

**Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one  
primary school in KwaZulu - Natal**

By

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## **Supervisor's Statement**

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval

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**Professor Pholoho Morojele**

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**Date**

## **Declaration**

I, Nqolobane Ntombela, declare that this dissertation entitled:

**Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in  
Kwa Zulu Natal,**

is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

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**Nqolobane Ntombela**

December 2014

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my daughters Hlakaniphile and Hhlakanipho Ntombela

## **Abstract**

Schools are becoming an environment of conflict in South Africa and facing numerous challenges in that learners do not understand the importance of being a learner at school. Most learners have experienced conflict whether they are victims or perpetrators and the conflict investigated in this study highlighted the negative impact on learners i.e. where learners failed to perform and achieve in class and as a result, conflict has affected their progress. Conflict within the school context is a barrier to teaching and learning, students do not achieve their full potential either in school or in their community.

The study was qualitative in nature, a narrative inquiry which included interviews and an innovative participatory research method called photo voice as data generation tools. The theoretical frameworks utilised was that of Children's Geographies and New Childhood Studies. The study was conducted at a primary school in KwaZulu-Natal and the respondents were eight grade five learners – four boys and four girls.

The findings of the study revealed that all respondents had been exposed to conflict or negative behaviours in the schooling environment. The study also revealed that respondents were found to be accepting of certain behaviours as they had no alternative... they were threatened if found to have complained against bullies. The study also showed that the development or expansion of conflict leads to learners being marginalised and excluded.

The findings of this study suggest that developing effective non-violent strategies for conflict resolution facilitates the learning process and promotes a friendly school environment. There is a need for conflict resolution programmes to be developed and implemented in schools and it must be discussed in detail by all stakeholders involved. Such programmes will be an indication that the South African curriculum has the potential to change learner's attitude and

make better behaviour. There must be multiple level interventions that should be organised. Such interventions will involve people like parents, community members and teachers even school governing bodies. It is said that such interventions will contribute in creating learner friendly environments and promoting inclusiveness in the system of education. There is a great need for conflict resolution skills training in schools in order to implement an effective conflict prevention strategy.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents to the reader, an insight into the research study conducted. In view of that, the aims, motivation and rationale for the study are discussed as are the context, conceptual framework and background of the study. The key research questions guiding this study are also presented. Finally, a summary of the chapters of the study is presented.

### 1.2 Aims and rationale for the study

On a personal level, my motivation to research the issue of learner conflict was triggered by observations of, and conversations with colleagues about learner conflict in various schooling contexts in South Africa. Schools in & are shown to have a high incidence of student conflict inside classrooms and on playgrounds during breaks (Bhana, 2005). Conflict can be divisive, creating resentment, bitterness and humiliation and alienating certain learners. Conflict, in my view, is complex and linked to a range of unacceptable behaviours in school spaces such as fighting tendencies, bullying and theft.

I was keen to explore the issue of learner conflict from the perspective of learners themselves as I wanted to listen to their voices and I believed that my study had the potential to inform interventions in school contexts aimed at addressing learner conflict. Within the African context there exists, limited scholarly research emanating on the issue of learner conflict within school settings (Hall, 2004). Further, few qualitative studies which explored the issue of learner conflict within situated schooling spaces and places were found. Consequently, this research study contributes to this body of knowledge as the study

examined the issue at a deep, contextual level, drawing on debates emanating from the research field referred to as the New Sociology of Childhood to understand and listen to the stories children have to tell (Prout, 2002). I believe that learners have the potential to be informed meaning makers and that they are social actors who could share views about issues and experiences in their lives. The concepts of New Childhood studies and Children's Geographies helped me to understand the spaces and places of the school where conflict occurs. I believe that learners can re-tell, re-live and articulate their stories therefore I intended to understand their views and coping strategies on the issue of conflict on a micro-level. I believe that children are active agents in their complex spaces and places and the study sought to understand why they have behaved as they do towards the issue of conflict, all while allowing children to tell their own stories through narrative inquiry.

Thus, the purpose of the study was to observe the function of learners in supervising conflict in the primary school as ill-discipline and different behavioural problems in the school continues to grow exponentially. There was a need to make a sort of examining with regard to how to sustain order in the school. The research study aimed to discover and build strategies that can be used to encourage an enthusiasm in educators to contribute constructively to victorious school authority. The purpose would be to help learners to identify methods that will permit them to gain knowledge of a systematic and physical environment, therefore speaking to learners who are perpetrators of conflict as well as to academic success. The research study wanted to shed light on issues of conflict - what were causes of conflict in the school? and what were strategies that could be implemented to alleviate conflict in the classrooms ?

This study was qualitative in nature and included the use of interviews and an innovative participatory research method - photo voice- as data collection tools within the school environment. The study sought to understand the stories children have to tell and

examine the issues of power dynamics embedded in learner conflict, therefore an interpretive and critical paradigm was adopted.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are learner's everyday experiences of conflict in a school?
2. What are the types or forms of conflict in this school?
3. What attempts do learners make to solve learner conflict in school?
4. How is conflict produced, reproduced, maintained and resisted?

### **1.4 Background of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate and explore learner conflict within the school environment - the places and spaces that significantly affect learners and conflict in schools. In 2012, the National School Violence Study (Burton & Leoschut, 2013) explored school violence among secondary school learners that occur within the school environment. The study found that conflict and violence in the forms of assault, sexual assault and robbery were prevalent in a number of schools. During the data collection period of one year (August 2011 to August 2012), learners identified the four types of violence present in schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Threats of violence were found to be most commonly experienced by high school learners (Burton & Leoschut, 2013) adding credence to the fact that threats of violence are just as important as actual violent events. While threats of violence may not result in physical harm, the psychological harm caused results in feeling of fear (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). The NSVS (Burton & Leoschut, 2013) also showed that most learners reported bullying in the school, either physical or verbal. In this instance, violence can present as a physical injury or assault (Antonowicz, 2010), the abuse of power as in the case of bullying (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008) or present as sexual harassment (Moore,

Villar-Marquez & Broadbent, 2008). It can therefore be said that schools do not exist in a social vacuum; they replicate the power relations within society (Moore et al., 2008).

Hord and Sommers (2008) explain that power differentials often cause conflict in schools because those in power push for more attention and aim for higher positions. They further argued that a lack of understanding amongst teachers may strengthen cultural stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, race and disability. A lack of civility often caused conflict among staff members in schools. If individuals were not treated with respect, equality and dignity, conflict may arise through a lack of participation by all staff members in decision making (Hord & Sommers, 2008) resulting in poor school functioning. Respondents viewed conflict as something that was bad, improper and unacceptable but not dreadful if it was managed successfully. Most scholars argue that organisational conflict constituted of both purposeful and dysfunctional outcomes in different institutions (Wall & Callister, 1995).

### **1.5 The geographical and social-economic context of the study**

The past decade has unquestionably been a stimulating, suggestive and productive time within the field of children's geographies and geographies of youth. The proliferation of studies, the creation of the journal and numerous conferences dedicated to research with the young have highlighted important issues in the diverse lives of children and young people across the world, placing their needs on research and policy agendas (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012; Morrow, 2008; Skelton and Francis, 2003; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). Bradford's (2006) research on political geographies of childhood focused on children's direct engagement with politics and examines how wider adults political conflicts can hijack children's issues and use them for their own ends. In a conflict that ostensibly concerns the perceived needs of children, children are affected in different ways.

This study is influenced by the new sociological perspective of childhood, which seeks to understand children's geographies in their multifaceted spaces and places (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). I believe that children are dynamic agents of change in their intricate spaces and places and I want to understand why they behave as they do towards the issue of violence and conflict with a focus on learners who are facing conflict in school (James & Prout, 1997).

Using concepts of resistance, resilience and voice, Bradford (2006) examined the different responses of young people and found that some are unaware of the conflicts, some are sensitive as they are aware the impact of conflict and others, once they have developed a more refined understanding of the conflict, are able to deal more adequately with conflict (Bradford, 2006). Bradford's (2006) study considered the spatial construction of varied masculinities and femininities in the primary education environment. An aspect supported by Newman, Woodcock, & Dunham (2006), who explore the construction of gendered identities through schooling and in doing so, increase the ever growing body of knowledge.

Researchers have also examined the multifaceted geographies that young people form amongst themselves viz. the creation of belonging and inclusion amongst peers as well as the circumstances that foster the exclusion of others. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), researchers aim to capture the reality or in-depth information about respondents' lived experiences in real world context. Motalingoane -Khau (2010) claims that one's environment is a point of reference and thus an imperative setting that helps to understand an individual's life experiences. This study looks at capturing the reality of learners lived experiences and thoughts about the nature of learner conflict and how to manage conflict in the real life context.

Research has shown that childhood is an engaging site for the study of identity formation, in which one can gain rich data and it is therefore crucial to explore how socio-



economic difference influences and impacts upon the identities of children. For example, existing research on children illustrates how universal negative stereotyping of children from impoverished backgrounds is. Weiner (2000) explored different children's views their own and other socio-economic status in the United States. Backett-Milburn, Cunningham-Burley & Davis (2003) explored how children from different socio-economic backgrounds view health inequalities. Their study found that impoverished children challenged the impression that their lives were worse than others, while wealthier children diminished their own material advantage (Backett-Milburn et al., 2003).

## **1.6 Context of the study**

The study took place at a rural school which is situated in Gingindlovu on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The research was conducted in a primary school using learners ranging from six (6) to thirteen (13) years old. The site was chosen as I have experienced a considerable number of cases being reported to me about children involved in conflict. The majority of these learners hail from disadvantaged backgrounds, often orphans or part of child headed or single parent households. There was found to be a link between high levels of unemployment and poverty and the wellbeing of learners. This was also a major cause of social evils for example rape, use of drugs by young people and domestic violence at home, which all have an unconstructive impact on learners at school. There was also a correlation poor pass rates and the transfer of students to other schools in surrounding areas. These factors motivated my pursuit of this research study at the chosen school as I wished to delve into the reasoning behind the decision made by most learners to leave the school.

## **1.7 Conceptual framework**

The study adopted children's geographies as its conceptual framework. Children's geographies explore new and innovative ways of researching with children and young people, drawing from the field of New Childhood Studies (James & Prout, 1997; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012; Prout, 2002). Internationally, there has been an increase in researchers using this framework for example, Morrow (2008); Skelton and Francis (2003); Van Ingen and Halas (2006). Morojele and Muthukrishna (2012) stated that the past decade has seen a proliferation of research in the field of children's geographies and the geographies of youth including how children viewed their neighbourhoods, the journey to school, urban conditions and school spaces (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012).

Weller (2004) argued that in exploring children spaces, one was concerned with power relations surrounding children; their conflicting ideas, experiences, ideals, values and visions which reflect many interesting discourses. This conceptual framework helped me to explore in my data, questions such as: What was the power relations embedded within learner conflict as a phenomenon? In what spaces do learners negotiate conflict, resist and collide to produce conflict?

## **1.8 Structure of the dissertation**

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

This chapter provides a broad overview of the research study conducted. The aim of this chapter is to indicate to the reader, the purpose, significance and objectives of the study and validate why the research was undertaken.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of current literature relevant to the study embarked on. The literature is located within, and addresses both international and local viewpoints. The chapter concludes with a discussion on empirical studies that have explored issues of learner conflict as well as the places and spaces within the school context that affect conflict amongst learners.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research paradigm and presents the conceptual framework that guided this research study. In addition, a discussion of the research design of this study is presented and a validation of the choice of methodology is provided.

## Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Within this chapter, the reader is presented with an analysis of the data collected, culminating in a synthesis of the data based on the findings of the study. This is done using the researchers' understanding of place, space and children's geographies.

## Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusions

This is the concluding chapter and presents the implications of this study for research in education. The challenges and limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations for future research of a similar nature provided. The chapter is concluded with a reflective discussion of the journey during the research study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on conflict and violence in schools in Kwa Zulu-Natal. South Africa is experiencing higher rate of conflict and violence in schools, especially in schools with predominantly black students. This chapter defines key concepts pertinent to my study and outlines and discusses international and national perspectives. These perspectives are based on the following themes: diversity in educational experiences, risk in educational contexts, conflict in the curriculum, conflict violence in the school, educational contexts, conflict children's social and emotional wellbeing within the schooling contexts, kinds of conflict in the schools, the context of violence and conflict.

The aim of this study was to explore learner's conflict within the schooling context. This was premised by the belief that conflict within schools plays an important role in the quality of teaching and learning. There is no effective learning that can occur in a chaotic environment (Babertta, Norona & Bicard, 2005 cited in Motseke, 2010). In order to create effective teaching and learning, positive conflict needs to be created, supported and monitored. Conflict in schools is becoming identical with explicit behaviours involving intimidation, hostility, conflict and aggression. It is said that conflict manifests clandestinely and delicately (Motseke, 2010). This gives us information that concealed or covert conflict is often misleading. It is said that there are also dangerous and destructive since overt is as expressions (Motseke, 2010).

## 2.2 Key concepts

*Conflict* is refers to disagreement between two groups of people or as in the case of this study, between learners in the classroom environment (De Wet, 2007). It is a disagreement or differences in opinion and is also defined as obstructing behaviour or combination of disagreement and negative emotions (De Wet, 2007). Conflict can occur in varied contexts or forms of conflict, including racial, religious, political, gender and conflict of values (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). It can be examined through the lens of children at school by taking into account their experiences of conflict and the spaces and places that affect these contexts. Conflict could be interrogated and examined in the construction of places and spaces i.e. social, political and cultural influences.

*Violence* is a form of aggressive behaviour that is in line with the use of power against those who are powerless, particularly in the school context. De Wet (2007) describes school violence as a multi -faced construct - those who are vulnerable are usually attacked by those who have power at school. There are threats, teasing, intimidation, ridicule for the aim of degradation of others with the purpose of humiliation and stigmatising other learners in school. Forms of violence involve beating, killing as well as sexual assault. Internationally, the problem of school violence has become one of the most pressing educational issues (Antonowicz, 2010; Bester & du Plessis, 2010; Bickmore 2008; Bisikaa, Ntatab & Konyani, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2004; Limbos & Casteel, 2008) and locally the trend follows suit.

*School conflict* is a kind of conflict that takes place within the school environment and has a great impact on the education of a learner since it is also a kind of learners' conflict in the classroom. Such conflict is in the form of abuse against each other, i.e. female learners indicating that conflict is a manifestation of a kind of masculinity... a hegemonic masculinity (Bhana, 2005; Morrell, 2001).

***Bullying*** refers to a special variation of violence, encompassing both the physical and mental components. This involves a victim and perpetrator relationship where the victim is oppressed (De Wet, 2007). According to Roberts (2006), bullying is a combination of verbal and physical aggression and aggravations directed to the victim. A learner is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, over a period of time, to negative actions which are when someone intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another (Roberts, 2006). Bullying is the intent to do harm and also involves hurt experienced by the victim of bullying which can be physical and psychological (Salmon, James & Smith, 1998). Bullying in the school environment is indicative of a power imbalance and can affect teaching and learning in the classroom (Salmon, James & Smith, 1998).

