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Comparing facility management strategies in public secondary schools in Gauteng: a comparative case study of former Model C schools and previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa

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Abstract

"*The racially discriminatory system of education spending under the apartheid system, has bequeathed to this country and the Gauteng province in particular a public school system in which some schools are much better resourced than most other schools in the system*." (Judge Mbha, 2011, per comm.)

South Africa is a country that has been plagued by many social ills of the past due to its history that segregated the nation in terms of race. The impacts of this have been seen in many sectors within the country and one such area is education. Schools systems in many countries especially those in high poverty areas experience a substantial amount of building decay as compared to schools with excellent building conditions normally found in suburban areas. There is value in maintaining these structures, and as studies have shown (Ogunsaju, 1998; Ehiametalor, 2005) school systems where these resources are properly managed accrue substantial benefit by way of high productivity and reduced student wastage. Though in many other school districts especially those in townships and rural areas, particularly those that were under resourced as a result of apartheid generally do not have a clear policy on physical facilities management as compared to the "former model c" counterparts. This is eminent in an overview presented by Gallie & Sayed et al (1997) that the diversity of management practices has led to the perception that "white" schools are better organized than "black" schools and to increasing numbers of "black" learners seeking enrolment in "white" schools. Now that the new government has projected democracy as the cornerstone of its policies, these perceptions must be highlighted to render holistic solutions to the problems in educational management.

Therefore it is without say that the arguments presented above highlight the variances within the public school system in South Africa especially those relating to the building conditions and the impact that they ultimately have on the learner's outcomes. Hence in order to offer solutions to one of South Africa's most important commodity "education" this research aims to examine the current policies and compare facilities management maintenance methods utilized in former "model c" and former Department of Education (disadvantaged) public schools, and to recommend the methods utilized in schools with excellently maintained building conditions and physical facilities management policies.

Using the case study method of qualitative research, the data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires complemented with interviews. The principals and custodians of school facilities conveyed various levels of understanding of school facilities management policies and implemented them similarly in certain aspects and differently in areas of management. These are visible in the physical fabric condition of the school. Former model c schools facilities are still managed more efficiently.