

“PASSING THE TEST:”
A Critical Evaluation of Formal Driver Education
In South Africa

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Abstract

Formal driver education is an essential part in the process of teaching people how to drive. Driving schools are crucial as they are the educational institutions tasked with providing the relevant education that learners need in order to become competent drivers. Because this education is vital in driver socialisation, it has to be structured and carried out in a way that ensures maximum affectivity. This education is essential in ensuring that learners acquire all the relevant driving skills.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to evaluate the current formal driver education in South Africa - i.e. the K53 licensing system - in order to determine whether it can socialise learner drivers into being capable drivers. It has been argued in literature that young novice drivers are the most at risk with regard to motor vehicle accidents even though they have just received their formal driver education. They are most at risk because of their inexperience in driving, immaturity and risk-taking behaviour. For this reason the sample of the study consisted of new driver between the ages 18 and 23 with no more than 5 years experience. The study was conducted in Durban, South Africa.

This study found that even though the respondents have driven for no more than five years, 23% of them have already been involved in motor vehicle accidents where they were drivers since receiving their driving licences. Although a majority of these respondents reported being trained in most road and traffic conditions as well as in safety procedures (confirmed by driving school instructors), the types of accidents that they were involved in indicate that they were not able to use the information that they reportedly gained from driver training. This indicated that there is a problem with

either what they were taught or how they were taught. A review of the K 53 licensing system by the Department of Transport found many flaws with the system, mainly with its design as well as loopholes that allowed driving schools to manipulate the process. These shortcomings impact negatively on driver socialisation and driver behaviour thereafter.

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Introduction

It has been estimated that in South Africa, approximately 10 000 people die each year from road crashes (www.arrivealive.co.za). Arrive Alive statistics also show that the road fatality rate is increasing yearly. There have been a number of campaigns that have been implemented with the aim of reducing road fatalities. Some of these campaigns include Arrive Alive and Asiphephe. But, these do not seem to be working at all. Instead of decreasing, the number of road fatalities is getting worse every year, as each vacation comes and goes. Perhaps the focus should be on formal driver education.

Driver training and education has been defined as the process of bringing a learner driver from *ab initio* to a level of skill and knowledge sufficient for him/her to properly operate a motor vehicle on all roads (Mathew and Simpson, 1996). This is a structured approach to the learning process that can presumably facilitate and accelerate the needed skill. It is assumed that drivers exposed to this formal instruction should have a lower accident rate than those who do not receive such instruction.

Young drivers, as it will be illustrated later, are considered to be more at risk of being involved in a car crash than older drivers. This is due to their age and lack of driving experience. When they obtain their driver's license and begin to drive they are young and they have very little experience to be able to handle most road conditions (www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect1.html). If previous research has found this, then this puts a question mark on driver education. If driver education

aims to provide the necessary skill to enable a learner driver to properly operate a motor vehicle on all road conditions, and if this formal education is properly structured, then there should be very little or no problems with young novice drivers. Should they not be as safe or in as much danger as older drivers when they are on the road?

1.1 Problem Statement

‘Teen drivers have a lot more fun than older drivers do. They also have more accidents. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (U.S.A), teens are involved in fatal crashes three times more often than other drivers’ (<http://web2.epnet.com/citation.asp>).

South Africa has one of the highest road accident fatalities in the world. It is estimated that in a year there are more than 50 000 accidents that happen on the road, with approximately 10 000 of them being fatal (www.arrivealive.co.za). KwaZulu-Natal ranks highest on the scale. For the last 5 years, at least, KZN has had the highest road fatality rate over the other eight provinces. Most accidents and deaths occur in this province, especially during the Easter and December vacations, and they are some of the worst accidents that can occur. The cause, amongst other things, is deviant driving behaviour such as speeding and drinking and driving (www.arrivealive.co.za). Drivers do not follow road traffic rules. They deviate from the law and therefore cause accidents.

It has been proven, world wide, that young novice drivers are the most at risk with regard to road accidents (Carstensen, 2002). Not only are they most at risk; they are involved in

3 times (sometimes more) as many accidents as older drivers (<http://web2.epnet.com/citation.asp>). This is alarming when considering that they account for only 7% of the total driver population worldwide. In Australia alone, it has been found that even though people aged between 15 and 24 make up 15 % of the population, they account for 31% of all road fatalities (Triggs, 2004). In Durban, South Africa, 47% of all drivers killed in road accidents were under 30 years of age (Ethekwini Transport Authority Brochure, 2004). Because many of the young novice drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes have recently received formal driving education, perhaps the current structure of formal driver education needs to be critically evaluated.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study, therefore, are:

1. To evaluate the current structure of formal driver education in South Africa, with specific reference to the drivers test;
2. To establish whether obtaining a drivers' license equips one with the necessary driving skills to be able to handle any road condition.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Driver education forms part of socialisation. When drivers are socialised into driving on the roads, they are taught the various rules and regulations that govern drivers when on the road. The process of teaching drivers all these rules and regulations may never end, but drivers need to have sufficient knowledge of road rules and regulations before they drive on the road. This is where the question of deviance will come in.

Various theorists have tried to define socialisation. Cheyne (1972: 78) argues that socialisation “may be considered as the development of increasing correspondents of the attitudes, values, and actions of individuals with socially defined norms or standards. Socialised self-control may be thought of as action (or refraining from action) that conforms to social norms in the absence of surveillance by social agents and, moreover, does so in the absence of concurrent reinforcements that might be presumed to maintain the behaviour in question”. Giddens suggests that socialisation “is a process by which (members of a society) learn the way of life of their society. It is considered the primary channel for the transmission of culture over time and generations” (2001: 26). It is basically the transmission of social norms and values.

Musgrave (1988: 1) also provides a definition of socialisation along the same lines. He argues, “Any human society must be regulated by established expectations about how members should behave. These expectations are often called norms and many of them are moral in nature, as they constrain how members treat each other.” But not only is

socialisation about learning norms and values, it is also about the acquisition of certain skills, attitudes, and the like (Gosun, 1969: 10).

Gosun (1969: 27) argued, “A very great part of socialisation takes place through the reinforcing and suppressive effects of positive or aversive outcomes of... overt behaviour. Although such outcomes may be socially transmitted in a variety of ways... reward and punishment are often the most convenient generic terms to use in reference to large classes of reinforcing or suppressive consequences of an act.” Musgrave (1988: 1) agrees with this when he argues that human conduct must be regulated and that this regulation is guaranteed by the incentive or threat of sanctions.

When one speaks about socialisation, deviance has to be included in the discussion. This is because deviance occurs when one deviates from the set norms and expectations, and expectations of that given society. “Deviance may be defined as non-conformity to a given set of norms that are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society” (Giddens, 2001: 203). Giddens further provides that this concept of deviance can be applied to both individual behaviour and to the activity of groups. Aggleton (1987: 7) also provides a similar definition of deviance: as behaviour that violates certain widely shared expectations or norms.

But, Aggleton then provides a very important point for any study into deviance: “deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behaviour, it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audiences who directly or indirectly witness them.

Sociologically, then, the critical variable is the social audience, since it is the audience which eventually decides whether or not any given action or actions will become a visible case of deviation” (1988: 10). Society defines what is deviant, and if society does not condemn certain behaviour, it therefore means that the behaviour is acceptable.

With regard to the punishment of deviant behaviour, Parke (1972) found that punishment received immediately after a ‘wrong’ action is more effective than a late ‘delayed’ punishment, and highly-intensive punishment has a greater affective impact than a low-intensity punishment. He also suggested that resistance to deviation depends on the level of negative effect associated with that behaviour, i.e. if the expected negative affects (consequences) of an action are low, it becomes easier for one to deviate or more difficult to resist deviation (we shall return to this point later on in the review).

What is deviant driving behaviour? There are a number of rules that are set for drivers, such as: do not drink and drive, drive within a set speed limit, keep a specific distance between your car and the one in front, and so on. It therefore follows that a driver be considered deviant when he/she violates any or all of these rules.

Larson (1999: 12) provides that an aggressive driver is “a driver who in his determination to achieve certain goals, engages in risky driving behaviours (such as) speeding, competing, tailgating, cutting off, refusal to yield right of way, weaving, lane changing without signalling, running red lights, making illegal turns, and is inconsiderate of other drivers and of passengers.” Since all of these behaviours violate traffic rules, in this study

they will be termed deviant driving behaviour instead of aggressive driving behaviour. Deviant driving behaviours are traffic offences, which are punishable by law. Going back to the issue of late and low intensity punishment, we can draw a conclusion that if a driver violates traffic laws and receives a low fine, for example, compared to the violation, it is very possible that the driver concerned will violate the rules again.

Vaa (1999) found that there are a number of factors that contribute to high fatality rates on the roads. These include speeding, drunk driving, unroad-worthy vehicles, and tiredness. These, of course, are not the only factors that contribute or lead to accidents and deaths – the external environment can also be a huge factor, such as the weather and road conditions.

Parker (1998) argues that most violations are the result of a conscious decision taken by the driver at the time. This leads to rational choice theory (Barnes, 2000). The rational choice theory basically provides that an individual makes informed choices and because an individual is a reasoning being, he/she can/should take full responsibility for his/her actions. It follows, therefore, that when a driver deviates or violates traffic rules he/she does so actively, having made the choice to violate the rules. Because we are all rational, thinking beings, we take responsibility for our actions. The problem arises when the choices one makes are based on misinformation. Then the question then is: who should take responsibility for the wrong actions? This question does not, though, form part of this study.