***Cognitive conflict*** is defined as a conflict that occurs when parties are aware that their thought processes or perceptions are incongruent (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). This is the stage where thinking ability is hampered as reasoning power is non-existent. During this period, conflict emanates to the different groups that have separate ideas. Those involved in the conflict at this stage intervene with the purpose of coming up with a solution because achieve a sense of power in solving the problem.

***Substantive conflict*** is conflict that occurs when two parties disagree with each other on task content (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The disagreement is the result of misunderstanding to each other on a certain work that needs special attention.

***Affective conflict*** is defined as the conflict that occurs when two parties reach an understanding that their feelings and emotions are incompatible. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994) aggression, tolerance and domination can affect the way in which a person deals with affective conflict. Personality clashes and antagonism could create conflict in the learners. People with opposing personalities i.e. extroverts and introverts, pessimistic and

optimistic, and the impulsive and the level headed often have opposing attitudes and engage in conflicts because they are opposing personalities (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2005).

*Conflict of interest* is the kind of conflict that is about scarce resources that hinder one's ability to work accurately. It takes place when two parties compete for limited resources (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Within the schooling context, learners can fight in classroom due to the fact that there is a shortage of resources as well as food during the feeding period. Conflict may rise when some of the learners are given meals but due to limited resources, some are left without.

*Corporal punishment* is described as any deliberate act of inflicting physical pain or discomfort on a learner, which may include spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking and hitting the learner with objects such as belts, canes, shoes and rulers (International Human Right Instrument cited in Buergenthal, Shelton & Stewart, 2009; Soneson & Smith, 2005). In majority of schools, corporal punishment has a negative impact on the learners; it causes conflict and violence because it is demeaning and has since been banned in South African schools. Research however, shows that in the country of Lesotho, there is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, but Section 4(5) of the Lesotho Education Bill which was drafted in (Ministry of Education, 2006) states that children should not be subjected to inhuman and degrading punishment i.e. corporal punishment. The Minister of Education and Training presented this new Education Bill (Ministry of Education 2009) in the national assembly which amongst others seeks to abolish corporal punishment in schools. To administer corporal punishment is a way of enforcing discipline because while it leads to conflict with learners, it does result in good behaviour (Soneson & Smith, 2005).

## **2.3 Review of related literature**

### **2.3.1 Diversity in educational experiences**

The complexity of learners' conflict is the issue that affects most learners in schools and involves a myriad of aspects collated for a certain purpose. Conflict, in my view, is complex and is linked to a range of unacceptable behaviours in schooling spaces such as fighting tendencies, bullying and theft (Watson, 2007). De Wet (2007) describes school violence and learner conflict as complex and a multi-faceted construct. De Wet (2007) further shows that the academic debate on violence in schools concentrates on three categories of behaviour displayed by learners: physical compulsion and physical injury, verbal aggression and mental emetic, and bullying. Factors contributing to conflict are being involved in gangs, substance abuse, gambling as well as prejudiced behaviour for example, xenophobic threats and sexism at schools (Watson, 2007).

The effects of bullying on its victims include a loss of self-esteem, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression and feeling of isolation (Meyer- Adams & Conner, 2008). It has been found that the rate of conflict and violent offences for gang members is three times higher than for non-gang delinquents. It has also been reported that a number of learners decide to leave school during the course of the year because of bullying against those who are powerless (Meyer- Adams & Conner, 2008). According to Gruenert (2006), young people observe and experience other young people for example, youth or learners committing act of violence and bullying against others. Morrell (2002) mentions that violence in schools exists and it comes in different forms and impacts on teachers, learners, parents and the school itself.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2004), conflict provides insight into other perspectives e.g. life experiences, strengthens relationships, adds fun and drama to life and



increases disputant's ability to cope with stress and be resilient in the face of adversity. My interpretation of their view is that conflict often has positive connotations, it provides awareness of certain situations and helps encourage agency and resiliency. Hord & Sommers (2008) further explain that power differentials often cause conflict in schools because those in power may push for more attention and struggle for higher social positions. As such, learner conflicts in schools provoke violence which are intrinsic conflict and which contributes to increased levels of violence (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Willox and Lackeyram (2011) ascertain that with learner conflict, one can ignore the conflict or confront the conflict and in doing so, acknowledge, manage and advance it. It is important that learners in schools are capable of managing their conflict in classrooms by utilising their understandings of conflict (Willox & Lackeyram, 2011). Unmanaged conflict creates dysfunctional schools and it deprives learner's rights of their citizenship through free and equal education. It is also important for learners to work in groups so as to facilitate co-operation when resolving conflict (Willox & Lackeyram, 2011). It is said that to promote cooperative and constructive interpersonal interactions, the following interactions were chosen to provide a guide for the respondent to create their conflict scenarios: parent/ child, girlfriend/ boyfriend; teacher/ learner; learner and pupil leader/ learner conflict (Willox & Lackeyram, 2011). The learner's conflict in a school could be the result of a boy who impregnates a girl. The Department of Education compiled a report from the views of young learners and educators regarding relationships in the school context (DoE, 2003), for example, conflict was found to be present in schools due to girls having multiple boyfriends. Homosexuality and the stigma related to this lifestyle choice was also a source of conflict in schools (DoE, 2003).

Morrow (2008) and Skelton and Francis (2003) argued that scholars have explored new and innovative ways of finding information with conflicting learners. It is true that

learners have skills of working with conflict. Conflict role-plays in the schools are due to incidents from the youths' real life experiences which reflect a great deal of verbal and physical violence during dramatisation (Skelton & Francis, 2003). In the learner- teacher conflicts physical intimidation, verbal abuse, physical violence and lack of communication were highlighted as issues. This type of conflict usually occurs within the school premises during break time, sometimes in the toilets in the absence of educators (Skelton & Francis, 2003). Girlfriend/ boyfriend role plays involved jealousy and frustration on the part of the partner about another love interest, jealous catfights ensued between two girls or the boyfriend threatened his girlfriend either physically or verbally(Skelton & Francis, 2003).

According to Barki and Hartwick (2004), researchers and scholars define conflict in multiple ways, dependent on contexts or forms of conflict including racial, religious, political, marital, personality, gender and conflict of values. There are those scholars (Adebayo, 2006; Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Skelton & Francis, 2003) who define conflict as disagreements or differences in opinions while others view it as obstructing behaviour as well as scholars who view conflict as a combination of disagreement, negative emotions. Conflict or violence is a way of manipulating someone's right by misusing his powers and rights. It is seen as destruction of power through discouragement and deprivation of authority looking down upon the privileges' that is embodied to somebody else (Barki & Hartwick, 2004).

### **2.3.2 Impact of conflict on the learners**

Adebayo (2006) states that in certain contexts, students and teachers have lost their lives to violence. Conflict imposes enormous costs on different institutions for example families, schools and states. It destroys families, schools and other institutions and markets (UNHCR, 2002). In addition, Adebayo's (2006) study identified conflict in Nigerian universities in the

form of staff management conflict, student management conflict, staff government conflict, student- student conflict and staff- staff conflict.

According to Niewenhuis (2007), conflict is experienced in the real world context. Motalingoane-Khau (2010) contended that context is a reference point and an essential backdrop that helps one to comprehend an individual's life experiences. This research study sought to capture the reality of learners' conflict - lived experiences and thoughts about the nature of their conflict and conflict management in a real life context. Research shows that there have been conflict management programmes designed to address conflict in different institutions including schools, Further Education and Training (FET) colleges as well as universities (Barsky, 2007, Bendeman, 2007).

Cameron (2006) views school discipline as a reliant on deterrence, control and punishment since discipline could not exist when there is no force and manipulation. Punishment is an important way of making school discipline. It is wise to sit down with learners, parents and staff, in order to strategise disciplinary methods to be used in the school so as to avoid conflict and violence. In schools, conflict may be a result of poor communication and disobedience caused by learners and to alleviate said disobedience, corporal punishment is used as a form of control and is seen to be effective in maintaining discipline in schools. However, these methods of control including harsh verbal and physical discipline can be associated with behavioural problems and conflicting acts among learners (Cameron, 2006; Lansford & Dodge, 2008; McKee, Roland, Coffelt, Olson, Forehand, Massari & Zens, 2007).

Lansford and Dodge (2008) found that those who behave violently usually have a history of the violent forms of punishment. Mckee et al. (2007) found that because males received harsher punishment than females, they showed more behavioural problems than

females. Prevalent trends around control, form and content of education across different social and cultural contexts show that there is good reason to pay attention to the role of education in conflict affected situations (Mckee et al., 2007). Conflict sensitive education according to Aragon and Vegas (2009) is an aspect which refers to technical capacity and the ability to implement policies which are most likely to be contentious, particularly in conflict-affected countries. It can give rise to charges of bias and discrimination which can lead to grievances over inequalities (Aragon & Vegas, 2009).

Harber and Sakade (2009) provide an important distinction between education for peace and education about peace. They state that “education for peace aims to improve peaceful relations, whilst education about peace intends to promote an awareness of peace and conflict and offer the means of conflict resolution in school and the wider world”(p.175). Harber and Sakade (2009) further highlight how peace education is understood in a project of the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project (WMQEP) in a multi-ethnic primary school in England. The focus there was on promoting positive peace in which peace is built through co-operative relationships, reducing violent behaviour to the negative peace. The focus of this research project was to emphasise the importance of building peace in schools among the learners and of peace education which begin in the contexts of intra-personal and interpersonal relationships (Harber & Sakade, 2009).

Weller (2004) explored the concept of a learner’s ‘space’ in which power dynamics and power relationships were evident. It was found that learners who cross certain boundaries often encounter different and conflicting ideas, experiences, ideals, values and visions. This study was found to be imperative to the study of learner conflict and to my own study as it showed the manner in which peace can be encouraged within the school premises so as to avoid conflict in the schooling environment. Learners in school are expected to understand all factors that lead to conflict because it affects their future and contributes to poor academic

performance particularly, when there are no measures in place to restrict conflict in the school environment (Weller, 2004).

### **2.3.3 Conflict risks in educational contexts**

Grant (2012) posits that schools have a vital role to play in education for peace, and teachers should be able to act as curriculum agents and implement these implications. Conflict in schools becomes a barrier to teaching and learning; hence the curriculum is hampered and affected as teachers fail to complete the curriculum timeously. This often leads to learners having to attend classes outside of school times i.e. during DoE allocated holidays and weekends. Classroom cultures which tend to be signs of gender identification and differentiation, is found within the school environment Grant (2012). Classrooms sustain inequalities and promote the conditions for gender violence (Leach & Humphreys, 2007). The learners work hard to maintain peace and avoid conflict as well as violence in the school. The barriers in schools are seen as factors that affect teaching and learning, leading to conflict and violence because learners want to learn and not be exposed to influences that hinder their learning.

Barriers also emerge between learners when there are variations in language, ethnicity and culture, social class and social differences as they become part of interactions and infiltrated relationships. Reddington (2007) suggests that there is a connection between substance abuse i.e. alcohol and drugs and the presence of delinquent behaviour in schools. Findings showed that the majority of learners in schools, often youth, are arrested for being involved in conflict and violent behaviours (Reddington, 2007).

Recent conflict adds additional challenges to the development of narratives about national and local history. Well known examples like the Rwandan decision to postpone teaching history for ten years following the genocide (Nunn, Freeman, Anderson, Carneiro,

Carneiro, Formicola & Yazdanie, 2008) and the creation in Bosnia Herzegovina of three parallel education systems that each maintained distinct historical narratives (Moore et al., 2008), demonstrate the recent conflict which makes the processes of developing the curricula about the recent past all the more difficult and contested.

#### **2.3.4 Violent conflict in the curriculum**

Education about violent conflict can contribute towards reconciliation and helps students to make meaning in the present. Germany's willingness to deal with Nazi crimes openly and regretfully within its history curriculum has been evidence to other communities of a reconciliatory stance on the part of the country (Dierkes, Yoshida, Clark, Kitson, Valls, Oglesby & Chapman, 2007). It is important to highlight how essential it is to teach about violent conflict as it will stimulate encouraging outcomes. The presentation of conflict in the national curriculum using the Trust and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) offered an opportunity for government officials to direct their criticism at educational material (Paulson, 2011). In Rwanda, the curricula which have been introduced after the ten year cessation, insists upon a single historical narrative in which ethnic identity has been erased in favour of a unified Rwanda (Nunn et al., 2008). The presentations of single, national narratives that erases ethnicity contrasts with the lived experiences of young Rwandans who report that ethnicity is still relevant and still part of how they understand themselves and their country (Nunn et al., 2008).

#### **2.3.5 Conflict- violence in the school**

Dierkes et al. (2007) study explores the phenomenon in Guatemala where learning about the three decades of conflict experienced by the country is approached from the perspective of building a culture of peace. The materials that Dierkes et al. (2007) work with appear familiar to other educators who have engaged in conflict materials prepared primarily for

peace or citizen education. Conflict does not keep learners in the classroom learning and teachers teaching but leads to unacceptable behaviour and corruption because learners will end up uneducated. The relationship between conflict and violence is apparent if one considers that violence is one of the consequences of the inability to resolve conflict effectively thus, to perform well and excel in all teaching and learning environments, hindrances that hamper academic performance and wellbeing in schools should be removed (Dierkes et al., 2007).

Several authors maintain that all forms of violence share one characteristic, namely conflict (Duncan & Rock, 1994; Gentry & Benenson, 1993; Stevens, Wyngaard & van Niekerk, 2001). Bundy (1992, cited in Duncan & Rock, 1994) maintained that a thin line exists between being a victim of violence and beginning to commit violent acts oneself. Learners in South Africa have been and are still, exposed to a high level of conflict and violence which contributes to criminal activity in schools and around the community. Authors such as Donald, Dawes and Louw (2000) and Biersteker and Robinson (2000) agree that violence and conflict cannot be pinned to a single cause, but to complex patterns linked to family situations, socio-economic conditions, the educational structure and teaching methods. The authors posit that for teaching and learning to be run smooth without any interruption, conflict and any kind of violence should be avoided. Those learners in schools who are regarded as perpetrators of conflict and violence should be disciplined through measures implemented by the school principal, school governing bodies and school management team. (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000; Donald et al., 2000).

### **2.3.6 Understanding educational contexts**

Prinsloo (2005) comments that in South Africa, females experience violence in teaching and learning environment that leads to conflict among learners which in turn suggests, that

schools are not safe places for young females. For example, male educators fail to provide female learners with enough support and as result harassment from male learners can occur. There could be a conflict in the school if the relatives of the female learner discovered such an incident had occurred to a family member (Prinsloo, 2005).

