding discipline, are generated (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:36), before problems such as learner absenteeism and late coming can manifest themselves.

Regulations such as the said Circular appear to fall within the category of being reactive rather than proactive, because the kinds of measures contained in its provisions appear to have been thought of only after the problem had already gained momentum. A further difficulty is that some of these measures tend to be “blanket ones” addressing matters in a general way. For example, the provisions of this circular are meant for all public schools in the Gauteng province, irrespective of their social and economic circumstances. The question that comes to mind at this juncture is whether the provisions of this circular have any meaning to the sampled schools of this study, who are located in the Tshwane West Educational District, and Soshanguve Township specifically where, as is the case with other townships in the Republic of South Africa, the trend is that families who have enough money for school fees, prefer to enrol their children in former Model C schools in the cities, rather than in local township schools.

Another example is that of the imperative which reads, “the practice of learners leaving the school property to go home for lunch must cease immediately” (GDE 2002: 2). This measure is worrisome and gives the impression of being mere thumb-sucking by policy makers. The rationale for this argument is that, given the socio-economic situations of most families within the area of this research, 50% of schools selected are located in the informal settlements around Soshanguve Township. Therefore, it is quite apparent that most learners face compelling circumstances that genuinely force them to have lunch at home.

Some examples follow: certain learners double as heads of families, whilst others come from families where both parents are unemployed or where not a single member of the family has a job. Some live with extended families where no one is employed, and so forth. Over and above these factors, school feeding schemes have not as yet reached all public schools, particularly secondary schools; where facilities such as cafeterias do exist, learners have no money to purchase meals. These kinds of situations can at best be described as desperate, needing considerable measures to be taken by educators and the education authorities, in dealing with such situations.

Hence the need for educators in particular, as policy implementers and enforcers, to “understand that their duties go further than just teaching and include those of parenting as well (even though it may not be clear how far they can take their parenting responsibilities)” (Magolego, 2003:68). Therefore, to categorically stamp out practices such as that of learners visiting their homes during lunch break to share whatever is there with other family members, is problematic, because schools may find themselves becoming breeding grounds of a new crop of truants who bunk classes and even tamper with school fences, for the sake of getting an opportunity to go home for meals.

As feeding schemes are not provided for, especially in secondary schools, some of these may find themselves spending much time tending to starving learners needing medical attention rather than receiving education. Regarding these matters of policy, Watt (2008:12) argues that as schools, “let’s work to make each student welcome and engaged and not focus on the guarding, locking down of the high schools”. Indeed, those learners who abide by the school rules, going home for lunch but coming back to school on time, should not be made to suffer for the sins of fellow learners who are truants.

In planning Circular 13 of 2002, most of the realities as mentioned above seem not to have carefully been taken into consideration, thus causing this study to agree with arguments postulating that, “school safety assessment often find stark differences

between, on the one hand, written policies and procedures, and on the other, actual day to day practices” (Trump, 2008:66). This argument links well with the truism that policy matters are not always the mirror image of realities on the ground. We may have valuable educational policies, as is the case in South Africa, but to implement them is often a huge challenge due to varying conditions and environments.

The second prong of the circular provides the school managers, the SMTs, with guiding measures for managing the disciplinary challenges of learners’ absenteeism from school during school hours and late-coming.

2.4.2 The second prong

This second part of the circular concerns the conditions under which a learner may leave the school property during school hours. *The Complete Word-Finder Dictionary* (1993), defines a condition, in law, as a stipulation, proviso, demand, requirement or prerequisite; something upon the fulfilment of which something else depends. In this instance, the conditions provided are there to fulfil the goal of the GDE, to eradicate the said issues.

These conditions are stipulated as follows:

- if a learner wants to leave the school property during school hours, the learner concerned must provide a letter from the parent detailing compelling reasons;
- the parent him- or herself, or a designated person, must come to the school’s administration block to collect the learner and sign the learner out in the control book;
- in a case where the learners are required to leave the school during school hours for school activities, the school must obtain permission from the parent of the learner and from the senior manager of the district;

- in the case where a learner is required to leave the school during school hours due to an emergency or illness, and the parent concerned is unable to fetch the learner, this is the principal's responsibility and thus a school official must accompany the learner to the learner's home and ensure that he or she is left in safe hands before leaving (GDE 2002:3).

The condition that requires learners to submit letters from their parents if they intend leaving the school property during school hours is important. Its contents are expected to indicate, clearly, reasons why the learner has to leave. If, for example, the learner will be leaving for medical reasons, proof of the doctor's appointment note needs to be attached, together with times of departure and returning to school as well as the signature of the concerned parent (GDE 2002). The letter covers both the parent and the school in cases of liabilities as contemplated in the State Liability Act, 1957 (Act 20 of 1957), and Regulations for Safety Measures at the Public School (Government Notice 1040 of 2001) respectively.

The problem which may arise in the case where a truanting learner just decides to leave the school property without submitting any parental letter of consent is that the learner concerned may already be appearing as present for the day in the school class register. If the learner then sustains an injury outside the school premises and during school hours, the school may find itself liable to be sued for failure to protect the learner involved (Bogden, et al, 2008:56-58). In such a case, the school is obliged to accept the responsibility and liabilities.

Another point to be made regarding this condition is that it reintroduces the ever important subject of parental involvement in the education of the child. Writing about the importance of the benefits derived from good relationships between the school and the learner's parents or families, (van Wyk, 2008:6) muses as follows: "When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life...additional benefits to them as learners being decreased truancy; improved attitudes of learners to their studies; improved behaviour and decrease in

drop-out rate.” The value of these benefits is that they accrue to any learner irrespective of the socio-economic status of her or his family (van Wyk, 2008:6; Haberman, 1992:3-9; Henderson & Mapp, 2002:37).

Parental involvement in the life of the learner and good working relationships between parents and schools are viewed by many researchers as the building block of parental confidence not only in schools but in the leaders (Trump, 2008:66; Hallam & Roaf, 1995:17). Such confidence is further explained as helping parents to gain a better understanding of what is happening in their child’s school, “and a feeling of empowerment, which is especially evident in disadvantaged communities” (van Wyk, 2008:6).

Procedurally, it is the responsibility of the parent to fetch the learner from the school at the time stipulated in the letter. Thus, the second condition deals with what the parent needs to do on entering the school premises, i.e., “come to the administration block” (GDE, 2002). Clearly evident is that, as a way of ensuring the safety of all learners during school hours, this kind of measure is necessary, particularly in the reduction of any chances of truancy as well as the avoidance of incurring any liabilities of injuries sustained outside the school property during school hours (Bogden, et al, 2004:56-58; Magolego, 2004:66).

Furthermore, this condition makes it clear that, “no learner will be released to a person other than the parent unless alternative arrangements are made in advance with the school authorities” (GDE, 2002:3). The alternative arrangements spoken about mean that the parent(s) should arrange for someone else to stand in on their behalf. Even in such instances, the law demands that the school must have received prior notification from the parent(s) involved (GDE 2002:3). The probability is that adherence to this measure would assist schools to avoid instances of learners “renting a parent”, (cf. 1.6)

Noteworthy about this condition, though, is that it focuses more on school property control and monitoring procedures. Thus, it is in consonance with provisions of the Act that deals with Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985) already mentioned (cf. 2.3.4). The truth is that, by allowing any one to come in and out of the school property unchecked, opportunities occur for the school property to be exploited and abused by people such as drug lords or drug traffickers, gangsters and prostitutes (Moseki, 2004:2). These are the main issues that this circular is intended to prevent at all costs, in all public schools falling within the jurisdiction of the GDE.

Condition number three represents the converse of the first and the second conditions discussed above. Whilst it too deals with precautionary safety control measures, the difference is that, in its case, it is the school that needs to obtain permission from parents and education officials before taking learners off the school premises to another site, in order to participate in educational activities during school hours. In such instances, the law categorically demands that, “all consent forms must be filed (no indemnity forms are required or have to any legal status). No learner may leave the school property on such outings without the consent of the parent and the senior manager of the district (GDE, 2002:3).”

It is essential that schools request such permission from the parents and the senior manager, in terms of learner safety and protection. In cases where learners incur injuries during a school activity, the school, the parents and the department know who has to carry the responsibilities and the liabilities that may arise. The practice also provides parents with full knowledge of the whereabouts of their children, as well as of what is happening to their children during school hours (GDE, 2002:3).

The obligation of asking for permission is based on Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, 2001 (Government Notice 1040 of 2001). These go further, to warn educators, parents or learners against possessing or using alcohol; drugs; any legal substance containing alcohol; dangerous weapons during any school activity or tour.

Moreover, it stipulates that school activities are regarded as taking place during school hours. Condition four concerns emergency situations which may occur in the form of an illness, thus forcing the learner to leave the school property during school hours. Emergencies are sudden and thus happen when least expected. Hence, parents will be caught in situations where it is difficult for them to collect their children when they are needed to. In such a situation, the condition dictates that the principal in particular, as the departmental representative, should carry the responsibility of ensuring the safety of such a learner, from school to the learner's home and also of making sure that s/he leaves the learner in the care of a person designated by the learner's parent (GDE, 2002:3).

This must take place firstly because the learner concerned will, in the case of a sudden illness, have become sick during school hours and secondly, his or her leave of absence will be official as he or she will be appearing as present for the day in the class register (Bogden, et al, 2004:56-58). Therefore, if such a learner were to be sent home alone, and happen to be involved in an accident or any kind of injury, the school would have acted negligently and against the stipulations of Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, 2001 (Government Notice 1040 of 2001) as well as the State Liability Act, 1957 (Act 20 of 1957).

The above mentioned procedure could also be regarded as an additional means for strengthening relationships of trust between the school and the parents' community, mainly because, in instances such as these, both parties need to cooperate in combating the problem. As the saying has it, good relations build good partners; thus parents should come to realise that the school cares about the safety of their children. Hence the notion that, "parents will forgive school officials if test scores go down but they are much less forgiving if something happens to their children that could have been prevented or better managed" (Trump, 2008: 66).

Following is the third prong which describes the implementation processes aimed at managing the disciplinary issues being studied.

2.4.3 The third prong

As a regulation, the Circular's provisions are mandatory at all times. This part of the purpose explicitly "serves to indicate the processes that must be followed should a learner be required to leave the school property during school hours" (GDE, 2002:3). The implementation processes take place at school level, with the principal and staff being at the centre of all the implementation activities. In this instance, implementers serve as representatives of both the parents and the department of education, as legal enforcers of the provisions of this circular.

Processes that must be followed to ensure learner safety and the conducive learning environment were mentioned earlier. In order to implement them successfully and effectively, implementers, principals and their staff must always bear in mind the principle that they are acting *in loco parentis* to the learner during school hours. "The implication of this is that learners are required to remain on the school property during the school hours, and that proper supervision is mandatory at all times, including during breaks" (GDE, 2002:2).

Commenting about educators discharging their mandatory supervision responsibilities, Magolego (2003:66) points out that, "before it can be said that the duty of care has been reasonably discharged, there must be adequate supervision of children at all times. The general rule is that whether the children are in class or on the playing field, they should always be supervised by a responsible person so as to prevent accidents and injuries from occurring."

In the light of the preceding comments and opinions, in order to avoid being accused of having acted negligently regarding one's duties, thus having to face liability charges (cf.2.3.2), educators need to gain a full understanding of what is meant by one acting "*in loco parentis*" and above all, be clear about the laws that govern their profession (Netshitahame and Van Vollenhoven, 2002:313), carrying out their daily pastoral duties under the guidance of these rules.

In an article that deals with the liability of educators as well as of the education authorities, Magolego (2003:64) expresses quite a number of valuable explanations about the doctrine of *in loco parentis*. That is, its meaning of one acting in place of a parent; instead of a parent; as well as one being charged, factitiously, with a parent's rights, duties, and responsibilities (*Black's Law Dictionary*, 1984:233). Further interesting to this researcher is Magolego's explanation of its implications (*ibid*), "What this implies is that in addition to the rights that they – the teachers (my own emphasis) -- have towards the child, the *in loco parentis* is also encumbered with the duties of the parents, one of which is the duty to care."

The said duty fits well with the dictates of this circular, as it demands that implementers of its provisions should always, during school hours, be in charge of the learners, whether during lessons or break. Moreover since learners spend most of their time at school, it is obvious that most of the injuries that may occur, leading to liabilities, would take place there (Magolego 2003:65).

Therefore, apart from anything else, the authorities find it in order to lock the school gates during school hours or introduce rigorous measures of safety control, to be able to monitor and to control anyone who comes into the school property (Moseki, 2004:2), thus disturbing the smooth running of the educative tasks which, according to Bogden, et al, (2004:56-58), have as their core mission literacy, mathematics and science.

Concerning the letters requesting permission for leave of absence, particularly from parents, implementers need to be vigilant, the reason being that in such cases truanting learners may take advantage of the situation by writing and even signing the letters themselves. Thus verification of the signatures, particularly of the parent or guardian who signed for the learner on admission to the school, is important (cf. 1.6).

However, one advantage of exchanging letters between the school, parents and education authorities, is that in the process better relationships are formed which create better understanding of each other, as stakeholders, for the good of the child's safety and education (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:137; Hallam and Roaf, 1995:55).

It should be noted that the circular emphasises the importance of its contents to all the implementers by warning that, “the seriousness of this circular cannot be overestimated, as the implications in terms of the liability of the state have serious implications. In a case where liability is proved, action will be taken against the departmental official (the principal) in terms of the Employment of Educators Act” (Circular 13 of 2002:3).

Magolego (2003:68) supports the warning above by explaining reasons why schools and education authorities have to devise measures, as stipulated in the circular, concluding that, “...education authorities and teachers have become more fearful of legal actions from parents who allege that their child’s rights have been violated. The only way to end this confusion is for teachers and education authorities to treat the children like reasonable parents would. Only then will these legal actions from parents abate.”

Implementers of Circular 13 of 2002 are all bound by its stipulations. For them to act contrary would be viewed as deliberate ignorance of the law which may lead to unfavourable consequences for the school officials involved. As Netshitahame and Van Vollenhoven (2002:313) argue, “as a professional, an educator should have a knowledge of the Law of education and can never invoke as a defence ignorance of the law concerning his profession.”

Therefore, the following section focuses on the international experiences, views and practices regarding what schools could do to manage the disciplinary challenges being studied.

2.5 Managing learner’s partial absenteeism and late coming.

This section outlines , views and practices regarding the management of the disciplinary challenges of learner absenteeism and late coming and ways to combat them. What needs noting though is that, proper management of learners’ partial absenteeism or

class bunking and late coming is critical to the development and creation of a positive school environment, that promotes learner attendance and good behaviour. Thus, enabling teachers to spend their valuable time teaching (Seganti, 2011:2).

Writing for schools in the United Kingdom on evidence based disciplinary challenges they face, Hallam, et al (1995: 22-60) proposes five key areas, which they consider to demonstrate a progression through which appropriate practice and policy could be developed to manage school attendance. Suggestions made are meant for schools to proactively address issues of learner attendance, as schools often find themselves battling with learners nonattendance, evidenced by misbehaviours such as late coming and class bunking, which are disruptive by nature and tantamount to truancy (Horner, Sugai, Horner, 2000:20). The following are the five key areas emphasised, each of which is discussed in detail below:

- Assessing the pattern of attendance;
 - Promoting a school environment;
 - The daily management of attendance;
 - Improving liaison outside school;
 - Developing, communicating and evaluating policy.
-
- *Assessing the pattern of attendance*: this area addresses the school management' responsibility as that of identifying learners' patterns of class attendance and the causes of nonattendance. Discussions also involves raising awareness about learners misbehaviours, of nonattendance, by collaborative efforts between management and staff, learners, education officials, parents and the wider community. The focus is on identifying groups and individuals with persistent attendance problems, so that appropriate action plans can be developed to promote attendance (Reid, 2007:25). Thus, avoiding the occurrence of partial absenteeism and late coming (Hallam, et al, 1995: 27).

- *Promoting a school environment:* This section looks at effective management and the creation of a positive social climate within a school. The main points of focus are, the need for a code of conduct for both learners and the entire staff, where good behaviour is praised whilst bad behaviour is discouraged (Collins, 1998:21). Learner participation in school activities, particularly in decision-making is encouraged whilst lessons are made interesting and there is constructive feedback. Learners' autonomous and independent learning is encouraged whilst relevant training opportunities are provided. Furthermore, the section recommends the need for the school management and staff to ensure that the curriculum is not only relevant but interesting to the learners in their quest to acquire needed life skills. Over and above, there is a need to ensure that the physical environment is safe and pleasant (Hallam, et al, 1995: 23).
- *The daily management of attendance:* The section commences on a cautionary note for school managers and staff, emphasising that ...“to improve daily attendance, schools must have accurate and systematic ways of recording it (Hallam, et al, 1995:37).” Recommended instruments for monitoring attendance and recording absenteeism and late coming are the use of school registers such as class and subject registers. The use of computers for record keeping is strongly recommended (Duckworth and de Jung, 1986:12). Also consistently emphasised is the need for the implementation of the whole school policy. Further suggesting that the implementation of the whole school policy could lead to the use of other systems such as the appraisal, self-evaluation and so on (Reid, 2007:22).

Also noted is the emphasis on schools to establish the reasons for persistent learner absence and late coming on the basis of discussions with the learner and the parents (Thambirajah, et al. 2008:147). Follow up of individual learner' cases of persistent class bunking and late coming are recommended, for schools to establish causes and interventional strategies (Cotton, 1992:3). Other recommendations include, regular consultations with other professionals where necessary,

administrative staff, parents and the community at large. School managers and staff are further advised to draw-up action plans and review programs to deal with disciplinary challenges (Reid, 2007:40). The section concludes by emphasising regular staff training on issues of monitoring and the management of learner' discipline (Hallam, et al, 1995: 28).

- *Improving liaison outside school:* to avert learner misbehaviour and to promote attendance, this section strongly encourages school managers and staff, as their responsibility, to take the initiative to have an understanding of the workings of related structures or agencies. That is, referral agencies such as health facilities, education welfare services, child protection agencies, etc. These agencies are said to be crucial in instances where learners have severe problems and needs referral (Horner, et al, 2000:21; Reid, 2007:26). Again, the provision of constant and appropriate training of staff in this regard is emphasised, as well as the need for the delegation of powers among staff members, e.g. staff members delegated responsibility to take charge of, for example, regular latecomers or absentees (Cotton, 1992:4). What needs noting is that delegated duties boost the teachers' morale, as they feel valued by their schools (Reid, 2007:23).

The section also reemphasises the centrality of parents and family (Reid, 2007:25), partner schools and the wider community, encouraging managers and staff about the need for the formation of stronger links in the interest of the education of the child and to avert learners indiscipline. It also encourages schools to take full advantage of Education Welfare Officers (EWOs), who in this regard have legal duties, particularly on learners who are regular absentees. The EWOs' legal powers include: random visits to regular absentees' homes to check for reasons of nonattendance. The EWO give correctional or rehabilitative support for such learners; liaise with social services on behalf of the schools. They also alert schools to policies that maybe causing disaffection, e.g. school uniform, setting, etc (Hallam, et al, 1995: 49).

- *Developing, communicating and evaluating policy:* the section describes some of the important aspects that schools need to consider in order to improve attendance such as; strict implementation of appropriate school attendance policies and policy documents (Reid, 2007:22), establish procedures and practices suitable for the daily monitoring and management of attendance. The ways and procedures of monitoring and managing daily school attendance are described as the building blocks of any school' attendance policy. Thus, the section continues to guide schools on how to write the school policy on attendance. Advice is also given on how to formally document and communicate the policy to learners, parents and the wider school community members. Of importance is the emphasis on learner punctuality in relation to the start of the school day and the teaching periods as well as the emphasis that the policy needs to reflect the characteristics of the individual school and its community (Hallam, et al,1995:55).

Another aspect of importance is how the attendance policy should be communicated to learners and parents (Reid, 2007:22). There is also a need to constantly review and evaluate the attendance policy, annually where possible depending on the circumstances prevailing within individual schools (Reid, 2007:21). Also emphasised are: the legal responsibilities of parents towards the school with regard to their children's attendance (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:137); the categorisation of authorised and unauthorised absence; procedures to be followed on granting permission to a learner; procedures to be followed by parents in cases where absence of a learner is sort. Also explained, are the referral procedures to other agencies, indicated above (Hallam, et al, 1995: 55).

The above explications are in line with the dictum, 'prevention is better than cure' (Cotton, 1992: 3-4). In essence, these explications call for individual school managers and staff to stay prepared by developing pre-emptive systems, ready to assist with their managerial duties, particularly where incidents of indiscipline may arise (Horner, et al, 2000:20).

In addition to the five points above, Reid (2007:21) made the following two valuable observations in his research:

- that the majority of school managers and staff had received 'none' or 'very little' professional development training with regard to management of school attendance. This lack is an administrative trap (Horner, et al, 2000:21) which weakens managers and staff ability to perform or to respond appropriately especially when confronted by serious incidents of discipline, such as the ones in this study, which need appropriate skills to resolve. As Seganti (2011:3) would observe, attempts to resolve managerial issues, at school, without proper training is like "... you've been told to accomplish something without having been given the proper tools.";
- that there is a dire need for the introduction of more alternative vocational curriculum schemes in schools to cater for the academically challenged learners or those who are simply bored by the curriculum offered by their respective schools. The two observations made above are in line with the preventative measures discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Writing from the American perspective about learners' disruptive behaviours at schools, (Horner, et al, 2000:21) believe that, schools with effective disciplinary systems are those who:

- invest in prevention of disruptive behaviour, e.g. learners who absent themselves from certain classes or arrive late;
- establish systems for identifying and responding to at-risk learners early;
- build capacity for highly intense interventions for learners with chronic disciplinary challenges.

Furthermore, in an inclusive study about managing learners with disruptive behaviours such as the ones under investigation in this study, conducted among American, English, Scottish, Australian, Norwegian, and New Zealand learners, Cotton (1992:13) arrived at the following conclusions:

- Management needs to intervene quickly, and not allow behaviour that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked;
- Management needs to develop supporting disciplinary systems and use these on truanting learners;
- Train misbehaving learners in self-control skills for them to keep check of their own behaviour;
- Train learners in general pro-social skills, to inculcate self-awareness, cooperation, and the sense of coexistence;
- Place misbehaving learners in leadership positions where they are responsible to some of the school activities;
- Management should ensure that punishment is reasonable and in line with the offence committed, in the quest to inculcate acceptable social character in the learner and to improve it;
- Management should make use of counselling services, to assist the misbehaving learners as well as to seek the root cause of such behaviour;
- Management should responsibly collaborate with misbehaving learners by way of support and guidance in the quest for behavioural change and skill building;
- Management should take advantage of the home based learner support to increase cooperation between the school and the misbehaving learner's home;
- Management of schools with serious disciplinary challenges, are encouraged to broaden their partnerships with neighbouring schools, related social agencies and the wider community they serve (Hallam, et al 1995:51-52; Horner, et al, 2000:21).

