

Ineffective School Management and Organisation as Contributor to Violence in South African Schools

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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT The paper is based on a qualitative study conducted in South African schools to obtain insights and understanding of the how and why of violence in schools. This paper in particular, is based on two case studies of schools, which first sets out a description of the schools, based on participant observation and then provides a critical discussion of the possible causes of violence in the school based on the ideas set out above in the report. In the case studies children are described as behaving badly in a number of ways but, as stressed in the report, they often behave badly for a reason and it is important not to automatically blame learners who are often the victims of the social and educational circumstances in which they find themselves. Lack of adequate school organisation and management was found to be contributing to violence in schools. Lack of professionalism, teacher absenteeism and non-punctuality contribute to violence. There is evidence in the report that many schools are not managed well. The study recommends that efforts must increasingly be made to realise this within the post-apartheid educational framework of education for democracy and peaceful conflict resolution – an effective school must also be a more democratic school; good management is more democratic management and a professional teacher operates in a more democratic manner. The more learners, parents and staff are involved in school policy and decision-making, the more there is a genuine community, the more the school can resist violence.

INTRODUCTION

How do we explain violence in schools? One argument, suggested in the report, is that schools are a microcosm of society and that they merely reflect or mirror the violence of the broader society. This in itself is worrying – the fact that schools are no better than and cannot protect children from the negative elements of the broader society. However, schools are not necessarily completely vulnerable to external violence in a violent society. A key factor in the extent to which schools can resist violence in the broader society is the extent to which the school is, and sees itself as, a well-organised and managed community with a determination to protect and care for its learners by means of a clear approach to safety and security. Research conducted at three schools in the Durban area of Kwazulu-Natal (Harber 2001) suggested that the more effectively the school is run, the less chance of violence coming in from the outside and the less chance of it being generated inside. Indeed, a well-run school with a more inclusive, democratic environment helps to foster a climate of openness and a sense of ownership, commitment, and responsibility amongst all members and therefore strengthens its determination to resist external violence and minimise internal violence. It was also important that all three schools had actually stopped using corporal punishment in line with the law, therefore both reducing an internal climate of violence and improving relationships between staff and learners. Instead, through codes of conduct, clear implementation of the rules and alternative forms of punishment, such as clearing up litter in the schools, are used to provide an ordered, safe, and essentially peaceful environment where both internal and external crime and violence are reduced to a minimum. Such a school also tries to reach out to and have good relationships with the local community, though at these three schools this is not easy because of the physical distance of many parents from the schools.

There are many effective and well-organised schools in South Africa. Importantly, there are many examples of such schools that are functioning effectively, achieving good examination results despite the fact that some of them are situated in areas affected by poverty and poor resources (Harber 2001; Bloch 2009). Bloch quotes the principal of Bhukulani High School in Soweto, which has a matriculation pass rate of over 90%, who is of the view that schools work simply because there are people who are prepared to work, who are turning up for class on time, and who are teaching effectively. Comparing this school to another equally successful school in a poor area, Block comments that: “There is a detailed set of planning processes and systems to ensure success, no magic formula.” The role of the head is

important as “teachers need the administrative efficiency and ordered predictability of a well-run school” (Bloch 2009:136). He further cites a ministerial committee that examined the nature of successful schools in South Africa, which found that the key to success was doing the basics well:

Firstly, all of the schools were focused on their central tasks of teaching, learning and management with a sense of purpose, responsibility and commitment. Secondly, they had a strong organisational capacity, including leadership and management and professionalism was valued. Thirdly, all of the schools carried out their tasks with competence and confidence; all had organisational cultures or mind-sets that supported hard work, expected achievement and acknowledged success. And lastly, all had strong accountability systems in place which enabled them to meet the demands of external accountability, particularly in terms of Senior Certificate achievement (Bloch 2009:138).

Research aims

We need to understand more about both the causes of violence in South African schools and what might be done about it. This project set out to do just that. The purposes of the project were six fold:

1. To elicit perceptions and experiences of learners, teachers, other school staff, governors and parents about school violence,
2. To categorise the types of violence that occur in South African schools both in terms of the nature of the violence and the actors involved
3. To compare such perceptions, experiences and incidences across six provinces of South Africa
4. To generate and assess quantitative and qualitative data and typologies of violence within the school environment which can be used for self-evaluation by a school
5. To identify and evaluate measures and initiatives taken by schools and their communities to promote a violence-free or secure environment in the school
6. To investigate the extent to which violence is a barrier to learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a primarily qualitative study that also employed some “quantitative” research methods. In order to get at the “lived” reality of violence in schools, qualitative research was used. Semi-structured interviews with teachers, learners, principals, members of the non-teaching staff, and members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) as well as focus group interviews with learners, and observations allowed the researchers to get a feel for the “flesh and blood” and more nuanced and detailed reality of what happens inside schools. This allowed the researchers to obtain insights and an understanding of the how and why of violence in schools based on the perceptions and experiences of those involved. The attempt was to get at the “truth” of violence in schools as seen by the key participants.

