

THE REINSTATEMENT OF STREET CHILDREN
INTO THE COMMUNITY WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO NEW NATION SCHOOL IN
JOHANNESBURG.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation into street children's re-incorporation into the main stream of formal education. The study looked at how children at New Nation School were assimilated into the mainstream society after having grown up without any authority figure or accessible support structures. The theoretical framework was developed around the educational rights of street children, and the role race, gender, class, homelessness and poverty play in the child's development.

For this qualitative research, six learners were interviewed, though the whole class was considered representative of the population. The researcher used open-ended interviews as well as direct observations to collect data. The findings disclosed that though these street children grew up without any authority figures for a greater part of their lives, they nevertheless exhibited a positive attitude towards a structured life. The efforts of the New Nation School contributed immensely towards the street children abandoning these activities in favour of acquiring healthy activities and positive attitudes towards formal education.

The logo of the University of Johannesburg, featuring two stylized birds facing each other with an open book between them, and the text 'UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG' in a serif font.

The following inferential findings of the study are meaningful. Formal education stands central to increasing the life chances of street children in that it provides them with opportunities to be skilled and sufficiently trained to market themselves competitively in the world of work. Street children remain an integral component of our communities. Their survival and existence is also the responsibility of society and its agencies. It behoves societal members to minimise the risk of losing social security benefits through the inadequate development of society's human capital invested in its children. Street children need to be protected against living the lives of despair, which can lead to their institutionalisation. As such, the larger society has an obligation to support efforts of departmental institutions such as the New Nation School. As South Africans, it is critically clear that condonation of poverty will forever continue to be a formidable scourge, if we leave the street children unattended for, in this way, we shall have invoked the wrath of criminal procreation.

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DEDICATION

This dedication is directed to my closest next-of-kin who have since taken departure from this world.

I solemnly declare my deepest appreciation:

To my father, *Ephraim Motlhaga*, who was called to Higher Service during the first year of this study.

To my sister, *Norlyn*, who died tragically in a car accident three months after my wedding celebration.

Lastly to *Butikie*, my nephew whose fatal death occurred immediately after his graduation as a Bachelor of Arts graduate.



SECTION 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In many Third World Countries, South Africa included, street children are victims of social disintegration and disorganisation. The phenomenon of modernisation driven by industrialisation and its resultant urbanisation are mainly responsible for this social discord. It is generally because of abject poverty that thousands of children abandon their homes. In South Africa it was the infamous policy of Apartheid, which worsened the situation by polarising the society along racial lines. It was the black people who bore the brunt of that policy which tightly controlled employment and schooling, thereby ensuring that living conditions remained squalid. To secure conformity people were subjected to systematic suppression, and even terror (Richter, 1998).

An alarming number of black children have either chosen or have been forced by circumstances, to take responsibility for their own lives on the streets. These external factors alone, however, cannot fully explain why some children take to the streets and others not. The above aspects led the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to initiate a pilot project called Street Children Education project, which would cater for the needs of out-of-school children in Gauteng. In 1994 the number of these children aged between 6 to 14 years was estimated at 70 000. In the same year a task force on out-of-school-children and youth was established. The report, which was published in 1995, recommended that a suitable place should be identified for the education of these street children. This report led GDE to adopt the YMCA School for Street Children in 1996 and renamed it the New Nation School.

The research essay not only focuses on street children but also on their need to be formally educated. The conditions to which street children become exposed are often inhuman and traumatic for human development. Often children who live on

the street do not attend school and their socialisation into the mainstream society disintegrates. In an attempt to assimilate these children into the mainstream society, a school program to reinstate them into the community was designed. As a student of community education, I consider this problem worthy of investigation, since children in this school have been growing up without authority figures, nor support structures. The concern raised is how such children can adapt to the school environment and become reinstated in the society.

One of the social theorists on whose work my investigation will lean is Paulo Freire. As a role player in education, he encourages students to question the system they live in and the knowledge being offered, as well as to discuss the kind of future they want, including their right to access structures of authority. He propagates remaking the school and the society in which the children find themselves (Freire, 1990). The main aim of this study is to determine the impact the New Nation School has on the lives of the street children enrolled there. It is also to find out whether they share the same needs as other school populations, and if so, what these needs are.

The sample consisted of six enrolled children doing grade twelve at the New Nation School. I aim to observe how they function in the school system. Teachers would be interviewed as key informants to this study. In this inquiry I would be investigating whether the street children who have been without authority figures and structures, such as parents or guardians, can be assisted in becoming productive citizens and community members and join the mainstream society successfully.

According to UNICEF (1995) there are different types of street children. Firstly, there are children for whom the street is home, as for them there is no family. Secondly, there are those who work on the street during the day selling flowers, watching parked cars, carrying luggage at the station or selling fruit in the market. This group assists their struggling family with their income. Thirdly there are the

children of the street, who have lost touch with their families and who can rely only on themselves or other like them for survival.

The research is motivated by the fact that the needs of the street children are perceived as being very much the same as those of other children. Street children deserve recognition and appreciation. The need for new experiences and the learning of new skills demand to be addressed if these children are to attain a personal identity. The assumption of the study is that only once this has been achieved will they be able to reach out and establish meaningful relationships with other people.

Street children, however, have no access to education once on the streets and it is this serious disadvantage, which drastically affects their chances of becoming contributing members of society. In order to address these needs, the school should formulate a program geared at helping the children to adapt to mainstream education. The education the child receives should not only reach the child to resume a life spent on the street, but also should empower the child and open up a world of hope (UNESCO, 1995). In order for teachers to address the problem they should be expected to be more of facilitators than educators in the traditional sense. It is necessary to understand the children's diverse background if the programmes are to have any meaningful impact.

The research problem on which I will focus is whether street children can be reinstated into the community after being with out authoritarian figures and necessary support structures during the crucial formative years. To try and respond to the problem, the following issues will have to be considered. Firstly, due to the fact that learners at this school lack a family support system, the task of the school is to ensure that learners leaving the school are armed with more than just further study prospects. The internal and external efficiencies of the school have to be determined. Internal efficiency addresses issues such as the commitment of teachers; the performance of the learners; and the relevance of the curriculum to

them. On the other hand, external efficiency focuses on how well the school prepares pupils and students for their roles in society as indicated by the employment prospects and earning of students. An important matter is the impact of the school system and its contribution to national development.