Burton (2008) contended that school environment is one where children do not just acquire knowledge; they also learn to know, to be and live together. The learners want to use knowledge they acquire from the school and transfer it from their fellow colleagues to minimise conflict and violence. Bhana (2005) discusses reports made in a primary school in South Africa where learners were violent - boys fighting against girls during teaching and learning hours. The school is affected as educators fail to govern such conflict between girls and learners.

In schools, teachers use corporal punishment as a method of discipline which often leads to conflict in the school (Bhana, 2005). The learners' experiences of violence causes them to think that conflict is acceptable as a violent social context breeds violence (Bhana 2005; De Wet, 2007; Humphreys, 2008). In the Democratic Republic of Congo, schools were a common site of child enrolment by rebel groups backed by Rwanda. This led to parents keeping their children from attending school and some schools were shut down. The effects of these experiences on children and youth is evident in a study by Sathiparsad (2003), who observed that when questioned as to what he would like to do when he grows up, a young Ugandan replied "I want to kill". It is clear that societal forces shape children to engage in behaviour that one would ordinarily consider unacceptable (Sathiparsad, 2003). There is also a conflict of interest which is caused by limited recourses. Ngcobo (2003) points out the issue of limited resources as one of the common causes of conflict in schools.



### **2.3.7 Effects of conflict on children's social and emotional wellbeing**

According to Morojele and Muthukrishna (2012) and Morrow (2008), the journey to school, urban conditions and school spaces have an impact on the education of a learner, which could end in conflict and violence if it is not monitored or managed. Conflicts contribute to dysfunctional behaviours in schools and it becomes an obstacle in establishing a culture of teaching and learning. The journey to school is affected and access to positive schooling spaces becomes limited since there are learners who fail to cope with violence and conflict, some incidences that occur within the premises of the school are major factors that hamper positive learner environments.

According to Burton (2008) all learners should be given a code of conduct, disciplinary procedures and emergency procedures which should be clearly communicated to learners to avoid conflict and violence.

Davis (2010) suggests an education system which addresses the range of areas that may be seen to fuel conflict in a politicised way. Conflict in the school would be not a major issue if learners engage themselves in disciplinary committees and have an input during discussions. While good conflict takes the contexts at the starting point, it is limited to what is happening in the classroom. The structure of education in order to eliminate violence as well as conflict in the school needs to be restructured to accommodate all learners. There is a great need to implement policies that perpetuate sound discipline to all learners in the school without any prejudice (Davis, 2010).

### **2.3.8 Conflict and power in schools**

Scholars have argued that schools are not divorced from cultural norms that maintain a power gap between female and male learners (Bisikaa et al., 2009; Mirembe & Davies, 2001). In

Uganda, Mirembe and Davies (2001) discovered that there are strands of gender inequality in schools rooted in patriarchal beliefs. Mwachombela (2004) reported that in Tanzanian society, male dominance at home is common and victims are females, he infers, saying that this patriarchal social order is extended to schools. The learners in the primary school behave differently than in high school. Unequal gender relations in schools may be reinforced through discipline (Bisikaa et al., 2009).

Additionally, learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) tend to be more violent and are leaders of conflict in the classrooms. The child is motivated to perform well in primary school, despite the fact that the high school environment may be experienced as complex for children with ADHD (Ek, Westerlund, Holmberg & Fernell, 2011).

Tajalli, Hooman, Afrooz and Bonab (2011) argue that parents of children who are experiencing conflict and those who engage in bullying behaviours failed to implement strategies to assist their children. Theule (2010) concurs and contends that parental involvement is relevant for children with a clinical diagnosis such as ADHD. It is discovered that such learners are the cause of conflict and negative impact other learners. Neaves (2009) states that learners whose parents have ADHD have symptoms of incompetency when they deal with conflict in the classroom. There are factors that affect the academic competency of learners who have conflicting behaviour and these learners ultimately need more attention from the parents as well as from the educators in the school (Neaves,2009).

The South African Department of Education has yet to implement effective measures to alleviate conflict and violence in schools and cite traditions and culture as to the reason why this is so (DoE, 2003). This could be because often disciplinary practices are not in line with practices of most African homes. For example, it is not popular among adult Africans to

talk politely to misbehaving learners and as a result they look at conflict and violence as good practice. Some parents are silent when their children misbehave; to be harsh and even to hit them or administer corporal punishment is not important (Vaaler, Ellison, Horton & Marcum, 2008). It is said that the largest single influence on children is their home life and society and the violence children see at home and in the society, translates into them often displaying violence and indiscipline. The polite measures at school could not be effective in dealing with ill-discipline among learners from the townships, due to the learner's exposure to unruly behaviour (Vaaler et al., 2008).

According to Ngonini (2007), there is a correlation between the rate of unemployment, level of poverty and the incidents of conflict and violence in schools (Campbell & Meads, 2006; Ngonini, 2007). The violence occurs within the families and spreads throughout the whole communities in different forms, starting from arguments to physical violence and such conflict affects a wide range of school learners (Soneson & Smith, 2005). As the conflict and violence commence from the families, it impacts the learners at school as it affects teaching and learning (Campbell & Meads, 2007; Ngonini, 2007).

### **2.3.9 Forms of conflict in schools**

Learners engaging in conflict make use of power dynamics in the classroom which sustains inequalities and promotes conditions for conflict and violence at schools (Leach & Humphreys, 2007). The learners experience a problem of sexual harassment from both structures that are learners and educators, which provoke conflict and violence. Sexual harassment is one form of conflict and sexual violence which perpetrate chaos, violence and conflict among learners schools (Prinsloo, 2005). Conflict and sexual violence is a continuation of non-consensual sexual experiences which is more of threats and intimidation

which involves unacceptable touching and use of illegal body contact (Brown, Thurman, Bloem & Kendall, 2006).

Burton (2008) posits that violence in schools across South Africa has become common place and is likely to impact negatively on children. The learners, who perpetuate conflict in the school, are undisciplined and as a result teaching and learning is affected. Those learners who are perpetrators of conflict mistreat others who are willing to learn with the aim of creating disorder (Klein & Kuiper, 2006).

Ramphela (2012) states that one of the biggest problems is that schools have not been educating learners to take ownership of their country and that is why most of the male learners mistreat their female counterparts. The Department of Education must be powerful in order to assist young learners while they are working on the conflict that is experienced in the school.

It is also discovered that those schools that experience a severe conflict among learners, have measures to solve such violence with the use of learner's parents and Department of Education. The problem of bullying, disobedience, stubbornness, stealing pencils from each other among learners is taken into account by the school (School Management Team). The application of corporal punishment is illegal in South African schools according to South African Schools Act, 96 (1996). The banning of corporal punishment by Department of Education exacerbated conflict and violence in the school since learners did not see any reason for good behaviour. The school is now a centre of conflict and violence.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Within this chapter, I have presented the standpoints and findings that academics have put forth, as I believe my study will not only augment the literature available, but more importantly, will provide new, innovative and progressive conclusions. In addition, this chapter provided definitions of the concepts that are interwoven throughout my study. Chapter 3 details the research model guiding this study, presents a discussion of the conceptual framework utilised and the research design, and lastly, the rationale behind the choice of methodology.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on research methodology and is organised as follows: First, it addresses the research paradigm utilised in the study and my positionality as the researcher. Secondly, I discuss the research design (qualitative approach), research respondents (school children), methods of data generation (semi - structured, interviews and photo voice) and then proceeds to address ethical considerations and the study limitations. Issues of trustworthiness, validity and data analysis are also discussed.

This research study focused on learner's conflict within the schooling environment. Attention will be paid to diversity as well as the authentic voices and complexity of the realities. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) distinguish between methodology and methods by referring to methodology as a lucid collection of methods that complement one another and has an appropriate fit to convey data and findings that will answer the key research questions to suite the research purpose. Learners researched will be observed as to how they negotiated their differences in a schooling context. The study attempted to make clear key issues in the research methodology. It also aimed at exploring about how learners experiences conflict which result into violence within and outside the schooling context. I involved those learners who are perpetrators of conflict in order to come up with solutions.

#### **3.2 Conceptual framework**

My study utilised a conceptual framework that aided in my goal to make sense of the findings of this research study. The conceptual framework utilised was that of 'Children's Geographies'. There is a growing body of research using this framework (Morrow, 2008;

Skelton & Francis, 2003; Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). Morojele & Muthukrishna (2012) stated that the past decade has seen a proliferation of research in the field of children's geographies and geographies of youth, for example, the way children viewed their neighbourhoods, the journey to school, urban conditions and school spaces (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012).

Many geographers have explored new and innovative ways of researching with children and young people, drawing from the field of New Childhood Studies (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). In my study, I link these two conceptual frameworks: New Childhood Studies and Children's Geographies, both of which stress the need for the re-conceptualisation of children as social agents with valuable perspectives that should be sought through research on their social lives (Skånfors, 2009). It is important to acknowledge that children are individuals in their own right with views that are important to hear (Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Salmon, James & Smith, 1998).

Through the lens of children's geographies, I examined the places and spaces of learner conflict, seeking to understand what are the geographies of learner conflict? According to Wyness (2006), the notion of children's space is a key concept in the field of children's geography. Children's geographies is an area of study in human geography that explores the spaces and places of children's lives experientially, politically and ethically (Holloway & Valentine, 2000 in Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). Space refers to the domain of children's rights and practices that privileges the perspectives of children (Cele, 2006). In exploring children's spaces, one is concerned with the power relations surrounding the category 'children' (Weller, 2004). It is true that most conflict in schools occur in classrooms and playgrounds when the teachers are not aware, hence these can be seen as key spaces of conflict. Van Ingen and Halas (2006) stated that schools are 'contact zones'— a space in which values, ideologies and practices routinely intersect and power relations play out. This is an important argument for my study. Weller (2004) argues that in exploring

children spaces, one is concerned with power relations surrounding the category of 'children'. Children's lives cross diverse boundaries bringing with them different and conflicting ideas, experiences, ideals, values and visions that reflect many intersecting discourses. Van Ingen and Halas (2006) hold a view that certain societal spaces within children's geography are normatively skewed towards adults and authority. This conceptual framework will help me to explore in my data questions such as: What is the power relations embedded within learner conflict as a phenomenon? What are the power laden spaces and places where learner conflict plays out? What values and ideologies intersect in the spaces of learner conflict? In what spaces do learners negotiate conflict, resist and collude to produce conflict?

### **3.3 Research design**

According to Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2009) qualitative research seeks to understand how and why people interact and relate the way they do and suggests that reality is a social construction. As such, my study was qualitative in nature and located in the space between an interpretive and critical paradigm. Qualitative research methods typically include interviews and observations but may also include case studies, surveys, and historical and document analysis.

Flick (2009) contends qualitative research as seeking to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning, patterns and structural features. By using this research methodology, I want to gain better understanding of the conflict between learners. Flick argued that qualitative research attempts to interpret meanings, emotions, behaviours and perceptions by analysing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts (2009).



Qualitative research allows for exploring and understanding the meaning the individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Cresswell, 2007). Qualitative research is appropriate to this study because there will be discussions that will take place between learners who are experiencing conflict and perpetrators of conflict in the school. I was interested in the stories narrated by children and wanted to look at issues of power dynamics embedded in learner conflict. The research study sought meaningful social action in order to gather large quantities of detailed qualitative data to acquire an in-depth understanding of how meaning is created in everyday life in the real world.

According to Henning et al. (2004, when researchers utilise critical theory, the aim is to promote critical consciousness while deconstructing the institutional structures and arrangements that breed oppressive ideologies and social inequalities which are maintained by social structures of ideologies. Therefore, I believe my study has the potential to contribute to addressing learner conflict in schools.

I also used narrative inquiry, which would allow my respondents to narrate how they experienced conflict. Lit and Shek (2007) stated that in narrative research design, both the narrator and the researcher are jointly involved in the construction of meaning and of the phenomenon under investigation. Insight on the causes and results of conflict experienced by the victims as well as the outcome of the actions of perpetrators' will be narrated. I invoked both parties to narrate their perspectives on the phenomenon. My respondents will position themselves as storytellers to portray their feelings. According to Cresswell (2007), narratives are imperative when one seeks to understand the world of human action and the subjective meanings of actions displayed by individual. I also hold the belief that there are multiple realities, hence the complexity of the phenomenon that I am researching.

Schwandt (2007) states that to get an insider's perspective of the experiences of learners in the complex spaces of the school, one must be involved in same and narratives allow the researcher the freedom to do so. In line with my conceptual framework, my belief is that I want to know about the phenomenon - learner conflict, therefore my respondents and I will be part in the research. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrators position themselves as storytellers who share their emotional life experience. The issue of power between researcher and child respondents is an issue that I will have to address through the design of the study. Other causes are the result migration in this country. Name -calling and discrimination result in the argument. This is supported by Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2011), as their studies show that migrant children often face conflict with regard to culture. Inviting children to lead the research will give them possession of the alternative taken to resolve the conflict. I will be following a participatory research approach.

### **3.4 Sample and sampling procedures**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), a sample is a small section of the total set of the objects, events or persons and constitutes the subject of the study. Sampling involves determining where and from whom data is collected and there are four important sampling procedures in qualitative research - convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and dimensional sampling (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) state that there are two methods of sampling called probability also known as random sample and non-probability also known as purposive sampling. Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2009) argue that sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for the study. Sampling decisions are therefore made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions (Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2009). According to Cohen et al. (2007) purposive sampling is a tool that allows for the selection of people on the basis that they can contribute and expand the researcher's

database. With purposive sampling the respondents are selected according to the researchers' own knowledge and opinion about which respondent they think will be suitable to that topic that is chosen. When utilising purposive sampling, the researcher targets a particular group with the understanding that it does not represent a wider population.

This study utilises purposive sampling as this method of sampling is less complicated to set up and considerably less expensive and therefore perfectly adequate in cases where researchers do not contend to generalise their findings beyond the question at hand (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Bell (2002), purposive sampling is used in order to access knowledgeable people about a particular issue. It implies that sampling is a process during which respondents who are suitable for the study can be identified and selected.

The sample consisted of eight (8) grade five learners – four (4) boys and four (4) girls who were found to have experienced conflict in school. It was discovered that the school experienced problems students engaged in conflict with each other. Learners were chosen as they had experienced conflict in the classroom and within the school as a whole. As a result, the learners were able to communicate their feelings and views and use their thoughts effectively about the observable fact that is being studied. Interview guides were drafted posed to both groups i.e. the focus group and individual interviews. The interviews were conducted in a private place, usually that used by the principal as office in the past few years.

### **3.5 Methods of data generation**

In order to gain rich descriptive data from my respondents, I choose to employ qualitative data collection strategies which comprised of unstructured interviews in order to compile a rich narrative by obtaining the first hand data from the respondents. It is important that as a researcher, I stay true to the nature of the interpretive approach appreciating that how people

know reality can differ in the school. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the respondents.