Let us go back to socialisation. Parsons provides that people learn norms and values through socialisation, and these norms and values inhabit our consciences (Barnes, 2000: 22). These socially functional norms and values make their presence felt as guilt when we deviate from them. These norms and values “are introjected and internalised, and once in place they incite appropriately functional, order-sustaining action” (Barnes, 2000:22).

We should now assume that the South African Department of Transport tries to teach drivers-to-be the correct norms that should be upheld by these learners when they become drivers. This is done through the Learners and Driving License tests. This leads us to the core of this study: formal driver education and young novice drivers.

Mayhew and Simpson define driver training and education as “the process of bringing a learner from *ab initio* to a level of skill and knowledge sufficient for him toproperly operate a motor vehicle within the highway training” (Mayhew and Simpson, 1996). This will be the definition employed in this study, but the operation of a motor vehicle will be on all roads not highways only. They also provide that formal driver education is a structured approach to the learning process that can presumably facilitate and accelerate the acquisition of the needed skill. Similarly, just as this study assumes, Mayhew & Simpson also assume that the main goal of driver education is to produce safer drivers, “simply put, it is assumed that drivers exposed to formal instruction should have lower crash rates than those who do not receive such instruction” (1996).

What puts young drivers more at risk than older drivers? Mayhew & Simpson (1996) provided the following profile of young novice drivers:

- Young novice drivers are more likely than older experienced drivers to place themselves in dangerous situations because of their inability to integrate motor skills efficiently. Their operation of the vehicle is easily disrupted when the demands of driving increase beyond the norm. In such situations, they encounter difficulties in dividing their attention across several tasks. Their greater inability to steer properly and maintain constant speed when task demands are high makes it more difficult for them to maintain the vehicle in the lane and handle curves properly.
- Novice young drivers are less aware of hazards in the environment and are less likely than older experienced drivers to identify moving objects as hazards. As a consequence, it takes novice drivers longer to respond to a hazard, and once the hazard is recognised this may overload their ability to respond and maintain control of the vehicle.
- Their problems with detecting hazards likely relates to the fact that their search and scan abilities are less developed than those of more experienced drivers. The novice driver may not have fully developed the use of peripheral vision and because they have a smaller range of scanning of the roadway than experienced drivers, they can fail to detect hazards in the environment. Young

novice drivers have a tendency to look closer to the front of the vehicle than experienced drivers, especially in low speed driving situations, and are less likely to use mirrors as visual aids.

- The problem in detecting hazards is compounded by the fact that young drivers perceive their crash risk as lower than that of their peers – they view themselves as much safer than their risky cohorts – and misjudge the risks they face especially in traffic situations that place the greatest demands on their limited vehicle control skills.
- Young novice drivers also overestimate their own capabilities. Risky lifestyle behaviours (e.g. alcohol use) and attitudes (e.g. alienation, sensation seeking) are also prevalent during these critical adolescent years. As such, some of them succumb to thrill seeking and risk taking tendencies, adopting risky driving behaviours that exceed their abilities to respond effectively in critical situations.
- These deficiencies in driving skills/capacities and risky lifestyle characteristics are reflected in driving practices – e.g. speeding, following too closely – that result in young drivers being over represented in collisions involving excessive speed, intersections, and striking the back of another vehicle.

- Research has shown that these experienced-related and age-related factors contribute about equally to the greater crash risk for young drivers (Mayhew and Simpson, 1996).

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the U.S.A. also argued that there are three main factors that work together that lead to fatal accidents (almost similar to the above profile): inexperience, risk-taking behaviour and immaturity, and greater risk exposure (www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect1.html). Many young drivers have very little knowledge or understanding of driving when they obtain a driving license. Young drivers or young people are also naturally impulsive and this “results in poor driving judgement and participation in high-risk behaviours such as speeding, inattention, drinking and driving, and not using a seat belt”(www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect1.html). Peer pressure is also a major factor. James (2000) argues that some people feel excessive pressure to do things they do not like because of fear of disapproval, this is especially true of young drivers. Young drivers, combined with the above, also have a tendency of driving at night therefore increasing their chances of being involved in an accident. In most cases “a larger proportion of teen fatal crashes involve speeding, or going too fast for road conditions, compared to other drivers” (www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect1.html).

According to an article from the U.S.A Today Magazine (1997) the leading cause of death among young people is road accidents. It also indicates that most of the crashes

involving young drivers are caused by inexperience, poor driving skills, risk-taking, or bad decision-making. This is a problem as, even though drivers between 15 & 20 years of age only account for 7% of the driving population, they are involved in 14% of all fatal traffic accidents and nearly 20% of total crashes. Fildes, Rumbold & Leening (1991) also agree with the above. They contend that crash rates are substantially higher during the first and second year of licensed driving than in subsequent years.

Is driver education important, then? Does driver education effectively reduce road accidents? Studies about this provide that formal driver education, as it is now, does not reduce road crashes/fatalities: “there was no evidence that driver education reduces motor vehicle crash involvement, and that...programmes encouraged earlier licensing which could result in more crashes by young drivers” (Achara et al, 2001). Mayhew & Simpson also agree: “the review of the scientific evaluations performed to date provides little support for the claim that driver instruction is an effective safety countermeasure – the overwhelming preponderance of evidence fails to show that formally trained students have a lower frequency of crashes than those who do not receive such training” (Mayhew and Simpson, 1996).

But, other studies prove otherwise. In Denmark, for instance, after realising that there was a problem regarding young novice drivers, driver education was reviewed and changed with positive results. “Driver education in Denmark was changed radically in 1986. An evaluation study was undertaken to see whether the new education concept had had any effect on road accidents. In an earlier part of the study, it was found that after the

change in education the number of accidents involving 18-19 year olds in the official statistics had decreased more than that involving mature drivers. This fact could not be solely attributed to changes in population size, changes in exposure, mild winters in the period after change, etc. It seemed, therefore, reasonable to attribute the effect to the changes in driver education.

In this study, two groups of new drivers – trained according to the old and new drivers respectively – were followed-up with four questionnaires through their first 5.5 years as drivers. The decrease in accidents found in the official statistics was also found for the drivers in the questionnaire study....those who received training which satisfied a number of the basic requirements in the new education program, had a lower accident risk than those whose education did not meet the requirements. This can be seen as an indication that the decrease in accidents is explainable, at least in part, by changes in driver education” (Carstensen, 2002).

In the United States of America it was also found that specific modifications to the current driver education does improve the driving skills of young drivers as well as their behaviour.

www.adtsea.iup.edu/adtsea/thechronicle/summer_99/the_effectiveness_of.htm

There are some major problems with the current structure of formal driver education. Achara, Adeyemi, Dosekun, Kelleher, Lansley, Male, Muhialdin, Reynolds, Roberts, Smailbegovic & Van der Spek (2001) provide that driver education comes too soon for

young people. They argue that teenagers obtain a driving license and start driving sooner than they should, “because teenagers have a higher risk of road death and serious injury than any other age group, earlier licensing could offset any beneficial effect of driver education and increase the number of teenage road traffic crashes” (Achara et al, 2001). Another problem that was pointed out was that “current driver licensing practices allow a quick route through the learning phase and place too little emphasis on supervised practice and training(www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect2.html), the result of this is that “an inexperienced young driver could pass a road test and receive a full, unrestricted driver license with almost no ‘real world’ driving experience”. And this may apply internationally.

Developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Africa have additional problems with their driver education. The News India Times reported that in India there is a lack of professionalism in driver training with a proportion of untrained drivers continually on the rise (<http://www.newsindia-times.com/2002/09/13/med30-poor.html>).

In an African Road Safety Congress held in 1989 it was agreed that African countries had a very serious road accident problem (Downing, 1989). It was reported that fatality rates per registered vehicle on the road were 20 to 30 times higher than those in developed countries. “As driver error is always the most common accident cause identified by the police it would seem likely that improvements in driver training have some potential for accident reduction...This...suggests that there is some scope for reducing drivers’ mistakes by improving the training of learners or qualified drivers” (Downing, 1989).

Drivers were found to be less disciplined in developing countries than in developed countries. Fifteen years later, studies still show some flaws in driver education from how the education is carried out to the actual test (Sitas, 2003). More of this is discussed in Chapter 3.

A study into formal driver education is needed in South Africa as well. This is because South Africa also has many young drivers that are involved in car crashes and there is a need to assess whether the current K 53 licensing system is structured and carried out well enough to equip young learners with relevant driving skills.

Chapter Two

This section will deal with the methodology employed in this study, the sampling technique, and how the data was analysed. They will each be dealt with separately

2.1 Methodology

This study used both the quantitative and qualitative methods of study. It was quantitative in that a questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The questionnaire (see appendix 1) was self-administered in the presence of the data collector. It was administered to drivers. The questionnaire had both open-ended and closed questions. The questionnaire was structured as follows: the first part contained demographic information. The second part asked questions concerning the driver's experience prior to going to driving school, i.e. whether they had informally driven a car, with whom and in which road conditions. This prior experience could have had a bearing on how the driver performs at driving school and after – this is the reason why this information was sought. The third part of the questionnaire aimed to get information on the experience of the driver whilst a learner trying to get a driver's licence. Questions asked included the road conditions that the driver (as a learner) was exposed to; race, class or gender issues that might have interfered with the training process; clear instructions from the instructor (e.g. was it clearly explained to the learner driver what was expected of him/her); whether the driver felt that the instructor had the necessary expertise in teaching learner drivers; and whether he/she was taught how to handle a motor vehicle in case of a potential accident. These questions are directly aimed at ascertaining whether driving schools provide necessary and sufficient driving skills to enable new drivers to safely operate a motor

2.2 Sample

This study was conducted in Durban. The reason for this, as provided by Dr Mbanjwa (Head of KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport, 2003), is that of all the accidents that occur in KwaZulu Natal 60% of them happen in Durban. 190 young drivers between the ages 18 and 23 formed the sample. 18 years is the minimum age for one to obtain a drivers license and 23 years of age allows a driver to have driven for a maximum of 5 years. The survey applies to these respondents. They will be of all races and backgrounds. They should not have had a license for more than 5 years.