Questionnaires were also administered across the six provinces in order to obtain a broad, quantitative feel for the situation across South Africa. To get a picture of the overall structure or skeleton of violence in South African schools, the questionnaires were aimed at: What does it look like? How big is it? What shapes is it? Furthermore, the aim of using questionnaires was to reveal a generalised, more quantitative “truth” of the bigger picture. The aim was therefore to balance the reliability of using a large sample for the questionnaires to make generalisations about South Africa with the validity of more in-depth, qualitative, first hand, face to face research in the schools in order to get two different types of complementary pictures.

However, this paper in particular, is based on two case studies of schools, which first sets out a description of the schools, based on participant observation and then provides a critical discussion of the possible causes of violence in the school based on the ideas set out above in the report. In the case studies children are described as behaving badly in a number of ways but, as stressed in the report, they often behave badly for a reason and it is important not to automatically blame learners who are often the victims of the social and educational circumstances in which they find themselves.

Case study 1

Situation

The school is situated in a black residential township less than 10 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. The school is situated in a predominantly low-income residential area. It is a big township made up of + 8000 houses with + 40 000 residents.

- Close to 40% residents are unemployed.
- Up to 10% residents are semi-employed.
- Up to 5% are self-employed.
- Only about 25% have permanent employment.
- Up to 30% receive grants from the government for (i) disability, (ii) elderly, (iii) HIV grants, (iv) children's social grants.

The school is located at the cross section of the two main roads. Around the school there are many informal businesses like tuck shops, street vendors, salons and liquor outlets.

There is also a minibus terminal, where the minibuses are stationed during the day when there are few commuters to transport. The minibuses will gather at the terminal in numbers of + 15 playing music (at high volume) at the same time, while they are being cleaned. Most of the minibus drivers are ex-learners. Some of them had left school prematurely because of various factors such as:

- Lack of interest
- Inability to cope with the academic challenges of high school
- Hooliganism, including high substance abuse
- Expulsion (anti-social behaviour)
- Poor background (lack of financial resource to pursue education)

School buildings

The school is composed of old and new buildings. There are 42 classrooms of which only 22 are actually used as classrooms, 10 classrooms are used for storing old furniture, 5 are used by teachers as their centre/offices, and 7 are empty. The empty rooms are always locked, but learners find their way into them and display bad behaviour like smoking, bunking classes, sexual harassment, fighting, and hiding bags and other valuables that have been stolen from others.

Physical appearance

The school looks very old with worn-out paintworks on the walls. Walls are extremely dirty with graffiti composed of insults – some teachers names are written with swearing and threatening words. Most classes have broken windows; some do not have doors, exposing learners to the cold during the cold season. The appearance of the school building is not very good. The structural layouts of buildings are also cause for concern from the security point of view and for health reasons. Buildings are so enclosed that only two narrow passages are used for entrance and exits to the classes, despite the fact that the school has an enrolment of about 1 200 learners. During break times and at the end of the school day when learners leave the class buildings, there is always pandemonium as learners and teachers make their way through those narrow passages. This is another flash point for criminal activities like pickpocketing and revenge attacks.

Fencing

The school is surrounded by old, corrugated iron fencing with many openings, some of which are large enough to just walk through, and this compromises the security of the school in a variety of ways:

- Unwelcome outsiders come in during the day.
- Learners move out (sneak out) any time unnoticed.
- Controlling late coming for learners is impossible.
- At night security personnel can't protect the property since they can't monitor all the openings around the school.
- At night the school is burgled on a regular basis and valuables such as computers, TVs, radios, and some educational materials and documents including reports, school stamps, and examination papers are stolen daily.

Security personnel

There is only one security person during the day and there is one at night (private).

