

Challenges Experienced by Life Orientation Teachers with Regard to Grade Nine Learners on Learner Bullying in Gauteng West

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KEYWORDS Family Background. Self-esteem. Counselling. Teacher Training. Bullying. Life Orientation

ABSTRACT The study focused on grade nine learners who were bullying one another even though they were taught Life Orientation. The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Life Orientation teachers on how they dealt with issues regarding bullying amongst grade nine learners. This was a qualitative study conducted in Gauteng West district in five Secondary schools. The participants were purposely chosen and these were Life Orientation teachers who had an experience in teaching the Subject not less than three years. Interviews were conducted after lessons at their schools and ethical considerations were observed. The findings of the study revealed that school policies and code of conduct were not taken seriously by learners. Teachers needed a thorough training on issues regarding counselling and how they should handle the bullies and the victims of bullying. The paper further addresses the issue of family background and its ripple effect in society.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers often feel that teaching in intermediate and senior phases schools has become a living hell as Teacher Education in South Africa has undergone a process of transformation (Rooth 2005). By so saying teachers have an important role to fulfil in curbing school bullying. According to Pretorius (2008) it is evident from his research that teachers worldwide are increasingly being held accountable for the ills of society. Education in particular is expected to equip our youth with the experiences, skills, knowledge as well as the values that will empower them to meet the requirements of a future society. Having policies on paper in South African schools alone is not enough to provide what is required of the teacher in the classroom currently. Furthermore, Pretorius (2008) mentions that changes and demands in education have caused a worldwide resurgence in research regarding the best possible ways to equip teachers more effectively for the new era. He further mentions that recent fact finding visits to the US, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, China, Taiwan and Japan have confirmed that education systems worldwide have been challenged over the past two decades by rapidly changing social needs. Even though, through the ages all young adolescents needed to feel a sense of belonging,

to feel safe, to feel loved and accepted, to experience a sense of independence, a sense of fulfilment and to be connected to the world around them – the modern adolescent also experiences a lack of efficient role models, mentorship and parental guidance in their lives (Elliot and Ageton 1998).

The modern-day learner grows up in a culture of violence where violence is seen as normal (Curcio and First 1993:7). Lack of parental involvement and dysfunctional families are stated as reasons for learner violence (Elliot and Ageton 1998). Many families struggle with problems of unemployment, finances, depression as well as drug and alcohol abuse (Finsterlin 1999). According to Arikewuyo and Dosumu (2001), schools in Nigeria have become a national heartache to most citizens. On pages of newspapers, radio and television, various opinions have been expressed by parents, teachers, clergymen and other opinion leaders about the conduct of students in Nigerian schools. In Zimbabwe, Zindi (1995) reported that with the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1982, corporal punishment was abolished and the consequence of this action was that pupils started bullying. Teachers are now faced with classroom discipline and control that is deteriorating.

Victims of bullying experience loneliness and often suffer humiliation, insecurity, loss of self-

esteem, and thoughts of suicide. Furthermore, bullying can interfere with a student's engagement and learning in school. The impact of frequent bullying often accompanies these victims into adulthood (Gabarino and De Lara 2003). Bullying does not only affect the learner, instead it has a ripple effect that includes the parents, friends and family as a whole, as cited by (Curcio and First 1993). They point out that there are indeed factors that encourage learners to bully other learners. According to Curcio and First (1993:7) learners who grow up in a culture of violence where violence is seen as normal are more likely to turn to bullying. In addition there is a negative reinforcement in the fact that the bully feels like a hero of the class. Irrespective of race or gender, school bullying has become a modern day societal disease and any learner can be affected by it (Curcio and First 1993).

Given the fact that bullying is the most threat to the future of the most learners all the time, every learner is standing a chance to be affected by it as well. It is because those actions are not receiving the necessary attention that it deserves from the authorities. Bullying goes hand in hand with violence in schools. It therefore becomes evident that Life Orientation teachers face critical challenges that they must respond to. Research conducted in Australia by Rigby and Slee (1998) found that the causes of student bullying are largely related to personality factors as well as issues concerned with their home and school. Rigby and Slee (1998) further asserted that reasons why bullies act the way they do is that their behaviour might be generally related to home, school, societal and personality factors.