The purposive/judgmental sampling procedure was used to get driver respondents. This is because drivers are not that easy to find and the specific target group will be even more difficult to identify. This sampling technique is useful in the selection of difficult-to-reach groups. For this reason, even though the researcher wanted to have 200 respondents, the aim was to get as many respondents as possible. At the end 190 respondents were interviewed. They were found in 'hot spots' for young drivers, such as tertiary institutions and high schools and sport grounds in the Durban Metropolitan area. A major concern was that it may not be easy to identify those drivers that fall within the age limit and that there are not that many drivers that fall within the age limit. The researcher had to rely on the honesty of the respondent and for those that were willing proof of age was provided e.g. identity numbers on student cards

A representative from the Department of Transport was interviewed concerning the way that formal driving education is being carried out. This representative was from the national branch of the Department of Transport. Eight different driving school instructors were also interviewed. This was done in order to ascertain their thoughts on the structure of driving education, as well as allowing the researcher to see whether there is any uniformity with the way that learner drivers are taught how to drive i.e. is the process a standardised for all driving schools?

2.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using the SPSS as it is easily accessible and understandable to the researcher. SPSS is a computer programme that is used to analyse numbers or statistics. Before the raw data was entered onto the programme, it was first checked and cleaned, i.e. all incomplete and unusable questionnaires were set aside. The second step was coding. Coding, according to Neuman, means “systematically reorganising raw data into a format that is machine readable” (2000, 314). The questionnaires were allocated numbers or cases so as to make entering the data easier. The responses were then allocated code categories for the same purpose. Categories were already pre-coded for most questions on the questionnaire; for example, there were different categories for age groups that respondents chose from.

The data was then entered onto the programme. Before entering the raw data, the questionnaire with the coded categories, responses or variables – in similar format - was entered onto the programme. This allowed the researcher to directly transfer the raw data

from the questionnaires onto the programme. According to Neuman (2000; 315), there are four ways a researcher can transfer information from questionnaires: code sheets, direct entry, optical scan sheets and computer-assisted telephone interviewing. In this case, the researcher opted for the second option of direct entry. “The researcher can sit at a computer and directly type in the data. This direct-entry method is easiest if information is already in a similar format” (Neuman, 2000: 315). After entering the data was then checked for accuracy because “accuracy is extremely important.... errors made when coding or entering the data into a computer threaten the validity of measures and cause misleading results” (Neuman, 2000: 316). The method used for checking or cleaning the data is called possible code cleaning (Neuman, 2000: 317). This involves checking the categories for impossible codes, for example, “respondent sex is coded 1 = male, 2 = female. Finding a 4 for a case in the field for the sex variable indicates a coding error” and should therefore be corrected (Neuman, 2000: 317).

The programme then analysed the data and produced a more manageable and summarised format i.e. into frequencies, tables and graphs. This allowed the researcher to correctly interpret and draw meaning from the data. Descriptive statistics were used in this case. “Descriptive statistics describe numerical data. They can be categorised by the number of variables involved: univariate, bivariate, or multivariate...” (Neuman,2000; 317). Univariate analysis was used to describe or analyse one variable and results were produced as frequencies or frequency distributions as well as in graphic form.

Cross tabulations or bivariate analysis were also used. Cross tabulation is when “the cases are organised in the table (or graph) on the basis of two variables at the same time” (Neuman, 2000; 325). The results of these were presented in tables as can be seen in Chapter Four below.

As mentioned in the methodology section above, some of the questions on the questionnaire were qualitative in that they were open-ended with no pre-determined responses. This data then was then analysed differently from the quantitative data.

Each of the open-ended questions was first regarded separately from each other. Responses on one question from the different respondents were first brought together to check for similarities of responses. Those responses that were similar to each other were categorised into one variable under one code. In other words, different themes that emerged from the one question were grouped together under different codes therefore forming different variables. Latent coding was used. This is when the researcher looks for the underlying, implicit meaning in the content of a text.

“Coding data has a different meaning and role in qualitative research. A researcher organises the raw data into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts, which he or she then uses to analyse data” (Neuman, 2000; 420). It can be argued that, thereafter, content analysis was used. ‘Content’ may refer to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, any message that can be communicated or – as in this case – themes (Neuman, 2000; 292). “There are qualitative or interpretive versions of content analysis”

(Neuman, 2000; 293). The emphasis in this study is on quantitative data about a text's content. "With content analysis, a researcher can compare content across many texts and analyse it with quantitative techniques (e.g. charts and tables)... Coding (in content analysis) turns aspects of content that represent variables into numbers. After a content analysis researcher gathers the data, he or she enters them into computers and analyses them with statistics in the same way that an experimenter or survey researcher would" (Neuman, 2000; 293). This is what was done in this study. After the themes were categorised and variables were formed the data was then statistically entered onto SPSS and quantitatively analysed as was done with the quantitative data. Tables and graphs were produced from this data and some of it was cross-tabulated with the quantitative data.

The findings of the study are dealt with in Chapter four along with the discussion.

Chapter Three

Findings and Discussion

As mentioned before, driver education forms part of socialisation. If socialisation is a process of teaching new members of a society about the culture and ways of that society, then driver education is a process of teaching learner drivers about traffic rules and how to operate a car i.e. the culture of driving. The aim of driver education is the process of bringing a learner driver from ab intio to a level of skill and knowledge sufficient for him or her to properly operate a motor vehicle on all roads (Mayhew & Simpson, 1996). This driver education or socialisation happens through an institution.

3.1 Driving Schools as Educational Institutions

Society is made up of many different institutions. According to Zijderveld (2000: 34) the role of institutions has largely been functionalist. He argues that “in sociology the institutional perspective has....been strongly functionalist, since it has always emphasized the coercion and control on the part of the institutions for the sake of structural or systematic order and stability”. He further argues that institutions are historical entities that are passed from generation to generation carrying with them norms and values which are then “ ‘forged’ in patterns of behaviour, into traditional and established ways of acting, thinking and feeling” (Zijderveld, 2000: 36). Some examples that he provides of institutions are schools, family and churches.

Socialization is also dependent partly on institutions, more specifically educational institutions. “Educational institutes have the responsibility of keeping in storage...the knowledge and wisdom of the past, to function as the memory banks of past educational experiences and skills” (Zijdersveld, 2000: 189). Zijdersveld then further defines knowledge as “structured information, data put together within a coherent, heuristic, i.e. meaningful framework, as in a theory or a handbook for practical skills.” This definition is fitting for the K53 manual for learner drivers.

3.2 The K53 Learner Driver’s Manual

The Engen K53 manual (found in retail stores) is structured in such a way that it provides all the information that learner drivers need in order to study towards receiving a driver’s licence. It is divided into 2 main sections: the first teaches all the road/traffic rules that the learner has to know, and the second part deals more with the theory on how to operate a motor vehicle. All this ‘knowledge’ has been put together in one manual with the aim of teaching and producing safe, good drivers that have the skills of driving a motor vehicle as well as knowing all the road and traffic rules. Of course, learner drivers still have to attend driving school in order to put theory to practice.

As it is now clear, in this study driving schools are seen as educational institutions. They are the key to formal driver education. As mentioned before, it is assumed that drivers exposed to this formal instruction should be better drivers than those that did not receive this instruction. Driving schools are the first step towards the socialization of drivers.

This is where they learn the proper norms and values (the culture, rules and regulations) of driving. So, how do they operate?

3.3 Driver Education: The Process

As part of this study driving school instructors were interviewed and this is what they reported concerning the operation of driving schools: when a person comes to them wanting to become a driver he/she is first asked whether s/he has a learners licence. No person in South Africa is allowed to begin driving lessons or receive a driver's licence without a learner's licence. The 'learner's', as it is called, provides one with basic knowledge of traffic rules. If one does not have a learner's licence they are informed by the driving school that they will need to obtain one before they are allowed to attend driving lessons.

Some driving schools offer to teach or carry the learner through this first part. A K53 manual is obtained and the learner attends classes where the contents of the manual are simplified to the advantage of the learner. After these lessons an informal test is given before the learner writes a formal test at a recognised testing station.

Once the 'learner's' has been obtained driving lessons begin. The costs for driving lessons differ across the different driving schools. The learner is assigned a professional instructor who will teach him/her how to operate a motor vehicle. The first place of learning begins at the 'grounds'. This is an artificial road environment with all the road

signs. Once it is clear that the learner knows the basics of operating a motor vehicle, they are then taken to the real environment, on the road.

3.4 Exposure to Different Environments

There are various environments that learner drivers are exposed to at this stage as can be seen from table 1.

Table 1: Driving in different road and traffic conditions while at driving school

Response	Residential area	Highway	Gravel road	Peak hour traffic	Night time	Rainy conditions
Yes %	91	86	34	86	30.5	73
No %	9	14	66	14	60.5	27

From Table 1 one can deduce that a vast majority of the learners were exposed to all types of road and traffic environments that they may find difficult to navigate through once they become fully licensed drivers except in the case of gravel roads and night-time. This is important as it shows that the socialisation of these learner drivers was taken beyond the basic stage of only learning how to operate a motor vehicle. In a study conducted by Sitas (2003: 32) it was found that 84% of the study's respondents (which included learners and new drivers) felt that their knowledge of road use and safety awareness was good. But, it was also found that their knowledge of the major

contributions to road deaths was somewhat limited. This, though, will be discussed later on in the driver's test section.

