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# The contribution of the low-fee private school sector towards access to quality education: a case study of two low-fee private school models

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**2016**
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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOL SECTOR TOWARDS ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOL MODELS


By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

in the Faculty of Humanities

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**

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**September 2016**


Protocol Number: 2015ECE033M

## Abstract

The research investigates the contribution of the low-fee private school sector towards access to quality education by examining two models of low-fee private schools in the Gauteng province, South Africa. The study generates insights about the contribution to quality education and implications of a growing low-fee private school sector for equity in the South African context. It looks at the factors that encourage the growth of the sector, the nature and challenges of running private schools and the quality of education offered by low-fee private schools.

The study uses an exploratory qualitative research methodology and a case study design. Elite interviews with three experts; three founding directors; principals and two teachers from two low-fee private schools (one non-profit and the other one for-profit) in Bramley, Johannesburg were used as data collection instruments.

The findings reveal that government support for private schools post-1994; excess demand due to middle class population growth in certain areas and differentiated demand owed to better quality and faith-based education are the key factors driving the growth of the private school sector in South Africa. The quality of education offered by low-fee private schools in South Africa is different across schools and mirrors the inequalities in the public school system. With reference to the literature, it is clear that the low-fee private school sector plays a noteworthy role, ensuring that some learners have access to schools in areas where government has not been able to keep up with the middle class population growth. Low-fee private schools give parents the opportunity to choose faith-based schools in a country where the public education system is faith-neutral. Although low-fee private schools are viewed as an alternative from public schools due to the poor quality offered by the latter, it is important to note that there are great differences with the quality offered by different schools in the private sector.

**Key Words:**

Independent schooling; low-fee private schools; privatisation; quality education; equity

## Declaration

I, Nduvho Theony Ramulongo, hereby declare that the contained in this research is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for examination at any other university. I further declare that authorisation and consent from the ethics committee was granted to carry out this research project.



Nduvho Theony Ramulongo

Signed on this 23rd day of September 2016

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I give praise and honour to God who gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars. Secondly, I am grateful to my mother Balanganani Florence Ramulongo, for instilling in me a passion to pursue education and acquire knowledge; for all the sacrifices and unwavering support throughout my schooling journey. To my sister Tshilidzi Rabedzwana, thank you for being there from day one and believing in me. My mentors, Ps. Liepollo Lebogang Pheko, Dr Musa Manzi and Mr Siphosethu August Sihlangu, your prayers and words of encouragement kept me going. To my friends, family and the Wombs of Destiny team, thank you for being patient with me, allowing me to prioritise my studies and encouraging me to stay the course.

Dr Francine De Clercq, your support, guidance and patience has been absolutely invaluable. I consider it a great honour and privilege to have walked this journey under your mentorship; you have inspired me to be a much better person. Prof. Sheila Meintjes, Prof. Brahm Fleisch and Dr Audrey Msimanga thank you for sharing your insights and expertise. To all the research participants and schools, thank you for your time and the valuable contribution that made this research project possible. Lastly, I am grateful for the efficient administrative support from the Wits School of Education staff.

## Dedication:

A domestic worker who determined that her daughter would be educated and gave up everything she had to make it happen- my mother, Balanganani Florence Ramulongo. Your sacrifices were not in vain.

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ANA | Annual National Assessment |
| CDE | Centre for Development and Enterprise |
| DBE | National Department of Basic Education |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| EFA | Education for All |
| GCE | Global Campaigners for Education |
| GDE | Gauteng Department of Education |
| GPLMS | Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy |
| ISASA | Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa |
| KZN | Kwazulu Natal Province |
| PAEPL | Provincial Average Estimate of Expenditure Per Learner |
| PALF | Pearson's Affordable Learning Fund |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Association |
| SA | South Africa |
| SACE | South African Council of Educators |
| SASA | South African School Act |
| SE | School Effectiveness |
| SER | School Effectiveness Research |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SIR | School Improvement Research |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| UNISA | University of South Africa |

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the post- apartheid era, the independent school sector supplemented the public education sector in order to meet the demand for quality education. The demand for quality education from the emerging black middle class encouraged the development of new models of private schooling (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). This led to the considerable growth of the sector and development of new models of independent schooling that continue to play a central role in meeting the demand for quality education from the fast growing population, especially in the socio-economic hub of Gauteng (Hofmeyr, 2014).

Post-1994, the growth in the private schooling sector in South Africa was substantial (Hofmeyr& Lee, 2004). In 2003, 61 percent of all independent schools in South Africa were registered in the 1990's, noting a peak in 1994/1995 and 1998/1999, the period right after the first democratic elections (Du Toit, 2003). The Center for Development Enterprise (hereafter CDE) estimates that, from 2000 and 2006, the number of learners enrolled at private schools doubled from 256 283 to 504 395 learners (Bernstein, 2015). In Gauteng in particular, the number of private ordinary schools increased by 363 to 593 between 1995 and 2013 (Hofmeyr, 2014). "In 2013 the learner enrolment in Gauteng private schools is roughly three times the size it was in 1995, and the schools are making a meaningful contribution to providing access to education for Gauteng citizens" (Hofmeyr 2014:265).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Clause 29 (3), supports and protects the rights of any individual to establish a private school for the purpose of advancing the basic right to education. The school must be registered with the government and the standards maintained by the school should not be inferior to comparable public schools. The school should promote democratic principles and especially not discriminate anyone based on race. Furthermore, Section 48 of the

South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, stipulates that registered independent schools that serve poor communities; provide good quality education; are under exceptional management and charge low-fees are entitled to a financial subsidy from the government. Indeed, according to Hofmeyr & Lee (2004), the South African Constitution offers far greater protection for the independent school sector than most democracies, thus encouraging the growth of the sector.

In 2013, the Department of Education reported that there were 1639 independent schools, making up 6.3% of all schools in South Africa (Hofmeyr, 2014). In Gauteng (the province that accounts for the largest number of independent schools), 10% of the learners in the province are enrolled in independent schools which constitute 20.8% of all schools in the province (Ibid). Umalusi, the regulatory body for independent schools, reported that it accredited over 3500 independent schools in 2013. Although there is no conclusive data on the size of the sector, the numbers suggest that the sector is growing but is still small compared to international standards (Du Toit, 2003).

The independent school sector is largely made up of non-profit schools, although there are schools that are for-profit. The post-apartheid independent school sector in South Africa comprises high-fee, mid- and low-fee schools. The sector consists of religiously affiliated schools, community schools, those that offer alternative philosophies and approaches to education, virtual schools, commercially operated schools and of late there has been a development of chains of private schools (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). There are also schools in the low-fee category that are unregistered and operate illegally (Schirmer, Johnston & Bernstein, 2010). The high fee category mainly caters for the white elite with African learners only making up just 18% of the enrolment (Hofmeyr, 2014). However, the whole sector, which includes the mid and low-fee schools, has made considerable strides in terms of racial equity as black learners make up 72% of the enrolment and African learners make up 59% (Ibid). In terms of gender, girls account for 51% of all enrolments and 63% in low- fee high schools (Bernstein, 2015).

The rapid growth of private schools is attributed to the arrival of new players from established chains - or what Bernstein (2015) refers to as “branded chains” that offer a variety of schooling models with high-fees, mid-fees and low-fees and innovative learning and teaching packages. Bernstein (2015) identified about seventeen such chains in South Africa. Eleven were not-for-profit, four were for-profit and two were publicly listed companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. According to Tshabalala (2014), the idea of a chain of schools starts with a single school to test the viability and feasibility of the model; if it works in more schools, it is expanded to more locations. These chains are treated much like a private organization that relies on the application of business governance and management principles.

When the education system was deracialised in the 1990’s, some township parents decided to move their children to former Model C schools (Ibid) but, because the government did not invest to expand former Model C schools, the latter became full and could not meet the demand of this growing new demand (Ibid). Over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of low-fee independent schools that service the low to middle black middle class (Schirmer et al. 2010). In fact, the majority of private schools in South Africa are now in the middle to low-fee category (Hofmeyr, McCarthy, Oliphant, Schirmer, Bernstein, 2013). The low-fee private schools charge relatively low-fees that are affordable for this class and are most popular in the inner-city, new suburbs such as Midrand, informal settlements and other areas where government did not manage to keep up the provision for public schools for the rapid increase in the lower middle class population growth (Hofmeyr, 2014). In Gauteng province in particular, there is an annual influx of new learners from the rural provinces and other African countries that increase the demand for access to basic education (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). The private schools found a gap between the supply of public schools and the expanding population in suburban areas and new suburbs. It is known that the private sector thrives in an environment where the government has failed or does not have the capacity to provide public services and goods, such as education, in certain areas (Archer, 2013). The demand for schooling from the black middle class grew especially in townships where public education was perceived to be of poor quality (Hofmeyr, 2014). Even though the low-cost schooling offered by the chains is low-fee, it is perceived to provide good quality education.

Some of the private school chains secured financial support from the Public Investment Corporation and Old Mutual Investment Group (SA) to the tune of R1.2 billion, through the Education Investment Impact Fund (Vally, 2014; Bernstein, 2015; Hofmeyr et al., 2013). The funding facilitated the expansion of these schools. The biggest chain, Curro Holdings, serves 36,021 learners in 42 schools and plans to expand the number of schools to 100 by the year 2020 (Vally, 2014).

Low-fee independent schooling is not a phenomenon that is unique to South Africa. In fact, it is far more prevalent in developing countries such as Chile, Ghana, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Latin America to name a few (Tooley & Dixon, 2006, McLoughin, 2013). The sector in these countries is said to be also serving the poorest families, making education accessible in the most remote areas where there is a lack of government service (McLoughin, 2013). The schools are celebrated for running at a very low –cost while still being able to maintain good quality education.

Although proponents and opponents of the sector engage a lot with the development of the sector in other developing countries, there are some differences in South Africa (Bernstein, 2015). The low-fee independent schools in South Africa do not service the poor as is the case in many of these developing countries (Ibid). The majorities of the schools are still not-for-profit and receive financial support from the government (Hofmeyr et al., 2013). The fact that this sector receives funding from the government makes it of great public interest and means that claims cannot be easily made about the sector in South Africa based on international studies.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research on the growing private school sector in South Africa is dominated by pro-market agencies that mostly publish articles that are not peer-reviewed, making great claims about the contribution of the sector in providing quality education to many. The proponents and opponents of the sector often draw on international examples as evidence of the quality or lack thereof and the implications for equity of this growing low-fee independent school sector. It seems therefore important to study and assess the claims made about the quality of education produced by low-

cost private schools and implications for equity, for the South Africa context, so that there is a better understanding of the sector's contribution to South African schooling.

Independent schools are given different names in different parts of the world, such as low-fee private schooling, low-cost independent schooling, low-cost private unaided schools and/or budget schools (Bernstein, 2015). This category of school's charge fees that are affordable for low-income families in most part of the world (McLoughin, 2013). Most of these schools are operated by sole proprietors, non-profit organizations, National Trusts and other forms of management (Brewer, 2011). They depend on user-fees for all or some of the operation costs and development (McLoughin, 2013) and are found in run-down factories and former government buildings; shacks; high rise buildings and sometimes close to the taxi rank (Schirmer et al. 2010).

## 1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the study is to examine the claims made for and against the contribution of low-fee independent schooling in terms of access to school quality and aims to understand the implications of this growing low-fee independent school sector in South Africa for equity. It will do this by examining two models of low-fee independent schooling in the Gauteng province as well as two low-fee private schools.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aims to understand the contribution of the low-fee private school sector in terms of access to quality education and the implications of this growing private school sector in South Africa for quality education. The sub-questions for the study are as follows:

a) What are the claims made for and against the low-fee private school sector in South Africa?
b) What factors contribute to the proliferation of low-fee private schools in Gauteng?

c) What kind of quality education is provided by two different kinds of low-fee private schools?
d) What opportunities and challenges does the growth of the sector present in terms of access to quality education?

## 1.5 RATIONALE

Low-fee independent schooling is a topical issue because it is there to address a gap in the provisions of public education. It is undeniable that the private school sector in post-apartheid South Africa has increased access to education for certain kind of learners who could not be catered for by the public school system as the latter did not have the capacity to grow as fast. For as long as the demand for education continues to increase in areas of Gauteng and in other provinces while the public school sector does not expand, there will always be a market or demand for low-fee independent schools.

Yet it is known that there have been contradictory results in terms of the quality of education produced in these schools in different parts of the world. During the 1980's, Chile rolled out privatisation policies for education but it is now reviewing those policies (Vally 2014), whereas the private schooling sector is receiving considerable support in countries such as Pakistan and India (Bernstein 2015). These contradictions call for a closer examination in South Africa of the claims that low-fee independent schools do not merely increase access to education but increases social inequalities.

## 1.6 CLARIFYING KEY TERMS

### 1.6.1 Schooling

Barrett, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nikel, & Ukpo (2006:2) define schooling as "providing the service of 'education', i.e. of educating young people through institutionalised and universalised 'organised' learning." This research is concerned with the manner in which low-fee independent schools provide education and the institutions they have built to provide that service and the manner in which learning and teaching is organized in these institutions.

### 1.6.2 Independent Schooling vs Private Schooling

In many part of the world, the term “independent” schooling has replaced the term “private” to refer to non-public schools (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). According to the South African constitution, schools that are owned and managed by private service providers are referred to as “independent” schools and not private. South Africa’s biggest Independent Schooling association has also adopted the “independent” over “private” (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). However, this study will mostly use the term low-fee private schools while making use of the word “independent” where necessary.

### 1.6.3 Low-Fee Private Schools and Low-Cost PrivateSchools

Although the terms of low-fee and low-cost schools sound similar, there is a need to differentiate them. According to Tshabalala (2013), low-fee private schooling refers to the cost for the buyer “that is the amount that the parent pays for the child to be educated in the school. Low-cost private schooling refers to the “cost for the seller”, that is the amount it costs stakeholders to run the school. The difference is thus between the cost to those who attend the school and the cost to the service providers for running the school (Lewin, 2013). This research will use the term low-fee Independent schools.

Low-fee private schools are schools that charge less than R 12000 per year (Bernstein, 2015). In broad terms, this amount of R12, 000 equates to “the 2014 provincial average estimate of expenditure per learner (PAEPL) in an ordinary public school, against which the subsidy amount that independent schools may receive is calculated” (Bernstein, 2015:13). This study includes, however, a school that charges a little over R12, 000 (R15, 000) because it designates and markets itself as a low-fee independent school. The other school charges R9, 600 a year.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature starts with an examination of the development of low-fee independent schooling in developing countries. It then reviews the arguments in favour and against the development of the low-fee independent schooling sector in South Africa and reviews negative and positive implications of privatisation in education. After this, it proceeds with a discussion of different frameworks used to explain the factors and variables that create conditions for good quality education. The frameworks are drawn up by the Global Campaigners for Education, UNICEF, Education for All and the School Effectiveness Research (SER). The concepts of quality education are drawn from the two major traditions (the Progressive/Humanist and Economist tradition) that have attempted to define quality education. This leads to a discussion on the School Effectiveness Research and its effectiveness factors in order to examine the claims that low-fee independent schools provide quality education as measured by learners' academic results, better classroom sizes and higher teacher quality, which in themselves strongly resemble variables identified by the SER. This is followed by a critique of School Effectiveness Research that has to be taken into account in interpreting the findings. The chapter concludes with a theoretical framework.

## 2.1 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOW-FEE PRIVATE SECTOR

Low-fee independent schooling is not a phenomenon that is unique to South Africa. A number of developing countries have experienced a proliferation of low-fee independent schools. This brief section highlights some key unique characteristics of the sector as revealed by studies in other developing countries.

Several studies have been conducted in a number of developing countries such as India, the Philippines, Columbia, Kenya, Nigeria, China and Ghana. Low-fee independent schools are spreading rapidly in low-income suburban, rural areas and slum areas (Tooley & Dixon, 2005). In fact, in some developing countries, the private sector is schooling more learners than the public sector. For example, in the Nigerian state of Lagos, a majority of 75% of school children were schooled in low-fee private

schools (Ibid). Researchers found the same trend in Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, Kenya and India with schools in high rise buildings, abandoned factories, shopping centres and illegal slums (Mcloughlin, 2013). The schools are strategically placed to provide schooling to the poor communities that do not have access to government services or where the demand for schooling exceeds government's provision.

The rapid growth of low-fee independent schools is further fuelled by the deteriorating quality of education in public schools (Vally & Motala, 2013). Even though most developing countries are committed to universal access to primary education since 2000, government spending on education has not kept up with the demand for schooling (Kitaev, 1999). For example, Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezeh (2010) explain that, in Kenya, government's spending on education is still low even after it implemented free primary school education. As a result, there is a general perception that public schools are becoming poor in quality. In India, private schools give learners the opportunity to learn in English, which is not the case in most government schools where the State language is the medium of instruction and English is only a subject in the fifth grade (Tooley & Dixon, 2005). In the current globalised world, there is a belief among many parents that their children should be taught well in English (Ibid).

The Centre for Development Enterprise reported that Pearson's Affordable Learning Fund (PALF), founded in 2012, has supported low-fee private schools (four in India, two in Africa, one in the Philippines) to use technology to improve teaching and learning in their schools (Mcloughlin, 2013). Therefore, low-fee independent schools in developing countries have ensured access to education in areas where governments provision is inadequate and have therefore contributed in the struggle to achieve universal access to basic education. They have also given poor parents an alternative to government schools. In India, where poor parents choose to have their children educated in English in private schools instead of the national language, they have implemented innovative technology to improve teaching and learning.

## 2.2 ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR AND AGAINST PRIVATISATION

### 2.2.1 Parental Choice

Independent private schooling gives parents the power and ability to choose a school that is in line with their views, values or religious beliefs (Hofmeyr, 2014). A parent can choose to send their child to a single gender school or a school that imparts religious teachings or a particular philosophy and even a unique teaching and learning approach that appeals to parents. In South Africa, public schools are obliged to be secular to accommodate the diverse religious groupings and be inclusive in many other aspects but independent schools could be designed to fill this other particular market. Friedman (1997) argues that opening up the school sector to the market and its inherent competition can improve the entire education system. By giving parents an alternative, the schools will have to improve their standards to retain and attract consumers or else they stand the risk of closing down. Competition for parents could of course encourage principals and teachers of public schools to improve their performance given the threat of losing their jobs if these public schools see a diminished learner enrolment or if they have to close down (Schirmer et al. 2010). A study conducted by Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno (2001) in Pakistan found that parents' choice was largely driven by the quality of education, the level of school fees and the school proximity. In contrast, Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe (1995: 53) argue that it is problematic to reduce parental choice in education to general principles of the market because parental choice is a complex process that should be understood in the context of" complex social calculus of compromises and constraints" and that always discriminates against poor families.

### 2.2.2 Education as Public Good

To understand the critique against privatisation of education it is important to understand that it is part of a bigger neo-liberal global ideological agenda (Vally & Motala, 2013). Neo-liberalism calls for the decentralization of basic services that are provided by the state such as education. In the face of failing education systems and tight budgets in most developing countries, multinational organizations such as the World Bank have encouraged states to adopt a market approach to education (Vally, 2014).

Vally & Motala, (2013) and Vally (2014) raise a concern against privatisation of education because it ignores the purpose of education as a public good that is used to encourage social cohesion in a country. Schools are public institutions that are used to advance social goals and instill good morals that promote citizenship; a peaceful and democratic society (Keep, 2011). According to Friedman (1997) for any society to achieve that there should be some common set of values and basic level of education on the part of the populace. These values are re-enforced through a common curriculum. When education is privatized, corporations are given the power to develop the curriculum, determine assessments and outcomes of education and the sustainability of teachers and administrators in an unaccountable, unregulated and undemocratic way (Vally, 2014). This is problematic because decisions about what is relevant and necessary is based on cost analysis and rationalization principles (Vally & Motala, 2013). Thus, schools are about public service and the state has the obligation to provide free service to everyone that is legally entitled to it (Keep, 2011).

### 2.2.3 Commodifying Education

Another problem associated with private schools is that it turns education into "a commodity to be purchased and sold in a highly commercialized and competitive market" (Vally, 2014:181). According to Keep (2011), commodifying education is tricky because there are structural differences between schools and business. For one, in the schooling sector, the customer is not clearly distinguished. The government views the parents as the customers while the school views learners as the customers (Ibid). This can lead to a conflict of interest between the customers about the packages that the schools should offer. Parents become customers because they exchange fees for education services (Action Aid, 2014); customers/parents are given so much power and they may lead the school to implement policies that do not promote democracy and inclusiveness but protect their middle class privileges (Vally, 2014). The private schooling sector rarely trains its own teachers and therefore strains the public provision of qualified teachers and imposes a deficit on the supply of teachers because it provides competition for trained teachers in public schools (Vally & Motala, 2013).