The day Security Officer performs a lot of tasks:

- Gate keeping

- General Menial tasks
- Gardener
- Messenger
- Caretaker

There is no house for the security guard at the gate. He is exposed to all forms of weather – rain, cold, hot and windy weather conditions. Also:

- He is unarmed.
- Has no walkie-talkie.
- No whistle.
- No phone.

The gate is closed manually. It is very old and is used both for vehicles and pedestrians. It is locked by an ordinary lock and chain. When open, somebody must lift it up and hold it; it cannot stand on its own. One of the duties of the security guard is to report if there are learners arriving late at the school (he has to keep them at the gate until a teacher comes and record them). This exposes him to many forms of violence:

- Psychological (learners outsmart him to get inside the school)
- Emotional – receives threats and insults
- Social isolation/antagonism (learners)
- Physical – some learners throw stones at him

Learners (students)

Most learners come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds:

- Orphans (20%)
- Single parents (20%)
- Unemployed (40%)
- Most live in informal settlement (with no proper sanitation, water and electricity)

Many come to school without a meal – teachers have to organise food with money from their own pockets since the school does not qualify for the feeding schemes from the government. It is mostly these learners who display emotional instability problems – fighting, swearing, stealing (mostly food from other learner's provisions), irritability, sickness (starvation, hunger-related). One learner was caught spreading human faeces in the classroom.

Late coming

The provincial Department of Education has issued a ruling that states that any learner that comes after the stipulated time should be sent home. The problem is when they are sent home:

- They are exposed to all sorts of temptations because some do not have any body at home.
- There are less people on the streets during mid-morning from 9 – 11 am (so learners are exposed to all forms of criminal activities).
- It is emotionally distressing for learners, especially those who use public transport because it is very much unreliable.
- Some see it as an advantage to try new adventures (sex, drinking liquor, drugs and truancy).

Toilets

Location – Learners' toilets for girls and boys close to each other (sometimes you find boys in girls' toilets). Toilets are located very close to the classroom; one who goes to the toilet is seen in and out from some classrooms. Toilets are frequently dysfunctional and learners are forced to relieve themselves outside the toilets. During the day there is a stench coming from the toilets, which is emotionally very discomforting for learners and staff.

Most teachers who use classes near the toilets usually miss their teaching periods and as a result learners are seldom in these classes, so that they are often in trouble for playing truancy, absenteeism and loitering during teaching time.

Water stoppages

The frequent water stoppages at the school are another source of stress to all the learners at the school. At times the school operates without water for the whole day. The frequent water stoppages at school are a major worrying factor, causing emotional stress and are a big health hazard. Very often water will stop without any warning and yet the school continues to operate because sometimes water returns before the school time is over.

Sometimes the school will be without water for half a day, the whole day, two days or three days in succession and at times it might take the whole week before the water returns. Water is an essential commodity since the school has an enrolment of 1 200 learners and a staff complement of 40 teachers and non-teaching staff. Keeping such a number of people without water for drinking, washing, cleaning, and sanitation is a big health hazard. Teachers and learners complain of sickness related to dehydration like stomach troubles, headaches, and depression.

The school principal seems to be powerless about this. When asked to dismiss the school because of water stoppages, he argues that the school is not the only one that has such a problem. If the other schools continue to operate, his school will also operate otherwise it can cause him a lot of problems with the DOE. Another point he puts across is that (1) if he releases learners from school, they won't be able to get water elsewhere in any case, because if there is no water at school, there is no water in the whole township. Also, since there are so many days without water it means if the school releases learners from school every time there is a water stoppage, it means there would be far less time for learning and the pass rate will be adversely affected, which is something the Department of Education won't tolerate. His job will be very much at stake. The lack of water and the bad odour from the toilets mean that both teachers and learners sometimes use empty classrooms to relieve themselves.

As a result, some teachers stay absent from school and this creates another problem because many classes will not be taught and will be without teachers to monitor or supervise them. Consequently, a lot of chaos ensues in the classrooms as learners get involved in various kinds of mischief such as making noise, fighting, playing, disturbing others who are studying, and so on. This situation is conducive to violence as learners are let loose to fend for themselves. The few teachers who are present are unable to control the situation because they are outnumbered and the problem of water is insurmountable at school. Teachers complain that some of them and learners are taking pills/medication; they are forced to take it without

water. Some say before they go to class every period they have to have a glass of water but under the circumstances (when there is no water) they are forced to go without water and they feel very disillusioned.