Barlett (1995:156) believes that the goals of the activities which children are engaged in during their assimilation should be to help them gain self-confidence, self-respect, and human dignity, and to strengthen their trust relationship with each other and those trying to help them.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide the data collection process:

- ❑ What are the educational challenges those street children in formal schooling face?
- ❑ What role can education play in changing their lifestyle?
- ❑ What are the norms, values, skills and attitudes that could be useful to their integration into mainstream society?

1.3 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are to determine the impact the New Nation School has on the lives of the street children who are enrolled. It is also to find out whether they have needs that differ from other school populations and if so, what these needs are, which could help them join mainstream society successfully. With regard to the statement of the problem, the general aims of the research are to investigate:

- ❑ the educational challenges that street children face.
- ❑ their needs while becoming integrated into mainstream education.
- ❑ how the school creates community for the street children.

1.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the research approach selected is known as a qualitative approach. This approach is characterised by the efforts to understand social events from the point of view of persons involved in them. The viewpoints of street children in formal schooling would be recorded.

According to Flick (1998), qualitative research is oriented towards analysing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity, starting from people's expressions and activities in their local context. Creswell (1998) also emphasises that qualitative research is important since the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyses them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language. It is an inquiry that explores a social or human problem.

There are different methods of qualitative data collection. This research will utilise two methods, namely observation and interviewing. Bryman and Burgess (1998) argue that the interview is one of the most intensively used methods of data collection in the social sciences. The sample population would consist of enrolled children at New Nation School. The interviews will be conducted with six learners, three boys and three girls. The learners belonged to the same class, which is the only grade twelve class, consisting of twenty-two pupils. Learners would be observed in class. The teachers would be interviewed as the key informants to this study.

1.5 SUMMARY

The other parts of the research essay will be presented in three sections. Section two will present the theoretical framework for the study. All relevant literature on

street children will be reviewed. Through an analysis of the literature, a thorough discussion on street children will be presented. Section three will focus on data analysis. In section four I will be presenting the findings of this study. Recommendations and suggestions for further research will be forwarded in this section.



SECTION 2

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This inquiry sets out to determine how street children can effectively be assimilated into mainstream society after having spent a substantial number of years on the street. In an attempt to build a theoretical framework for the study, various theories will be presented. An examination of the relevant literature dealing with the educational rights of street children, as well as the impact of race, gender and apartheid will be discussed. The approach to educational needs of street children, together with the attendant implications of the culture of poverty will be put under scrutiny.

2.2. STREET CHILDREN AND SOCIETY

According to UNICEF (1995), there are two categories of street children. The first group are those on the street without family and/or other ties and therefore totally at the mercy of the street. The second group of children is those on the street who are away from home most of the time, yet in some way they are maintaining family ties. Swift (1991) argues that most children on the street are usually also working children. They form a distinct group of street workers, similar to unskilled labourers with low and unsteady income. For example, they work as shoe-shiners and street vendors in order to survive. Work for them is often any income generating activity. These street workers are referred to by Unicef (1995) as children with survival strategies. Supporting Unicef with regard to categorisation, Blunt (1994) observes that street children are those for whom the street is more than their family, has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults.

Deduced from the definition above, two broad categories of street children have now been generally recognised. These are those "on-the-street" maintaining contact with their families and those "of-the-street" with no family contact and living independently. The street children enrolled at New Nation School constitute the first category. Rymberger (1987) points out that most street children are individuals who have left school early and are most likely to engage in criminal activities, have poorer health and lower rates of civil participation.

2.3. EDUCATION RIGHTS OF STREET CHILDREN

Emancipation must mean among other things liberation from the clutches of ignorance because those who lack education cannot function effectively in a modern democracy. Their lack of literacy could contribute to such people not being able to read the constitution of the country; let alone understand what rights and obligations it accords them. The majority of street children cannot read nor write. In the post-apartheid South Africa these children can receive formal education. According to Le Roux (1994), "Education is the conscious and calculated process by which a person gains knowledge and understanding through formal and systematic study". Street children, being in a formal learning environment, should have access to this kind of knowledge. Le Roux (1994) further argues that "Education is also a vehicle by which norms, values and skills are transmitted from one generation to the next".

Uneducated citizens live and operate on the margins of democracy and are prone to manipulation and misuse by both the state and society. Over forty percent of our population is not functionally literate and that does not auger well for the entrenchment of our democracy. Street children are more likely to grow up as these adults and will push up these percentages.

According to the South African Schools Act 1996 (Act no 84 of 1996), education is compulsory from the first day of schooling until the age of 15 for normal children and 18 years for children with special educational needs. Street children often do not attend school because they are outside of mainstream society. This is the problem that the Gauteng Department of Education is aware of. In support of the Schools Act, the curriculum development phase of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) introduced the Street Children Education Project to pilot a curriculum that would cater for the needs of out-of-school children in Gauteng. This was in response to the recommendation made by a task-team on out-of-school children and youth. Blunt (1994:244) supports street children's right to learning by arguing that, unless street children are provided with access to an alternative education, they will be condemned to remain illiterate and ignorant of their national culture. They will be denied the opportunity to develop their individual capabilities and to explore their potential as citizens.

Research has shown that "no treatment program designed for street children can succeed unless the community is prepared to respect, protect, and provide opportunities for them" (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). However, the report of the first National Workshop on Street Children, held in Cape Town in 1987, stated that no legal designation in the Child Care Act existed which allowed for children shelters at which street children could be rehabilitated. The children therefore fell through the system and ended up on the streets (Le Roux & Smith, 1998).

In South Africa it is theoretically possible for a child as young as seven to be arrested, held in custody, charged, tried, convicted and sentenced without the presence of a lawyer or even a parent. Street children, because of their circumstances of being without family or other ties, often suffer these consequences. According to Le Roux and Smith (1998), the law provides little real protection for the street child. Sergiovanni (1994) argues that "real change can only come as a result of the commitments of both the minds and hearts of the total school community". This implies that our minds and hearts as a nation can play a

major role in positively influencing street children as human beings. Their future may project brilliant prospects for development and empowerment.