It is clear that the debate between the proponents and opponents, as captured above, raises questions concerning parental choice and competition as factors that could improve the quality of education of private schools and the factors that contribute to this quality. This is why it is important to review the debates about quality education**.**

## 2. 3 QUALITY EDUCATION

Access to quality education has been a central international issue debated since the Jomtien Declaration and the official goal at the Dakar World Forum (Watkins, 2008). Quality education is a complex and highly contested concept, without a single universal definition of what constitutes quality education. In fact, it is widely accepted that different stakeholders hold different interpretations of quality education (Watkins, 2008). However, there have been two dominant traditions in the quality discourse, namely the Economist tradition and the Progressive/ Humanist tradition (Barret et al., 2006). The economic perspective uses quantitative measureable outputs [or learners' results] as a measure of quality (Ibid). The Progressive/ Humanist view focuses on educational processes - what happens in the school and in the classroom. It is acknowledged that the term "quality education" carries a positive connotation and, as such, is accepted to mean education of a high standard that reaches certain expectations (Ibid). In the absence of a clear definition of quality education, several stakeholders have provided guidelines for conditions that enable good quality education.

### 2.3.1 The Global Campaigners for Education

The Global Campaigners for Education (GCE) drew up six key points that are necessary to achieve quality education (Watkins, 2008). The GCE guide states that: 1) Teachers should be adequately recruited, trained, supported and paid. Teachers must receive pre and in- service training using relevant teaching and learning methods. Reasonable remuneration and development keeps teachers motivated. 2) Every classroom should be equipped with adequate equipment, textbooks, desks and learning material. Furthermore, the teacher: learner ratio should not exceed the standard 1/35 teacher/learners ratio. 3) Appropriate, relevant and inclusive curricula are at the core of every education process. The learner's mother-tongue should be

the primary language of instruction. Teachers should also take it upon themselves to develop learning material that can be constructed at low or no-cost at all. 4) Quality education could be achieved when schooling takes place in an environment that is conducive for learning. School infrastructure and facilities should be safe, stable and offer adequate protection from the sun and rain. There should be drinking water and satisfactory sanitation for both girls and boys. Furthermore, learners should be protected from all forms of violence. 5) Schools should also engage with the school community which includes – parents, teachers, and students and outside community. The school should actively reach out to disadvantaged members of the community and help them to acquire skills necessary for active participation. 6) A school can offer quality education when it is offers a positive learning experience that includes measuring learner's achievements and completion of the learning cycle.

### 2.3.2 UNICEF Framework

The international working group on education, gathered at Florence, Italy in June 2000, provided a broader definition of basic quality education encompassing "learners, content, processes, environments and outcomes" (World Education Forum, 2000:2). The group drew up five basic elements of quality education. Firstly, learners should be in a psychological and physiological condition that allows them to participate actively in learning and they should have their families and communities academic support. Secondly, schooling should take place in an environment that is secured, healthy, inclusive, gender- sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities. Furthermore, the content should be designed to equip learners with basic literacy, numeracy and life skills and include knowledge in key areas in life such as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace and security. Teachers should be well trained and equipped with the necessary skills to use- child centered teaching, maintain order in classrooms and schools and assessment "facilitate learning and reduce disparities" (Ibid). Lastly, good quality education includes "outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society" (World Education Forum, 2000:4).

### 2.3.3 Education For All and Quality

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2005) drew up a framework on quality education that brings together the humanist approach, critical approach, behaviourist approach, indigenous approach and adult education approach (Barret et al., 2006). Here are four main variables that influence quality education: A) Learner characteristics, learners socio-economic background and family background, which determine the learners cultural and social capital have a bearing on quality learning. B) The economic, societal values and national policies determine the educational context in which learning takes place. C) The availability and management of both material and human resources is an important indicator of quality education. D) Educational outcomes, as measured through tests and examination performance are also determinants of good quality education. This framework is useful because it draws in the effect of broader societal influences on schools.

### 2.3.4 Quality: Value for Money

Quality education has also been equated with 'value for money' (Ball 1985a). This implies that the price paid for something should equate to the standard of that particular service (Harvey & Green, 1993). This definition is underpinned by notions of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness (Ibid). There ought to be accountability to funders and customers. Efficiency is driven by market forces and competition between different service providers. Effectiveness is understood in terms of quantifiable outcomes. Efficiency is measured by monitoring particular performance indicators such as staff-student ratios and examination results. Along with the four frameworks mentioned, this is one of the definitions that will be used to assess quality in low-fee private schools, particularly in for-profit private schools that promote the idea of quality as value for money to retain customers.

### 2.3.5 School Effectiveness Research

Efficiency as quality that is relatable to resources has also been advanced by the School Effectiveness Research (SER) and School Improvement Research (SIR) that have drawn up a more extensive list performance indicators and school factors that are associated with quality. The SER focuses on the conventional educational inputs or resources such as learners' background, class size, infrastructure, teachers'

formal qualifications, leadership etc. as key quantifiable factors to contribute to effective schooling and educational quality (Cohen et al., 2005). SER states that schools with greater educational inputs and better organisational factors than others achieve better than average results and therefore quality, measured by educational outputs, the most common measure of quality education (Ibid).

SER started after the 1966 Coleman Report, which was commissioned by the United States Congress on Equalities of Educational opportunity (Christie, 2007) and led by James Coleman. The Report included 3000 schools and about 650,000 students. The report's main finding was that factors determined by learners' family background such as parents' income and parents' educational background were the over-riding contributors to learners' outcomes (Lezzotte, 2001). It was concluded that schools had a limited effect on students' performance. The report found that school factors such as classroom teachers and curriculum and facilities made only a notable contribution to disadvantaged learners (Christie, 2007). In particular, good teachers were found to have the greatest impact in improving disadvantaged learners' outcomes. The findings instigated the emergence of the school effectiveness movement and school improvement movement (Lezzotte, 2001).

SE researchers set out to prove that schools play an important role in the educational development of learners and, through regression analyses, identify factors that effective schools possess that positively influence student learning and results (Christie,2007). Edmunds (1982) highlighted seven attributes that are evident in all effective schools which were later refined into what is now known as the seven correlates of school effectiveness (Lezzotte, 2001). Firstly, effective schools have a school principal who is focused on his role as an instructional leader. Instructional leadership is the idea that the principal must firstly understand the quality of curriculum to ensure that teachers are delivering the correct and sufficient content to all the students (Louis, Wahlstrom, Michlin, Gordon, Thomas, Leithwood, Anderson, Mascall, Strauss & Moore, 2010). Secondly, an effective school has a clear and focused mission. This is evident when staff members share a common understanding and commitment to the mission and they are collectively working towards fulfilling it. Thirdly, effective schools have a safe and orderly environment

which is conducive for teaching and learning. The schools should intentionally work towards eradicating or at the least minimizing disciplinary problems that are disruptive to teaching and learning. Fourthly, effective schools have mechanisms in place to ensure that there is regular monitoring and assessment of student progress. Assessment of learners' performance is used for formative – that is for improving learning, and summative purposes which serve to summarize learning and inform the different stakeholders of the learners' progress and development (Harlen, 2007). Fifthly, effective schools have a positive relationship between the learners' home and school. Learners' parents understand the school's mission and they participate in school activities and contribute towards fulfilling the schools mission. Sixthly, effective schools provide opportunity to learn and time-on-task. A high percentage of the school day is dedicated to actual learning. Classroom teachers clearly understand the instructional objectives for each grade and subject and learners are actually given the time to learn and work on assigned tasks. It is therefore important for teachers to be well trained and qualified to clearly carry out the schools' instructional objectives. Lastly, effective schools have a climate of high expectations about the learners.

In the early 1990's, there was a 'rapprochement' between school effectiveness and school improvement research (SIR), whereby researchers in both movements contributed to a complementary perspective (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). SER continued to focus largely on factors deduced from quantitative research methodology, while SIR examines the internal dynamics of schools and school processes by making use of qualitative case study research methods (Hopkins & Levin, 2000).

Lezotte (2001:4) writes that "The correlates [identified by SER] are critical to the effective school because they represent the leading organisational and contextual indicators that have been shown to influence student learning". Attempts to define quality education as being associated with the seven key points that are necessary to achieve quality education, drawn up by the Global Campaigners for Education and the UNICEF framework closely resemble the factors identified by the school effectiveness movement.

This is useful to retain when examining the different factors that are attributed to quality education in the low-fee private school sector. School effectiveness correlates 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 were used to examine the quality of education in the case studies. Correlate 6, or time-on-task, was not considered because the researcher was not allowed to observe teachers in the classroom during the period in which data collection was conducted. More importantly, time-on-task is a difficult variable to measure in a qualitative case study approach although the quality of teachers could be a proxy variable.

Thus, the six variables drawn up by SER have been used to determine factors that contribute to quality schooling in the case studies of two schools. What follows is a discussion on these variables drawn from SER to argue that private schools deliver quality education.

## 2.4 FACTORS FAVOURING LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOLING

Researchers such as Hofmeyr (2014) and Schirmer et al. (2010) who argue that low-fee private schools produce better quality education than public schools make reference to student outcomes, resources, teaching culture in the school and parents' relationship with the schools to prove that they indeed produce quality education. If we go back to the SER correlates, the quality of education in low-fee private schools is determined, according to Hofmeyr (2014) and Schirmer et al. (2010) by the SER correlate 4 (assessment and outcomes), correlate 3 (conducive learning environment), and correlate 5 (positive relationship with parents) and correlate 6 (quality teachers). Below is a discussion of these factors that proponents of these private schools hold as evidence that they produce quality education.

### 2.4.1. Academic Performance

The outcome results of private schools are often used as the yard stick to measure the quality of education and to draw in parents to show that private schooling provides better quality education than similar fee-paying public schools. In 2010, the CDE administered a test to grade six learners from independent schools that was also administered to grade six learners from public schools. It was found that independent schools' results were significantly better in most areas than public

schools (Schirmer et al. 2010). The results of the 2005 National Systemic Evaluation administered by the government to schools showed that learners' score in the independent school sector were 12 % higher on average than the learners' score in public schools (Brewer, 2011). The low-fee independent schools that receive a government subsidy are pressurized to produce good matric results to secure a subsidy for the following year and thus it could be said that they have an incentive to get a good matric pass rate (Hofmeyr, 2014). Indeed, the government demands that learners in subsidized independent schools achieve results that are at least equal to or better than the provincial pass rate in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) and the National Senior Certificate (Du Toit, 2003).

Literature on the low-fee private schooling in South Africa does not appear to critically question the extent to which teachers are using the exams' content as a school syllabus which could explain the high matric results. According to Cohen & Spillane (1993), teachers can use examination questions as the syllabus to ensure that they perform well (Harlen, 2005). So, the results could merely reflect the learners' ability to recall isolated facts, which does not account in a genuine manner for the quality of education. This trend is not unique to South Africa or to private schools, but it is also evident in the international literature on public schools.

In 2005, a team of researchers led by Tooley & Dixon (2005) conducted a study in India, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. They found that the private schools (both aided and unaided) performed better than government schools (Tooley & Dixon, 2005). The mean scores in mathematics ranged between 5 and 23 percentage points higher than public schools (Ibid). Wadhwa (2009) questions the trend and contests that the effect of private schooling on learners' outcomes was most probably overestimated given that there are covariates – that is the effects of learners' ability and family background. It is widely known that learners from rich social background tend to perform better than those from poor families because of the academic support and cultural capital they receive from home. However, Tooley, Dixon & Merrifield, 2011) conclude that private schools had a better academic performance compared to public schools, even after accounting for covariates and using different empirical techniques. Javaid, Musaddiq, & Sultan (2012) conducted a study in

Pakistan and found that taking into account covariates causes a decline in the private schools' advantage over public schools but that the private schools' rate is still higher than government schools'. A new research study from Durham University has found that private schools perform better than students in public school after taking into account learner's social background (Barker, 2016). In fact, they are said to be around 2 years ahead.

It is worth noting, though, that a lot of the international research studies (Tooley & Dixon, 2005; Wadhwa, 2009; Tooley et al. 2009; Javaid et al. 2012) compare low-fee private schools and state schools. Also, what is acceptable or unacceptable as good quality education is different for each country (UNICEF, 200). For example, low-fee private schools in India can be found in shacks, which would be unacceptable in South Africa. Therefore, this means that, while one researcher may conclude that low-fee private schools offer good quality education in one country, the same can't be said about the sector in another country.

### 2.4.2 Learning Environment: Classroom Sizes and Resources

Low-fee private schools, like other private schools, have much smaller classroom sizes compared to public schools. Research conducted by the CDE revealed that some low-cost private schools had only 10 to 12 learners in a classroom (Schirmer et al. 2010). It is believed that small classroom size contributes positively to better academic outcomes because, in a small classroom, learners receive greater academic support from teachers as the teachers interact with each learner personally, enabling them to assess their progress closely (Ibid.). But in the United States, there has been extensive research with contradictory results on the effect of small classroom sizes on students' academic outcomes. Some school improvement advocates, such as Finn & Achilles (1990) (as quoted in Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003), argued that, while small classroom sizes do not offer a silver bullet for education, they make classroom instruction more effective and lead to better learners' results.

Dixon (2013) found that low-fee private schools have adequate facilities, such as clean drinking water, electricity, computers, television, desks and chairs. Libraries

were also better in low- fee private schools in India than in government schools. Tooley et al. (2011) found the same pattern in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and India where low-fee private schools had far greater outputs and inputs, including separate toilets for boys and girls; more private schools provided drinking waters, technological devices such as tape recorded for teaching and learning purposes, libraries and lights in the classroom compared to government schools.

### 2.4.3 Quality Teachers

The quality of teachers is argued to be a major contributor to the quality of education provided by the low-fee schooling sector. It is debatable how teacher quality should be measured: is it through the teachers' behavior in class or their credentials? Proponents of low-cost private schooling argue that teachers in the sector perform better than those in the public sector, even though many lack the qualifications that teachers in public schools have (Bernstein, 2015). Studies in South Africa and other developing countries show that teachers in the sector have lower level of absenteeism and a higher level of teaching activity when the teacher is in class (Tooley & Dixon, 2006, Keep, 2015, McLoughin, 2013). This often provides learners with more contact time (McLoughin, 2013). According to Kremer & Muralidharan (2008), private schools in India had three to four times more contact time with teachers, compared to learners in public schools. The 2010 CDE's report found that, particularly in unregistered low-fee private schools, there was low level of teacher absenteeism (Schirmer et al. 2010). The parents reported that teachers were punctual, reliable and accountable whilst, in public schools, they experienced rude and dismissive behavior from teachers, who further lacked humility, accountability and respect (Ibid). A Wits research project into a chain of indepedent schools in a South African township found that the key driving factor for parents' choice of that school was the perception that independent schools have quality educators (Morgan, 2015). Interestingly, this research argues that parents did not want unionized teachers because they believe that un-unionized teachers are more committed and offer better quality teaching.

However, some research (McLoughin, 2013; Archer, 2014 and Tooley and Dixon, 2006) found that, in many developing countries, teachers in the independent sector

did not necessarily have the qualifications, training or certification that teaching requires. Moreover, there was no long or short-term investment into teacher development (Ibid). It has been shown that low cost independent schools are able to operate at low costs precisely because teachers get relatively lower salaries –" which is the largest expenditure in any education system" (McLoughin, 2013, 15). The reason for teachers' low salaries is that these schools rely on school fees to pay teachers hence they receive poorer salaries than teachers in the public sector who are often unionized (Archer, 2014). Riep (2014) conducted a study on the model of a low-fee private school chain, called the Omega Schools in Ghana where teachers employed come from high-school and have only gone through a two-week teacher training programme but that they have to deliver standardized lesson plans to their learners (Ibid). If teachers are appointed with only a high school qualification, they are likely to deliver lessons based on how they were taught and are not able to keep up with current changes in the curriculum (Cohen & Spillane, 1993). This poses a great challenge to the credibility of teaching as a profession. Bernstein (2015) argues that training is not the single most important determinant of teacher's performance in class as there are other factors that also contribute. If teachers are engaged with teaching, they stand to improve their skills and knowledge over time (Schirmer et al. 2010). Research conducted in India and Tanzania found that pupils in private schools were afforded more "contact time" with their teachers (McLoughlin, 2013).

In South Africa, however, poorly qualified teachers do not seem to exist in low-fee independent schools. The latter uses and retains qualified teachers mostly from Zimbabwe and India and this does not have a negative impact on teachers available to public schools (Hofmeyr, 2014).

### 2.4.4 Parental Involvement

Action Aid (2014) reports that great parental involvement has been highlighted as strength in the low-fee independent school sector. Low-fee independent schools are said to increases parent participation in the children's education because they want to follow through on their financial investments and it is perceived to improve the quality of education. Mcloughlin (2013) found that parents in low-fee independent schools found that teachers were more accountable to them and were open to

consultations unlike in public schools. Parental involvement and accountability is driven by the idea that if parents are not satisfied they could merely “vote with their feet” and find another school (Ibid).

Thus, the four variables (learning environment and resources; quality teachers; parental involvement and academic outcomes) derived from SER correlates can provide insight into the quality of education in low-fee independent schools. Although the literature review is limited to just three, the report will explore other variables such as parent’s relationship to the school.

Finally, it is important here to be aware of the critique of SER and its weak points.

## 2.5 CRITIQUE AGAINST SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

School effectiveness research has been subjected to a few criticisms over the years. Three criticism leveled against SER are retained here. This research has been criticized for being a-political, for its theoretical limitations, and thirdly, for the research methodology that it employs.

In a bid to prove that schools make a difference to learners’ educational outcomes, it has neglected to take into account the socio-economic and political context in which schools exist. SER has focused on effective schools, maintaining that there are schools that manage to produce great academic performance, given their inputs and organisational variables, and despite a learner population from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Luyten, Visscher, & Witziers, 2005). For example, Christie & Pottertons’ (1997), research into South African schools highlighted schools that manage to overcome the adversities in their communities and still function well compared to similar neighboring schools which have failed. SER then identifies a set of variables that explain the effectiveness of these schools, irrespective of their limiting resources and poor socio-economic circumstances (Thrupp, 2001).

Yet, learners’ social context and family background have an impact on learners’ academic performance in more than one way (Luyten et al., 2005). In fact, it is

known that, when a school has a high percentage of disadvantaged learners and ethnic minorities, this brings a lower overall academic performance of the learner population (Thrupp, 2001). This has led to “a culture of blame”, where these schools are blamed for failure to meet up to the expected standards (Thrupp, 2001). SER promotes the view that poor schooling alone is one of the main causes of educational failure (Ibid). While schools make a significant difference, they cannot make “all” the difference. They cannot make up for all the societal shortfalls that affect academic performance as these have a bearing on other quality school indicators (Reynold, 1995). Schools exist within communities and are therefore influenced by the social, cultural and economic contexts. These context factors influence the way poor learners are motivated at school, the way they engage with homework and a curriculum that embodies middle class knowledge, the way teachers treat or discriminate against poor learners and all of this should be taken into account. Also, schools can’t compensate for the effects of the social context in which schooling is embedded (Luyten et al., 2005). As Jacob & Ludwig (2009) warn that when market oriented reforms are adopted without changing social policy puts the blame on the teachers for factors that they could not control. Consequently, a large number of teachers will flee to schools with less disadvantaged learners.

Secondly, Luyten et al. (2005: 258) criticize SE researchers for having a poor theoretical base: “With some exceptions, we feel that the theoretical basis for selecting and operationalizing the variables studies in SER is often quite weak, it seldom constitutes an elaborated theory”. SER tries to identify particular school factors associated with academic performance, but there is no substantial explanation of the relationship between these particular variables (Thrupp, 2001). The reliance on common sense to explain the relationship between particular variables limits theoretical development. Furthermore, the extent to which these effectiveness factors can be applied universally is questionable, considering the contextual and cultural differences amongst schools.

Thirdly, SER is also criticized for the heavy reliance on quantitative research methodology (Hopkins & Levin, 2000). This over-reliance on large-scale datasets objectifies teachers and pupils and consequently ignores life experiences and

meanings that they give to the phenomenon as research participants (Thrupp, 2001). The data analysis only goes as far as researchers need to establish the correlation between student achievement and several other variables (Luyten et al., 2005). This often leads to blanket solutions for all schools, ignoring the unique contextual issues (Ibid).

