



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

REPORT ON RACISM IN SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF HOERSKOOEL ELLISRAS



[An attempt to collapse artificial boundaries that exist between black and white learners and work with and across race at Hoerskool Ellisras]

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Foreword by MEC: ND Masemola

In 1994, with the first democratic elections in the republic of South Africa and led by the first black president of South Africa, comrade utata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the people of South Africa made a commitment to break with racist and undemocratic practices of the apartheid years. I do not need to remind readers about that painful past where the majority of the people of South Africa were treated as second class citizens with very little rights if any.

Across government departments and different spheres of government - National, Provincial and local - we put in place programmes that addressed the ills of the past and stated very clearly, that not a single person should be discriminated against and all people should be treated as equal. In Education, which I now led provincially, we said learners should be given equal access and opportunities. It is the commitment of the state with all its spheres of influence.

I was then surprised when Concerned Parents in Lephalale presented me with a memorandum of demands, which essentially showed racist practices at Hoerskool Ellisras. I promised them an in-depth study of the problems they identified and immediately established a task team to look into them. This report represents a substantive investigation of the issues raised and it provides recommendations that I will be working on. I present the report to all those involved in education, politics and community development. I would also like to thank the members of the task team that produced this excellent report.

It is important to emphasise that since racism has been expunged from South African statutory books, it does not mean the practice has been totally eradicated from the face of South African landscape. We need to be vigilant and guard against subtle and covert forms of racism and ensure equal educational opportunities to all children.

Executive Summary

The report investigated allegations of differential treatment of learners that is based on race at Hoerskool Ellisras. It also examined programmes that the school has devised to deal with issues of racial tension among the different races at the school. This investigation emanated from a memorandum of demands submitted to the MEC by a section of the parent community at the school. The MEC established a task team to thoroughly investigate the allegations and broaden the scope by examining school integration.

The data upon which the report is based was collected through structured face-to-face interviews with selected key stakeholders; analysis of relevant school documents such as admission policies, subject packaging, code of conduct, etc; and observations of school practices. Extensive amount of time was spent interviewing a broad section of the school community, including district and circuit officials.

Key findings of the investigation are as follows:

1. Management of the school has done very little towards **racial integration** among learners. White learners keep their place and so do black learners and this cannot be condoned as cultural differences. And in most cases black teachers teach black learners and the same applies to their white counterparts.
2. The **admission policy** of the school allows black learners to be admitted, but the school's transformation agenda and efforts towards school desegregation are very limited. There is little evidence that suggest the school is making an effort to transform from its racial past to reflect the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of non-racialism and access to education by all.
3. Annual **school fees** is set at R900.00 per month per learner and when this is taken together with other additional fees charged by the school, opportunities for poor families to have their children in this school are restricted severely.

4. The school has introduced a complicated **curriculum packaging** which prevents English speaking learners in general but Blacks in particular access to certain subjects such as Electrical Engineering and Mathematics. Before 2011 no black learner could register Information Technology class.
5. **Recruitment of teachers** is said to be purely on the basis of merit – having the relevant qualifications, experience and ability to speak Afrikaans. Blacks do not bother to apply because of language (Afrikaans). But that black teachers only offer languages and to black learners is a very worrying phenomena and does not bode well for transformation.
6. Five black parents have been co-opted to be members of the **School Governing Body** and in the light of little efforts to transform the school to date, their participation in the SGB should be given powers like all others.
7. **Fights** in the school have racial overtones as in most cases it is between black and white boys.
 - 7.1. The school management regards these fights as minor issues that do not warrant serious attention by management.
 - 7.2. The case of Mabela was not attended to in a fair and just manner. The reasoning of the School Governing Body and the Principal is that it is a minor issue when one boy has his jaw broken by another and no real steps are taken to ensure that the victim gets recourse in the school.
8. From the evidence gathered, **Register Classes** only serve as tokenism of racial integration of learners.
9. **Circuit Office's** role and support in ensuring that the school transform is very questionable. According to the Circuit Manager the issue of Hoerskool Ellisras has been blown out of proportion and does not warrant the intervention of the MEC and the District.
10. The school has widened its **feeder zone** to accommodate schools such as Marken and Swaartwater primaries in the Baltimore Circuit and Vaalwater in the Vaalwater Circuit. The effect of this is that it has blocked out of the school the residence of Lephale.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings the following recommendations are made. It is important to read the recommendations in relation to the programme of action attached to the report (Appendix A) as some of the recommendations should be acted upon immediately, while others are for the medium and long term periods respectively.

1. Management and Governance

- 1.1 The Head of Department must transform the Management and Governance of Hoerskool Ellisras.
- 1.2 Strengthen the monitoring and supporting role that the Circuit and District offices play in the life of the school with a clearly-defined programme of action.
- 1.3 The Department must adopt a program of Action that ensures that there is a speedy and visible transformation of the school. (see Appendix A for programme of action)

2. Curriculum

- 2.1 Curriculum Advisory service of the District must ensure that the Subject Packaging of the school is reviewed in line with applicable policies.
- 2.2 The Department must provide additional learning spaces in the school to accommodate additional English Speaking learners.
- 2.3 The Department must provide additional English speaking educators to cater for additional learners in terms of item (5) above.

3. Deracialisation

- 3.1 The School must develop, adopt and implement a de-racialisation policy.
- 3.2 The School must develop, adopt and implement a School Code of Conduct for Learners.
- 3.3 Register classes must be revisited so that they do not serve as a disguise for racial integration.

REPORT ON ALLEGATIONS OF RACISM AT HOERSKOOL ELLISRAS

I want to live in a world where black people can go to school without apology, without being given the impression that Western European people are the only people who have contributed to the social, industrial and economic development of human thinking...a world where white children would be steered away from a philosophy of arrogance and social superiority. (Black Student's View of the World (quoted in Klein, 1993))

Throughout the world many countries have been and still are battling issues of racism and equal treatment of children in schools as reflected in the quote from England. South Africa is not alone in this struggle.