Cell phones

The school code of conduct for learners specifies that learners are not supposed to carry cell phones to school. But the carrying of cell phones is uncontrollable. Cases related to cell phones supersede all the other cases at school. These cases include, fighting over possessions, pickpocketing, stealing, and robbing at knife/gunpoint. The cases sometimes escalate to the extent that it requires the involvement of learner's parents, community members, gangsters, and the police.

Other cases related to cell phone

1. Pornography

Several cases have been recorded whereby learners were caught watching explicit sex videos on their cell phones in the class and sometimes while the lesson was in progress.

2. Music

Many learners are caught listening to the music from their cell phones through their ear phones while the teacher is teaching.

3. SMS & twitting

Some learners are caught twitting while the lesson is on.

Discussion of case study 1

Why is there violence and violence-related behaviour in this school? Let us examine what is reported based on the participant observer in the order it is reported:

1. In respect of the immediate social context, there is high unemployment and poverty. It may therefore be difficult for learners (and perhaps staff as well) to see a purpose to formal schooling – for many at the school, will hard work at school really provide future employment and income?
2. Certainly, those who now drive minibuses and left school early seem to have thought this was a better option, partly because they didn't have the financial resources to pursue education further anyway. However, there are also problems with the school itself – they say they were not interested in school and that they couldn't cope with the academic challenges of the school. Is it not the responsibility of the school to interest and engage learners and to work with them at a level that makes progress meaningful for them? Were their early dropout from school and their "hooliganism" and expulsion a result of not being educated appropriately by the school?
3. The school knows it has a problem with the empty classrooms – why are these not shut off properly so that unauthorised entrance becomes much more difficult?
4. With regard to the poor state of the school buildings, the failure to remove insulting graffiti and to paint the school (both relatively easy things to fix) indicate to learners that the authorities are indifferent to their education. The school is not a welcoming or healthy place; learners will not feel valued or cared for as a result and will tend to behave accordingly.
5. Built in to the design and operation of the buildings is the danger of forcing large numbers of people through two narrow passages when learners and teachers are either leaving classes or at the end of the school day. Moreover, the ensuing chaos provides an ideal context for theft and violence.
6. The school is not properly protected by a fence, there is no proper housing for the security guard and the gate doesn't work properly. All these again suggest to learners (and teachers) that the authorities do not care about their safety and security. School buildings, fencing, etc. are not the responsibilities of the learners, and it is the negligence of the education authorities and school management that facilitates the possibility of more violence in the school.
7. If learners feel that they go to a school where they do not feel particularly welcome and where their security is not genuinely an important concern, this will develop and

aggravate an “us and them” relationship between staff and learners, some of which seems to be being taken out on the security guard who is perceived, as much as a policeman, as somebody protecting their security.

8. Children who are hungry or starving will be irritable, not be able to concentrate, and be tempted to steal from others. Being hungry is not the fault of the learners.
9. Often late coming may be to do with transport or home problems rather than the laziness of the learners. As the case study suggests, sending learners home automatically can cause more problems than it solves, and schools need to recognise this in order to find ways of accommodating learners with genuinely difficult transport problems, and should refrain from treating learners on a “one size fits all” basis.
10. Exposing learners (and teachers) to the insanitary water and toilet conditions of the school could be regarded as an act of violence against learners in itself. The provision of proper toilets and a reliable water supply could be seen as a basic human right and the fact that such basic needs are not met again makes learners feel unwanted and unwelcome but also very uncomfortable at school. This, it must be stressed again, is a problem that the political and educational authorities should address, not the learners. In this case, it is their negligence or incompetence that is both causing an act of violence against the health of those concerned and facilitating violence through teacher absenteeism.
11. Would the code of conduct for cellphones be better revised to control the use of cell phones in school rather than their actual possession as this seems to be not working? If learners were taught well, engaged in learning and felt more of a community that cared about their progress and well-being, would this be such a problem?

(In relation to the ex-learner taxi drivers who play loud music near the school, it is also interesting to note a point made by Thompson who uses spatial theory to problematise the notion of seeing schooling as occurring within a fixed, contained and static environment that cannot do anything but exclude the misbehaving learners – those who fail to fit into the school space-time arrangements. In Thompson's frame of reference such learners are sent out of learning time-spaces to punitive/therapeutic ones, which are perceived to be appropriate in

addressing the problems of misbehaviour (e.g. detention for a fixed period, provision with alternative programmes and exclusion) that lead to them leaving the remainder of the learner body to get on with the mandated work. As a result, the learners experience themselves as visible to the school, but also paradoxically feel that they are unrecognised. Consequently, they do things that will make them get a "reputation". It is this reputation that sometimes places them in situations where they become obvious targets for disciplinary action. They feel "highly" visible but also, at the same time, as if they are actually not seen and/or heard. Does this apply to the situations that led to those taxi drivers leaving school and opting to take positions that would make them more visible, and probably more audible, not only to their former class mates and teachers, but also to the larger communities where they work?