These criticisms levelled against SER will not prevent the use of SER findings in the case studies. However, the lack of consideration to social and economic factors that influence quality schooling will be remembered during the interpretation of the report findings in chapter 5.

## 2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is now important to draw from this literature review a conceptual framework that will be used to inform the research and analyse the empirical findings.

### 2.6.1 Market Choice and Competition

The first theoretical framework is the one about market competition and choice. This theory was advanced by Friedman (1955) under the key assumption that educational efficiency is affected by the development of the market (Bernal, 2005). It says that, when a population is well educated, there is a higher human capital in the country and this increases the production per capita across, or the productivity of people, as well as workers' or employees' incomes and wages which leads to a higher tax contribution to the government (Berger & Fischer 2013). Therefore, it is in the interest of the market to improve the education system. The market will improve education by using market principles (Ibid). The state would have to relax its administrative control of the sector and offer financial support so that schools are autonomous, competitive and there is higher parental choice (Friedman, 1997). The market would cut down the costs of education and parental choice would drive schools to improve their standards so that they are competitive enough to keep the learners (consumers) and stay in operation (Boyd, 2005). This is a neo-liberal argument which will be tested by this study which investigates the extent to which the growing low-fee independent schooling sector leads to the expected improved

quality education, where parents have a bigger choice in the schooling of their children.

### 2.6.2 Quality Education: School Effectiveness and Education For All framework

In examining the question on the quality of schooling, there are lessons drawn from the literature debates and more specifically from the School Effectiveness Research. This research studies how educational resources such as learning environment, resources, leadership, school mission, parental involvement etc. are associated with outcomes. These variables, called correlates of effectiveness, are said to contribute to effective schooling and quality schooling (Cohen et al., 2005). SER also states that schools with some greater educational inputs and organisational factors influence the quality of educational outputs the common understanding of quality education (Ibid). However, criticisms levelled against SER were taken into account, such as SER is a-political, ignores the influence of learners' socio-economic and political background on the process and quality of schooling. Secondly, SER is not based on a strong theoretical basis that provides a logical explanation for the connection between the different variables. Thirdly, SER over-relies on quantitative research method that cannot capture the meanings that research participants attach to the phenomenon of school quality or effectiveness.

Given the criticisms levelled against SER, the EFA framework for quality education is also useful because it incorporates learners' social background (Barret et al., 2006). The framework presented by EFA provides a framework that incorporates social background factors within the schools and understand the effect that this background has on school factors such as teaching and learning, motivation to learn etc. Lastly, the EFA framework is grounded in a humanist approach (this is primarily concerned with educational processes - what happens in the school and in the classroom) which is in direct contrast to the economist approach from which SER emanates (Ibid). Therefore, the SER research and the EFA framework are used in the investigation on the quality of private schooling or the education provided by the two school case studies. The SER critique will be used to interpret or qualify those findings.

# CHAPTER 3
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter discusses the exploratory qualitative research method chosen as well as the selection of a case study design for the research. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on the methods and the three data collection instruments. It further gives a detailed explanation of the research site; the research participants that were selected and the steps followed when analyzing the data. Lastly the chapter gives consideration to validity and reliability as well as ethics.

## 3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH AND CASE STUDY

Exploratory qualitative research using a case study design was found to be the most appropriate approach for this research. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2006), qualitative research relies on the interpretive paradigm that requires the researcher to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon. Hittleman & Simon (1997) adds that qualitative research describes, explores, interprets, assesses and verifies data. In this study, the qualitative research approach assisted the researcher to explore, interpret and analyse the contribution of low-fee independent schooling in terms of access to quality education in Gauteng and the implications of this growing independent school sector on the South African education system. As such, a qualitative approach was

more suitable than a quantitative approach which is concerned with quantity and not meanings given by the main stakeholders (McMillan & Schumacher (2010).

Exploratory qualitative research approach allows the researcher "the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" to interpret the social phenomena using the meanings that the people that are part of the phenomena attach to it (Merriam, 1998:6). Thus, qualitative research is associated with the interpretive paradigm because the researcher must unpack and make sense of certain actions and behaviors in a particular setting from the participant's point of view (Creswell, 2007).

Punch (2009) explains that in this case the researcher attempts to capture the natural context in which the phenomenon occurs. The case studies in this research were two low-fee private schools. The fact that it is a case study means that value is not placed on the number of people that were interviewed but rather an in-depth analysis of the phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It would not have been possible to accomplish this with a quantitative approach because it is focused on quantity and often uses statistical data. Case studies are unique from other types of research because they are thorough descriptions and analysis of a single unit or (in the case of this study) a bounded system of multiple case studies in its natural setting (Punch, 2009; Merriam, 1998). A bounded unit system allows the researcher to set boundaries around what will be studied (Merriam, 1998).

This study used the bounded system to limit the unit of analysis to just two low-fee private schools. If the study was not bounded then all the private schools in Gauteng would have been used as case studies, which is not feasible. Merriam (1998) recommends that researchers can use multiple case studies that are contrasting in nature to have a variety across cases. This makes the interpretation more compelling and strengthens the external validity of the study.

Exploratory qualitative method seeks to examine and gain insight on a phenomenon. It helps the researcher 'to discover themes of participant's meanings' (Merriam, 1998). Researchers interpret the social phenomena, using the meanings that the

people that are part of the phenomena attach to it (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In simple terms, the research seeks to understand the phenomena from various participants' point of view. The researcher discussed the themes that stemmed from words and meanings that formed the data to report the findings. This is appropriate to the topic of the research study because its attempts to understand the contribution of the low-fee private school sector in terms of access to quality education and the implications of this growing private school sector in South Africa for quality education

### 3.3 RESEARCH SITES

The research was based in Johannesburg, Gauteng. The two schools (their staff and their directors) that were used as case studies were located in a north east suburb of Johannesburg, a neighborhood not too far from Alexandra Township, one of the oldest and most populated townships and from Sandton, one of the most affluent areas in Johannesburg. Schools in this area attract learners from vastly different socio-economic background.

The Gauteng province has the largest number of private schools in the country and hosts the leading research institutions that have been heavily invested in studying the sector over the past two decades and the biggest private schooling associations in the country. Gauteng is the socio-economic hub of the country, attracting migrants from the rural provinces and other African countries that increase the demand for schooling in the province (Hofmeyr, 2014). It was also of great convenience that the research site was easily accessible to the researcher, allowing her to go back to the sites to verify data as necessary.

### 3.4 SAMPLING

Punch (2009:162) maintains that sampling is very important to qualitative research because "we cannot study everything even about a single case". Therefore, research sampling has been determined using non-probability sampling because it allows the researcher to select subjects that have particular characteristics that are relevant for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The particular type of nonprobability sampling that has informed the choice of research participants is purposeful sampling. This gives the researcher the autonomy to use their knowledge about the

topic to make judgement about the subjects that would provide information that is necessary to answer the research question and fulfil the purpose of the study (Cresswell, 2008). Purposeful sampling allows for the researcher to locate the case studies that will help the researcher understand the phenomena's being studied (Ibid). The purposeful sampling was done by unique case which allows for the researcher to look for unusual elements in the schools (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In order to gain an indepth and diverse and holistic understanding of the complex nature of the contribution of low-fee private schools to access to quality education and the implications of the growth of the sector the study had three sample categories.

The study first selected three experts. There were two key researchers from two research centers that have studied the development of the private schooling sector over the past two decades: the one, an ardent advocate in support of the private schooling sector and the other one, a zealous critic of most aspects of the sector; as well as the third expert being the executive director of one of the biggest private schooling associations in South Africa.

It then selected two low-fee private schools in the same area, one in the non-profit category and the other one in the for-profit category. In relation to the two low-fee private schools, it is worth mentioning that there are many schools in the low-fee category in Gauteng. The two schools selected provided for interesting case studies because they represent two main categories of low-fee private schools in South Africa. The first school is a for-profit school and part of a growing chain of low-fee private schools and the second school is a non-profit and receive a subsidy from the government. This allows for some generalizability in patterns to be drawn from the study about the sector. The researcher purposefully selected two schools in the same area as they have access to the same group of learners and exist within a similar context. This will allow the researcher to examine similar themes in two different schools that exist in the same context.

In the two schools, the school principal and two teachers of low-fee private schools in the two distinct categories in the sector were selected. The first school is a for-

profit low-fee private school that is part of a chain of private schools, while the second school is a non-profit low-fee private school. In addition, two directors, one of a for-profit private chain of schools and the other from a non-profit chain, were included as well.

Thus, in all, twelve participants were selected as part of the sample.

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Three data collection instruments were chosen and used to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and ensure validity of the data collected: semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations

#### 3.5.1 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected subjects to collect the data, which allowed the researcher to ask questions that emanated during the course of the interview. This ensured that the research developed from various participants an understanding of the phenomenon and not prior information. These were elite interviews to gain in-depth data. Elite interviews are a suitable instrument for this research project because it allowed the researcher to focus on the people that are well informed about the schools and the sector (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

These elite participants include researchers or experts, in favour or against low-fee private schools in South Africa, as well as key stakeholders of two-low-fee private schools such as the director of the group of these two schools as well as the principal and two teachers from each school. In-depth interviews allow for open responses to questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This enables the researcher to collect data regarding various participants with different meanings of the phenomenon. The semi-structured interview schedule enabled the researcher to guide the conversation and ensure that key themes that have emerged from the literature were touched upon (see Appendix A for the experts' interview schedule; Appendix B for directors' interview schedule; Appendix C for school principals' interview schedule and Appendix D for teachers' interview schedule.

All the interviews were face- to- face, with the exception of two telephonic interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for spontaneity and probing questions to gain deeper insight and avoid misconceptions (Cresswell, 2008). Semi-structured, face-to face interviews in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to ask for clarity and elaboration with open-ended questions. This was to ensure that participants were not constrained by the researcher's perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Face to face interviews allowed the researcher to read into participants reactions and feelings as well. This uncovered hidden meanings and gave insight into participants understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher was able to go back to the school for follow up questions after assessing the data. However, school directors and experts were not available for follow up face-to face interviews but availed themselves to answer further questions via email. Due to distance and ill health, two interviews were made telephonically. At the time of the interview Expert 1, was unfortunately injured and could not meet for a face to face interview. Director 2 is based in Cape Town and therefore a telephonic interview was the most cost efficient method. Cresswell (2012) explains that a telephonic interview is useful when "participants in a study may be geographically dispersed and unable to come to a central location for an interview".

The following themes: regulation; school models; opportunities and drawbacks; subsidies and key drivers of the sector, were used to guide the interviews with the experts. The interview questions for the school directors were grouped according the following themes: quality schooling, school model, push and pull factors towards the private sector. The research questions for the school personnel were structured according to the themes that were influenced by the school effectiveness findings: school inputs; teacher quality, school communities and parents' involvement.

### 3.5.2 Document Analysis

Documentary analysis was used as the second data collection instrument. "In conjunction with other data, documents can be important for triangulation, where an inter-sectioning set of different methods and data types is used in a single project" (Punch, 2009:159). The researcher collected artifacts used for internal

communication and external communication. Artifacts used for external communication included: brochures, pamphlets from the two schools and quarterly magazines and journal publications from the respective research institutions. Artifacts used for internal communication included the schools creed and lesson plans for extra curricula activities. Internal documents of this nature revealed the values and ethos of the organizations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Although artifacts are not designed to meet the research objectives as is the case with interviews and observations, they nonetheless provide useful insight about people's experiences, actions and values (Merriam, 2001).

### 3.5.3 Observations

Observation restricted to the physical setting in schools was another useful data collection instrument. The main focus of the observations was to record descriptive details about the school environment where learning and teaching takes place. Observations gave great insight into safety measures, resources and the overall setting. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), researchers do not record everything in the field but may selectively choose to focus on some contextual features which were the case with this study. An audio recorder was used during a brief tour to capture observations and as well as a field notebook.

## 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is defined as an "Inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 364). The study therefore adopted an inductive content analysis method of analysis. Inductive content and narrative analysis allows the researcher to categorize and interpret the data so as to adequately explain a phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) which in this case is to understand the contribution of the low-fee private schooling towards quality education and the implications of a growing sector in Gauteng.

The first step was to transcribe the audio-recorded interviews into word documents. As soon as all twelve interviews were transcribed, the researcher listened to each interview for the second time while reading the transcriptions. This was primarily done to ensure reliability and for the researcher to familiarizes herself with the data.

When the researcher was satisfied with the quality of the transcripts, she read through them again with a highlighter and a pencil to generate codes and also note ideas emanating from the process. McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:368) recommend that the researcher should "compare codes for duplication and overlapping descriptions". As such the researcher grouped the codes that had similar notions and dissolved them into themes. These themes are used to discuss findings in chapter 4.

**Experts' sample: Codes and Themes**

| **CODES** | **THEMES** |
|---|---|
| Innovation | Arguments in favour of privatization of education |
| Teacher training | |
| Middle class | |
| **CODES** | **THEMES** |
| Choice | Arguments in favour of privatization of education |
| Middle-class | Arguments against privatization of education |
| Commodity | |
| Profit | |
| Against Free education | |
| Reduce State responsibility | |
| Human Right | |
| Inputs | Quality education and Quality assurance |
| Fly-by night | |
| SACE | |
| Registration | Accreditation |
| Costs | |
| Quality assurance | |
| Umalusi | |
| Push factors | Development of sector |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pull factors | |
| Access | |
| Demand | |
| Choice | |
| Faith-based | |

**Directors' sample: Codes and Themes**

| **CODES** | **THEMES** |
|---|---|
| Quality deficit | Motivation to starts schools |
| Population growth | |
| Community | |
| Inequality | |
| **CODES** | **THEMES** |
| Former model-c | Quality Education |
| Interpersonal skills | |
| Soft skills | |
| Resources | |
| | |
| Sustainability | Financial model and fee structure |
| Shareholders | |
| Costs | |
| Profit | |
| Low-income | |
| Investment | |
| Partnership | Suggestions for public –private partnership |
| Model | |
| Funding | |

**School-based sample: Codes and Themes**

| CODES | THEMES |
|---|---|
| Racial Composition | School and Learners' profile |
| Economic class | |
| Residential area | |
| Instructional leader | Leadership |
| Principal | |
| Culture | Ethos |
| Religion | |
| Assembly | |
| Values | |
| Motto | |
| **CODES** | **THEMES** |
| Intervention Class | Ethos |
| Library | |
| Computer Lab | Resources |
| Low-cost teaching & learning materials | |
| Facilities | |
| Intervention Class | |
| Development programme | |
| Motivation | Teachers Motivation and Development |
| Team work | |
| Salary | |
| Training | |
| Assessment | Assessment and outcomes |
| Results | |
| Bullying | |
| Discipline | Behavior |
| Homework | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Parental involvement | School Community |
| SGB | |

### 3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In a qualitative case study, validity "refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009:330). This ensures that the researcher is indeed testing what she sets out to test. Reliability has to do with "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam, 2001:206). Research findings are interpreted by a researcher with personal views and political history that shapes the researcher's interpretations. Researcher's interpretations should therefore correspond with the participants' interpreted reality, which is the phenomenon as experienced and perceived by the participants (Merriam, 2001). What the researcher has captured should agree with the meanings that the participants attach to the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Validity and reliability were enhanced through low-inference descriptors and triangulation. Low-inference descriptors were used to ensure that the descriptions used in the reports are as the participants described, using the terms that they used to avoid the use of the researchers' terminology. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed to ensure that data was correctly captured. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods to collect data about the same phenomenon to ensure validity and reliability (Creswell, 2008). Triangulation is a useful tool to ensure validity because the researchers can cross-check the different set of data against one another to ensure validity. The researcher was careful not to forward the interview schedule before the interview. This was to ensure that research participants remain objective and answer questions honestly. While it is not possible for the researcher to remain completely objective, it was important for the researcher that the probing questions are for the purpose of clarity on what the respondent has said and not gearing the participant to answer the question in a manner that confirms the researcher's views. This is to ensure that the researcher remains as objective as possible.

## 3.8 ETHICS

According to Creswell (2008:22), “all educational researchers need to be aware of and anticipate ethical issues in their research”. Research ethics are concerned with researchers observing morally correct procedure and conduct when interacting with research participants and data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). It is important that research participants’ rights are respected through ought the duration of the study.

This research was endorsed by the Wits Ethics committee and Research Protocol number: 2015ECE033M was granted. The research exclusively focused on private schools and it was therefore not necessary to get authorization from the Gauteng Department of education which is a requirement when research of this nature is conducted in public schools. Each of the three interview schedules had an information sheet which gave brief background into the study and its purpose and informed the participant that they had the right to withdraw from the study anytime during the study; they could refrain from answering any question they are uncomfortable with; participants’ identity would be kept anonymous; data will only be used for academic purposes and would be destroyed after 3 to 5 years. In the case of the telephonic interviews, the researcher emailed the consent form to the participants, days prior to the interview and they read through it, signed it and emailed it back to the researcher before the interview started.

It is important for the research participants to understand the purpose of the study prior to the actual interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). This is to safeguard against deception. An information sheet outlining the purpose of the research was sent to participants asking for their involvement in the study. Furthermore, a consent form authoring the researcher to audiotape and transcribe the interview and gain access to documents that contain the school’s policy and or were published by the particular institutions (such as quarterly magazines) was also attached to the interview schedule. Before each interview, research participants were asked to read through the consent form and ask any general questions about the research before they signed it (see Appendix E for the experts ‘information sheet and consent form; Appendix F for directors’ information sheet and consent form and Appendix G for school principals’ information sheet and consent form and Appendix H for teacher’s

information sheet and consent form). “Informed consent implies that the subjects have a choice about whether to participate” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009:118).

## 3.9 LIMITATIONS

There were some strengths and limitations with the design of the study and also with the manner in which it was carried out.

### 3.9.1 Strengths of the Study

The data collection instruments and data analysis were valuable and appropriate tools to gather data and also interpret it. Even though the extent to which the data can be generalised is limited, the study nonetheless provides great insight into low-fee private schooling in Bramley. The time-frame allocated for the study enabled the researcher to find new participants in time to gather the relevant data. Private schools may use the findings of this research to look at areas that need improvement in the quality of education that they deliver and ways to deliver it.

### 3.9.2 Limitations in the Design of the Study

Considering that it is a case study of two schools only, aspects of the study are limited to the context and the unique characteristics of the schools and therefore the findings are not generalizable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The study took place in a north east suburb of Johannesburg and the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence schooling in the area are different from those found in other provinces. For example, the migration into Gauteng and the demand for education are far greater in Gauteng than it is in other provinces. This implies that there are aspects of the findings that cannot be generalized and used in understanding the entire sector.

### 3.9.3 Limitations in the Execution of the Study

It is important to acknowledge some of the limitations with the execution of the study. The first limitation was with regards to the two case studies. The two chains of independent schools initially selected as case studies could not participate in the study because of corporate restrictions. One of the chains was not upfront with the researcher and instead sent her from one office to the other which was time

consuming. She therefore had to re-select schools for the case study. It was quite challenging to re-select the schools because there are a limited number of independent school chains in the non-profit category in Gauteng. One of the directors was not based in Gauteng and another participant had health restrictions which meant that telephonic interviews had to be arranged. Though telephonic interviews are a recognized alternative for people that are not in the same geographic space, they restrict contact and communication between the researcher and participants which may limit the researchers understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008).

## 3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter explained that the research was designed to study and test the claims made about the quality of education produced by low-fee private schools and the implications for equity in the South African context. This chapter justified the use of the exploratory qualitative research using a case study design. Moreover, the chapter gave extensive explanation on the research site, sampling, the three instruments used for data collection and data analysis. Lastly, it acknowledged possible limitations and issues ascribed to validity and reliability.

# CHAPTER 4
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings. The presentation will be categorised according to the themes that emerged from the data analysis process in the previous chapter. The first section looks at the findings from interviews with three experts studying the private school sector. The experts interviewed discussed privatisation as an approach to education, the different forms it can take, the role of the government versus the evolution of the private sector in South African schooling. The section that follows is a presentation of the findings from data collected from three founding directors of three independent school chains. They give insight into the concept of independent school chains in South Africa and the different models they have built and why. Lastly, findings from interviews and observations of the two schools as case studies are laid out. This provides an understanding into the nature and challenges of private education and the running of low-fee private schools.

## 4.2 FINDINGS FROM THE THREE EXPERTS

### 4.2.1 Sample Description

The sample consists of three experts studying the independent school sector in South Africa. The two experts occupy executive positions in leading research institutions and the third heads one of the biggest independent schooling association in Southern Africa. The experts are in a valuable position to discuss key arguments for and against privatisation of education and debate key issues relating to the evolution of the entire private sector. The participants' profiles are presented below.