According to Rafferty (1998), the 1987 Mckinney Homeless Assistance Act makes the following provisions. Firstly, there would be no separate educational system for homeless children. Secondly, the state must adopt policies, which ensure that these children are not isolated or stigmatized. Lastly, the state must ensure that these children have access to the same free, and appropriate public education. The above legislation has relevance for South African education. The unfortunate situation is that most black children still remain victims of non-literacy because during the era of the struggle against apartheid, the slogan has been, "liberation first, education later". The challenge therefore, is that now that we have achieved liberation, we need to attend to the ills of education as part of our legacy, especially in the black communities. The implication is that if this state of affairs is left unchecked, the Street Children are going to suffer more than is presently the case.

Legal barriers to education which street children face need a great deal of attention. They are excluded from school or delayed admission due to officials who require proof of permanent residence or signature of legal guardians. Other formalities such as documentation proof of birth certificates, immunisation records and transportation also contribute to their exclusion.

2.4 THE ROLE OF RACE, GENDER AND CLASS ON HOMELESSNESS

The apartheid system has caused considerable damage to the black community. One example of legislation that affected blacks tremendously was the Group Areas Act. This and other laws have resulted in migrant labour whereby men left their homes in rural areas to seek employment in urban areas. When these men arrived in urban areas, many started new families with urban woman, whilst those at home

were left to their own devices. Poverty drove many young ones away from home to look for some means to survive, many of whom became street children.

The trauma experienced by many black families was enormous. The large number of children loitering the streets may add to the already high rate of crime in the country (Le Roux, 1996). It is estimated that most of the 9 000 street children in South Africa are black. There is no state administered children's home for African children in the urban areas. According to The Star of 17 July 2000, in mid 1999 there were over 25 000 juveniles in prison, an increase of almost 6000 since 1996.

White children in need of social care in South Africa have been adequately provided for by the community and by the state. Conversely, black children in need of social care have been sorely neglected. It is observed by Le Roux (1996) that the street children in South Africa constitute an uncomfortable reminder to this country, of its ignominious past. They are in actual fact, victims of apartheid. The racial character of the street children phenomenon is clearly evidenced in a study by Swart (1998) wherein it emerged that in Johannesburg, with the exception of a few coloureds, they were almost exclusively black.

Turning to the issue of gender, male children are at a disadvantage as compared to their female counterparts. It has been found that there is a preponderance of boys taking to the street life than girls. Le Roux (1996) found that in Johannesburg, as elsewhere in the world, street children are predominately male. Apparently girls are infrequently abandoned when families disintegrate. They are taken in by relatives whose main motives would at times be that they are useful in carrying out household duties. But in the event that they find themselves on the streets, these girls (usually in their teens) wind up as prostitutes, thereby securing accommodation with relative ease.

In many cases the move to street life is an adaptive response to the disorderly experienced of families living in a society of conflict. Thus the move to the streets

often represents a desire to take control of one's life and to displace old values and conditions with new ones. A challenge for society is to reduce the rate at which boys leave their homes. In addressing barriers to gender issues, society must banish the stereotypes of excluding males from the kitchen as this might be a solution to the problem of the street children. If they can be encouraged to perform household duties like baby bathing, nappy changing and baby feeding, they might also feel that they have a sense of belonging and stop seeking fulfillment in the streets.

2.5 THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF STREET CHILDREN

Given the circumstances to which children in the streets are exposed, it is assumed that their educational needs would differ from that of children who never dropped out of school or grew up on the street. This is because street children have been on their own for long periods of time without any authority figures. In contrast, children who never grew up on the street have been brought up in a family environment with at least one or two authority figures. Educators of street children need to understand how the lack of control figures will impact on their schooling and ability to adjust to formal structures.

Although education is regarded as a priority, there are other basic needs that could be barriers to their education, such as health problems, hunger, transportation obstacles, difficulty obtaining school clothes and absenteeism. According to Turkey (1996), one street child interviewed intimated that he came to the city with a friend. He came from a poor family of six and food was scarce. This prompted him, being the eldest, to leave home to earn a living.

This poverty which drives children to the streets leaves educators with a challenge, and according to research, the longer children are exposed to street life, the more they are distanced from possible rehabilitation resources, and thus become absorbed into the street life culture. In most cases the street life culture is one of

the survival of the fittest, where the absence of clear rules makes anybody an authority figure to other street children.

The educational model that these children are subjected to, needs to also take into consideration their out of school needs. Townsend (1994), in his framework of "core-plus" education, explains that the core is a set of state mandated obligations, while the plus is determined by the community itself. Therefore the barriers of street children in education need to be highly considered. This needs to be demonstrated by all students irrespective of their background. Therefore, teachers need to strive to cover a range of goals expected from these traumatised learners.

Many street children are victims of emotional abuse and neglect. These experiences can result in the development of a lack of self-esteem and a high level of social alienation. As a result they may become adults who show high levels of anti-social behaviour and poor adaptive social skills. Therefore, educators need to address these learners' experiences because failure to do so can lead, as Blunt (1994) asserts, to a cohort of adults who become the under class of society. They could become alienated, potentially violent and psychologically disturbed adults due to their experiences as children whose lives have been shaped by hardships, violence and alienation on the street.

Street children need to acquire skills that have immediate applications to their survival. These skills must have the potential to become income-generating or supportive and to be responsive to the needs of the street child. Blunt (1994) points out that educators need to strive to adjust their learning activities to the immediate needs of the street children. Street children need to be employable upon leaving school. It is imperative that these children acquire the requisite skills that may enhance their future employability.

For homeless learners the school must establish a climate of sharing, caring and learning. These can be met as they learn together in formal education because,

according to Vygotsky (Forman et al, 1993) learning should be rooted in a more social context. He says that people learn through interactions with each other. Learners learn better when they work together and when those with more knowledge can help fellow-learners who experience difficulty in learning something. Thus, in Vygotskian language, they enter their Zone of Proximal Development or Zoped. By establishing a caring environment that provides safety, security and some measure of stability, schools can make a significant, and positive difference in the lives of street children. According to Eddowes (1994), teachers can provide a stable, non-threatening classroom environment by establishing routines. Le Roux (1996) suggests that personnel at street children schools should be workshopped. According to statistics, there was a series of workshops held during the 1990s by the state where homeless parents discussed ways in which the school can best serve children exposed to shelters (Le Roux, 1996).