What needs noting about the above guidelines is the emphases on the prevention of the disciplinary problems of nonattendance by suggesting active learner involvement in their own social and educational development. In particular, the notion that learners with chronic misbehaviours should actively be involved in all spheres of school activities including governance.

The following section describes and assess some factors that may lead to learners' absenteeism during school hours and late coming.

2.6 Factors contributing to learners' partial absenteeism and late coming

Factors contributing to these problems are many and varied. For instance, from the criminology perspective, social, personal and economic factors are all said to influence criminal behaviour (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008: 111). The above identified factors are in consonance with those identified in the educational report on the prevalence of learners' absenteeism in public schools of the Republic of South Africa by CASE & JET (2007:2). Thus, their classification model, which describes these factors in three broad categories, is suitable for this study, and duly adopted. The objective of the exercise is to assess these factors and ascertain how they relate to the given challenges.

2.6.1 Personal factors

Personality is often defined as the distinctive character or qualities of a person, distinct from others, or as the individual's psychological, physical and spiritual characteristics determining one's behaviour within the context of the environment (Tulloch, 1993:1136; Meyer & Viljoen, 2003:11; Reid, 2007:24). Personal characteristics, particularly the psychological ones, are like a compass in the behaviour of a learner (Moseki, 2004:25), guiding the learner through his/her personal life. For example, as many researchers would agree, the reason most often given for learners to be absent from school is illness. Halam, et al (1995:10) concur and add that, "this is legally acceptable and on the surface seems simple and uncontroversial. However, appearances can be deceptive."

The reference to deception is here understood to mean a situation where a learner, for some reason known to her/him, will fake illness so that s/he creates a chance not to be at school or leave the school property during school hours. For example, a pregnant learner can easily fake illness because of her situation. However, if discovered such

tactics would qualify her as a truant. Hence, Circular 13 of 2002 provides for the management of such situations (cf. 2.4.1). What needs noting is that, illnesses, whether genuine or otherwise, affecting learners are diverse, thus manifesting themselves in various ways, and in accordance with the learners' situation and behaviour (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008:85).

The most frequently researched factor, which greatly impacts on learners' behaviour, including that of truants, is "anxiety" (Halam, et al,1995:11). Commenting further on matters of illness and anxiety, these authors (ibid) argue that, "illness can be precipitated by anxiety caused by stressful situations." In this instance these could be the school environment, i.e. the grounds and the classroom. Many things, positive and negative, happen within this environment, which in essence is supposed to be safe (Braun & Kearns, 2008:13), and is the place where learners spend most of their time (Magolego, 2003:65).

For example, in the classroom, a learner may come to feel anxious about the subjects taught because they are difficult to comprehend, find the classroom environment highly competitive, with homework, class tests and examinations stressful and having to worry about failure (Hallam, et al, 1995:13). If in these kinds of situations the educator in charge is not aware of or cannot bring relief to the learner's situation, schooling may become boring (Colgan, 2005:12; Levin, 2001: 51), and usually the only escape road will be via truancy (cf. 2.5).

Similarly, where a learner is a victim of bullying either in the classroom or around the school playgrounds, such a learner may come to develop anxiety which may result in the learner becoming a bully himself or herself, bunking class, finding excuses not to attend, lacking interest in school work or just becoming a truant whose interests are focused more on matters outside the school property than inside (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:20). This causes Peters (1998:12) to advise that, school managers should focus more on preventive work in the areas of counselling, bullying prevention, and diversity acceptance. Also that, there is a need to get people to recognise the signs earlier and to do something before the moment occurs (Horner, et al, 2000:21; Seganti, 2011:3).

Another example that may be given at this juncture is that of measures such as locking school gates and stopping the learners from going home for lunch, suggested in Circular 13 of 2002. Difficult as these measures are for educators to implement, it is feared that they may cause much tension and anxiety among learners who genuinely have to go home for lunch, during break, because of the financial or economic status of their families. On being refused permission to go home, because of the dictates of this circular, some learners may come to be truants by default (cf. 2.5).

Adding to all these may be the learner's fears of failure which is usually coupled with a lack of self confidence, too much dependence on parents, anxiety in interacting with fellow learners, other developmental problems such as issues of age, e.g. adolescence and the like (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:36).

2.6.2 Socio-economic factors

As regards matters related to socio-economic factors, both local and international researchers are of the view that family circumstances are largely responsible for high rates of truancy (Moseki, 2004:38; Nhlapo, 1997:95; Reid, 1999:92; Malcom, Wilson, Davidson & Kirk, 2003:2). Most learners live in large families or in overcrowded conditions without any sort of financial income. As Halam, et al (1995:17) observe: "Some children are prevented or discouraged from attending school because of overstretched family finances. Difficulties in providing school uniform, appropriate shoes, can all contribute towards non-attendance." Usually, learners in this kind of situation are often misconstrued to be truants, particularly when their socio-economic circumstances are ignored (van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009: 160-164; Reid, 2002:56).

The situation as described above still prevails and according to media reports, the situation is escalating in most Black South African areas. It needs to be reiterated that in this country, particularly among African Blacks, some learners play a double role, as

learners during the day and heads of families after school hours. These are the unfortunates who are sometimes labelled as truants just because they often arrive late at school or bunk classes, because of circumstances beyond their control (cf. 1.6.1). Cases of learners from dysfunctional families are rife in townships and rural villages, where often the entire family has no source of income. In these instances, factors are numerous and varied. A few that could be mentioned, and also impacting negatively on the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002, are the HIV/AIDS pandemic, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, and the like (CASE & JET 2007:2).

Nevertheless, the above explanations do not, in any way, suggest that truants are only found in poverty stricken areas alone, but that, given the circumstances of Circular 13 of 2002, some of the measures stipulated may not be relevant and helpful to implement in situations mentioned above. As Collins (1998:2) contends, truants should not be seen as coming from a particular social class. In this instance Collins is supported by those who view truancy as a behavioural problem found, especially, among the adolescents living in the well to do socio-economic communities (Brown 1998:298; Moseki 2004:38).

Also impacting on the problem is that some of the learners, in the schools selected for the research, do not necessarily live in the feeder area of the school concerned. Hence, such learners may have to travel long distances to get to school. The reason normally given by schools involved is that, with their numbers dwindling, they have no choice but to register any child who wants to attend them. In such situations transport usually becomes part of the problem because, financially, it may be costly for some learners, or there may be some deficiencies in its provision (Halam et al, 1995:17).

Consequently, transport as a factor may lead to learners arriving late for school or not arriving at all for the day. However, in this instance, the regulation provides for such cases, for example where it warns that: "No learner must be turned away from school for the day and a record of all latecomers must be maintained" (GDE 2002). But learners being who they are, some may still choose not to arrive at school at all, and if late coming becomes a norm, fear ridicule and even possible punishment (Halam, et al, 1995:13), some learners might be vulnerable to becoming truants as they may come to

develop new interests such as bunking classes, staying away from school without permission and knowledge of the parents, taking drugs, drinking during school hours, and so on (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008:17). Unfortunately, such practices are not school related and learners engaged in them are unsafe and run the risk of ending up in jail as criminals.

2.6.3 School factors

The unrelenting learner indiscipline could point to the inability of SMTs to effectively implement the guiding measures, as provided for in the circular, or to the reality that the provisions themselves are impossible to implement. It may also suggest that learners have lost confidence or have lost interest in the schooling system (Halam & Roaf 1995:13). Further still, it may be sheer learner truancy emanating from views such as, regarding school environments as unsafe or hostile, and thus not conducive spaces for teaching and learning (Netshitahame & Van Vollenhoven, 2002: 313). Regarding this as a matter of fact, Halam, et al (1995:16) opine that, there are aspects of school life which may contribute towards apathy and alienation in the life of a learner, which may lead to schools being viewed as environmentally unattractive places to be.

These are aspects related to the learner's day to day realities of life. Among others, they would include, the transitional phase of moving say from primary to secondary school, being accepted by new peers and educators, or whether the learner comes to accept, or not accept, the new environment s/he finds herself/himself in (Levin, 2001: 23). The age of the learner at the time of the transition is also of the essence at this point, as he or she may experience learning difficulties, new attitudes, forming new relationships with fellow learners and educators or coping with issues such as bullying (Thambirajah, et al, 2008:37).

CASE & JET (2007:2) also mention factors which may discourage a learner about schooling, subsequently becoming a truant, such as, boredom with the curriculum, bullying and violence in schools, punishment for late coming, inability to pay school fees, poor relationships between learner and educator, poor school facilities (Davies, 1999:66), inefficient school management, lack of appropriate disciplinary measures, teacher commitment, and the like (cf. 2.5).

The last mentioned reminds one of the number of times that teachers themselves are not at school: for example, when they are on strike or writing examinations to improve on their own qualifications. During such absence, many things could go wrong among learners, which may cause some to lose interest in schooling. As Halam, et al (1995:16) observe, "... opportunities for bullying also increase during these periods, when supervision is often left to untrained supervisors."

If teachers absent themselves regularly from class, as mentioned above, or arrive late at school, it is only normal that learners will not find any reason to sit obediently in class while not being taught. As van Wyk and Lemmer (2009:39) remind one, children learn behaviour by imitation, which indicates that if some educators are regular latecomers or regularly absent from school, learners will follow suit, thus rendering the school environment ungovernable, whilst at the same time, such misbehaviour would render the aspirations of Circular 13 of 2002 untenable.

School factors discussed above would be manageable if the home of the learner or the family is recognised, through the formation of strong bonds between the home or family school partnerships, as suggested by Epstein in Redding (2005:487). Moreover, the general belief is that close relationships between the parents and schools would avert all the negative aspects that might come to discourage learners about school, thus turning some into truants. Hence it will be important for schools to always strive for ideals such as involving parents in the education of their children, as well as working to make each learner feel welcome and engaged in the educative tasks that they may come to school yearning for (Watt, 2008:12).

The preceding paragraphs revealed that challenges of learners' partial absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming are universal and complex. Thus, impossible to supply a single solution to the management of this phenomenon (Hallam, et al,1995:22).

2.7. Conclusion

Explications in the preceding paragraphs have revealed that the phenomenon of learner absenteeism and late coming to school is widespread. They also demonstrated that absenteeism in particular, locally and internationally, is defined in broad terms, contrary to its partial treatment in Circular 13 of 2002. What also emerged was that this circular was specifically formulated as a guiding regulation to regulate disciplinary challenges of learner truancy. Therefore, by now expectations are that all the GDE public schools must have formulated their codes of conduct for learners, guided by this circular.

The following chapter will focus on the research design and the methods of data collection.

Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 focused on the literature review of documents concerned with the research problem, thus providing a theoretical framework to this study. The purpose of this chapter is to give detailed descriptions of the qualitative case study research design and the methodology adopted, which includes details of procedures employed by the researcher to resolve the research questions as posed under the problem statement (cf.1.3). The role and position of the researcher, the data analysis procedures, trustworthiness and ethical considerations, will also be described.

3.2 The qualitative case study research design

The concept of such a design was briefly introduced and defined in Chapter 1 of this study (c.f. 1.5.1). Thus central to this section was the ascertaining of scholarly views on the concept, with the objective of relating it to the purposes of this study. Moreover, the research design is viewed as descriptive in nature, describing procedures to be followed in conducting research (Maree, 2010:70). This includes plans on how to go about researching, what happens to the subject as well as indicating methods used for data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:22; Makhoba, 2008:41). This is why Mouton (2001:107), arguing from the point of view of solving the research problem, defines the research design as, "... a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the problem" (cf. 1.3), furthermore (ibid) stating its function as being "...to enable the

researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be so as to maximise the validity of the eventual results.”

Although this concept of a qualitative case study research design, is differently and broadly defined by many researchers, the understanding in this study holds that it is any kind of a research design of which the findings are not produced by means of statistical procedures or any other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17; de Vos, et al, 2009:351). Hence this researcher considered the design to be legitimate and relevant to his purposes with regard to the given Circular (cf. 1.4).

As Subbiah (2004:11) observed, the qualitative research design encompasses several research strategies that share certain characteristic features. The common denominator is that they are all research strategies which present facts, in a narrative, using words (cf. 3.2). All these should happen when the approach, “...assist[s] us in raising new questions, by leading us to question assumptions, by cultivating an appreciation for complexity, and finally by expanding our frames of reference” (van Wyk, 1996:127; Sherman & Webb, 1988:45)..

In addition, McMillan & Schumacher (2010:102) explain a well structured research design as including the selection of subjects or individuals to be studied, the place and time including the circumstances under which selected individuals would be studied, as well as the research sites and strategies to be employed for data collection. They (ibid) further explain the objectives of a research design to be, to answer the research questions asked, (cf. 1.3), and to provide credible results. These thoughts are in consonance with Yin (2003:21), whose advice is that the goal of a well structured research design should be to help to avoid instances where the research findings do not address the initial research question(s). From the statements above, it is evident that a properly structured research design should provide results that are judged as credible and reliable (Hofstee, 2006:108; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:102). Consequently this study adopted the qualitative case study research design (cf. 1.5).

Given the explications above, the following section describes the rationale for adopting the qualitative case study research design.

3.3 The rationale for adopting the qualitative case study research design

The rationale was influenced by the following imperatives:

- the design is empirically based, thus a qualified method of assessing perceptions, attitudes and opinions of individuals, organisations, events or procedures (Smit, Moerel, van der Wolf & Slegers, 2003:12; Ntshangase, 2001:62; Gay, 1987:11). This is in line with the aim of this study which wanted to determine the experiences and perceptions of the SMTs regarding the circular (cf. 1.4);
- the design will assist in obtaining detailed knowledge and understanding of the phenomena (cf. 1.4);
- its adoption is determined by the problem under consideration, and the assumptions the researcher holds about the world (Elphinstone & Schweitzer, 1998:7);
- it is comprehensive of several research strategies with common characteristic features, that present facts in a narrative form (Subbiah, 2004:11);
- the nature of the research question relates to “how” or “what”, (cf. 1.3);
- it involves a study of individuals in their natural setting, in other words the researcher, as a participant observer, is constrained or confined to the same situation as the respondents/ participants involved (cf. 3.3.2.5);
- as the participant observer, the researcher becomes an instrument of data collection, telling his/her story from the personal point of view as a participant rather than as an expert who passes judgement on participants (Creswell, 1998:16); (cf. 3.3.2.5);

- it emanates from the traditions of experimental psychology, as the only accepted way to analyse and interpret educational settings (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984:1); and,
- it is mainly concerned with processes of evaluation in order to understand the problem from the participants' perspective, as the participants experience the problem the way it relates to their situation (Hoberg, 1999: 76). See (4.4.1).

Furthermore, Leedy & Ormrod (2001: 148-149), identify qualitative studies as important because they serve one or more of the following purposes:

Description – They can reveal the nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems, or people (cf. 1.5.2).

Interpretation – they enable the researcher to: gain insights into the nature of a particular phenomenon; develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon; discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon (cf. 1.5.1).

Verification – they permit a researcher to test the validity of certain assumptions, claims, theories, or generalizations within real-world contexts.

Evaluation – they provide a means through which a researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices and innovations (cf. 1.4).

Consequently, all that has been explained above forms part of the discussions in paragraphs to follow. For now, let it suffice to say that the importance of this approach, is viewed in accordance to the possibilities of it assisting this study in identifying factors contributory to the problem at hand, (c.f. 1.3).

In terms of the above imperatives, which are all applicable to this study, the researcher intends to utilise them to identify and to describe the disciplinary challenges mentioned with the aim of gaining more knowledge about the phenomenon being studied, in order to resolve the problems at hand, (cf.1.3), and to formulate supporting recommendations that would assist SMTs in this respect.

The following section provides more clarity on the concept of the case study.

3.3.1 The case study

Mothata, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000:23) define a case study as “a qualitative, detailed examination of one setting, one subject, one single depository of documents or one particular event”. In agreement are McMillan & Schumacher (2010:102). An in-depth exploration of a bounded, i.e. unique, according to the dimensions of time/when, setting/where, and participants/who, is involved. Of importance are the uniqueness and singleness of the cases under investigation. McMillan & Schumacher (2010:345) further categorise cases into: the intrinsic case, which is purely a case focused study; the collective case, which focuses on two or more cases; and the instrumental case, which is theme based.

The three approaches to case studies accord well with the theme of this study. Hence, the rationale for choosing the case study as the mode of inquiry, suitable to our aim of developing a holistic understanding (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:345) of the uniqueness and complexities of this phenomenon (cf. 1.4).

3.3.2 Sampling

The process of sampling, and its tenets: purposive, convenience, criterion, etc, as a principle of qualitative data gathering has already been defined in Chapter 1, (cf. 1.5.2). In this section, the focus falls on how sampling was utilised to maximise the data gathering process and for what purposes. Cohen, et al (2010:115) argues, especially about purposive sampling that, it does not pretend to represent the wider population, and may not be generalised as that is not its primary concern, but that it is deliberately

and unashamedly selective and biased. Thus, for this study, sampling was found to be convenient because of the following reasons:

- utilised aimed at gaining a better understanding of the problem at hand, from the participants' perspective;
- the research questions, posed as parts of the problem (cf. 1.3), were formulated with an eye to the SMTs as implementers and managers of the provisions of Circular 13 of 2002;
- their selection was also influenced by the defining characteristic of them, SMTs, viewed as holders of the data, composed of knowledge and experiences, needed for this study (Maree, 2010:178; Cohen, et al, 2010:115);
- the circular was published with the sole purpose of guiding the implementers, SMTs, in combating the disciplinary challenges of class bunking and late coming (GDE, 2002).
- The study focuses only on the SMTs, as they are viewed to be a representative size large enough to give a greater reliability (Cohen, et al, 2010:101).

The process of sampling is not only restricted to the selection of participants (cf. 1.5.2), but also involves the sampling of: the settings, incidents, events, and activities to be included for data collection (Maree, 2010:79;). Therefore, the next paragraphs describe the selection of the research site and participants of this study.

3.3.2.1 Site selection

As indicated, four public schools of the Tshwane West Educational District were selected for the study. Various reasons were mentioned. In addition, as a resident of both Ga-Rankuwa and Soshanguve township driving around these areas, one is never short of seeing learners, in various school uniforms, roaming around the streets during

school hours (cf. 1.3). The phenomenon is daily news, reported in various newspapers such as *Sowetan*, *The Star*, *City Press*, etc, but the practice seems not to be abating. Hence this researcher's interest in establishing contributory factors (cf. 1.2).

Given the above explanations, and the etymological descriptions of this township,(cf. 1.8.1), Soshanguve is vibrant in its socio-cultural mix. Today, due to infiltration by foreigners from other parts of the world, with their diverse cultures and languages, the township has grown to be a melting pot of cultures, whose children attend school together. Thus, the said problems affect them all. Another point worth reiterating is that this township is now one of the largest and most highly populated black townships in the Gauteng province of the Republic of South Africa (Statistics South Africa: 2011). The township is zoned into formal and informal settlements, (cf.1.6.1). Of the schools sampled, school "A" is located within one of the latter, whereas schools "B" "C" and "D" are located in the formal areas.

Permission to conduct the research was sought from both the GDE and the Tshwane West Educational District, (cf. Appendix: B & C). This led to the selection of the four participating schools, which took place at the district offices under the supervision of the Educational District Manager. The Tshwane West Educational District contains 56 public secondary schools, out of which the researcher needed to sample only four, as this is a case study and thus only a small sample was needed (cf. 1.5.2). A random sampling method was employed, whereby the researcher was asked, by the education official, to pick every fifth school appearing on the list until the four schools had been selected. What needs noting, though, is that, coincidentally, all four were found to be located in Soshanguve Township, (c.f. 1.6.1).

In the researcher's opinion, the advantage of selecting schools that are neighbours is that the study would empirically be describing data provided by participants from more or less the same socioeconomic and cultural background (cf. 2.5). Once again, as this is a case study, it is hoped that the data collected from the sample would be sufficient to shed some light about the phenomenon being studied, thus help in the resolution of the problems at hand and the formulation of recommendations to assist SMTs in monitoring

and managing learners' absenteeism during school hours and late coming. Thus giving effect to the aspirations of Circular 13 of 2002,(cf. 1.3).

3.3.2.2 Selection of participants

Relevant participants selected for data collection in this regard were all members of SMTs of the four schools, because of the reasons already advanced in section 3.3.2 above. For interviewing purposes in particular, members of the SMT of each school were interviewed at their respective school. An interview schedule based on the research questions for this study was used (cf. 1.3).

To facilitate the interviewing process, the SMT of each school was divided into two groups, thus yielding the following two distinct groupings of senior management and middle management of the school, here represented as follows:

- Senior management: consisting of the principal and his/her two deputies – the arrangement of two deputies was found to prevail in all the four sampled schools.
- The middle management: This level is composed of all HODs and senior educators of the school. It should be recalled that, the numbers of HODs differ per school, as the allocation of the teaching per school is determined by the number of registered learners. A large number of learner registrations ensures more teaching posts for the school and vice versa This scenario is further explained in Chapter 4 of this study (cf. 4.4.1.1).

Altogether, the total sum of the participant members of the SMTs interviewed during the data collection process was thirty five (35) out of the following enrolment:

Table 1: Learners enrolment. Educators and Members of the SMT.

School	Learners	Educators	SMT
A	1102	41	9
B	1079	42	10
C	923	32	7
D	935	34	9

The description of the processes of selection of sites and participants is here followed by that of the data collection techniques employed for this study.

3.4 Data collection techniques

As indicated, the main purpose of data collection in research is to address the initial propositions of the study concerned (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:150; White, 2002:82; Yin, 2003:109). Findings made should assist in making generalisations about the problem at hand (cf. 1.3), and in the formulation of recommendations which will serve as support material for schools regarding the present issue. Data was collected based on the following qualitative research techniques:

3.4.1 Observations

As already indicated in section 1.5.3.1, the technique of field observation is fundamental to qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:362). Therefore, as noted, the technique was adopted with the understanding that the researcher was undertaking the process from the point of view of a participant rather than a bystander passing judgement on the participants (Creswell, 1998:16). Thus, during observations the researcher collected and classified the data into themes. This was in preparation for the analysis and description processes of the data. The themes were further arranged into the following categories and sub-categories, to facilitate the analysis and descriptions of data:

3.4.1.1 Arrival and starting times

Discussions in this category focused on learners' and educators' arrival times at school and the commencement of teaching times; learners' transport, particularly in the morning and how it impacts on their late-coming; their catchment areas and their impact; truants and the challenges of class bunking; as well as the issue of indifferent local communities and how they relate to the school, thereby contributing to the said challenges (cf. 2.4.1). This led the researcher to look into the availability of the enabling facilities and services at the four participating schools.