Expert 1 is a strong advocate of low-fee private schooling. She is amongst one of the leading researchers on low-fee independent schools. She has worked as an executive in one of the leading neo-liberal think tanks that has published and advocated for the support of the private sector over the past decade and was an executive at one of the biggest independent schooling associations in Southern

Africa. She has great insight on the development of the sector in South Africa and other developing countries.

Expert 2 is the executive director of the biggest independent schooling association in Southern Africa. He has great insight in the different models of schools in South Africa and the legislation that governs the sector.

Expert 3 is a strong critic and activist against the privatisation of education and the promotion of low-fee independent schools. He has gone to great lengths to develop some strong arguments against privatisation of education in South Africa. He has authored and co-authored several publications with international scholars and activists on the subject. He has great insight on the local and international movement against school privatisation.

The three experts provide an engaging discussion on privatisation and the evolution of the private sector in South Africa. This discussion into key issues provides a good background to understand the issues that are discussed in the two sections that follow later.

### 4.2.2 Arguments For and Against Privatisation of Education

This section begins with a presentation of arguments for the private sector by expert 1 and 2 as well as arguments against the sector by expert 3. This was the order that the arguments were presented in chapter 2.

**In support of the private sector**

Expert 1 argues that independent schooling does not stop the state from fulfilling its constitutional obligation to provide basic education for all because the constitutional court states that, whether the child is in a public or private school, that right should be fulfilled. The argument that independent schools are taking away the middle class from public schools and there will no longer be middle class power left in public schools for them to protest and bargain does not stand. The middle-class has not protested about anything over the past twenty years in South Africa. If anything, it is the poor, populist social movements, unemployed, out of work people in

disadvantaged communities who take to the streets in protest and not the middle class. Furthermore, the problem is not with private schools but rather with the failures in public schools that are driving people away to private schools. If there were enough good public schools to accommodate the middle class, this situation would not exist. Expert 1 adds that:

> *But you have to ask how change is actually occurring, as opposed to the old fashioned argument which applies to maybe developed countries where there aren't such huge levels of poverty and unemployment.*

State financial support through subsidy to private schools is a debatable point but it's arguable that such schools are providing access to quality education and saving the state a lot of money. They only cost less than one percent of most provincial budgets and therefore it is unreasonable to say that they are depleting resources that should be used for public education. However, Expert 1 argues that the 60 % subsidy that private schools receive is inadequate. The 60 % rate was determined by calculating the amount that Kwazulu Natal (hereafter KZN) province spends per pupil. KZN was used because out of all the nine provinces it had the lowest amount spent per pupil because the large majority of the teachers were unqualified and they receive lower salaries which drastically reduced the provinces cost for education compared to all the other provinces. KZN's per pupil expenditure has equalised across all provinces since 1994 and therefore that model is irrelevant.

> *So that is an okay sort of ancient method, it's not based on logic, it's not based on means, it is not based on contribution so it must go up because it actually all hinges around that educational model. It should go up.*

Expert 2 is also in support of state subsidies

> *I am very much for the subsidies that are being given out to the schools*. *South Africa is unique in the sense that our educational framework puts money where it is needed in the system, and they are getting value for money for that*.

If a school charges fees that are twice what the state spends per pupil and is a non-profit organisation it is eligible for state funding. Only 30% of ISASA members are

eligible for a subsidy while, with the other 70%, their parents not only pay taxes but they fully fund their children's schools, so this is a hybrid system. Expert 2 said that:

> *But when we look at the last Constitutional judgement in the constitutional court the court itself said that subsidies are actually a cost-saving to the state.*

It is in the state's interest to provide subsidies, according to him, rather than build new schools and pay for their maintenance and human capital. Subsidies also provide an automatic quality assurance because for a school to qualify for a subsidy their standard must be of the same or better quality as a comparable public school. Furthermore, the current system is adequate because instead of money following the learner it follows the school. Expert 2 argues:

> *I support our present system I don't think that it is broken, I think that it is simply, It needs, maybe oil, it needs servicing but does not need a new car.*

Additionally, most high fee paying private schools open up their schools to poor learners for Saturday classes and other academically enriching activities. This is a very unique model and contribution to the schooling sector as a whole. He argues that:

> *So it's not as if we are islands of privilege and blind to poverty we don't do charity in our schools, in the sense that we open up our own schools and our own infrastructure we don't send our kids to go and do nice things and here is only for you.*

However, expert 1 had this to say about the 'for-profit' private schools.

> *The for-profit exists and I don't think they should necessarily get state support; I don't think that.*

The private school sector, according to her, allows for creativity and innovation because these schools can decide to make changes in the way they approach something, restructure the curriculum, and use blended learning. This is far more difficult to do in the state system. The public system is able to use and replicate these innovations because they are dealing with a similar learner population and

therefore what works in low-fee private schools is most likely to be applicable in the public system.

Lastly, she refutes claims that private schooling is depleting the state's pool of trained and qualified teachers as most private schools rely heavily on Zimbabwean teachers and they train their own teachers through UNISA.

> *There are a lot of Zimbabwean teachers teaching in low-fee independent school, even though the salaries are lower and everybody mistakenly thinks that all salaries in independent schools are higher they are most certainly not*.

**Against private schools**

Expert 3 argues that education is above all a human right and privatisation turns it into a commodity to be sold and bought. It is in line with a market economy which limits the state's responsibility in delivering education. 'For-profit' private education is based on the amount of money that a parent can afford to pay. The majority of parents in South Africa cannot afford to pay even the low-fee of public schools from quintiles 4 or 5, which is set between R12, 000 and R30, 000. Many of the schools that charge below R12, 000 are fly-by-night institutions that should be guarded against. Privatisation of education (for-profit schools) is a growth industry, whose main priority is making profit and this is not right.

> *So if you look at Advetech or at the Curro schools which talk about low-fee schools, it's about their profit margins. When you read the business newspapers or the business programmes, the electronic media, you see how their shares are doing well.*

It is the government's responsibility to ensure that all its citizens, including those who do not have money and the unemployed, have access to quality education. Education should be free, particularly primary education and secondary education as well. By shifting its responsibility to the private sector, government is failing to fulfil the preamble of the constitution (section 29) about the right of all its citizens to neither basic education nor the clause on education in the freedom charter.

> *I think it's a human right and a human right means that you should not profit from the education of your citizens*.

Expert 3 also argues that privatisation of the education sector will exacerbate problems around social cohesiveness.

> *It's about building a common nation but if this can be done with private education why can't it be done with public education.*

Expert 3 further argues that the sector is not homogenous as non-profit private schools exist alongside for-profit private schools. There are non-profit schools that exist because there is a need and these are not motivated by making money. For example, the Albert Street School (a non-profit low-fee private school, founded during the 2008 xenophobia attacks to educate non-nationals and undocumented children) fulfils a very important role ensuring that non-South African children received an education during the xenophobia attacks. The government should have supported it and further its mission. He adds that:

> *That doesn't mean that I think that one should be hostile to them in the same way one should be hostile to those who are trying to make money out of education*

If the government was providing adequate quality in public schools, there would be no need to discuss state subsidies to private schools. The most pressing issue is to fix public schools. Subsidizing private schools, particularly 'for-profit' private schools, means that resources are taken away that could be used to fix public schools. The problem with public schools is far bigger than just throwing money at the problem.

> *What I think is even more ominous and it is how actually the pension fund of civil servants are used and invested to support the for-profit sector. They need to put their resources, their thinking to fix public schools.*

### 4.2.3 Quality Education and Quality Assurance

This section looks at the three experts' perceptions on quality education and the conditions necessary for quality education and quality assurance in South Africa.

Expert 3 holds that the variables characterising private schooling as distinct from the public schools, such as small classroom numbers, small learner/teacher ratios and teachers who are properly trained and committed are all conditions that ensure quality education. These conditions should be for all learners and not only for those privileged enough to attend private schools. He also cautions that many (though not all) low-fee private schools that charge less that R 12000 are fly-by-night and not quality schools. These schools have unqualified teachers and sometimes the schools are closed and their managers run away with the money.

> *There are some people who are committed who charge very little, but by and large they are fly-by -night operations you can't talk about them being quality schools.*

Expert 2 agrees with this point and argues that there is a widely held misconception by the public that private schools offer better quality education compared to public schools. This view is uniformed, false and promoted by the media which has its own agenda. The fact that a school is private does not necessarily mean that it provides quality education. South Africa has a number of very good public schools that offer exceptional quality education. The private school sector is far more complex than simply labelling everything that is private as 'good' and everything that is public 'bad".

> *Yes, more resources contribute to improving quality…. But it is not a necessity in order for you to have quality education because I know of certain schools that are high fee with lots of resources but I would not define them as quality institutions. Yet, there are low-fee schools that I would say are quality institutions and I think that it is really fascinating that, at one of our last conference, one of our principals stood and I asked her what distinguishes your school and she replied that they are confident, articulate, and neat and they have aspirations to improve their lives and they are exemplary citizens in their communities that are what I would define as a quality school.*

This re-enforces his beliefs about what quality education is and should be about:

> *It is a very broad definition but ultimately, to be productive does require that you meet a minimum numeracy and literacy rate or you've got a high level of*

*numeracy and literacy rate to be able for you to be an active engaged citizen that can manipulate, encourage, give employment and create greater employment.*

The association that he leads has set its compliance requirements to ensure that schools meet the constitutional standards. Schools are required to be registered with all the relevant authorities and all teachers must be registered with SACE. However, he does acknowledge that, in the sector in general, there are some illegal schools whose standards are below constitutional requirements.

*Regrettably there are many fly-by-night schools that also as I have said do not meet this constitutional standard but fall below it.*

Expert 1 argues that, although there are unregistered schools in Gauteng, there are very few in number compared to other developing countries. The types of low-fee private schools that exist in other developing countries would not be allowed to open in South Africa because the South African population and law set higher standards.

*There has been a forensic audit . . .of all the 240 something schools in Gauteng they found only 14 which had some problems of which only 4 or so were really problematic and they spent millions huge schools were put through nightmarish, to what effect, it was a complete overreaction but then the whole sector gets punished.*

### 4.2.4 Accreditation and Quality Assurance

Umalusi, the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, has been appointed on the basis of Section 24 of the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008. This council ensures that independent educational institutions, such as private schools, are providing quality education by meeting a set of requirements. Experts 1 and 2 believe that the private school sector in South Africa is highly, and to some extent unfairly, regulated.

According to Expert 1, there are three problems. Firstly, the accreditation body does not recognise the evident excellence of quality-assured independent schools. Umalusi does not focus on schools that are not aligned to a union and should in fact

give accreditation to these schools that are aligned because they have the policies required by Umalusi. Schools that are aligned to a union have complied with Umalusi requirements and are quality-assured to some extent because the unions demand similar standards that Umalusi demands for membership.

> *Why is Umalusi not focusing on those schools that are not aligned first and maybe giving accreditation to those schools that are aligned, you are accredited until proven inadequate.*

Expert 1 argues that accreditation imposes a great financial burden and administrative burden on low-fee private schools. This is due to the high requirements that private schools must meet, such as fire hazards, electricity hazards and wheelchair ramps. Thirdly, schools must get provisionally registered with Umalusi before they are fully registered with the department of education. Lastly, the registration process is quite lengthy as schools must submit the application form with the necessary documentation to the district office by the 31 of August the year before the next school year commences.

> *Those registration conditions are becoming more and more stringent every year and Umalusi are absolutely ridiculously over the top, I mean there is the fire certificate and these electricity things I mean the costs are really quiet frightening.*

Expert 3 dismisses claims that the sector is over-regulated in South Africa and argues that, though government is trying to regulate the sector, it is not enough. They shouldn't just tighten up regulations but they should also provide public alternatives for those children.

> *It is the same thing they say about the unions; they say the labour market is highly regulated we need more flexibility. This is what people say all over. In other words, it's that kind of language that disguises the fact that they are trying to say that we need cheaper labour; we need people who should not be protected as much as they are by worker legislation. We need to be flexible. It is the language of business people not of educators.*

### 4.2.5 Development of the Private Schooling Sector in Post-Apartheid South Africa

This section will therefore explain the push factors as identified by the three experts. Expert 1 explains that:

> *You've got to distinguish between the pull and the push factors. There are definitely factors pushing parents away from public schools, most often because there is no public school like in informal settlement or some of the areas where there has been more rapid population growth take the northwest of Joburg.*

**Factors pushing parents away from public schools**

Expert 2 explains that sometimes the state is not able to keep up with the growing demand for schooling and private schools help to fill that gap. Expert 3 explains that Edupreneurs have established schools in areas where there are no state schools or where it's too far for the students to travel to public schools. Expert 1 concurs that independent schools have thrived in areas where there are no public schools, like in informal settlements and areas where there has been more rapid population growth.

> *Take the northwest of Joburg, take the Midrand area here, and take the west-coast of Cape Town, it takes years before the state builds public schools. So if you put that together you have the push factors, because there is nothing.*

In Gauteng and the Western Cape, there is also a huge excess of learners coming annually that were not accounted for or planned for in public schools. Gauteng and Western Cape are also popular destinations for migrants from other African countries and rural provinces. Expert 1 claims that every year, the Gauteng province has 20,000 more pupils than planned for coming into the province. Independent schools therefore play a huge role in filling this gap. Expert 2 explains that.

> *It is also the difficulty that the influx of people comes in such numbers that the state is not able to keep up in terms of meeting up demand by putting up new infrastructure for schools.*

The quality deficit in public schools is another push factor that has encouraged the growth of the low-fee independent school sector in South Africa. Expert 1 agrees that quality deficit is another push factor.

> *The other push factor is the quality of the schools, at the beginning it would be that if you don't have any good state schools in the area that they can access.*

Expert 1 and 3 noted that there are deep failings in the public education system and, as a result, parents look to independent schools for quality education. According to Expert 3, the blame rests squarely on the state:

> *The majority of our kids go to pre-primary schools which are just not doing anything stimulating, the edu-care teachers are not properly trained or remunerated from that level. In our public schools the vast majority of our schools don't have libraries, it's not taken seriously, and the people in those libraries are not proper librarians.*

Expert1 further adds that there are also issues of poverty and inequality that affect teaching and learning in public schools. A large number of learners in public schools have problems at home such as overcrowding, child abuse and hunger, all of that affects schooling.

Expert 2 asserts that there are good public schools and it is problematic to simply say that public schools have poor quality schooling. However, Expert 1 explains that a lot of the good public schools are former Model-C schools which are inaccessible to the lower-middle class who do not live where the schools are located.

> *The black elite goes to the high fee schools they can afford; the lower-middle class often don't live in the areas where there is former model–C schools. So they can't get to them the only option left is the low-fee independent schools.*

Expert 3 argues that white flight from public schools due to racism should not be dismissed. The people that run the biggest independent school enterprises, the people with economic power are white people. As a result, there could be a silent prejudice that public education is failing because the decision makers are black people.

*There is a really deep ingrained racism and prejudice and because it's a black majority democratic, I have serious problem with this, ask anybody.*

**Factors pulling parents to Private schools**

Expert 1 and 2 reveal that parents are pulled towards private schools because they offer alternative models of education and diversity. Private schools in South Africa offer schools that offer different philosophies and models of schooling. Private schools are not only diverse in terms of ethos but in size as well, allowing parents to exercise their right to parental choice. Expert 1 is adamant that parents are particularly attracted to independent schooling because, for example, they want faith-based education, which is not an option in public schools. She re-counts that the large majority of schools are Christian and then there are Muslim schools;

*Public schools are faith neutral or multi-faith, state schools are not allowed to be devotedly Christian or Muslim or whatever now many parents, a huge number. I mean amongst independent schools at one stage, many years ago, the vast majority, 43% I think were faith based . . . the parents don't mind which religion it is because they say it's the value system, the ethos, the values, it's the discipline, the work ethic they want.*

Expert 2 added that:

*I know that for me as a parent my faith is important to me and I know that I want my child to grow up in that particular school that will re-enforce values that I hold at home.*

Parents want the value system, the ethos, values, discipline and work ethic found in faith based schools. It is important for parents to have schools that re-enforce values that they uphold at home. A lot of low-fee independent schools are faith based. Black communities are said to be increasingly interested in the Montessori approach in early and pre-school phase.

Expert 2 adds that it is important to low-fee independent schools that offer diversity and alternative models because firstly there is a myriad of ways of arriving at an

outcome. Secondly, this ensures that everyone irrespective of class can make a positive choice for their child.

*Choice should not be the preserver of the rich.*

Expert 1 and 2 add that “Edupreneurs” were encouraged to establish low-fee independent schools because the post-apartheid legislation was in favour of them.

It is important to understand that education is a basic human right that all citizens should have access to. However, it is not fair to shift the responsibility to the state. By providing subsidies the state is playing its role by ensuring that everyone in public and private school have access to basic education and the state can continue to regulate it. Although the accreditation requirements set by Umalusi for independent schools appears to be unfair and implausible, the low-number of unregistered independent schools is perhaps a testament that they are necessary and effective. It is concerning though that poor quality education in public schools is one of the factors pushing parents away from public schools to private schools because all learners should have access to quality education irrespective of whether they are in a public or private school.

## 4.3 FINDINGS FROM THE DIRECTORS OF TWO LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOL CHAINS

### 4.3.1 Sample Description

This sample consists of three founding directors who established and run private school chains. Below is a brief description of each director and the role they played in the establishment of each model.

Director 1 is the Chief Executive officer of the oldest and biggest chain of low to mid-fee independent schools in South Africa. In 2015, the company had 42 schools with about 36,000 learners. The schools are for-profit and are listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. As the founder of the company he engineered the business plan and stirred it up to the point where the company was listed on Johannesburg Stock Exchange. His adds that:

*I constructed the first school myself and from there I concluded the property model and I always had the education model because I had a doctorate in education.*

Director 2 is a founding director and chief executive officer of a for–profit chain of independent schools, with eight schools currently in operation. In fulfilment of a Masters of Business Administration degree, she conducted a study on a sustainable financial model for low-fee private schools in South Africa. She is also responsible for the business development of the chain.

Director 3 is a founding director and Operations manager of a chain of low-fee non-profit school in a township, East of Johannesburg. At the time of the interview, there was only one campus running but the company had plans to replicate and expand the model to other areas. The director grew up in the community where the first school was piloted and as such was able to get buy in from key stakeholders in the community to register and start the school.

### 4.3.2 Motivation for Starting Schools

Director 1 was motivated by the norms and standards set by former model C schools, the post-apartheid governments support for independent schooling and the new demographics. He had just completed his doctorate answering the question what makes the school best practice and therefore felt that he had sufficient knowledge. The founders also saw an opportunity and a gap in the market with the rapidly growing population and constructed schools in areas that did not have public schools. The school boasts of being pioneers in affordable independent schooling as the first company to run a chain of mid to low-fee private schools.

*You see, in 1998/1997 the government, the ANC allowed private schools to be established and they protected the private schools by means of article 29 of the constitution and at that stage I completed my doctorate and I developed 80 indicators of success in other words, answering the question: what makes the school best practice, so I thought I had the knowledge and the government actually protected the person if you want to open a private school.*

Director 2 was inspired to start a chain of independent schools because the price of elite private schools makes them inaccessible. She also observed the quality deficit in schools in South Africa coupled with a broken education system. They wanted to break the barrier of inaccessibility to quality education. In establishing the chain of schools, the idea was to find a model that will provide high quality education at an affordable cost. They therefore decided to have the first blended learning model in South Africa.

> *We wanted a model that was a blue print for the rest of South Africa to learn, a solution for the country and so the blended learning model is innovation.*

Director 3 runs a chain of low-fee independent schools in a township. The respondent grew up in the community and experienced first-hand the schooling challenges. She was the only one in her group of friends that went to university. She used her university vacation to help her friends re-write matric and ran a holiday school programme for matriculants in her previous high school. When she got to university, she realised that the public schooling education system in townships does not prepare pupils for university. She also noted the vast inequalities and disparities in the public schooling sector. She is driven by the firm conviction that the challenges in our communities will only get fixed by "us", those who live there. The vision was to change education systematically and push for schools that cater to low-income families. The motivation to start the school really steams from her personal experiences with poor public education in the township.