This provision of training for personnel can facilitate the development and delivery of appropriate educators with effective methods by looking at sensitive issues faced by street children throughout their lives. Lastly, besides the emotional impact on children, frequent student mobility makes it more difficult for schools to provide meaningful service, particularly if the child's school records have been lost. In many cases street children tend to attend school seasonally.

2.6 THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING IMPLICATIONS IN A CULTURE OF POVERTY

Education of street children is emerging as a crucial and urgent issue in a number of countries, especially in South Africa after decades of apartheid. Helping street children develop into self-fulfilling and effective citizens in the face of the grossly adverse street environment is a challenge. Poverty is one of the factors that have driven street children to the environment where they are found today. In support of this assertion, Alcock (1993) states that poverty means going short materially, socially and emotionally. It means spending less on food, on learning and on

clothing than someone from an average income. Above all, poverty takes away the tools to build the blocks for the future. It steals away the opportunity to have a life unmarked by sickness, a decent education and a secure home.

Based on this definition of poverty, there have been different causes affecting children, such as structural changes in the economy, unemployment rates and changes in programs where government fails to provide benefits for poor people. Another contributing factor to poverty is the structural changes in the family such as an increase in child-bearing outside of marriage, an increase in single parent households due to divorce and an increase in maternal employment without the assurance of adequate child care (Fitzgerald, et al, 1995).

Given the above circumstances on the background of poverty it is clear that children from a poverty culture do not appear to be "school prepared" at the appropriate age. Malnutrition has contributed to the tardy development of their brains. The solution recommended by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC), (1981) is that education of high quality should be directed at the special needs of the poverty-culture child. Often a poverty-culture child, especially one from a non-supportive milieu, has problems in the formal schooling situation.

Fitzgerald and associates (1995) agree that "the poverty-culture child must be equipped for entry into the mainstream education". He suggests that poverty children could benefit from a skills oriented curriculum, which will equip them with basic literacy, recreational activities, practical and vocational skills, which may result in finding jobs. Poverty has very serious repercussions for children. A 1998 study by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation found that young men serving jail sentences or were involved in crime were either abandoned or thrown out of their homes, or had to live with a step-father and/or step-mother who rejected them.

Street children are often paid badly while they work as car washers, or polishing people's shoes in order to make a living. This low income results in malnutrition, ill health and low energy levels, which in turn contribute to lower productivity and the increased likelihood of unemployment. Where adult labour has been unable to meet the needs of the family, child labour has become a necessity. As such, children who work cannot attend school and the failure to receive an education denies them access to job training and the acquisition of skills for employment.

2.7 THE FAMILY AS A SOURCE OF SUPPORT IN EDUCATION

According to Le Roux (1994), one of the obligations that a family has is to educate its members. In the past fathers used to go out to seek employment, while mothers assumed responsibility for the education of their children. As time went on this trend had to change due to economic factors, which began to impact on families. Because of their economic status, mothers were obliged to join the fathers and work outside the family, changing the key function of the family. Education of children is becoming the sole responsibility of the schools.

According to Unicef (1995), there are basic needs that the family is bound to provide for children, such as food, shelter, and security. These are core factors, which drive children from their families to the streets. Most street children were not protected from external threats, and not given a sense of well-being and security.

Le Roux (1994) points out that the family is the only societal institution that can provide for the physical care of its members in an affectionate and caring environment. Although it is recognised that welfare institutions are there to provide, in my opinion, they cannot be an absolute substitution of the family. Again, our concern is family and education as the first institution where a child starts to interact with others in the family. Family is the genesis of the child's interaction with other human beings. When children grow up in the streets, they

lack this foundation, because some leave at a very early age when they still need moral and social guidance. This interaction and formulation of relationships extend to the external world.

When the child starts school and is exposed to the other societal institutions such as churches and clubs, it is within the family that the rules for interaction usually are taught and internalised. Therefore, the family provides an environment that reflects societal norms and values that can equip its members for integration into the community at large. Apart from the above aspects on family, another major role that a family performs is as a feedback guidance system. The family plays a major role in teaching a child how to relate to the outside world, and get feedback and reinforcement. In a world of rapid change, children also play an important role in bringing information from the school into the family. It is assumed that families often spend evenings sharing what happened at school and parents sharing their daily work experiences. Street children who are housed, go back to shelters where they are faced with their supervisors, e.g. social workers or matrons.

Le Roux and Smith (1998) suggested that institutionalised racism may have induced the development of a host of disorders among black children as well as their care givers, which has led to a marked inability to defer gratification, and an extremely distorted negative sense of self. They also observed that apartheid steadily deprived the black family of its ability to provide a structured nurturing environment for children.

The point, in short, is that the emotional stress accompanying violence negatively affects relationships with family, peers, teachers and others. Thus negative social conditions have influenced the growth of the street child phenomenon in South Africa. Due to increased family disintegration, children landing up on the streets are on the increase. Blunt (1994) believes that there are many reasons that repel fathers from families, which also cause abandoned mothers to take immediate action. He points out that some do this deliberately and seek an easy alternative

unencumbered by dependants, while other fathers are incarcerated for petty crimes or become sick or injured and are unable to continue to support a family. These fathers then seek alternatives to survive themselves. Some mothers seek a solution by replacing their missing or non-productive partners with ones that are able and willing to maintain the family or find, through illicit means, the income required to support the family.

Regarding the comparison between children from families with two parents and those from single parent ones, Saha (1997) points out single parent children are more susceptible to pressure from their friends to engage in deviant behaviour, have lower academic achievement and are more delinquent, especially in father-absent families, and have greater social and psychological problems. But on the other hand, an argument comes that statistical relationships between family structure and children's outcomes do not, without further exploration, necessarily support the proposition that living in a single-parent family is educationally or emotionally unfavourable for children. In general, the quality of parent-child interactions during childhood and adolescence has important associations with school-related outcomes, which lead to eventual social-status attainment of young adults.