According to the driving school instructors in Durban they conducted most of their training in surrounding areas (in the CBD where they are situated) and in residential areas. This is confirmed by the high number of respondents who reported being trained in peak hour traffic, assumingly in the CBD, as well as the very high number of respondents who reportedly trained in residential areas (Table 1). The problem with concentrating most of the driver training in these areas will be dealt with in Section 3.6 below.

The minimum and maximum number of lessons allowed by driving schools to be taken by learner drivers varies. Some allow for a minimum of less than 5 lessons to those people who feel that they already know how to drive and only need a licence. Only 7% reported having done less than 5 lessons (Figure 1 below). The same graph shows that a majority 31% attended between 5 and 10 lessons while 28% attended between 11 and 16 lessons. But, it has to be pointed out that 59% of the respondents (Figure 2 below) had received training before going for formal driver education. This means that a significant number of the respondents had received some experience of driving a motor vehicle before attending driving school.

Inexperience has been cited by some authors in the literature review as one of the major contributing factors of road accidents for young novice drivers (Mayhew and Simpson, 1996). This assumes that the more experienced a driver becomes the less chances he or

she will become involved in an accident. But, the findings indicate that those licensed drivers who received some driving experience before going to driving school were involved in almost just as many accidents – 51% - as those drivers that did not have any experience of driving a motor vehicle before receiving formal driver education. One has to attend formal driver education in South Africa in order to get a driver’s licence whether or not they already know how to drive. This is why the 59% that had already received some prior training still attended driving school though they did not attend full courses (only 18% did more than 22 lessons as shown in figure 1 below). A full course is either 20 or 30 lessons depending on the driving school (according to the driving instructors).

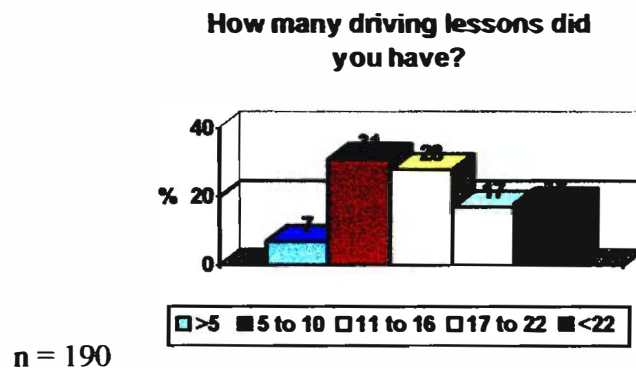


Figure 1

As can be seen from above 31% of the respondents received between 5 and 10 driving lessons at driving school, 28% received between 11 and 16 lessons, 18% trained for more than 22 lessons, 17 % went to between 17 and 22 lessons, and 7% went for less than 5 lessons (figure 1).

Did you have any experience of driving a motor vehicle before going to driving school?

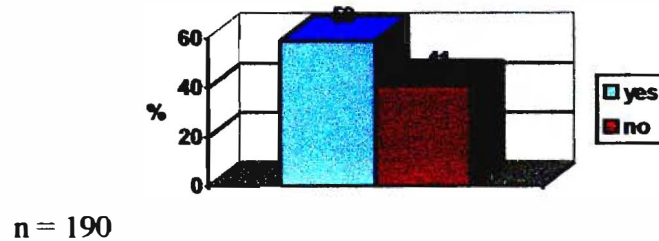


Figure 2

Figure 2 provides that 59% of the respondents interviewed had received driving experience before going to driving school. 41% did not receive this prior training.

3.5 The Driver's Test

After the lessons are done the learner is then taken to a testing station to be tested by fully trained professionals or inspectors. It seems that in all the cases traffic officers test the learners. If the learner passes the test they then receive their driver's licences. If not, then the learner goes back to driving school for further lessons.

According to the driving school instructors they use the same K53 manual that learners use in order to teach their learner drivers. They reported that they (the instructors) are trained and tested and have to be experienced drivers themselves (approximately 3 years

of driving) before they are awarded a permit to be driving instructors. This coincides with the 88% of the respondents who felt that their instructors had the necessary expertise to train learner drivers mainly because the instructors were professional and seemed confident during training. Some respondents, though, felt that they did not get a 'fair deal'. Some reported that their instructors did not answer questions posed to them by the learner while one respondent reported having to change instructors as the one he/she had always asked other instructors for answers and guidance.

The instructors reported being monitored by their driving school owners. They also reported that there are certain bodies in Durban that monitor the driving schools. They have to register with these bodies. They claimed that they are not monitored by the Department of Transport. They were not clear though how or when they are monitored. They also admitted that there are many illegal driving schools in Durban that are not registered – they have to have registration documents and registration numbers as proof of registration. Some of the driving schools that were approached during this study refused to be interviewed after being asked for their registration documents.

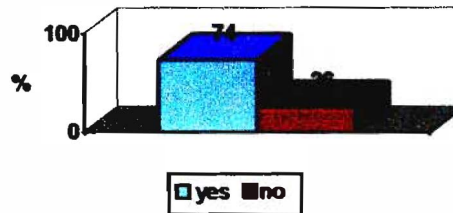
There are some common dangerous situations that drivers find themselves in when they are driving. As can be seen from figure 3 to 7, it seems that driving schools do teach their learners how to avoid potentially dangerous situations such as what to do if one loses control of his/her vehicle (Figure 3), if the brakes fail while driving (Figure 4), if the road is slippery (Figure 5), if another vehicle from the opposite direction crosses to his/her lane (Figure 6), and what to do if the vehicle in front loses control (Figure 7). The

instructors did report that they do teach some basic road safety, but it was reported by one driving school that there is a need for drivers to attend ‘advanced’ training in road safety as normal driving schools teach only the basics.

This is echoed in the study conducted by Sitas (2003). In the study she pointed out that there are four major contributions to road deaths: drinking and driving, speeding, not wearing a seatbelt and driving unroadworthy vehicles. Her findings of the knowledge of these factors was disturbing: less than 50% of the respondents claimed to know the alcohol limit, but less than 10% of the 39% who chose to offer an answer, accurately quoted 0.05/100ml; 48% claimed to wear their seatbelts in the front and back at all times even though a majority of the respondents said wearing a seatbelt is important; 39% felt that it is not important to stick to the speed limit and 60% believed that there are situations that warrant exceeding the speed limit. Her findings suggest that “there is a large gap in all levels of drivers’ knowledge or road use and safety awareness. The majority of drivers- although confident of their abilities – tend to be ignorant of some of the major dangers contributing to high death toll on South African roads” (2003: 35).

An overwhelming 94% of the current study’s respondents reported feeling confident that they were good drivers after they had passed their driver’s test. What was worrying was that she found that those interviewed did not seem to understand the legislation in place or even why those laws were established in the first place. This leads to the question of driver competency in South Africa.

Did your instructor explain to you what to do if you lose control of your vehicle?



n = 190

Figure 3

Figure 3 provides that 74% of the respondents reported that it was explained to them what to do if they lose control of their vehicle and 26% reported never being given this information.

Did your instructor explain to you what to do if your brakes fail you?

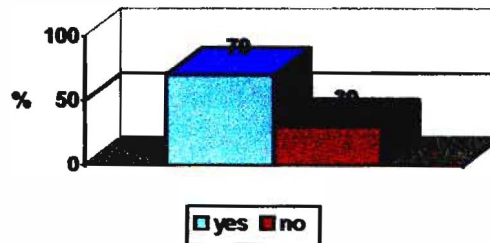


Figure 4

Figure 6 shows that 53% of the respondents did receive information on what to do if another vehicle comes straight at them from another direction and 47% reported that they their instructors did not explain this to them.

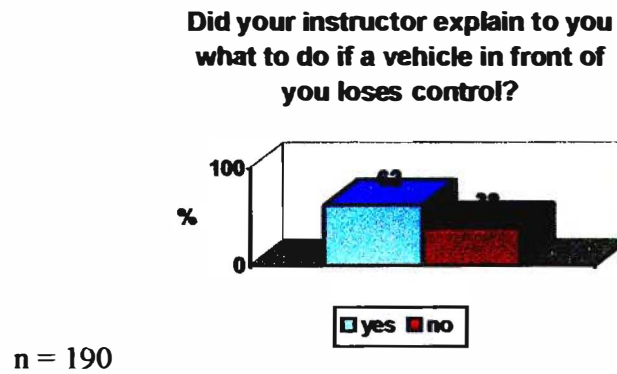


Figure 7

As can be seen from figure 7, 38% of the respondents reported that it was not explained to them what to do if a vehicle in front of them loses control while 62% reported that they were given this information.

3.6 Driver Competency in South Africa

So, how good is South Africa's licensing system? On The 20th November 2001 the late minister of transport Abdulah Omar launched the Road to Safety Strategy. At this launch he commented, "the Road to Safety Strategy...is not a Utopian wish list but a set of carefully measured, balanced and prioritised actions that are practical, affordable and do-able" (www.gov.za/dot). This strategy has one simple aim: to reduce the number of

crashes on South African roads, as well as the deaths and injuries as a result of these crashes, by 5% each year until year 2005 therefore decreasing the economic burden that road crashes incur. Nine projects were formulated that are to be implemented under this strategy and one of these projects is on driver fitness.