Case study 2

General appearance

The school in KZN is not very old – it was built in 1982 with face bricks. But due to poor maintenance, the buildings are in a state of dilapidation with broken windows and doors, falling ceiling on the verandas, and classrooms with dirty floors that are uncovered – no carpets or mats or tiles – just bare concrete floors with many holes.

The gate

There is only one big gate used both by cars and people on foot. It is always locked during the day while teaching is in progress. There is one guard during the day; he has a small gate house made out of wood. He hardly stays inside the gate house; he claims it is too small for his comfort. He just uses the gate house to change or keep some of his belongings like food and some documents. The gate is manually closed and opened.

The guard complains about the problem encountered at the gate – learners shouting at him when he closes the gate and tries to stop them from entering as per the principal's instructions. Some of them try to bribe him with money in order for him to open the gate when they come in late – he is sometimes tempted to let them in but when the principal finds out he threatens him with the SGB. The gate is very close to the main road (about 915 metres

away) and the road is very busy and as a result every year an accident happens involving learners and a passing car.

The administration block

It is a front building of the school. It is built separately from the other school blocks.

Nothing shows that this is an administration building:

- The building is not labelled.
- The entrance is very small (just an ordinary small door).
- There is no holding room.
- The reception room is right behind other offices.
- The principal's office is also concealed amongst other offices. There is nothing distinguishing it from other offices.

The distance between the administration block and the classrooms is cause of concern because it is a bit far away from the classrooms. For instance, the distance between the principal's office and the classroom at the rear end of the school might take a good five minutes at a brisk walk. As a result some teachers are reluctant to teach in those classes and they are flash points for scenes of criminal and other forms of antisocial behaviour.

Fencing

The school is surrounded by a concrete wall, but at the back of the wall a fence has been removed by criminals and has never been repaired. This provides access for criminals, latecomers and those learners who are absconding from classes. By entering the school through this opening, outsiders are able to access the school to sell drugs to the learners; intimidate them; and take their valuables like cell phones, money and school bags. Learners and teachers are very uncomfortable about this opening in the school fence. The fencing has

not been repaired for a long time now. The main outcry from both the SGB and the district officials is the lack of funds for school maintenance.

Through this opening a lot has been illegally removed/stolen from the school, for example, computers, typewrites, chairs including office chairs, fridge/microwave, toilet seats, electrical connectors including plugs, electric bulbs, electric wires and fuse boxes, and phone receivers. These are stolen by the community members in order to build their dwellings/homes. The criminals are doing this despite numerous community meetings where the principal and School Governing Body as well as ward councillors make earnest appeals to the community to refrain from looting the school. The department of education officials have threatened a number of times to close down the school but all these attempts have had very little or no effect. Instead, parents have responded by removing their learners from this school to enrol them in the neighbouring school. As such the enrolment of the school has dropped drastically and many teachers have been redeployed to other schools.

Surrounding community

Most of the people around the school are unemployed and during the day, you may find people, especially young men and woman, roaming around the tuck shops whilst others are in the sheebens (informal pubs). Learners in their uniforms always find themselves passing and meeting such people on a daily basis and some learners are seen hanging out with these people. Other learners claim that these people force them to do bad things and some say they do it willingly, which increases the high crime rate in the area. The high unemployment rate in the community is blamed for the high degree of criminality, which eventually affects the schools in the area.

Learners

Almost 90% of the learners in this school come from poor backgrounds.

- Orphans (no parents), child-headed family
- Orphans but raised by relatives (usually grandmothers)

- Live with boyfriends/girlfriends
- Live in the orphanage home
- Live with mother who is not working
- Very few have both parents living together and working.

Drugs and alcohol

This is one of the greatest problems prevailing among learners in this school. There have been many incidents that are drug related and these include fighting, shooting, and stabbing resulting in death inside the school premises. Dagga smoking is very fashionable amongst boys and girls. Some bake them in cakes and sell it, calling it dagga muffins. Most of the learners who are drug addicts cause trouble for other learners, stealing their possessions, and threatening them with their gangster friends because most of them belong to gangs. They (gangsters) usually visit the school when the last bell rings; they hang around the gate and terrorise learners, taking their money, cell phones, and sometimes they abduct the girls.