Children who land up on the street often grew up with no father figure in the family structure. According to Saha (1997), the absence of fathers has a particular socialisation influence in that these absences decrease children's motivation for achievement and interferes with normal psychosexual development. This results in poorer academic performance and premature dropping out from school. The worldwide statistics had proved that most street children are boys. This could be because the absence of a role model is more detrimental for boys.

Lastly, according to Gracenin (1994), there is often a clash of cultures between school and street children behaviour since the latter's behaviour is based on survival of the fittest. Due to a lack of family support they live by their wits and

develop the ability to act quickly and decisively. This means their concern is with instant gratification. In school, these children exhibit self-defeating behaviours in that they sabotage their own success. In most cases their first encounter with adults is typically hostile. It is only after a measure of trust has been established, that one can act with authority when dealing with them.

2.8 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF AND REACTIONS TO STREET CHILDREN

According to Turkey (1996), most street children perceive themselves as unwanted and rejected. The youngest street children, mostly at the age of five years, have developed habits of begging for money and searching for food, while their older counterparts tend to hide away during the day to avoid contact with those members of the community who denigrate their actions. They are often hunted by the police and are driven to acts of desperation in their fight for survival.

Blunt (1994) asserts that in most cases many street children require protection from physical and sexual abuse at the hands of family members, employees, other street children, the police and community vigilantes. In August 1990, Amnesty International gave a report of hundreds of street children who were shot by a vigilante group comprising of off-duty policemen and private security guards. Blunt (1994) reported on the 16 year old death squad victim in Guatemala City as follows: when the educators returned to the jail to pick Beso up, the police chief said. 'You can get him out of the jail, but you can't save his life'. Beso escaped from Sunabern (a government child welfare institution) shortly thereafter and a few days later his bullet-riddled body was found under a bridge. He had been tortured before his death - evidently a message from the killers to other street children. This could become the reality for South Africa street children too if their number continues to increase.

Unfortunately, street children's bad experiences with the authorities generally make them suspicious of any official. Research has pointed out that in America Street children tend to avoid seeking medical care because they find health care facilities intimidating and health care providers to show a "lack of tolerance of their kinds and their lifestyle". Le Roux and Smith (1998) concluded from their investigation that most people in communities have mixed feelings about street children. They exhibit a mixture of pity, guilt, anger and frustration, and at the same time these communities do not know what their behaviour should be towards street children. Some members of the communities express fear towards street children. One policymaker observed that some street children grow up in a violent environment, are totally undisciplined, and saw them as a dangerous group of children.

In most cases Street children have much the same needs as other children, but these are seldom fulfilled. I have observed in Johannesburg that street children rely on the general public for their day-to-day existence. They perform duties like washing cars, directing parking spaces, carrying shopping bags etc. It is seldom that recipients communicate appreciation for these services. Instead, the transaction invariably takes the form of a handout given to the child to get rid of him. Accordingly, these children, in begging, play on people's guilt feelings. According to the literature reviewed, street children live under a constant threat of violence. Many members of the public believe that by maltreating these children they will disappear.

2.9 SUMMARY

In this section relevant literature on street children were reviewed. This section also emphasises the fact that street children are children like any other, and as educators we need to share responsibility for their growth. They need to be treated with dignity and respect. Section three will provide a detailed description of the process of data collection and data analysis.

SECTION 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the processing of the data collected, as well as a presentation of it. Firstly I will give a detailed description of the setting. The first setting is the shelter, which accommodates the children who are the population of the study, and the second one is the New Nation School, which they attend. Afterward I will discuss the methods that I used to collect data.

3.2 SETTING OF THE INQUIRY

The shelter I visited, houses some of the children who form part of the population of the inquiry. The shelter is situated at 90 Albert and De Villiers Street in Johannesburg. Paradise shelter is for boys and Usindiso for girls. The Rhema Church of South Africa, based in Randburg, funds these shelters. The shelter is for all racial groups: White, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The first floor of the shelter consists of the reception area, with a security guard and receptionist on duty, and a big kitchen. The same floor houses a dining hall, which is used for eating, morning devotions and Sunday Church service.

Boys at Paradise are grouped according to their ages. The first group is six to eleven. The second group is twelve to fifteen and the third group is sixteen to eighteen. Not all the children attend school. Some do literacy classes during the day with the assistance of child-care workers. Boys are involved in different sports like boxing, and wrestling and have a special football coach. Apart from sport there are Bible classes every Monday at 6pm. These boys do their homework between four and five in the afternoon with the help of childcare workers or volunteers from tertiary institutions.

The school was registered as a Model C school and was opened as a state school in 1996 by the former MEC for Gauteng, Ms Mary Metcalfe. The school is situated in Vrededorp in the city of Johannesburg. The majority of pupils enrolled at the New Nation School is from Johannesburg shelters and are bussed to the school daily. At the moment the enrollment is 658, consisting of approximately 400 boys and 258 girls. The school caters for grades 1 to 12, with a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40. The school had one class for each grade. The teacher population consists of 16 Blacks, two Whites and one Indian. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) pays the salaries of all the teachers, except for two teachers who are paid by the School Governing Body (SGB). The population for the study was the twenty-two grade twelve learners.

3.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

It has been explained in section one that for the purpose of this study, the research approach selected is the qualitative approach. Silverman (2000) points out that qualitative research is important because it avoids statistical techniques and the mechanics of qualitative methods. The study firstly used open-ended interviews to collect data from students about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. The researcher used an interview guide, which is helpful, as questions are not direct but give latitude to probe the participants for more information.

According to Silverman (2000), these open-ended interviews help the researcher record respondents' answers, which are facts, events or internal experiences. During the interview participants were asked questions about their present educational experience as compared to street life where there was no education offered to them. In this approach, the researcher managed to access various stories or narratives through which participants described their world of experience before they registered with New Nation School.

Interviews are important because learners' flexibility is tested, and the issue of subjectivity helps them to come out with their own opinions concerning the research subject. Proceeding from the premise that the learners are street children, the individual interviews avoided sensitive non-educational issues. The interviews were conducted over a period of three days.

During data collection the researcher used the in-depth interview. In-depth interviews allowed the researcher to acquire specific responses. Silverman (2000) views a tape-recorder as a valuable resource during the interview. It allows the researcher to return to the data in its original form as often as she/he wishes. The information is also flowing, as there is no note taking, which distracts the attention of the participants. The participants gave the researcher permission to use the tape on condition that none of the New Nation staff members should have access to the information.