1. Aim

The purpose of this report is to investigate allegations of preferential and or differential treatment of learners that is based on race at Hoerskool Ellisras. It also examines programmes that the school has devised to deal with issues of racial tension among the different races at the school. The report is based on data that was collected mainly through structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders and observation of school practices.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The investigation of allegations of racism at Hoerskool Ellisras emanates from a Memorandum of Demands by Lephalale Concerned Parents dated 21 February 2011, submitted to the Circuit Manager at Lephalale – Mr N Maswanganyi and MEC of Education Mr ND Masemola. The Demands of Concerned Parents essentially revolve around unfair treatment of black learners at the school and failure by the school management team and School Governing Body to adequately address issues of transformation as expressed in the South African Constitution of 1994 and South African Schools Act of 1996 (*see Appendix B for details of the demands*).

Following the submission of the memorandum of demands, the MEC established a task team comprising of: a general manager; 3 senior managers and a manager to investigate

the allegations. The brief of the task team was to thoroughly investigate the allegations, observe school practices and make appropriate recommendations to improve the situation at the school.

2.2 Racism in Schools

A number of reports have been and continue to be produced centering on the challenges experienced in addressing racism and school integration in South Africa. For example, The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) produced a report titled *Racism, 'Racial Integration' and Desegregation in South African Public Secondary Schools*, in which it notes that “educators exhibit little or no commitment to constructing a learning environment free from discrimination and prejudice. Too many prefer to deny the existence of racism or presume a superficial tolerance” (SAHRC, 1999: vii).

In the same vein, the report by Sekete on *Deracialisation and Migration of Learners in South African Schools* published in 2001 makes the point that some schools are not tackling racism in schools as they should and there continue to be incidences of unfair treatment of black learners in comparison with their white counterparts.

The Limpopo Provincial Department of Education also experienced serious challenges of racial integration at Hoerskool Potgietersrus (1996) and Capricorn High School (March 2006) some years ago. At Hoerskool Potgieterus, a number of white parents were against the admission of black learners. In January 1996, Northern Province's Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Mister Matukane, wanted to have his children enrolled at this school. A dispute broke out at the school and, on demand from the white parents, the black pupils were refused admission. The case ended up in the Supreme Court.

This however was resolved and the school now appears to be fully integrated. At Capricorn High School, there were issues around language, and the principal suspended by the previous MEC. It was further alleged that the black learners were leading the protest at the school around language issues. This has seemingly been well resolved.

The point, however, is that the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education appears not to have thoroughly engaged with other schools in the province on transformation and school integration, as the demands by Lephalale Concerned Parents indicate. It is in the light of the demands submitted to the MEC indicating serious violation of the South African Constitution and South African Schools Act of 1996 that the present report focuses on allegations of racism at Hoerskool Ellisras

3. Brief review of international literature

As indicated in the opening quotation, issues of race in education are also experienced the world over. In England, there was a fatal experience where Ahmed Iqbal Ullah (an Asian student) was murdered in the playground by Darren Coulburn (a white student) at Burnage High School and a Committee of Enquiry recommended a thorough engagement with issues of racism in schools (Gillborn, 1995).

In the United States of America with a history of oppression against black people, the famous court case : *Brown v Board of Education* in 1955, the Court found that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal and recommended that segregation of schools be abolished. While progress was made in desegregating schools, recently a number of authors have noted the reversal of the progress made. Most schools are now segregated as was the case in the 1950s and 1960s (Kozol, 2005).

It is important to note a growing body of literature that suggest that education officials and schools should openly engage with issues of race in education because failure in this regard is likely to perpetuate racism in schools. In her recent publication, Mica Pollock of Harvard Graduate School of Education (2010) strongly cautions against avoiding to talk about racial orders when attempting to address race related issues. The author argues that:

It is virtually impossible to fix racial inequality and improve race relations *without* talking about how race matters. Colormuteness—even when it’s well intentioned—can have very dangerous effects. Refusing to talk about racial orders doesn't make them go away. Indeed, we can actually exacerbate racial orders through colormuteness. This rather complex reality is demonstrated when admissions plans erasing race labels from applications actually help to increase the role race plays in college admissions (Pollock, 2010:3).

For Ramphela (2008), the scourge of racism needs to be ritualized in the same way that South Africa ritualised the closure of political crimes through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Black and White learners need to confront the monster of racism together and agree to set it aside in pursuit of a shared vision and common future. Ramphela (2008:82) advises that until they name the problem the ghost of racism will always haunt them.

The review of literature on race in Education also warns against tokenistic endeavours such as "Inter-racial Days", suggesting that this only scratches the surface on racism in schools and is wholly inadequate in working towards fundamentally altering the practices of schools in the pursuit of proper school integration and racial harmony (Kozol, 2005). Government officials in general and those working in schools more specifically should develop programmes and activities that will enhance school integration and break the artificial boundaries that separate blacks from whites.

Recently a number of authors have argued against a language of binaries – us and them; black and white; developed and underdeveloped (Apple, 2005; hooks, 2009; Carrim and Soudien, 1999). The authors point out that lumping together people in the category black or white masks internal differences such as class, gender and geographic location. If we work with categories such as black we may fail to acknowledge gender difference within such a broad category. The key argument in this sort of literature is against essentialist categorisation. The category black is not homogenous and this needs to be reflected upon in discussion and writing about black or white.

4. Problem Statement (Research Questions)

Are learners at Hoerskool Elliras treated equally irrespective of race? Do learners at Hoerskool Elliras have equal opportunities to select whichever subject/learning area combination they want? What programmes/activities has the school (School Management Team and School Governing Body) put in place to address issues of school integration and racial harmony?