A study that was conducted by Rossouw and Steward (2008) stated that aggressive behaviour in the classroom disrupted effective teaching and learning and that it had become a significant factor in increasing the stress levels of teachers. A case in point is alluded to by Rossouw and Stewart (2008) where in a suburban Eastern Cape school, some learners who took part in a focus group session, openly declared that most disciplinary methods fail because it has no positive effect. "The same group of learners were in detention almost every day, but they did not change", one said. "What is more, when serious offenders were suspended for a few days, they saw it as being rewarded with an extra holiday". When learners were asked to suggest a more effective method to combat misconduct, they

suggested that corporal punishment should be brought back, because that was all that some learners understood. Teachers therefore become confused and do not know what to do (Rossouw and Steward 2008).

Research that was conducted in twenty schools in the Cape Metropolitan area found that violence was endemic to both primary and secondary schools (Eliason and Frank 2000:1-4). Findings indicated that the possession of weapons, fighting, violence, vandalism, assault and gangsterism occurred on a regular basis and there were major problems in all those schools (Eliason and Frank 2000:1-4). The bullies referred to here were often learners with a history of abuse who have been bullied by their parents or others.

A study on bullying by De Wet (2007) gave educators' perceptions on bullying and prevention strategies in the Free State Province. The findings of the study revealed that strategies which could be effective to combat bullying in schools include amongst others the following: breaking down of communication barriers that may exist between educators and learners; more active educator participation and calling upon the school's code of conduct to prohibit bullying. De Wet (2007) also found that the involvement of the police services could be an effective tool in combating bullying.

Rationale for the Study

The school plays a central role in a child's social development and it is critical that schools offer a safe environment in which learning and growth can take place (Neser et al. 2004). In Pinetown High School, five teenagers were charged for allegedly smacking another teenager's private parts. The father of the victim said that the school authorities had tried to assist his son as best as they could, but they did not have the resources to make this stop, that is why he laid the charges - hoping to end this type of behaviour, but without success (*Pretoria News* 20 October 2009). Another incident was in Krugersdorp whereby a boy slashed a schoolmate's throat with a samurai sword (*Sowetan* 15 April 2009). These serious incidents of bullying occurred in schools even though Life Orientation was taught as a compulsory subject in all grades in schools.

Bullying is one of the topics which should be addressed in Life Orientation classes. Within the context of this study, Life Orientation teachers should therefore play a role in intervening and preventing bullying in schools, even if they receive little or no help on how to effectively deal with such problems (Juvonen 2003:78). From the literature study, the lack of research in South African schools on Life Orientation teachers' experiences and intervention with regard to bullying is still a need. Taking the above facts into consideration, it becomes clear that the focus of this study was appropriate for exploring the challenges experienced by Life Orientation teachers with regard to bullying.

Objectives

The overall aim of this study was to explore the challenges that were experienced by Life Orientation teachers with regard to learner-on-learner bullying in Gauteng West District amongst Grade nine learners.

Theoretical Framework

In order to do justice to the study the researchers used the bio-ecological theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner as a lens. Bullies and the bullied learners come from homes which form the micro-system in the life of a person. Bronfenbrenner (2005) describes the microsystem as the immediate environment where proximal processes are played out. The child's behaviour unfolds in the micro systems in which one's development is influenced by parents, siblings and significant others (Donald et al. 2006).

Bullying is committed by learners from the communities and because a school is part of this community, bullying takes place at school level too which is a meso system. Many children tend to become unruly at school and the teachers are unable to discipline them effectively due to lack of applicable disciplinary measures. The exosystem, encompasses indirect factors that influence the life of a learner. Poverty has escalated in Gauteng West as a result of unemployment brought about by the closure of mines in the area. The chronosystem involves the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course. It has to do with the timing of events, number of events in a given time, the length of time of events, and perceptions of time over time.

These may be events in society or in the school premises like initiation process of new comers in the school.

METHODS

According to Henning et al. (2004) qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem.