According to Bester and du Plessis (2010), the purpose of interviews is to find out what is in someone's mind. This study intended to find out what stories respondents had to tell about their experiences of conflict in the school and its consequences. The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through eyes of the respondent and they can be a valuable source of information if used correctly (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Interviews are advantageous in obtaining rich descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand the respondent's construction of knowledge and social reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

### ***3.5.1 Individual semi-structured interviews***

Individual interviews were used where each respondent was given the opportunity to share his or her own stories. The learners will explain what they have experienced during the process of interviews and discuss in groups, difficulties they have come across with during research in the process. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007) semi-structured interviews allow for probing and clarification of answers. As a researcher, I was cautious in maintaining control and guiding the discussions as interviews are easily side tracked.

As a researcher using semi-structured interviews, I was able to explore the perceptions of learners' conflict and resolutions in the primary school. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents freedom to construct and reconstruct their world. The young people interviewed wanted to be treated as individuals not an age group (Holdsworth and Morgan (2007). According to Young (2009) the use of a child centred approach for data collection is recommended and appreciated as the approach addresses the power dynamics amid the respondents and researcher.

Semi structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore issues as they arose whilst providing an initial framework for areas of discussion. They facilitated an immediate response to a question, allowing both parties to explore the meanings of the questions and answers, resolve any ambiguities and can provide a friendly emphasis to data collection (Grbich, 2007; Hemson, 2011). Theis and Grady (1991) refer to diagrammatic exercises as analytical tools which facilitate a deeper understanding of the contextual setting. It was important to me to research the experiences of the marginalised learners during the conflict. There were one or two hours a day for interviews and each respondent was allocated 45 minutes. Interviews were also conducted in a group (focus group) so that clarity on the arguments was noted and accepted by all my respondents before being transcribed verbatim.

Audio recorders will be used to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of data as once all data has been transcribed, transcripts will be given to respondents to reflect on, and verify the data. The information was documented and recorded in the file just for safe keeping and future research. The learners who participated in the study were given flexible time during the process of interviews and interview schedules which include closed and opened ended questions to collect in depth information from learners who are perpetrators and victims of conflict were used. Language chosen by the respondents allowed them to express their feelings freely, without any prejudice. The second session of the interview was when I met with them as a group to probe experiences and allow them to add or retract from the data which was recorded.

### ***3.5.2 Focus group interviews***

According to Greef (2011), focus group interviews involve the act of convening a meeting that involves respondents who have freely indicated their intention to participate in the study. This is in line with Cohen et al. (2007) who state that interviews will be conducted with the

respondents allowing them to respond collaboratively. Focus group interviews are also highly recommended while conducting interviews for the purpose of collecting data.

Focus group interviews are based on the assumption that group interaction will be effective in widening the range of responses and activating forgotten details of experiences (Cohen et al., 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Focus groups help respondents to relate with each other and heal them in a way by knowing that they are not alone when it comes to experiencing conflict. Focus groups are used to generate data out of group discussion and interaction (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that it is generally agreed that the distinguishing features of the focus groups is that discussions are focused on a particular topic, that debate and even conflict are encouraged and that power dynamics assist in data generation. It encourages respondents to talk to one another and is equally interested in the exchanges between the respondents as the content of what they are saying. Focus groups are set up as social interactions, best suited to producing data where the social connections are important to the findings. In focus group interviews, respondents are able to build on each other's ideas and comment to provide in-depth view not obtainable from individual interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that focus group interviews increase the quality of data obtained. These methods were chosen to delve deeper to respondent views and perceptions (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). Data would be collected using semi structured focus and individual interviews, all of which would be audio recorded. In terms of justification of data generation, the interviews and observations would provide evidence of respondents on conflict and violence (Blaxter et al., 2010).

Cohen et al. (2007) contend that interviews are a good data collection tool for finding out what a person knows i.e. his knowledge and information. What are values and

preferences? and what a person thinks his attitudes and his beliefs? Interviewing is not a simple data collection exercise, but it is a social, interpersonal encounter with respondents (Wengraf, 2006). Thus, power relations could influence the process of interviews and in order to prevent this, I encouraged the respondents to play a neutral role to ensure confidentiality during the course of the study. It is said that interviews generated large amounts of textual data (Wengraf, 2006).

### ***3.5.3 Photo voice***

An additional tool utilised for my data collection was photo voice. Photo voice is described as a grass roots approach to research which enables the voices of respondents to be captured through visual prompts (Wang, 2006). According to Van der Riet (2004), this tool involves the process of using photographs as a source of storytelling. It allows the researcher to gain access into different social and political realities. Respondents will be asked to take photos of the key spaces and places that have an impact of their schooling experiences. The photos form the basis of dialogue (Wang, 2006). Van der Riet further comments that the use of photo voice is important as people can identify, represent and enhance their community through specific photographic techniques (2004). Jacobs and Harley (2008) concur and state that this process of taking the interpreting photographs as 'photo voice' is analysed at the beginning and at the end of the project. They discovered that engaging young people in the use of photo voice help them to become more conscious of their circumstances and are real when encountering problems.

In order to visually document the key places and spaces in their schooling environment, each pupil was given a disposable camera to take their photographs with. I explained to the respondents that these could include areas where they were made to feel excluded or uncomfortable or felt that conflict was prominent as well as the areas where they felt a sense

of belonging and safeness. The pupils were encouraged to take photographs of as many places and spaces as they wished but were also advised that ethically, pictures of peers were prohibited as the exercise was not to implicate or victimise other students at the school but instead sought to provide an opportunity for them to showcase their school experiences.

In addition, I went through a detailed explanation of how to use the disposable cameras, explaining the steps required before a photograph could be taken and a demonstration was done for the respondents. Finally, a timeline for the retrieval of the cameras was stipulated.

From the cameras that were processed, the respondents selected photographs they considered most relevant and spoke about why these photographs were important. The respondents also discussed the meaning the photographs held and what prompted them to take those particular photographs. This included issues that they might have traditionally been silent on, for example, bullying, teasing and victimisation but more importantly for this study, the support structures and strengths at their school. As a researcher, I was able to collect rich data by using the snippets provided by the respondents as going through the photos gave the young people power to reflect on the challenges encountered by constructing and reconstructing their experiences within the context of everyday life. Deeper understanding of what they go through as they navigate their social lives in the school was gained.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2007) explain that an important ethical aspect to consider during the research process is the issue of confidentiality regarding respondent's identities and the data that emerges in the study. Confidentiality, anonymity, caring and fairness are the key principles that protect the rights of research respondents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Cohen et al. (2007) state that informed consent involves comprehension, competence,



voluntarism and access to full information. If the respondent is a minor, consent should be sought from parents or guardians. Such consent process involves multiple levels. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that informed consent is essential; it is a fundamental ethical principle. The approach of this research is within the ethical framework as I as a researcher, obtained consent from the parents of respondents, the school principal and the KZN Department of Education (see appendices 1- 5). Morrow (2008) contends that research with children requires negotiation with adults gatekeepers before children can be approached in order to receive consent. The research respondents will be assured of their confidentiality and privacy.

The 'gatekeepers' that I sought permission from to conduct my study were the senior education officer in the Ilembe District in Durban, the DoE Circuit Manager, the School Management Team and School Governing Body of the school where my study was based. This contact was to request permission to conduct interviews in the school. The principal of the school was also given a letter to obtain permission to conduct the research. The respondents of the study are learners, most of which are minors; therefore permission to conduct interviews was obtained from parents or guardian of the learners. Another letter was sent to the parents of the learners to make them aware of the research study as well as the aims, focus and objectives of the study.

Permission from the learner's parents is very crucial and of high value. Informed consent was going to be obtained from the learners. Children were given a meaningful explanation about the intention of research as during our initial meeting, the purpose and aims of my study were explained to them. All respondents were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they have power to end participation at any time during the research without prejudice. Learners were assured that any information obtained would be

taken into consideration with strict confidentiality. The learners were given an assurance that the purpose of the study and their anonymity would be maintained.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness and validity**

According to Cohen et al. (2007) and Flick (2009) trustworthiness and validity is the key to effective research. Credibility, transferability, dependability and comfortability are regarded as the dimensions that increase trustworthiness in qualitative research (Van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2007). It is said that credibility is enhanced by member checking of data which is seen as persisted observation in the field (Flick, 2009).

One should pay careful attention to the data that has been collected in the presence of the respondents in order to confirm the findings and to make it a point that to ensure that the information is to be true to the researcher. According to Bell (2008), with regard to validity, findings must be based on the evidence. It is said that transferability refers to the researcher's ability to make explicit, the nature of the respondents (Bell, 2008). In this study, I have given a clear in-depth description of the research design in order to make sure that further research can be done to decide on the extent to which findings can be transferred to other situation.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), qualitative data analysis studies the important effect and representative content of qualitative data. It seeks to establish how respondents make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their understandings, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences. According to Mouton and Babbie (2001); Cohen et al., (2007) and Creswell (2007) data is analysed using content analysis. It involves studying and coding data by identifying commonalities, i.e. similarities and differences. It also observes relationships and categorises these into patterns and meanings. My study was informed by my research

questions, by my conceptual framework as well as the literature I studied. Data is going to be interpreted from a constructive framework. The respondents were encouraged to participate in the data interpretation.

I aimed to use multiple data collection and documentation strategies to collect data so as to facilitate an understanding of learner conflict. In this study, an analysis of data using photo voice in conducting interviews was made this study as I concur with Morojele and Muthukrishna, (2011) who state that data should be transcribed and translated into English and to IsiZulu. Cohen et al. (2007) said that researchers should selectively analyse aspects of human actions and events that illustrate the recurring themes from the interviews. The respondents would be encouraged to participate in the collection of data. It is important to note that respondents verify that data interpretation is accurate, perfect and in accordance with their experiences.

### **3.9 Limitations of the study**

It was discovered that the approach of traditional conflict resolution can appear to be direct to the individual, without recognising that the most of the people prefer collectivist perspectives. The learners had problems of understanding factors that lead to conflict and what are resolutions to those problems. The high rate of absenteeism during the study could have lead to poor data or insufficient resources to collect data.

The medium of instruction i.e. English in schools, could hinder the proper progress of the research and to translate the information to IsiZulu can cause problems with respondents. However, my choice of using focus group interviews and a participatory technique, photo voice, helped address these issues.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to present an overview of the research methodology and design of the study and substantiate the choice of my research paradigm chosen. The succeeding chapters discuss the findings of my research study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This study aimed to investigate learner's experiences of conflict in a primary school situated on the North Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The study intended to explore and analyse how conflict takes place in schools, particularly primary school and sought to describe the learners' experiences of conflict in these contexts. The study also worked according to the use of gender based conflict among learners. As a researcher, I wanted to understand the views of the learners, how they look at the conflict in the school and how to interpret the conflict and analyse it. It also intended to investigate the type of conflicts in the school.

The focus of this study was on aggressive behaviour, violence, intimidation, power dynamics, vulgar language, fighting, robbery, assault and bullying that takes place in the playground as well as sexual violence and harassment. The research study investigated conflict related to drugs and alcohol abuse, gang related incidents and theft of property schools. The study discussed the dynamics of conflict and violence and focused on the reproduction and maintenance of conflict at school. The study intended to explain way conflict is reproduced and maintained at school. The researcher studied how conflict was challenged and maintained. It also addressed the geographies of conflict within the school. The researcher intended to address strategies on how conflict could be banished in the school.

#### **4.2 Learner's experiences of conflict**

The study found that both male and female learners have seen different aspects of conflict at school. Female learners did mention that they are always threatened by other females during

both school and after-school hours. Respondents also mentioned that such incidents occurred particularly when other new learners were introduced to their classmates. The four female respondents reported to the principal that the older girls in grade six intimidated them when they did not entertain them while playing at the tennis court. The new learner stated that there are girls who mocked her because she is HIV positive; they did not want to play with her. There are a number of girls who reported that they were ill-treated and intimidated by high school girls and indicated that they were always alone, not interacting with their peers. According to Coyne and Monks (2011), the experiences of poverty lead to discrimination, even in older people. Learners from impoverished backgrounds are usually ostracized by learners who hail from privileged backgrounds. The comments of respondents relayed this tendency.

**Thandeka\*<sup>1</sup> (girl - 12 years old):** *I was walking along the kitchen when a grade seven (7) girl asked me to come and wash dishes for her. I refused, and then she called me a fool. When I responded, she came and beat me with a big spoon at the head.*



**FIGURE 1: CONFLICT BETWEEN GIRLS**

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms were used

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *When I was doing grade two, I found out that I am HIV positive. At school the others realised that I have such disease as a result most of them did not like to play with me. Their parents told them that they must not come closer to me because I am going to infect them with it. A grade five learner was asked to make a sentence in the class about HIV and she used my name because they know that I am HIV positive. After that everyone in the class laughed at me.*

**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *I was at the school gate when two high school girls saw me picking up papers in the school yard, then they called me to them. I asked them for what then they said my face is a monkey face and I walk like a baboon. It was very painful to me because I could not anything to them as they are older than me.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *I was in the playground with other learners when an older boy asked me to fetch water for him in the borehole. I refused after that he took a stick from the ground and hit me four times on the head. I decided to go home and not come back again at school, until my father who was in Mpumalanga Province come back. He took me to school and asked the teachers to show him that boy but the principal told my father that he is no more in that school.*



**FIGURE 2: CONFLICT BETWEEN BOYS**

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I was knocked down by Simangele, a grade seven girl and the matter was reported to the staff but nothing happened to discipline the girl.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *I was asked by kitchen staff members to fetch water from the tank, when I got there, one of the boys pushed me to the wall. My head was knocked by stones and I was affected by a headache. The report was given to the school principal and the school management team, the learner was asked to visit the office to be punished.*



**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *I was working in the garden watering plants and vegetables with other learners, a grade four learner took the bucket of water and poured it over my head. I took a small stick to beat her in the legs. One of the grade six learners who is a relative of that learner came and kicked me three times in the garden. I cried loudly, the garden teacher came to me and discipline the boy who hit me.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *I drew a map in my exercise book in the class; one of the girls commanded me to do her mathematics homework for her. When I said that I was busy, she pushed me on the face with her finger and scolded me as if I was doing nothing.*

Respondents explained that they were target of conflict as a result of various factors within the school environment. Learners failed to abide by the school code of conduct which led to conflict with the other learners at school. Nesor, Ovens, Van der Merve, Morodi and Ladikos (2003) explains that when adults were asked why they were victimised at school, their response was to say it was because they had failed to purchase correct school uniforms, they wore the wrong type of clothes, they indicated that they felt sad and ashamed. It is also found that other learners mentioned that there are learners who cannot play school games after that they are labelled as lesbians and gays. According to a study conducted by Done (2002), he discovered that boys and girls experience different forms of conflict and violence. The learners come across with different kinds of diseases in the school which leads to them becoming unhappy about schooling and to attend classes in the presence of other learners who are naughty and stubborn.