For the purpose of providing a clear picture, the interviews were conducted on a person-to-person basis. Strauss and Corbin (1990:21) support the view that the researcher should gather data and present it in such a manner that the "informants speak for themselves". This helps in giving an honest account with little or no interpretation or even interference with those spoken words. This approach helped the researcher in acquiring exact experiences from the conversation through the use of the tape. Participants reported on their past experiences on the street and their present experiences as learners in formal education.

Flick (1998) points out that the role of observation is central to the history of qualitative research. Observations enable the researcher to find out how something factual works or occurs. The school manager made appointments on my behalf with teachers of the grade twelve class. After the meeting three subject teachers were selected for classroom observation. The researcher conducted observations during the Biology, Afrikaans and English sessions. During the Biology learning activity, participants were free, interacting with their activity, which was, the eye.

The activity was learner centred, the teacher was facilitating the activity and also probing participants with open-ended questions. Although learners were aware of my presence, their participation was exciting throughout the lesson. They were asking the teacher for clarity where they were not satisfied with the explanations on the functions of the eye.

In the classroom situation, the non-participant observation was used. This approach helps the researcher to record the flow of events. Behaviour and interaction could continue as they would without the presence of the researcher's interruptions. During this time, I took notes without interrupting anything that learners were engaged in, and was an observer.

After data collection I started to do content analysis, which according to Patton (1990), is to read your observation and interview notes, and the organising of data into themes. Lastly, I had to code the data. I looked for statements that go together and those that answer my research questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that coding is part of analysis. The researcher reviews a set of field notes, transcribes or synthesises and dissects them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact.

In the process of interpretation of data, a number of different procedures can be distinguished, such as open coding, axial coding and selective coding. I started with open coding where the data was broken down, conceptualized and put back together in a new way. While coding I used constant comparisons of phenomena, concepts of questions, which are addressed to the research. I then used categories which, according to Flick (1998), refer to the summary of concepts into generic concepts where one elaborates on the relations between concepts and generic concepts.

Lastly, axial coding was used. Flick (1998) views this as the process of relating subcategories to a category. These methods helped the researcher in bringing

together the categories that are most relevant to the research questions. I used different colours to single out information from my participants in order to identify different outstanding ideas or issues and come up with themes.

After I analysed the data, the themes that were identified were: accountability, responsibility, authority and discipline, which relate to educational challenges faced by street children and the role that education, can play.

3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

New Nation School consists of grade one to grade twelve learners. The research population was confined to the grade twelve class since they are matured and have a history as street children. The other important motivation is, this group is about to exit their Further Education and Training (FET) phase, and therefore they have more information about their experience at this school. The class consists of ten girls and twelve boys. The whole class was considered representative of the population. Interviews were conducted during their break in order to avoid interfering with their studies. The sample consisted of three boys and three girls.

I started out by gathering information on the origin of the participants. Table 3A reflects this information. Pseudonyms were used for all the respondents.

TABLE 3 A Reflection of participants' origin

Participant	Province of origin	Age
Tebogo	Gauteng	18
Bothoboile	North West	20
Donald	Kwa-Zulu Natal	23
David	Kwa-Zulu Natal	18
Thato	North West	18
Elias	Northern Province	20

The geographic location of participants shows that these children come from the nine provinces of South Africa, which suggests that the problem of street children is a national phenomenon.

I also wanted to determine whether their parents were present in their earlier lives while growing up.

Table 3 B: Parental presence in life

Participants	Father	Mother	Caregiver
Tebogo	NA	D	GM
Bothoboile	NA	D	M
Donald	NA	A	AU
David	D	D	AU
Thato	NA	D	BP
Elias	A	A	BV

Codes: M = Mother, BP= Both Parents, B = Brother, AU = Aunt, GM = Grandmother.

Table 3 B informs us about these street children's family background. Out of six participants, only one had both parents. The majority grew up with no mothers and absent fathers. A theme that was clearly identified is growing up without both parents. Participants were asked about the caregivers in their lives prior to their departure. The table shows us that before they left their homes, their caregivers were not a biological parent, but another family member. Five out of the six said that their mothers were the source of income prior to her death. While these children lived with caretakers there was ill treatment and favouritism of others over them. These unbearable conditions forced them out of their homes.

3.5 TEACHER LEARNER RELATIONSHIPS

The community in which street children grow up, differs from other communities. There is an absence of authority figures. It was assumed that they would have a negative view of mainstream society. The following interviews demonstrate how

the quality of the relationship between educator and learner is crucial for learning to take place.

Six participants responded as follows:

- Tebogo : Sometimes I blame myself for things happening here, learning under pressure is not learning. Teachers some time expel you from class if you argue a lot.
- Bothobile : It's good, doing something wrong you get chased away. I like the way they teach us.
- Donald: I take them as teacher-scholar-relationship, do not get too close to them.
- David : I understand them, we understand each other and share point of view. When I am behind with studies, they call me to the staff room, to pull up my socks.
- Thato : I discuss my problems with some of them, they are always supportive. Although at times is not easy.
- Elias : I like my class teacher, in fact all teachers are okay, but they chase you out of class while not doing your work.

During the interviews, I asked the participants to tell me about their adjustments to formal school.

Table 3 C: Learners' response to Authority

Participants	Unit	Categories
1. Tebogo	I feel teachers are wrong to punish us; you have a reason why? Teachers must understand your problems.	Negative response to punishment
2. Bothobile	Teachers have to punish us, we are still children (learners). Punishment helps us to do our work.	Positive response towards punishment
3. Donald	It is not right for teachers to punish grade twelve learners. We are experienced, responsible and matured.	Too old for punishment
4. David	Rather beat me, why should I be suspended? I hate it; it keeps you away from school while other people are learning.	Corporal punishment is better than suspension
5. Thato	I think its right and also wrong, the more you go outside the class while teaching is going on, the more you loose.	Negative and also positive
6. Elias	Yes, when misbehave you have to be punished, you have to abide to rules, why not	Punishment and justified rules are important

After categorising the data, I then followed a process of pattern formation. This means that all the categories that are related are grouped together for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. The following table is the interpretation of the findings from the units.