3.4.1.2 Facilities and services

The researcher observed the availability of facilities and services, to enable the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002; the habitability of the school buildings; the availability of the school enclosure – the security fence and gates; security services at the school gates; the grading of schools according to the quintile system; the availability of tuck shops and fruit vendors (cf.2.4.1).

The next step was to check on the participating schools' record keeping, pertinent to the management of disciplinary issues.

3.4.1.3 Record keeping

Observations included those of gate registers for latecomers and school visitors; the marking of class registers and subject or period registers; disciplinary procedures and records regarding learners as well as records of regular latecomers and class bunkers (cf. 2.4.3). Having dealt with the three tenets of observation, the researcher's next step was to review the content of the school documents, as the second technique adopted for data collection.

3.4.2 Review of school documentations

The most important school documents that warranted reviewing were the “*codes of conduct for learners*”, the rationale being that they contain the disciplinary measures of the respective schools, thus being relevant to the study (cf. 2.4.2; 2.4.3). The review process was therefore aimed at establishing:

- the schools' adherence to the stipulations of the circular;
- the impact of the circular on the formulation of schools' codes of conduct for learners;
- whether the participating schools have put programmes, procedures, and systems in place to control and to manage the said difficulties;
- the commonalities and differences that exist between the participating schools' codes of conduct for learners, thus shedding light on how the four schools' SMTs manage these problems (cf. 1.3).

The process of reviewing school documents was followed by that of focus groups interviews with the SMTs of the four participating schools.

3.4.3 Focus groups interviews

The concepts "interviews, and focus groups" were defined and described in section 1.5.3.3. In this section, their characteristics and purpose in this study are described. As indicated in section 3.3.2.2, above, focus groups, as a technique of data collection (Maree, 2010:90), were firstly adopted in this study for the participants, members of the SMTs, to take part in answering the research questions in this study,(cf. 1.3). Secondly, this technique was adopted because of certain defining characteristics that cause them to be suitable for the researcher's aims. Maree (2010:90-91) identifies the following:

during the focus groups interviews, the discussions are focussed on a particular topic, whereby debates and even conflicts are encouraged. With regard to this study, the debates concerned the given difficulties. Such debates appear in the next chapter where data is analysed;

- group dynamics assist in data generation. Debates and often conflicting statements that arose during the interviews, with the SMTs of the participating

schools, assisted greatly in adding a number of new perspectives to the discussions about the phenomenon being researched;

- group dynamics become an integral part of the procedures as participants generally engage each other in the discussions of the matter at hand. This is what turned out to be the case in this study, as evidenced by the group engagements regarding issues, described in the next chapter.

Regarding the focus groups interviews, it is important to note that, during these, interviewees were able to build on each other's ideas, and comments, thus providing clearer views about the challenges of learners' indiscipline and what the Circular 13 of 2002 was intended to achieve. In the researcher's opinion, this adds value to this study.

At this juncture it should be recalled that focus groups interviews were tape recorded. The rationale was its usefulness in elaborating and corroborating the initial research data and findings, as well as to assist in raising additional research questions (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010: 364), during the data analysis process.

Also worth noting are the field notes, taken during the processes both of observations and of focus groups interviews. Crucial as these notes are, they became invaluable during the interpretation of data obtained from the participants (cf. chapter 4). As Flick (2009:206) explains, "they are notes taken by researchers about their thoughts and observations when they are in the field or environment they are researching."

Having discussed the data gathering techniques or methods employed in this study, the researcher deems it important to explain his role in this regard.

3.5 The role of the researcher

As mentioned, the role of the researcher within the qualitative research design is that of being part and parcel of the research itself (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:314). It is further (ibid) pointed out that, in his/her role as a change agent, the researcher's personal involvement is more useful in an instance where s/he is simultaneously a member of the group s/he is studying, and a researcher doing the study. In other words, s/he becomes an instrument of data collection (Patton, 1990:14). Hence the argument that the validity of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigour of the researcher.

Taking queue from the above explications, the researcher deemed it necessary to reemphasise and to establish good relations between the researcher and the researched (van Wyk, 1996:129). Empathising and identifying with the people being studied, and determining their understanding of issues being studied. Moreover that, as a researcher one needs to "...strive to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and *rapport* with his/her subjects...as the quality of the data depends on the *rapport* in so far as it increases the likelihood of participants sharing authentic knowledge of their life world with him/her" (Measor, 1985:57). Furthermore, the researcher was solely responsible for all the activities that took place in this study with the express purpose to safeguard the negotiated relationships between himself, as the researcher, and the researched, so that the study, particularly the conclusions drawn, could have a profound impact (van Wyk, 1996:128; Weinstein –Shr, 1990:345-354). This was of help to him particularly when it came to reporting.

The above explanations about the role of the researcher lead to a discussion of the issues of objectivity and subjectivity in regard to the participants.

3.6 Issues of objectivity and subjectivity

As explained above, one of the important tenets of the qualitative research design is the involvement of the researcher in the research itself. Therefore it is very difficult for the him/her to be involved but remain totally objective as regards his/her opinion and influence on the subject being researched. Moreover, in his/her involvement with the research, to ensure validity and reliability, s/he would be expected to "... subject all phases of the research process to continuous and rigorous questioning and re evaluation" (van Wyk, 1996:169; Thomas and Pring, 2004:36).

In this vein, users of qualitative research approaches should always bear in mind that, whilst licensed to be subjective because of their involvement with the subject they are researching, theirs is a "disciplined subjectivity" (van Wyk, 1996:169). This can be attained by using different data collection techniques, such as collecting extra data from educators as well as from the parents' representatives, who are members of the SGB.

What follows are the ethical considerations that prevailed during the data collection period.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one of the most important aspects of qualitative data analysis (cf. 1.6). Therefore, the researcher ensured that on assessment of the analyses of the raw data, findings and conclusions, they were found to be a true reflection of the participants' views or the reality being studied (Maree, 2010:113; de Vos, et al, 2002:351). Thus, the next paragraphs describe issues of validity and reliability, as **tenets of trustworthiness**, and how they were considered in this study, when the researcher analysed the raw data. The main purpose was to arrive at findings and

conclusions that are credible and trustworthy (Aldridge and Levine, 2001:40; Maree, 2010:215-216). This was in line with the view that reliability and validity are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing the study, analysing the results and judging the quality of the study (Patton in Golafshani, 2003:597)

3.7.1 Validity/credibility

Validity is an integral part of qualitative data analysis. It is concerned with the scientific findings (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982:32). To ensure that these scientific or empirical outcomes are believed and trusted, they need to undergo a validation test (Maree, 2010:113; Merriam & Simpson, 2002:101). Hence they were assessed based on the constructs of the internal validity and credibility.

As Merriam & Simpson (2002:101) argue, internal validity/credibility is mainly concerned with the achievement of congruence between the research findings and the realities of life. After completing the transcription of the data process, the researcher revisited each participating school to verify unclear data and to validate the findings as well as to ascertain the correctness of facts (Maree, 2010:115). This time, no further tape recordings were made, though some field notes were taken. The main approach was the one-on-one interviews with the principals and deputies, including some of the HODs, initially involved in the focus groups interviews. It should be pointed out that the said interviews were specifically adopted for the sake of verification and validation processes only.

Telephonic communications with the above mentioned participants also formed part of the verification and validation process. The interviews were guided by the same questions asked during the focus group interviews. The purpose of using the identical

questions was to avoid the distortion of the research findings, by what Schumacher & McMillan (1993:391) regard as extraneous factors.

3.7.2 Reliability/dependability

This study shares the view that although the term reliability is a concept used for testing or evaluating quantitative research, the idea is most often used in all kinds of research (Golafshani, 2003:601). Thus, Babbie (2004:307) defines reliability in terms of dependability, further (ibid) viewing it as an acid test for judging the quality, that is, the value, of a research design. The focus is placed on minimising errors of fact (Maree, 2010:115) and biases in the study. In other words, reliability also encompasses obtaining the same research findings if the method of data collection or inquiry is replicated (Merriam and Simpson, 2000:102). Reliability is also viewed as “... a measure of the extent to which the results of an indicator or test are consistent over time” (Aldridge and Levine, 2001:39).

To ascertain reliability, the researcher used one set of questions with all the eight focus groups interviewed. The purpose of using the same questions was to avoid the distortion of the research findings (cf. 3.7.1.1), if the researcher were to have asked each focus group a different set of questions. The reliability of the data collected, particularly from the verbatim accounts of the tape-recordings, was ensured by revisiting the participating schools or telephonically communicating with participants to verify and to seek clarity regarding facts not clarified during the focus group interviews.

In conclusion, the validation process of the findings, and the reliability testing of the research data, were conducted in the spirit of trustworthiness, which in educational circles, is regarded as the true value, governing the completeness of a study (De Vos, et al, 2002:351).

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics concern moral principles. As the main focus of educational research falls on human beings, the researcher deemed it to be his ethical responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the participants involved in this research (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:15). This was ensured by always clarifying to the participants the voluntary nature of their involvement, before the commencement of the interview sessions. The objective was to make them aware that, although their participation and contributions to the research are valuable, if during the proceedings a participant or participants were to feel uncomfortable, they were free to excuse themselves. Permission to audio-record the interviews was also sought with the interviewees before the commencement of each session. The anonymity of their names was assured by using letters of the alphabet: A-D to identify each of the four participating schools instead of their real names.

As data gathering is always done on somebody's home ground (Stake, 1995:57), the researcher first sought permission from the relevant educational authorities to conduct research in their schools. Letters of permission were personally hand delivered to the four participating schools' principals. All the research visits were scheduled a month before. The times were set for after school hours, so as not to disturb the educative proceedings during school time. Confidentiality of the data collected was also identified in terms of numbers allotted to each participating schools. Thus, the GDE Head office, The Tshwane West Educational District 15 office, and the four participating schools, have each been promised to receive a copy of the study on completion.

Below follows a short description of the data presentation and processing that took place.

3.9 Data presentation and analysis

After data was collected, it was empirically analysed and described based on the following five stages of qualitative data analysis, which emphasise: presentation, selection, interpretation and description of the research data, suggested in Denscombe (2007:252):

- Data preparation – this started with the recognition of the huge amount of data often yielded by a qualitative study such as this one. That was followed by the process of transcribing tape-recorded data from interviews, comparing and aligning it with field notes from both the interviews and the research site observations (cf. 3.5). These processes commenced immediately, from the evening and the day after each research visit to a particular school. The rationale for doing this was to capture all important information whilst it was still fresh in the researcher’s mind (de Vos, et al, 2002:318), and to store the data as organised records on the computer, in preparation for in-depth analysis.
- Initial exploration of data – this took place in the form of immediate identification, alignment and categorisation of recurring themes and issues from the research site observations, tape-recordings, transcriptions and field-notes. Records of data derived were then organised into categories and sub-categories according to similarities and differences of theme, and stored on the computer (cf. 3.4.3). This exercise was carried out in view of the truism that an effective approach to dealing with data is to begin with the analysis process as soon as the first interview has been conducted (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999:149).
- Analysis of the data – in this study, the process of analysing data was guided by the notion that data needs to be considered from various angles, aiming “to identify keys in the text that will help us to understand and interpret the raw data” (Maree, 2010:101). Using the comparative method, data organised according to similarities (commonalities) and differences of theme, as

mentioned in the preceding paragraphs (cf. 3.4.2), were coded, evidence verified, interpreted and described. The main objective was to make sense of the plethora of data collected (Patton, 2002:432), as well as to transform it into reliable research findings (de Vos, et al, 2009:333).

- Presentation and display of the data – after the tedious exercise of sifting through the data, the researcher presented, in writing, an interpretation and description of relevant findings that would shed light on the thesis, the problem statement and the research questions posed in the study (cf. 1.3). The interpretations were corroborated by means of direct quotations of verbatim responses of the interviewees, derived from transcripts of the tape-recordings and field notes (cf. 3.4.3). Direct quotations of interviewees' responses appear in italics.
- Validations of the data – the data were validated as described earlier (cf. 3.6). The validation exercise was performed in line with the advice that it is necessary for researchers to revisit original field notes and verify conclusions, or to go back to the same participants to collect additional data, to verify or seek feedback (Hofstee, 2006:100). Data were also validated by comparing the data to relevant experiences elsewhere, as noted in the literature review chapter of this study.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter identified and discussed the research design and the methodology of data collection. The qualitative case study research design was identified as suitable for the purposes of this study, and consequently adopted and described. Reasons were given. The qualitative data collection strategies (Meree, 2010:90), were identified: observations, review of school documentation, and focus groups interviews. The whole

of Chapter 4 is devoted to their description. The chapter also touched on the place and role of the researcher within the context of the research process. Issues of subjectivity and objectivity, particularly during the analysis and description processes, were clarified, as were the ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a description of the steps followed in the presentation and analysis of the data.

Chapter 4

Data presentation, analysis and descriptions

.4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on the research design and the methods that serve as the framework detailing how data would be gathered, selected, analysed, interpreted, and described (cf. 3.1). This chapter presents and analyses the research data derived through the various processes. The analysis is related to the aim of this study, contemplated in section 1.3, the rationale being to give effect to the argument that the depth and intensity of data analysis depends squarely on the aim(s) of what is being studied (de Vos, et al, 2002:318). Furthermore, such analysis is essential to thoroughly examine the meaning of people's words and actions, (cf. 1.2; 1.5.2) in order to arrive at the results which will lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:22).

To answer the research questions, bearing in mind the idealistic nature of policy documents such as Circular 13 of 2002, the researcher set out on an empirical journey to solicit, on the ground, experiences and perceptions of School Management Teams (SMTs) in managing the two issues being studied. The main objective was to collect raw data which, on analysis, would be transformed into findings shedding light on the problem statement (cf. 1.3).

4.2 Synopsis of the research methodology

As indicated in section 3.4 of this study and its subsidiaries, certain qualitative case study research techniques, viz: field observations, document analysis and focus groups interviews, were employed for data collection purposes. Observations made were part of the researcher's personal involvement (cf. 3.5) with the research itself (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:314), as well as of his role as the instrument of data collection (Patton, 1990:432; Maree, 2010:79).

Altogether, 35 SMT members (cf. 3.3.2.2), from the four schools sampled participated in the interviews. Two homogeneous focus groups were established from each of these schools. Questions asked (cf.1.3) were identical in all groups of interviewees. However, the data collected, the analysis, and the description of the findings of these groups were presented jointly. The first focus group comprised the principal and his/her two deputies, representing senior management of the school. The second focus group comprised all HODs, as managers of learning areas offered by the respective participating schools. Hence the difference in the number of HODs per each school, as indicated in the following paragraphs.

To ensure confidentiality and privacy, participating schools were coded by means of the letters of the alphabet, from **A** to **D** (cf. 1.5.4; 3.8). Which school was given which letter of the alphabet, remains confidential, only known to the researcher, the Tshwane West (D15) office and the GDE. Meanwhile, members of the SMTs, referred to as respondents or participants in the study, are coded as follows:

School A: Principal = AP1. Deputy 1 = AD1. Deputy 2 = AD2. HODs = AH1 - AH6.

School B: Principal = BP1. Deputy 1 = BD1. Deputy 2 = BD2. HODs = BH1 – BH7.

School C: Principal = CP1. Deputy 1 = CD1. Deputy 2 = CD2. HODs = CH1 – CH4.

School D: Principal = DP1. Deputy 1 = DD1. Deputy 2 = DD2. HODs = DH1 - DH6.

The protection of identities was duly announced to the participants before the commencement of each interview session, to encourage them to contribute openly to questions and the discussions (cf. 3.7).

Visiting schedules were planned, together with principals of the given schools, a month before the commencement of the research visits, i.e. on the day the researcher visited the schools to hand-deliver permission letters to undertake research, from both the GDE and the Tshwane West (D15). Examples of school documentation such as “*codes of conduct for learners*” were collected for reviewing. Focus group interviews were based on questions posed in terms of the problem statement of the study (cf. 1.3). The same interview schedule was used for all participants, so as to increase the validity and credibility of the findings; thus, confirming the argument that, at the end, this kind of approach provides a holistic picture of all responses in order to ascertain consistency, and to reach reliable conclusions thereafter (Kumar, 1999:202).

The duration of each interview session was between 60 and 80 minutes. These sessions were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants (cf. 1.5.3.3). Meanwhile, key points made were also written down by the researcher, as field notes to corroborate the information tape-recorded during the data analysis process (cf. 3.4).

The following paragraphs detail the data presentations, the analysis thereof, and the descriptions of the findings.

4.3 Data presentation, analysis and description

Discussions in the following sections focus on the presentation, analysis and descriptions of the empirical data. As mentioned, the data were thematically organised into categories and sub-categories. The information was empirically obtained guided by the qualitative research techniques of data collection described in the previous chapter,

viz.: Observations, review of school documentations, and focus groups interviews (cf. 3.4). The main purpose of the exercise was to arrive at reliable sub-conclusions about the problem statement (Hofstee, 2006:138), described in section 1.3 of this study.

4.3.1 Observations

Below are the detailed descriptive narratives of emergent trends, from the research observations (cf. 3.4.1). They are described per participating school.

4.3.1.1 Observations of arrival and starting times:

The main aim of this section was to establish the observance of arrival and starting times by both learners and educators, at the beginning of the school day (cf. 3.4.1.1).

School A

The *code of conduct for learners* at this school states that: *“All learners are expected to arrive at school in accordance with school rules for the start of the school day, and to be punctual at all times during the day. Learners who arrive late will be given disciplinary action.”* The school times mentioned are not spelt out in the codes of conduct for learners. However, according to AP1, *“... all educators and administrative staff, are expected to arrive at 7:30. Learners are expected to arrive at 7:45 for the marking of the class registers and to be ready for the first period that commences at 8:00.”* Hence, all learners are expected to be in class by 7:45 failing which the learner is marked absent for the day (cf. 2.4.3; 2.5). It also emerged that starting times were not adhered to by all, as some learners and educators kept on arriving well beyond 8:00.

Concerning observations on late coming, AP1 lamented thus, *“...apart from the learners coming in late, I wish this enquiry was about my teachers, they do not have respect for time. They are the main culprits in this regard, which is sad as it includes some members of the SMT. We always fight about this and I would not say I am winning.”* AP1’s comments to some extent reveal possible weaknesses of leadership at this school, thus raising questions about the SMT being able to implement the provisions of this circular given the school’s tolerant culture on late coming (cf. 2.4.3; 2.5). That educators regularly arrive late, was confirmed by the Time book, which is full of slots, highlighted by the principal, to indicate that on a particular date, an educator was late. Conclusions that could be drawn were that arrival and starting times are of no consequence at this school, as both learners and educators do not respect official starting times, particularly in the morning.

Learners rely on public transport which drops them off a kilometre away from school (cf. 2.2.3). According to AH6, *“... transport contributes much to late coming, thus making it difficult for us to contain this problem. At the same time we need to admit that our learner catchment area is quite large as it stretches from Hammanskraal to Winterveldt and Mabopane areas, which are more than twenty kilometres away from the school.”* The above statement reveals that both transport and the vast learner catchment area impact negatively on the management of late coming and the effective implementation of the provisions of the said circular (cf. 2.4.2; 2.5). However, AD2 defended the school’s admission policy of admitting learners from outside the local area as, *“... catering for those learners whose home languages are not taught in schools in their area, as well as a means of survival for us as a school. If we do not admit them our numbers will dwindle and the department of education will close us down.”*

It emerged that by “survival”, AD2 referred to a common practice by the Department of Education to close down schools with a limited number of registered learners. Also, few registrations at a school mean that some educators are in excess; thus, they risk being transferred or asked to take early retirement. To protect itself, this school registers any learner of school going age, irrespective of whence they come from or what caused

them to leave schools in their neighbourhood, (cf. 2.4.1; 2.5). The danger with this practice is that some of these schools end up registering truants who were rejected by their previous schools because of indiscipline. The risk of inheriting such learners is that they increase the behavioural problems of their new schools, such as late-coming and class bunking, consequently rendering the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002 impossible (cf. 2.4.1; 2.5).

School B

The school's *code of conduct for learners*, does not indicate the official starting times save to mention that, "*transgression of the arrival and starting times is an unacceptable and punishable behaviour.*" According to BP1, "*... all educators and administrative staff are expected to arrive at the school by 7:30.*" Explaining the purposes of arriving early, BD2 mentioned that, "*the fifteen minutes between 7:30 and 7:45 is used for morning briefings between the SMT and the rest of the educators.*" Furthermore, as BD2 explained, "*... learners are expected to be seated in their respective classrooms by 7:45, at which the first teaching period commences.*" It was clear that, educators arrive on time, with most of them arriving even earlier than the scheduled times (cf. 2.3).

Explaining the situation, BD1 mentioned that, "*... educators arrive early as most of them have matric classes to teach before the commencement of the school day. Now it is a norm, as even those who do not teach the matric classes, just come in early to mark learners books, and so on.*" The situation was corroborated in the second focus group interviews with the HODs, where BH6 mentioned that, "*...as the SMT we do not have educators arriving late without any good reason at this school. Anyway, we all know what our responsibilities are, and that it is wrong for an educator to arrive late at school as that may create wrong impressions among the learners.*" The punctuality of the educators was confirmed by the Time Book, which showed that educators at this school observe the stipulated times (cf. 2.4.3; 2.5).

Pertaining to the learners, BD2 admitted, “... we do have our own share of delinquents, especially boys who are repeaters, they give us headaches, most of them are locals, who deliberately come to school late. They are the same learners who often bunk classes and leave the school premises without permission. Otherwise, others who sometimes do come late, are non-locals as our learner catchment area is quite spread. Generally, we are not bad off. ” The explanations were supported by a few latecomers waiting outside the school gates for the first period to end so that they could be allowed to come onto the school premises and into their classrooms (cf. 2.4.1; 2.5).

Once again, as in the case of school A, most of the learners at this school are not locals: also, they include learners from the neighbouring farming areas, for whom the department of education is said to subsidise their transport. The reason for accommodating learners from outside the school’s immediate catchment area, was also given by BH3 as, “... a means to survive and not to lose on teaching posts or the school being closed down because of low numbers of registered learners.” Evident in the above comments is the fear of being closed down as well as of losing teaching posts. These concerns are similar to the ones expressed in school A. Otherwise, members of the SMT at this school are in agreement that, besides some incidents of late-coming because of transport, generally this does not pose much of a difficulty to the school (cf. 2.2.1).