#### ***4.2.1 Gender based conflict***

Male learners did not take female learners into consideration. The school consisted of boys who were rude and naughty. Peers viewed bullies as powerful figures in and around school, and being powerful is usually linked to the dominant discourses of masculinities (Bhana, 2005; Morojele, 2012; Morrell, 2005; O'Connell, Pepler & Craig, 1999). These authors indicated how boys invest in the dominant discourses of masculinities which are seen as desirable and symbolising real manhood. Bullying was done by male learners (boys) to female learners (girls); again there was no report to the staff members. It was also found that unacceptable weapons within the school were being carried by boys during the break and teaching and learning hours at school. The division of the school into phases created gender inequality where the older boys seemed to be one who dominated the school.

The discourse of masculinity and feminism was evident throughout the school. Those boys who were doing higher grades like grade six and seven were found to often display negative and abusive behaviours towards to the younger girls from lower grades. For example, it was found that the Grade R educator had recorded a complaint with school management against a boy in grade seven, who had kicked a Grade R girl's utensils (spoon and plate) during the lunch period. When questioned by the school principal as to why he was behaving like that, the boy responded by saying that he wanted his spoon and plate and she had taken it. When questioned further by educators, the response from the child was that he needed the girl's utensils to eat and that was the reason to why he had taken it. It was incidents like this, in addition to others that displayed the tendency of male learners to physically acquire what they believed to be rightfully theirs...boys in the school used to also take the meals meant for the young girls.

According to Greeff and Grobler (2008) bullying outside the classroom usually occurs during breaks as it is easy to be bullied when there are no teachers present - either on the playgrounds, near the toilets - areas considered to be away from authority.

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I use to look at the knife as something to make harm to somebody else. I worked with a group of male learners where we use weapons in the school to threaten female learners. I was found in possession of okapi<sup>2</sup> being opened in front of the girl and the girl cried loudly. I told the girl that she must not report to anybody at school either teachers or to the parents at home even to the police station. I was intoxicated by the alcohol when I started to stab the girl in her back, I wanted to kiss her while she was afraid and I enjoyed her fear.*

**Nobuhle (girl - 14 years old):** *I insulted the girl using an unacceptable word in order to make her afraid. I told the class teacher that we are boys, we cannot clean the classroom. It is the duty of girls to perform such work. I use to talk very harsh to female learners and I call them prostitutes. I heard a grade four girls saying that one of the boys are arguing and talking very harsh to one of the girl in the corner of the classroom.*

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *I was walking to the tuck shop with my friends when a grade six boy proposed his love to me. I did not accept his request after that his sister told me that I am a fool like my mother.*

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<sup>2</sup> A lockback or slipjoint knife, the name of which is derived from the giraffe like central African 'okapi'.

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *I asked one of the girls to lend me a book, she responded by saying she cannot assist a new comer who does not wash his body and face like me.*

According to Armstrong, Lekezwa and Siebrits (2008), children who grow up where violence is common learn to settle differences by violent and aggressive means. A number of complaints made by female learners to teachers indicated that they were being intimidated by the male learners who passed unacceptable remarks and displayed lewd behaviour toward them. They also indicated that boys refused to wash dishes after meal at school they want girls to do it for them, displaying gender equality. On the other hand, the male respondents had this to say:

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *A grade five boy was reported to the principal of the school. The boy was busy during teaching and learning hours touching the private parts of the girl in front of her friends in the class. The girls were not happy about what is happening in the class, they found themselves not being honoured in the school.*

**Simphiwe (boy 11 years old):** *He said there were four high school learners who fought against them after school on the way back home. He reported the matter to their parents at home but no action was taken against such learners.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *He launched a complaint about the young learners who do not respect them during the break and on the playground. That's when they talk harshly to young learners who cry and report it to their class teachers.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I was in the toilet when one of the boy entered in the girls toilets and he touch my private parts. I decided to go out from the toilet and make a report to my class teacher.*

Many of the female respondents felt that their dignity was undermined by the boys at the school. One respondent said she had intended to report an incident that had occurred to a teacher but was threatened by the boy involved, who said that he was going to hit her after school if she reported it to staff. Madonna and Murphy (2009) claim that another important factor that encourages the bully is acceptance by their peers, which is also indicated in this research study i.e. that there was a general peer acceptance of bullying among the learners in the school.

**Simphiwe (boy - 12 years old):** *Boys refused to clean the class; they said this is the work for the girls not for boys because cleaning even at home is done by girls. The class comprised of few girls who failed to do thorough cleaning since they are very young. Boys fight with the girls telling them to mop the class and pick up papers.*



**FIGURE 3: THE LUNCH HALL**

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *He spoke of the young learners who used to play under the mango tree, which is a tree with edible fruits. The young fruits fell when they climbed up on the tree. The young children do not honour the older learners since they report to their teachers if they are asked what had happened to the fruit in the tree.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *She spoke about the way classrooms are cleaned during the teaching and learning hours, where girls are forced to make cleaning while boys are doing nothing.*

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *She cried in the class when another learner took her exercise book as she was busy writing class work. She also complained that older boys copy her work without permission at school.*

The aforesaid statements demonstrate conflict in the school through masculinity where males are seen as bosses to the girls. The masculinity begins at home, the father tells his son that he is the male therefore his work is to look after cattle and build a kraal<sup>3</sup> for the cattle. Morrell (2002) argues that violent masculinity exists in homes as well as in schools and that male dominance is a global phenomenon. Boys do not see any harm or danger that might be caused by carrying weapons to school. The weapons that are carried to school are not regarded as infringements that might lead to violent behaviour and ultimately prison. Bhana (2005) alludes that violence in schools is exacerbated by social constructions of masculinity and feminism. The issue of masculinity and feminism is founded by parents at home, unaware that they mislead the child while he or she is young. When the boy applies negative

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<sup>3</sup> A kraal is an enclosure for cattle or other livestock, located within an African settlement or village.

behaviour to females, he is not aware that such thing is unacceptable and is depriving the rights and undermining the dignity of a girl. There is often a tendency for males to dominate over females while girls see no need for domination as equality is seen as more important.

The study found that young male children are taught that if you show affection toward a girl who does not reciprocate their feelings, it is your right as a male to force the girl to fall in love with you. Girls are undermined by boys at school as they do chores that should be evenly shared by all learners in the class or at school. This inequality is perpetuated by teachers in schools who fear boys and who use the primitive method of life style and culture that favours males. The boys hit girls because they look at them as people who are of no value, like their father did to their mothers at home.

This male dominated stance questions the 'nature versus nurture' debate and challenges the stereotypical notions of 'boys behaving badly' and 'boys will be boys' due to biological reasons, which points to the social construction of gendered notion that boys are made of 'rats and snails and puppy dogs tails' while girls are made of 'sugar and spice and of all things that are nice'. Differences in gender roles involve power relations in which masculinity activities are given higher status compared to feminist activities (Morojele, 2011). Bhana (2005) contends that the notion of boys will be boys, creates the impression that boys are naturally problematic. It is an assumption based on biological stereotype that brand all boys as naughty, aggressive, and purveyors of poor behaviour. Bullying occurs around the issue of owning brand name clothing, however this in line of bullying, tends to be restricted in primary schools, compared with high school settings, where bullying is based on more serious forms of discrimination and malice. However, Morrell (2001) signals a possibility of improvement here by indicating that whilst school produce gender inequality, they nonetheless have the ability to change oppressive gender practices.

### **4.3 Types of conflicts in the school**

The learners identified different types of conflict in the school including bullying, gender inequality and abuse. It is said that such conflict results in a poor performance during teaching and learning hours and educators sought ways to alleviate conflict at school because it often ends in violent confrontations among the learners. The school and its learners decided to make a notice board that is going to deal with such incidents. The conflict is experienced by learners during break times and even after school hours. Learners are reporting this matter to their parents and to the educators. The following types of conflict are identified by the learners.

#### ***4.3.1 Learners' aggressive behaviour and violence***

This kind of behaviour emanates from home where learners imitate their parents i.e. their father or mother during arguments at home. These parents are aggressive to their children at home which in turn affects them and causes a cycle of violence and aggression as these learners then begin to display negative behaviours towards their peers at school. Learners are also humiliated and misbehave particularly boys, who have a tendency to be aggressive, destructive and disposing their violence behaviour to other classmates.

**Thandi (girl - 12 years old):** *She defined conflict as an unacceptable behaviour that is having signs and symbols of disregarding the right of another person. The learners explained that in the school, they come across with the problem of boys who fight for girlfriends and boyfriends.*



**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *I saw a young learner having a problem in the kitchen when old learners take their food as a result they end up getting insufficient food and plates and spoon for eating which causes depression to the young learners...some of the learners are experiencing a problem where their belongings are taken by force by older learners and those who have power.*

The kitchen is located next to the mango tree where most of the learners eat during break time. It is found out that young learners do not enjoy food because of the older boys who take their food by force. Those learners who are hungry and from poor families enjoy speaking with older learners and giving them their meals.

#### **4.3.2 Intimidation**

Learners from higher grades apply intimidation to the young learners on day basis during break and lunch time. Parents wrote numerous letters to the school principal as well class teachers reporting incidents of intimidation that their children experienced at school. An example of this is that of a learner in grade seven who threatened a grade one learner by saying that he would be punished after school if he did not buy chocolate for him. Respondents' accounts below lend credence to this form of conflict.

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *One day I fought against a grade one learner who refused to give me her pen, I took her exercise books and threw them away in the water. I also promised to hit her if she complained to an adult. When she complained to the class teacher, after school, she was threatened by me. We made a disagreement about food in the kitchen and that lead to bullying of young kids by adult learners.*

**Nobuhle (girl - 14 years old):** *She said that older boys and girls used to ill-treat young learners waiting in the queues for food. She feels unhappy about most of the things that is usually happen and events that takes place during the break times.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I was running in the class when I blocked the window by mistake but the older boys beat me with the brooms on my body. I reported the matter to the class teacher. The class teacher said I have to pay for it because I am new in the school.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I was dishing food to my class mate, one of the girls said I doing as if this food come from my parents, why I am doing this slowly?*

**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *I make a joke with one of the learner unaware that she is not going to accept it, she fought against me. The teacher blamed me I apologised for what I have done.*

During lunch breaks there are those learners who play roughly and this leads to disputes with others, for example, when they are busy playing soccer and netball while educators are away from the learners. Another example is that of a shortage of water in the school therefore when learners come to school with their own water and there are those who seize water to those who are powerless and fight for water at the end.

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *She played with her friends next to the gate while certain boys came to propose love to them. The girls decided to run away from these boys, after that they followed them with abusive words and annoying remarks.*

**Siphiwe (girl - 11 years old):** *She complained to the educators that boys wanted to take their books and pencils in the class.*

**Nobuhle (girl - 14 years old):** *She talks about an abuse that occurs in the classroom when the educators are away from the classroom, sometimes when they are busy in the meetings. The older learners misbehave with others who are not good in reporting incidents that are taking place at school.*

It is the prerogative of the school viz. the principal and teachers to ensure that learners are safe and protected against any forms of unacceptable behaviour. The school governing body together with the school principal must make rules and policies for disciplining learners who behave in a way that contravene school policies. Solberg, Olweus and Endresen (2007) posits that a greater number of teachers have resorted to conducting supervision rounds during break periods in an attempt to mitigate the incidents of bullying among the learners. All staff members in the school have to make certain that learners are in a safe place.

#### **4.3.3 Power dynamics**

The use of power against learners leads to the dissatisfaction of the younger children who are powerless in the school. The question was tentatively approached by two different learners who reflected key research arguments that seek to explain the information of dominant, hegemonic identities in older and younger boys.

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I was running along the road one day when two older girls were taking my books and pens. When I asked why, they promised to kick me and I went home without my school material. At home I made a report of what happened but I was told to*

*report to my educators. To get attention from other learners, when a boy thinks that he is strong and he has the power to do anything, then he does wrong things.*

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *He stated that in the classroom one of the boy was writing in the exercise book only to find that his classmate hide his mathematics exercise book after that, he was told not to report to the teachers.*

**Sithandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *She said that one of the grade 6 boy fights against a grade 7 girl who took the pens that was used by that boy while the other learners were in the break.*

The class teachers should make sure that all books that are given to the learners are clearly marked to avoid theft and corruption by other learners. All classrooms should have rules on the wall about any child that will be found in a position of another's property where disciplinary committee will take action against those learners.

**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *I found a grade seven learner fighting against young boy who is doing grade five, as he refused to go to the tuck-shop to buy cookies for him. I am also explaining that there is a major issue of conflict like that of taking pens from others without permission and is taken for good.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I was reporting a theft which is at a high rate during break time and teaching hours in the classroom. I used my authority to solve the problem as an adult learner.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I was talking with boys in the sports field when a grade seven boy said I must not put any comment because I am new. The other boys laughed at me and said why I am not giving him a kick.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I was reporting a case of one of the class mate who use to take my pens and books after that he does not return them back.*

Learners should be separated during the break, whereby boys play on the other side and girls have their own playground. All of them should be supervised by educators in each group and monitored accordingly. The educators have to appoint head prefect to see to it that everybody is safe and protected. Greeff and Grobler (2008) stated that victimisation is found to escalate during primary school, especially in the intermediate phase, and decreases in the early years of high school.

#### **4.3.4 Vulgar language**

The use of unacceptable language starts at foundation level...in the family home, when children absorb the characteristics of adults who are role models i.e. the father and the mother. The child imitates their parents and this kind of behaviour is enforced by the parents use at home.

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I am a girl but to me to insult other kids at school is am common and I am making them uncomfortable since they are not use in such language. The conflicted learners are always unhappy. I feel happy if there is such situation at school, because of bullying, there is a chance to seize another's property.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *I was reporting to the principal, learners who are highly gifted in the class, they have a problem with other learners when they call them names like they call them dogs and give them names as if they are showing off to other learners.*

Perpetrators of conflict make unacceptable overtures towards their victims' e.g. sexual harassment etc. Salisbury and Jackson (1996) emphasise that the immense majority or preponderance of perpetrators of conflict acts of aggression and disobedient behaviour in schools are male learners. The assumption is that violence begets violence through the exhibition: parents at home have a tendency of making harsh arguments in the presence of their children which in turn creates hostility in children. These findings point to the fact that bullying in schools is an important mechanism of social control mainly directed at learners who did not conform to the dominant discourses of what it means to be boys and girls (Morojele, 2011). The fight and aggression that happened at home leads to school, at this time it is being practice of hegemonic masculinities explains the reasons that contribute or donate to the present stop working in order and control within schools.