In this study the researchers therefore opted to use qualitative research with an aim of exploring the causes and factors of bullying. From an exploratory point of view we looked for details about gaining insight into the situation, phenomenon, community or individual (De Vos et al. 2000). The researchers' focus was to understand through detailed description the challenges that were experienced by Life Orientation teachers with regard to Grade nines on learner on learner bullying

The study followed a phenomenological approach. Van Manen (1990:62) describes the purpose of phenomenological research as borrowing from other people's experiences and their reflections of the experiences to gain a better understanding of the deeper meaning of one aspect of their lives, and intimately as an aspect of the possibilities of being human. Phenomenological research turns to the nature of lived experience in an attempt to capture the deeply held beliefs, feelings or worldviews as expressed in the language of the participants (Henning et al. 2004: 34). The purpose of using phenomenology was to find out more on the challenges experienced by Life Orientation teachers with regard to Grade 9 learner on learner bullying.

The sample was purposely selected from the target population which consisted of six schools. One Grade nine Life Orientation teacher from each school were selected in particular those who had an experience of more than two years in teaching Life Orientation in Grade nine. The researchers carried out the study in Gauteng West District in Kagiso township schools. Gauteng West District was chosen on the grounds of practical considerations in terms of availability of time, and the level of the occurrence of bullying, violence and deaths in the district for the past few years. The participants' ages ranged between 35 and 59 and they all had an experience of teaching Life Orientation.

An instrument for interviews consisted of open-ended questions which allowed participants to explain and describe their experiences of learner on learner bullying in detail. Each interview lasted for approximately thirty to thirty five minutes. Questions focused on teacher's knowledge of the content of Life Orientation as a subject, their experiences in the Life Orientation classroom, perception of their skills to implement programmes to curb bullying and experiences on cases of bullying in their schools.

DATA ANALYSIS

As the study was in Kagiso, teachers were allowed to express themselves in Setswana or English although almost all of them responded in English. Analysing and exploring qualitative data was done by deeply immersing in the interview data. The responses from the interviews were from the six teacher participants. The purpose of this study, the data collected from the interviews was classified to allow us to consider similarities and differences from those responses. The written transcriptions were then typed on MS Word. The transcripts were read through individually in order to verify and clarify what could have been missed during the process of the interview. Henning et al. (2004:104) stated that analysis has to be done through analysing, coding and identifying patterns, and categorizing data. List of all codes was made and we read the whole text again to see whether the codes made sense and whether there was coherence (Henning et al. 2004). The researchers looked for possible groupings of the codes to cluster words with similar meanings. The verbatim statements with similar words were coded and clustered accordingly into categories. From the categories the following themes emerged:

- ♦ Types of bullying observed by teachers in a school.
- ♦ Challenges faced by teachers in respect of the bully and the victim
- ♦ School environment's contribution to the vulnerability of learners.
- ♦ Effective implementation of school policies.
- ♦ Inadequate teacher training on how to recognize and handle bullying

Types of Bullying Observed by Life Orientation Teachers: The teachers cited types of bullying as bossing people around, beating oth-

er learners, harming deliberately and pinching as types of physical bullying. Emotional bullying was identified as hurting others, making others feel inferior, stealing and damaging other learner's property and teasing whereas others are called names which is verbal bullying and ill-treatment of younger learners by older learners.

Challenges Pertaining to the Behaviour of Victims: Truancy was seen as a common element amongst victims of bullying. They stay away from school to avoid harassment and humiliation. One of the participants stated that *"Bullying itself damages self-esteem, it makes them to be scared to come to school. It makes them feel powerless."* Victims of bullying tend to deteriorate in terms of physical, emotional and social attachments. This also leads to learners being truant and dropping out of school. Another challenge faced by Life Orientation teachers is decline in performance. Participant B indicated that performance is affected, it drops automatically as a victim loses focus in the studies. Self-esteem was also observed by teachers on learners who were bullied. One of the teachers pointed out that: *"Bullying damages self-esteem and that can take a long time to heal"* Self-esteem also influences self-confidence to an extent that even specialization areas of a learner are being affected. Fear of the unknown is taking place as the victim does not know as what will happen next. Again self-esteem in the one being bullied is being broken down to the extent that this learner has no self-confidence regarding the ability to cope with everyday procedures. The victim will develop the type of person who cannot make decisions, is unable to come to conclusions. Because of this drop in the confidence of the victim, suicide could be seen as a means of escape, or as a means of gaining attention to the problem, possibly a means of asking help

The findings indicated that the victims of bullying are likely to have suicidal tendencies. One of the participants said that: *"Bullying has a negative impact which may result in a bullied learner being depressed achieving poorly and also developing suicidal tendencies."*