5. Methodology

5.1 Evaluative Case study

The methodology used in conducting this investigation falls within the realm of qualitative research as it had structured interviews and observations as the main sources of data gathering (*see Appendix C for details*). The investigation also included an extensive documentary analysis, where school documents such as admission policy, language policy and Conduct of Learners Policy were analysed. Additionally, the subject combinations offered at the school were examined together with class lists that show which learners took which subjects.

To a greater extent the study was evaluative in nature as the team wanted to find out whether the allegations directed against the school have merit or not. There was also an attempt to enquire about what will makes things better at the school and in a sense the team wanted to understand dynamics in the school, without being judgmental. Hence there is a combination of evaluation – does differential treatment exist and how pronounce is the problem and exploratory where the primary aim is not to make judgments. The methodology does not fit neatly into one category. It straddle both fields of evaluation and none evaluation case study research.

5.2 Research Instruments

5.2.1 Interviews

These were structured in interviews which in some instances involved focused groups and in other instances individuals. For example the following people were interviewed individually:

1. Circuit Manager
2. District Governance officer
3. Principal
4. Deputy principal

The focused groups were made of:

1. Concerned Parents
2. SMT
3. SGB
4. RCL
5. Support staff (office and grounds/environment)

5.2.2 Observations

Observations assist in ascertain whether the responses provided by research participants are matched by what is obtained on the ground. They serve as an important source of data that either corroborates what was said or not. It adds an element of triangulation in the research and makes the conclusions that are arrived at credible to a large extent.

5.2.3 Documentary analysis

The last form of data collection was documentary analysis. A variety of documents from the school were collected and analysed in order to see whether there is a fit between what is expressed and what is documented. Presence or absence of key policy documents in schools give a sense of how the school functions. They are also telling about administrative acumen, that is one cannot function properly and optimally without documenting what guides institutional practices so that those within and outside will have a sense of what constitute contravention or good practice.

5.3 Profile of the School

Hoerskool Ellisras is an Afrikaans medium school that previously was exclusively meant for white Afrikaans speaking learners and with the advent of democracy it started admitting black learners in the early 2000's. In 2006 it appointed the first Black language teacher and then in 2009 appointed another.

- The school had 831 learners in the last term and 270 were black
- Number of educators 47 departmental educators and 15 SGB appointed educators
- The school still has vacant posts and there are only 2 black educators
- School is a fee charging school , charges R900, per month for the 10 months
- Budget setting is in line with SASA requirements
- Exemption is applicable in the school and parents are made aware of this right (10-15%) to apply
- If fees are not paid, finance committee is responsible for collecting fees or else court cases ensue even though there is no knowledge or documentary proof of anybody taken to court

6. Limitations of the study

One of the major limitations of the investigation was the lack of conducting classroom observations, where the interaction of learners and the teacher in class will be noted and important conclusions drawn. It is thus recommended that such a study of classroom practices be conducted in the near future.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation of the data is based on a selection of questions from the investigation instrument. The instrument had many but for the purposes of this report a few have been selected that helps to illuminate the issue of race more clearly; for example there were questions about the support the Circuit and District offices provide to schools and responses to this question are not dealt with in any detail here. Save to say that, members of the schools commented on lack of support especially from the district although they couldn't specify what exactly.

Presentation of the data is also structured according to the category of respondents and drew common themes across the various stakeholders interviewed and the observation notes taken at the school. From each category of respondents we detailed the essential points coming out and compared with those from other category of respondents.

7.1 Comments on School Integration (transformation)

One of the School Management Team members had this to say:

For many years, the school was run in a particular way and it is difficult to change from this. Many unpleasant things were said about our school and I think we need to appreciate the issues raised by the Concerned Parents. Maybe we have been slumbering. But we are definitely making an effort. But the problems we experience in the school are the problems experienced in the community. (Interview, SMT, April 2011)

The main thrust of the explanation by the member of the SMT, is an acknowledgement of the history of the school, which was exclusively for whites, in particular Afrikaans speaking people and they are now changing this. She also makes an important point about problems experienced in the school as societal problems – problems faced by the wider community. This is important in the sense that attempts to address racial issues at the school should be broadly conceived to include analysis of the broader community and South African society. Internalist mechanisms restricted to the school are not bound to achieve much. The principal of the school, was quite scathing about the home environment: “The problem is at home. Our communities are at fault. Racial issues start at home and then come to our schools. Start with the home”.

A different perspective emerges from the views of the black parents:

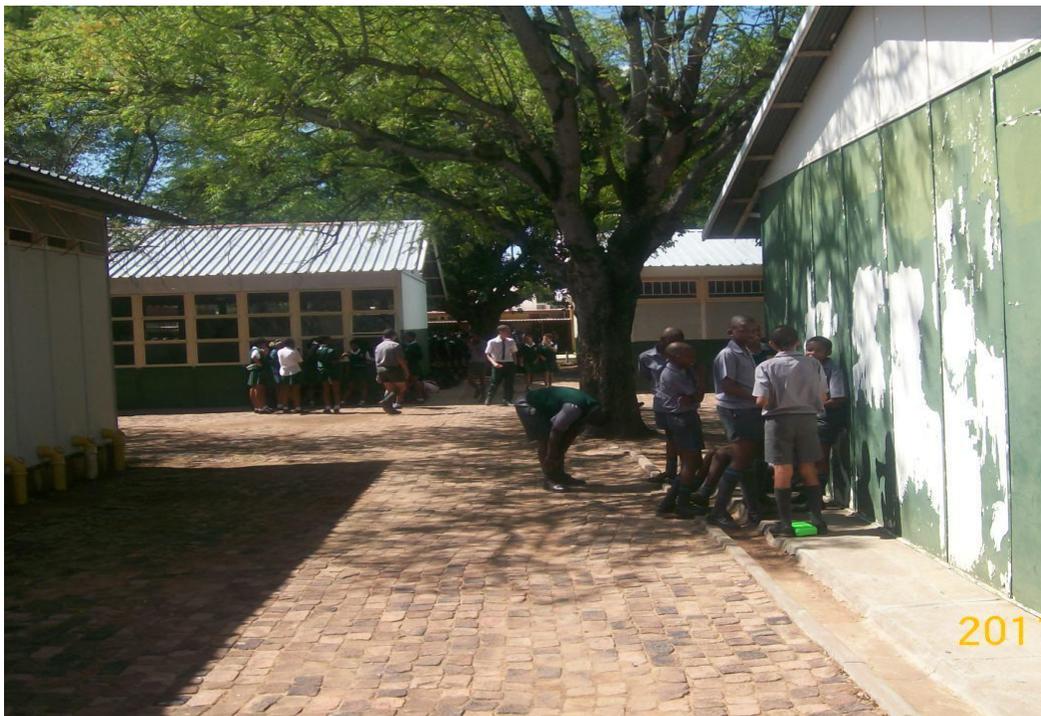
The school is still stuck in the past, hence our demands submitted to the MEC. When we were co-opted in the SGB, we thought they want to change but after one meeting of the SGB, where we were told that everything will be communicated in Afrikaans, we have serious doubts about transformation. We came out of that meeting really exhausted and could not function properly for two days. And there were issues we wanted to discuss but we told no. Worse we were told we have no voting rights (Interview, Co-opted SGB, April, 2011).

The issues expressed by the co-opted member of the SGB were shared by four others. They thought the new SGB was serious about working towards truly transforming the school and turning the school into a fully racially integrated school. But to their surprise, their first meeting gave them a different conclusion. The co-opted members got a message in the meeting that, the school belongs to whites but as blacks, they are accommodated.

If one takes the way the principal speaks about the new SGB, the reservations the co-opted members have about the resolve of the school to tackle transformation issues and school integration, the concerns of the co-opted members are valid. The principal talked freely

about an illegal SGB and that some of the co-opted parents expressed negative things about the school.

Comments by some of the teachers on the issue of school integration and transformation suggest practices that predominantly keep black learners together and away from their white counter parts. One of the teachers said that in the few cases where you find white learners mixing freely with black learners, often this is because they started at the primary school and both are in the English classes. It is rare to find learners in the Afrikaans classes interacting freely with learners in the English classes.



Picture 1: The only incident where learners of different races mix



Picture 2: A group of Black learners during break (a norm in most of the groups)



Picture 3: A group of white learners during break (a norm in most cases).

Members of the task team had an opportunity to observe practices/interaction during break and in the majority of cases noted white learners keep to themselves and the same applies to black learners. It was only in one case where a group of young boys included blacks and a white learner. During interviews with teachers, the task team members were told that these learners are in grade 8 and the white learner is in an English class not Afrikaans as the latter are exclusively for whites.

Coming to the School Governing body members, a number of things were raised about transformation. SGB members stated that they have heard about teachers who do not “treat learners equally” and they would be working hard to improve this. The chairperson of the SGB mentioned in particular that they have plans to be seeing each teacher on his/her own and try to improve the situation at the school. He went on to say that they were told about a

number of policies at the school and they will review them. For him, it was one thing to have a policy and another to see to it that it is well implemented. The chairperson talked specifically about the policy on learner conduct.

Responses from members of the RCL on the other hand indicate a concern with cultural differences. As one of them put it:

You see, there are cultural differences between white and blacks and some learners click to their cultural groups not because of racism but because they speak the same language. I mean I am Afrikaans and cannot speak English well but I try like when I am with Nthabiseng but my English is not good. That is why you see Afrikaans staying together and blacks doing the same. This is because cultural differences (Interview, RCL, April 2011).

The point about cultural differences was repeated by other learners who mentioned that during school trips, blacks will prefer a separate bus because of the type of music they listen to and sometimes sing aloud. But the learners also talked at length about influences of the home environment on what happens in the schools. Some of them were quite forthright talking about some parents being racist and their children bring this to school. This was not confined to whites according to learners – you find some white parents who are racist and some black parents who are also racist. Again it is important that efforts to address issues of transformation include analysis of community and societal practices at large. A multifaceted approach is needed in dealing with racial issues and this should include other departments, such as the Department of Justice and Social Development as they deal with protection of children and ensuring equal treatment of people irrespective of their race, class or gender.

7.2 Allegations of fighting (Black and white)

The instrument used in collecting data had a question around fighting in the school and also enquired about an incident that led to one child being hospitalized as reported by the Concerned Parents. Different responses were received to this effect, with that of the Circuit Manager, school principal and SMT members playing it down, whereas with black parents it is a serious issue.

The circuit manager pointed out that he was told that boys fought each other and it happened to be blacks and whites. One black boy was injured severely but the matter according to the Circuit Manger seems to have been blown out of proportion. The SGB members confirmed that there has been fighting but these normally happens between boys. It has got nothing to do with race

One of the co-opted members of the SGB commented as follows on fighting:

Racial conflict at the school is very bad. What is the school doing to eradicate this? My son cannot go into the restrooms, if there are white kids in there. If he goes he has to have his friend. He is scared to go alone in there when there are white kids. This is not good at all. Black kids are not allowed to walk in certain areas. On the school buses it is worse. The bus issue is a story of its own (Interview, SGB, April, 2011)

The views expressed by the co-opted parent were shared by many black parents. And this is also reflected in the letters submitted to the school and MEC by Mr Sithole (dated 02/02/2011) in which he laments continued fights at the school. At some point his daughter called panicking and saying she needed to be picked up immediately.

