

How is Child Trafficking Addressed in South African Schools' Policies?

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ABSTRACT The current study focuses on child trafficking and school policies in South African schools. The main aim of the study was to see if a topic of child trafficking was covered by the school policy. The secondary aim was mainly to see how informed were the schools regarding the safety and the well-being of learners. The study was conducted in Johannesburg schools during a period of practice teaching by the fourth year students who were doing Bachelor of Education degree and Postgraduate Certificate in Life Orientation. This was a qualitative study, the participants comprised of school principals, deputy principals, heads of departments for the subject Life Orientation of ten high schools and school governing body members. Documents such as school policies were also analyzed. Findings revealed that school policies did not cover the topic of child trafficking per se although there were issues around safety. In this paper it is argued that schools were taking policies raw as they were from the Department of Education without adding or elaborating on what was suitable for their contexts.

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 and 2010, the fourth year Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate students who were specializing in Life Orientation, conducted a study during their school experience in Johannesburg schools for a period of eight weeks. The study's duration was sixteen weeks since this was conducted over a period of two years. The rationale for embarking on this study was mainly influenced by the world soccer cup in South Africa and the way media was reporting about trends in trafficking and that South Africa was a source, destination and transit country (Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) Newsletter 17 April 2009). Trafficking is further spurred by an increase in sex tourism and there was evidence that children were trafficked for a number of reasons, for example, labour, sexual exploitation, to be beggars, street vendors, housebreakers and drug runners (UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund 2007). I was a lecturer for these prospective teachers and I was interested in knowing how prepared were the schools in making learners aware about the issue of child trafficking. I also wanted to know how the schools will deal with the issue of child trafficking beyond the 2010 World Soccer Cup. As a lecturer for Life Orientation, I wanted to see how the Life Orientation teachers interpreted an outcome on the well-being, safety of learners and children's rights. On

the other hand, I wanted to see how the school governance and school management teams were vigilant in dealing with issues of safety and the well-being of learners. What bothered me the most was how media like newspapers were reporting on human trafficking and how some learners disappeared from the school premises (Molo Songololo 2000). In the year 2000, Molo Songololo, a non-governmental organization in South Africa reported that there was nearly an estimate of 30, 000 child prostitutes. I perused the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Republic of South Africa (1996). It was silent on the issue of child trafficking. Again I looked into the content of the subject Life Orientation in all grades, there was nothing on the issue of human trafficking, though safety was mentioned as one of the topics and human rights. My interest for conducting this study grew further as media reported on how the FIFA World Soccer Cup in 2010 may cause an increase in child trafficking and schools seem to turn a blind eye to this issue. Reports by SAPA (South African Press Association) October 19, 2007 stated that "Malawian women are sold by Nigerian syndicates to Germany, Italy and Belgium, and all this happens via South Africa. Chinese traffickers were using Johannesburg as a transit point for Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique. Russian and Bulgarian women were exploited in private clubs and venues in Johannesburg." It seems most of the activities around trafficking were in Johan-

nesburg which urged me to conduct a study around Johannesburg schools. Although there were attempts by non-governmental organizations in raising awareness on the issue of child trafficking in 2008 such as Leadership Conference of Consecrated Religious (LCCL) and SACBC, there was no awareness campaigns from the side of the Department of Education. This really bothered me as an educationist about children's awareness regarding the issue of child trafficking. This led to the study's research question: are South African schools' policies covering issues regarding child trafficking?

Theoretical Framework

The lens which guided my study was the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Donald et al. 2006). The Bio-ecological theory puts emphasis on the interaction amongst subsystems from the micro, meso, exo, chrono and macro system. I wanted to see the ripple effect amongst the subsystems regarding the issue of child trafficking and how the schools reacted to the media news coverage regarding FIFA World Soccer Cup in 2010 and its impact regarding child trafficking especially around big cities like Johannesburg. The micro system as the home also should play a role in influencing the school and knowing what information learners receive at school. Time as stipulated in the chrono system played a significant role in this study due to the heightened excitement and advertisement of World Soccer Cup in South Africa. There were many changes in the South African chrono system which affected the well-being of children, in particular adolescents who were the targeted age group (Molo Songololo Report 2005). The context mainly in this study was covered by meso system being the school, local community, the exo system being all the indirect forces that affected the children and the macro system being the values and belief system of South Africans (Donald et al. 2006).