Participants raised the challenging issues pertaining to bullies, which are inter alia carrying of weapons to school and lack of remorse. Participants highlighted that *"bullies carry weapons and they get into frequent fights"*. These dangerous weapons are exposed by bullies for conflicts; as a result high mortality rate is experi-

enced. Gangsterism was common amongst bullies. In some instances participants mentioned that: *“the tragic end was experienced due to bullying in schools. Several cases of school deaths, involved the victim killing the bully”*. Bullies at times feel that they need weapons of some type so as to show their power and the lack of fear in using these objects. The bully might feel that the only way is to show violence over the weaker person and using violence brings out fear from the victim which the bully thinks gives power.

Warnings from school authorities were ignored by bullies. This was pointed out by one participant that *“bullies do not show remorse, even after being warned, bullies keep on hurting others.”* Bullies again don't show remorse as they cannot stoop low due to peer pressure popularity. The perpetrators do not show any emotions of regret for their actions. Life Orientation teachers felt that teaching about bullying remains just a lesson like any other lessons and it is up to the learner to internalise the lesson.

School Environment Contributing to the Vulnerability of Learners: What emerged from the interviews with the participants, were the following on the school environment: *“I think playground duty is a good idea especially at Primary school level where learners are prone to and vulnerable to bullying”*. The importance of the playground duty in that it lays down duties for a Life Orientation teacher during learners' play time. It allows Life Orientation teachers to supervise learners while they play and are thus in a position to prevent any unwanted behaviour such as bullying. It poses a big challenge because not all teachers are interested in playground supervision during break and in most cases the School Management Team is quiet on that. In schools where the timetable is effective learners are able to report and relevant steps are taken. Learners also report to teachers that they trust. These are the teachers they think will take the relevant steps to solve their problem of being bullied.

Based on the above discussion, it therefore shows the importance of monitoring and supervision of teachers during break times. Their presence as authority figures might have a positive effect on the learners who are victims and on the bully. The playground duty should therefore be an important aspect in the school where each

educator allocated playground duty should take it seriously.

The Implementation of School Policies: Some participants in this study indicated that the: *“Code of Conduct is implemented but many times the parents do not want to accept it when their children violated any of the rules”*. These findings clearly indicated that some parents are not supportive to adherence to school policies. Most parents do not attend school meetings which poses a problem for the school to discuss and implement Codes of Conduct effectively.

Some participants indicated that: *“Our school policy and code of conduct is very effective, our learners are aware and they have copies and they have it also in their Life Orientation books”*.

Often the code of conduct is not followed or implemented. It is a good document which gathers dust in the offices as implementation is a challenge. Most parents are not well informed about the code of conduct and they do not attend meetings where such information can be shared with them. There is still lack of knowledge, on the side of teachers regarding the code of conduct as stipulated by the South African School's Act. They indicate that the code of conduct is not working-therefore need not be followed.

The Code of Conduct was not seen as an effective tool for dealing with bullying in schools. The implication is that teachers do not familiarise themselves with the South African Schools Act and they also neglect the content of their own school's code of conduct. The schools' code of conduct is also seen as not preventative and responsive to bullying by the participants. *“The Code of Conduct does not see or hear the hardship suffered by the bully. In this case, the Code of Conduct is “non-existent”*. In the case where the Code of Conduct is effective it does not necessarily mean that the pain incurred by the victim will fade away. Bullies also suffer because sometimes it is not of their making, but there are factors influencing them to bully other learners.

Inadequate Teacher Training on Bullying: From the findings it would seem that not all teachers talk about the issue of bullying in class because according to one participant, bullying has never been taught as one of the topics in Life Orientation. Teachers furthermore feel that they are not adequately trained to deal with bullying in schools. Furthermore participants highlight-

ed that “educators are not trained to deal with emotional and psychological consequences of bullying. Another participant said the following statement”*As a Life Orientation Teacher I am not trained to deal with the emotional and psychological consequences of bullying but what I know for sure is that a bully in most cases has a lot of hurt inside and wants to give that pain away*”. The unavailability of intensive workshops creates a lot of problems for Life Orientation teachers as they are the ones who ultimately carry the whole burden of addressing the problem of bullying in schools. The school management changes Life Orientation teachers almost every year and this poses a big challenge. If the same teacher teaches Life Orientation over a number of years the teacher will be able to make a follow up on cases and improve also on the teaching of aspects related to bullying. When there are frequent changes of Life Orientation teachers this limits progress in addressing the problem of bullying.