Today, the 2nd of February 2011 another fight broke at the same school. As I was on my way to site after our meeting at Mogol club, my daughter called me requesting that I should quickly fetch her from school. One of the learners got struck by with a brick just above his eye (Sithole, 2011).

What is critical here is the intervention strategies by the school community to ensure that such incidents never happen again or if they do, it is to a very limited extent. The school should be an environment where learners interact without fear and socialize freely across the racial boundaries as failure in this regard has adverse effects on educational outcomes. One cannot learn in a hostile environment that is racially charged and school management seems to be doing very little.

It is important to note that the principal on the other hand talks of boys fighting with boys because of hormonal changes. In his opinion, not much should be read into fighting among boys, as this also happens between white and white. The same applies to black boys fighting among themselves. On this score the principal's views are shared by one of the members of the SMT, who pointed out that his two boys often fight with each other and therefore we should not overreact when boys fight with each other: "I have got two boys who are always on each other's throat. It really happens often. Boys will always fight among themselves. It has got to do with changes in their hormones" (HOD, Interview, April 2011).

The assertions by the principal and one of his HOD's is very troubling if we factor in that the school has in the past been exclusively for white Afrikaans speaking children. If we work with this assertion, we may end up doing nothing about transformation and school integration. Since people were deliberately separated along colour lines by previous apartheid regime, it is incumbent on us to consciously and purposefully work towards integrating the different racial groups. Such arguments about boys fighting and hormonal changes, fails to take into account the history of South Africa. Neither will such arguments bring about racial tolerance and mutual respect.

7.2.1 The case of Mabela Child

The above Black child had his jaw broken by one white learner. His parents took him to a hospital in Pretoria for operations. The school has not been able to deal with the matter successfully and it is spilling out of control as a results. The parents of the learner have instituted legal proceedings because of their belief that the school does not have an effective disciplinary procedure.

All those interviewed confirmed fighting among boys although there was a difference on whether this was racially motivated or not. But the point is that fighting often takes place between white and black boys. This calls for stern action by management of the school and SGB, about the code of conduct of learners. There should be clear programme of action that brings the different races together. It cannot be left to sporting codes, where you find few blacks.

It was noted in the brief literature review that in some cases, racism in schools could lead to tragic ends, where a learner loses his or her life simply because is attacked on the basis of the colour of the skin as happened at Burnage High Schoolin England. That the son of Mr and Mrs Mabela had to be hospitalised and booked for operation in a theatre, is serious indeed and needs the Department through its District and Circuit offices to monitor practices in schools.

7.3 Admission Policy

All the respondents in this investigation were asked about the school's admission policy and its contents. According to the principal, there is no differential treatment of applicants and all learners are offered equal opportunities to study at the school. The principal put it as follows:

In a meeting with parents and those from Medupi (power station), we made a commitment to take everybody. If a candidate qualifies, I admit. I have taken all

those who qualifies. We don't turn away anybody" (Interview, Principal, April 2011).

When further questions about how a candidate does qualifies the principal pointed out three things:

1. Proper transfer card (indicating pass marks)
2. Compliance with NSC
3. Age of the learner (You don't expect me to take someone who is overage)

Through interviews with the principal and the school management team, it became clear that in addition to the nearby Laerskool Ellisras and Boshveld primary school that serve as feeder schools, there are also the following schools that lie some kilometers away:

Marken Primary school in the Baltimore Circuit (75km),

Vaalwater Primary school in the Vaalwater Circuit (approximately 50km)

Swaartwater in Baltimore Circuit (100 Km).

The admission of white learners from outside the feeder zone has had an impact on the racial breakdown of the enrollment of learners in the school.

The members of the SMT also talked at length about not turning away any child who applies. As one of the members put it:

We treat each learner equally. We do not make any distinction. It is not whether you are black or a white child. It has got nothing to do with race (Interview, SMT, April 2011).

While this seems to be a fair practice and shared by many of those interviewed with the exception of Concerned Parents, the packaging of subjects and availability of teachers to teach English classes which are predominantly black, turn some learners away (*for details on this see the section 6.1 that deals with subject choices pages*).

7.4 Changing the complexion of teaching staff

Respondents were also asked about employing more black teachers to improve the profile of the school in the eyes of the community and society at large that it is not only white. As stated earlier only two black teachers are employed by the school and out of 15 School Governing post, not even a single one was allocated to a black teacher. Black teachers in the school teach languages and only to blacks (English stream)

In response to the question on employing more black teachers, the principal had this to say:

Teachers have to speak Afrikaans. This is an Afrikaans Medium School. If they apply, they have to speak Afrikaans. I don't receive many applications from black teachers. But it is important that they speak Afrikaans (Interview, Principal, April 2001).

For the principal and the school at large, what remains fundamental in employing teachers is the ability to speak Afrikaans. This takes precedence over all other things because the school is an Afrikaans medium. But black parents in the school have got different views, arguing that only whites are considered and not much effort is being made to recruit black teachers except for languages. The parents assert that the problem lies mainly with the School Governing Body and school management team. If these two structures were to transform, there will be other black teachers in the school teaching, for instance mathematics.

According to members of the school management team, what is of cardinal importance in employing teachers is qualifications and experience: "we look at the CV especially the qualifications and experience". One of the members actually asked the task team members the following questions:

"Should we appoint a teacher because he/she is black?"

The question directed to the respondents was not to appoint a person simply because he/she is black and there was no suggestion at all to overlook other applicants on the basis of race. Essentially, the question was whether in appointing teachers, say 15 SGB posts, they could find one black teacher to be appointed. Key here is whether great strides are being made by black teachers in the school. It is not true that they cannot find a black person who is able to teach biology and knows Afrikaans. What is worse, there is an impression that African teachers are capable to teach languages in Afrikaans Medium schools. But what is very troubling at this school is that the black teacher who teaches English as an additional language only teaches blacks (so-called English stream). Why not take the English teacher who teaches Afrikaans speaking learners English as an additional language to teach blacks and vice versa.