There have been a number of anti-drug campaigns at this school. Some community leaders have been in and out of the school addressing learners and warning them about the harmful effects of drugs. Convicts, health workers, nurses, and community role models have been summoned to spread the gospel of fighting the war against drugs, but the impact of all these has been minimal. Very few learners have come forward for help. Those who come forward for help are referred to the relevant agencies but after a short while they go back to their old habits.

Bullying

The wide age gap between learners seems to be the main cause of this behaviour. Most learners at Grade 8 level are between 12 and 14 years (while they should be 13 years old) and in Grade 9 they are between 14 and 18 (while they should be 14 years), in Grade 10 they are between 15 and 20 (while they should be 15 years old), and in Grades 11 (16-17) and 12 (18) they are 15 and 22 in short:

Grade (8) = 12 – 14yrs = 2 years

Grade (9) = 14 – 18yrs = 4 years

Grade (10) = 14 – 20yrs = 6 years

Grade (11) = 15 – 22yrs = 7 years

The above age gap analysis depicts a very startling age gap in the school. It creates a condition whereby young learners become subservient to the older ones. Young learners are the ones commonly found in possession of dangerous weapons and they always claim that they are forced by the older learners to carry drugs, while they are carrying weapons in order to protect themselves from being bullied by the older ones. They join gangs to defend themselves against the older bullies.

Cell phones

Cell phones are a source of many problems at this school, mainly stealing. Many cases have been recorded whereby cell phones belonging to learners and sometimes to teachers have been stolen by learners. Answering phones during the lessons and disturbing teachers while teaching is also a problem. Some cases have been recorded whereby learners insult each other through Facebook – a social network that led to the loss of lives to some of those who used it – .whereas in the past learners were insulting each other by writing graffiti on toilet walls.

Violence based on gender stereotypes

There are many cases in the school involving male learners fighting against female learners. Teachers and learners report that in most cases verbal arguments between male and female learners usually lead to physical fighting; male learners in most cases are found to be the ones that start physical fights. Male learners, even the young ones, seem to have patriarchal tendencies. They seem to have a low opinion of female learners and to be prejudiced against them.

On the other hand, most of the female learners do not want to be undermined by male learners – most of them are quite assertive. They believe in themselves and they want to be treated as equals by their male counterparts to the extent that they are even prepared to defend themselves by fighting back physically.

Parental involvement

Teachers at this school believe that another source of problems in the school is the lack of parental involvement. Parents do not come to school when called during parental or School Governing Body meetings because their working hours coincide with School Governing Body meetings but, contrary to what they say, almost all of them claim to be unemployed when asked to pay for school fees. A few parents do come when asked to come and interview teachers regarding learner performance. They also do come or send representatives when learners are threatened with expulsion or when a child's cell phone has been taken by the teacher. They will come just to plead that the cell phone be returned to them. The lack of parental involvement is a very disturbing phenomenon because teachers can't discipline learners effectively without their support. Teachers also believe that learners whose parents are involved at school are much more disciplined and they perform far better than those whose parents don't come to school.

Teenage pregnancy

This is one of our biggest outcries in the school. There are too many young girls who got pregnant as young as 13 years of age. The situation is so bad that by the time most girls reach Grade 12, most of them have children of their own. Some teachers and learners blame the government for this. They believe that by allowing pregnant learners to continue to learn after falling pregnant until they are due to give birth has no deterrent effect on other young girls; but it encourages them as they see that they don't lose anything by getting pregnant. One teacher remarked that at one stage 15 girls in a class of 24 learners (63%) got pregnant; and in another year a total of 18 girls in Grade 10 got pregnant. He said it was very difficult to teach the class. The girls behaved in a very disturbing manner:

- Always half asleep during lessons

- Frequently asking to go to the toilet
- Display moody, arrogant tendencies
- High absenteeism
- Lazy and lethargic

At one stage the teacher's car was used to ferry one who was about to give birth in the classroom.

Staff

At the present moment the school has a staff complement of 14 teachers, six male and eight female teachers. Teachers complain about instability and uncertainty as a result of frequent redeployment of teachers and the possibility of the closing down of the school. They complain that it is very difficult for them to plan their future as they live in a state of transit. Some young teachers have left the school at short notice and the problem is left to the teachers who feel they are too old to start their lives elsewhere. Some were doing critical subjects and the school had to change its curriculum because it cannot get suitable teachers to teach those subjects.