Child Trafficking

Trafficking in human beings is defined by UNICEF (2007) as "a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon involving multiple stakeholders at the institutional and commercial level, whereby vulnerable population are exploited for sex industry, agricultural and industrial labour and or-

gan harvesting". The victims of human trafficking include destitute families, unable to support their children, people who are looking for employment, girls are the most vulnerable. Anderson and O'Connell (2002) argue that trafficking falls within a continuum of experience, which ranges from people who are transported at gunpoint, then forced into labour to people who are not deceived or coerced in any way, are well paid and work in an environment that respects and upholds their human rights.

A survey conducted by Molo Songololo (2005) a non-governmental organization fighting against the abuse of children indicated that the kidnapping and trafficking of children, child pornography and prostitution was one of the biggest sources of revenue for gangs and syndicates in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The victims were girls of twelve and sixteen year old and these were abducted during the day from shopping centres, taxi ranks and schools. These girls were gang-raped and kept as prisoners (Brits 2003). The impact of trafficking on children range from emotional, physical and psychosocial abuse. According to IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) and UNICEF (2005), children who have been trafficked reported feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem and were stigmatized. Furthermore they were susceptible to contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. This is caused by a myth that having sex with a virgin can cure HIV/AIDS, hence a high demand for young girls (IPU and UNICEF 2005). Factors that make children vulnerable for trafficking are amongst others: poverty, children without caregivers or parents, demand for exploitative sex and cheap labour and traditions and cultural values. These factors make children vulnerable especially in developing countries (IPU and UNICEF 2005).

Legislature and Trafficking

One of the biggest downfalls in South African law is that prior to 2010 World Soccer Cup, it did not have a direct law against human trafficking. The Justice and Constitutional Development Minister Jeff Radebe presented a draft law 16 March 2010 in parliament which would fight against human trafficking in South Africa (Bua News 16 March 2010). In the bill, internet service providers are obliged to report internet addresses on their services that are suspected to

contain information that facilitates human trafficking. Furthermore, the bill is aimed at curbing human and child trafficking in the country (Bua News 16 March 2010). The Minister claimed that this was a work in progress of passing the bill, and it has got nothing to do with 2010 World Soccer Cup.

The bill was in a way addressing the inadequate law on human trafficking in South Africa, there were only two Acts, the Sexual Offences Amendment Act and Children's Act. These two Acts had a limited operational scope, which made it difficult for South Africans to see the extent of the problem. In the Children's Act, chapter 18 aims to give effect to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent Trafficking in persons and generally to combat trafficking in children. For instance, it expands the child protection net to protect street children, children involved in child labour, trafficked children, refugee children and children in child-headed households by enforcing social work intervention and social work investigations into the circumstances of those children (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations) (UNESCO 2007).

The Department of Education does not have a direct clause which addresses the trafficking of children. In the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, provision is made for protecting the rights of children and the safety of learners. Furthermore, an amendment was passed in 2008 towards the safety of learners and the devices to be used for drug testing and the procedure to be followed (Republic of South Africa 1996). One can argue that the legal rules dealing with child safety are derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996). Though safety of learners is included in the South African Schools Act (1996), the Act is silent on matters pertaining to child trafficking. The current study was an attempt to address the silence in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Life Orientation as a Subject in South African Schools

The subject Life Orientation which is a compulsory subject in all South African schools has an outcome on social development or citizenship education which addresses issues of human rights and safety. I studied the policy documents Department of Education (2003) and Department

of Education (2005) for primary schools and secondary schools but none outlined the content on child trafficking. This will mean the South African schools will in the Life Orientation classes talk about safety issues or human rights but never touch child trafficking. I also studied the content of Life Orientation textbooks from various publishers specifically on the outcome of human rights and safety none of the publishers wrote about child trafficking. It is against this background that I embarked on this study in trying to find out about what schools are doing about the topic of child trafficking.