7.5 Composition of the School Governing Body

Respondents were also asked about electing black parents in the SGB. Across the board it was indicated that blacks are in a minority in the school and hence it is difficult for them to be voted into the SGB. Since many white parents vote, they only vote for white representatives. Asked how this could be altered, the task team was told that they have already co-opted members from the concerned parents.

Co-opted members raised issues that they were allocated responsibilities in the SGB without their consent since there was no consultation and worse, they are more into discipline than in any other structure. They have not been included in teams that deal with admissions and financial issues at the school

How do you give me a responsibility without evening consulting with me?
How is that possible? It appears they are making us a favour in being part of the SGB (Interview, Co-opted Member, 2011)

What is again worrying is that the principal seems not be comfortable with the co-option as he always talks of two SGBs, one legal and the other illegal.

7.6 Programme that the school has to encourage integration among learners

The task team members asked about any specific programme that the school has devised to encourage interaction among the different races at the school. A number of issues were highlighted:

- Register Classes,
- Announcement of messages,
- Debates and
- Sporting activities.

7.6.1 Register Classes

According to the Principal of Hoerskool Ellisras, Mr Campbell a register class is a class into which a learner has been registered. A register class is taken care of by a Register Teacher. The principal informed the study group that in every Register Class there are four Black learners. A learner does not receive tuition from the Register Class. Learners receive tuition from the Subject Class which is where they have registered for certain learning areas. A register class is also used to monitor the writing of tests. These learning areas are in turn classified according to Language of Learning and Teaching.

7.6.2 Announcements of messages

In the immediate past, before March 2011, messages were broadcast in Afrikaans. After the intervention of a District Team the school began to broadcast messages in both Afrikaans and English.

7.6.3 Debates

For some time the debating sessions were conducted in Afrikaans only and not in other languages. In order to transform, the school has introduced debates in English as a way of integrating the learners racially.

7.6.4 Sporting activities

Teachers, principal and deputy principal talked about two black boys who play in the school rugby team. Recently the school went to Stellenbosch in the Western Cape, with mostly white players and there were no issues of feeling alienated or treated unequally. The same two black players have been selected to tour Portugal. For the school the sporting activities are helping in bringing the black and white learners closer to one another. Observation by one of the task team members on Tuesday afternoon, supports the point about black learners participating in the rugby team. The two learners were seen in two teams in a practice session in the afternoon.

8. Racism

Racism can be described as a 'prejudice or animosity against people who belong to other races' and based on this prejudice there is a belief that people of different races have different qualities and abilities, and that some races are inherently inferior or superior to the others. Racism can masquerade as creed, cultural, religious and practices that are distinct to a particular grouping of people to the exclusion of the others.

In Hoerskool Ellisras the differences among Black, White and Indian community of learners is understood as cultural difference which find its expression in languages spoken by these various racial groups. These racial groups are classified as English or Afrikaans depending on the language of learning and teaching in which a learner receives tuition.

From the interviews and study of documents the study group found that there are indeed some practices of racism in the school. This racism manifests itself in:

- the packaging of subjects,
- dissemination of messages in Afrikaans more than in English,
- appointment of educators ,
- management of discipline of boys
- admission of learners into the school.
- charging of high fees which are not affordable to historically disadvantaged Blacks
- separate seating arrangements in buses during sporting trips.
- inculcation of fear amongst Black learners and hence separatist arrangements during breaks and on trips.
- employment of predominantly white staff.

8.1 Language of Instruction

The admission policy of the school states that the school uses both English and Afrikaans. Contrary to this expression there are very few subjects which are available for children who choose to study in English.

8.2 School Fees

The school charges a school fee of R900.00 x 10 months which amounts to R9000.00 per child per annum. The study group found out that although the school is aware of the exemption policy of the Department, this has not been made known to the community of Ellisras despite the access that the school has to various local newspapers.

The amount of school fees has had an impact of scaring the potential learners away from the school. The availability of quintiles 1 and 2 schools in the vicinity of Ellisras has led to many Black children from Ellisras enrolling at schools such as Phegello in the Marapong Township.

8.3 Management of Code of Conduct for Learners

The group has found that there are challenges with regard to the management of code of conduct for learners in the school. The school does not have a Disciplinary Committee which overlooks at issues of discipline. Disciplinary issues are taken care of by one educator who uses his discretion in dealing with disciplinary issues. There are a number of reported cases of fights between Black and white learners which the school has not been able to deal with.

The School Governing Body regards incidents of fights as ways of growing up boys and not as something to worry about. In most cases Black children have been victims of this incidents and the school has not been able to deal with them.

There are two learners who fought and were suspended without a hearing. They were later on reinstated without going through a formal disciplinary hearing. The conclusion one can draw out of this practice is that innocent children are punished in order to appease the parents of the perpetrator.

9 Analysis of documents

In order to determine whether allegations of unfair discrimination in subject offering at the school where a section of the student body is not allowed or is discouraged to register for certain subjects regarded as marketable; the following documents were perused.

- The admission policy;
- Language policy;
- Subject choice form and
- Subject packaging.

Subsection 6.2 of the English version of the admission policy indicates that the school is an **English Medium** institution while the same section in the Afrikaans version states that **Afrikaans is the** medium of instruction.

The subject choice form states that a learner in FET should choose two subjects in a specific area (Learning Field). Those learners register for (a) Accounting, (b) Engineering Graphics and Design, (c) Information Technology; (d) Electrical Technology and (e) Physical Science should register for Mathematics not Mathematical Literacy.