School C

As in the cases of schools A and B, the school’s *code of conduct for learners* does not spell out the official starting times. It also categorically states that: “*All learners are expected to be punctual for the start of the school as well as for every period. Late coming to school shall be considered as a violation of the Code of Conduct and a punishable offence.*” Confirming the statement, CP1 explained that, “*All educators and the administrative staff are expected to be at school by 7:30, and the learners by 7:45 which is the time for marking the class registers. Teaching time commences at 8:00 until*

the end of the school day, at 2:30.” However, observations made were that, in reality the situation at this school, regarding late-coming, is not different from that of school A as it is rife (cf. 2.2.1) . The state of affairs was confirmed by a large number of latecomers waiting outside the locked school gates, waiting for the end of the first period, before they could be allowed to enter their respective classrooms (cf. 2.2.2).

It also emerged that this school has been allocated nine buses, sponsored by the GDE, specifically to service its learners (cf. 2.2.2.). However, as CP1 explained, *“late coming is rife irrespective of the learners having their own transport.”* Confirming the allegations made, CD2 took these a step further claiming that, *“... truants, among whom you find most of our repeaters, are the main perpetrators, as they deliberately misses boarding times and thus arrive late.”* In the researcher’s opinion, learners involved in these *shenanigans* revealed the lack in both positive actions and self-discipline, which are important elements of the standard behaviour recognised and accepted by civil society (Squelch, 2000:19). Their conduct also revealed their lack of respect for the school times and their low valuing of education (cf. 2.4.3; 2.5), which are not conducive to the effective implementation of this circular.

Interesting though, some educators also arrived late, though they were allowed in by the gatekeeper. On enquiring about this discriminatory practice, a dubious answer, from CD2 was that, *“they have to be allowed in as they have to teach learners who arrived on time”*. Some of the latecomers, both male and female learners, were seen walking away from the school gate, hand in hand, in the direction of Soshanguve township. Later the researcher was informed that those were truants who deliberately come late, find the school gates locked and then return into the township to spend the rest of the school day at the taverns and brothels (cf. 2.2.3). Given the situation, the researcher reached the conclusion that the schools’ starting times are of no essence to certain learners as well as some of the educators. In other words, late coming is not properly managed at this school (cf. 2.2.3), which is a practice against the spirit of Circular 13 of 2002.

School D

The *code of conduct for learners* at this school clearly states that, “... *educators and learners should report to school punctually in the morning. Punctuality to class throughout the day and in all school activities is expected.*” However, in reality, late-coming is also rife at this school. As with the cases of schools A and C, learners and teachers are culprits in this regard (cf. 2.3). As the starting times are not officially indicated in the school's *code of conduct for learners*, DP1 explained that, “*The arrival time for educators and administrative staff in the morning is 7:30, and the fifteen minutes before 7:45, is for consultations between us as the SMT and the rest of the teaching staff. Learners are expected to be seated and ready for lessons, which commences at 7:45.*” The above descriptions signify that learners and educators who are latecomers deliberately enter late whilst knowing what the expected official times are. This demonstrates that the code of conduct for this school is merely idealistic as in reality it does not apply (cf. 2.3)

This situation led DP1 to remark that, “... *some of my teachers behave similar to the truanting learners.*” This is a sad state of affairs, moreover involving some members of the SMT. Thus the situation calls for the education authorities to monitor policy implementation; otherwise, these policies would not be worth the paper they are written on (cf. 2.3). Regarding the transportation of learners, HD3 noted that, “... *we are next to the main road where there is always busses and taxis passing by, but late-coming is rife among local and non-local learners*”. This indicates the amount of truancy that this school is experiencing (cf. 2.2.3)

Also contributing to the discussions, HD2 noted that, “*we have a large learner catchment area which includes Rosslyn, Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane and Winterveldt due to the fact that, other African languages in exception of Setswana are still not taught in the former Republic of Bophuthatswana. Thus all the learners whose home language is not Setswana come to schools in Soshanguve and we cannot turn them back irrespective of the fact that they contributes much to our problems of late coming and often class bunking.*” Apparent from these remarks is the need to reinstate African

languages which were removed from the curriculum in Bophuthatswana during the homelands era (cf. 3.3.2.1). Adding to the explanation DH3 acknowledged that, “... *there are busses paid for by the department of education but they are meant for learners from neighbouring farms, and at times they do bring in the learners late. The main culprits are the local ones. Particularly truants who deliberately choose to wait for the sgubu taxis and thus arrive late.*” The *sgubu taxi*/taxi with a drum is township slang referring to a taxi that plays loud music (cf. 2.4.1).

The researcher also observed that there is confusion about the exact time for marking registers as a way of controlling late coming in the morning. According to DD1, “... *there is no specific time for marking the class registers as that is left to the class teacher’s discretion.*” However, during the transcription of the tape-recordings, the researcher felt it was necessary to phone the school to verify the information about the times when class registers were marked (cf. 2.2.2; 2.5). The receiver of the phone call, an HOD, here identified as DH5, explained that, “... *all class registers of this school are marked at 12:30, immediately after the lunch break, to check on learners who may have left the school premises during break and did not come back to complete the school day, as they often do.*” Conflicting statements by the two managers, on such a simple managerial issue, are thought provoking as this raises questions about the commitment, honesty and consistency of some members of the SMT in implementing the circular (cf. 3.8.1; 2.5).

Summary: The arrival and starting times, in the morning, of all the four schools sampled are more or less the same (cf. 2.2.2), although not officially stated in their codes of conduct for learners. Clear stipulations of the school times in these codes are crucial as these are the documents that learners and their parents receive on first registration with the school (cf. 2.5; 2.6.3). This circular is generally ignored which is evidenced by its not being mentioned in the four codes (cf. 4.4.2). The continual prevalence of late coming suggests that the circular and its stipulations are deliberately ignored, or the prevailing circumstances in these schools render the circular impossible to implement, or the circular itself is unrealistic (cf. 2.4.1; 2.4.3).

In three of the four schools, educators are part of the problem as they arrive late. The situation is worsened by some of these latecomers being members of the SMTs (cf. 2.5.3). Behaviour wise, they are bad examples to the learners, as they undermine the spirit of Circular 13 of 2002. As perpetrators, these educators are transgressing their contractual obligations, as prescribed in the Employment of Educators Act (Act 76 of 1998) and reemphasised in this circular, which may result in them facing disciplinary actions for misconduct and possible dismissal, contemplated in Schedule 8(2) (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:275). In this regard, the *Time Book* is the main tool that SMTs, particularly the principal, as the representative of the department, should use to monitor educators' observance of the arrival, starting and departure times at the end of the school day (cf. 2.3.3).

It needs to be noted however that, with the exception of school C, the time books of the other three schools are not properly managed. They are left lying, unmonitored, in the hallways or at the enquiries desks of the administration blocks, thus giving dishonest latecomer educators a chance to fill-in whatever time they choose (cf. 2.4.1). Conclusions that could be drawn from these instances are that the arrival and starting times, apart from school B, are of no consequence nor respected by both learners and educators alike. All these schools need to monitor and to manage learners' transport, particularly that which is departmentally sponsored, to ensure that learners arrive and start school on time (cf. 2.2.2; 2.5).

It also became clear that the learner catchment areas, for all participating schools, are vast because of reasons such as: home language, protection of teaching posts and resistance to school closure by the department, remuneration of senior management, and catering for new areas where secondary schools have not been built as yet (cf. 2.2.1).

The following section describes the available facilities and services.

4.3.1.2 Facilities and services

The main objective of this section was to determine whether schools have the necessary facilities and services to enable the SMTs to effectively implement the provisions of the given circular (cf. 2.5).

School A

This is a no school-fees paying school (cf. 1.6.1), and thus qualifies for a feeding scheme, supplemented by the services of a tuck-shop and fruit vendors. Under normal circumstances, the availability of a feeding scheme and these services would afford the SMT the possibilities of locking the school gates during school hours, as mandated by regulation, thereby minimizing the challenges indicated, and enhancing the possibilities of effectively implementing this circular (cf. 2.6.2).

However, as AP1 noted, *“... learners absenteeism during school hours and learners late coming are rife at this school. What worsens our situation is the lack of a protection fence enclosing the school property. I was appointed principal of this school three years ago, and I found the school fence as it is today.”* From these comments is clear that the school community and property have been vulnerable for quite some time (cf. 2.3.4). As AD1 further explained, *“...years come and go, learners register with the school and complete their studies under these circumstances. In the meantime, the school is expected to meet the policy demands and function properly. How do we do it?”*

This feeling of disgruntlement is justified, as this policy is implementable depending on the availability of certain resources (cf. 2.6.2). Palpable from the foregoing explanations and remarks is that the government has neglected its responsibilities towards the school, by failing to rebuild its fence, as prescribed in the South African Schools Act 84,1996: s12(1); s52 and 55, consequently putting the safety and lives of both property and the school community at risk over many years (cf. 2.3.3). As a no fee school, totally

dependent on state funding, it is unfair to expect the SGB to meet the obligations of the SASA (s 21(1) (a) - (e)), with regard to financially maintaining the school grounds and paying for other services rendered to the school (Davies, 1999:63).

Many footpaths that crisscross the school grounds, turned into thoroughfares by members of the public, also confirm that the school has been without a fence for some time. Hence AH7 opines that, “... *without proper fencing, it is impossible for us as the SMT to effectively implement the provisions of policies such as Circular 13 of 2002.*” These remarks make it quite clear that in their experience, the SMT of this school is of the opinion that a properly fenced school would ensure learners’ safety as well as improve the chances of the effective implementation of this circular (cf. 2.4.1).

The semi-double storied buildings are quite huge and daunting. According to AD2, “... *the physical structures offers a lot of hiding places which are taken advantage of by class bunkers, gamblers and smokers.*” It was also observed that the double storied section of the buildings manifests many cracks which makes it unsafe for human occupation, even though learners are presently using the building; hence the education department is running the risk of incurring serious liabilities should the building collapse (cf. 2.3.2). Similar are the interiors of some of the classrooms where the ceilings are collapsing. AH5 explained the situation as “... *poor workmanship by the builders, aggravated by vandals who steal electrical cables and lights from the school buildings.*”

Further observations of the school buildings revealed that all windows, including those of the administration block, are barricaded with meshed iron grids. Two entrances leading into the centre of the buildings are barred with huge sheets of iron, for gates, said to have been installed to monitor late arrivals. The third entrance on the northern side of the buildings has been closed with a high brick-wall on top of which hangs a razor-wire, which shows that it has been tampered with. The physical appearance is rather that of a penitentiary than of a school (cf. 2.4.1). In this regard, AD1 indicated that, “... *burglary is one of the challenges that the school is facing, moreover that burglars find it easy to approach the school buildings because of the absence of a proper enclosure around the school.*” Confirming the aforementioned concern, some

boys, not in school uniform, were seen chatting to those inside the classrooms from the outside, which illustrates lack of security in the school community. Regarding this observation, AH4 explained that *“...it happens all the time sometimes even when there is an educator in class, particularly female educators. Those boys you see may be drug peddlers on business.”*

In the researcher’s view, the prisonlike appearance of the physical buildings does not promote a positive school environment meant to facilitate teaching and learning, as well as the development of young minds (Hallam, et al, 1995:17). According to Thambirajah, et al (2008:37), usually, these kinds of situations result in hardened negative attitudes towards the school environment, which may lead to the escalation of indiscipline among learners. Thus it is not surprising that the school is experiencing disciplinary difficulties such as truancy, bunking classes, using drugs, gambling on the school premises, sneaking out or deliberately coming to school late (cf. 2.4.3).

In some classes, learners were playing and making a noise as there were no educators attending to them. On the day of the observations, police officers were at the school, to investigate a case of burglary said to have happened the previous night (cf. 2.4.2). In the researcher’s opinion, burglaries, alleged to be frequent as thieves target the school properties such as computers and doors for their own use, were clear signs of an indifferent surrounding community, though the school is meant for its benefit, and an uncontrollable situation, which defeats the school’s fundamental interest in providing a secure and disciplined environment conducive to teaching and learning (Blystone, 2007:199-200). Hence AP1 laments, *“... lack of proper facilities at our school, and the general disrespect of the school property, by the local community impacts negatively on learners and the school as an educational environment”*. Thus the SMT of this school finds it hard to effectively implement the provisions contemplated in this circular (cf. 2.6.3).

School B

Entrance into the school property is through massive iron gates manned by two security guards who, unfortunately, do not keep any form of register for latecomers, or for the incoming and outgoing traffic (cf. 2.3.2). Their responsibility seems to be that of opening and closing the gate, directing visitors to the administration building or closing-out latecomers until the end of the first period when they are allowed to go to their respective classes. The school fence, built of cement palisades, looks intact. However, on further inspection, most of the palisades behind the classrooms, were broken or had been removed. On enquiry, BD2 explained that *"...it is the work of vandals and thieves who steal the palisades for their own home enclosures. Unfortunately for us as a school, it means lack of protection and safety as truanting learners, who bunk classes or arrive late, gamblers and drug dealers, gain access in or out of the school premises through the opening."*

Although the condition of the school fence was not as grave as that of school A, the challenges posed by truants, repeaters especially, and other intruders on the school property, there to gamble or to sell drugs to the learners, were found to be similar (cf. 2.4.2). Hence the admission by BH4 that, *"... we are experiencing class bunking especially among male learners who are repeaters. Sometimes they leave the school premises without being noticed. Late coming is there but can be attributed to the shared transport with the neighbouring schools, but in general we are doing fine in managing both class bunking and late coming."* Once again, it is apparent that facilities such as the school fence contribute to the effective implementation of circular 13 of 2002 (cf. 2.6.3).

Unlike school A, school B is graded as a "school-fees school" (cf. 1.5), and is thus partially dependent on the State for its financial needs, as prescribed in the SASA, s36 (Davies, 1999:66). Thus, the responsibility to repair the damaged or missing fence is in the hands of the SGB, which should possess the competences to enable them to maintain or to improve their school facilities at their own expense, as prescribed in the SASA, s21(6), and alluded to in Davies (1999:66) (cf. 2.3.3; 2.4.1).

It should also be noted that, because of their grading (cf. 2.4.1), parents of the learners are required to pay all the fees agreed upon with the SGB (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:51-52). However, in BP1's view, *"... these expectations are hard to accomplish, as only a few parents are able to pay school fees"* further explaining that, *"... in this township (Soshanguve) parents who have money send their children to former model C schools and we remain with the destitute. The majority of our learners are cared for by their grannies, dependent on the government grants. Some parents are unemployed, whilst some of our learners are themselves heads of families, and do not pay school fees. Thus, we spent much of the year operating on a zero-balance and unable to meet some of our obligations."* One of the obligations referred to was understood to be that of the SGB, being unable to rebuild the broken fence behind the classrooms because of the financial constraints (cf. 2.4.1).

Being graded as a school-fees school also means that the school does not qualify for the government "feeding scheme". Opposing this grading, BD1 argues thus, *"... our grading makes our situation difficult, as we also deal with learners from destitute families. Some of them often come to school hungry, claiming not to have had food at home. These learners find it difficult to concentrate in class, and sometimes, some of them turn to truancy, as they bunk classes, gamble or become drug peddlers. Perhaps the authorities need to downgrade us to the level of a no school fees school, so that our learners could also benefit from the services of a feeding scheme, which in my opinion, would also encourage school attendance, as most of them do not have money to buy meals from the school tuck-shop or the fruit vendors. Unfortunately, it is the law, that dictates that we keep them locked inside the school property until the end of the school day. This is where this policy seems to be unfair to such learners. But in all fairness, the policy is unfair to the kind of learners we are dealing with"*.

Views expressed above are indicative of the idealistic nature of policies, which often do not turn out to be mirror images of reality (cf. 2.6.2). The implication is that the government's "feeding scheme" in public schools, should not be granted because of the quintile system, where a school is either a fee or a non-fee school, but rather granted

according to the socioeconomic environment where the school is located (cf. 2.6.2; 2.6.3).

Pertinent to the physical structure, the single storied structure is quite huge. As in the case of School “A”, school doors and windows were also found barricaded with meshed iron grids and plates, understood to be an attempt at maintaining safety in the school community and to stamp out theft of the school’s property such as computers (cf. 2.6.3). Nevertheless, burglary at this school, as explained by BD1, only “... *happened a long time ago, as we have armed security guarding the school at night.*”

School C

The school fence and gates of meshed wire, reported to have been rebuilt recently, are intact. The security gates, manned by the school’s factotum, are kept locked at all times, only opened for those who come onto or leave the school property. Although there are no registers for latecomers or for visitors entering or leaving the school property (cf. 2.3.3), observations indicated that learners’ protection and safety during school hours are taken care of as the school gates remain locked until the end of the school day. These observations were confirmed by CP1’s comments that, “*Once learners are inside the school premises, they are not allowed to leave unless they have permission to do so in a form of a letter from parents or a medical practitioner.*” This is what the given circular stipulates (cf. 2.3.4).

CH5 further explained that, “... *since our school fence was rebuilt, we are able to keep check on the whereabouts of our learners in the spirit of keeping them safe during school hours. Class bunking still persists, with learners hiding themselves in toilets, or in classrooms where there are no educators. However, having the protection fence around the school, incidents of learners absent from school during school hours have lessened.*” The above remarks reiterated the comments, by members of the SMTs of schools A and B, about the importance of maintaining a protective fence and gates

around the school properties to ensure safety and to enable the implementation of the prescripts of the circular (cf. 2.6.3).

Concerning the school buildings, the single storied structure is massive. Similar, to schools A and B, all windows and doors are also barricaded with meshed iron grids, their purpose being identical to that in the above mentioned two schools. CD2 explained the advantage of securing doors and windows as, *“...very helpful as it has come to lessen cases of burglary which were frequent before the school fence was rebuilt and the doors and windows protected.”*

Pertaining to male learners seen moving around the school premises, during teaching times, CH5 admitted that, *“... those are truants contributing to the difficulties of controlling class bunking, as they always escape into the classes where there are no educators, or hide themselves in some of the school buildings, to smoke, gamble and even to take drugs, the only consolation we have is that, they cannot move out of the school premises because our gates are always locked during school hours.”*

As with the case of school B, this is a fee paying school; thus it does not qualify for the benefits of the feeding scheme. Commenting on their situation, CP1 opined as follows, *“... the possibility is, the learners taking a chance at gambling hope to make some money to buy food from the school tuck shop or fruit vendors, as the majority are from destitute families. The school can never condone this, and they know that what they are doing is illegal. Whenever they are caught, we sent them home to bring along their parents to be present during the disciplinary proceedings. Aware of the destitute background of our learners we intend applying for a down grade as a non school fee paying school.”* Emerging from the remarks is the strong desire that the fee schools be downgraded. As CP1 argued, *“... a downgrade is ideal so that our learners could also benefit from the services of a feeding scheme, so that we could keep them inside the school premises, as stipulated in the ‘Lock-up policy’ (Circular 13 of 2002), moreover that parents are just not paying fees because of various reasons.”* It is obvious that the reasons given were similar to those discussed under school B above (cf. 2.4.1).

School D

Similar to school C, the protection fence enclosing the school was rebuilt recently and consequently was still intact. However, the school gates are not locked nor manned by any security personnel, save for the lone factotum who opens and closes the gate without registering visitors' names or asking questions (cf. 2.3.4). According to DP1, "*... the school cannot afford to hire security guards to guard the school during the school day as only a few parents pay school fees. Thus, we can only afford unarmed security services for the evenings only.*" The challenges of non-payment of school fees by the parents at this school are similar to those experienced at schools B and C above. However, the omission as regards locking the school gates, mandated in the circular, and the neglect of monitoring the incoming or outgoing traffic, is in direct contravention of the Act, Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53,1985), as well as the safety measures provided for in Circular 13 of 2002. Also to be noted is that the safety of the lives of learners and everybody else on the school property is compromised (cf. 2.3.4).

Defending the situation, DP1 explained that, "*... we are a school-fees paying school but the majority of our parents do not pay as they claim poverty. Thus we are unable to employ the private security guards to man our gates and to take care of other safety matters during the school hours, as we have no money to pay for such services.*" On this point DD2 revealed that, "*... before the State removed its security personnel from public schools, we were able to implement the prescripts of this circular effectively. Learners absenteeism and late coming had then reduced drastically. But now the problems are worse than before.*" Surfacing from the remarks is another let-down by the State, in removing the armed security services which dealt with issues of safety at schools, thereby allowing educators to focus on educational matters (cf. 2.6.3).

DH4 further noted, "*... we are dealing with learners from the same destitute backgrounds as our neighbouring schools. What affects them affects us too. Thus, it is important that we apply for a downgrade of our status so that our learners could also benefit from the services of the government feeding scheme as most of them have no*

money to buy meals from the school tuck-shop or the fruit vendors.” Arguments about the grading of the participating schools, and how it negatively impacts on the fee-schools, especially, are again evident. So are the reasons for parents failing to pay school fees (cf. 2.6.3).

Observations of the school buildings as well as the disciplinary challenges experienced by the other three participating schools discussed above yielded the same results. Similar is the appearance of a penitentiary (cf. 2.4.1). Here too, DH3 felt that the purpose and advantage of barricading doors and windows were, “... *to assist in lessening the burglaries that were frequent before their school fence was rebuild, and thus have come to lessen challenges of class bunking.*”

Summary: Broken fences at schools A and B make effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002 difficult, as the situation allows for learners to sneak in or out of the school premises whenever they are late, or to bunk classes. The same applies to the unwanted elements from the local community, such as gamblers and drug peddlers, said to be causing numerous problems at these schools. As cited in 2.4.3, the department of education is responsible for rebuilding these fences, although there is a difference in the two schools as school B is a fee school, with the implications mentioned.

The general feeling of the SMTs of schools C and D, whose fences were recently rebuilt and thus intact, was that they agreed that their situations had changed for the better, as cases of class bunking and learners sneaking out of the school premises had lessened. This is indicative of the necessity of proper school fencing, for ensuring learner safety as well as an important prerequisite for the effective implementation of the circular (cf.2.6.3). Another point to note is that, because of their sizes, all participating schools need concerted efforts by all members of their SMTs to manage them (cf. 2.3.3).

The huge school buildings are said to be problematic since they offer many hiding places for truants and intruders who come on the school premises to gamble as well as to sell drugs. Perhaps the architects need to think about schools as places where

learners spend most of their time of the day and thus plan the school buildings and grounds in such a way that would be attractive to the school community, especially the learners. The iron grids barricades on doors and windows gives these schools bad image, (cf. 4.3.1.2), which evokes feelings of being at a prison more than an educative institution. Sports grounds, particularly of school with fencing problems, are no go areas as they are not safe for learners (cf. 2.4.1), because of a lack of proper fencing, (cf. 2.3.2).