> *I love my friends and I love my community, I was raised by my community and if people could help me go to school and that is how I make decisions… I grew up here and I think that the problems in our community are only going to get fixed by us.*

### 4.3.3 Notions of Quality Schooling and Quality Education

When asked to define good quality education, Director 1 listed five factors that are essential to provide good quality education. First, he highlighted the importance of a good curriculum. Secondly, a school that seeks to provide good quality education ought to have good teachers that are equally qualified and passionate about the

profession. Thirdly, there ought to be discipline in the school. Furthermore, a school should have ethos and enjoy effective partnerships with parents and different stakeholders in society. Lastly, in providing good quality education a school ought to have good facilities such as well-equipped laboratories and sports grounds to ensure that learners remain competitive. The company has a teacher's college where their teachers are trained and receive further development to ensure that they are equally qualified.

Director 2 holds that quality education includes the development of both hard skills and soft skills. It is about the learners' inter-personal skills, learning how to interact with others, having a sense of who they are and how to navigate around their space. She explains that it is not just about having academically competent individuals but it is also about creating great responsible citizens with strong character, great demeanour and a sense of awareness. The school does not screen any other children to assess their abilities because they believe that all children, irrespective of their background have the ability to achieve international standards.

> *Quality education is preparing our children for the future and not just hard skills but actually soft skills that count to development which is critical to adapting to the new environment.*

Director 3 concurs with this idea of what quality education means. She believes that the youth is not hopeless, they just need opportunities. The school has a strong focus on the learners' interpersonal development, their independent thinking skills, articulation, communication skills and problem solving approach to education. They develop learners holistically. Learners at the school participate actively in competitions that develop their academic abilities such as spelling competitions and also do a wide range of extra-mural activities such as threat and playing classical musical instruments. A huge number of their learners play for the Johannesburg orchestra. In a quest to build responsible citizens, learners are encouraged to identify a need in the community and start a project to address that need.

### 4.3.4 Financial Models and Fee Structures

Profit as an incentive for shareholders investment seems to be the single biggest motivating factor for running schools as profit making businesses.

Director 1 explained that it costs them R100 million to construct a single school. That money is raised by pooling in different investors who require capital return. In light of this they have come up with a business model that allows them to keep fees at a relatively affordable level, pay teachers decent salaries provide top quality curriculum and pay out reasonable capital return to the shareholders.

> *For every school that we build it cost us about 100 million rand the bank won't give you that kind of money, so you need shareholders and shareholders won't give you money if you can't give them a capital return . . . So if we didn't make it a, for-profit organization we wouldn't get any investors it is as easy as that.*

The company has different models with different fee structure. The low-fee model is about R17000 per month. The fee structure was determined taking into account the subject spread, language of instruction, cost of facilities and classroom size. Thirdly, the low-fee schools have bigger classrooms (35 learners per class) while the higher fee schools have 25:1 learner to teacher ratio. However, the company ensures that each school irrespective of the fees has quality, discipline, curriculum delivery at classroom level, and that the academic standard at all the schools is the same. The school offers only English and they adjust the subject spread, depending on the model, as he explained below.

> *The subject spread that you offer the parents from grade 1o to 12 now some of our schools offer 25 subjects now in our low-fee school model we only offer 7 or 8 and that makes it cheaper and also you know if it's an English only school it is cheaper than a parallel medium school where you have to cater for instance for Afrikaans and English so that is the factors that drive the decision.*

Director 2 explained that the decision to run a for-profit school was influenced by the need to attract donor funding and for the sake of sustainability. The CEO felt that

running a non-profit school will be unsustainable because they constantly need to source out donor funding and any changes with their funders would also affect the running of the schools such as a change in leadership.

> *So during my research when I looked at the financial model of existing low-fee private schools and I found that pretty much majority of low-fee private schools in education are non-profit and so in order to attract a lot of donor funding and I didn't think it was a sustainable long-term solution.*

The fee structure is simply determined by governments total cost to education. The company benchmarks its total costs to education against governments total cost to educating. Governments' spending per learner determines what they charge per learner. She affirms this below:

> *So we are not going to suddenly shoot our fees to the roof it is all looked at in terms of what government is offering.*

Director 3 explained that the total annual cost to educate a learner is R700. The school does a means assessment test and learners can pay from as little as R200 and those that can afford pay the full amount. The rest is supplemented by donors called "scholarship sponsor" (sponsor one scholar) or "scholarship ambassadors" pay for more than one scholar. When the school was initially founded, learners were all expected to pay R200 but financial sustainability forced them to re-consider and implement the current system. Though the founders would not disclose in great details the school has added a for-profit component to ensure that the school remains financially sustainable. She argues that "low-fee" should mean that people at the bottom can afford it. At R1300 or R1500, domestic workers who earn R2000 or R3000 on average and still support their household can't afford it. She poses the question, can the child of a domestic worker go to school and be afforded the same opportunities or she/he is dismissed because their mother is a domestic worker.

> *If we are saying that it is low-fee then we are saying it is starting to cater to low-income market.*

### 4.3.5 Suggestions for Public Private Partnership

Directors 1 and 2 expressed the need for greater partnership between the private school sector and government. They seem to believe that the role of government should be to provide funding and leave the management of the schools to them.

Director 1 believes that a private –public partnership could be a means to finding solutions to the challenges in education and ensure that all South African children have access to top quality education. He acknowledged that the sector enjoys considerable support from the government however they could do more. The government could support the sector by allowing the sector to lease plots to build schools at a lower rate so that they can build more schools. This would subsequently save the government costs for building new schools and that money could be used to improve the state schooling system.

> *I think the South African government and the private sector must work together to find solutions to give all our children in the country top quality education, if the government starts supporting the independent sector, aggressively, they do already but I say aggressively.*

Director 2 explained that education was not the sole responsibility of the state but the private sector cannot do it alone and therefore there is a need for collaboration between the public and private sector. Collaboration between the two sectors would ensure that the country can find the best solution for the education system. He also highlights the fact that many people have lost faith in the state school system. The company has built the model for public private partnerships to take place. The company runs the schools at the same cost that government spends on educating, thus revealing what the state schools could look like if run efficiently at the current cost they are spending. The school could run as effectively as it does, without having to charge learners if government would pay for the running of the school.

> *If there was ever a private-public with partnership government for funding, then we would be able to operate the schools as is with zero extra funding and the schools would be free . . . so we have built the model for public private partnerships to effectively happen.*

Director 3 had challenges with the district when she tried to register the school but with the support of her community and former school, she managed to successfully register the school and the relationship was restored. The school has successfully managed to get learners, and she notes that the district and parents in the community question why their schools are not as efficient and effective as this low-fee independent school when the learners and teachers are from the area. As a result, the founder is now in conversation with the district and she is invited into district strategic planning meetings to work out a plan to improve the districts mathematics and science results.

> *The district director is coming in and saying how can we do that and we are forming part of that conversation.*

The poor quality of education in public schools seems to be a serious concern to founding directors of independent schools, leading them to build new models to make up for the deficit. Although they share a passion for accessible quality schooling, financial sustainability remains a huddle, leading a majority to have their schools as for-profit independent schools. It is also clear that while educational inputs such as quality teachers are all important for quality education, founding directors are also concerned about developing learner's soft skills.

### 4.4 Findings from Low-fee private schools' teachers and principals

This sample consisted of staff from two low-fee private primary schools in Bramley, East of Johannesburg. Two grade 2 teachers in each school and the principals were interviewed. This group of interviewees are well positioned to provide information about the nature of education that they are offering and the running of the school. The two schools allow the researcher to test claims made by experts (as related in section 4.2). There are stark differences between the two schools. School A is part of a popular chain of for-profit low-fee private schools and school B is a non- profit school and, even though it is part of a network of schools inspired by a particular religious' doctrine, it is a single private school and beneficiary of a government subsidy. The data will be presented per school. The data is categorised according the themes that emerged from the data analysis process discussed in chapter 3. The themes are as follows: Leadership; school culture; teachers' motivation and

development; learners' behaviour; academic assessments and outcomes; resources and school community. This data is arranged so that the reader understands the school first, teaching and learning and then the school's external relations.

### 4.4.1 School A Participant Sample

Interview participants from school A was the school principal and two teachers. The principal was one of the founding teachers when the chain of schools started. When the school was expanded and the current school opened she was promoted to principalship. The first teacher is a maths literacy teacher who is a PGCE graduate from the University of the Witwatersrand. This happens to be her first teaching post and she was attracted to the blended learning approach that the school uses. The third research participant is a literacy teacher. This is her second teaching post and, though she was trained as a high school teacher and worked as a high school teacher in the previous school, she had a keen interest in foundation phase and decided to pursue that when she joined the school.

### 4.4.2 School A and its Learners Profile

School A is located at the heart of Bramley. It is situated in what used to be houses that were renovated to suit the school's demands – with a play area, classroom and office space. The school is well guarded, with adequate fencing around the entire school and a security guard who stands at the gate to check the credentials of everyone who enters the school. He carries a communication device that is used to communicate with all the key personnel in the school. He ensures that every learner is signed into the school in the morning and signed out in the afternoons by an authorised person. At the front desk, seats the office manager with a netbook for visitors to register. The area is decorated with a volunteering chart for learners, parents and pictures from school activities. Learners' work is displayed outside each classroom on the corridor. During the short tour, the school principal explained that every week, learners' best work is displayed on the wall. This includes sentences, paragraphs and art. The school has clean toilets for both genders. Door locks and toilet seats have been adjusted to the learner's height. The school has cleaners who clean the classrooms and grounds daily.

The learner to teacher ratio is 24:1 but can go up to 30 -33 at full capacity. Over all the school had a total of 165 learners from Grade R -3; 7 teachers, 4 tutors and 2 physical education coaches. The school has extended schooling hours from 08h00 to 16h00. The school fee in 2015 was R 15,000 per year. The school is in its first year of operation hence classes only go up to grade 3. The school is multi-racial, and serves learners from upper and middle class families. A large number of the student population lives in Bramley and other surrounding areas such as Alexandra and Lyndhurst.

### 4.4.3 School Leadership

The school leadership consist of the school principal and the assistant principal. The principal's key responsibilities include observing teacher's lessons once a week to give them feedback. The weekly observations are followed by weekly one-on-one sessions with each teacher to discuss steps that teachers should take to improve classroom teaching. The principal is also responsible for leading professional development training every Monday from 1:30 to 4 pm. She is also in charge of data analyses of the school's mid-term results. This allows them to group their learners according to the percentage on assessment to ensure that they are driving change and instruction in the following term. Lastly, she overshadows all the five ground staff to ensure that they grow and develop so that they become supervisors next year. There is also an assistant principal that helps the principal carry the load. The teachers enjoy an open and professional relationship with her. The principal describes her role in the school as "*an instructional leader".*

### 4.4.4 School Ethos

The mission, vision and the core values of the schools are clearly spelled out. Assembly plays an integral part of the school life. School A has five core values which are service, persistence, responsibility, achievement and kindness and the unique core value to that particular school is compassion. The values are re-enforced during class time and assembly. Learners that display a core value through the course of the week receive a core value ticket that is put into a raffle box for a draw on Friday. During assembly which takes place every morning, learners sing and dance to a song that is related to one of the core values and they also recite a

daily creed that reminds them who they are, what they stand for and the responsibility they have to serve others. Learners are further taught about the various cultures, they learn to accept it and question it. The school celebrates heritage day and allows everyone to wear their traditional attire and has food testing from the various cultures represented in the school. The school's motto is:

*I am a (school's name) scholar, I am going to university*.

The importance of the slogan is that learners start thinking about university as early as grade R.

### 4.4.5 Resources

The two teachers interviewed in School A reported that the school provides a wide range of teaching and learning material for each subject. The literacy teacher reported that they have a phonic centre, writing centre and reading centre with games related to the centre to enhance the learners learning experience and keep them stimulated. In the absence of a school library, each literacy teacher has a shelf filled with reading books and reading resources in their classroom. As her learners are learning the difference between fiction and non-fiction her book shelf has fiction and non-fiction. Furthermore, each classroom has stationery, trays with worksheets, literacy books and posters. The numeracy teacher reported that she has access to resources that she can sign out and they also make use of resources such as toothpicks, straws and leaves that are of no cost to the school and learners. The school has a learning lab with chrome books and Nexus tablets for each learner. The chrome book has a maths based programme called ST maths. The Nexus Tablets have programmes for different skill areas. The lab facilitates the schools ground-breaking blended learning programme. The school principal explains what the ST Maths programme is about below.

> *ST maths is a maths based programme which develops from basic maths concepts to your more experienced concepts of algebra and fractions and reading links is phonetics based and runs from your basic literary sounds, identification to reading comprehension.*

### 4.4.6 Teachers' Motivation and Development

The school consists of multi-racial South African teachers, with the exception of one Zimbabwean teacher. The teachers are predominantly female except for the Lab instructor who is male. School A has five different teachers and learners rotate from one teacher to the other as they would in university. Teachers must ensure that all the learners meet the set target. Secondly, it is important for teachers to grow in the profession. The school has a Professional Development Plan, where teachers spend 250 hours a year in training workshops. Every Monday school is adjourned at 1:30 pm to accommodate the teacher's development training. Teachers receive professional growth plans, every term which is a rubric that measures the teacher's performance in planning, execution of instructions, professionalism, investment and content delivery. The school principal assesses the teachers based on those five areas during the weekly classroom observations and one-on-one sessions and gives them feedback as well as steps they should follow thereafter. This serves as an accountability instrument. The teachers were pleased with the programme and inspired by the potential for upward mobility within the company through the programme. In addition, the school sets up skills portfolios, which is an opportunity for teachers to plan, organise and execute tasks and events throughout the year. The idea is to give them exposure to leadership without an actual title by giving them the opportunity to lead a particular project. The teachers seem motivated by the prospects of upward mobility as the chain expands. They also enjoy the innovative manner in which education is delivered in the school. Teacher 2 said that:

> *You are always learning, always like if I think the progress one would have made in a government school. I mean I have been here what 9 months . . . I mean I did my pracs where I was exposed to what it is like and I remember the HOD who is like a higher teacher, she had been teaching for like 33 years before she became an HOD and you have (Name of principal) who is young and she is a principal, but she is at that point because of her professional development because she is at this school.*

The School also encourages team work and collaboration between the entire staff. Teachers do everything online, on the chrome books and so it's easy for them to share documents Team work and collaboration is made easy because teachers are

subject specialists and so they work with the same group of learners and as a result they are able to discuss learner's progress. Teacher 1 said that:

> *You have other people that are working daily with them so you are able to like this one is having an issue with this, what is working and what is not working in your class with them and they will say: I discovered this works for Johnny. So you have a lot of collaboration.*

### 4.4.7 Learners' Behaviour and Discipline

School A reported that they only experience challenges related to bullying from grade R learners during the first term of school because learners coming into the school for the first time are not familiar with the school culture. For example, in the year 2015, they had a few cases where a learner was physically hitting another one. That was treated as a serious offence and the learner was sent home immediately. The school has a behaviour policy. Each classroom is fitted with a magnetic chart with six different colours. The principal explained:

> *They all start their day on green with a number that is allocated to them at the beginning of the year. If they meet behaviour expectations, they move their magnet up to blue and then purple which is like super scholar of the day. If they don't meet expectations they go to yellow which is a warning, orange is loose box fly so they don't get to participate in our community gathering every morning and red is an immediate phone call home where they must explain to their parents why they are calling them and then they fill out a behaviour reflection to reflect upon their actions and what they will do better next time. . . If we have a child that demonstrates continuous ill-behaviour, we put them on a weekly observation plan and from the week's observation we develop an individual plan that is unique to that child which is a four-week plan, which means the parent has to meet with the teacher and myself once a week to discuss the targets at home and the targets at school because you have to have consistency between the two.*

The school does not allow teachers to shout at the children. Teachers are encouraged to use positive re-enforcement to manage learner's behaviour instead. When scholars fail to meet the schools behaviour expectations they emphasise the

fact that the school believes in positive re-enforcement by rewarding scholars for improving their behaviour. The school also depends heavily on the relationship that they have with the parents as part of the behaviour management strategy.

### 4.4.8 Assessment and Outcomes

School A challenges its learners to reach 1.5 growth a year, that is to say that in a time frame of one year, their learners are expected to have made a year and a half growth. Scholars are benchmarked on international standards. The idea is to have learners that meet international academic standards and not just South African standards. They use the Annual National Assessment (ANA's) to see if learners are meeting the expected progress. The learners write ANA assessment that is designed for next grade. For example, grade two classes will write grade three assessments and in that way the school can see if learners are making the year and half progress. At the time of the interview (term 3), the school principal was impressed with the progress that the learners had made, commenting that the marks had been outstanding. Beyond the ANAs, teachers set informal and formal assessments for learners. There is a formal assessment at the end of the term and a weekly informal assessment every two weeks to test learners understanding of the key concepts before a teacher introduces the next concept. The principal explained that:

> *We set the target that kids need to develop a year and a half each year and those they need to be internationally aligned so we do many assessments termly to ensure that they are not just meeting the academic requirements of South African universities but international standards as well.*

The school has different strategies to ensure that learners reach their set target. For one, they have an extended school day which ends at 16:30. Learners are divided into different ability groups so that the teacher can give learners specialised attention in their ability group. The teacher rotates the groups for one-on-one time. The school further has a programme called guided reading, guided writing and guided maths. Teacher one explained that:

> *Whilst some learners are busy we pull up maximum five learners and we work with them and these learners receive tutoring.*

Though academic achievement is the main focus, the school also intends to develop well rounded human beings by building learners at a social and emotional level through the toolbox project. The toolbox is an instrument adapted from an American model that helps learners articulate themselves and develop problem solving skills. For example, there is a words' tool where learners are taught to use their words; personal space tool where learners are taught the right to their personal space, apology and forgiveness tool as well.

> *Academic results are the main thing, but also for them to grow on a social and emotional level and to be able to use something called the toolbox project which we have here.*

### 4.4.9 School Community

School A encourages a lot of parental involvement in the school. Teachers maintain constant and open communication with learner's parents. Teachers can easily send an email to a parent or call them. Open communication between parents and teachers ensures that parents are constantly aware of their children's performance at school and both negative and positive behaviour. The school has set 30 volunteering hours for parents to work towards. Volunteering hours are a compulsory part of the school code of conduct. Parents who complete the allocated 30 hours' get recognised and their picture and name goes up on the wall of fame at the school's front office. Parents who work for 60 hours are recognised as the volunteer of the year; they receive a parent sticker and they are invited to attend the schools year end function. Parents use their 30 hours to do a variety of activities for the school such as helping teachers organise events and activities, observing their child in class and/or reading to class. Participating in art activities and donating essential products to the school. Parents are also expected to help their children with homework. For the literacy teacher, it is important for learners to do a bit of reading at home to re-enforce the idea that reading takes place everywhere. Scholars have a reading log where a learner with the help of the parent must write down the title; summary of the book they read and the amount of time they spent reading and the parent must sign it. The school does not have a School Governing Body because the parents are actively involved in the schools activities.

*So we really drive parental involvement in our school. We don't want parents to stop and the school gate and feel like that is where their journey with us ends.*

### 4.4.10 School B participants' sample

The research participants from school B was the school principal and two primary school teachers. At the tim1

e of the interview, the principal had only been with the school for just over one year. The school principal was a coach for the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics strategy (GPLMS) programme before he joined the school. He had previously worked as the school principal at another low-fee private school in Limpopo. He had taught for a number of years in Zimbabwe where he received his training. The second and third participants are both female teachers. They were trained at the United College in Zimbabwe. They had held teaching jobs in Zimbabwe before they moved to South Africa. The second participant is also a Head of Department. She was attracted to the school because of its Christian foundation which she also upholds.

### 4.4.11 School B and Learners' Profile

School B is located in a commercial building in Bramley. Access to the reception area is gained through the building's basement. The reception area is decorated with pictures from key events, the school's core values and its vision and mission. After school, learners wait on the pavement outside the building for transport. Classrooms are divided with cardboard material. In some classrooms there were parts that were broken. There are cleaners who clean classrooms daily. The school has toilets for both genders, which are cleaned regularly, in fact one of the cleaners sits by the door to give learners tissue and ensure toilets remain clean right throughout the day. The two teachers who participated in the study had 29 learners in a class. They explained that at full capacity the number can go up to 40 learners per teacher. The primary school (grade R to grade 4) had 354 students and 10 teachers. The school fees rate is R9, 600 per annum for all learners.