METHOD

The study followed a qualitative design type and the phenomenological approach was used. The purpose for using the latter approach was to mainly describe what all participants, namely principals, deputy principals, heads of departments, Life Orientation teachers and school governing bodies of ten schools, had in common as they experienced the phenomenon of child trafficking in the year 2009 and 2010 in Johannesburg schools (Creswell 2007). What the student teachers did was to collect data in a purposeful way from people who interacted closely with the school policies and issues around children's rights and safety. The purpose as Moustakas (1994) outlined was to develop a composite description from ten high schools in Johannesburg of the essences of the experiences of all individuals who interacted with school policies. Ethical considerations were observed whereby permission was sought from all ten schools by student teachers and participation was voluntary. Guaranteed anonymity of participants and schools' names was given and letters of consent were signed by all participants after they were informed about the purpose of the study (Henning et al. 2004). Individual interviews were used for all participants after they filled in open ended questionnaires. Documents such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and School Safety Policy were also analyzed.

Interviews served as one of the instruments for data collection from all mentioned participants. The interview questions covered were for an example :*Does your school have a policy on child trafficking? Do you have a policy on safety issues in your school? Do you think children in your school are aware of what child trafficking*

is? What steps can be taken to protect learners from the threat of child trafficking? Do you think South African Schools Act (1996) is helpful to schools with regard to child trafficking?

The questionnaire covered questions such as: *Explain if there is any information available in your classrooms about child trafficking. Describe how schools deal with issues of safety on school premises and outside school premises. Explain how you feel about policies that are drawn by authorities like DOE without teacher involvement. What measures are in place in your school in making children aware about child trafficking? Does the policy document of Life Orientation include child trafficking?*

For document analysis student teachers had to look for issues regarding child trafficking in the school policies, safety policies, curriculum policies and the South African Schools Act.

The process of data collection was done over a number of days depending on the availability of participants since most were part of the school management teams. Each interview lasted for thirty to thirty-five minutes and these were conducted in the interviewee's offices. For the members of school governing body, an office was also allocated where interviews were conducted, although there was no uniformity in all schools. No audio recordings were done but notes were taken during each interview session and the interviewer had to summarize what the participant said and these were great tools for reflecting understanding (Henning et al. 2004).

As for questionnaire completion, participants were allowed to complete them during their free time and they were later returned to student teachers or researchers. Documents such as policies in schools were analyzed during free periods.

FINDINGS

Phenomenological data analysis according to Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007) required that significant statements that were said during interviews should be highlighted first which helped in providing an understanding of how all participants experienced the phenomena namely child trafficking and school policies. Then clusters of meaning were developed into the following themes:

Schools Did Not Have a Policy on Child Trafficking: The schools had all policy documents except the policy on child trafficking. They

all felt that the Department of Education did not require such a document, therefore they never saw that it should be drawn by the school. Though in some schools, the School Management Teams felt that it would be good to have a policy on child trafficking. They also felt that parents should be informed about trafficking of children, because it places their children at risk.

Good Safety Measures But No Policy in Place: In all the schools there were good security and safety measures in place. Gates were locked throughout the day and there were security guards at the gates who controlled people entering the school premises. The safety policy was implemented fully in all the schools.

Learner Awareness on Child Trafficking: Teachers at schools in more affluent areas felt that their learners were not vulnerable to child trafficking, whereas in less affluent areas like township schools, teachers felt that learners were more vulnerable maybe due to poverty experienced in some families children may be tempted to follow strangers due to lack of money or poverty.