However, from the subject packaging some learners were allowed to choose subjects that were not in a specific area. See Boeyns, Klariese who takes Business studies; Geography and Engineering Graphics and Design and Mailula Kwena Johanna who is registered for History, Life Sciences and CAT) (*Appendix I learner registration*). There are no two subjects coming from one learning field.

Grade 12

All learners who have registered for: 1. Accounting; 2. Business Studies; 3. Electrical Technology 4. Information Technology have registered for Afrikaans Home Language. This indicates that these subjects are taught in **Afrikaans only** in grade 12.

Grade 11

All learners who are taking 1. Accounting; 2. Engineering Graphics and Design, 3. Electrical Technology and 4. Information Technology have registered for Afrikaans Home Language. This indicates that these subjects are taught in **Afrikaans only**.

Grade 10

In grade 10 all the Nine (9) learners registered for (a) Electrical Technology; (b) Accounting and (c) Electrical Technology have taken Afrikaans Home language. There is none who has English or Sepedi Home language, Subject packaging follows the trend where some learners do not choose two subjects from a specific field.

Although it is indicated in the “Admission Policy” document that the school is an English medium institution, there is no evidence that learners who have registered for English Home language or Sepedi Home language are catered for in certain subjects.

10 Suggestions by Stakeholders

The investigation instrument had a section where respondents were asked to think about issues that need to be attended to in order to improve practices in the school. It was pointed out that most of the issues experienced at the school have their roots in the community or home environment. It was therefore proposed that transformation of the school should start with the community.

One of the RCL members talked about learners at Potties who get well together and interact with one another very well and would love to see this happening. The stakeholders mainly suggested that the following should be done.

- Foster tolerance and mutual respect for each other and then things will improve
- Help us in proving to the black community that the school is changing and is changing for the better
- SGB pleaded for more time and said that they are working on changing the school practices and reviewing all the policies of the school.
- Other stakeholders suggested that the management of the school should be changed.

11. Summary of Findings

The preceding discussion of findings indicated differences in the way people interpret issues: with some saying it is cultural differences and some, especially blacks arguing that practices in the school are along racial lines not culture. Members of the School Management Team argued that race does not play any part in the activities of the school and instead merit and expertise are the driving forces. They however acknowledge that the school has a particular history of racial exclusion as it was meant for Whites, in particular Afrikaans speaking and this has to change. It was further admitted that change is difficult and perhaps the school was not changing at a lightning speed as some people perceive.

The data also indicated that some members of the school, teachers and management team, do not see colour in the school. What they see are English stream and Afrikaans stream learners and not black and white. But it was earlier indicated that often not talking openly about race may in actual fact perpetuate racist practices. Various stakeholders in the school need to openly talk about these issues of race and racism. This will also be an acknowledgement of our troubled past history of apartheid rule.

There is further acknowledgement of constant fights among the learners and some of the respondents argue this is purely between boys as their hormones change and they mature. But some parents argue that the fighting is wholly racially motivated and the school is not doing enough to address this issue. Black parents in particular suggest that not only the school but even the circuit office, where the circuit manager is perceived not give the issue of race the attention it deserves at the school. As a result of little action from the circuit and district offices, the matter has been escalated to the offices of the MEC of Education and that of the Premier.

Differences were also noted on admission of learners as some stakeholders were of the view that the school discriminates among the races when coming to admission. Some black learners are turned away from the school purely on the basis of being black although under the pretext of not having teachers to teach the subjects they require in English.

The discussion further observed that subject packaging was problematic at the school as it leaves certain subjects as exclusively for whites while others are for blacks. It was argued that there are not enough teachers to teach the subjects black learners intend to enroll for.

In relation of improving the profile of the teaching staff by increasing the number of black teachers as the number of black learners is increasing, the principal and SMT, argued very strongly that the recruitment of teachers is done purely on the basis of academic qualifications. Also critical here is the ability to speak Afrikaans as Hoerskool Ellisras is an Afrikaans medium school.

On the issue of voting for black parents into the SGB, it was stated that voting is done democratically and if black parents are not voted into it, it does not mean there is discrimination. It only confirms that black parents are a tiny minority in the school. It was however indicated that the school does not have specific programmes and projects to deal with racial issues. They mentioned that there are register classes and the sporting activities, especially rugby is used to foster integration. There are two black learners that have been selected to participate in the sport in Portugal this year.

12. Conclusion

The following conclusions are made after studying relevant documents, conducting interviews and observing school practices:

1. Management of the school has done very little towards **racial integration** among learners. White learners keep their place and so do black learners and this cannot be condoned as cultural differences. And in most cases black teachers teach black learners and the same applies to their white counterparts.
2. The **admission policy** of the school allows black learners to be admitted, but the school's transformation agenda and efforts towards school desegregation are very limited. There is little evidence that suggest the school is making an effort to transform from its racial past to reflect the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of non-racialism and access to education by all.
3. Annual **school fees** is set at R900.00 per month per learner and when this is taken together with other additional fees charged by the school, opportunities for poor families to have their children in this school are restricted severely.
4. The school has introduced a complicated **curriculum packaging** which prevents English speaking learners in general but Blacks in particular access to certain subjects such as Electrical Engineering and Mathematics. Before 2011 no black learner could register Information Technology class.
5. **Recruitment of teachers** is said to be purely on the basis of merit – having the relevant qualifications, experience and ability to speak Afrikaans. Blacks do not bother to apply because of language (Afrikaans). But that black teachers only offer languages and to black learners is a very worrying phenomena and does not bode well for transformation.
6. Five black parents have been co-opted to be members of the **School Governing Body** and in the light of little efforts to transform the school to date, their participation in the SGB should be given powers like all others.