One of the aims of the driver fitness project is to ensure an acceptable level of competency of drivers through the enhancement of the driving licensing system. In other words, it wants to ensure that learner drivers are socialised in an effective and efficient manner through a system that is capable of producing good quality drivers (i.e. they can handle any road/traffic condition). One of the ways of ensuring this was through revising the current K 53 practical test for a driving licence. By 20th November 2003 a report entitled 'Driver Competency in South Africa' had been released containing the revision of this system. The aim here was also simple: to develop a "user-friendly practical test to determine the proficiency skills of each of the applicable drivers in a real traffic situation."

This new document on driver competency in South Africa revises the current licensing system in South Africa. It was found that the current system has a number of flaws but only the ones most relevant to this study will be discussed.

licence to drive a heavy motor vehicle, conveying a very heavy load while being accompanied by the holder of a professional driving permit.” The problem with a professional driving permit is that applicants are not subjected to a practical test to determine their proficiency level. As for the level of difficulty, Sitas found that 63% learners and 72% new drivers found the learner’s testing process to be an easy one (2003: 12). A major flaw of the learner’s testing process that Sitas picked up in her study was that the learner’s licence was too technical and did not explain why the rules being taught were made. “They do not emphasise practical driving skills and what it means to be a responsible road user” (Sitas, 2003: 36).

3.6.1.2 The driver’s licence: The practical driving test

There are a few problems that were pointed out concerning the practical driving test. It was found that a person can obtain a driving licence in a higher vehicle class (such as a code C1 for heavy vehicles) and then be authorised to drive a motor vehicle in a lower class (such as a light motor vehicle requiring a code B) without considering that the person does not have the skills to do so.

But, it is not only the practical test that needs to be revised, but also the licensing system as a whole as there are also some flaws with the manner in which driving schools teach their learners. “An example of the situation is that most driving schools make use of small trucks of which the gross vehicle mass, as specified by the manufacturer, exceeds 3500 kilograms. These trucks are then ‘modified’, by removing some of the wheels to become ‘smaller’. Some are the ‘modified’ in a higher degree. This ‘small’ truck is then

used to 'train' applicants and to obtain a driving licence in the code C 1 (heavy vehicles). Motor vehicles with a gross vehicle mass of up to 16000 Kg may then be driven with the same code of licence" (Driver Competency in South Africa Report). The driving test is designed for big trucks not these 'small' trucks. It was further mentioned that the reason for obtaining a code C1 licence in this 'small' truck is due to the fact that the holder of this code (C1) is authorised to drive a motorcar (code B). "To obtain a driving licence with a motor car means that the driver must prove that he or she can execute manoeuvres like a 'parallel parking' and 'alley docking' from both sides as well as a 'turn in the road' within these three movements. These manoeuvres require much more skills than the manoeuvres for a C1 licence, while the holder is authorised to drive a motorcar anyway" (Driver Competency in South Africa Report). There was a strong suggestion that the classification of the different licences that South Africa currently uses needs to be revised urgently in order to avoid this tendency to continue. There was no indication in the document suggesting that this revision has been underway.

What was also found was that during the practical test there is too much emphasis on procedures and sequences rather than on driving skills in real traffic situations. It was also found that learner drivers are subjected to testing within an urban area where the speed limit is 60km/h. The driving school instructors in the interviews echoed this – they trained their learner's within the city and hardly trained them in conditions where the speed limit exceeds 60km/h. This is problematic as drivers also drive in situations where the speed limit exceeds 60km/h. This means that the learners do not receive the required skill to properly operate a motor vehicle on, for example, highways where they may want

to drive at a speed of up to 120km/h. In this instance new drivers find it difficult to control the vehicle, as they are not yet used to driving at speeds exceeding 60 km/h. It is argued that most accidents take place outside urban areas at speeds higher than 60km/h (Sitas, 2003). The Road Accident Fund reported that “currently, 40% of South African drivers exceed the 120 km/h speed limit, 80% the 100km/h limit and 90% the 60km/h limit” (www.arrivealive.co.za/speeding). This suggests that new drivers do not understand the reasoning behind the speed limits and therefore do not adhere to them.

In addition, Sitas provides another criticism of the driver’s test. She argues, “This test does not...deal with many common driving circumstances such as driving at night or in certain weather conditions.... This test focuses on the practical manipulation of the vehicle that is being examined, and like the learner’s test, fails to instil a sense of responsibility regarding certain regulations and why they are so important to abide” (Sitas, 2003: 36). Some examples of regulations that are not properly explained are: headlights should be switched on if road users and vehicles are not clearly visible within 150 m; driving beams should be able to illuminate a maximum distance of 100m while passing beams should illuminate a maximum distance of 40 m; the legal distance at which a driver should stop his/her vehicle from a pedestrian crossing is 9m. When one thinks about it, how long is 9 m? How many people know what 40m is exactly? The truth is that these are some of the rules that are not explained. For instance: will it matter if one stops 8 m from a pedestrian crossing rather than 9 m and why is there a specific distance? Once the driver is on the road how will he/she measure the distance that the vehicle’s

passing beams illuminates? These are examples of some rules that are not explained and may therefore not be followed once a person obtains his/her driving license.

So far it may seem that what was argued in the literature may be true in South Africa as well. It was argued that current licensing systems allow for a quick route through the learning phase and place little emphasis on supervised practice and training resulting in in-experienced young drivers passing a road test and receiving full, unrestricted driving licenses with almost no 'real world' driving experience (www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/SaveTeens/sect2.html).

3.7 The researcher goes to driving school

As mentioned in the methodology, part of this research involved the researcher going for formal driver education. This enabled the researcher to gain more knowledge of the entire driver training process and some of what the researcher found out was interesting.

The researcher had never been to driving school before and did not have a learner's licence as yet and the first step was to find a driving school. After approaching several driving schools and being informed that she has to have a learner's licence before attending driving lessons she went to find a learner's manual. There were three options that were put in front of her: first, to buy her own manual and study privately and book her own test date; second, was to attend learner's lessons at the driving school and allow them to book a test date for her to write the learner's licence test; and third, (offered by one driving school that will not be named) give them money to book a test date for her

and not worry about learning for the test as it was guaranteed that she will get her learner's licence (the driving school did not want to get into any detail as to how this option works but the researcher was told not to worry). The researcher opted for option one.

Buying the K53 driver's manual was difficult. There are many manuals compiled by different agents and choosing which one was the best became a lengthy process. In the end she chose one that looked more appealing as the sales lady that they are all the same informed her. She found out the day of the test (while waiting to write the test) that they are not exactly the same. The manuals explained some rules differently and pictures were not the same.

After obtaining the learner's licence, driving lessons began. It has to be mentioned that the researcher had never attempted to drive a motor vehicle before but on the very first day she was put behind the steering wheel and told to start the car and get on the road – at a residential area at 7 a.m. with residents driving off to work. She had to ask how one starts a car. This was the procedure until she received a new instructor. The first instructor gave instructions on what should be done without explaining how or why. For example, he will say indicate to the right without telling you where the indicators are and how they work. Asked whether this was normal procedure, the instructor responded that this is how he teaches learner drivers. The researcher had informed the instructor on the first day that she had never been inside a car besides as a passenger.

This brought into question of quality control. Once the learner is alone in a car with his or her instructor it is up to the instructor what he or she teaches the learner and how the lessons will be conducted. To a first time learner who has never been to driving school there is now way of knowing whether what you are being taught is what you should really know. You also do not know whether what you learn is what will enable you to pass the driver's licence test.

Another danger is that what your instructor does not teach may go unnoticed because you do not know that you are supposed to be taught that particular part, for example, if you do not know that there is such a thing called a three-point-turn (as the researcher did not know) and your instructor does not teach you then you are in danger of going to the test only to fail as you were not taught and you did not ask about it because you did not know about it. Money paid is non-refundable. Then the question is: who monitors driving school instructors during lessons and why are learners assigned only one instructor at a time? The second instructor was a much better teacher. He explained everything that a learner needs to do before it was carried out and why.

The researcher found the driver's test process to be very rigid. One has to follow the sequences and procedure exactly as the traffic officer testing you wants it to be done: for example, before going to the test the researcher was given a ten minute lesson on the pre-trip inspection which has to be conducted in the anti-clockwise direction from top to bottom – this is what the inspector wants. Although one sees the reasons behind inspecting a vehicle before using it, one has to wonder what difference it makes whether

you do it clockwise or anti-clockwise. Again, the question of quality control through perhaps a third party is brought up. During the test on the road it is the learner and the inspector and no one else. Everything that you do is up to the inspector: for example, if he wants you to go on a freeway and not into a CBD that is what the learner will have to do. The whole process is not standardised. The researcher was tested at a residential area while some learners were tested in the CBD. Whether one passes or not is in the hands on one inspector and one trip and questioning the inspector is not easy.

During the lessons and the test the researcher noticed that there are some things that she was being taught to do but were not being done by other drivers around her. These included checking the blind spot, checking each and every incoming road for other cars even if you are not making a turn and conducting the 360degree check when pulling off. One question that the researcher asked to both the instructors and the inspector was why is it that some of that she was being taught was not practised by drivers around her. The response was the same: other drivers knew what they were doing and the way they drive and their safety is up to them. This told the researcher one thing: as soon as she gets a driver's licence what she will do is dependent on what she considers safe by her standards and she does not have to do all the sequence checks that she was being taught and tested on and it seems that this is exactly what other drivers are doing. And, this type of thinking is dangerous. The problem is that most of the rules that she was being taught and tested on were not really stressed as being of major importance or why they were there. As for why the previous licensing system was changed, the instructors did not seem to know. It has to be stressed that during this entire process at no point did the researcher

reveal that she was reviewing the current licensing system and how it is implemented and it was all done before she received the report from the Department of Transport on Driver Competency.