Parents Are Not Aware That Schools Don't Have Policies on Child Trafficking: Parents were not aware of such policies and knew only matters pertaining to school governance, finances, admission policies and safety measures. This was a clear indication that they were properly inducted before they started with their work as the school governing body. The school governing bodies felt that this is an important matter pertaining to their children therefore a document is necessary or a clause may be added on issues regarding safety matters.

Inadequate Information in South African Schools Act 1996: The interviewees all agreed that the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 did not cover issues regarding child trafficking, although it did outline safe school environment that was conducive to teaching and learning. The School Management Teams did not feel like adding anything on what the Department has given them. This indicates that what comes from authorities in a way is accepted as it is and not questioned about gaps or shortfalls.

Classrooms Information on Child Trafficking: In township schools there were posters on walls in the classrooms on child trafficking and that it should be stopped. On the contrary, in the affluent schools there was nothing in classrooms on child trafficking. This clearly indicates that

the schools in poorer communities felt that learners needed to know more about child trafficking in order to be vigilant and not fall prey to traffickers and pimps.

The Content of Life Orientation and Child Trafficking: The content of the subject Life Orientation in all grades did not cover the topic child trafficking, though there were topics dealing with safety and human rights. Life Orientation teachers also did not teach about the aspect of child trafficking since no textbook included such a topic.

Inadequate Information in Documents: In the documents available at all schools, policies such as South African Schools Act of 1996, school safety policy, and Curriculum policies for Life Orientation, it was found that all policies were silent on the aspect of child trafficking.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that in all schools there were no policies on child trafficking, which is somehow worrisome to an extent since there were reports that there was a tremendous increase in acts of child trafficking. One is obliged to think that schools in Johannesburg, in particular where this study was conducted, were relaxed since they were never affected by such incidents. Although safety measures were observed in all the schools what was neglected was information to learners regarding child trafficking. Regarding information to learners, one may argue that learners are exposed to technology such as internet, cell phones and media which will inform them about such issues. Since the focus of this study was targeted on school management teams and school governance, little is known about learner knowledge or awareness.

Regarding learner awareness, the affluent schools thought that child trafficking would never occur in their schools or to their learners. They thought that only in disadvantaged communities learners were vulnerable due to poverty and child-headed homes (IPU and UNICEF 2005). Township schools were actually worried with the FIFA World Cup and made learners aware by putting posters in the classrooms though little was said about the issue. The step taken by educators in township schools indicates that an ethos of care is available for the well-being of learners and they were also acting in *loco parentis* (educator "acting as parents") (Nieuwenhuis 2005). In both

affluent and less affluent schools, the way schools ensured that safety measures were in place, it shows that they act pro-actively by protecting learners from harm (Prinsloo 2005), though child trafficking was not in any document of school safety.

The content of the subject Life Orientation needs to be beefed up a bit since the broad learning outcomes that are stipulated in the policy documents Department of Education (2002) and Department of Education (2005) do not cover all the topics that one can think of. Though Life Orientation is a subject that is informative it also needs a teacher who is a researcher and who will not only focus on the textbooks supplied by the department of Education but should be broad in approach.

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that there is a significant lack of documents or policies outlining how to prevent or deal with issues of child trafficking. However, the lack of documents or policies does not suggest that schools in South Africa should be silent on the issue of child trafficking since it affects the well-being of learners. Based on the findings of the current study, I would recommend that schools should play a preventative role by availing information to learners, and by outlining how the perpetrators work and lure their victims. Parental involvement should be prioritized whereby parents are made aware about safety precautions on their children in and outside the school premises. Parents should also be informed about the pimps and how they work, especially those who are not exposed to media such as newspapers and internet. They should be made aware about the issue of child trafficking and how to prevent their children from being victims. The National Department of Education should include the issue of child trafficking as part of content in Life Orientation. The fight against poverty in South Africa will also minimize the risk of learners not to be victimized as they search for money in order to survive.

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