The pupils in the school come from middle to low-income families. The teachers agree with this statement as they have observed learners' lunch boxes and/or lack thereof and ability to meet extra-mural costs. The large majority of the learners come from Alexandra Township. Teacher one remarked that:

> *We notice those who are from struggling families who can't even afford to have an exercise book or even text books. Because even after this term, I have some learners who couldn't manage to have one book, so I have to copy everything for them.*

### 4.4.12 School Leadership

The school leadership at school B consists of the principal and two deputy principals. One of the deputy principals is responsible for the primary school phase and the other deputy principal is responsible for the high school phase. The deputy principals are assisted by various heads of departments, whom he works very closely with. The school believes that his appointment as a school principal is a calling. His duties are mainly administration and public relations. He also works closely with the directors to ensure that they are aware of the teacher's needs and those needs are met. He also listed facilitating the implementation of the curriculum. Although, the deputy principal and the Head of Department are responsible for classroom observations he also conducts random, unannounced classroom observations to conduct his own assessment of teaching and learning in the classroom. In his own words

> *I am developing them [teachers] in terms of social issues, the curricular and those kinds of things.*

### 4.4.13 School Culture and Ethos

The school principal listed excellence, integrity, quality education, service, honesty and responsiveness to the school's needs as core values. Learners continuously recite this motto during assembly sessions. The aim is to try and encourage the learners to work towards achieving excellent results. They have assembly sessions once a week on a Monday for the primary school learners and on Wednesday for the high school learners. During assembly sessions, a teacher, guest speaker or pastor preaches to the learners and staff member to motivate them. The school prays together during assembly and also has an annual week of prayer to minister and

motivate the learners. The school has very diverse cultures with quite a number of learners and staff members coming in from other African countries. One teacher responded that she is able to overcome the different cultures in her classroom by using English as the mode of communication. The school's motto is:

*No to mediocrity and yes to excellence*.

### 4.4.14 School Resources

School B has a library, however one of teachers describe it as "not expressive" enough, meaning that it does not have a wide variety of books and resources. Furthermore, the library is not accessible to the learners. A teacher goes to the library to get books for learners. Beyond that teachers depend heavily on the graded readers that are available for English Home language. When asked about the teaching and learning material they use, teacher 1 listed chalk, duster, textbooks and black board. She later then added the comment that,

> *At times teachers have to improvise . . . because the school can't provide everything, you look at visual arts, visual arts you need so many things and the school can't provide so we improvise*.

Teacher two mentioned that learners are asked to bring project boards for class exercise and teachers use what is left over to make their classroom charts. They also use low-cost materials such as leaves empty shoe boxes and milk containers for subjects such as life skills and visual arts. Teacher 1 expressed disappointment at the fact that, though they have a computer laboratory (with about 20 to 26 computers), they do not have access to the internet and as a non- South African, access to the internet would help her research on content that is South African based.

> *We've got a computer laboratory, although we don't have access to the internet because for some of this things you need to google for answers and we don't have access, I am not from South Africa, I want to know about this and that, then I will go blank because I can't tell, I don't know.*

The principal explained that the school would like to use more e-learning programmes but they do not have the funds. He explains that they find themselves in

a difficult position because they want to provide the best quality and yet they do not have the necessary financial means because they depend on school fees. However, they can't increase the school fees because that would exclude low-income families that they have set themselves to provide education to. He re-enforces the idea that the vision is not about money and hence they can't increase the fees so that they can get better resources.

> *That is not what the vision is about, it's about serving the poorest and not profit-making it's about serving the poor who must also enjoy the benefits of a better education in a country where people who have been disadvantaged ever since apartheid.*

### 4.4.15 Teachers' Motivation and Development

The teacher composition at school B consists of black Africans from different parts of Africa and South Africa. The two teachers interviewed and the school principals are from Zimbabwe. A teacher must take the group of learners from grade one right through to grade four and teach them all the subjects. Though the school does not have a teacher development programme, they run workshops called 'Demonstration sessions' where one teacher presents on a particular subject while others observe and give feedback. There is also a workshop at the beginning of the year for teachers who were not trained to deliver the CAPS curriculum to ensure that they are on par with the requirements. According to the principal, the school needs teacher development programmes that particularly focus on the curriculum.

The school did not have an official policy that dictates how teachers should be held accountable; however, the principal explained that teachers that are not performing well are called to explain themselves. He assesses the teacher's performance based on the learners' performance in the classroom. He also expressed disappointment at the level of teaching as it is not quite what he desired to see. At the end of the year, teacher's class performance is measured against other teachers' performance and the best performing teacher receives a reward. The principal, Head of Department and Vice-principal conduct occasional class visits for personal evaluations.

When asked what motivates them the teachers stated that it was the passion for teaching and seeing the positive impact they have on the learners, even though the money is not so great the passion keeps them going.

> *There isn't much that motivates me but if you have the passion, you just have to work towards good learners results, If you just know that I been through this as well with my teachers who helped me to be where I am. Just look at them, even if you are not getting much you just feel for them.*

### 4.4.16 Learners' Behaviour and Discipline

The two teachers from school B reported that ill-discipline was a serious challenge in the school. Some learners are lazy, hyper active, loud and there are learners who bully other learners. For example, there was one student in particular who makes other children feel uncomfortable; he tries to belittle them by calling them names, explained one of the teachers. The school does not have a behaviour policy as such. Consequently, teachers use different behaviour management strategies. The teachers use different light punishments such as moving a troublesome learner to seat at the front of the classroom, making them kneel, ask them to kneel with their hands lifted up or appointing the troublesome to be the class monitor. Teacher 1 explained that:

> *There is this position where they have to stretch their hands up, they kneel down and put their hands up straight and then stretch their hands up, it's so painful so sometimes they do that and I normally do that during break time, so they make sure that they don't cross the line because they really want their break time.*

They reach out to learners that bully each other and when the teacher has failed to talk the learner out of the behaviour she refers him/her to the school principal. Teachers at the school also reach out to parents in an attempt to understand conditions at home and if they have any effect on the learner's behaviour at school. Teacher 2 explained that there was an instance when she had a problem with a learner who was bullying other learners.

*I spoke with the mother, we had a consultation day and I asked her, she said he does that to the younger sister, so I don't know if he is getting it from the parents because he does it to the little sister*.

### 4.4.17 Assessment and Outcomes

School B set academic target is 80 percent and above. The school principal maintains that it is important for the school to attain 80 percent pass rate so that they meet the average provincial pass rate. If the school fails to do this, they will be classified as underperforming and they will lose the government subsidy. The previous year, the school's overall matriculation pass rate was unimpressive, particularly in Maths and Accounting. For teacher 2 a good command and understanding of English is important for learners to improve their academic performance because all their subjects are taught in English. The school has formal assessments as stipulated by the Department of Education and they also have informal assessments weekly to test learners' level of understanding and reading. The assessments also help teachers identify learners that are struggling to meet the minimum desired standards and areas where they lack understanding. Moreover, the school has an intervention programme for learners that are not meeting the expected performance. Learners that are struggling with a particular subject are asked to remain at school in the afternoon for an hour for some one-on-one time with a teacher, working on the area that needs improvement.

*Those learners who are struggling with reading I normally have an afternoon class. It's an intervention programme starting from 1:30 to 2:30, I give them an hour and I work on their reading skills only, normally I use the phonic method*.

The school also expects teachers to provide social, emotional and spiritual development to the learners and stand as role models to the learners. Teachers reported the importance of providing motivation to learners because of the learner's socio-economic background. The school has a club called the Pathfinders club, which develops learners socially, emotionally and spiritually based on the Adventist church principle. In the words of the school principal,

*they are taught basic principles on growing up, on managing their lives and managing themselves*.

### 4.4.18 School Community

School B hosts a consultation day for parents to evaluate their children's performance and also consult with the classroom teacher and give feedback to the teachers. Parents also support the school with fundraising initiatives. The previous year the school had a market day and parents prepared treats for learners to sell on the day. The school also relies on parents to assist resolve disciplinary challenges with learners. Another teacher said there are parents who do not respond to communication and she has to send out four or five letters before they respond. In case of an emergency the parents are called in. She also reported that some parents are unforgiving to the teachers and if a teacher makes a slight mistake they will come in fuming. The school does not have an official homework policy as they are still drafting it; however teachers give learners homework everyday expect on Friday.

The school does not have a School Governing Body because they have a board of directors that makes the necessary decisions. The school also has a forum called 'Parents Teachers' Association' (PTA) where parents can raise their concerns.

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the data collected from the three different samples. It reveals that the experts were divided on their arguments for and against low-fee private schools, looking at different aspects of the sector to justify their perspectives. The directors unpacked their idea and the advantages and challenges they identify in the independent school sector. Finally, the two different schools revealed how they struggle differently with the quality and challenges of the education they offer.

# CHAPTER 5
# DATA INTERPRETATION

This chapter interprets the research findings and compare or locate them within the literature and conceptual framework. It begins with a macro view of the independent school sector. It then focuses on the conceptualisation of independent school chains and particular models of schools from a management point of view and then zooms into the micro school level with the case of two low-fee private schools. Arguments and claims made by experts are interpreted and then findings from directors and school case studies are also interpreted using literature and conceptual framework**.** The data collected and interpreted will be used to answer the research sub-questions in the next chapter.

## 5.1 ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF EDUCATION

### 5.1.1 For-Profit vs Non-Profit Private Schools

The three experts agreed that non-profit private schools are playing an important role in delivering basic education in South Africa. Expert 3 explained that non-profit private schools often start because of particular circumstances that warrant their rise. For example, Director 3 established a non-profit low-fee private school in a township where the number of public schools was way below the demand and this led to overcrowding as well as poor quality in many of the existing schools in the townships. School B ensured that children from an overcrowded nearby township had access to quality education. Director 3's motives for starting the school are underpinned by a genuine love for the wellbeing of the community and its people. Director 3 and School B's founders are also primarily concerned about providing quality education at an affordable rate for low-income families and not for the profit they stand to gain.

Director 1 and 2 revealed that they opted for a for-profit chain of schools because they did not think that it would be financially sustainable to have the schools as non-profit organisations. To get investment for the schools, the founders had to get shareholders who, in turn, wanted capital return on their investment. It is evident that financial sustainability is a pressing issue for "Edupreneurs" and if the school is

not for-profit, then they need to find another way to ensure financial sustainability. “Today’s school founders are more likely to wrestle with how they can create a schooling model that results in as many children as possible accessing a quality education at an affordable price, whilst they also are able to make a profit for their shareholders” (Montjane, 2014: 4). This therefore means that school founders had to balance financial sustainability without compromising the quality of education they offered. Kitaev (1999) adds that managers and founders of for-profit schools must do a thorough cost-analysis to determine the fee scale because it is the major source of funding. Furthermore, they must ensure that the money is adequate enough to pay teachers decent salaries to ensure that they are motivated and provide adequate learning and teaching conditions (Ibid).

Expert 3 argues that private schools exclude the large majority because they can’t afford to pay and in fact even low-fee private schools are still too expensive for low-income families at R3,000 a month. Director 3 agrees with this and challenges what should be categorised as low-fee. She argues that low-fee should mean that it is affordable and caters for low-income families, domestic workers who earn R2,000 to R3,000 a month. School B, which is non-profit and serves middle to low-income families reported that they have financial problems as parents fail to meet their financial obligations. In most developing countries where low-fee private schooling is a growing phenomenon, the schools can service the poor. McLoughlin (2013) defines low-fee private schools as schools that charge fees but which are affordable to low-income families. Hofmeyer (2014) does confirm that South African low-fee private schools do charge fees that are significantly higher than in other developing countries and therefore do not cater for the poor. For example, Tooley, Dixon, & Gomathi (2007:548) found that, in India, they only account for 4.2 to 5.5 % of a breadwinner’s minimum wage.

If low-fee private schools meet the excess demand in provinces such as Gauteng and Western Cape, that is they cater for learners that could not secure places in some public schools, it means that parents that do not have the financial means are led to attend these schools because it is the only alternative. This means that learners (even though it is a small number) are actually potentially excluded from

schooling because they lack the financial means. The sector does not necessarily help the most disadvantaged learners in society because in South Africa it tends to service the middle-income government bureaucrats, teachers, nurses and small business people. However, in a province like Gauteng where there is a great influx of learners each year and limited schooling, when families that can afford the low-cost private schools choose to educate their children there, they make way for disadvantaged children in public schools and thus the sector can help disadvantaged children indirectly.

### 5.1.2 Education as a Human Right

Expert 3 argues that education shouldn't be privatised because it is a human right. The idea that education is a human right is advanced by the basic needs approach. This theory which emerged in the 1970's holds that education is a basic need that all human beings are entitled to have (Tilak, 2001). It views access to education and educational services as crucial to fulfilling human basic needs and helps to improve the quality of people's life. Education helps people make better use of healthcare facilities, water and sanitation and further equips women with the necessary knowledge to make more calculated decisions regarding fertility, welfare and hygiene (Ibid). Vickers and Yarrow (1990:113) explain that, when the particular service of interest generates positive externalities, government may intervene on social welfare grounds, through regulation and also by providing subsidies.

South Africa's approach to private schooling shows that the state is conscious of its responsibility towards its citizens and it is taking responsibility for that by providing subsidies to non-profit registered private schools. Yes, there is debate about whether or not government should or should not provide subsidies. Tooley et al. (2007) report that subsidies are actually not very common in many developing countries; however, in South Africa they have gone a long way in encouraging the growth of the sector, registration of schools and extending access to basic education. Kiatev (1999) argues that schools that are community-based and/or religious receive government grants which go towards teachers' salaries and other recurring expenditure. These schools may also receive other benefits from the government such as tax exemption in exchange for government regulating some key

aspects of the sector and schools. The South African government offers financial support to low-cost private schools in two ways. First, it subsidizes all Private schools that are registered as Public Benefit Organisations or Non- Profit Organisations and are thus exempt from paying tax according to the Income Tax Act (1962) and Municipal Property Rates Act (2004) (Bernstein, 2012). According to the National Norms and Standard for School Funding, the Department of Education makes provision for subsidies to schools that are registered non-profit organisations.

Government subsidies to private schools have been a point of contestation. Expert 3 argues that they are draining government's provision for schooling which should be used to improve public schools. While Expert 1 and 2 argue that they should be granted subsidies because they are not-for-profit, they are saving the state a lot of money and they serve as quality assurance. In agreement with Expert 3, Kitaev (1999) argues that private and public schools directly and indirectly compete for a share of the money. However, Expert 1 argues that it is not the case in South Africa because subsidies account for a very minimal amount (1%) of the Gauteng provincial budget.

The constitutional obligation to provide education to all learners binds the Department to provide minimum subsidies to low-fee private schools in support of the learners' educational development. However, priority is given to the development of public schools. It is possible to argue, from the above discussion and evidence from multiple studies and interviews, that in the South African case, the provincial government's financial aid to private schools is not a threat to the public schooling sector.

The fact that the government subsidy accounts for 60 % of the total revenue of some schools illustrates that there is a serious demand for subsidies and the Department is therefore playing an important role (Brewer, 2011). School B also emphasised just how important it was for non-profit private schools to receive financial support because the lack of finances hinders them from fulfilling their mission, which is to deliver quality education to the poor who cannot access, for one reason or another, public schools.

Expert 2 argues that subsidies are beneficial because they function as quality assurance because schools have to earn it by ensuring that their standards are at the very least comparable to public schools. Tooley et al. (2007) add that there are cases where schools receive subsidies to incentivise them to perform better. Financial assistance or rather subsidies are used to incentivise the schools to encourage better performance. Through the Foundation Assisted Schools Programme, the World Bank delivered subsidies to low cost private schools in Pakistan. They found a positive relationship between the subsidies and the pupils' learning outcome (McLoughlin, 2013). In 1999, the Quetta Urban Fellowship in Pakistan also provided subsidies to communities – who had established private schools - as an incentive for them to increase the enrolment rates of girls (Ibid).

The contribution to good quality education is questionable though because good quality education in this case refers mainly to academic outcomes. Subsidies are awarded on the basis that the schools' pass mark is higher than the average provincial pass rate. It is problematic to use academic pass rate as the yardstick to measure good quality education because it could encourage superficial learning or teaching-to-the-test (Harlen, 2005). Indeed, teachers could be focusing on the content that learners will be tested on, administering repeated practice tests or only preparing students to answer specific tests (Ibid). Good quality education is far more complex than just the pass rate; there are other factors that ought to be taken into consideration. Criticisms levelled against SER are that it is insufficient to measure quality education by merely looking at quantitative variables, such as student achievement because there are factors such as socio-economic background that affects learner's performance and outcomes and education is not only a product but a valuable process (Luyten et al., 2005). While taking into account the complexity of merely reducing pedagogical standards to the pass rate, it is however regrettable that ISASA'S executive director affirms that "for legal purposes, a proxy for educational standards must be found. I contend that such an indicator of educational standards should be the examination results of the National Senior Certificate" and the Annual National Assessments for primary schools (Montjane, 2014: 12). Therefore, in that case, subsidies challenge private schools to increase the quality of

education as measured by the pass rates. It is clear from the two international examples that subsidies are an effective incentive for schools to increase student outcomes. In addition, a new research study which shows that, based on academic results, learners in private schools are doing much better than learners in public schools even after taking into account learners' social background and prior attainment (Barker, 2016).

The discussion is very engaging and, though different experts argue different, it's important to remember that each expert looks at the private sector from a different angle and they select evidence to justify their argument by looking at some and not all the perspectives.

### 5.1.3 Innovation in Private Schools' Teaching and Learning

Expert 1 has argued that private schools spearhead great innovations in education which could be applied to public schools because the learner population is similar. All three directors interviewed have demonstrated evidence of this taking place in their schools. Director 1 spoke about the way the company plays around with subject spreads to accommodate the different fee structures. Director 2 and 3 have extended the school hours in a day. Director 2 has also incorporated a blended learning system which means that learners have instructional time with teachers by relying heavily on computer programmes to re-enforce concepts taught in class and practice their maths and language skills. They have also incorporated games. Montjane (2015) views the use of technology and electronic learning platforms as crucial, given that there is a heavy reliance on technology throughout the world. Director 3 explained how her company has opted for an international Cambridge curriculum. The school also restructured the way the curriculum is delivered by dividing the school day into instructional period, group learning session and independent study session. School B however had not yet implemented anything innovative.

## 5.2 FACTORS PPROMOTING THE GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND FURTHERING INEQUALITIES

There are factors such as: high demand; quality deficit in public schools; parental choice and government support which have emerged to encourage the growth of low-fee independent schooling in South Africa, according to most of the experts and directors.

Director 2 argues that one of the factors that inspired him to start a chain of low-fee independent schools was governments support for anyone who wanted to start an independent school. Furthermore, post-apartheid South African government legislation was in favour of the independent school sector (Hofmeyer, 2014). Indeed, anyone could register a private school, as long as the quality of education is comparable or better than a public school. Private schools had to be registered as Public Benefit Organisations or Non- Profit Organisations and had to be exempt from paying tax according to the Income Tax Act (1962) and Municipal Property Rates Act (2004) (Bernstein, 2012). In addition, the government made provision for subsidy for registered non-profit private schools that meet a set of departmental requirements. Government subsidy was a good incentive for schools to get registered and improve the quality of education they offer.

Expert 1 and 2 commended the low-fee independent school sector for giving parents greater choice. Expert 2 went on to add that the low-fee independent school sector in particular has ensured that choice is available even to the poor. Private schools are said to give parents the choice to choose faith-based schools or schools that offer alternative philosophies because public schools are faith-neutral. Of the three directors interviewed, only one runs a chain of private schools that is faith-based, the other two are faith-neutral like state schools. School A is a faith-neutral school while School B is faith-based. Director 1 mentioned that some of their models allow for learners to choose from a wide variety of subjects, while the low-fee is limited to a minimum of 7 subjects. This is concerning because it seems like choice in this particular school is determined by the amount that parents are able to pay and it is indeed limited for the poor by default. In noting the class stratification emerging as a result of a growing private schooling sector, Expert 3 argues that the middle class

are always able to get a better deal for their children. He also admits that the sector was far too small in South Africa today to be responsible for class stratification. However, at the rate that the sector is growing at the moment in South Africa, this argument may not hold for much longer. School A, more than School B, is an example of the social inequalities that exist in the sector. Learners from School A are getting far more than those in School B in-terms of educational inputs because they can afford to pay more.

Demand for education is understood as excess demand which occurs when the demand for education far exceeds the supply by the state and when differentiated demand exists for alternative types and quality of education (Kitaev, 1999). Hofmeyer and Lee (2003) argue that independent schooling in South Africa is driven by both types of demand. There is unmet demand, which is prominent in some black communities, and differentiated demand from white communities and black middle class families.

Tooley, J., & Dixon, P. (2006) and Oketch et al. (2010) find that private schools sprout up in remote areas where pupils do not have access to public schooling. In South Africa in particular, provinces that experience a lot of migration and population growth are the ones where there is a real excess demand. Edupreneurs such as Director 2, who confirmed that they saw a gap in the market and specifically targeted areas where there had been new residential developments, looks for gaps in the market and move into the space. According to Oketch et al. (2010), private schools identify gaps, such as the lack of access to quality education in some areas, such as director 1 and 3 or lack of technological innovation such as in the case of Director 2.