3.8. Accident Profile

The following will be an accident profile of the drivers. This section will try to ascertain who has been involved in motor vehicle accidents since receiving a driving license.

To begin, with of the 190 respondents interviewed, 66.3% of them were male while 33.7% were female. 4.8% were 18 years old, 4.2% were 19 years old, 4.2% were 20 years old, 17.4% were 21 years old, 20.5% were 22 years old and 48.9% were 23 years old. As to how long the respondents had been licensed drivers 28.9% had been driving for one year, 27.9% for two years, 17.4% have been driving for 3years, 12.1% for 4 years, and 13.7% have been licensed drivers for five years. Of all the respondents 23% have been involved in a motor vehicle accident since receiving their driving licences as shown in figure 8 below.

After receiving your driver's licence have you ever been involved in a motor vehicle accident where you were the driver?

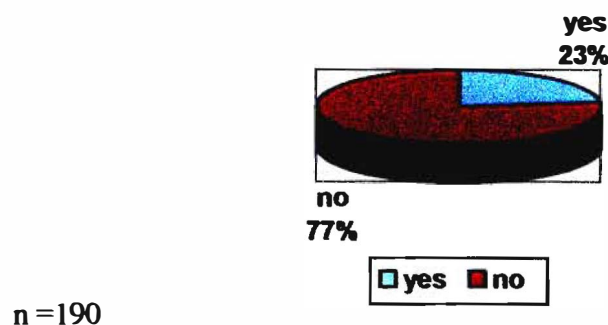


Figure 8

The above figure is alarming when one considers that these drivers have been driving for no more than five years. Statistics provided by the Ethekewini Traffic Department show that drivers between the ages 15 and 24 were involved in more accidents than drivers between the ages 50 and 59 between the 1st January 2003 and the 30th December 2003 – table 2 below.

Table 2: Age distribution of drivers involved in motor vehicle accidents

Date Range: 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003

Age group	No. of accidents
15 - 24	12391
50 - 59	9415

When broken up, the statistics in the above table show that of the 12391 accidents, 2121 of them involved drivers between ages 15 and 19 and 10270 of the accidents involved drivers that were between 20 and 24 years of age (table 2 below). In terms of severity it can be seen from table 3 and table 4 below that younger drivers were involved in more accidents that were fatal than the older drivers and accidents with injuries – both serious and slight.

Table 3: Age distribution of young drivers (detailed) by severity of casualty

Date Range: 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003

Age Group	All Drivers	Deaths	Serious	Slight
15 – 19	2121	8	29	227
20 – 24	10270	18	113	796
Total	12391	26	142	1023

Table 4: Age distribution of old drivers (detailed) by severity of casualty

Date Range: 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003

Age Group	All Drivers	Deaths	Serious	Slight
50 – 54	5552	6	42	292
55 – 59	3863	6	19	189
Total	9415	12	61	481

Findings from this study show that young novice drivers are involved more in accidents where they were hit from behind – 38% - as provided in figure 9 below.

Type of Crash

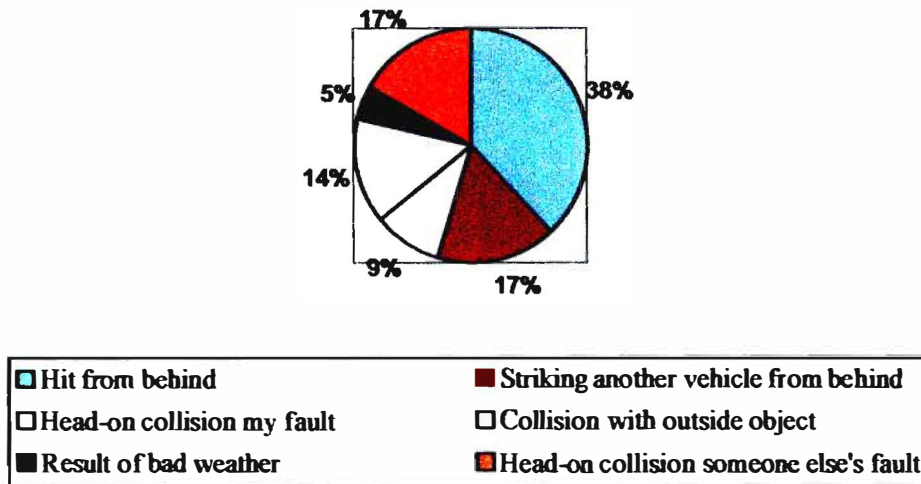


Figure 9

The above is in line with findings of a study conducted in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland. In this case it was found that 35% of young drivers between the ages 18 and 24 were involved in crashes where they were hit from behind. The reason given for this is that younger drivers were more likely to be involved in accidents caused by failing to give way (www.aami.com.au). In this overseas study it was reported that 27% of all drivers killed in road accidents in a year are between the ages 17 and 25. The study found that of all the respondents (aged 18-24) surveyed 47% have been involved in an accident – this number is much higher than the respondents interviewed in this study.

The reasons provided by Mayhew and Simpson (1996) are that young novice drivers have an inability to integrate motor skills efficiently thus their operation of the vehicle is

easily disrupted when the demands of driving increase beyond the norm. They argue that in such cases the young driver encounters difficulties in dividing their attention across several tasks. The same reasons may apply as to why 27% of the respondents that have been involved in crashes (as shown in figure 9 above) were involved in head-on collisions. “Young novice drivers are less aware of hazards in the environment and are less likely than older experienced drivers to identify moving objects as hazards. As a consequence, it takes novice drivers longer to respond to a hazard, and once the hazard is recognised this may overload their ability to respond and maintain control of the vehicle” (Mayhew and Simpson, 1996). All this is a result of less developed search and scan abilities of younger drivers as compared to older more experienced drivers.

But, one might think that driving schools should be equipping these drivers with all the necessary skills to operate a motor vehicle in almost all road or traffic conditions. The next question then is: of those respondents that have been involved in a motor vehicle crash, were they not taught how to handle the different types of road and traffic conditions taking into consideration that 89% of all respondents reported that they received clear instructions from their driving school instructors and 83.5% of them felt confident about their driving abilities after passing the driver’s test.

The findings provide the following:

Of the 23% (n=43) respondents that have already been involved in motor vehicle accidents:

- 86% were exposed to driving on the highway during formal driver education,
- 86% were exposed to driving in peak hour traffic,
- 63% were exposed to driving in rainy conditions, and
- 88% were exposed to driving in a residential area.

The only exceptions were exposure to driving on gravel road (33%) and driving at night (37%). Figure 3 to figure 6 above provided the number of respondents that were taught safety measures at driving school and the findings indicate that a majority of them were taught how to handle potentially dangerous situations when driving. But, after some cross tabulations it was found that a majority of the respondents that were taught this have been involved in an accident.

Table 5: Respondents involved in accidents, by Respondents taught what to do if they lose control of vehicle that they are driving

Instruction when vehicle loses control	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	24	55.8	117	79.6	141	74.2
No	19	44.2	30	20.4	49	25.8
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

Table 5 above shows that of all the respondents that were not taught what to do if they lose control of their vehicles while driving, 44.2% - a significantly high number - of them have been involved in an accident. Even though this does not necessarily mean that these drivers were involved in accidents as a result of them losing control of their vehicles, it does mean that many of these new drivers may not be able to handle a situation where they lose control of their vehicles and this may lead to a motor vehicle accident. For example, if they were not taught that one does not slam on the brakes if a motor vehicle loses control while still on the road as a result of a burst tyre as this has a potential of leading to a serious accident, then there is a big chance that the driver concerned may do just that because of instinct without knowing the danger of that particular action. But, 55.8% of the respondents that were taught what to do have also been involved in accidents. This puts a question mark on driver education. Similarly, as can be seen from table 6, a majority of the respondents that were taught what to do in case their brakes fail have also been involved in more accidents. This indicates that there may be a problem with the instruction that they received.

Table 6: Cross tabulation – Respondents involved in accidents, by Respondents taught what to do if the brakes of a motor vehicle fail whilst driving.

Instruction when brakes fail	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Yes	22	51.2	111	75.5	133	70.0
No	21	48.8	36	24.5	57	30.0
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

As can be seen from table 6 above, 48.8% of the respondents that were not taught what to do if the brakes of the vehicle that they are driving fail whilst still on the road have been involved in accident. This means that almost half of the respondents may not know what to do if this situation arises and may in turn cause an accident and this lack of knowledge may lead to motor vehicle accidents that may involve more than one vehicle.

Table 7 indicates that 51.2% of the respondents that were not taught what to do when driving on a slippery road have been involved in an accident. This, though, does not mean that the type of accident that they have been involved in was as a direct result of lack of this instruction. But, what is troubling is that 48.8% of the respondents that have been involved in accidents were taught what to do in such a case. The significance of this is discussed below.

Table 7: Cross tabulation – Respondents involved in accidents, by Respondents taught what to do if road they are travelling on is slippery

Instruction when road is slippery	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	21	48.8	108	73.5	129	67.9
No	22	51.2	39	26.5	61	32.1
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

Table 8: Cross tabulation – Respondents involved in accidents, by Respondents taught what to do if another vehicle from opposite direction loses control and comes toward them

Instruction when vehicle from opposite direction skips to your lane	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	23	53.5	77	52.4	100	52.6
No	20	46.5	70	47.6	90	47.4
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

Table 8 provides that of those drivers that have been involved in accidents, 46.5% of them reported not having received instruction on what to do if a vehicle from the opposite

direction jumps lanes and comes towards them. 53.5% that did receive this instruction have also been involved in an accident.