Teachers also mentioned the frustration of disciplining those who commit bullying as departmental procedures for disciplining learners are cumbersome. So in this case this encourages schools to adopt care-free attitude in disciplining learners. As a confirmation teachers do not have the insights regarding the procedures of handling bullying as a result no proper channels and assistance is done. Proper training for equipping teachers should be embarked on. Some participants in the study indicated the following:

“Anti-bullying programmes should be established to empower teachers to deal with bullying effectively.”

“All educators need training in the areas of identifying and dealing with bullying as bullying can take place in any class.”

Furthermore teachers do provide punishment and counselling to bullies but are unsure as to the effectiveness of the punishment and counselling that they provide. There is no guarantee that corrective measures work but this does not prevent one for trying to do well. The result of counselling may not be immediate but may have a long-term significance. The challenges associated with counselling of the aggressor and the victim in bullying is that it is upon the aggressor and the victim to accept the counselling. It becomes very difficult to change the behaviour of a perpetrator of bullying while at the same time to normalize the situation of the victim of bullying.

The training of Life Orientation teachers does not offer in-depth knowledge like that of clinical psychologist nor preparing them to be experts in behaviour modification.

Educators elaborated on the importance of training and development on matters that are related to the identification and support of victims and bullies. Due to lack of knowledge and skills, teachers encounter difficulties regarding aspects of personal development in Life Orientation where bullying was addressed. Another important fact is that there is some evidence that Life Orientation as a subject may not bring meaningful changes in the attitudes and behaviours of the learners if there is still no empowerment of teachers and self-study.

DISCUSSION

Types of Bullying

The findings of this study have revealed that bullying occurs in many forms as described by participants. Learners use different weapons like pens, scissors, knives. Victims are forced to give bullies money or do their homework. Some end up killing other learners. These can be confirmed by newspaper report (Sowetan 15 April 2009). As Naser et al. (2004) indicates, bullying amongst learners in grade nine is also intentional, repeated and hurtful. It is not limited to aggressive behaviour as argued by Therrien (2011). Teachers have cited damage to property as the other form of bullying, physical and non-physical bullying, verbal bullying, emotional bullying, racial and sexual bullying. There is a similarity of the types of bullying which are observed by Rigby (2001), Olweus (1993), Sullivan (2000) that direct and verbal acts of hitting, kicking, teasing, or taunting, and manipulating friendships or purposely excluding other children from activities. Piotrowski and Hoot (2008) agree that bullying can be defined as a specific behaviour that causes harm, demonstrates an imbalances of power and is repeated over time. The similarities are observed again when Piotrowski and Hoot (2008) shared the same sentiments of emotional bullying as aggression without words whereas verbal bullying is referred as rational aggression may be seen when a girl reports that another girl is not talking to her. And she is encouraging everyone else to do the same. These types of bullying were also mentioned by participants in the study.

The quarterly statistics in Gauteng West on incidents of bullying in schools have indicated that learners portray aggressive behaviour towards each other in the classroom. From these reports it has emerged that teachers lack adequate skills to deal with learners who bully others. The reports are reflecting challenges in behaviour of learners in grade nine. There is also a growing concern from teachers that lack of parental involvement and dysfunctional family backgrounds put pressure on the success which teachers can have in addressing instances of bullying. The findings of the study are similar to what was mentioned by Elliot and Ageton (1998) pointed out that learner bully is aggravated by poor parental involvement and dysfunctional family units. The incident reported in Gauteng West, as well as reflections by teachers during curriculum Information Sharing sessions, have revealed that poor school management and lack of support from the SMT (School Management Team) and poor implementation of school policies, has led to the difficulty in getting teachers to effectively supervising learners in school grounds and that has created opportunities for bullies to explore how they can attack victims. Rossouw and Steward (2008) argue that where schools have corrective systems in place to protect learners from incidents such as bullying, such systems must be appropriately monitored and enforced and with careful consideration.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

The participants have cited truancy, self-esteem, decline in performances and suicide as challenge. This has been confirmed by Besag (1998) whereby he highlights that anti-social behaviour that stems out of life situations that leads to bullying behaviour. This is further reiterated by the report in *The Times* (2011) whereby it was indicated that factors that increased risk of suicide in schools included suicide.