Teachers who are left are now overloaded with some having to teach subjects they have never been trained to teach during their in-service years. These teachers are demoralised, dispirited and always complain about the years left before they take their pensions. Teacher absenteeism from school is high; they also come late at school and always miss their due date for submission. There is always chaos in the school as most classes are unoccupied by the teachers. The quality and standard of education is very poor. The education department took some measures in a bid to improve the situation in the school by removing the principal. He was redeployed to a local primary school and the current principal was brought to this school – since then there is a slight improvement in terms of work ethics from the teachers but there is still a long way to go.

Pass Rate

The pass rate of the school is shown below

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
60%	56%	33%	10%	12%	8%	43%
102	112	64	52	54	42	38

Camps

The redeployment of teachers has left the staff divided into many camps because some feel that the procedures to determine the number of teachers in excess were not correctly followed and they were quite aggrieved when they lost their close companions through redeployment. This has led to factions among teachers at the school. The situation is so serious that some have turned into becoming real enemies who do not see eye to eye and who do not even talk to one another. This has affected teaching adversely and the new principal is having a hard time trying to create an acceptable atmosphere for teaching and learning.

Discussion of case study 2

Why is there violence and violence-related behaviour in this school? Let us again examine what is reported based on the participant observer in the order it is reported:

1. Due to poor maintenance, the school buildings are reported as being in a state of dilapidation: broken windows and doors, falling ceilings on the verandas and classrooms with dirty floors that are uncovered. There are no carpets or mats or tiles – just bare concrete floors with many holes. This is hardly a welcoming or conducive environment for learners or

teachers and is unlikely to help in making them feel welcome or cared for and therefore protective of the school.

2. Is shutting learners out for being late a good school management policy? Could it do more harm than good, especially in the light of what is suggested in case study one and the proximity of a busy road where there are regular accidents? Are there other ways of dealing with learner lateness than shutting them out?

3. The lack of proper fencing and security provides a risk of violence to learners, staff and property – and this, in fact, happens. Learners and teachers do not feel safe and properly protected and parents withdraw their children from the school. This is the responsibility of the educational authority.

4. The school is in an area of high unemployment and poverty, with many children being orphans. Many learners (and teachers) will wonder what opportunities education can really provide in such a context, and crime and violence may seemingly offer more immediate possibilities. In such a context drugs may seem like an attractive and exciting (if temporary) escape but this needs funding and so some learners resort to crime and violence. But does the school provide a meaningful and good quality experience that might provide alternatives to drugs – from the description in the case study, the answer is no.

5. There is clearly a problem with bullying in the school, at least partly facilitated by the large age gaps. Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? Is it implemented? Does staff take action when bullying is reported? This seems very unlikely given the comments in the case study about low staff motivation and morale which are discussed below.

6. If learners were taught well, engaged in learning and felt more of a community that cared about their progress and well-being, would cell phones be such a problem?

7. All the problems of the school are exacerbated by the reported low parental involvement. It is hard for teachers and schools to perform at their best when they are not supported by (and in return help to support) parents. This must also provide a message to both learners and teachers that parents do not care about what they do; this is hardly any encouragement to work hard and perform well. The inability, or unwillingness, of parents to pay fees also hampers the possibility of providing greater security and a better learning experience.

8. The male learners seem to have patriarchal attitudes towards female learners which cause conflict and violence. This is an issue of a certain interpretation of masculinity – what has the school done to educate the boys about nonviolent forms of masculinity which accept gender equality?

9. Is the high pregnancy rate a result of a sense of male entitlement amongst boys in and outside the school? Is it fair to blame the girls who get pregnant simply because they can still come back to school and continue their education? Who gets the girls pregnant? If girls who are pregnant were to be excluded would boys who got girls pregnant be excluded as well? Is pregnancy exacerbated by the drug culture?

10. At the heart of many of the problems is the low teacher morale and motivation and the divided nature of the staff – this has been a poorly managed school with an attendant problem of low teacher professionalism. The lack of teacher commitment and enthusiasm contributes to a laissez-faire and chaotic environment where violent and potentially violent behaviour can proliferate given the problems and issues of the surrounding social context. The declining pass rate until 2010 reflects this as does the possibility for improvement due to changed leadership from 2011.