Table 9: Cross tabulation – Respondents involved in accidents, by Respondents taught what to do if vehicle travelling in front of them loses control

Instruction when vehicle in front of you loses control	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Yes	21	48.8	96	65.3	117	61.6
No	22	51.2	51	34.7	73	38.4
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

Table 9 indicates that 51.2% of the respondents may not know what to do if a vehicle travelling in front of them loses control. This is because not only were they not taught what to do if this situation arises, they have already been in accidents where, perhaps, lack of this knowledge led to the accident.

It has to be agreed that the aim of teaching safety measures is to avoid vehicle accidents on the road. The best way to avoid accidents is to always maintain control of your vehicle under any circumstance. This means that the driver has to maintain control in any of the above scenarios i.e. when brakes fail, the road is slippery, or another vehicle loses control. But, the table below shows that most drivers failed to maintain control and thus accidents occur. Table 10 below shows that of the 23% that have been involved in

accidents, 83.3% of them had been involved in accidents whereby they collided with an outside object such as a bridge. 75% were involved in head-on collisions stating that it was their fault, followed by 57.1% who reported that they were in a head-on collision due to someone-else's fault, 50% of the accidents were as a result of bad weather, and 14.3% of the accidents were rear-end collisions as result of the respondent's fault. It has to be mentioned that respondents gave more than one response in cases where they were involved in more than one accident.

Table 10: Instruction when vehicle loses control, by nature of accident

Describe nature of accident	Instruction when vehicle loses control				Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Rear-end collision my fault	1	14.3	6	85.7	7	100
Head-on collision my fault	3	75.0	1	25.0	4	100
Rear-end collision someone else's fault	5	31.3	11	68.8	16	100
Head-on collision someone else's fault	4	57.1	3	42.9	7	100
Collision with outside object	5	83.3	1	16.7	6	100
Result of bad weather	1	50	1	50	2	100
Total	19	45.2	23	54.8	42	100

All the above figures question the formal driver education that they received. If the respondents were taught what to do if they lose control of their vehicles but were still

involved in accidents where they should have used this knowledge, then why were they still involved in accidents? It is understandable for those that did not receive this instruction to be involved in accidents as a result of a lack of this knowledge, but those that were taught should have been able to maintain control and therefore not become involved in the accident.

The driving school instructors reported that they teach their learners some safety procedures. They also reported that they use the same manuals that learners use to teach learners. The manual that the researcher used for her training did not give information on what to do in order to maintain control of the vehicle in potentially dangerous situations. The question then is: where did the driving school instructors get the information that allowed them to teach this? Why did the manual not give the same information? If the respondents were given the right information, made to understand and practise the right procedures to maintain vehicle control, then they would not have been involved in such accidents where they failed to maintain control.

This leads to an argument that “both the learners and drivers tests are essentially technical examinations – primarily examining a persons memory and basic motor skills, while neglecting to enforce a cognitive process whereby participants are forced to understand the reasons behind the rules” (Sitas, 2003). Had, perhaps, the whole process been structured in such a way as to teach learners in a way that ensures understanding as well as tested on their understanding of motor skills, safety procedures as well as rules and regulations, then maybe the new drivers would know what to do to maintain control of

their vehicles and not have been in accidents as a result of not knowing and understanding.

Table 11 below shows the relationship between those respondents that have been involved in a motor vehicle accident and the number of years they have been driving. From this it can be seen that those respondents that have been driving for 5 years have been involved in more accidents (27.9%) as compared to those that have been driving for a shorter time. Laapotti et al (2001), also found that drivers with a higher mileage had more accidents than those with a low mileage. He also found that what ever the mileage younger drivers were involved in more accidents than older drivers. This does not explain why drivers that have been driving for 2 years have been involved in the most accidents (37.2%). If one looks at table 12 below it can be seen that the most drivers that have been driving for 2 years are 21 years old – 45.5%. But, what does this mean? It is possible that these drivers are entering the job market and are therefore driving more than before. At the moment there is no evidence of this, as the study did not measure this. What is also not explained is the link between mileage and experience. One would have assumed that the more you drive the more driving experience you obtain. The argument was that the more experience one has the better able they will be to avoid accidents on the road, but it has been found that the more mileage one drives the more accidents. This confusion has not been explained.

Table 11: How long have you been a licensed driver, by respondents involved in accidents

Years as a licensed driver	Have you been involved in an accident where you were a driver?				Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 year	5	11.6	50	34.0	55	28.9
2 years	16	37.2	37	25.2	53	27.9
3 years	5	11.6	28	19.0	33	17.4
4 years	5	11.6	18	12.2	23	12.1
5 years	12	27.9	14	9.5	26	13.7
Total	43	100	147	100	190	100

Table 12: Age, by number of years as licensed driver

Years as a licensed driver	Age												Total	
	18		19		20		21		22		23			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 year	6	100	6	75.0	5	62.5	12	36.4	12	30.8	14	15.1	55	29.4
2 years	0	0	2	25	3	37.5	15	45.5	11	28.2	22	23.7	53	33
3 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9.1	11	28.2	19	20.4	33	17.6
4 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.0	4	10.3	17	18.3	22	11.8
5 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6.1	1	2.6	21	22.6	24	12.8
Total	6	100	8	100	8	100	33	100	39	100	93	100	187	100

3.9. The Keskinen Model: The hierarchical model of driving behaviour

This model argues that driving behaviour can be constructed as a hierarchy with four levels of driver behaviour (Laapotti et al, 2001). The first level of driving behaviour is called 'vehicle maneuvering'. This level is operational and focuses on speed control and the direction and positioning of the motor vehicle. The second level is a tactical level called 'mastering traffic situations'. On this level the focus is on how the driver should adapt his/her behaviour to the demands of a traffic situation, "he/she should know how to behave according to the traffic regulations" (Laapotti et al, 2001). The third level is the planning or strategic level called the 'goals and context of driving'. This refers to the purpose and circumstances of driving. The fourth and highest level is called 'goals for life and skills for living'. This level connects driving behaviour with human behaviour in general – it "refers to the importance of cars and driving for the drivers' personal development and to skills for self-control" (Laapotti et al, 2001).

In Laapotti's study it was found that young novice drivers lack in all four levels of the above hierarchy "they are not just inexperienced as drivers but they are also inexperienced in life generally" (2001). It is argued "drivers usually get their driving license at an age when the adult identity is still under construction. Feedback and appreciation of a peer group have high importance at this age. The goals for life and skills for living are under development" (Laapotti, 2001). What this means is that young novice drivers do not achieve level four of this model, as they are too young.

Level three of the model may be achieved by young novice drivers, but not on a positive side. 68% of the respondents of this current study reported that their main purpose for driving is for leisure. One of the reasons cited for younger drivers being over-represented in motor vehicle accidents is their greater risk exposure (Schulze, 1990). Young drivers are known for having a tendency to drive at night – in pursuit of entertainment – therefore increasing their chances of being involved in accidents (James, 2000). This pursuit of fun means that young drivers are most likely to be driving in the presence of other young people – “young drivers are driving more during evenings and nights, they are driving more with friends and they are consuming more alcohol and drugs than....older drivers” (Laapotti, 2001).

Peer pressure is a major factor/influence on how young drivers behave on the road. Young drivers find themselves showing off their driving skills to their peers (Laapotti, 2001) and therefore engage in risky driving behaviour. This may be that they feel confident of their driving skills – when asked whether they felt confident of their driving skills after passing their driving test, 84% of the respondents of this study said yes. Though they have a purpose for driving which may not be bad (leisure), reckless driving as a result of peer pressure may lead to a potentially dangerous situation. This is particularly dangerous if the driver does not or has not developed the abilities needed to safely operate a motor vehicle.

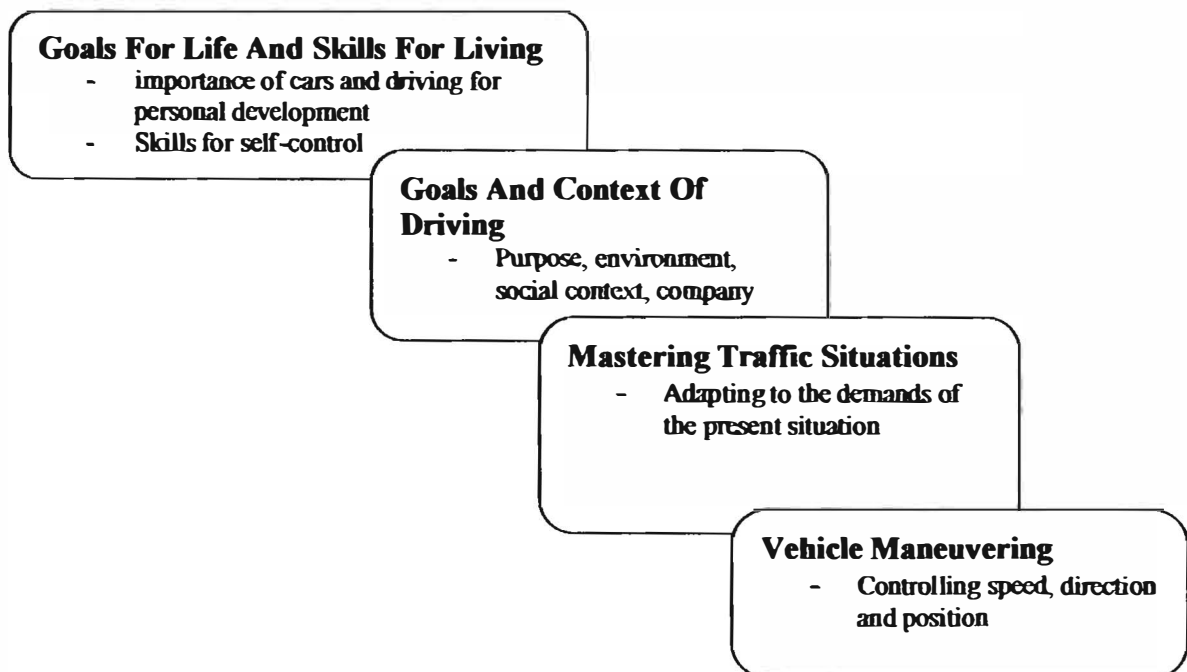
It was argued by Mayhew and Simpson (1996) that young drivers do not have the required search and scans abilities and thus cannot detect hazards. Cooper et al (2003)

argue, “Complex task performance, such as driving, requires rapid switching of attention”. They argue, “Much of driving is characterised by basic vehicle control activities (such as maintaining appropriate lane position and headway within surrounding traffic) which, with experience, take up very little mental processing and allow some attention to be diverted to other tasks”. What this means is that with little or no experience basic vehicle control activities may require a lot of mental processing on its own. This means that a young novice driver has to focus a lot of attention on basic vehicle control and may fail to detect other hazards around him/her. This means that the young novice driver is still trying to master level one of the model of driving behaviour. This is compounded by the fact that their search and scan abilities have not yet developed. This is made worse if the driver in question is under pressure to show off to his/her peers.