#### **4.3.5 *Fighting, robbing and assaults***

**Siphiwe (girl - 11 years old):** *One of the boys was holding okapi against one of the learners and a lot of weapons, such as golf sticks, ring force, illegal guns and broken pens from outside the school trying to protect themselves against each other. I have discovered that a number of learners come to school with different kinds of unacceptable weapons with the aim of injuring one another.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *She found her books thrown on the dust been after break, if I asked who did such thing nobody gave me the answer.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *I was in the school hall when four boys attacked me with sticks and stones; I get out in the hall through the window. I asked them what their problem was; they said I am going to get more stones if I speak nonsense to them.*

According to Shariff (2008), violent and conflict activities inspired learners to use violence such as physical fights and carrying of weapons and in South Africa, school shootings are periodically reported. Some of the learners are bullied by other learners and they even assault them during school hours. Rudatsikira, Maposa, Mukandavire, Muula and Siziya (2009) stated that common acts of misconduct in Zimbabwean secondary schools include fighting, truancy, bullying, taking drugs and insubordination to teaching staff.

It is discovered also that bullying can be either overt or covert. According to Shariff (2008) overt bullying involves physical aggression, such as beating, kicking, shoving and sexual touching which could be accompanied by covert bullying, in which victims are excluded from peer groups, stalked, stared at, gossip about, verbally threatened sometimes harassed. There are learners that come with different kinds of weapons to school for example knobkerries, kitchen knives, screw drivers and bush from outside the school for protection with the aim of wounding others.

#### ***4.3.6 Bullying and intimidation in the playground***

The environment from which learners come from has a great influence on children. The young kids can be influenced to be bullies from other children at home.

**Thomas (boy – 13 years old):** *I was running along the school fence when a grade seven learner hit me on my back. I saw a girl who is doing grade R being kicked by a grade six girl, asking her why she reported her for stealing pens in the office. I also found that boys talk harsh to the girls during break time and show them that if girls do not accept them as their boyfriend, boys will kick them.*

**Simpfiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *We were busy in the principal's office arranging seats and put charts on the wall, one of the girls said I must go out in the office because I did not wash myself before I go to school.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *I was washing the toilets with young boys in the toilets when two girls said we are like cats in the kitchen as we are doing that work.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I was mopping the school veranda when the three young learners come in and throw a lot of papers and soil from the garden. I beat them with stick and they reported me to their class teacher.*

Bradshaw, Sawyer and O' Brennan (2007) state that a vast majority of learners feel that schools are not doing enough to prevent bullying, whereas most teachers believe their prevention efforts are adequate. Bullying in schools is one of the major causes of conflict, which leads to the unrest amongst learners. Young (2009) points out that if one witnesses an incident of bullying, they should not join in but rather think of how they would react if the roles were reversed and they were the victim. Govender (2013) reports a study of bullying in South Africa. The study was conducted in Gauteng with primary school learners. The study



found bullying to be one of the prevalent forms of conflict and violence in schools. The interpretation of personalities done during the study showed that bullying personalities appear to have no remorse and can kill in cold blood and that bullies in schools engage in bullying because they want to be popular and seek approval from their friends.

#### **4.3.7 Sexual violence and harassment**

In the community from which learners hail, they are frequently exposed various explicit activities. Learners are often victims of sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated by classmates in the classroom during teaching and learning hours. This is a clear example of how gender, sexual orientation, sporting games and chores that children perform are linked to complex and profound ways to exalt the dominance of heterosexual masculinities over other forms of human identities (Morojele, 2012), including feminine masculinities and homosexual femininities.

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *A girl said that a boy kept on touching her breasts and private parts and other girls were busy laughing at her and keep on saying she is a prostitute. Sexual activity in the school took place through all corners of the school. In the toilets and on the way back home after school boy's touch girls at their private parts.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I found young boys having sex in toilets, in front of the other girls. I have seen a grade five boy harassing young girls and young boys while they are away from the teachers.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *I have played with young boys and girls in my neighbour's at home. I discovered that young boys and girls involved in sexual activity, either touching private places around their home and on the way to home after school.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *I was working with the security guard in the school gate; one of the boys kicked me at the back. The security guards gave him a strong discipline and report the matter to the school principal.*

The data shows that while in a few incidents, people were not certain about harassment, they would make assumptions of the people involved in behaviour regardless of whether they were correct or not. Female respondents stated that they experienced inappropriate touching by boys in their age group in the classrooms during teaching hours. In terms of sexual abuse against a child, it was reported that some of the learners have complained to their parents about their experiences at school. This is a clear example of how gender, sexual orientation, sporting games and chores that children perform portray the dominance of heterosexual masculinities over other human identities (Morojele, 2012).

Child sexual abuse occurs in all races and economic groups in South Africa and both males and females are affected (Education Labour Relations Council, 2005). Sexual harassment or sexual activity is traumatising the whole school. There should be preventive measures in place as well as reasonable steps when dealing with sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.

#### **4.3.8 Conflict related to drugs and alcohol abuse**

When parents display negative behaviours for example, engaging in substance or alcohol abuse in the presence of their children it changes the character of the child. The learners watch and are influenced by their parents particularly when they talk about those intoxicated substances.

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *I found grade seven boys at the back of the class smoking benzene and whoonga<sup>4</sup>, when they saw me they asked me to come closer to them, I said no but they promised to hit me after school.*

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *I was walking along the classrooms when I saw two girls next to the toilet drinking wines and one of them tried to call me but I did not attend them.*

**Nobuhle (girl - 14 years old):** *I was with the tuck shop owner in the tuck shop when a grade five learner took my money from my pocket. When I made a report, he said it was his money and that I was mad if I say it was my money.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *The school is build next to the forest, a big snake came from the forest, boys killed it then they took it and threw it on me... I cried loudly expecting help from the teachers but received nothing at all.*

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<sup>4</sup> Street drugs that are in widespread use in impoverished areas, mostly townships in South Africa.

Crawage (2005) stated that the use of drugs or alcohol makes a learner less settled and therefore increases the likelihood of conflict and indiscipline among learners. Conflict and drug addiction is a consequence of children being traumatised and not being helped to recover. The school is expected to take action according to its Code of Conduct for learners.

#### **4.3.9 Gang related incidents**

The community in which this study is based is one that is surrounded by gangsters who are always up and down on the streets. There are critical incidences reported to the police station about such people.

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *She experienced a difficult thing when she saw boys wearing caps that are nasty and dirty walking like people who are thieves. The kind of people like them have no mercy at all... she was afraid as they come closer to her, they asked her to come next to them and the girl decided to run away.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *The school is located next to the tavern and sheeben<sup>5</sup> where there are a lot of people who are thieves. There are people who sometimes rape young learners and beat them after school.*

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *I was attacked by a group of girls who are not at school while walking home after school. They asked me why I am learning in that school. I asked them why they ask me such a nonsense question, than they said I am rude, I deserve punishment.*

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<sup>5</sup> Shebeens are illicit bars where alcohol is served and are most often located in townships as an alternative to pubs and bars.

Another incident in the school was that of gangsterism or students involvement in gang activities. De Wet (2007) stated that the presence of gangs in schools and in townships increases the incidence of victimisation of non-gang members and this brings with it, a terrorising fear factor that traumatises learners together with their parents.

According Greeff & Grobler (2008), learners are identified with gangs and in such associations, fulfil the need for the transition from childhood to adulthood. The learners argued that the gangs are coming from the taverns and sheebens that are situated around the schools. Victimisation is found to escalate during primary school, especially in the intermediate phase, and decreases in the early years of high school (Greeff & Grobler, 2008). Learners also mentioned that gangs are creating a feeling of fear that they are not safe and that they have to protect themselves in addition to being protected by parents and teachers.

#### ***4.3.10 Theft of property to one another***

The community members were found to confiscate property of one another and provide those things with their children. When the children ask them where they bought it, they are told that it has been stolen. Parents do not see any problem if they say something that is going to change the behaviour of the child.

**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *My mother gave me a book and ball pen to use at school but I didn't use it as it was taken away from me while I was busy playing with my friends in the class. She also heard a group of learners discussing about ways of taking money from grade R learners since they are given a lot of money to utilise at school because they are young.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *Parents buy books and things for their children after that others who are the 'bosses' took those items by force when teachers weren't around.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *the learner was found crying in the toilet as her books were not found after break. The child went home without books and pens, which were bought by her parents.*

The learners have a problem with peers who promote the theft and looting of the property of learners. One of the learners reported that his new school bag was taken by grade six learners along with the exercise books of another learner. When he was questioned about that, he told the teacher that the bag has been bought by his mother in town the previous week.

#### **4.4 Dynamics of conflict and violence**

The Department of Education and schools are using different methods, equipped with all the necessary safety measures but school conflict and indiscipline amongst learners is a continuing process (Drosopoulos, 2008). Schools experience violence and conflict and it has been found that teachers use a system of discipline that suits their views rather than that which benefits the learners. Teachers also have their own methods of investigation to work with conflict and violence in school (Drosopoulos, 2008). It was found that learners use weapons for example, knives, ring forces, knockers, nail clips and others, to engage in violent behaviours and incite conflict. The availability of guns in rural schools becomes a serious problem, which contributes to gang violence as it leads to conflict.

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *He reported that that teaching and learning is hampered by those learners who are perpetrators of conflict in the school. The school does not have sound rules to discipline some of the learners who are obstinate at school.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *she talked about the causes of conflict and violence in the school which contributes to the poor performance of most learners in school.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *Most of the learners who leave school before grade 12, leave as result of conflict and violence within the school. When I started foundation phase, I did experience such things at school when boys ill-treat young learners who were unable to defend themselves against any act.*

The study found that learners imitate the older people in the community; they view them as role models. Learners do not see the difference between what is good and what is wrong because of the influence from their supposed 'role models'. The learners involve themselves in difficult situations because of misunderstanding and ignorance that is accompanied by the stage. It was also discovered that some of them become imprisoned and punished as a result of being involved in an unacceptable behaviour through the influence of their friends and peers. There are learners who are being told by their parents that they are first born therefore all powers are invested upon them, power which they feel they can transfer to school.

#### **4.5    Reproduction and maintenance of conflict**

Conflict is produced when one learner treats others in an unacceptable manner or badly by marginalising that learner. This occurs through derogatory acts such as pointing at them, laughing and name-calling. Oftentimes, as a teacher, I am willing to give help to those who are affected but I failed since they are more powerful than myself. Conflict is reproduced through the ignorance of parents at home. There are those families who fail to apply discipline to their children. Some children have a tendency of bullying other children at school which emanates from home. It was discovered that some of the learners do not respect other learners in the school; to fight against each other is not a problem. Parents at home recognise their children as heroes. The lack of cooperation among children leads to a conflict because there is no guidance of how to live with each other.

The study found that learners look at the teachers as their fellow mates as some teachers at school also would engage in smoking and drink alcohol with the learners. There are learners who are orphans; they live with their grandparents at their homes. It is sad that grandparents have no powers to control them; they have no rules and behave according to their own standards.

**Thomas (boy - 13 years old):** *School is experiencing a problem of boys who does not respect teaches and they look at them as if they are equal to them. There are those who smoke with the teachers, a bad habit even to the community as it is unacceptable.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *Educators drink alcohol with boys and after what they propose love to them, when they are drunk. The school must make some means of putting aside learners from teachers who are smokers and drink alcohol.*



**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *The schools need to have a space for the learners who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and they have to take care of them. Learners who ill-treat them must be disciplined thoroughly without fail.*

According to Coyne and Monks (2011), the experiences of poverty lead to discrimination even in older people. Learners who are associated with poverty are usually ostracised by learners who are associated with richness. It goes without saying that sometimes a learner's social status contribute to becoming either an agent of conflict or a target of conflict.

#### ***4.5.1 Way conflict is reproduced and maintained in the school***

Conflict is produced as a result of ignorance amongst learners in schools. Conflict is experienced by learners at home between parents and the child. When arguments arise between parents and the child witnesses it, the concept of conflict is created in the child's mind. Mshengu (2005) contends that witnessing of the use of physical and verbal aggression by parents towards their children may have negative impact on children's ability to form relationships. The child becomes hostile and is full of anger in his or her mind. Rigby (2000) argues that poverty, poor family functioning and especially domestic violence might promote bullying in several ways. Perpetrators are not aware that such poor behaviour could lead to conflict. Children observe differences between parents and transfer feelings of unhappiness into inciting conflict at school. Learners need to see to it that no learner that should be treated wrongly at school. Learners must have to respect each other regardless of race or social and economic status.

Schools are a place of teaching and learning according to the Constitution of South Africa (1996). Conflict is produced through the lack of cooperation between teachers and learners and in some cases, through verboten relationships between staff and students. For

example, it is found that some of the female learners fall in love with the male teachers of the same school, which is prohibited. According to Young (2009), oppression refers to the disadvantages and injustices some people suffer in everyday practices of the society. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) agree that oppression is the process where one social group exploits another for its own benefit. For example, in the case of male teachers building relationships with female students, the relationships are often noted by the community and in time the Department of Education, leading to the suspension of male educators. Once again, teaching and learning is hampered and disturbed. It was also discovered that female teachers also fall in love with male learners; they use to give them money as their “Ben 10<sup>6</sup>”.

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *She said that conflict is the result of witnessing negative behaviour of parents from at home. The learner continued by saying that some of the things that are done by their parents create feelings of anger in them as children.*

**Luyanda (girl -10 year old):** *She told one of the educators about her mother who is away from home because of her father who kicked her during the night.*

**Thamsanqa (boy -11 years old):** *He spoke with his friends about the toilet that fell in the yard at home. His father is expecting them to build it up.*

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *He explained the issue of one of the family member who ignores who stones his wife in the present of his children.*

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<sup>6</sup> A Ben 10 is a young man/boy who becomes involved with an older woman for monetary gain.

The learners were required to attend counselling in order to keep their life better. The families and members of the family, even community members need to attend counselling, possibly in the form of a workshop etc. Parents should be aware of the fact that their actions have an impact on their children and consequently their holistic development.

#### **4.5.2 Way conflict is challenged and maintained in the school**

Learners failed to perform well in the classroom. The school encounters a problem of misunderstanding amongst the learners; there are those who are unwilling to learn and those who want to do their work up to the standard. Poor performance results in a number of learners who failed at the end of the year.

**Sthandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *She said that she is not happy about how other learners are treated and unable to go to school. I feel unable to go to school. I do not like to go to school...there is peer pressure to drink, take drugs and feel unhappy. Conflict provokes the aspiration for vengeance on the way to the perpetrators.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *Conflict develops anger and makes me feel that school is becoming useless, those who are not at school do as they want to do without anybody providing help or any assistance. To me, to be at school is like being a prisoner who is in jail.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *It is better to stay at home for the rest of my life with my parents and my brothers, with my family rather than enjoying being hit and beaten at school by other learners and teachers.*

Respondents felt that conflict affects their academic performance, causing them to fail. They prefer being away from school and felt that if they stood up to those who created conflict, it would make them enemies. Some students even felt that suicide was preferable, hence the prevalence of teen suicide in schools.