CONCLUSION

Violence is a serious problem in many South African schools – perhaps in the majority. This study based on a range of different educational personnel and using a variety of research methods has found different types of violence in schools in six out nine South African provinces. It has also found evidence of the consequences of violence for learners.

Some types of violence affecting schools, for example Gangsterism, clearly originate outside the school as do the use of illegal drugs which facilitates violence. Some forms of violent behaviour such as bullying and male learners' sexually harassing female learners may well be learned in families and communities beyond the school. However, this is not to say either that there is nothing that schools can do about such external violence or that such violence is completely external anyway.

Firstly, a well-organised, inclusive and well-run school can do much to reduce the incidents and impact of external violence because learners and teachers are part of a community with a sense of purpose – there is something that people feel they belong to and that is worth protecting. Such a well-organised school may well have a safety and security committee that

makes sure that there are proper fences, locks, etc. but its main strength is that loyalty and commitment to the school will reduce internal collaboration with potentially violent external individuals and groups. As opposed to a dysfunctional or laissez-faire school, such external threats will be more readily noticed and acted upon in a cohesive way.

Secondly, as this report shows, some “external” threats are also partly internal. Some learner respondents report that the failure of the school to recognise them as individuals or to boost their self-esteem promotes their use of drugs. More obviously, schools are failing to deal with cases of bullying or sexual harassment even when they are reported to teachers. This is a case of violence by omission where schools knows there is a problem of violence, which the evidence in this study clearly suggests they do, and does little or nothing to try to prevent it. One teacher even noted that the broader education system itself was partly to blame as many bullies were those who the system has failed. As the report shows, these forms of violence in schools could have serious educational, medical, social, and economic consequences for learners.

However, the most disturbing part of the report is the evidence of direct forms of violence that originate within the school itself. From this study it is clear that a proportion of teachers are verbally, physically and psychologically violent towards learners, including using corporal punishment which is illegal.

Such direct forms of violent behaviour by teachers demonstrate a serious problem with regard to a lack of professionalism, compounded by evidence in this report of teacher behaviour that also indirectly contributes to violence – teacher absenteeism and lateness. There is also some evidence in the report of the schools’ failure to take into account the individual needs of young people in an attempt to control them in a “one size fits all” manner, which in itself can result in violent rebelliousness. However, ultimately it is the school management – the principal and SGB – that is responsible for the day to day prevention of violence in schools, and there is considerable evidence in this report that schools are not being managed well and in an appropriate manner to reduce violence.

The study also suggests that the role of the police in helping with violence in schools can be positive but is also haphazard and inconsistent – and in some cases non-existent. It is also an interesting question of what role model some police provide in relation to violence. However, a key question stemming from this study that policymakers and educationalists will have to ask themselves in relation to reducing violence in South African schools is whether they want

to continue down a path that emphasises punishment, control, and surveillance of learners (and staff) or a path that emphasises increasing the effectiveness of school organisation and culture?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Current efforts aimed at increasing basic levels of good management, school effectiveness and teacher professionalism in South African schools need to be supported and enhanced as this will also have a beneficial effect on reducing school violence. A well-ordered school is also a less violent school.
2. However, efforts must also increasingly be made to realise this within the post-apartheid educational framework of education for democracy and peaceful conflict resolution – an effective school must also be a more democratic school; good management is more democratic management and a professional teacher operates in a more democratic manner. The more learners, parents and staff are involved in school policy and decision-making, the more there is a genuine community, the more the school can resist violence.
3. Initial teacher education needs to be more rigorous in producing professional teachers.
4. Schools that experience problems of violence need an active safety and security committee that monitors violence; recommends violence prevention measures; and oversees its implementation. This committee would need to advise on the necessity for, appropriateness and consequences of, any searches for drugs and weapons among learners.
5. Many teachers still need training on why corporal punishment is ineffective educationally and has negative consequences, as well as what are constructive alternatives to corporal punishment.
6. Bullying must be recognised as a problem and acted upon in schools by staff. Each school should have clear anti-bullying policy.
7. The nature and causes of violence in society and in schools need to be examined and discussed in schools and teacher education.
8. The social nature of masculinity, and alternatives to aggressive and violent masculinity, needs to be examined and discussed in schools and in teacher education.

9. Race and racism also need to be examined and discussed in schools and teacher education.

10. In the light of 7-9 above, there is a need to reconsider the place, nature, and content of teaching about society in South African schools. Does Guidance and Counselling provide a suitable vehicle? Is a new approach required? Are teachers equipped to teach controversial issues in the classroom?

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