The different grading of schools in the same socioeconomic environment, as fee and non-fee schools, was found to be problematic. Moreover the general belief and experience is that parents who can afford to pay school fees, register their children with former model C schools in the city of Tshwane, thus leaving other schools with the destitute learners whose parents find it difficult to pay school fees (cf. 2.6.3), as prescribed by law (Davies, 1999:66). It also emerged that most of the learners of the four participating schools are cared for by their grannies with their monthly government payouts. Such learners are in these situations either as orphans or because their parents, mostly single mothers, live at or near their places of employment (cf. 2.6.2). Some of these learners are often blamed for class bunking or for coming late.

Also emerging as a trend across the four participating schools was that some of these learners double as learners during school hours and as heads of households after school. As explained in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, these moonlighting learners were found to contribute negatively to the effective implementation of the said circular, as they are always late for school or they bunk classes, thus adding to the problems of, absenteeism during school hours and late arrival (cf. 1.3).

It also emerged that the removal of security services from schools, previously sponsored by the State, compromises the safety of the school property and the learners, as most of the schools cannot afford to employ such services because of financial constraints, discussed above. Yet State sponsored armed security services at schools also comprise a crucial prerequisite of enabling implementation of Circular 13 of 2002, (cf. 2.3.4).

Sports grounds across all the four sampled schools are neglected and overgrown. Some have been turned into food gardens by community members for their own individual benefit with SMTs explaining the practice as a way of keeping the school property clean. Fear of criminal activities taking place during the sporting activities at these schools such as: drug paddling, gambling, rape, use of guns, intrusion and trespassing by unwanted elements, etc, are advanced as the main reasons why sports is no-more a priority (cf. 2.3.4; 2.4.1).

This is sad, as schools are often places where some learners get a chance to develop interest and skills, even becoming sports personalities of repute. Removing sports from the school curriculum means that learners at these schools are denied a vital ingredient of their supposed to be holistic educational development (cf. 2.5). After all, SMTs need to remember the importance of the dictum: *all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*. As the status quo prevails, it is not surprising that being offered half school curriculums may turn to be boring, forcing learners into truancy (cf. 2.6.3). Thus making it difficult for the SMTs to effectively implement the provisions of this circular.

The following section looks into record keeping.

4.3.1.3 Record keeping

The main objective of this audit was to establish how the participating SMTs maintain official records and information regarding their respective schools, as this enhances the implementation and management of the purposes of this circular.

School A

The observation of record keeping at this school, in the form of registers and disciplinary records, revealed that: there are serious flaws which need urgent attention. For

instance, the office of the principal could not produce a copy of the circular which was at the centre of this investigation. This means that some of the official documents are not taken seriously (cf. 2.3.4). Furthermore, the school does not maintain gate registers for latecomers, nor a register to monitor visitors who come in or out of the school property. This compromises the safety of the learners (cf. 2.6.3), and is in conflict with the spirit of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985), as well as the safety measures provided for in the circular (cf. 2.3.4). In an attempt to clarify the situation, AP1 created the impression that, *“the school does not keep the latecomers’ and the visitors registers, as the circular prescribes, because there is no fence or gate to lock.”*

It was also observed that class registers are marked very early in the morning, at 7:45, and no other mechanism is in use, such as period registers, to monitor learner attendance for the whole school day (cf. 2.2.2). In this regard AD1 explained, *“... in the past we had period registers but because they disturb our teaching time, we stopped using them.”* Non utilisation of the period registers means that it is in the school culture not to enforce their use, even though the circular requires that vigorous measures be employed to prevent absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming (cf. 2.4.3). Thus the school is acting in contravention of this circular, especially since, as AH4 explained, *“... late coming and class bunking are rife at this school, encouraged by the absence of a proper enclosure around the school property.”* However, it is hoped that this situation will change as period registers were intended to be mandatory for all public schools in the Republic of South Africa, from January 2011, with the purpose of encouraging class attendance during school hours (*Government Gazette*, 4 May 2010).

It also became evident that the school has not devised disciplinary programmes and procedures for how it will deal with disciplinary issues such as the ones mentioned. Similarly, the absence of written records of how the school dealt with learners’ disciplinary hearings in the past, relating to absenteeism during school hours and late coming, means that the school will not have precedents concerning these matters to

which it can refer in the future. Similarly, there will be no records to refer to in instances where there is a need to issue a testimonial or a transfer letter to a learner (cf. 2.4.1).

School B

In respect of the purpose of ensuring the safety of the school community, envisaged in the given circular (cf. 1.1), the SMT fails in this regard as there are no gate registers to keep a check on visitors coming into or out of the school property, so that there is no record of who comes in and for what reason or purpose (cf. 2.3.4). The role of gatekeepers seems to be that of opening and closing the gate, to direct visitors to the administration block, and to closeout latecomers out during the first period, without entering their names into any form of register. Explaining the situation, BD2 mentioned that “... *it is the workload that we have which makes us to focus on that which we think is more important, which is teaching.*” Unfortunately this kind of reasoning is not helpful if educative tasks take precedence over management and the creation of a conducive learning environment (cf. 2.6.3).

As with school “A”, it emerged that period registers are not in use nor any other measures put in place to ensure that class bunking does not occur. According to BP1, “... *it is because of the work load, and the number of learners we have to teach that limits our time to read circulars. Thus most of our time is consumed by teaching than doing the monitoring work, as it has been prescribed by the education authorities that every educator including the principal, must have classes to teach.*” This regulation is worrisome, all the more so because principals and their deputies need to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the learners’ safety and the creation and provision of a conducive learning environment (cf. 2.4.3).

However, unlike school A, school B does keep records of learners’ disciplinary hearings, regarding class bunking and late coming. This is the appropriate practice which is in line with the provisions of Circular 13 of 2002. Moreover, such records will serve as sources of future reference with regard to disciplinary matters (cf. 2.6.3)

School C

Similar to schools A and B, school C does not keep any form of register for latecomers or vehicles and persons coming onto or leaving the school premises (cf. 2.3.4). Consequently this school too, does not keep records, programmes or procedures that indicate how late coming is monitored and managed at the school. However, period registers are effectively in use at this school. In this regard, CP1 confirmed this, saying, *“... we have problems with late coming, particularly during the first period, and class bunking. Thus, I always insist that subject teachers should first check attendance by marking period registers before the commencement of each lessons.”* This is consistent with the circular concerning the use of rigorous measures that need to be taken to ensure learners’ attendance (cf. 2.2.2).

Concerning the keeping of records regarding programmes and procedures for learners’ discipline, CH3 explained as follows, *“... we keep records of regular class bunkers, known gamblers, drug peddlers, smokers, and those learners who regularly leave the school premises during school hours without permission. The main purpose being to try to rehabilitate them. If the problem persists, we bring in the parents and possibly the SGB, to try and save the learner’s future.”* This practice is in line with the spirit of *loco parentis*, emphasised in the circular (cf. 2.4.2).

The school also maintains records of learners’ disciplinary hearings, regarding absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming. These records are stored in the principal’s office for future reference. There is a mandatory “time book”, for educators, which all are supposed to sign on arrival and when they leave in the afternoon; this register is kept and monitored by the principal or his two deputies. In this regard, CP1 elaborated, *“I personally monitor the Time Book to ensure that latecomers do not fill in wrong arrival times. Learners late coming is rife at this school, thus to stamp it out it needs to start with educators, whom some have the tendency of arriving late. Thus, this register, serve as record that assist us in managing educators time.”* CP1’s explanations are in consonance with the observations made under this school’s “starting times”, (cf. 4.4.1.1).

School D

Investigation of record keeping at this school yielded the following: As in the case of school A this school could not produce a copy of Circular 13 of 2002 and had to rely on a spare copy provided by the researcher. Acknowledging the unavailability of the circular among the school records, DP1 explained thus, *"... I am hardly two years with this school, and this is an old circular of 2002, so I do not know what my predecessor did with it as I have never come across it in the school files."* The explanations caused the researcher to conclude that, although the school struggles with problems of learner absenteeism from school during school hours and learners late coming, all members of the SMT are ignorant of this circular, even though the latter contains guiding measures that could assist them to solve the said challenges (cf. 2.3.4).

It also emerged that as is the case with schools A, B and C, no register is kept for vehicles and persons coming onto or leaving the school premises. Everybody, including latecomers, both learners and educators, just walks unhindered through the school gates, which remain unlocked for the entire school day,. This practice is in violation of safety measures contemplated in the Act governing Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53,1985), (cf. 2.3.4). In this regard DD1 agreed that, *"... as members of the SMT we are aware that we are violating the lock up policy rules, but our problem is money. Parents do not pay school fees, thus we are unable to employ gatekeepers to monitor all people coming in or out of the school premises. We have classes to teach therefore we are unable to monitor the gates during school hours and to record latecomers."*

The comment that the researcher makes on the above explanations why no or few records are kept is that: There is no documentation which indicates the procedures and the programmes which guide the school in dealing with indiscipline. Thus the school is acting against the dictates of the circular (cf. 2.3.4). It is incumbent on the education superiors to have a monitoring tool, which seems not to be available at the moment, that

would ensure proper implementation of regulations like this one. During the time of observations, there were no records to show who regular latecomers are or how late coming is monitored and managed, or the disciplinary measures that apply to discourage these practices. Period registers are also not used at this school. Therefore, there are no records kept for class bunking which often leads to absenteeism from school during school hours (cf. 2.5). The school also experiences numerous incidents of drug abuse by the learners, gambling in classrooms or toilets, but there are no records kept of such incidents nor records of learners' disciplinary hearings pertaining the above mentioned problems, and the outcomes thereof.

Summary: It needs to be noted that all the participants in this study could remember what Circular 13 of 2002 deals with, referring to it as the “Lock-up policy” although some schools could not produce a copy thereof. The audit also revealed that: Although class bunking and late arrival at schools is rife across the four participating schools, these schools do not record nor formulate procedures that will guide them in monitoring and managing the challenges facing them (cf. 2.3.4). The times when registers are marked are problematic, particularly with three of the participating schools that do not make use of the period or subject registers (cf. 2.4.3). Non-availability of records and procedures also creates difficulty as these schools do not possess any document regarding how to deal with challenges mentioned nor records for future reference (cf. 2.6.3). It was also evident that the education authorities have decreed that all educators, including principals and their deputies, have to teach. This divides their focus, thus sacrificing their managerial duties and consequently leaving them with little time to read, interpret the school policies, such as this one, and to compile programmes and procedures for implementation (cf. 1.4).

The next paragraphs concern the content analysis of school documentation in the form of codes of conduct for learners, (cf. 3.4.2).

4.3.2 Content analysis of school documents

As the given circular concerns issues of learners' discipline and safety, the most important and relevant school documents to be checked and analysed were *codes of conduct for learners*. The rationale for delimiting the area of document analysis to these is twofold. First, the delimitation was influenced by the imperative stipulated in the circular, that codes of conduct for learners of all public schools under the jurisdiction of the GDE must deal with issues of absenteeism during school hours and that systems must be put in place to monitor late coming (cf. 1.1). Secondly, it was due to the fact that codes of conduct for learners are concerned with disciplinary issues at schools (cf. 2.4).

The data gathered indicated a fair amount of similarities of content among participating schools (cf. 3.4.2). Therefore, the researcher resolved to discuss the merits of the four sampled schools' *codes of conduct for learners* jointly.

Section 8(2) of the SASA document explains the school's *code of conduct* as aimed at, "establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment that is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:121). Given this aim, expectations were that the reading and examining of the contents of each of the four *codes of conduct for learners* would reveal the guiding disciplinary measures provided for in Circular 13 of 2002 (cf. 2.4). It was also expected that the contents of the four codes would reveal the uniqueness of procedures in handling disciplinary and safety issues, as determined by the situation of each school, and in line with the circular's imperative, mentioned above (cf. 1.1).

However, the contents of all the four schools' *codes of conduct for learners* do not mention or acknowledge this circular. For example, school A's *code of conduct for learners*, indicated as being effective for the years 2009 - 2010, thus suggesting that it was recently formulated or reviewed, does not mention the circular by name even

though it is supposed to be the foundation on which discussions of the given disciplinary challenges are based (cf. 4.4.1.1).

It needs to be noted though that *codes of conduct for learners* for schools A and B do, tangentially, make reference to learners' absenteeism during school hours or class bunking, and their late coming, which are the main tenets of Circular 13 of 2002, but without mentioning it by name (cf. 1.1) . Also to be noted is that, where class bunking and late coming are mentioned they appear listed under the items "*unacceptable behaviour and misconduct that is punishable*", without elaborating on them. Similarly, learners' late coming is listed under the item "*punctuality*". In this instance also, learners are merely advised to arrive on time, or otherwise warned that, "*learners who arrive late will be given disciplinary action.*" Or that, "*learners are expected to know and to adhere to school and classroom rules. Ignorance of this rules is unacceptable.*"

It also came to light that *codes of conduct for learners* for schools C and D were mere replicas of the legal parameters as they appear in Section 8 of the SASA document. Concerns on issues of learners' absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming, as described in Circular 13 of 2002, are tangentially touched on, and merely indicated as unacceptable. How such challenges will be dealt with is not explained (cf. 4.4.3.1). In other words, in their present status, these codes of conduct have no merits as they were not formulated based on the disciplinary guiding measures provided for in this circular. Failure to recognise this circular, which is in force, means that they cannot be relied on when it comes to learners' disciplinary hearings or when the school is faced with other related challenges in terms of which liabilities are claimed (cf. 2.3.2).

From the contents of these codes of conduct it was also obvious that in their formulation and adoption, no consideration was given to the guiding measures, cited in Section 8(5) of the SASA document, which categorically state that codes of conduct must contain provisions regarding due processes for the purposes of safeguarding the interests of the learner and other stakeholders involved in the disciplinary proceedings (Davies, 1999:70; Joubert and Prinsloo, 2002:121). In other words, procedures need to be drawn up taking into consideration the unique nature of the disciplinary challenges of each

school, and disciplinary records maintained for future reference (Davies, 1999:70-71; Squelch, 2000:71-76), (cf. 4.4.1.3).

It needs to be noted that under normal circumstances, the development of the *codes of conduct for learners* is the prerogative of the SGBs (Squelch, 2000:17), but in the case of these four participating schools, it was found that most of the SGBs' parent member complement are literacy challenged, thus meaning the development of the codes of conduct for learners becomes the responsibility of each school' SMT.

Summary: There is no doubt that ignorance of this important document has led to the persistence of the given issues. Given the content of these codes of conduct, It is evident that there is a need for both the SGBs and the SMTs to be trained regarding how to formulate school policies according to their individual situations, and consistent with government regulations such as provided for in the said circular. It also emerged that SMTs need to be trained with regard to policy implementation whilst the education authorities must also develop tools to monitor policy implementation as well (cf. 2.3.4).

Presentations and descriptions of the research data collected through the focus groups interviews are furnished in the next section.

4.3.3 Focus groups interviews

The findings from these interviews are presented according to the participants' responses to the research questions (cf. 1.3). As indicated, all participants were subjected to the same ethical considerations contemplated in sections 1.5.4 and 3.8 of this study. The transcriptions, descriptions and analysis of the data obtained from the focus group interviews follow. Participants' responses, typed in italics, were not edited but presented verbatim from the tape recordings and field notes. The discussions are arranged per sampled school. The rationale for this arrangement was to retain the direct verbal responses of the participants to questions in order not to lose their original

meaning, validity and credibility (cf. 3.7). Three key questions, as indicated below, were asked, with each question divided into categories and sub-categories to facilitate the discussions (cf. 1.3):

4.3.3.1 What are the experiences and perceptions of the School Management Teams (SMTs) regarding Circular 13 of 2002?

The main purpose of this question was to determine the experiences and perceptions of the four participating SMTs with regard to Circular 13 of 2002 and its impact on the management of the disciplinary challenges under discussion, (cf. 3.4.3).

School A

The general impression of all members of the SMT was that the practice of closing the gates and locking out learners who are late for school, is an effective disciplinary measure. But, as AP1 observed, *“... the measure is easy to implement if you have proper facilities, such as the protection fence around the school and gates to lock. Unfortunately this is not the case with us at the moment, as our fence has been vandalised.”* Adding to these remarks, AH5 pointed out that, *“... we used to lock the gates to prevent learners from entering or leaving the school premises whenever they felt like. But now we do not do it anymore as we do not have a proper enclosure around the school, which compromises our disciplinary endeavours particularly with regard to late coming and class bunking.”* It is evident that there are some reservations about this circular. Ideally it is a sound regulation, but practically it needs proper facilities and resources to be realised (cf. 2.4.1).

Furthermore, AP1 mentioned that, *“... it is not learners alone that makes it difficult to say whether this circular is a good measure or not. For example, fellow educators, some being the members of the SMT, arrive late, thus not encouraging learners to respect*

school time, which is against what the circular is trying to discourage.” These comments reveal that various factors are being experienced that make it difficult to effectively implement this circular, in this instance educators’ misbehaviour. Negative comments about educators being part of the problem add to the uncertainties as to whether this circular is experienced as being effective or not. As noted, educators who transgress its dictates are guilty of misconduct which may lead to serious consequences, contemplated in section 17(1)(a-d) of the Employment of Educators Act, Act 76 of 1998, also cited in Joubert and Prinsloo (2001:284), (cf. 2.3.1).

Concerning issues of the State carrying the responsibility of rebuilding the school fence, AH4 reported, *“... our pleas seem to fall on deaf ears, as we have been asking for help for many years. Our experience is that with all the vandalism, drug peddling and gambling going on within the school premises, the school community and property are not safe. Members of the community just walks through the school grounds and sometimes silly boys and drug dealers disrupt lessons by talking to our learners through the classroom windows. In this instances, the policy is rendered useless as it cannot assist our situation”*. One could arrive at the conclusions that, until this school is properly enclosed, and both learners and educators change their behaviour, starting to respect the school rules, it will continually experience problems with regard to the implementation of the disciplinary and safety measures suggested in the circular (cf. 2.4).

School B

As in the case of school A, members of the SMT at this school express mixed feelings about this circular. For example, on issues of learners’ safety, members were apprehensive about it, as noted in BH7’s comments that, *“... idealistically the practice of locking up the gates and keeping the learners in for the whole school day is a good safety measure, but realistically the principle is bad as most of our learners come from destitute families.”* To these comments BD3 agreed, adding, *“... it is an effective*

measure to ensure both safety and protection of our learners, but only guaranteed by the availability of facilities and services such as proper school fencing and feeding scheme services, otherwise to cage hungry learners like we are doing now is dangerous as some learners turn to truancy to access their homes during lunch break.” The preceding remarks point to the positive and the negative aspects of this circular (cf. 1.1).

Agreeing with her colleagues, BH5 argued that “... *the main source of our problems emanates from both our grading, as a school-fees school, and the way we are funded by the GDE. As parents struggle to pay their dues, most of the time the school is running on zero bank balance and thus unable to mend simple things like our broken fence, which is important when it comes to safety issues.*” These concerns are in line with what has already been discussed in the preceding sections, (cf. 2.4.1; 2.4.2).

As a result, the remarks above reveal the frustrations suffered by some members of the SMTs in the endeavour to apply the dictates of this circular, which appears to be inhumane; yet because it is the law and they are the implementers, they have no option but to obey (cf. 2.3). Nevertheless, it should be noted that on the positive side, the circular is praised by BD2 as, “... *having brought some change of behaviour and bad attitudes, especially among some learners who deliberately used to be late or regular class bunkers.*” Participants also maintained the view that a proper school enclosure contributes greatly to strengthening the possibilities of effective implementation of this circular (cf. 2.6.3). As BP1 noted, “... *with all learners coming in and going out through the same gate, we are able to close out latecomers for the duration of the first period, as punishment and a warning that, as long as they come late they will continue missing out on valuable lessons offered during this period.*”

Although continuous late coming or class bunking would in any instance weaken the effective implementation of this circular, it became clear that unlike school A, which is totally dependent on the department for its financial needs, school B is one where legally parents are expected to pay fees, thereby enabling the SGB to assist the department of education in paying for the maintenance of the school facilities such as broken school fences (Davies, 1999:70), (cf. 2.4.1).

School C

The experiences and perceptions of the SMT at this school, with regard to the advantages derived from the circular are similar to those discussed under schools A and B respectively (cf. 2.6.3). For example, CP1 viewed the advantages of locking-out latecomers as, *"... a positive and corrective disciplinary measure that has far reaching advantages, that leads to behavioural change among the learners as they come to respect the official school times. Attitudes change as those serious about their education come to realise that if they continually arrive late for school, their punishment is to miss out on all the educative tasks of the first period, as they are not allowed to come in during the lesson, as that is disruptive."*

Talking of behaviour change, CH4 observed that, *"some of these learners are not even aware that by arriving late at school they are actually transgressing the school's code of conduct that may lead to far reaching consequences, which may lead to suspensions and possibly expulsions, depending on the gravity of the offence."* Evident from the discussions was a belief among participants that a protective fence and security gates around the school do not guarantee the total eradication of the disciplinary challenges being studied, but at least lessen them (cf. 2.6.3). This was noted in CP1's comments: *"... since the rebuilding of our school fence we are able to lock the school gates as mandated. We came to experience positive behavioural changes among learners, especially the reduction in absenteeism from school during school hours and late coming. Thus, improvement in school attendance and obedience of the school rules."*

One other important change noted by CD1 was, *"... as management, we also view the disciplinary measure of locking the school gates during school hours, as a tool that help us to identify regular latecomers and class bunkers, so that we can intervene appropriately."* To intervene appropriately is here understood to mean that the disciplinary measures that the school would take against erring learners are positively aimed at correcting the wrong and inculcating proper educational values to which learners are expected to adhere (Squelch, 2000:3), (cf. 2.5; 2.6.1).

During discussions on whether the SMT considers the practice of locking the gates and not allowing learners to leave the school premises during school hours to be an effective safety measure, responses were varied. For instance, CH5 considered, *“whilst the measure is good in the sense of protecting learners and keeping them safe within the school premises, learners’ physiological needs were not considered”*. Put in context, these needs refer to the nutrition schemes in schools, for which this school does not qualify, as it is a school-fee school (cf. 2.6.3). This seemingly caused CP1 to note, *“... challenges of absenteeism from school during school hours have now changed hands with those of hungry learners who find it hard to concentrate in class as they cannot access their homes during lunch break thus, in a way, at times the circular self becomes the source of learners delinquency.”*

In summarising the discussions on SMTs’ experiences and perceptions regarding this circular, CD2 expressed his concerns thus, *“... we have the responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of the learners during school hours, guided by the provisions of this circular. However, we are simultaneously challenged by the realities of policy implementation on destitute learners who are not even sure where their next meal is going to come from. Caging them for the whole day is consciously and humanly problematic.”* The experiences and perceptions expressed above indicate the collision course that often occurs between policies and the realities of life on the ground (cf. 2.4).