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *She looked at conflict as a dangerous thing that affects the life of somebody else and it causes pain to others, it is an unacceptable behaviour to the school environment especially to the learners. In the class, student performance become very poor because of conflict.*

**Sithandiwe (girl - 12 years old):** *She found that it is a trauma to watch conflict because even if you are not directly involved it affects you and make you lose your concentration in class and you end up failing your subject. She further said that: they took away my pen, I end up not writing. For example, I lose marks when we are writing a test or examination.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *If someone is putting you inside the toilet bowl, he is degrading you and makes a challenge to your manhood. As you think about this in class, it takes away all your concentration and makes you lose focus in the lessons.*

One of the respondents said that the perpetrators of conflict took away his books and as a result he is unable to learn in the class for his Math and English exercise books were missing. The performance of the learners has shown that there is a drastic decrease in the performance of the learners work, they performed poorly academically.

**Luyanda (girl -10 years old):** *She said that those learners who are jealous used to hide my pens and bring it back later because I am bright and they wanted to see me failing in the class. Some of my learners' gossip about me to the teachers and to fellow colleagues saying I am always seemed to be better than them in the class. They wanted to find some means of letting me down.*

**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *She said that sometimes while she is doing a presentation in the class, learners disturb her by making a lot of remarks and jokes so that she could lose focus and concentration.*

#### **4.5.3 Geographies of conflict within the school**

During the data collection, learners drew areas of conflict and violence in the school. They walked around the school, identifying those areas where conflict is prevalent. The learners put red stickers in areas of conflict. Some of the areas they identified were the boreholes where learners fetch water during break time, the sports field - where they sit together and have they eat their meals and play after that they quarrel against each other. Other areas identified were the school toilets that are situated away from the classrooms where fights occurs and the tavern and restaurant where they pass on the journey from school. These are places where most respondents indicated that they are beaten by people from the outside. Respondents also stated that the kitchen was an area where those who are powerless are marginalised by the older learners who take their food without permission. In most of the areas identified, the respondents are overpowered by others and beaten. This often results in parent raising complaints against the school.

The respondents also identified areas where there is no conflict in the school. In those areas they put blue stickers and drew marks around such places. The places like parking areas

were identified as a free zone in the school as no students are allowed there. The respondents viewed the church next to the school as a place where there was no conflict since it is a place of worship. The principal's office was also identified as a place of no conflict and with no violence since the principal uses it for Departmental purposes.

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *She noticed that kitchen is a place where most of the conflict is experienced and bullying is usually happen when they are required to fetch plates and spoons for food. Space in the kitchen is not enough and the cooking utensils can endanger the learners who came to fetch food.*

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *He complained about the older learners who used their power to get food given to the young children. The kitchen is expected to be clean but they make it dirty as they enjoy their meals inside that room.*

**Gadlaza (boy - 11 years old):** *He stated that those who cook also wash dishes, spoon and plates for the learners. The other students complain and refuse to do cleaning of the utensils.*

Perpetrators of conflict seek opportunities in which to show their power, for example, they use the toilets to abuse others and fulfil their needs. Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan (2004) posits that it is important to focus on changing the behaviour of perpetrators and to avoid labelling perpetrators. This will allow the perpetrators to move out of negative roles and aid in solving conflict. He continues saying that sometimes other learners push the young ones to the pit and hit them if they don't do what they are expected to do (Sullivan et al.,2004).

For many, the principal's office is a sanctuary as no learner is allowed to enter without permission. The learners can use it in the presence of educators. There are rules and regulations that are placed for any person entering the office. There are those learners who stay in the corners of the class aiming to disturb other learners engaged in lessons. It was found that the seniors in grade seven and six use the corners of the classroom to pass water. When the younger students report them, they scold them after school or hit them.

The playground is where most of learners meet for their sporting events during break time even after school in the absence of teachers and caregivers. The different activities like soccer, netball, volleyball, cricket and other activities are practiced in the sport ground without teachers and school coach. This lack of supervision contributes to the learners engaging in conflict.

**Thomas (boy - 13 years old):** *The mango tree is the place where young learners and grade R learners sit during break time to enjoy their meal. It is usually happen under that tree when the fruit is ready some of the learners use sticks and stone throwing to the ripe mango up in the tree and they end up hitting one another.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *A learner who is doing grade three throw a stone to the monkey that was eating mango in the tree, the stone hit one of the learner who was passing by the tree. The stone knock the child next to the eye, she was seriously ill and the wound was very deep.*

**Luyanda (girl - 10 years old):** *I was running with my friends in the ground during break time, grade five boy asked me to go out of the ground and clean her shoes. I refused then he kicked me at the back but I did not retaliate.*



**FIGURE 4: THE MANGO TREE**

According to Roberts (2006) children who live in a particular section of the town and do not wear the right brand of clothing or shoes may become target of bullying by abusive predators. There are learners in the school who do not wear the same school uniform or even simple clothes who are victimised by those from advantaged backgrounds.

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *She was mocked by boys because of her uniform that has a hole at the back. This uniform was torn apart and is old without a school badge.*



**Nandi (girl - 11 years old):** *I saw two boys coming from the toilet holding sticks; I change the direction because I thought they would hit me. They said to me come here you girl, I run away to the class and tell my friends.*

The study found that students from poor families are always neglected by those who are in the rich families. Learners who are coming from the rich families laugh and make fun of those who are coming from poor families. They jeer at their lunch etc. and make jokes against such food. Learners who are coming from poor families feel isolated and ashamed of themselves (Roberts, 2006).



**FIGURE 5: HOME LIFE**

Children from wealthier families are seen as better children than others in the school and respondents identified them as having their own groups who share their meals together, putting away those who are not their group (Roberts, 2006). One of the respondents pointed out that even when they start to have love affairs they do not want to fall in love with the learner from poor backgrounds. Learners discussed the issue of being a Christian in the

church where there is no pastor and their parents are members of such a church. The argument is about poor buildings while the members of the church are civil servants and they earn a lot of money but they failed to take care of Gods work. Learners who belong to a certain denomination they walk together and spend their time in their own private place.

**Simphiwe (boy - 11 years old):** *reported that learners who are homosexual are discriminated even by the teachers in the school. Those who are against gays use unacceptable words to the gays and sometimes they fight with them using name calling like saying isitabani<sup>7</sup>.*

**Thamsanqa (boy - 11 years old):** *He said that most of the learners found that abusive words are hateful to one another and this leads to conflict and fight in the school.*

**Thandeka (girl - 12 years old):** *The boys who were doing grade six touched my private parts in the class. I moved them away they called me a fool I do not know nice things, I report that to my class teacher he punished them.*

Space is the complexity of adjusting to the horror children faces at school as they are bullied to each other. Their spaces are in different contexts, it can be age, gender, ethnicity, culture, social class and upbringing as the factors that contribute to their differences (Cele, 2006). The children's relationships with the others are dynamics across individuals, contexts and time. That is where every action or conflict started is located within specific practices. There are those learners who are victims of the conflict and those who are perpetrators; it depends on the stimulus given in that situation (Sullivan et al., 2004).

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<sup>7</sup> A derogatory term referring to homosexuals

Children think differently and their thinking is influenced by social relationships, peer and environmental conditions where conflict is manifested and cultural conventions which are morals (Roberts, 2006). Victims of violence are always facing challenges with regard to learning at school. Conflict at school is because of poor behaviour of some of the learners. Perpetrators are also seeking attention to be counselled with their problems.

This study also speaks to terms of social identity like hunger and unsafe environment where conflict and violence are present. One that seeks to teach children to survive but also to contribute to their places being invaded through insult by other learners. The public and private space children inhabit can contribute to their vulnerability. When learners are become more involved in the conflict that takes place, this results in difficulties in the school environment. There are many children who struggle to 'fit in' in the school environment as it has been identified that bullying and assault are linked to space, they perceive as poorly designed therefore they feel the space is unsafe.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to acquire understanding of learner's experiences of conflict and examine learners' responses about their experiences of conflict and different types of conflict they observe in the primary school. The findings which are presented in this chapter are arranged according to the themes that emanated from the data. It presented the voices of the learners and their experiences given by learners during the process of interviews. The themes which emerged are learners' experiences and understanding of conflict, types of conflict which are experienced by girls and boys in the school, factors that perpetuate conflict in school as well as effects of conflict in the lives of learners and which strategy that could be applied to eradicate conflict in schools. The following chapter deals with the conclusions and the implications of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore learners' perspectives of conflict in Dokodweni reserve in one of the school. The study investigated and sought to understand how learners make meaning and engage with conflict incidents taking place in the schooling environment. The study also wanted to investigate effective solutions to the problem of conflict in the school. The study drew from the notions of Children's Geographies and the New Sociology of Childhood (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012) as its conceptual frameworks.

#### 5.2 Summary of key findings

The study indicated that the respondents had an understanding of the concept of conflict and that the perpetrators of conflict are mostly boys. Boys are socialised to be dominant and girls to be subordinates. Respondents made it clear that victims of conflict are usually learners who are physically weak, vulnerable and young in age.

##### *5.2.1 What are learner's everyday experiences of conflict in a school?*

Respondents state that the conflict at the school is the result of learners who are more powerful than the others as on a daily basis, young learners are affected through power relation and misunderstanding of one another. Domhoff (2005 in Stoudt, Kuriloff, Reichert, & Ravitch, 2010) describes power as the dimension that leads to bullies, rival gangs, enforced corporations, hierarchy, ruling classes and wars among national states. It is clear that once people have power they exercise them in an unacceptable manner and it causes pain

to one another (Domhoff, 2005 in Stoudt, Kuriloff, Reichert, & Ravitch, 2010). There are those learners who end up leaving the school before time because of ill-treatment that is happening in each day.

### ***5.2.2 What attempts do learners make to solve learner conflict?***

The study showed that learners sought to establish new methods of working collaboratively to fight against conflict and make use of educators to solve problems. Learners tried to look at solutions that are more effective and led other learners the workshops where they discuss about how conflict affects the school environment. The learners involved parents and other stakeholders to come up with solutions to help eradicate conflict in schools. The school will organise motivational talks to keep them well disciplined. Class discussions, role plays and debates should be encouraged and promoted by the learners. Activities like soccer, netball, cricket, tennis ball, volleyball etc. should be promoted by the learners.

### ***5.2.3 How are learner's attempts to solve conflict received by other learners?***

The respondents requested that the school introduce a code of conduct for students and that roles be played by learners to come up with a solution to the problem. The school has to devise strategy on how many meeting will be conducted in the school and communication once a week to discuss about victims of conflict as well as perpetrators. The learners make use of possible strategies which could assist the learners who are victims. The school is expected to make rules and regulations that are going to discipline learners who are perpetrators of conflict. All learners are going to learn about basic moral values. They will learn to be loyal and how are they going to respect one another at school.

#### ***5.2.4 How is conflict produced, reproduced, maintained and resisted?***

Conflict is manifested through parental ignorance i.e. parents who have failed to their children appropriate discipline. The consequences of this was that children do not develop the skill of solving problems instead they cause conflict while trying to evade the problem. Baldry (2003) posits that children, especially girls, who witness their mothers being harassed, insulted, and beaten up by their partners might learn that violence is a normal way of being treated, boys on the other hand might identify themselves with the male perpetrator and learn that violence is an acceptable way to respond to disagreements and become aggressive with weaker peers. Conflict exists when there is a poor communication between the parents or caregivers of a child at home.

According to Shariff (2008) students with disabilities, gays, lesbians and heterosexual children of the same sex parents, may also exhibit poor performance in the school and lead to depression. The consequences of conflict are poor performance of the child and dislike of school work. If conflict is resisting there are majors that need to be used in order to defeat resistance that is taking place at school among learners.

The learners faced the problem of bullying that occurred during times when learners were unsupervised i.e. during break times, when the teachers were away from the classroom and on the journey to and from school. The study found that learners encountered the problem of rape and sexual harassment in the toilets and even after school hour. Stein (in Campbell-Sills, Forde & Stein, 2009) stated that schools need to involve parents, through community forums as well as private discussions, especially if their children are involved in incidents of bullying and sexual harassment. A high rate of crime among the learners was indicated as the older student's confiscated exercise books and school bags even pens that belonged to the younger ones. The higher grades physically abused children in lower grades

when they were playing on the school grounds and high school learners fought against the primary school learners.

Learners were found to attempt reconciliatory meetings with those who are perpetrators of conflict and in the meetings, they involved stakeholders like izinduna and amakhosi <sup>8</sup>and other members of the staff. Smith & Sharp (1994) emphasise the empowerment of student through conflict resolution, peer counselling and assertiveness of training. The study raised the issue of socialisation as it was discovered that boys were socialised to be dominant whereby girls were socialised to be subordinates. The learners made a request for the appointment of prefects and head prefects to keep other learners on the safety side of the school. The learners also made a plea for the appointment of educators who are going to conduct monitoring and supervision during the break time and lunch. There was also a request for toilets to be built next to the classrooms, for example, flushing toilets are in great demand in the school. The removal of alien vegetation was also considered as it prevents educators to see what is happening next to the toilets. The school has to invite counsellors to help with alleviating the high incidence of violence and conflict in schools.

Additionally, affected learners are advised to report to the teachers at school and to the parents at home. The perpetrators are given warnings not to be found watching movies on television that encourage bullying and fighting or even read magazines that have violent imagery. The educators and school governing body are requested by the learners' to create interactive lessons that teach about and encourages good behaviour.

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<sup>8</sup> Izinduna refers to an advisor, great leader, ambassador or headman and Amakhosi refers to the chief of a village.

### **5.3 Theoretical and methodological reflections**

The study makes use of an appropriate conceptual framework that will make sense of the findings, this framework is the one that talks about the notion of 'Children's Geographies'. Children's Geographies is the area of study in human geography that explores the places and spaces of children's lives experientially, politically and ethically. Spaces is refers to the domain of children's rights and practices that privileges the perceptive surrounding the category children's (Weller, 2004).

When learners are at school they experience first-hand, conflict at school. The learners have to understand their journey to school and tell stories which need to be told by them as learners. This study is about the spaces and places where bullying and violence as well as abuse are being identified by the learners. Maphumulo (2012) reports that one parent gave up her cushy job and started an anti-bullying programme at school after discovering that her daughter took a bottle of pain killers, trying to commit suicide because she was harassed and bullied by her school mates. Their rights as children are violated by other children at school. The study identified the power of domination, which is Foucault's (1983) theory of power and the cycle of socialisation which is Young's (2009) five faces of oppression and Harro's (2000) theory of socialisation. The children seek to defend themselves from being bullied by others at school and show that they are resilient in the face of abuse. The theoretical framing assisted me as I analysed the data collected as it provided guidance to understand how the learners experienced conflict. Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2003) explain that power struggles are the root of violent conflicts which begins from kindergarten, through the life cycle and extending into the field of work. Young (2009) said that oppression signifies unequal social relations of power. The theoretical framing was also used when cameras were given to respondents to take photos in which they identified places and spaces of experienced conflict



The study used qualitative, interpretive research design and was embedded in learner conflict, looking at the issues of power dynamics. The study, in addition, utilised a critical paradigm to investigate and observe data that is being collected. These methods helped me, as the researcher as well as my respondents during the data collection period.