7. **Fights** in the school have racial overtones as in most cases it is between black and white boys.
 - 7.1. The school management regards these fights as minor issues that do not warrant serious attention by management.
 - 7.2. The case of Mabela was not attended to in a fair and just manner. The reasoning of the School Governing Body and the Principal is that it is a minor issue when one boy has his jaw broken by another and no real steps are taken to ensure that the victim gets recourse in the school.
8. From the evidence gathered, **Register Classes** only serve as tokenism of racial integration of learners.
9. **Circuit Office's** role and support in ensuring that the school transform is very questionable. According to the Circuit Manager the issue of Hoerskool Ellisras has been blown out of proportion and does not warrant the intervention of the MEC and the District.
10. The school has widened its **feeder zone** to accommodate schools such as Marken and Swartwater primaries in the Baltimore Circuit and Vaalwater in the Vaalwater Circuit. The effect of this is that it has blocked out of the school the residence of Lephale.

13.Recommendations

In view of the above findings the following recommendations are made. It is important to read the recommendations in relation to the programme of action attached to the report as Appendix, as some of the recommendations should be acted upon immediately, while others are for the medium and long term periods

13.1 Management and Governance

- a. The Head of Department must transform the Management and Governance of Hoerskool Ellisras.
- b. Strengthen the monitoring and supporting role that the Circuit and District offices play in the life of the school with a clearly-defined programme of action.
- c. The Department must adopt a program of Action that ensures that there is a speedy and visible transformation of the school. (see Appendix A for programme of action)

13.2 Curriculum

- a. Curriculum Advisory service of the District must ensure that the Subject Packaging of the school is reviewed in line with applicable policies.
- b. The Department must provide additional learning spaces in the school to accommodate additional English Speaking learners.
- c. The Department must provide additional English speaking educators to cater for additional learners in terms of item (5) above.

13.3 Deracialisation

- a. The School must develop, adopt and implement a de-racialisation policy.
- b. The School must develop, adopt and implement a School Code of Conduct for Learners.
- c. Register classes must be revisited so that they do not serve as a disguise for racial integration.

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Appendix A

Interview: Principal

1. General Conditions at the school

- 1.1 What are the enrolments of learners at the school: Total number and race differentiation?
- 1.2 When did the enrolment of blacks increase?
- 1.3 What is the staff composition along gender lines? How males and females in the staff?
- 1.4 What is the staff composition along racial lines? Any plans to recruit more females?
- 1.5 Any concrete plans to recruit black teachers?
- 1.6 What is the policy of the school on admission?
- 1.7 What plans does the school have to increase the number of black learners?

2. School Governing Bodies

- 2.1 We are told blacks we never voted in and actually we co-opted to be part of the SGB. Don't you think it is important to have an SGB with black parents as there are black learners in the school? This only happened after the Concerned Parents Group raised it? (Blacks actually voted but because they are minority they are not able to meet the threshold. Maybe we may rephrase))
- 2.2 In your meetings (SGB) were issues raised about improving the profile of black learners at the school.
- 2.3 In your meetings (SGB) were issues raised about recruiting black teachers?
- 2.4 If black poor parents do not afford the fees that the school charges them is there an exemption?

2.5 How many of the poor people that were exempted from paying school fees were black?

3. Racial Integration

3.1 Would you say white and black learners mix freely at the school? Substantiate your answer -Provide reasons (If not what are the manifestations of this disintegration)

3.2 There are allegations that during examinations black learners have their own row (do not mix with white learners). Your comment.

3.3 There are also allegations of no go areas for black children within the school premises during break. Your comment

3.4 Allegations of fighting along racial lines (black and white). What are your comments? And what plans are there that this never happens again?

3.5 What are the specific measures that the school under your leadership took to ensure that there is racial harmony in the school.

3.6 What does the school policy say about racial issues?

4. Circuit and District Support on Racial Integration

4.1 What sort of support do you receive to deal issues around racial integration

4.2 Would you say the support is timely and appropriate?

4.3 What would you want to see happening in the future in terms of Circuit/District Support

4.4 What is the schools language policy?

4.5 Will you say that the school language policy promotes racial harmony between Black and White children?

4.6 Please describe distribution of learning areas (subjects) to learners according to race (LOLT).

4.7 Do Black and White children offer an equitable number of languages at the school? If not what is your explanation.

4.8 Does your school have a disciplinary code for learners?

4.9 Is this code applied fairly in the school?

Appendix B

Interview: Circuit Manager

Date

Time

1. General Questions

1.1 Could you provide a brief description of working with schools in the area (Primary and Secondary)? What stands out?

1.2 Common challenges experienced in the past 3 years

1.3 What are the challenges, if any, you experience with schools that are predominantly white? (Probe: Follow-up)

2. Hoerskool Ellisras

2.1 There are issues raised by concerned parents about differential treatment of white and black learners at the school: When did you first hear about this? What did you do? (Provide details.) From your interaction with the school, is there some evidence that black learners are treated differently?

2.2 What are your specific observations about the general conditions at the school? (Probe: Follow up questions)

2.3 From your interaction with the **school management/administration** how do you rate their commitment to racial integration? **(a)** High, **(b)** Medium, **(c)** Low **(d)** Difficult to say. (Provide reasons for your answer)

2.4 Have you had interaction with **teachers**? If yes: What are their challenges and concerns about racial integration

2.5 What is your experience in interacting with the **SGB?** (Probe: open to integration; resistant to integration)

2.6 Your comments of **certain subjects** reserved for white or black learners refused to register subjects they prefer

3. Specific Case: Fighting

3.1. We are told that fighting at the school is often along racial lines: white learners fought black learners. How did you come to know about this? What is your take on this?

Provide details

3.2 Would you say this is an isolated incident?

4. Interaction with Concerned Parents

Your comments and experience of interacting with Concerned Parents

5. Suggestions for improving school functionality in the midst of racial integration challenges

What have you tried and did it work?