School D

The experiences and perceptions regarding this circular at this school are similar to those shared by the other three participating schools. This applies to both its positive and negative aspects. For instance, DP1 raised the concern that, *“... the circular mandates that educators taking up the security duties at the school, of monitoring the school gates as well as the learners during breaks. I think this is asking too much of the educators that are already overloaded with classes to teach.”* The concern emanates from the imperative discussed in section 2.3 of this study.

Significantly, though, during the interviews, it was found that none of the suggested practices are taking place at this school, as gates were not manned, and latecomers were merely encouraged to hurry to their respective classes, where they were left at the mercy of the educators in class at the time, to allow or not to allow learners into the classroom. Explaining the situation, DH2 commented, *“... we did try to apply these practices before but I need to concede that this circular is not easy to comply with. We are expected to hire our own security because of being a school-fee school. As it is we do not have money to hire security personnel because of reasons already given. For the sake of the safety of our learners, we cannot lock them outside the school property where they would be vulnerable to any kind of danger. That is why we allow them to come in and go to their classes. Sometimes we do take down their names for purposes of discipline, and give them some cleaning work to do during lunch break.”*

Although the school lacks consistency in the disciplinary measures it applies to deal with latecomers, given the reasons advanced, this is a fair practice that focuses on both the discipline and the safety of the learners (cf. 2.4.1). Faced with the challenge of daily staring into the eyes of destitute learners who cannot buy themselves a meal from the school's tuck-shop, DP1 indicated that, *“... in an attempt to comply with the circular and not allow learners to visit their homes during lunch break, educators decided to form an intervention forum called, ‘school based support team’, where every month, educators volunteered to contribute money for groceries, in order to provide learners from destitute families, with a meal daily.”* At the moment, the above mentioned initiative is said to be collapsing as volunteers have their own financial needs to contend with. However, the above case of destitute learners is indicative of how the good intentions of policies can turn supposedly safe environment into an unsafe one (cf. 2.4.1; 2.6.3).

Summary: Given the experiences and perceptions of the four SMTs regarding both the positive and negative aspects, conclusions that could be drawn are that as a guiding document, its effective implementation is conditional as it depends on the availability of certain facilities and services (cf. 2.6).

The mixed perceptions about the circular were well summarised by one of the participants who felt that, “... *irrespective of the policy’ positive or negative aspects, it is the law and we are supposed to implement its prescripts without fail, however I now understand the expression of ‘one finding himself ‘between a hammer and an anvil.’*” Interesting though, participants were in agreement in explaining that there is no monitoring or assessment of the proper implementation of this circular by the GDE officials (cf. 2.5).

4.3.3.2 What are the challenges to the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?

The purpose of the question was to explore the internal and the external factors that pose challenges in this regard, thus impacting negatively on participating SMTs in controlling learners’ absenteeism and late coming (cf. 2.5; 2.6.3).

School A

Quite a number of factors within and outside the school premises were found to impede the efforts to control the two problems under study (cf. 2.5; 2.6). Prominent within the school were the administrative processes, which were found to be wanting. For example, the school does not keep registers for latecomers and visitors coming in or out of the school premises, which in essence is a violation of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles Act, 1985 (cf. 2.3.4). Defending not using the registers, as mentioned above, AP1 stated, “*Gate registers are ideal in a situation where there is a security fence and gates. Unfortunately, as you have observed we have none of those facilities. Thus, it would not serve any purpose to keep them just because the circular demands that we keep them.*” Whilst it is acknowledged that during the conducting of

the interviews, the school was experiencing fencing problems, these kinds of comments sound like lame excuses by school managers hiding their own inabilities to manage the school affairs (cf. 2.6.3).

Concerning the fencing issue, the authorities are to blame for failing to carry out their responsibilities, thus leaving the school property and community vulnerable. That the school has been without a protective fence for a long time was confirmed by AP1 when he said, *“I was appointed at this school three years ago, and I found the school fence as it is now, and as we are a no school fee school we are totally dependent on the department for our financial needs.”* The longer the department takes to rebuild the school fence, the greater the number of excuses not to implement the measures as provided for in the circular. However this neglect of responsibilities is directly in contravention of the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools (cf. 2.3.3).

Besides the lack of gate registers, it also emerged that period registers, to monitor learner attendance and class bunking, are also not being used. Yet members of the SMT confirm that absenteeism during school hours and late coming are rife (cf. 4.4.1.1). Disuse of these registers was explained by AD1 as follows: *“In the past we used the period registers to monitor class bunking, but of late we have abandoned them as they take much of the teaching time.”* The remark exposes ignorance of the importance of period registers, which if properly maintained are the best means of controlling class bunking whilst ensuring class attendance (cf. 2.6.3).

The above remarks are also indicative of the SMTs’ despairing of handling these disciplinary challenges. Hence they are unable to apply the guiding provisions as contained in the circular (cf. 1.3). The feeling of hopelessness is further noticeable in this SMT seemingly not being able to alter the times of marking registers or to employ period registers to monitor class bunking. This type of situation points to the inefficient school management skills in this case (cf. 2.6.3). However, AD2 explained that, *“... marking of the class registers so early in the day serves as a disciplinary measure to discourage late coming, as learners would not want to appear as absent for ten*

consecutive days as that may lead to being withdrawn altogether from the school registers.” This is a fair reason, but a disadvantage is that truants will generally exploit such a situation by being available in the morning, being marked as present for the day, then bunking classes and leaving the school premises without being noticed (cf. 2.3).

It also became clear that the tolerant school culture was also contributory to the woes of the school, thus rendering it difficult to control the disciplinary challenges being studied. For example, educators who are unabatedly allowed onto the school property without any disciplinary measure being taken against them, furnish a bad example to learners as they do not encourage the latter to respect official school times and rules (cf. 4.4.1.1). Learners repeating certain classes, were mentioned by AH5 as, “... disruptive because they *think they already know what teachers would be teaching, therefore they arrive late or leave the school premises at any time it suits them.*”

It should be noted that the problems encountered with the repeaters, and the way their behaviour is explained, may be related to curricular issues (cf. 2.6.3). Another example is the school’s tolerance of pregnant learners, who are allowed to remain in school until they give birth. As AD2 argued, “... *pregnant learners take advantage of their situation and most of the time arrive late or just leave the school whenever they want to skip some classes under the pretext of not feeling well.*” One should note that at the time of the interviews, October 2010, the school had 28 known pregnant learners (cf. 2.6.1).

In other words, they have ample reasons or opportunities for faking ways of not attending certain classes or of coming to school late (cf. 2.5.1), consequently adding to the difficulties of the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002. Some of the factors evident from the above discussions expose the SMT’s own deficiencies with regard to lack of appropriate school management skills, and commitment to the provisions of this circular, as contemplated in (CASE & JET, 2007: 2). Concerning factors outside the school premises, that make it hard for the school to control absenteeism and late coming, the SMT identified the indifference of the surrounding community and lack of financial support as the main ones (cf. 2.5; 2.6.2). For instance, AD1 observed, “*the*

community does not value the school, as they do not protect it from vandalism. It is some community members who stole the school fence to enclose their own homes, leaving the school property vulnerable for burglaries, which are frequent, as thieves target the school computers and other valuables". AH7 added a similar view, saying, "it is true that we are not valued, as the community allows it that shebeen owners continue selling liqueur to the learners in school uniform during school hours, which encourages class bunking and the use of drugs by learners, but even the political ward councillors are just turning a blind eye to it."

It also surfaced that some parents, from other provinces, secure stands to build their homes in this community, and move their children to come and live alone whilst they remain behind. This practice is blamed for the large number of learner-headed families who contribute to the problems of late coming and absenteeism. This situation led AH4 to note that, *"... such parents never attend school meetings and if it happens that their child should appear before the school disciplinary committee, because of truancy, they are not there for the learner, thus such learners end up renting a parent"* (cf. 1.8.1).

The extensive learner catchment area also contributes to the difficulties of controlling learners in these respects (cf. 4.4.1.1). As AD1 explained, *"... the law does not allow us to refuse registration to a child of school age irrespective of where the child comes from. Besides, as schools we need these learners to register in large numbers for our own survival otherwise we shall be closed down"* (cf. 2.6.3).

Concerning the school's financial support, explained in 4.4.3.1 above, AP1 mentioned that *"this school is totally dependent on finances from the department, which usually takes time to reach us."* Sponsorships are also said to be hard to come by. Summarizing the discussions on sponsorships AH6 remarked in disgruntlement that, *"who will give us financial support when the school itself is not protected? Whatever we get will be gone [stolen] by tomorrow. Nobody wants to throw his/her money into a bottomless pit"*, (cf. 2.6.2)

School B

The school is also experiencing internal and external factors which cause it difficulty in controlling the disciplinary challenges mentioned. As in the case of school A, administrative processes were found lacking since the school does not keep gate registers for latecomers and school visitors, thus meaning that the school is also in contravention of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles Act, 1985, discussed in 2.3.4. No reason could be given for not keeping these registers; moreover the school employs two security guards at the gate during school hours, who could be of assistance in this regard.

It was also evident that part of the school's fence needs rebuilding. Commenting on the impact, BP1 noted, *"... although our situation is not that bad, we experience problems mainly with the male repeaters especially the male ones. Whenever they bunk classes or they had arrived late, the opening on the fence becomes the gate."* In other words, the broken fence reinforces the challenges of learners leaving the school premises without permission (cf. 2.2.3), which is another issue that the circular is addressing (cf. 2.4)

Discussions about rebuilding the school fence yielded the following responses: BD1 explained that *"it is the GDE's responsibility, but the delay in rebuilding it may be due to the understanding that, as a school fee paying school, our SGB may as well as do it."* If the SGB were to undertake this, they would be abiding by the rule that compels them to take all reasonable measures within their means to supplement the resources supplied by the State to improve facilities as well as the quality of education for all learners (SASA, s 36; Davies, 1999:66). But BD2 was quick to report that, *"there is no money that the SGB could use to rebuild the fence as most parents do not pay school fees, at the moment we are running the school on a zero balance"*.

It also emerged that the grading of the school in quintile 4 greatly increases the problems (cf. 2.6.3), which caused BP1 to remark thus, *"we need to be downgraded so*

that we too could qualify for a nutrition scheme which we hope would encourage learners to stay at school and focus on their studies instead of wanting to go home during lunch, and end up vandalising the fence.”

At the time of the interviews, the school had nine (9) known cases of pregnancies, of which BH7 reported that, *“...they usually do not want to appear to be difficult learners to deal with. Thus, they try to be on time, and attend classes until the end of the school day. The only time that some arrive late, is when they first have to visit clinics or consult doctors before reporting to school. Generally they are well behaved.”*

Concluding the discussions on the internal factors that make it difficult to implement the circular, BP1 raised the following concern: *“so many policies are churned out by the department daily, but we as implementers are rarely work-shopped about them. Similarly our workloads are rather too much as everyone, including the principal, have classes to teach. So it is sometimes difficult to effectively implement policies such as this circular.”*

Outside factors, as mentioned, include large catchment areas, which BH6 described as *“...quite large and wide, stretching from Hammanskraal, Ga-Rankuwa, Winterveldt, Pyramid farms and Rosslyn. As some of these places are over thirty-six kilometres away from Soshanguve township, such learners sometimes arrive late because of transport.”* In this regard, BD2 explained reasons for admitting learners as follows: *“...it is the survival strategy adopted by township schools, as local learners who have money, go to school in the city of Tshwane. Secondly, some of these learners come to our schools because the above mentioned areas are within the former Bophuthatswana Bantustan where public schools offers only Setswana and not other African languages such as Sesotho, Zulu, Tsonga, Venda, and so on.”*

It is essential to note in the above experience that the education authorities seem to have forgotten to reinstate the teaching of the aforementioned African languages, which were struck off the school curriculum of the former Bophuthatswana Bantustan, in the

spirit of separate development. This is eminent, as it will stop learners travelling long distances to learn their home languages as well as alleviating their late coming (cf. 2.2.1).

Concerning the situation of gambling and drug abuse amongst learners, (cf. 2.6.1), BH3 remarked, *"... our problems are outsiders who take advantage of our broken fence, at the back of the school, and come in to gamble as well as sell drugs to our learners."* Asked about where learners who choose to bunk classes and leave the school premises go to, the quick response from BH5 was, *"they visit illicit places such as shebeens and brothels in the township."*

School C

The administrative processes of managing these two issues are the same as in schools A and B. As with school A, rates of teenage pregnancy are quite high at this school. During the time the interviews were conducted, the school had twenty three (23) known cases of learners who were pregnant (cf. 2.6.1). As CH4 noted, *"the scenario of so many pregnant learners at the same time does not argue well of our school. It disturbs the teaching and learning processes as most of them come late and often leave at anytime, claiming illness, which makes it difficult to apply the disciplinary measures provided in the circular, on them"* (cf. 2.6). The researcher was told that sometimes women teachers are obliged to play the role of midwives as some of these pregnant learners give birth whilst at school.

Gambling and drug smoking in the school toilets, blamed mostly on male learners and the repeaters in particular, are said to impede control of class bunking, and as CP1 explained, *"it is the teaching workload which prevents us from being vigilant in checking the toilets and other corners of the school buildings, which are used as hiding places."*

Truants travelling on the buses hired by the department are also regarded as adding to the problems of implementing this circular. As CP1 noted, *“... once they arrive at the school gates, they would choose not to come inside but visit illicit shebeens in the township for liquor, drugs and prostitution. Unfortunately the school cannot send them away, as it is illegal to do so. The problem that I suspect with our repeaters may be curriculum related, where they feel that there is nothing new to learn, thus leading to boredom and class bunking.”* Such a practice is said often to cause educators to abandon the other learners, and go into the township to fetch the already drunken learners back to school. In this regard, both boys and girls are said to be involved (cf. 2.6.3).

It also became obvious that the grading of the school in quintile four (cf.1.6) should be downgraded, as the situations and the needs of the learners are similar to those of school B. Expressing an opinion on their situation, CP1 reported, *“... our school has also applied for a downgrade to be a non-school-fee school for the sake of the learners from destitute households.”* The discussions on the working relationships between members of the SMT and the SGB revealed that the situation at this school was similar to what prevails in schools A and B. In this regard, CH5 opined, *“Members of the SGB are kind people but, it could have been better not to have them as some are illiterate and thus clueless about their role, and we end up doing their work.”*

External factors that lead to difficulty for the school in controlling learners' late coming are not different from those of schools A and B: the learner catchment areas are the same, as well as the reasons for admitting them. However, CP1 further mentioned that, *“... we admit learners particularly from the Rosslyn area because those are new settlements where there are no public secondary schools built as yet.”* In this regard, CH2 also pointed out, *“... truanting learners, deliberately misses the boarding times so that they arrive late at school.”* Concerning school fees, CD2 reported that, *“... parents simply ignore that subject or just refuse to pay as they claim to be jobless. On the other hand, some of our learners are orphans and they are cared for by their grandmothers.”*

The problems resulting from nonpayment of school fees are similar to those of school B (cf. 2.4.2).

Discussions on the role of parents, with regard to the challenges under discussion, yielded the following response from CP1: *“We have a lot of uncaring parents at this school, with some last seen when they came to register their children for the first time at this school. Some of the parents only visit the school when their children have transgressed the school rules and are invited to come for their child’s disciplinary hearings. Sometimes some of them simply refuse to come when invited.”* CH3 added that *“shebeen kings and queens selling liquor and drugs to our learners contribute much to our difficulties in controlling late coming and absenteeism during school hours.”* The above comments reveal that the school does not enjoy the benefits of parental involvement and support, which van Wyk (2008:6) views as tools not only for the child’s success educationally but also throughout life (cf.2.3.2).

School D

Internally, the school also evidences a lack of proper administrative processes to control the given issues. As with schools B and C it does not qualify for a feeding scheme and thus experiences the same kind of challenges that beset the others (cf. 2.6.2). As DP1 conceded, *“... it is extremely difficult for us to keep hungry learners locked inside the school premises for the whole school day knowing the desperate situations of the households they come from, where some learners come to school not having had anything to eat.”* Perhaps this was the reason why DD2 mentioned their intentions as, *“... going to apply for a downgrade so that our learners should not pay school fees, and instead be afforded a feeding scheme.”*

Some respondents doubted the rationale behind grading schools such as theirs, as relatively wealthy whereas in reality, as DH2 noted *“... the majority of the learners remaining in these schools are the destitute, cared for by grandmothers who pay school fees from their meager monthly government payouts, or from families where there is no*

one employed.” Adding to this view, DD2 observed that “sometimes it is these kind of policies, that causes school dropouts and truants as they are not compatible with the learners socio-economic realities.” The above concerns about socio-economic conditions, and the different grading of schools within the same destitute environment, necessitate urgent reconsideration by the educational departments not only in Gauteng but in all the provinces of the Republic of South Africa (cf. 2.6). Learners heading families also contribute to the difficulties facing the school. As DH1 explained, “... it is difficult to implement this policy on them as they are the main culprits when it comes to late coming and class bunking.”

Discussions pertaining to the contribution of transport to the said disciplinary issues revealed that, despite the availability of all types of transport, the school faces other challenges that impact negatively on attempts at stamping out late coming (cf. 2.6). For example, DP1 mentioned that, “...our school is enclosed by bus and taxi roads, but because we have a lot of silly boys and girls, they do not worry about school time but chose to wait for the ‘sgubu’ taxis (township lingo for a taxi which plays loud music), and end up coming in late.” The remark reveals that truancy among learners is another factor which schools need to deal with in the quest for effective implementation of this circular.

As in the case of the other three participating schools, teenage pregnancy is rife, contributing considerably to the given problems. At the time of conducting the research in October 2010, the school had 24 known pregnant learners. Commenting about this situation, and its impact on discipline, DH3 said, “...I admit that it is difficult to manage this group of learners as they are ever late and always complaining of being ill and having to go home, thus missing lessons.”

It also emerged that the school experiences a high intake of learners from neighbouring and more distant countries such as Mozambique, Pakistan, Somalia, and so on. The main challenge, as DD2 explained, “... is the lack in language skills, particularly the problem with local languages including English, which makes it extremely difficult for them to comprehend what is being taught in the classroom.” Adding to these

explanations DH4 noted that, *“... if the first period in their class happens to be a language period, some will deliberately come in late to avoid just sitting and listening to something they do not understand. Similarly during the day, they tend to skip such classes, thus adding to problems of class bunkers.”* These are curriculum issues which are the responsibilities of the educational authorities, given the promises in section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108, 1996), (cf. 2.3).

Exactly as with the case of school C members of the SGB are said to be friendly people, yet some of them are unable to carry out their responsibilities as they are illiterate; hence the SMT ends up doing their work. However, as in the cases of schools B and C this school experiences difficulties controlling learners' late coming because of the large catchment area, and transport problems (cf. 2.6.3). To differentiate between deliberate regular latecomers who are locals and those who are delayed because of transport, DP1 reported that, *“... on registration our learners are categorised into two groups – A and B. The A group comprise of local learners who make up twenty percent (20%) of the total enrolment. The B group comprising eighty percent (80%) is made of learners from different areas such as Winterveldt, Hammanskraal, Klipgat, and so on.”*

Concerning parental involvement, it became apparent that the situation is similar to those in the other three participating schools, (cf. 2.4.2). Describing their situation, DP1 conceded, *“... we really struggle to get parents to pay school fees as they claim poverty. That is why we intend asking the GDE for a downgrade. As for nonattendance of meetings, some parents do not live with their children, or they are no more alive and the learners are under the care of grannies. Which are some of the factors that impact on the attendance of school meetings.”* Similarly, DH3 viewed nonattendance of meetings as, *“... one of the reasons why we are sitting with the kind of SGB that we have today.”* This comment was understood to refer to the SGB, dysfunctional because of some members who were said to be illiterate. Thus, the state of affairs pertinent to SGBs of the participating schools also calls for the education authorities to reconsider the selection criteria applying to members of the SGBs in public schools (cf. 2.4).

Summary: Evident from the above discussions are the commonalities between the internal and external factors affecting the four participating schools. For example, all these schools are located within the same socio-economic and cultural environment, where the majority of learners are described as coming from destitute family backgrounds. As a result learners' needs are the same, hence the wish of the three schools B, C, and D to be downgraded from the status of wealthy schools (Quintile 4 grading) to government dependent or non school-fees paying schools, for the destitute learners to benefit from the services of the government feeding scheme and to encourage school attendance among them (cf. 2.6.2).

Also common is the lack of administrative processes to control the challenges posed by the two issues. For instance, all the four participating schools experience large numbers of learners who are family heads or learners not living with their biological parents but living under the guardianship of their grannies, as well as a large number of girl learners who are pregnant and other learners who are repeaters (cf. 2.6.3). The problem of truancy among learners is also common across the four participating schools. Often these groups of learners are blamed for the given problems, thus making it difficult for these schools to effectively implement the provisions of Circular 13 of 2002 (cf. 2.3.4).

Also obvious are the language problems besetting foreigners registered at these schools, as well as the need for the reintroduction of other local official languages in public schools of the former Republic of Bophuthatswana. This would curtail the movement of learners who would like to be taught their home languages instead of Setswana, thus alleviating the challenges mentioned (cf. 4.4.3.2).

It also came to light that where schools experience difficulties with the maintenance of school property such as the rebuilding of vandalised school fences, the GDE is invariably neglecting to assist, which contributes to the schools being unable to control class bunking and late coming, as truanting learners and any other intruder gain access onto or out of the school premises through the openings in the fence (cf. 2.6.3).

The challenges posed by the indifferent community members who furthermore sell liquor and drugs to learners, are also common to the four schools. They encourage absenteeism and late coming, thus hampering effective implementation of the circular. However, it needs to be emphasising that teaching seems to be more important to all the SMTs of the participating schools, rather than the management of processes, as contemplated in the circular, which if properly administered, could alleviate most of the problems related to policy implementation (cf. 2.3.4). What needs noting is that, whilst focus on teaching is a good thing to do, there need to be a balance between teaching and the management of the schooling environment and all the activities within it (2.6.3).

4.3.3.3 What are the disciplinary procedures employed by the sampled schools' SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?