Finally, the poor quality of education in public schools emerged as a key factor pushing parents away from public schools to private schools. Kitaev (1999) adds that the evolution of private schooling in a particular country often points to particular weaknesses in the public education system. This argument is strongly echoed by Expert 1. This was also one of the key motivating factors for Director 2 and 3 to start their chain of schools. Director 2 felt that good quality schools were inaccessible. Director 3 had personally experienced the effect of poor public schools because she

studied there. This argument is also confirmed by a wide range of statistics documenting the failures in the South African public education system. Kane-Bernam (2014) reports that previously disadvantaged schools account for 80% of schools in South Africa. Researchers found that 41% percent of the school day which is 3.5 hours is spent on actual teaching and learning in the poorest schools (Taylor, 2008). Fleisch (2008) reports that this is compared with 6 hours and 15 minutes that a middle class school utilizes on average. In post-apartheid South Africa when schools were de-racialized, there was a huge flight from township schools to former model-C schools by the black middle class, due to the quality deficit in these schools. However, the former model-C schools were not expanded by the government and quickly reached capacity, but they are also far from townships which add extra travel costs. As a result, low-fee private schools have become an alternative for those people in townships who do not want their children educated in public schools in the township and who can afford it. Thus, the drive to seek private schools because of the perception that they offer better quality education and an alternative to public schools is understood as differentiated demand (Kitaev, 1999). In this case, private schools are complementary and are not necessarily in competition with the public education system (Ibid).

The role that private schools especially non-profit private schools play is supplementing the public provision for education in South Africa is valuable. It is therefore, important for the government to continue providing financial support and regulation as this ensures that the state fulfils its constitutional right to ensure that all citizens have access to education which is a human right. The sector has certainly taken great strides as far as innovation is concerned. However, it is unfortunate that it is schools with financial means that are able to benefit from most technological innovations, while schools such as school B must do with the bare minimum. This perpetuates inequality amongst learners and puts those at schools such as school B at a great disadvantage. Lastly, the sector certainly gives parents an alternative from public schools, sadly even with a “low-fee” sector choice remains the preserver of the rich as it is clear that low-fee private schools in South Africa are too expensive for the poor.

## 5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The three experts agree that for-profit private schools should not receive financial assistance from the state because they are making a profit. However, Expert 1 and Director 1 and 2 argue that financial support from the state is necessary. Director 2 states that the sector is actually saving the state a lot of money while Director 1 explains that it costs them one hundred million rand to construct a single school. The government could offer more support to for-profit private schools by allowing them to lease land for free or at lower rates. This means that, with every school they build, the state saves one hundred million. He maintains that offering financial support to the sector is far cheaper for the state because they save on running costs and teachers' salaries.

Director 2 adds that public-private partnership could mean that they offer the same model and quality of education at no fees to the learners. This proposal suggests that government should take financial responsibility for schooling while it delegates the management of the schools to managers in the private sector. These suggestions seemed to be underpinned by the assumption that government is ineffective at managing education and it should rather fund the sector while it is privately managed. This mirrors the classic neo-liberal argument. Yet, Friedman (1955) argued that government should take financial responsibility for the education of its citizenry on the basis that it is a public good. However, it should decentralise the management of the education sector because government's administration of education sector is ineffective and wasteful (Ibid). He continues to argue that the state should relax its administrative control over the sector and offer financial support so that schools are autonomous, competitive and there is higher parental choice (Friedman, 1995) as Vally (2014) notes, the neoliberals argue that the market is considered to be cost efficient, accountable, provides choices and competition which produces quality services. The market would cut down the costs of education and parental choice would drive schools to improve their standards so that they are competitive enough to keep the learners (consumers) and stay in operation (Boyd, 2005). This will lead to improved education across the board because all the schools want to retain and attract new learners.

Expert 3 is greatly opposed to this argument and instead argues that private schooling is not the solution; it is in fact a false solution to the challenges facing the education system in South Africa. He firmly holds that the solution is to fix public education. There could be truth in this in the sense that private schools are able to drive change at the micro level. A particular model is only beneficial to the few children that attend that particular school but is not at a national level. Every school has their own model. School A has a model that is different from School B and it is clear that private schools are unable to drive change at a national level. The problem with South African schools is also with the kind of teaching and learning that is taking place. This calls for a change in the way teaching and learning is delivered systematically and not just in a particular chain of private schools.

Nonetheless, the public and private sectors stand to gain from some kind of collaboration. However, public funding to privately managed institutions is not the solution.

## 5.4 QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOLS: ANALYSIS OF TWO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

This section starts by unpacking conceptions of quality from the Experts and Directors and then discusses the nature of education from the two case studies.

Tooley et al. (2011) report that the perception that private schools offer better quality education is informed by the fact that they have better inputs and better outcomes. The inputs include resources such as proper libraries with trained librarians, trained and professional teachers, small classrooms are the ideal condition for quality education. Expert 3 argues that those conditions should not be unique to private schools. The international Working Group in 2000, in Florence also concluded knowledge and character are evidence of good quality education. However, the Global Campaigners highlighted the importance of basic inputs such as desks, chairs and stationery. It cannot be that learners are receiving good quality education when their learning environment is not in order therefore it is should be the case that resources provide the condition for quality education to take place and the learners character is the outcome. Expert 1 and Director 2 and 3 explain that good quality

education produce learners that do not only have intellectual capabilities but also have good character and other soft skills. Expert 3 and Director 1 highlight factors that lead to quality schooling which creates conditions for good quality education, such as good curriculum, motivated and well trained teachers, facilities and discipline.

### 5.4.1 Learning Environment and Resources

School A and B have gone to great lengths to ensure that teaching and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment and at a very basic level, learners are protected from the weather vicissitudes as recommended by the Global Campaigners for Education. However, School A takes the learners' security more seriously, providing a security guard and a secure waiting area for learners. It is concerning, though, those learners from School B wait for transport afterschool outside the school premises on the pavement. This exposes learners to several dangers such as car accidents and kidnapping-as they play on the road and a learner could easily get kidnapped while waiting outside. The classroom sizes are just below the standard of a learners-teacher ratio of 35/1. Even at full capacity, School A is still just below the standard at 33. It is worth noting that School B can go up to 40 learners to 1 teacher at full capacity. Both schools dispel the claim that low-fee private schools have a low 12/1 learner's/teacher ratio in a classroom.

School A has state of the art facilities. They have also managed to bring technology to enhance teaching and learning as the first school with blended learning in South Africa. School B has very basic facilities due to financial constraints. The international working group agree that schools should have adequate resources and facilities (UNICEF, 2000). With the spread of technology, it is up to date with what has become an essential resource for all learners to have.

### 5.4.2 Teachers' Training and Development

Teachers in the private sector have been a point of debate between opponents and proponents of the low-fee independent school sector. Opponents such as Expert 3 and scholars (Vally & Motala, 2013) have argued that the sector's schools impose an unnecessary lack of supply of teachers for the public schooling sector. Expert 2 and

1 have dispelled this claim and argue that private schools train new teachers and also provide in-service or skills development for their teachers, thus adding to the pool of trained and qualified teachers in South Africa. If anything, the public schooling sector is far more attractive to teachers in the low-fee private sector. Furthermore, the sector depends heavily on Zimbabwean teachers, who are prepared to teach even though the salaries are lower than what their counterparts in the public schooling sector earn, because it is still far more than what they would earn teaching in Zimbabwe. Low salaries in the private sector seem to be an international trend that other scholars such as Mcloughlin (2013), Tooley and Dixon (2006) and Tooley et al. (2007) have picked up on. Oketch et al. (2010) argues that low teacher salaries reduce operational costs, thus allowing schools to charge minimum fees.

Yet, it is important that teachers are adequately trained, recruited, supported and remunerated (Watkins, 2008). It is not sufficient for teachers to only have pre-service training; the school ought to ensure that they also receive internal continuous training. Sufficient remuneration and in-service training ensures that teachers remain motivated throughout their career according to UNICEF (2000). The participants from both School A and B received sufficient pre-service training. They had all obtained teaching degrees from leading universities in South Africa (School A) and the leading teacher's college in Zimbabwe (School B). It is therefore clear that, though teachers in low-fee private schools in most developing countries (as documented by Archer, 2014 and Mcloughlin 2013 amongst others) lack adequate training and development, it is not the case in South Africa.

School A has a well-run and beneficial development programme for teachers, with specific aims and expectations. The teachers interviewed are excited and grateful about the programme and the prospects of promotion. Although the school would not disclose the teachers' salaries, the two teachers did not seem dissatisfied. School B attempts to provide skills training and development; however, they do not have a fully developed programme designed for this purpose. The school did not disclose the salaries but in response to the researcher's questions, the teachers interviewed showed dissatisfaction with the remuneration rate. As a result, teachers had to look

within themselves for motivation. Lastly, teachers in both School A and B showed a clear understanding of the school's mission and were committed to work on it, as is the case in schools that are effective.

Director 1 confirmed that his independent school company has a training college and that they also offer skills development programmes for their teachers. Director 2 also mentioned the fact that they have an in-service training programme for their teachers while Director 3 recruit's members of the community and put them through UNISA to ensure that they are qualified and accredited teachers. This is in direct contrast to Riep's (2014) findings in Ghana. A study conducted by Riep (2014) in Ghana, using the biggest chain of independent schools in the country as a case study, found that there was no long or short-term investment into the teachers' development and that the teachers were high-school graduates that went through a two-week teacher training programme, employed to deliver standardized lesson plan.

It is impressive to see that independent school chains in South Africa are taking the initiative to train and develop their teachers.

### 5.4.3 Learners' Discipline and Behaviour

The promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence was adopted as a goal by the Dakar by the GCE World Assembly (Watkins, 2008). Learners must feel secure and protected from all forms of violence at school (Ibid). Violence in a school environment could mean physical, emotional and/or psychological abuse and could be inflicted by fellow learners, teachers or school management. Schools should work towards creating a culture of peace and non-violence by minimising disciplinary problems that disrupt teaching and learning (Ibid). Both School A and School B have had disciplinary challenges from learners and from bullying. However, School A has successfully managed to eradicate behaviour challenges by setting up a clear and effective behaviour management policy and programme. School B doesn't have a plan or policy to show that the school is intentionally working towards eradicating disciplinary problems such as bullying. It appears that in the school every teacher is responsible for finding ways to minimise disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The

only common action appears to be calling learners' parents to intervene in extreme situations.

### 5.4.4 Assessment and Outcomes

Lezzotte (2001) argues that effective schools monitor student progress regularly for both formative and summative purposes. Both School A and B had regular internal and external assessments. Internal assessments were mainly used for formative purposes and external assessments were used for summative purposes. Furthermore, assessments in both schools were used to create a positive learning experience. In School A, learners were actively involved in the process through peer marking. They could also keep track of their own performance through the performance chart on the walls. In School B, learners that performed well were encouraged with compliments which encourage learners to work harder. Learners' academic outcomes were very important for both schools. Private schools use academic performance to attract parents and donor funders. The schools also try to develop learners' social and emotional intelligence. Through the toolbox programme, School A has demonstrated their commitment to learners' holistic development. School B plays a central role in the learners' spiritual, emotional and social development. Learners in that school are from low-income families in a township that is heavily laden with many societal ills. As a result, the school tries to remedy that through its spiritual and emotional development programmes. UNICEF (2000), notes that good quality education strives for good outcomes in knowledge, skills and attitudes and overall societal involvement as is the case in both schools.

### 5.4.5 School Community

School A and B understand the importance of parental involvement in schooling. School A has a policy that guides parental involvement. Parental involvement in this school is designed to encourage parental involvement in the leaners academic development though daily homework tasks and the school community and thus helping the school fulfil its mission. There is also open communication policy between parents and teachers. It is however concerning that the schools do not have a SGB. The South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996) calls for parents to make up a majority of the governing body to encourage participatory decision making (Hofmeyr

& Lee, 2004). Parents are able to make the school account for certain decision and actions taken and influence the direction that the school takes. School A tries to get parents involved in the academic development of the learners through open day and homework. However, the school doesn't have an accountability system such as asking parents to sign learners' books to ensure that parents were actively involved in the learner's homework actively. Effective schools enjoy great parental support in that parents are actively involved in school activities and they understand and contribute towards fulfilling the school's mission (Edmonds, 1979).

### 5.4.6 Learners' Social and Family Background

Looking at the variables presented by the SER, the Global Campaigners for Education and UNICEF framework are taken into account, it is clear that the quality of schooling in School A is of greater quality than School B, on the basis that they meet all their variables. However, this does not take into account learners' socio-economic family background which has a huge bearing over learners' academic performance and quality education. Learner characteristics such as their socio-economic family background influence greatly the learners' cultural and social capital (UNESCO, 2005). All of these also improve the educational context and influence the learning environment. Learners from School A come from middle and upper class families. These families have cars and are able to collect learners from school; or they stay in the area and the helper can collect the child from school. This means that the school's policy to have learners signed in and out of school by an authorised person actually works effectively. Learners from School B on the other hand which come from the nearby township of Alexandra rely heavily on public transport to collect learners from school. This would make it quite a challenge for the school to re-enforce a similar policy. However, the school can still come up with some solution to ensure learners safety. Furthermore, School B has the burden to remedy or compensate for its learners and various societal ills that they have fallen victims to. Teachers explained that they suspected that ill-discipline is a consequence of what learners are exposed to at home. Teachers have to spend considerable amount of time encouraging the learners to look beyond their financial limitations. The school principal spoke about an intervention programme where the school founders have

taken it upon themselves to provide housing for learners writing matric to give them an opportunity to study in an environment that is conducive for learning.

This reveals two truths about the low-fee independent school sector in South Africa. Firstly, the differences and inequalities that exist in public schooling are also found in the low-fee independent school sector. Secondly, in the quest to provide quality education and schooling in South Africa, the context in which these schools exist has a huge bearing and puts limitations to the school's ability to fulfil that mandate.

Overall Schools A and B reveal that low-fee private schools in Gauteng do not necessarily have small classrooms unlike what Schirmer et al. (2010) found. In as far as resources are concerned; the school with more financial input had better resources while the non-profit school had all the necessary resources they desired to offer far more for their learners. School A's academic results were extremely high, with learner making a 1.5 growth rate a year while, in School B, the principal said that it was not too satisfactory. Contrary to most studies that state that teachers in the private sector are underqualified and do not receive training, teachers in both schools had necessary qualifications. The study did confirm though that the sector depends heavily on Zimbabwean teachers and, in School B, they were not paid much but still continue to teach. Lastly, it appears that, even though the school provide an alternative for parents from public schools, parents' choices remain limited by the school fees.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter analysed the data from the three research samples, namely the three experts studying the sector, three founding directors of low-fee independent school chains and the case of two independent schools in Johannesburg and their participants. All this data was interpreted in reference to the conceptual framework and the reviewed literature.

# CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study set out to test the claims made for and against the contribution of low-fee independent schooling towards access to quality education and further understand the implications of this growing low-fee independent school sector in South Africa for equity by examining two models of low-fee private schools in Gauteng. It was important to conduct this study because claims about the quality of education produced by low-fee private schools are drawn from research conducted by pro-market agencies and informed by international studies that often do not represent the situation in South Africa.

The research was conducted using the exploratory qualitative research approach, discussed in Chapter 3 to firstly understand arguments made by opponents and proponents of low-fee independent schooling and the idea and challenges of low-fee independent school chains. Then those claims will be tested using the two schools.

In-depth interviews with elite participants, document analysis and field observations were useful instruments in gathering the findings of Chapter 4 which are used to answer the research sub-questions.

This chapter summarises the core findings of this research to answer the four sub-questions of this study and discuss the recommendations for private schools, policy makers and a few points are identified for further research.

## 6.2 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 6.2.1 Factors Contributing to the Growth of Low-Fee-Private School Sector

Between 1994 and 1999, as South Africa's transition to democracy took place, the number of schools peaked in the Johannesburg inner city and other areas in the country (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). The research findings revealed that at this point in time the post-apartheid government provided favourable conditions for this growth, such as more legal protection and support for private schools. Firstly, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa allows anyone to open and operate an private school at their own cost, provided that its standard is not lower than a comparable public school. Furthermore, the legislation as set out in the South African School Act makes provision for government financial support to non-profit schools serving poor communities. This encouraged school's founders such as Director 2 to start the first chain of independent schools in South Africa.

It was both excess demand and differentiated demand that drove the growth of the low-fee independent school sector in South Africa over the past twenty years (Hofmeyer & Lee, 2003). Gauteng as the strongest economic province attracts a lot of migrants from rural provinces and other African countries leading to a rapid population growth. This has meant a huge demand for schooling in areas where learners were not effectively accounted for or where the government had not constructed more schools. Low-fee-private schools in Gauteng, as is the case in other developing countries such as Kenya and India (Oketch et al, 2010; Mcloughlin 2013) are found in areas where government had lagged behind in constructing more schools. There is therefore excess demand because there isn't an adequate supply of schools to meet the demand (Kitaev, 1999). There has also been a demand for

schools that offer better quality, particularly from white South Africans and the growing black middle- class. While South Africa has nearly reached universal access to basic education, there is a great quality deficit, particularly in previously disadvantaged black schools in rural areas and townships. This leads to what is called a differentiated demand because parents are looking for something different from their neighbouring public schools (Hofmeyer & Lee, 2003).

In addition, public schools in South Africa are faith-neutral, while there are a number of faith-based private schools. Therefore, parental choice for faith-based education and alternative philosophies has also been reported as a key motivating factor.

### 6.2.2 The Nature and Quality of Education Provided in the Schools

Firstly, our two schools have gone to great lengths to ensure that teaching and learning takes place in a clean and secure environment. Both schools had strong ethos that promote the overall South African national goals of democracy, peace and awareness and respect for the diverse cultures and groups of people. The schools also have satisfactory relations with the community and learners' parents. However, there were some differences between the two schools in-terms of the quality of education offered. School A has well researched policies to guide the relations with parents and the community; teacher development; management of homework and learners' behaviour. School A has been very innovating in the way they manage teaching and learning. School B lacks somewhat direction on how to deliver basic aspects of education such as homework, discipline, parental involvement and teacher development. The school faces a great deal of financial limitations. They have a clear idea of the type of education they desire to deliver but face a great deal of financial restrictions, However, increasing fees is not an option because low-income families would then be excluded and their mission is to provide access to quality education to low-income families.

The teachers are all qualified and well trained. School A has managed to attract very enthusiastic teachers, who enjoy being part of a school that has an innovative education model, in fact the first to experiment with blended learning in South Africa. They are also motivated by the professional development they receive from the

Professional Development Plan. School B has teachers mainly from Zimbabwe who did not seem satisfied with their remuneration. The school does not have a fully developed teacher development programme to motivate and commit their teachers to the school but, overall, there is a great deal of team work amongst teachers in both schools. While School A has kept their classroom sizes just under the standard requirement, School B, exceeds that limit and is at full capacity. Nonetheless, the classroom sizes are not particularly small but they are just manageable. Both schools are driven to improve learners' results. While School A is doing extremely well, the school principal of School B was not impressed with their academic performance. Lastly, while, School A has managed to eradicate ill-discipline it remains a daunting challenge for teachers in School B.

From this, it is perhaps safe to conclude that, while the for-profit low-fee private schools are doing well in this area, the non-profit low-fee private schools appears particularly weak in a number of aspects of the education they offer and therefore the quality of education they deliver is questionable. Overall, School A, a for-profit school, is providing education of exceptional quality. The environment where teaching and learning takes place, learners' outcomes, teachers and relations with the school community is quite outstanding in the South African context. School B, on the other hand, has a number of weaknesses and the quality of education is questionable based on the teacher's development and remuneration, academic outcomes, discipline and behaviour. Lastly, it lacks policies necessary for managing teaching and learning.

However, it will be shallow to conclude that School A provides better quality without taking into consideration learners' socio-economic background. School A, which charges higher fees than School B, has learners from middle class families while School B has a large component of learners from lower-middle class and charges lower fees as well. As a result, School B has far less inputs in terms of resources and in-service training programmes and relies heavily on Zimbabwean teachers who may be willing to settle for lesser pay.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude the quality of education offered by low-fee private schools in South Africa is different across schools and infact it mirrors the two tier system evident in public schools where a majority of the middle class have it better than the poor and lower-middle class.

