

Can Violence Reduce Violence in Schools? The Case of Corporal Punishment

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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 based on the perceptions and experiences of teachers, learners, principals, support staff and School Governing Bodies (SGB). Semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and observations were conducted. The study also employed 'quantitative' research methodology so questionnaires were administered across six provinces in South Africa. The study reveals that many teachers are verbally, physically (use corporal punishment) and psychologically violent towards learners. Lack of professionalism, teacher absenteeism and non-punctuality contribute to violence. There is evidence in the report of some schools' failure to take into account the individual needs of young people by trying to control them in a generic manner resulting in violent rebelliousness. There is evidence in the report that many schools are not managed well. It emerged that because of authoritarianism, schools are failing to protect learners from violence. Thus policy makers and educationalists will have to change ways of reducing violence in schools from those that emphasise punishment, control and surveillance of learners to employing strategies that eliminate authoritarianism and increase effective school organisation and culture.