The main objective of the question was to ascertain the disciplinary procedures employed by the participating SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of this circular with the aim to combat the problems at hand. Moreover that one of the imperatives is that the schools' codes of conduct for learners must put monitoring systems in place to deal with the disciplinary challenges mentioned (GDE 2002: 2).

School A

According to the *code of conduct for learners* at this school, disciplinary procedures to control absenteeism during school hours and late coming (cf. 2.2.1), are as follows: “... *disciplinary sanctions will range from a stern look and reprimand in class to menial work and community service, to detention and to suspension and expulsion for very serious cases.*” During the interviews it transpired, however that the disciplinary procedures mentioned in the code are not practised. Instead, latecomers are ordered to do some

frog-jumping or ordered to pick up papers littering the school grounds as well as emptying rubbish bins at the school's dumping site. Upon completion, they are allowed to proceed to their respective classes in the middle of teaching activities (cf. 2.3). Consequently, lessons and the concentration of those already in class are disrupted (cf. 2.3). However, AP1 explained the situation as, *"... temporary measures as we normally, when we have gates to lock, keep the learners outside and only allow them in at the end of the first period."*

In addition, AD2 noted that, *"... this days you need to be careful of what you say or do to learners. In short we are afraid to add corporal punishment to our disciplinary code as it is outlawed, and that most of these male learners are thugs."* This was bad news to hear, and reminded the researcher of the argument that good discipline is not a matter of chance, as the school management needs to create a positive, disciplined school environment aimed at preventing disciplinary problems (Squelch, 2000:2). In instances like this, where tensions often arise between educators and learners, effective leadership is crucial (cf. 2.6.3). Hence, the advice that members of the SMT, especially the principal, should always remember that they are figures of authority in their respective schools. Therefore, they are expected to create orderly and harmonious school environments, whilst leading by example (Squelch, 2000:3; Walsh, 1997:113).

The school has not published programmes that guide the SMT in dealing with disciplinary matters about learners who are, for instance, suspended because of regular late coming, class bunking, possession of drugs or gambling on the school premises. In this regard, AD4 indicated that, *"There are no written programs, but as a standard procedure, learners are given letters from the principal's office to bring a parent(s) along to be part of the disciplinary hearings. Serious cases, are always referred to the SGB for a decision."* Although the school does not provide any written guidance, reporting of serious disciplinary matters to the SGB is the right thing to do, as it is the relevant body with powers, under certain conditions, to suspend a learner or recommend expulsion of the same learner to the Head of Department (Davies, 1999:71).

Coming to light from the above discussions was that truants often abuse the procedure of bringing along a parent or guardian by renting any other adult to represent them (cf. 1.6.1). As AH6 explained, “... *some learners are silly, they sometimes collude with strangers, paying them to accompany them to the disciplinary hearings, masquerading as their real parents. However we often discover them by asking them to put down their signatures.*” Renting a parent is said to be common around the Gauteng schools (cf.1.5). If the fraudulent practice is discovered, such a learner is further given a chance to bring the real parent(s) along, or the matter is then referred to the SGB for a ruling.

Furthermore, AD1 noted that, “... *as we experiences late coming by educators as well, we devised our own register called the ‘traffic register’. Its purpose is to keep track of the whereabouts of the educators and administration staff, during the school hours and to protect the school in cases of liabilities being claimed. Thus procedurally, whoever leaves or re-enter the school premises, during school hours, needs to sign this register. But because some educators, including some members of the SMT, have their lunch outside the school premises and often return late, the register is largely ignored or rarely signed.*” This procedure is a sensible initiative, but rendered worthless because of poor policy implementation and management by the school itself (cf. 2.3.2; 2.5).

It also came to light that whilst the school experiences large numbers of girl-learner pregnancies (cf. 2.2.2; 2.5), there are no written procedures for how to deal with them. Commenting, AD2 explained that, “... *pregnant learners contribute a lot to the problems of controlling and managing late coming and absenteeism from school during school hours as we find it hard to discipline them. When these learners are unable to attend classes, schools are expected to continue supporting them by sending them study materials at home, to keep them in the loop with what is happening at school.*”

Another procedure, which applies to pregnant learners who manage to remain at school for the duration of their pregnancy, is that, from the seventh month, they daily have to bring along their mothers or caretakers in case they become due for birth whilst at school. On this score, AH3 argued that “*the procedure is cumbersome, as there is no*

sitting space for all the mothers and caretakers. It causes us a lot of stress as we are not health workers but educators and we are dealing with children here.” The truth of the matter is, it is doubtful if such policies are always taken into consideration when schools are faced with these kinds of challenges (cf. 2.2.2). In other words, sometimes life realities are in conflict with what policy, such as this one, suggests. Disturbingly, this school policy is also not in written form but merely communicated by word of mouth.

School B

The school’s *code of conduct for learners* vaguely states that, “... as a matter of procedure, disciplinary measures would be taken against any learner who contravenes this code. Learners must be expected to know and to adhere to school and classroom rules. Ignorance of these rules is not an acceptable excuse.” The code of conduct is silent on specific procedures to be followed to discipline learners, as laid down in the circular (cf. 2.2.1).

The school gates, manned by two gatekeepers, are always closed but not locked, which is in conflict with the dictates of the circular, which mandates that the gates must be locked during school hours (cf. 2.4.1). However, the standard practice of dealing with latecomers at this school was described by BP1 as follows: “As a disciplinary measure we keep latecomers outside the school premises for the entire first period so that they do not disturb class proceedings, thereafter we allow them to go to their respective classes. Behaviours and attitudes towards school times also come to change.” Despite the sound attempts at discouraging late coming, it came to light that there were no written procedures for handling this or records as regards regular latecomers.

Class registers are marked at the end of the fifth period just before the lunch break. The rationale for this practice was explained by BD1, “... we are still comfortable with our times of marking the registers as we do not experience much of these problems. Perhaps we need to amend it by marking our registers just before the end of the school day to guard against those that may have left the school premises unnoticed during

breaks.” In the researcher’s opinion, the procedure could easily be amended by introducing the period registers, which are not used, so that the school could maintain records as well as keep track of the whereabouts of the learners during school hours (cf. 2.2.2).

At the time of conducting this research, there were no officially formulated disciplinary programmes to deal with late coming, class bunking, gamblers, drug users and peddlers on the school premises, as mandated by the circular (cf. 2.2.1). However, BH5 mentioned that, “... *wrong doers are given letters to bring their parents or guardians along to the school for disciplinary purposes.*” It should be noted that this procedure is similar to the one adopted by school “A”. Perhaps this is the reason why even the kinds of problems experienced with this procedure are the same in both schools, for example, truants and parent renting.

Procedures for dealing with pregnant learners were also found to be similar in both schools. Opining about how such learners add to the difficulties in effectively implementing the provisions of this circular, BH4 remarked, “... *they know that procedures that apply to them are temporary and valid for nine months only, thereafter they no longer enjoy whatever privileges they had, where they could come in late or leave the school at any given moment.*” The arrival and leaving of the pregnant learners is not in line with the imperatives stated in the circular (cf. 2.4.1).

School C

The *code of conduct for learners*, under the item “due processes”, deals with general legal quotes which have nothing to do with the kind of disciplinary processes that were mandated in the circular (cf. 2.4.1). The following procedures are employed: Gate keeping procedures are the same as those discussed under school B above. The only difference is that, at this school, the gates are manned by a factotum who keeps them under lock and key for the entire school day. Learners are not allowed to leave the school premises until the end of the school day at 2:30 in the afternoon. As a

disciplinary measure and a standard procedure, as in the case of school B all learners arriving after 8:00, in the morning, are locked outside the school premises until the end of the first period, whereupon they are allowed to proceed to their respective classes (cf. 1.6.1).

As CP1 explained, “... *for the rest of the school day, class attendance is monitored by means of period registers*”. It should be emphasised that of the four participating schools, this was found to be the only one that uses the period registers to monitor class bunking (cf. 2.2.2; 2.4.2). No wonder that, as CD2 noted, “... *since introducing the subject registers, problems of learners bunking class and even leaving the school premises during school hours were reduced drastically. What we have now are cases of truants who bunk class and hide themselves in the toilets or other classes where there is not an educator, but find it difficult to leave the school premises as the gates are always locked.*”

As with schools A and B, gambling and drugs on the school premises are serious disciplinary challenges. Similar are the disciplinary procedures in dealing with those caught as a result of these misbehaviours. But it should be noted that disciplinary procedures that apply at this school are not formulated according to the requirements in the circular (cf. 2.2.1). Concerning learner pregnancies, at the time of conducting these interviews, the school had 23 known cases. Here too, there were no formal written disciplinary procedures for dealing with these learners, irrespective of claims that they contribute to the difficulties of controlling absence from school and late coming, as is the situation with the other two participating schools, thus adding to the SMT’s inability to effectively implement this circular.

School D

The only issues of procedure referred to in the *code of conduct for learners* at this school concern learner suspension, without mentioning the causes thereof. Nevertheless, gate keeping, procedures that apply at this school are similar to those of

schools B and C. The only difference is that it has devised a rota system where educators rotate in manning the school gates; which, during the interviews, was not in operation. Explaining how the system works, DP1 indicated that, “... *because we all have classes to teach, at the beginning of the first period gate duties remains the responsibility of the school’s factotum, who should ensure that latecomers come into the school premises silently, without disturbing the morning proceedings.*” In other words, the rota is merely there on paper but not in use (2.6.3).

This procedure is different from that followed in schools B and C, in that learners are not closed out until the end of the first teaching period. As with other participating schools, there are no gate registers for both latecomers and visitors, which is in contravention of Act 53 regarding the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles (cf. 2.3.4) and the State Liability Act, 1957 (cf. 2.3.2), and what has been mandated in the circular (cf. 2.4.1) itself. Nevertheless, the SMT at this school is convinced that its members are unable to manage properly because of the teaching workloads they shoulder.

This school follows the same disciplinary procedures that apply in the other schools sampled, with regard to the kind of punishment meted out to latecomers, class bunkers, gamblers, pregnancies and drug users. Emphasising the drug situation at this school, DD2 confirmed, “...*we have many learners, particularly male learners, who are not just using drugs but are addicts already. These kind of learners are problematic. They are often late, skip classes or totally not showing up for school.*” Unfortunately the school does not keep records of such learners or the kinds of results stemming from these challenges, which reinforces the SMT’s inability to manage and to implement this circular (cf. 2.4.1).

It also became obvious that the school does not keep records or lay down formal disciplinary procedures to deal with the high number of pregnancies that the school is experiencing. Moreover, pregnant learners are also blamed for the problems of late coming and class bunking. At the time of conducting this research, the school reported 27 known pregnant girls. Commenting about the support system that staff members initiated for these learners of whom most are said to be from destitute families, DH4

noted that, “... because of the high number of pregnancies we experience every year, drug addicts and the generally starving learners, educators established a fund called ‘the school support fund’ to make sure that they at least get a meal during lunch break, as most of them are from destitute homes.” This is a laudable initiative which explains why the school is also among those that wish to be downgraded so that they too could qualify for a feeding scheme (cf. 2.6.2).

Summary: Examination of the disciplinary procedures employed by the four participating schools revealed the following:

None of them were formulated according to the demands of the circular (cf. 2.4.1). There is general ignorance of the guiding disciplinary measures provided for in the circular with regard to addressing the disciplinary challenges under discussion, as revealed by the codes of conduct of the four participating schools (cf. 1.3). All these schools claim these issues to be rife, but do not follow the guidelines for controlling these challenges which appear in the circular (2.4.1).

The challenge of teenage pregnancies, described in the preceding paragraphs, is a reality that cannot be wished away. Thus, schools need to seriously look into improving liaisons with related agencies such as the departments of health, social welfare and child protection services, to assist in instances of emergency where pregnant learners may need referral (cf. 2.5).

Also common among these schools is the absence of formalised and written disciplinary procedures, also mandated by the circular (cf. 2.2.1). For example, programs that contain procedures on dealing with truancy, detention, suspension, and so on. In the researcher’s view, ignorance of the mandatory guiding disciplinary measures provided for in the circular, encourages the escalation of these problems, (cf. 2.5). The researcher is also of the opinion that the four sampled schools do not know much about the contents of Circular 13 of 2002. Sadly, the GDE is aware of the challenges under discussion but does not seem to have devised any strategies to monitor and to manage the implementation of crucial policies such as this one.

4.4 Conclusion

The main focus of the study was to explain the phenomena of learners' absenteeism from school during school hours and their late coming, in the light of the GDE Circular 13 of 2002. The chapter concerned the presentation of the data collected through the techniques of observations, review of school documentations and the focus groups interviews. The analysis of the data was guided by the five steps of qualitative data analysis, suggested in Denscombe (2007:252) (cf. 3.9). The findings that emerged from the data analysis process are summarised in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to round off the whole study in moderate detail, with more emphasis being placed on chapters two and four. To facilitate the process, the chapter is divided into four sections: the summary of the study per chapter, key findings and conclusions, recommendations for implementation and suggestions for future research. The background of the study briefly introduced Circular 13 of 2002, as a regulation for all public schools of the Gauteng province, meant to deal with the challenges of: learners' absence from school during school hours (partial absenteeism) and their late coming. The rationale and purpose of the study were thus, to identify reasons for these misbehaviours, irrespective of the existence of this circular, promulgated almost a decade ago (cf. 1.1 - 1.3), and to establish how its implementation is managed by the SMTs of the four sampled schools.

The next section provides a summary of the study, arranged per chapter.

5.2 Summary of the study per chapter

Chapter one furnished a brief introduction and background to the study (cf. 1.1), followed by the conceptual framework (cf. 1.2), the problem statement (cf. 1.3), the research aims and objectives (cf. 1.4). These were followed by the research design and methods which include the strategies employed for data collection purposes (cf. 1.5). The definitions and clarification of related concepts (cf. 1.6), followed by the delimitation

of the field of study (cf. 1.7), the limitations (cf. 1.8), the division of chapters (cf. 1.9) and the conclusion (cf. 1.10).

Chapter two comprised a literature review of both local and international documents. The main aim was to focus on gaining knowledge and understanding of the diverse experiences and practices, pertinent to the management of the universal phenomena being studied. The concept, absenteeism from school during school hours was discussed extensively, defined as partial absenteeism or class bunking (cf. 2.3). The supporting legal frameworks that give effect to the circular, suggested in the circular itself, were discussed, as were some of the factors that might contribute to the tasks of control and containment of the above mentioned disciplinary challenges (cf. 2.4; 2.5; 2.6).

Chapter three described the case study research design, adopted for the study, and the methodology and strategies of data collection. Four schools were purposefully selected and the researcher participated in the research, gathering data through the following research instruments: observations, review of school documentation and interviews (cf. 3.4.3.1 - 3.4.3.3).

In chapter four the analysis of the research data, derived from the raw data collected by means of the instruments mentioned in the methodology chapter, was undertaken. The purpose was to arrive at findings that would assist in resolving the problem posed in the study (cf. 1.2).

Chapter five contains a summary of the study by chapter, followed by a summary of findings and conclusions, recommendations for implementation, suggestions for future research and the conclusion. The recommendations for application of the research findings were made because of the number of findings which indicated that schools often ignore certain practicalities; if these were to be taken into consideration, most of

the implementation and managerial issues regarding the circular could be alleviated (Hofstee, 2006:159). The recommendations were developed from the integration of the literature and the field research (cf. 2.5; 4.3.1- 4.3.3).

The following section is a summary of the research findings and conclusions that came to light from the empirical data analysis.

5.3 Summary of the research findings and conclusions

The findings are described under the following headings: data collection techniques comprising observations, review of school documentation and the focus groups interviews.

5.3.1 Findings from the observations

Findings from the observations were further categorised and described under these headings: arrival and starting times; facilities and services; and the keeping of school records, by the participating SMTs.

5.3.1.1 Arrival and starting times

- Observations of arrival and starting times in the morning revealed that late arrival was rife among learners, across the four participating schools. Unfortunately these schools do not keep registers or records of latecomers (cf. 4.3.1.1).

- The large learner catchment areas coupled with transport problems were found to be contributing greatly to learners' late coming, thus making it difficult for all these schools to effectively implement the circular (cf. 2.5; 4.3.1.1).
- It also emerged that truants using the state funded transport deliberately miss boarding times in the morning, thus arriving late at school. Some of them are said to use this ploy to skip classes that they do not want to attend (cf. 2.5; 2.6.1).
- In three of the four schools, some educators were found to be part of the problem, as they too arrive late. The situation is worsened by some of these latecomer educators being members of the SMTs (cf. 2.6.3). Disturbingly, with the exception of school C, educators' *Time books* are not properly managed (cf. 4.3.1.1).

5.3.1.2 Facilities and services

- Schools A and B were found to be experiencing fencing problems, which compromises the safety of learners, especially at school A (cf. 4.3.1.2). Thus it was found to be difficult for the SMTs of the participating schools to control the two main issues. It also emerged that drug peddlers and gamblers take advantage of the four schools' penitentiary like structures and huge buildings which are said to offer many hiding spaces, especially where there are fencing problems, to ply their trade during school hours, thus again making it difficult for the participating SMTs to manage the disciplinary challenges being investigated (cf. 2.3.2; 2.5).
- The prison like structures are not attractive to the onlooker and probably to the school community or the learners themselves. Which may be the reason why some learners find it better to be outside or away from such places (cf. 2.5).

- Similarly are the sports fields, across all the four sampled schools, found to be neglected, overgrown and now turned into food gardens by community members, with permission from the participating schools' managers. Access onto the school grounds is unlimited, as it happens at any time of the day including weekends. As a matter of fact, this practice is in contravention of the spirit of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles, 1985 (Act 53, 1985), (cf. 2.3.4).
- The SMTs of schools C and D, whose fences were recently rebuilt and thus still intact, were in agreement that their situations had changed for the better, as cases of class bunking and learners sneaking out of the school premises had lessened. This is the result of proper school fencing, in ensuring learner safety as well as being one of the prerequisites for the effective implementation of the circular (cf. 4.3.1.1; 2.6.3).
- It also became clear that of the four participating schools, located in the same socioeconomic environment, three are categorised as quintile four (4) schools, or "fee schools", which basically means that they are wealthy, whilst only one is categorised as a "no fee" school, thereby qualifying for the government feeding scheme and services (cf. 1.8.1). However the three fee schools were found to be experiencing similar difficulties with parents not paying school fees, because of reasons such as unemployment and poverty (cf. 2.6.2).
- Another finding was that all the three participating "fee schools" expressed a need for a downgrading of their schools to the status of "no fee schools", for the reasons already mentioned above, as well as to obtain the benefits of facilities and services provided by the government to "no fee schools" (cf. 4.3.1.2; 2.6.2).
- The general belief among participants in this study was that parents who have money take their children to Tshwane city schools and private schools. The former further argued that they are left with the destitute learners who are in need

of government assistance in terms of a feeding scheme, as they find it difficult to prohibit hungry learners from going home during lunch break as mandated by the circular (cf. 4.3.1.2).

- It also came to light that the removal of security services from schools, sponsored by the State, compromises the safety of the school property and learners. The said security services are also a crucial prerequisite for ensuring the successful implementation of Circular 13 of 2002. Moreover, this service prevents various safety threats to the school community and the school environment at large, (cf. 2.3.2).

5.3.1.3 Keeping of school records

Findings from the record keeping audit of the four participating SMTs revealed the following:

- Whereas Circular 13 of 2002 calls for the use of gate registers to monitor access onto and out of the school property by visitors to the school (cf. 2.3.4), and to compile a record of regular latecomers, for disciplinary purposes, none of the four participating schools was found to keep such registers (cf. 4.3.1.3). Thus they do not comply with the school safety measures to protect learners from harm, as contemplated in Circular 13 of 2002, (cf.2.3.3; 2.3.4; 2.4.1).
- It was established that the principle of locking the school gates during school hours was not observed by any school except for C. With the other three schools, anybody is able to walk or drive in without answering any questions, or reasons for the visit being asked or recorded. This neglect contradicts the school safety measures prescribed in the circular (cf. 2.3.3; 4.3.1.3).

- No participating schools have planned and developed programmes of procedures that will apply in dealing with disciplinary matters pertinent to the two issues researched. Similarly, these schools, with the exception of school C, do not maintain records of previous disciplinary cases in these respects. Of importance is that such records embody the history of the school as to how it deals with disciplinary matters, which forms an integral part of the school's future code of reference on discipline (cf. 4.3.3.3).

The next paragraphs concern the findings stemming from the review of school documentation.

5.3.2 The review of school documentation

The following findings emerged from the review of school documentation:

- That the content of the codes of conduct for learners of all participating schools are not compliant with the imperatives as stipulated in the circular (cf. 4.3.2).
- There is also no trace of the circular's impact on the formulation and development of all the four codes. This is evidenced by non-recognition and lack of reference to this circular in the content of these codes (cf. 4.3.2).
- It also became clear that, where issues of absenteeism during school hours or class bunking and late coming appear in the schools' codes, the discussions are tangential. The codes also contain generalities and statements of no substance. For example, learners are expected to know and to adhere to school rules, yet

those rules are not clearly contextualised in the codes, but merely listed as unacceptable behaviour which is punishable (4.3.2).

- Another finding concerns the replications of Section 8 of the SASA document without proper interpretation of content according to the individual school's situation (cf. 2.4.2).
- It also emerged that, although it is not their prerogative, SMTs of the four participating schools have taken over the role of developing codes of conduct for learners. The main reason claimed to be that parent members of their SGBs have literacy challenges thus cannot contribute much to the development tasks expected of them (4.3.2).
- It emerged that three of the participating schools, excluding school "C" do not use period registers to monitor class bunking and late coming. Similarly, class registers are also said to be sometimes marked by class prefects, which is not right (cf. 4.3.3.2).
- It also emerged that in exception of school "C" the Time book for educators are not properly monitored and cared for, (cf. 4.3.1.1).

The following section describes the findings from the focus groups interviews.

5.3.3 The focus groups interviews

In this section findings were categorized and described under the following three main categories:

- the experiences and perceptions of the SMTs;
- the challenges to the effective implementation of the circular; and

- the disciplinary procedures employed by participating schools' SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002, (cf. 1.3).

