Chapter 16

Transformation through Marketing:
A Case of a Secondary School in South Africa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A historically white school in a city setting in South Africa is faced with the demand from a newly demo-cratically elected government to transform and become an agent of change in making its pupil profile more representative of the demographics of the country as a whole. This demand is driven by significant national contextual change from a position where schools had an allocated catchment based upon geo-graphical area and ethnic group (before 1994) to a market oriented approach where every school must compete for pupil recruitment to ensure survival whilst also adhering to the government requirement to demonstrate a willingness to change existing mono-cultural pupil profiles to multi ethnic profiles and establish non-sexism and non-racialism as the dominating culture.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

South Africa is finally beginning to overcome many of the difficulties caused by years of struggle against Apartheid and the country has viewed educational change as one of the major strands in enabling necessary transformation to take place. During the challenge to Apartheid, education was one of the vehicles used by liberation movements to render the country ungovernable with the out-come that certain sections of the education system, especially during the nineties, were left in chaos

and disarray. It is only now with the transformation agenda in place that significant improvement is taking root throughout the system. White schools with the better funding under the old dispensation opened their doors to all racial groups and black schools, now with additional funding, are coming much closer to delivering education at an acceptable level (Bisschoff in Pashiardis, 2001).

This case study is about the transformation process at an established white school in Johannesburg and how it utilised its marketing plan to better serve the schooling requirements of whole community irrespective of any racial differences and how it addressed the challenge of change and moved away from the divisions' characteristic of schooling under Apartheid.

SETTING THE STAGE

To understand the case study school and the context within which it is situated, one needs to look closely at the Human Rights entrenched in The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996a). Within those Human Rights, the government sets out to redress all the historic imbalances in South African society created as a result of the former Apartheid ideology and to eliminate the inequalities and inequities of the past. In particular, issues of inequality and inequity relating to race and gender are high on the priority list for Governmental action, with the result that both national and provincial administrations of the country are now active in addressing such issues as a matter of course.

The principal aim of the transformation process is to afford every previously disadvantaged person of colour an opportunity to take his/her rightful place in society and to obtain full benefit from all aspects of public administration, including education (Davies, 1999). The transformation of the education system was of necessity far-reaching, demanding both organisational and structural changes to redress the imbalances in

provision and to break the former bureaucratic stranglehold prevalent within the system. After 1994, the new National Department of Education radically altered and redefined the vision of the education system in South Africa with a series of policy initiatives and new legislation to ensure a new and better direction. Importantly, these new national policy frameworks contain clear guidance for education planning and for effective educational management.

It should be borne in mind that prior to 1994, the management structures responsible for education in the country were a direct function of the political system that was in place at the time. Glaring injustices in the socio-political development of the country before the advent of the 1994 transformation were well rooted in a divisive education system. Separate education departments and separate schools for "blacks, coloureds, Indians and whites" existed in all those areas of the country including those that had been divided up into smaller homeland areas. The policy at this time resulted in no fewer than 18 education departments in all, not counting the department at national level which had to be further divided among nine newly established provinces.

South Africa is now engaged in a continuing process of transformation and improvement in teaching and learning, school management and in the way in which national and provincial education departments are organised, all with the purpose of creating a democratic, equitable and comprehensive national system of education. Emergent legislation to date has served to place the country on the road to a school-based system of management. Indeed, education management has been devolved from national to provincial levels and the establishment of new governing bodies with the support of provincial and district offices has enabled substantial decision-making authority and responsibility to reside within schools themselves.

Such initiatives from the central government have presented an opportunity for South Africa to reinventing its schooling. A new vision opposes

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