### 6.2.3 Opportunities and Challenges of the Growth of the Private Sector

It is undeniable that low-fee private schools in South Africa have played a crucial role, supplementing public education, particularly in Gauteng and the Western Cape where government supply has not kept up with the demand. This saves the state some money and time as it does not have to build and maintain these new schools.

Through the subsidy system, the government appears committed to actively fulfil its constitutional commitment to provide access to basic education for all learners. The state has the authority to regulate the private sector, further ensuring that the quality of schooling is not compromised and that learners and parents are not exploited in anyway. Although it appears as though the state is taking financial resources (with its subsidies) that should be used to improve public education, the amount that provincial departments of education spend on subsidies to private schools is very minimal. Subsidies assist the state in ensuring and monitoring quality education in the private sector because these schools must meet particular quality standards to qualify for a subsidy. Lastly, subsidies are also an incentive for these schools to get registered and ensure that the number of unregistered private schools remains small.

Another advantage with a number of low-fee private school chains is that they are training new teachers through their own colleges, as Director 1 explained and through UNISA as Director 3 mentioned. Though not all, some teachers receive in-service training programmes to further develop and motivate them. This is not only beneficial for the sector but for the country as a whole because this contributes to increasing the pool of qualified teachers.

The research found that a number of low-fee private schools are experimenting with innovative ways to deliver basic education. For example, School A, Director 2 and

Director 3 have extended the school time to allow for more teaching and learning. Director 3 also re-arranged the way in which teaching and learning takes place. Director 2 introduced a blended learning programme which combines instructional teaching time and the use of computer programmes to facilitate learning.

The quality of education offered in low-fee private schools is very diverse as there are great variations among what the different private schools offer. Sadly, in most cases, like in the public school system, those that can afford to pay more get better schooling. As a result, it seems as though there is a two tier education system similar to the public education system that is emerging in the private sector. This is problematic because this will perpetuate inequalities with quality private schools for the rich while lesser quality private schools for the poorer. Thus, even though the private sector is still relatively small in South Africa, it cannot be blamed for class stratification but it is certainly contributing towards it.

Finally, it is important to note that, because there are private schools that are doing extremely well, there comes the danger of shifting the responsibility for differentiated quality education to the level of the schools and ignoring the societal context and socio-economic inequalities that exist in the wider society and are reflected in the schools. For example, it would be a grave injustice to ignore the fact that, though School B is not doing as well as School A, that school has more learners that lack the social capital to excel and the school has to deal with societal ills that affect teaching and learning.

## 6.3 IMPLICATIONS

### 6.3.1 For Private Schools

The research confirmed that, just because a school is private, it does not necessarily mean that it offers good quality education. It is therefore important for private schools to invest financially in the non-profit models and policy. When building a model, it is important to study the different definitions of good quality education and strive for that and not merely strive to provide access to schooling.

### 6.3.2 For Policy-Makers

Private schools in post-apartheid South Africa play a critical role in supplementing the demand for access to education, finding effective ways to manage schools and experimenting with different models. It is thus wise for policy makers to forge partnerships with for-profit or non-profit low-fee private schools and device strategies to improve the quality of education in public schools because the range of their learner population is quite similar.

Delivering good quality education is expensive and as such it is important for government to continue offering financial support and perhaps financial management skills to non-profit private schools. Although low-fee private schools are cheaper than elite private schools (and therefore many poor South Africans cannot afford it), with government funding they can at least be accessible to the lower black middle class.

The low-fee independent school sector and the entire private school sector is still relatively small in South Africa and thus a large majority of our learners still depend on public schooling for education. It is therefore important for government to work continuously to improve the quality of education offered. Furthermore, the solutions to the challenges facing our schools do not rest at the level of schools. Thus, schools such as School B that nearly fails to meet the state standards should not take the sole responsibility because there are other broader societal issues that affect schooling that schools do not have control over. Furthermore, for the quality of education and schooling to improve in South Africa, the state should continue to work towards resolving other societal ills such as violence and unemployment which affect learners' social capital and ability to perform at their optimum best.

### 6.3.3 Implications for Further Study

The low-fee independent school sector in South Africa is rather diverse and therefore this research could be replicated or expanded to include a larger sample of low-fee private schools built on different models. The research could be done in other areas, such as schools in townships, inner-city, rural areas or even other provinces. A study could also be conducted to draw a comparison between a low-fee private school and a former Model-C school of a comparable fee. It would be interesting to see if the

extent of the difference in the quality of education provided by a former Model-C school, a low-fee for-profit or a low-fee non-profit schools, considering that low-fee private schools are seen as an alternative for those who can't secure space in former model- C schools.

Lastly, it would be interesting to research what drives parental choice in the private sector. Parental choice and in particular the demand for faith-based education is said to be one of the biggest factors that have contributed so far to the growth of the private sector in South Africa. For example, a study, on a chain of low-fee independent schools based in Pretoria, South Africa found that parents were willing to pay for private education because they believe that teachers in the school are well qualified and will therefore produce better quality education. A study of this nature may uncover other underlying factors driving South African middle-class parents to low-fee private schools.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

The low-fee independent school sector has made a remarkable contribution in ensuring that some learners have access to schools in areas where government has not been able to keep up with the population growth. While low-fee private schools are viewed as an alternative from public schools due to the quality deficit of the latter, it is important to note there are low-fee private schools that offer high quality education but that there are also private schools where the quality of education is questionable. This conclusion is made by examining the quality of the environment that may undermine the quality of learning and teaching that takes place. This includes: teachers' qualification and training, school ethos, resources, learners behaviours and discipline, school's relationship with the broader community and academic outcomes.

In addition, in a country where the public education system is faith-neutral, low-fee private schools ensure that some (black middle and lower middle class) parents have an alternative and can choose a faith-based school.

To sum up, the findings from the study show that there are serious inequalities in the South African education system. Like in the public system, in the low-fee independent school sector, some learners will continue to receive better quality education over others, based on what their parents can afford to pay. If good low-fee private schools expand in the townships, they have the potential to challenge the quality of education in public schools and encourage communities to hold their district and school officials accountable for the kind of education, they see, is possible.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROCESS AND QUESTION SCHEDULE (Experts)

### INTRODUCTION

- Introduce myself as the researcher
- Remind them of the purpose of the research project.
- Give them the research consent form with a copy of the information sheet attached to the back.

- Allow time for clarity seeking questions with regards to the consent form and/or information sheet.

**GO THROUGH THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:**

- Briefly highlight what the interviews will entail and the expectations.
- Remind them that at any given moment they have the right to withdraw from the study.
- They have a right to stop the interview.
- They have the right not answer any questions they are uncomfortable with.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. How do you define quality education?
2. Do you think that Low –cost Private schools are delivering quality education?
3. What contribution has the private schooling sector made in the South African education system, if any?
4. Does the market have a role to play in addressing the challenges in the South African education sector?
5. What indicators should be used in South Africa to measure quality education?
6. The quality of teachers in the sector has been criticized heavily, should government to standardize the teaching profession in the sector?
7. There is no doubt that a large majority of the schools in the sector are producing a good outcome based on the National Senior Certificate, to what extent is this telling of the quality of education
8. What do you think are key drives of the rapid growth of the sector in post-apartheid South Africa?
9. To what extent do you think the upsurge in low-fee private schools is a result of inadequate investment former model C schools by post-apartheid South Africa?
10. With the current shortage of former model-c schools to cater for the rising middle class in the country do you think that low-fee independent schools are an adequate alternative?
11. Is governments financial support for the sector justified, if so, is it adequate?

12. What are your thoughts on the criteria used to allocate subsidies to private schools?
13. Do you think the sector is adequately regulated?
14. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a growing for-profit and non-profit private schooling sector in South Africa?
15. The sector is quite diverse; do you that particular models should be supported over others, why?

Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel will assist me further.

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROCESS AND QUESTION SCHEDULE (Directors)**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Introduce myself as the researcher
- Remind them of the purpose of the research project.
- Give them the research consent form with a copy of the information sheet attached to the back.

- Allow time for clarity seeking questions with regards to the consent form and/or information sheet.

**GO THROUGH THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:**

- Briefly highlight what the interviews will entail and the expectations.
- Remind them that at any given moment they have the right to withdraw from the study.
- They have a right to stop the interview.
- They have the right not answer any questions they are uncomfortable with.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. **Profile of interviewee**
    a. What is your current position?
    b. What has been your contribution to the development of the model of schools?
    c. As a founding director which category best describes you - entrepreneur, philanthropist or social entrepreneur?

2. **Motivation for starting schools**
    a. What inspired you to start this model of low-fee independent schools?
    b. Was expansion into a chain part of the initial plan?
    c. What challenges/ shortfalls have you identified in the South African education system?
    d. How does your model seek to address the challenges you have identified?
    e. How do you define good quality education?

3. **Fee Structure**
    a. What distinguishes your chain of schools from other schools in the sector?
    b. Why did you choose to have the school as a for profit/or non-profit?
    c. What has informed the fees structure for the different models?
    d. The fees at the schools are relatively similar to those of the former model C schools, was the idea to offer an alternative from model C schools?

e. What management style have you adopted and why did you choose this particular model?

4. **School Model**
   a. What is unique about your model of independent schools?
   b. Do you think that the model is making a meaningful contribution to quality education and how?
   c. Why do you think that this model is successful in South Africa?
   d. Why did you choose to situate your school in this particular area that it is in?

**APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROCESS AND QUESTION SCHEDULE (School Principal)**

**INTRODUCTION**

- Introduce myself as the researcher
- Remind them of the purpose of the research project.
- Give them the research consent form with a copy of the information sheet attached to the back.

- Allow time for clarity seeking questions with regards to the consent form and/or information sheet.

**GO THROUGH THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:**

- Briefly highlight what the interviews will entail and the expectations.
- Remind them that at any given moment they have the right to withdraw from the study.
- They have a right to stop the interview.
- They have the right not answer any questions they are uncomfortable with.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. **Profile of interviewee**
    a. How long have you been working in schools and in this particular low-fee private school?
    b. What does your current job in this private school entail?

2. **Inputs**
    a. What is the racial composition of your staff members?
    b. What are the nationalities status of your staff members?
    c. What is the teacher to learner ratio?
    d. What are the subjects that you offer in your phase?
    e. What are the social and racial compositions of your learners?
    f. What is your marketing strategy for the school?
    g. How adequate are the teaching and learning equipment? what technological resources are you using?
    a. How is the teacher's rate of remuneration compared to public schools?
    b. Are the teachers affiliated to any teacher's union?

3. **School Communities**
    a. Which areas do your learners come from? What do parents do on average?
    b. What do you think makes parents to choose the school?

c. Do parents participate actively in the school's activities?
d. Do parents pay the school fees in time?
e. What action is taken when a parent does not pay the fees?

**4. Process**

a. How do you think is the teaching and learning going in your classrooms?
b. How do learners respond in class? Discipline issues?
c. What are the most important values foregrounded in the school?
d. What development programmes have you benefited from in this school?
e. Is there a form of team work in this school?
f. What are the main strategies that you use to improve your learners' results?
g. Beyond learners' results, what else is most important for teachers to do?
h. What are the main administrative challenges that you are faced with?
i. What is the school's language policy?
j. What is your behaviour policy?
k. In which areas do you think the school needs to improve?

**5. Learner Results**

a. How and what motivates you to work for good learners' results?

Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel will assist me further

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROCESS AND QUESTION SCHEDULE (School Teachers)

### INTRODUCTION

- Introduce myself as the researcher
- Remind them of the purpose of the research project.

- Give them the research consent form with a copy of the information sheet attached to the back.
- Allow time for clarity seeking questions with regards to the consent form and/or information sheet.

**GO THROUGH THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL:**

- Briefly highlight what the interviews will entail and the expectations.
- Remind them that at any given moment they have the right to withdraw from the study.
- They have a right to stop the interview.
- They have the right not answer any questions they are uncomfortable with.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**1. Profile of interviewee and of the school**

a. How long have you been working in schools and in this particular low-fee private school?
b. What does your current job in this private school entail? What are the main expectations of the principal regarding your work? Are these realistic?
c. What is your view about the performance of the principal?
d. Is there team work in this school? elaborate
e. What are the most important values foregrounded or promoted by the school?

**2. Inputs**

a. What is the teacher to learner ratio in your classes?
b. What are the subjects that you offer in your phase?
c. What are the social and racial compositions of your learners?
d. How adequate are the teaching and learning equipment? what technological resources are you using if any?
e. What kind of teaching materials are you asked to use?
f. How is the teacher's rate of remuneration compared to public schools?
g. Are you and other teachers affiliated to any teachers' union?

**3.School Communities**

a. What socio-economic background do your learners come from? What do parents do for work on average?
b. What are the main reasons, in your opinion, for the parents to choose the school?
c. Do parents participate actively in the school's activities, which ones?

**4.Process**

a. Have you got problems with learners' discipline? How do you maintain discipline in class?
b. What are the most important challenges for you in class?
c. What are the main strategies you are using to improve your learners' results?
d. How accountable are you for producing such learners' results? And where does this accountability come from? elaborate
e. Beyond learners' results, what else are seen as important indicators of teacher performance?
f. What motivates you to work to improve learners' results?
g. How much support do you get from within or without the school?
h. What teacher development programmes have you benefited from since in this school? elaborate
i. What are the main administrative challenges you are faced with?

Is there anything that you would like to add about your work in the school that you want to say which could be useful for my research?

# APPENDIX E: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONCENT FORM TO EXPERT

**INFORMATION SHEET TO [Experts name]**

[Date to be filled in]

Dear [Name of participant]

My name is Nduvho Theony Ramulongo. I am a registered Master of Education student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg at the School of Education in the Education; Leadership and Policy Studies department under the supervision of Dr Francine De Clercq.

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education, I am conducting a research project titled: The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee independent School Sector in Gauteng. I would therefore like the opportunity to interview you.

The study seeks to examine the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school and the possible implications of a growing low-fee private schooling sector in South Africa.

I have chosen to interview you because you have played a key role in the development of independent school sector in South Africa. Furthermore, you have made a valuable contribution to the debates on low-fee independent schooling and quality education. The data collected from the interview will be of great use for the project as it will provide qualitative information on the development of the low-fee independent school sector and the possible impact that the growth of the sector will have on the South African education system. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to interview you.

This study has received approval from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: 2015ECE033M). There is no identified risk from participating in this research.

The interview is strictly confidential and you may remain anonymous if you wish to and pseudonyms will then be used to report the information. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Please note that, you will receive no reward for participating in the research study. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop for the next 5 years after completion of the project.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Nduvho Theony Ramulongo
310 Esiphethweni Section, Tembisa
541799@students.wits.ac.za
071 916 2627

**CONSENT FORM TO [Experts name]**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

*The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng: A case study of two low-fee independent school models*

My name is: _____

**Permission to collect documents** **Circle one**

I agree that documents, Journals and links to information that I share with the interviewer may be used for the study. YES/NO

**Permission to be interviewed**

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

**Permission to be audiotaped**

I would like to be audiotaped during the interview. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the audiotape at any time. YES/NO

**Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Signature_____ Date_____

# APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONCENT FORM TO DIRECTOR

**INFORMATION SHEET TO [Directors name]**

[Date to be filled in]

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Nduvho Theony Ramulongo. I am a registered Master of Education student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in the School of Education – Education; Leadership and Policy Studies department under the supervision of Dr Francine De Clercq.

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education, I am conducting a research project titled: The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng. I would like to use your school as a research site.

The study seeks to examine the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school and the possible implications of a growing low-fee private schooling sector in South Africa.

I have chosen to interview you because you are one of the founders of the chain of low-fee independent schools that has played a significant role increasing access to education in post-apartheid South Africa. Your chain of schools is of interest to me because it is the biggest chain in South Africa, with unique and innovative model that caters to different economic classes. The data collected from the interview will be of great use for the project as it will provide qualitative information on the motivating factors for establishing the chain of schools. I would greatly appreciate your assistance and permission to interview you.

This study has received approval from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: 2015ECE033M). There is no identified risk from participating in this research.

The interview is strictly confidential and you may remain anonymous if you wish to and pseudonyms will then be used to report the information. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Please note that, you will receive no reward for participating in the research study. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop for the next 5 years after completion of the project.

If you require any further information do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to your response as soon as it is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Nduvho Theony Ramulongo
310 Esiphethweni Section, Tembisa
541799@students.wits.ac.za
071 916 2627

**CONSENT FORM TO THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF [School name]**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

*The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng: A case study of two low-fee independent school models*

My name is: _____

| **Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts** | **Circle one** |
|---|---|
| I agree that formal school documents that stipulate the management structure of [School name]. | YES/NO |

**Permission to be interviewed**

| | |
|---|---|
| I would like to be interviewed for this study. | YES/NO |
| I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. | YES/NO |

**Permission to be audiotaped**

| | |
|---|---|
| I would like to be audiotaped during the interview. | YES/NO |
| I know that I can stop the audiotape at any time. | YES/NO |

**Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

# APPENDIX G: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONCENT FORM TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

## INFORMATION SHEET TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL [School name]

[Date to be filled in]

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Nduvho Theony Ramulongo. I am a registered Master of Education student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg at the School of Education in the Education; Leadership and Policy Studies department under the supervision of Dr Francine De Clercq.

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education, I am conducting a research project titled: The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng. I would therefore like to use your school as a research site.

The study seeks to examine the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school and the possible implications of a growing low-fee private schooling sector.

I have chosen to interview you because you are the principal of the school. Your school is of interest to me because it is one of the oldest schools in the sector. It is also part of a larger chain of low-fee independent schools and it is located in the Johannesburg inner- city. The data collected from the interview will be of great use for the project as it will provide qualitative information on the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school. I would greatly appreciate your assistance and permission to use your school as a research site and to interview you.

This study has received approval from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: 2015ECE033M). There is no identified risk from participating in this research.

The interview is strictly confidential and you may remain anonymous if you wish to and pseudonyms will then be used to report the information. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Please note that, you will receive no reward for participating in the research study. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop for the next 5 years after completion of the project.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to your response as soon as it is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Nduvho Theony Ramulongo
310 Esiphethweni Section, Tembisa
541799@students.wits.ac.za
071 916 2627

**CONSENT FORM TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AT [School name]**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

*The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng: A case study of two low-fee independent school models*

My name is: _____

**Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts** **Circle one**

I agree that formal school documents that stipulate the vision, mission and objectives of the school and school brochures can be used for this study only. YES/NO

**Permission to be interviewed**

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

**Permission to be audiotaped**

I would like to be audiotaped during the interview. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the audiotape at any time. YES/NO

**Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Signature_____ Date_____

# APPENDIX H: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONCENT FORM TO SCHOOL TEACHER

**INFORMATION SHEET TO CLASSROOM TEACHER AT [School name]**

[Date to be filled in]

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Nduvho Theony Ramulongo. I am a registered Master of Education student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in the School of Education – Education; Leadership and Policy Studies department under the supervision of Dr Francine De Clercq.

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education, I am conducting a research project titled: The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng. I would like to use your classroom as a research site.

The study seeks to examine the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school and the possible implications of a growing low-fee private schooling sector in South Africa.

I have chosen to interview you because you are a teacher at a chain of low-fee independent schools. Your classroom is of interest to me because it literacy class for grade 2 learners. The data collected from the interview will be of great use for the project as it will provide qualitative information on the factors that contribute to quality education in a low-fee independent school. I would greatly appreciate your assistance and permission to use your school as a research site and to interview you.

This study has received approval from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: 2015ECE033M). There is no identified risk from participating in this research.

The interview is strictly confidential and you may remain anonymous if you wish to and pseudonyms will then be used to report the information. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequence. Please note that, you will receive no reward for participating in the research study. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop for the next 5 years after completion of the project.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to your response as soon as it is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Nduvho Theony Ramulongo
310 Esiphethweni Section, Tembisa
541799@students.wits.ac.za
071 916 2627

**CONSENT FORM TO CLASSROOM TEACHER OF [School name]**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

*The contribution to quality education and implication of a growing low- fee Independent School Sector in Gauteng: A case study of two low-fee independent school models*

My name is: _____

| **Permission to observe classroom** | **Circle one** |
|---|---|
| I agree that observation of the classroom teaching and learning material and Classroom resources may be conducted | YES/NO |

**Permission to be interviewed**

| | |
|---|---|
| I would like to be interviewed for this study. | YES/NO |
| I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. | YES/NO |

**Permission to be audiotaped**

| | |
|---|---|
| I would like to be audiotaped during the interview. | YES/NO |
| I know that I can stop the audiotape at any time. | YES/NO |

**Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Signature_____ Date_____