5.3.3.1 The experiences and perceptions of the SMTs

Experiences and perceptions of the members of the SMTs of the four participating schools yielded the following findings:

- The general consensus among SMTs across the four participating schools is that this circular is a good corrective disciplinary measure but with some reservations because of its limitations (cf. 4.3.3.1). They argued that its implementation depends on the availability of certain resources such as properly fitted security enclosures and gates (cf. 2.6.2), feeding scheme services, and so on (cf. 4.3.3.1; 2.5).
- Some SMT members claimed to be new in the field of teaching and not yet inducted with regard to the circular; some claimed to be novices to school management, thus not knowing much about this circular; whilst most of the older SMT members, claiming not to have been trained about this circular, which they refer to as the "Lock-up policy" had only a faint remembrance of it saying that it lost popularity because it was unrealistic to implement (cf. 2.5; 2.6.3).
- It also emerged that the GDE seems not to have a monitoring tool to assess the implementation of this circular, as it is alleged that the education officials never visit these schools to assess issues of class bunking and late coming. Thus, it comes as no surprise that some SMT members have lost memory of this important circular, (cf. 4.3.3.1).

- Another general consensus among SMTs was a lack in managerial skills training, especially on handling circulars such as this one. Once more, blaming the GDE for not inviting them out to workshops on school management (cf. 2.5; 4.3.3.1).
- It also emerged that, schools B, C and D are rated as quintile 4 schools, fee schools (cf. 1.6.1), thus not totally dependent on the GDE funding as is the case with school A. However, because of the socioeconomic situation of their area of location (cf. 2.6.2), these schools are unable to cope with ordinary maintenance of the day to day financial needs as they claim most of the parents do not pay school fees as expected, and that the financial assistance from the GDE often takes long to reach them, (cf. 4.3.3.1).
- Some members felt that the circular contains reasonable disciplinary measures which can only be realised by city schools where all parents pay school fees, which is not the case with them (cf. 4.3.3.2).

However, the mixed perceptions about the circular were well captured by one of the participants who felt that, *“... irrespective of the circular’s positive or negative aspects, it is the law and we are supposed to implement its prescripts without fail, however I now understand the expression of, one finding himself between a hammer and an anvil”*, (cf. 4.3.3.1).

5.3.3.2 The challenges to the effective implementation of the circular

Analysis of the internal and the external challenges in this regard yielded the following findings:

- The majority of learners in all the four schools were found to come from outside the schools’ immediate catchment areas. These learners were found to be

travelling this far to gain access to their home languages, which were abolished by the erstwhile Bophuthatswana apartheid regime in the seventies and were never restored by the new democratic rulers of South Africa since coming to power in 1994 (cf. 4.3.3.2). The language problems also relate to learners from Mozambique, Somalia, and other countries, said to be numerous but lacking skills in the local languages, which include English. These learners are said to often skip language classes, thus adding to the challenges of class bunking (cf. 2.6.2).

- Another finding was that, most of the new informal settlements surrounding Soshanguve Township do not have their own secondary schools as yet; thus the schools researched serve as the only places where learners from these areas can gain access to secondary education (cf. 4.3.3.2; 2.5).
- It also became obvious that, out of the four participating schools only school A is graded as a “no fee school”, whilst schools B, C, and D, though in the same area, are “fee schools”. This grading (cf. 2.6.2) was found to be problematic for the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs (cf. 4.3.3.2).
- A factor also common among the participating schools that makes it difficult for them to control the challenges under investigation is their lack of administrative processes. For example, all four experience large numbers of learners who are family heads or learners not living with their biological parents but living under the guardianship of the grannies, as well as numerous pregnant learners, but the schools have not devised programs regarding how to go about giving support to such learners (cf. 2.5; 2.6.3).
- It emerged that truancy among learners, especially male repeaters, gamblers, and drug users, is common across the four participating schools. The

misbehaviours by these groups of learners are blamed by all the sampled SMTs for making it difficult for them to effectively implement the provisions of this circular (cf. 2.3.4).

- Furthermore it came to light that where schools experience difficulties with the maintenance of school property such as the rebuilding of vandalised school fences, the GDE invariably neglects to assist, even where a school such as A is totally financially dependent on it (cf. 2.6.3).
- Also found common among the four participating schools were challenges posed by the indifferent community members, who, ignoring by-laws that restrict the sale of liquor to minors or close to school premises, sell liquor and drugs to learners (cf. 2.5; 4.3.3.2). Thus hampering effective implementation of the circular.
- It also emerged that teaching is more important to all the SMTs of the participating schools than the management of the processes, as contemplated in the circular, which if properly administered, could alleviate most of the problems related to policy implementation (cf. 2.3.4; 2.5).

5.3.3.3 Findings from the disciplinary procedures employed by participating schools to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002.

Findings in this respect revealed the following:

- No schools sampled have formulated procedures according to the demands of the circular (cf. 4.3.3.1), to guide them in managing the disciplinary challenges

mentioned. These programmes must be devised as prescribed by the circular, which is part of the school law and needs to be obeyed (cf. 2.3).

- it was found that there is a general ignorance of the guiding disciplinary measures provided for in the circular in all the sampled schools. This is evident in all the four codes of conduct for learners (cf. 1.3).
- All these schools claim said problems to be rife, but do not follow the provisions of this circular. In the researcher's view, this encourages the escalation of these problems (cf. 2.4.1).
- The researcher is also of the opinion that the four sampled schools do not know much about the contents of Circular 13 of 2002. Sadly, the GDE knows about the challenges under discussion but do not seem to have put any strategies to solve them in place (cf. 2.5).

The above findings explain why the participating schools experience the given difficulties. Against the background of these findings, recommendations that could guide the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002 are formulated.

5.4 Summary of the recommendations

Almost a decade after the promulgation of Circular 13 of 2002, hardly a day goes by without newspaper headlines reporting negatively about learners involved in or caught performing wrong actions, or seen in full school uniforms roaming the streets during school hours (cf. 1.2). The negative exposé is indicative of two important possibilities: the ineffectiveness of the circular, or poor school management of the above mentioned disciplinary challenges.

Based on the preceding findings, the study proposes the following recommendations:

5.4.1 Recommendations stemming from observations

The recommendations are made under the following categories: arrival and starting times; facilities and services; and the keeping of school records.

5.4.1.1 Arival and starting times

Pertinent to learners' arrival and starting times, especially in the morning, it is recommended that:

- The SMTs need to emphasise the importance of respect for official school times, to learners in the morning assemblies as well as in classrooms. Educators who arrive late for no apparent reason should not only be cautioned but their misconduct also be reported to the education authorities. Moreover, their behaviour disturbs the supposedly conducive teaching and learning environment, as well as acting against the spirit of the circular and the Employment of Educators Act (cf. 4.3.1.1).
- The GDE needs to set systems in place to monitor the implementation of school policies (cf. 4.3.1.1). Otherwise the intended purposes of the policies become redundant, as has been found to be the case with Circular 13 of 2002 (cf. 2.4).

- The GDE needs to reconsider policies that concern learners' feeder (catchment) areas and their transport, especially that funded by the State, the emphasis being on how the GDE monitors these processes (2.6.3).
- All members of the SMTs need to be afforded chances of attending workshops where they would be trained about school management issues, which is part of personnel or staff development. This means that personnel development should not be focused or afforded the principal educators alone, as some principals do not report back on these events to their colleagues. This was found to be a general concern across participants, being evident through their responses that although they are members of their respective schools' SMTs they lack knowledge of school management (cf. 2.5; 5.3.3.1).

5.4.1.2 School facilities and services

Findings in this category concerned provisioning, mainly by the education department. The situation was found to display many gaps, particularly those pertinent to the GDE not meeting its responsibilities, often putting the safety of the learners in jeopardy (cf. 4.3.1.2). Therefore it is recommended that:

- The GDE needs to ensure that public schools under its care have properly constructed security fences and gates. This applies to all other facilities and services that are the GDE's responsibility (cf. 4.3.1.2), hence enabling the SMTs to manage the implementation of policies such as this circular (cf. 2.3.2).
- Architects of school plans need to make them attractive as places of teaching and learning (cf. 2.3.3).

- Those responsible for managing, the SMTs in particular, schools should ensure that fences and gates remain intact and properly monitored at all times, for the safety of all on the school grounds (cf. 2.4.1).
- It is also recommended that, to secure safety of the school property, which includes the learners, access onto the school playgrounds, now turned into food gardens by members of the community, should cease immediately (cf. 2.3.4). SMTs needs to ensure that school playgrounds are restored and used for the purposes they are intended for, and the education officials should monitor this process. This should be done in the spirit of restoring a full school curriculum to avoid learners developing sporting interests elsewhere, which may lead to truancy and thus the difficulty to implement the provisions of this circular (cf. 2.5).
- The GDE needs to revisit the grading of public schools located in the same socioeconomic environment, but graded into different quintiles. This kind of grading was found to be problematic for the reasons noted (cf. 4.3.1.2).

5.4.1.3 Schools' record keeping

As records were found not to be well kept, the following recommendations are made:

- The GDE needs to ensure that all members of the SMTs, and not principals alone, are afforded training opportunities to skill them about school management in general, as well as to train them in record keeping. For example: to maintaining records which would serve as the school's history on discipline (cf. 2.3.4; 4.3.3.3).
- Strict keeping and use of gate registers to register entry and exit of visitors needs to be maintained during school hours (cf. 2.3.4) for the purposes of safety to the school property, which includes the learners (cf. 4.3.1.3).

- Similarly, gate registers for latecomers, contemplated in the circular, (cf. 2.3; 4.3.1.1) must be enforced for the purposes of maintaining latecomers' records, and the history of the disciplinary measures as applied by individual schools. Such records will serve as future reference to guide schools in the development of disciplinary programs and procedures pertaining late coming (cf. 2.2.3).
- School gates must also be locked at all times, during school hours, as mandated by the circular (cf.2.3.3). Moreover that, the practice is necessary for the safety of the school property which includes learners. The main purpose being to protect and to allow the educative tasks to take place unhindered (cf. 2.3.2; 2.4.1).

The following section deals with recommendations regarding the review of the school documents.

5.4.2 Review of school documentations

Findings from the review and analysis of the documents of the four participating schools gave rise to the following recommendations:

- All the four participating schools must revisit and develop their codes of conduct for learners in compliance with the imperatives stipulated in the circular, and should also reflect recognition of its provisions (cf. 4.3.2).
- The content of the codes should be written in simple clear English instead of the legal terminology used, especially school "C" (cf. 4.3.2).
- The content of the codes of conduct for learners must mirror the disciplinary situation as it prevails in each of these schools instead of their present status as replications of Section 8 of the SASA document,(cf. 2.4.2).

- The GDE needs to review the appointment of the SGBs particularly in township schools, in the light of the literacy challenges that mars full participation of the parents component on issues of their functions (cf. 4.3.2).
- The GDE must monitor implementation of circulars, codes of conduct and the daily use of the period or subject registers, as well as the conduct of educators. Especially on issues of late coming and absenteeism.
- Both class and period registers should not be marked by learners but by the class teachers and the subject teachers concerned (cf. 4.3.3.2).

Following are the recommendations on the focus groups interviews.

5.4.3 Focus groups interviews

The recommendations in this section are classified into the following three categories:

5.4.3.1 The experiences and perceptions of the SMTs

- The GDE needs to be prompt in provisioning schools with resources and facilities that will enable them to implement this circular without any hindrances (cf. 2.5.2; 4.3.3.1).
- The GDE needs to constantly workshop and train all SMT members, instead of principals alone, on issues of school management, especially on discipline which this study found to be the most problematic area of school management across all participating schools (cf. 2.5). Otherwise, circulars such as this one will not be

implemented and ultimately will be forgotten, as is the case in this regard (cf. 2.6.3).

- The GDE needs to monitor and to assess the implementation of this circular, which is very much relevant to combating the challenges of learners' absenteeism during school hours and late coming (cf. 1.4).
- Given the socio-economic situation of the area of location of the participating schools (cf. 2.6.2), it is recommended that the education authorities should revoke the quintile status of schools B, C, and D to that of no-fee schools, because of their current financial situations (cf. 4.3.3.1; 4.3.3.2).

5.4.3.2 Challenges to the effective implementation of the circular

Recommendations in this respect are:

- The GDE should reduce the long distances travelled by many learners' to access the official African languages, by reintroducing the teaching of these languages in the school curriculum of the former Bophuthatswana schools (cf. 5.3.3.2). This will alleviate the challenges of late arrival which often encourage absenteeism (cf. 2.6.1).
- Most of the foreign learners from Mozambique, Somalia, Congo, and elsewhere, have achieved asylum status, and enjoy the right to education in the Republic of South Africa. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the GDE to ensure that they obtain assistance with the acquisition of local languages skills, including English, as contemplated in Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, (cf. 4.3.3.2).

- It is also recommended that, because of the high number of pregnancies, the GDE should form partnerships with sister departments such as that of Health and social welfare, so that schools could be afforded health and social workers to deal with the pregnant learners whilst educators focus on providing education (cf. 2.6.3; 4.3.3.2).
- Concerning the indifferent community members who sell liquor and drugs to learners, here too, the GDE needs to form partnerships with the South African Police Services and child protection services to give support in this regard (cf. 4.3.3.2).

5.4.3.3 Disciplinary procedures employed by the schools to manage the disciplinary challenges under discussion.

Findings revealed general ignorance of this circular which contains most of the solutions to the challenges under discussion, as well as a lack of well developed and formalised procedures to manage the said disciplinary challenges across all four participating schools. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- The participating schools' SMTs together with their SGBs should develop programs of procedures especially on learner discipline, and it is also recommended that the GDE should give guidance in this regard (cf. 4.3.3.1).
- In giving direction to the development of procedures, the GDE should ensure that the development processes are guided by the provisions as stipulated in the circular (cf. 4.3.3.1). Moreover that, the challenges under discussion are so rife and currently, matters of concern in public schools across the provinces of the

Republic of South Africa, (see report: Sunday Times 14/08/2011), and thus disturb the processes of teaching and learning.

- The GDE should impress the need and importance of the seriousness of this circular among the educators, as well as to make sure that it is read, understood and implemented accordingly and without fail. Moreover that circulars are part and parcel of the school laws that govern them and thus needs to be obeyed at all times (cf. 2.4.1).

The following section deals with the suggestions for further research pertinent to learner absenteeism during school hours and late coming.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

Given the above findings and recommendations, it became apparent that issues of indiscipline with regard to late coming and absenteeism are severe in all the sampled public secondary schools. Hence further research is needed. Therefore, future studies should be conducted:

- to determine ways of narrowing the gaps that exist between the idealistic school policy provisions, and the realities of the school situation. The purpose is to enable policy implementation, thereby improving the teaching and learning environments.
- To determine effective ways of managing learner absenteeism during school hours and late coming.
- Policies that informs the appointment of members of the SMTs and their role in school governance.

The following section describes the limitations of this study.

5.6 Limitations of the study

- The sample used concerns only four (4) public secondary schools out of a total of fifty-six (56) public secondary schools in the Tshwane West Educational District (15). Thus the findings cannot be generalised to other educational departments across the GDE in the Republic of South Africa.
- As a case study, the sample consisted of schools in one educational district alone, whilst dealing with serious phenomena which are plaguing public schools, not only in the Gauteng province but across provinces of the Republic of South Africa (*Sowetan*, January 17: 2011; *Sunday Times* August 14:2011). The wish of the researcher is that there could be a wider audit of this phenomenon, particularly partial absenteeism across the Republic, to ascertain the situation in all public schools, so that well planned programmes and procedures could be formulated to deal with the scourge.

The following section concludes this chapter.

5.7 Conclusion

The main question posed by this study (cf. 1.3), was: Why do learners of the GDE, continue to arrive late for school, bunk classes, and why are they frequently seen roaming the streets during school hours, irrespective of the promulgation of Circular 13 in 2002? To answer the question, relevant literature about the challenges at hand was consulted. Factors contributing to the challenges mentioned above were identified. The qualitative case study design and its data collection techniques or methods were

identified as suitable for the purposes of this study and thus adopted and applied during the processes of data collection, presentation, analyses and description.

Findings revealed poor management and governance of educational processes in all sampled schools, which reflects badly on members of the SMTs, who are expected to work as a collective. However, it has also emerged that the said challenges are not easy disciplinary matters for schools alone to deal with, (cf. 2.5; 2.6).

It also emerged that the GDE churns out policies which the implementation thereof is not monitored nor emphasized. This raises doubts about the purpose and the seriousness in issuing such policies, whereas it is quite apparent that the GDE lacks the human capacity to ensure that school managers are properly trained and skilled in effective policy implementation and school management. This is evidenced by an outcry among SMTs that, upon appointment, they only receive five days' induction in school management or nothing at all, and that in many instances trainers themselves are unable to respond to questions.

This confirms the researcher's belief that most SMTs are not well equipped with knowledge and skills to manage schools (cf. 4.3.1.3). Perhaps the GDE needs to learn from the notion that, to be appointed to do a job that you are not well trained in is tantamount to "... been told to accomplish something without having been given the proper tools" (Seganti, 2011:3), (cf. 2.5).

Strong partnerships need to be formed, between the education authorities, neighbouring schools, parents, local communities, health, social welfare and child protection agencies to fight indiscipline (cf. 2.5). Crucial as the partnerships are among stakeholders, they should be guided by the spirit of dedication as well as constant assessment by the education authorities of policy implementation in schools.

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Appendix: A

Open (unstructured) questions and sub-questions (to facilitate the discussions during the data collection) used for the Focus Groups Interviews (cf. 1.3).

Main Question:

Why do learners, of the GDE, continue to arrive late for school, bunk classes, and why are they frequently seen roaming the streets during school hours, irrespective of the presence of the GDE Circular 13 Promulgated in 2002?

Specific question:

1.1 What are the experiences and perceptions of the School Management Teams (SMTs) regarding Circular 13 of 2002?

Sub-questions:

- (i) Do you find Circular 13 of 2002 to be an effective measure to combat problems of partial Absenteeism and late coming?
- (ii) Do you find the practice of locking the school gates helpful as an effective disciplinary measure regarding the challenges mentioned above?
- (iii) Do you consider the practice to be an effective safety measure for the school property which includes the learners?

2.1 What are the challenges to the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?

Sub-questions:

(factors within the school premises)

- (i) What are the factors identified within the school that makes it difficult for your school to control learners' partial absenteeism from school during school hour guided by this circular?
- (ii) What are the factors identified within the school that makes it difficult for your school to control learners' late coming guided by this circular?
- (iii) Does your school have a feeding scheme?
- (iv) Does your school have learners who double as learners during the day and parents/caretakers in the evening?
- (v) Does your school experience problems of teenage pregnancy?
- (vi) How frequent does it happen?
- (vii) How does this affect the management of the above mentioned problems and the effective implementation of the circular?
- (viii) In which kind of responsible activities do you involve your learners, especially those identified as regular latecomers or class bunkers/truants?
- (ix) Does your school encourage learners to be involved in sporting activities?
- (x) How often are you invited for training as SMTs for purposes of skill development in school management?

(factors outside the school premises)

- (xi) What are the external factors which makes it difficult for your school to effectively control and manage the mentioned problems as mandated by the Circular 13/2002?
- (xii) Tell me about your learner catchment area, and the mode of transport to and from school?
- (xiii) Does your school have partnerships with the surrounding community, other schools in the neighbourhood, or agencies such as welfare, health, child protection, etc?

3.1 What are the disciplinary procedures employed by the sampled schools' SMTs to sustain the effective implementation of Circular 13 of 2002?

- (xiv) Does your school have the *Code of Conduct for Learners* compiled in accordance to Circular 13 of 2002?
- (xv) How often is your *Code of Conduct for Learners* revised?
- (xvi) Do you have written plans and procedure to guide you in the management of the challenges/problems of late coming, and absenteeism during school hours?

Appendix B: Permission letters to conduct research in Tshwane West (D15) Schools.

- (i) Letter from The Tshwane West Ed. (D15)
- (ii) Letter From the Tshwane West ED. (D15) to Principals of participating schools.
- (iii) Letter from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)

Letter from The Tshwane West Ed. (D15)

Letter From the Tshwane West ED. (D15) to Principals of participating schools.

Letter from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)

Letter from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)

Letter From the Tshwane West ED. (D15) to Principals of participating schools.



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

ENQUIRIES: Tlhoale RL
UNIT: PP and DMIS
TEL NO.: (012) 725 1357

REFERENCE: Research/project
FAX NO.: (012) 702 7723

TO: LEPONO PETER BOSHEGO
FROM: MR MEKWA
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR
TSHWANE WEST
DATE: 15 SEPTEMBER 2010

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PROJECT

Attached please find Head Office approval to your request to conduct research.

You are kindly advised to interact with the principals on the following schools:

Secondary School
Secondary School
Secondary School and
Secondary School.

Names blocked
or ethical
reasons →

MR MEKWA (MRS)
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR
TSHWANE WEST

Office of the Director – District Tshwane West
(Mabopane, Winterveldt, Garankuwa, Soshanguve, Kameeldrift, Rosslyn, Akasia, Pretoria North, Mountain View,
Roseville, Capital Park, Hercules, Pretoria Gardens, Pretoria West, Lotus Gardens)
Private Bag X38, ROSSLYN, 0200 Tel: (012) 725 1300 Fax: (012) 702 7723 Web: www.education.gpg.gov.za



ENQUIRIES: Tlhoale RL
UNIT: PP & DISM
TEL. NO.: 012 725 1357

REFERENCE: Research
FAX NO.: 012 702 7723

TO: **PRINCIPALS OF SELECTED SCHOOLS:**
James blocked or ethical reasons → [REDACTED] **SECONDARY SCHOOL**
[REDACTED] **HIGH SCHOOL**
[REDACTED] **SECONDARY SCHOOL**
[REDACTED] **SECONDARY SCHOOL**

FROM: **MR MEKWA**
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR

CC: **S HLATSHWAYO**
CES: IDS

DATE: **15 SEPTEMBER 2010**

RESEARCH PROJECT- "THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CIRCULAR 13 OF 2002, IN SELECTED PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF TSHWANE WEST EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT"

District Tshwane West would like to confirm that LP Boshego has been granted permission to conduct research in our District and your school has been selected to assist in the project.

You are therefore requested to afford him the necessary support to interact with SMT and Learner representatives. In this process please ensure that teaching and learning time is not compromised.

Attached find a copy of Head Office approval.

MR MEKWA
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR
TSHWANE WEST



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

Date:	14 September 2010
Name of Researcher:	Boshego Lepono Peter
Address of Researcher:	530 Aldo Street
	P.O. Box 4402
	Rietvalleirand
Telephone Number:	0124802283/0824347489
Fax Number:	0124294919
Research Topic:	The Implementation of the Gauteng Department of Education, Circular 13 of 2002, In Selected Public Senior Secondary Schools of Tshwane West Educational District
Number and type of schools:	4 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*


Office of the Chief Director: Information and Knowledge Management
Room 501, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2000 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000
Tel: (011) 355-0809 Fax: (011) 355-0734

4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Nomvula Ubisi
DEPUTY CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST: RESEARCH

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	
Date:	10/09/2010