School's Environment and the Vulnerability of Learners

The school environment has been found to condone bullying in Gauteng West district schools in this research. The situation is also confirmed by literature that such schools create an unsafe environment as Sullivan (2000) points out, both conflicted and dysfunctional schools

convey the message of an unsafe learning environment.

This inquiry has shown that the school environment contributes to learner bullying in many ways. As Rigby and Slee (1998) asserts reasons why bullies act the way they do are generally related to home, school and society. Inadequate involvement in gangs has been found to condone bullying De Wet (2003). This inquiry has indicated that the seriousness and pervasive of bullying is generally depended on the school's tolerance for bullying, teachers attitudes on the supervision of breaks (Roberts 2000).

School Policies

The participants in this study have cited inconsistencies in policy implementation when dealing with bullies in schools. In their view the school's codes of conduct were not effective in dealing with this problem. They also cited concerns on the 5 day rule in the South African School's Act as mentioned in the Department of Education (1996) as an effective way of punishing bullies once they were taken through a disciplinary hearing. As Roussouw and Steward (2008) argue, schools with effective systems which are appropriately monitored and enforced, will succeed in curbing the problem of bullying in schools.

Teachers have cited concerns around the development of clear policies linked to addressing the problem of bullying. As Stobart (2009) there are a number of strategies that can be reflected in the schools' code of conduct that stipulates how the instances of bullying can be dealt with effectively in schools. Most of the teachers are not conversant with the Departmental policies such as Disciplinary measures that are found in the South African School Act. They neither understand the White Paper 6 (Department of Education 2001) or Inclusive Education. The School Based Support Team's role is not yet understood by the schools together with Life Orientation teacher's role which cause a very big challenge. There is a common view where participants talked about the Code of Conduct that is clearly outlined together with the disciplinary measures but the problem lies in the practicality of the implementation in the classroom, they feel that it cannot be realized in the present educational situation and conditions.

Teacher Training

It is a concern to note that even though social problems play a major role in inhibiting the success of teaching and learning in schools, Life Orientation teaching is still not awarded the status it deserves in schools. Lack of adequate training as indicated by Rooth (2005) seemed to be of great concern for teachers as teachers are placed in an institution where they lack expertise or find themselves outside of their league. The value attached to Life Orientation in schools has led to most institutions allocating it to unqualified teachers in that area. And that allocation being influenced by the school's curriculum needs which put little emphasis on Life Orientation teaching. Teacher training and development in addressing psychological problems in schools has been jeopardized by union involvement. Most unions feel the duty of teachers is limited to teaching and creating learning opportunities for learners.

CONCLUSION

The study managed to identify challenges faced by Life Orientation teachers with regard to grade nine learners on learner bullying. The study also addressed what the role of Life Orientation teachers is after an incident of bullying has occurred at school, and what measures can be put in place to prevent bullying in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggested the following recommendations in trying to improve the situation in schools. These recommendations may guide teachers on how to curb bullying in schools. From the above discussion one recommends that:

- ♦ Life Orientation teachers be exposed to rigorous developmental workshops that would deal with skills and techniques of conflict management and classroom management and most importantly counseling skills. This should be done whilst these teachers are still training at Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) to become teachers at the university and for as long as they are still teachers in schools. Short quick workshops, with a lot of information will normally leave teachers, confused and frustrated. Utilisation of the experts in training the teachers will be of

utmost importance because the teachers will understand what would be expected from them.

- ♦ Life Orientation teachers need to take responsibility for all topics in the subject, in other words, they need to start teaching Personal Development as one of the concepts in Life Orientation seriously, thereby instilling in the learner an appreciation for Life Orientation.
- ♦ Life Orientation teachers should come up with awareness programmes by interacting with outside relevant stakeholders who are invited to speak about issues such as bullying. Dramas, songs and dances can play an important role in imparting the knowledge of bullying to the learners, thus reducing the risk of learners bullying other learners.
- ♦ Rules should be clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and fairly applied to all learners.

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