Young novice drivers may not have mastered level two of the model either (Laapotti, 2001). This may be because of their inexperience. At this level the driver should know how to adapt to different demands of a traffic situation but this may be obtainable more from experience. It is difficult to dispute that driving becomes better with more experience on the road. 98% of the respondents reported that their driving has become better with more time spent on the road. But, another reason for failure at this level is that young drivers may not have learned the relationship between their emotions and their driving behaviour. It has been argued, “young drivers need to be taught that emotions such as anxiety, depression, anger and despair can result in short-term dangerous driving. In an age group where there is an intensity of emotions arising from lifestyle and social

relationships, we cannot assume that young people will make the connection between what is happening to them and their capacity to safely drive a car” (www.aami.com.au). All this makes it more difficult for a young novice driver to maintain safe driving behaviour.

Figure 10: The Keskinen hierarchical model of driving behaviour



Conclusion

To begin with, the K53 licensing system in South Africa seems to have flaws. The system has loopholes that undermine it and therefore undermine the whole process of driver socialisation. It cannot, though, be denied that it does, to a large extent, teach learner drivers basic driving skills and rules and regulations aimed at producing competent drivers. The problems lie with the ways in which these are taught and tested on as well as the way in which the system is structured. These shortcomings impact negatively on driver socialisation and driver behaviour thereafter.

Some of the shortcomings include the following: there does not seem to be a specific procedure in place to regulate driving schools. Driving schools are very important in formal driver education, as they are the institutions that have been legally given the primary task of educating future drivers. It was found in the study that there are many driving schools in the Durban area that are not registered and are therefore illegal, but they continue to operate. Driving schools can seemingly charge learners any amount for services provided. It is up to each individual driving school to determine the minimum driving lessons that learners can take before the test. The only part that is regulated is the way that any person can become a driving school instructor.

A major problem with driving schools is that it is the task of one instructor to decide how they will teach their learners. Different instructors have different ways in which they teach their learners. If an instructor is not good, it is difficult for a learner to know as new

learners with no previous driving experience do not know what or how they are supposed to be taught. Teaching of learners is therefore a subjective process highly dependent on the one instructor.

It is up to the inspector concerned how one is tested. There is the standard yard test that is the same everywhere and that one has to pass. The manner in which the road test is conducted is dependent on the inspector. The inspector will choose in which areas he/she will test you on, for example, in a suburb or highway or CBD, or everywhere. The learner has no say nor does the driving school. It is in the discretion of the inspector concerned. This is also a problem, as there seems to be no uniformity in the testing process and no third party quality control.

There is also too much emphasis on sequences, such as the 360 degree check. Although one may see its importance, there does not seem to be a need why it has to be carried out in a particular way. If there is a need then it is not explained. This brings us to the lack of explanations of rules and regulations.

Findings and literature show that most rules and regulations are only recited and not explained to the learner driver and this leads to most drivers not following them. It is vital that rules are understood and that drivers know why they are in place. At the moment the emphasis seems to be on memorising the rules and reproducing them at the test. There is no process in place that ensures that learners not only learn the rules, but also understand the reasons behind the rules. Knowing that one must drive at a certain distance in a

certain area does not necessarily mean that one knows the reason behind the speed limit or minimum speed.

In some instances there is a difference between what one is taught and tested on with real life experience. An example of this is the yard test where one is tested on how to park a light vehicle. In the test, and during the driving lessons, there are poles that one uses markers on how to safely park a motor vehicle. In real life one finds that there are no poles in parking bays and therefore has to re-learn how to park.

Another major flaw concerns the different licensing codes. If one is in possession of a code 10 driving license for heavy vehicles, then they may also legally drive a light motor vehicle. This does not take into consideration that there are certain skills that one has to learn to drive a light motor vehicle that are specific to that class of vehicles. For example how to park a light vehicle – this is not taught to heavy vehicle learners but they are still allowed to do so without having received this particular instruction. Motorcycle drivers may drive legally without driving licenses without supervision because of a loophole in the system.

What all the above means is that when new drivers enter mainstream driving they may not have been properly taught how not only to be a legal driver, but how to be a safe driver as well. The socialisation process has been hindered thus allowing drivers who may not be fully equipped with driving skills to legally drive on South African roads.

Recommendations

There is only one recommendation that can be put forward: that the current K 53 licensing system in South Africa be revised. In its revision many solutions may arise, but one will be put forward as it deals with the problem of young novice drivers: Graduated Driver Licensing.

In this process learner and new drivers have restricted and temporary licences for a period of at least a year into the driving career. During this period they are not allowed to drive in certain conditions unless under adult supervision. They will still be required to attend driving school where they will have to undergo a minimum number of lessons that will be set nationally. During lessons there should be compulsory lessons in all road and traffic conditions for a stipulated number of hours. If, during the 'probation' year they are involved in any accident or driving incident, they forfeit their permits. After this period they are to prove that they are now capable of driving on their own in any road and traffic condition with no supervision only then will they receive unrestricted driving licenses.

But, the context in which all this is done should not be forgotten. A vast majority of people in South Africa cannot afford basic needs. The process of acquiring a driving license at the moment may already be expensive enough. Whatever recommendations we may have will have to take this into consideration as well as the different backgrounds that exist in South Africa. If it is argued that the safest drivers are the ones that have the most driving experience, then the problem may be that for most young drivers they may

not have access to a motor vehicle that they may use for practise, simply because no-one at their own homes may even have a motor vehicle. These facts cannot be ignored.

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Appendices

A: Questionnaire

1. Gender

a) Male	b) Female
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2. Age

a) 18	b) 19
c) 20	d) 21
e) 22	f) 23

3. How long have you been a licensed driver?

a) 1 yr	b) 2 yrs
c) 3 yrs	d) 4 yrs
e) 5 yrs	

4. Did you have any experience of driving a motor vehicle before going to driving school?

a) Yes	b) No
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 If No, please go to Q 7.

5. Who trained you?

.....

6. Did you experience any of the following road conditions? (Please circle)

a) Highway	Yes	No
b) Gravel road	Yes	No
c) In peak hour traffic	Yes	No
d) At night	Yes	No
e) Rainy conditions	Yes	No
f) Within suburb/township	Yes	No

Please specify the location of your training.

.....

7. What were your expectations concerning driving school before you went to the driving school?

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. At driving school did you exposed to the following conditions? (Please tick)

a) Highway	Yes	No
b) Gravel road	Yes	No
c) In peak hour traffic	Yes	No
d) At night	Yes	No
e) Rainy conditions	Yes	No
f) Within suburb/township	Yes	No

9. Did you feel that your driving instructor had the necessary expertise in training learner drivers?

a) Yes

b) No

10. Why do you say so?

.....

.....

.....

11. How many driving lessons did you have?

.....

12. Did your instructor, at any point during your training, make you feel uncomfortable because of your race, gender or class?

a) Yes

b) No

13. Explain

.....

.....

.....

14. Did your instructor explain clearly what was expected of you?

a) Yes

b) No

15. Did you instructor explain to you what you can do in the following scenarios?

a) You lose control on your vehicle	Yes	No
b) Your brakes fail you	Yes	No
c) The road is slippery	Yes	No
d) Another vehicle comes straight at you from opposite direction	Yes	No
e) Vehicle in front of you loses control	Yes	No

16. After passing your drivers test did you feel confident that you were a good driver and that you could handle most road conditions?

a) Yes

b) No

17. Why?

.....
.....
.....

18. Having driven for a while now, do you feel that the formal driving Education you went through gave you enough skills to become a Good driver?

a) Yes

b) No

19. Why?

.....
.....
.....

20. Has your driving become better with more time spent on the road?

a) Yes

b) No

21. Assuming that your vehicle is road-worthy, mention a road/traffic condition (s) that you find difficult to drive under.

.....
.....
.....

22. Have you ever been involved in an accident where you were a driver?

a) Yes

b) No

23. If yes, how many and describe the nature of the accident.

.....
.....
.....

24. Have you received any other training after being to driving school?

a) Yes

b) No

25. Is the car that you normally your own car?

a) Yes

b) No

26. What is your main purpose for driving a car?

.....
.....
.....

27. Any additional comments concerning driving schools?

.....
.....
.....