Table 3 D: Interpretation of findings

Categories	Patterns
Negative	Teachers are wrong to punish
Positive response Its worthy	I think its right teachers have to punish
Experienced	Grade twelve learners are matured

3.6 OBSERVATION OF TEACHER LEARNER INTERACTIONS:

In most cases, if one is really to understand a group of people, one must engage in an extended period of observation, in order to collect data on teacher and learner interactions. I observed in two class sessions. The first was the Biology lesson and secondly the Afrikaans and English period. As a non-participant observer, I was free to engage in writing notes on the flow of events. It gave me the opportunity to study behavior and interactions. During these non-participant observation sessions the learners were aware of my presence, which at some stage did affect participation.

The following excerpt comes from the observational data recorded during Mr Mpapele's Biology sessions:

Good Afternoon: Tony helps me to put the chart on the board.

Cyril: Jump, Sir I will help you; we have to be responsible, we want to pass Biology.

Elias: Sir can we go back to the functions of the eye, before you continue with the activity.

Sir: Yes its good to do revision on the previous activity; it shows you are accountable for your studies. (Teacher facilitates the activity. The activity was learner centered).

Carl: Sir what is actually the function of the retina; I mean the black portion of the eye.

During the classroom observation, I observed that learners had a diagram of the eye. They were all focussing on the object, discussing the different parts of the eye, and their functions. The activity was learner centered as some learners kept on stopping the teacher for clarity about the functions of the eye. What I observed was, for the most part of the session, they obeyed and listened attentively.

The following observation data was recorded during the English session of Mr Mohale:

Good Morning Pupils: How do you feel, its spring! Lets open windows.

Teacher: Touch the wall next to you.

Learners: Yes, yes, it's so warm!

Teacher: Our activity is a poem on page 21 of your setwork ' Mending Wall'

Botho: Read the poem for us. She read the whole poem.

Sir: I can't pronounce this word, which one, she starmark.

Sir: Its consequences. Lets look for its meaning in the dictionary.

Donald: After checking the meaning it means, you account for your actions learners loved!!!

Elias: Does it mean the theme of the poem is accountability?

Sir: Let us be in pairs, read together with your partner, then we will analyse the theme. They all read quietly together

Learners were interacting with the poem. The teacher wanted the learner to understand the implications of one's actions. The theme related to personal accountability and that one must be accountable for one's work and actions.

3.7 FINAL CONFIGURATIONS

The following categories were identified after data analysis:

- Discipline
- Authority
- Accountability
- Responsibility

Learners stated that, even if they had been without authority figures, rules had to be negotiated. Some felt that they needed to be punished, while others felt that they were too mature to be punished. They gave reasons for their misbehavior. For example, some mentioned during interviews about lack of concentration in class, they think about their past experience during lessons.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this section the data that the inquiry generated were displayed. The study investigated the educational needs of street children, in formal schooling. Section four will discuss the findings and recommendations concerning this study.



SECTION 4

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This, the last section of the inquiry, will provide the discussion of data that was collected. The categories have already been presented in section three, they were:

- Discipline
- Authority
- Accountability
- Responsibility

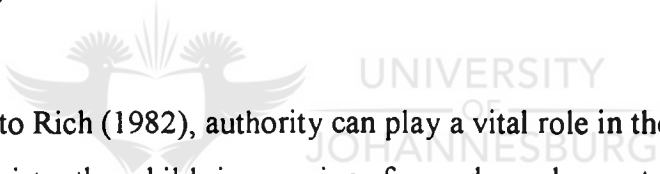
4.2 DISCIPLINE

Most street children have been without authority figures during a crucial time in their development. The purpose of the formal mainstream schooling is to encourage them to adjust to rules and become responsible community members. However, rules are often equated with punishment. Participants feel that punishment must be implemented through negotiations. They feel that they have reasons to commit an offence. Street children mostly are undisciplined and follow the bad examples set by their peers when they realise nothing will happen to them. Since one of the aims is for these learners to be reinstated into the community, the school is trying to use rules fairly and consistently. The participants are aware that rules that are broken are dealt with immediately and therefore they resort to absenteeism if they are to face disciplinary action. Some participants mentioned that they hate punishment when they are late. They would rather absent themselves from school on that particular day. This constant enforcement of the rules and consistent application of the corrective actions is an effort from the school to change improper behaviour. I observed during classroom observations

that learners who did not do homework were kept out of the class during the lesson. According to participants, punishment whereby expulsion was implemented was wrong. They believed corrective actions should not become more severe and unpleasant for the learner.

Participants felt that even if the learner continued with his or her misbehaviour the punishment should not become more intense or harsh. During the interviews the majority reacted negatively towards expulsion. They felt it was not educationally sound to have learners out of school. They felt the school should introduce alternative measures of discipline, which would allow learners to continue with their schoolwork. Although some participants were of the opinion that if learners continued to jeopardize the learning environment they should be eliminated from the school, they could not provide an alternative solution. The main issue was to reinstate them back into the community.

4.3 AUTHORITY



According to Rich (1982), authority can play a vital role in the process of growing up. It assists the child in moving from dependence to independence and interdependence. During the interviews some participants were showing a lack of self-confidence and some exhibited some form of rebellion. One participant said that she did not know whether she was wrong in accusing the teacher of being stupid when he call them stupid in class. Some learners acted rebelliously towards authority because for most of their lives they had functioned independently. The felt power was used against them to carry out learning.

During the interviews one participant mentioned that learning under pressure was not learning. Due to the circumstances under which these learners had grown up, teachers used threats to encourage learning, which resulted in some of them rejecting authority by dodging school and studying independently at their shelters.

Teachers stated that they were faced with two types of rules, the academic and the institutional, which were used to implement the school and classroom policies.

4.4 ACCOUNTABILITY

The concept of accountability means having to answer for one's actions, particularly the results of those actions. A main objective of this school is to teach learners to account for their actions. Most learners understood this during the learning process. Street children are used to situations of handling money for themselves, and are unable to cope with strict budgetary constraints when they arrive at shelters. These learners become trapped in a situation of reverting to prostitution and some to stealing. This happened during my second round of interviews when two of the interviewees went missing at school for a number of days. When the school manager inquired from their shelter co-ordinator as to their whereabouts, it was alleged the two girls had gone back to prostitution.

It is crucial and important for the learners and the school to work hand in hand to accomplish this mission. The school should put in place a support structure, which should only be stopped after learners had passed their grade twelve and are ready for tertiary education. Learners also should develop their self-esteem and pride, and not allow themselves to be lured by money. These learners learnt skills of coping with life, which often are alien to the principle of accountability. Learning is a co-operative venture between the learner and the teacher. This co-operation is important in the learning process of the learners. They will in future empower others about their history and their success as community members.

4.5 RESPONSIBILITY

Townsend (1994) argues that new educational programmes should satisfy the need to be realistic, relevant and responsive to community needs. During the interviews participants mentioned that this school was very helpful. It had helped in reducing the number of street children by accommodating them at school and shelters, which is the core community concern.

Some participants mentioned that there was harmony and good relations between them and their teachers. These were also observed during the class visit where I came across educators subscribing to Freire's theory of the "liberating educators". Although these learners were street children, educators had faith that they could perform. They had and showed love, as was demonstrated during interviews when some stated that they fetched their educators from staff rooms even if they were only five minutes late for their class. These educators practice Freire's fundamental effort of education, which is to help with liberation of people. The educators who were key informants during the study, mentioned that learners needed that liberation. They were eager to learn because they had noticed that education was the only weapon that could liberate them and help them survive in future.

Freire's ideas, where educators pose problems derived from learners' life experiences and social issues in a mutually created dialogue existed during their learning activities. During the class observations, an Afrikaans educator was discussing a poem about 'wreaths' and how grandparents needed to be taken care of. Learners were questioned on their existing knowledge and there was dialogue. The learners were involved in a social action of empowerment. Critical methods by which learners questioned the existing knowledge prevailed during the learning activity. What I observed was that the teacher was involving the learners, not using the old methods where learners were passive participants. The activity was learner centered and where arguments cropped up, the educator had to address

them and provide clarity on some concepts while learners were allowed to ask questions in the discussions. Freire (1970) argues that the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness, which would result from their intervention in the world - as transformers of that world.

4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

What I found after conducting this research is that each and every individual has time to consider changes in his/her life. According to Townsend (1994), managing change relies upon the individual's attitude towards the direction of such change. What I came across in the research was the realisation that all street children have the potential to change, as they have positive attitudes towards life. Every individual has the potential to change, because change is directly related to the level of the individual's understanding of, and commitment of that change. During the interviews, some stated that they were prostitutes, but after they had made contact with this school, they changed and resorted to pursuing education. Others mentioned that they had been involved in stealing but had now changed their attitude to face up to their responsibilities.

This is in line with the core-plus concept, because they were involved in the decisions affecting their future. Street children at New Nation School are empowered to make decisions about the functioning of their school. They feel, unlike in the streets, that they have a sense of belonging. Their voice can be heard by sponsors and senior management of the department of education since some of them form part of Learner Representative councils (LRC) at school level.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to South Africa's social and political past, many children, especially black street children, never had access to formal education. The community and

government need to redress this backlog in education. The community must practice "Ubuntu" to uplift one another. Those who are poor, and therefore unable to provide for themselves, need support and improvement of their living conditions. Although the New Nation School has made significant efforts to address the educational needs of street children, this benevolent action requires replication through the establishment of similar institutions in the Gauteng province. In this way, the country shall have landed assistance to those who suffered the socio-political-economic oppression during the apartheid era. It is schools in the category of the New Nation Institution who would effect meaningful repairs to these damages.

Owing to time constraints in completing this study, it has been difficult for the researcher to include more class-grades in the sample. I delimited the study to only grade twelve. If time had permitted, the researcher would have conducted this study with a larger sample, including more classes, using both qualitative as well as quantitative research tools. It would therefore be appropriate to suggest that further research be conducted at other parallel schools in South Africa to attain this goal. Only the educational needs of children at New Nation School were researched, thus making the findings limited to a narrower scope than would have been the case with a more detailed and thorough investigation.

4.8 SUMMARY

The research problem can be viewed as constituting the necessity to investigate the circumstances under which street children lived and their rightful need to be educated. The assumption relates to the question of whether street children could be reinstated into the community after being deprived of authority figures and the necessary support structures during the crucial years of development. In carrying out the research, cognisance had to be taken to ensure that the views of street children at the New Nation School were meticulously recorded about education. The advent of the New Nation School heralded the emergence of a haven for street

children. One of this school's outstanding achievements is the betterment of the street children's welfare and protection that guarantees their reinstatement in the formal education sector and re-incorporation into the normal social stream. In addition, New Nation School has also fostered healthy attitudes of community ownership if measured against the social benefits of continuing affection and encouragement. The New Nation School also serves a multiferous advantage in terms of providing for the social, emotional and spiritual needs of these children.

The research population was confined to the class of Grade 12 learners on the basis of their maturity and history as street children. The experimental (sample) group comprised six learners who were each subjected to an open-ended interview as an exercise of conducting an investigation underpinned by a qualitative approach. The research was extended to the classroom situation where a non-participant observation method was used. In turning around the lives of these children, the teachers lavished their love, support, dedication and feelings of security in order to promote an enabling environment for their proteges.

The findings are to the effect that: while the learners accept discipline, they believe that corrective actions should not become severe and unpleasant for the learner. Authority can play a vital role in the process of growing up, as it assists the child in developing from dependence to independence and interdependence. Some learners act rebelliously towards authority because for most of their lives they functioned independently and cannot accept the use of power in forcing them to learn. On the other hand teachers contend that they have to use academic and institutional rules to implement the school and classroom policies. The school should put in place a support structure for learners throughout their schooling life, which will facilitate their development in attaining the goals of accountability. The school has succeeded in reducing the number of street children by accommodating them as redress to the community concerned. Educators expressed faith in the learners' ability to perform educationally and socially. Educators also subscribed to Freire's theory of "liberating educators" by practicing its recommendations,

while learners were eager to learn as they realised the power of education as a tool to empower them.



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INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Student Relationship with teachers
Student Relationship with management

C: MANAGEMENT

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D: TEACHERS

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E: COMMUNITY

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Response to them

F: CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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