#### **5.4 Implications of the study**

The study have summary and recommendations that are in line with the research using research questions of the study. The following implications give us the picture of what has been happening and how are we going to have input in the study.

##### ***5.4.1 Implications on policy and practice***

From the key findings of the study, it is suggested that:

- The school should make use of policies that are relevant to the problem that is being addressed. Learners are expected to have a copy of each policy that is going to work as a guide. Learners will produce the copy their caregiver either is a parent or anybody who is a guardian of that particular child. The child will work according to the policy that is given to them without any hesitation.
- The school must put into place, operation and implement anti- bullying policies so as to reduce the problem of learners who are ill-disciplined and disobedient. Learners who failed to obey this rule will be suspended until he or she is abide to the rules and regulations of the school without any prejudice. Those learners who are bullies are expected to desist as disciplinary action will be taken against them. School rules will be set out in the notice board in each class
- All policies should be given to every learner to read and guide the child about his or her behaviour at school. Learners are expected to look at those policies every day and

inform their parents that such policies are against any delinquent behaviour that can be undertaken by a learner at school. The educators will be given an opportunity to read these policies to learners and ask the learners to read for themselves at least twice a week. This is going to show to them the importance of these policies.

- The Department of Education is expected to come up with policies that are going to give guidance to the learners to solve problems. It is also advisable that those policies that are coming from Department are taken into cognisance by the school especially the learners. The school needs to work hand in hand with the policies of department and they are also given to the learners as a guard and keep them on a safety side. The learners who disobey the rules will be disciplined and parents of that learner will be called in to stand on the side of his or her learner.
- It is important to adhere to those policies since they are going to guide learners on how to conduct themselves in the school. Policies that are going to give solution to a problem will be taken into account. All policies will be revised yearly to check if they are still in operation or not. The school, that is the staff and the learners will draw new school policies to help those who are not happy about that policy but it will be directed by the laws of the school. Everybody is expected to work through the policies of the school.
- School policies should be done in a polite manner where all learners are satisfied, policies are implemented and there are no irregularities are being practice. All learners are going to be treated equally and in justice. Policies should accommodate all learners without any prejudice and discrimination among each other. The policies are expected to regulate malpractices and maladministration of work and books.

The school is expected to endeavour to have power over learners through rules or policy, policies and regulations using code of conduct. Classroom rules ought to be managed in a compassionate manner. To apply obedience on learners makes the learner conscious that the earth is a commonplace, place where bad behaviour is required to be controlled equally without any prejudice or discrimination and unfairness because this will generate misunderstanding to the learners.

#### ***5.4.2 Implications for further research***

The study has to work very hard to give evidence from the learner's family background. It is important that the researcher show the places and spaces at home that were prevalent to conflict. The study has to do much on the history of the learner and especially the environment where the learner has grown up. There is also a need to find out whether the parents of a learner are married or not as well those who hail from single parent or child headed households.

Learners who live away from their parents, for example who live in boarding schools display a lack of parental guidance which is required by the learner. The school is expected to make some means of security and safety for the protection of the learners. There is a need for the intervention of police and community members. Amakhosi and Izinduna are expected to take initiative to solve problems that are facing learners and the staff in the school. The community members have to make meetings and seminars to curb the situation in order to protect the life of the learners. Politicians must not disturb learners at school by involving politics in the school as it will hamper proper teaching and learning of the child.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The chapter discussed the key research questions of the study, where it put more effort on the issues of conflict that took place in the school. The important issue is about how learners could come up with a solution for problems they encountered within the classroom and at school as a whole. In this chapter, I focused on the theoretical framework where learners use it as a tool towards the solution of conflict and how they implement their strategies. The learners would like to prevent conflict amongst peers through discussion which would involve debates etc. The learners wanted to conclude by finding out how conflict was produced, reproduced, maintained and resisted within the school. It also makes use of the summary, conclusions and recommendations that are in line with research questions of the study. The study involves implications for further research, where they are going to discuss and address the issue of learners who touch the private parts of one another without any permission.

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## Appendix 1: Informed consent document: IsiZulu version for parents

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
Faculty of Education



School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605  
Durban

\_\_/\_\_/2013

Mzali

Igamalamingingu **Nqolobane Ntombel** angingumfundiofundae Nyuvesiya KwaZulu Natal  
esikhungwenisemfundoe phakeme i Edgewood. ngokusithoba okukhulungicelaimvumeyakhouk  
ubamntwanawakhoabeingxenyeyophenyo engzobengilwenzaesikolenilaphoafundakhona.

Ikhelilamilithi: Dokodweni Area, Gingindlovu 3800. Inomboloyamiyocingoithi 083 433

8718. Isishlokosophenyosithi. **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

Injongoyaloluphenyokutholaukuthiabantwanabayazi yiniindlela abahlukumezekangazonok  
uthilokhukuhlukumezekakunamthelela muni ekufundeninasempilweniyomfundi.

yiziphifuthi izindlela ezingasetshenziswaukunqandalokhukuhlukumezeka. Yiniimbangelayalok  
hukuhlukumezana.

Umntwanawakhouzobuzwayedwaaphinde abuzweehlanguenenabanye. Loluphenyoluzothatha iz  
insukuezine kuphela enyanyenyodwa. Luzobelwenzekakanyengesontongemuvakokuphumak

wesikole. Igamalomntwanawakhoangekelisetshenzisweumasekubhalwanomakuxoxwanayeuk  
uzeavikeleke. Ukubambaiqhazakuloluphenyoakuphoqiqweumntwanawakhoangahoxanomayi  
niniumaezwaengakhululekile. Ukutholaulwaziolunyemayelananaloluphenyongaxhumanakan  
yenomalulekiwamiu Phrofesa Pholoho Morojele  
eNyuvesiyaKwaZuluNatalikulelikhelielilandelayo:

Tel: 0710410352

Email: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

Ngicelaukukwazisaukuthiakukhookuzotholwaumntwanangokubambaiqhazakuloluphenyo. izi  
mpendulonomaingxoxoiyobhalwaphansinomaiqoshwekwikhasethi. Uma  
sekuqedweukubhalwangaloluphenyoizintoebesisetshenziswazi yokugcinwaumelulekiendawe  
niephephileiminyakaemihlanubeseziyalahlwangendlelaephephile.

## **ISIFUNGO**

Mina \_\_\_\_\_ (igamalomzalieliphelele)

ngyavumaukuthiumntwanawamiabambeiqhazaophenywenioluzobelwenziwaesikolenifuthingi  
yakuqinisekisaukuthingiyaluqondaloluphenyo.

Ngiyaziukuthiumntwanaangahoxanomaninikuloluphenyomaengasathandi.

SAYINA

\_\_\_\_\_

USUKU

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Informed consent document: IsiZulu version for learners

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
Faculty of Education



School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605  
Durban

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/ 2013

Mfundi

Igamalamingingu **Nqolobane Ntombel** angingumfundio fundae Nyuvesiya KwaZulu Natal  
esikhungwenisemfundo ephakeme iEdgewood. ngokusithoba okukhulungicelaimvumeyakhouk  
ubamntwanawakho abeingxenyeyophenyo engzobengilwenza esikoleni lapho afundakhona.

Ikhelilamilithi: Dokodweni Area, Gingindlovu 3800. Inombolayamiyocingo ithi 083 433

8718. Isishloko sophenyosithi **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case  
of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**

Injongoyaloluphenyokutholaukuthi abantwanabayazi yini indlela abahlukumezekangazonok  
uthilokhukuhlukumezeka hekunamthelela muni ekufundeninasempilweniyomfundi.

yiziphifuthi izindlela ezingasetshenziswaukunqandalokhukuhlukumezeka. Yini imbangelayalok  
hukuhlukumezana.

Kuloluphenyozobuzwawedwauphinde ubuzwekanyenabanye abafundi. Loluphenyoluzothatha  
izinsukue zine kuphela enyanjenieyodwa. Luzobelwenzekakanyengesontongemuvakokuphuma  
kwesikole. Igamalakho angekelisetshenziswe umase kubhalwanomakuxoxwanaweukuze uvikele

ke.Ukubambaiqhazakuloluphenyoakuphoqiqwe.Ukhululekileukuhoxanomayininiumauzwaun  
gakhululekile.Ukutholaulwaziolunyemayelananaloluphenyongaxhumanakanyenomalulekiw  
ami **uPhrofesa Pholoho Morojelee** NyuvesiyaKwaZuluNatalikulelikhelielilandelayo:

Tel: 0710410352

Email: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

Ngicelaukukwazisaukuthiangekeutholeluthoekubambenikwakhoiqhazakuloluphenyo.

izimpendulonomaingxoxoiyobhalwaphansinomaiqoshwekwikhasethi. Uma

sekuqedweukubhalwangaloluphenyoizintoebesisetshenziswaziyokugcinwaumelulekiendawe

niiminyakaemihlanubeseziyalahlwangendlelaephephile

## **ISIFUNGO**

Mina \_\_\_\_\_ (amagamaapheleomntwana)

ngiqinisekisaukuthingiyakuqondakonkeokuchazwekulencwadifuthingyavumaukubambaiqhaz  
akuloluphenyo.

Ngiyaqondaukuthingikhululekileukuyekanomangasiphiisikhathiumasengifisaukuyeka .

Ngiyaziukuthingingahoxanomayininikuloluphenyomangingasathandi.

## **SAYINA**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **USUKU**

\_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3: Informed consent document: parents/guardians

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
Faculty of Education



School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605  
Durban

\_\_/\_\_/2013

Attention: The parent of a Child  
Sample Primary School  
Gingindlovu  
3800

Dear Sir/ Madam

**LETTER TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN REQUESTING FOR INFORMED  
CONSENT FOR HIS/HER CHILDS PARTICIPATION**

My name is Nqolobane Ntombela, an M Ed student in the school of Education and Social justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree fulfillment. Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission in advance from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and has been granted me. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in your school. The title of my study is: **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

The study aims at exploring the conflict at school and also how to reduce such conflict within the school. The planned study will focus on the school conflict and learners who are affected.

The study will use interviews, observations document review and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with 8 learners of the school. When doing observation I will be looking at the real condition of the school in terms of the learners who affected by conflicts and bullying. I will also listen to what respondents are saying and look what are they doing and take notes. I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in the meeting.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Respondent will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will voluntary which means that respondents may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they are willing to do so without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Prof Poloho Morojele at 0710410352. Email [morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:morojele@ukzn.ac.za).

In addition should you have any queries please feel free to contact me directly using the following contact details: Nqolobane Ntombela 0834338718.

Email [nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com](mailto:nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com)

Your positive response will be highly appreciated

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. N Ntombela

I.....(full name of respondent) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at anytime should I want to do so.

Signature of respondent:.....Date.....

Signature of witness:.....Date.....

Thanking you in advance

Mr. Nqolobane Ntombela



## Appendix 4: Informed consent document: permission letter to the school principal

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Faculty of Education



School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605  
Durban

\_\_/\_\_/2013

**Attention: The Principal**

Sonqoba Primary school  
P O Box 881  
Gingindlovu  
3800

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Nqolobane Ntombela, an M Ed student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree fulfillment. Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission in advice from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and are waiting for their response. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in your school. I further request to be part of the study. The title of my study: **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

The study aims to explore the dynamics of school violence and also how conflict can be reduce in schools. The planned study will focus on the learners who are experiencing conflict in the school.

The study will make use of interviews, observations, document review and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with 8 learners. When conducting interviews I will be looking at the real condition of the school in terms of broken windows, graffiti on the walls, theft, bullying, robbery the is occurring around the school. I will also to what respondents are saying and watch what they do and take notes.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Respondents will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be positively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which means that respondents may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they wish so without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project please feel free to contact my supervisor, Prof. Poloho Morojele 0710410352 email [morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:morojele@ukzn.ac.za). In addition should you have any queries contact me in the following contact details: Nqolobane Ntombela 0834338718 Email [nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com](mailto:nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com)

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. N Ntombela

I ..... (Full name of respondent)  
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedure for the study: **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

I have also received, read and understand the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at anytime should decide to do so.

Signature of respondent.....Date.....

Signature of witness.....Date.....

Thanking you in advance

Mr Nqolobane Ntombela

## Appendix 5: Informed consent document: permission letter to teachers

### UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

#### Faculty of Education



School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605  
Durban

\_\_/\_\_/2013

#### **Attention: The Teachers**

Sonqoba Primary school  
P O Box 881  
Gingindlovu  
3800

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

My name is Nqolobane Ntombela, an M Ed student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree fulfilment. Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission in advice from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and are waiting for their response. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in your school. I further request to be part of the study. The title of my study: **“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KwaZulu-Natal”**.

The study aims to explore the dynamics of school violence and also how conflict can be reduce in schools. The planned study will focus on the learners who are experiencing conflict in the school.

The study will make use of interviews, observations, document review and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with 8 learners. When conducting interviews I will be looking at the real condition of the school in terms of broken windows, graffiti on the walls, theft, bullying, robbery the is occurring around the school. I will also to what respondents are saying and watch what they do and take notes.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Respondents will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be positively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which means that respondents may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they wish so without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project please feel free to contact my supervisor, Prof. Poloho Morojele 0710410352 email [morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:morojele@ukzn.ac.za). In addition should you have any queries contact me in the following contact details: Nqolobane Ntombela 0834338718 Email [nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com](mailto:nqolobanentombela1@gmail.com)

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advince

Yours sincerely

Mr N Ntombela

I ..... (Full name of respondent)

hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedure for the study: The learner conflict within the spaces and places: The case of one primary school in KZN.

I have also received, read and understand the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at anytime should decide to do so.

Signature of respondent.....Date.....

Signature of witness.....Date.....

Thanking you in advance

Mr Nqolobane Ntombela

## Appendix 6 - Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University Of Kwa-Zulu Natal



26 April 2013

**Professor A Muthukrishna 845**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

**Expedited approval**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.






I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Dr P Morojele  
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids  
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Professor S Collings (Chair)  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za /  
snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za  
Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix 7 - Ethical Clearance Certificate from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education



education

Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8

Prof. N Muthukrishna & Dr P Morojele  
P O Box X03  
ASHWOOD  
3605

Dear Prof. Muthukrishna and Dr Morojele

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Umlazi District  
Sisonke District  
Zululand District

Othukela District  
Pinetown District  
Illembe District

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 19 November 2013

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 Fax: 033 392 1203

EMAIL ADDRESS: [kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za); CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty

WEBSITE: [www.kzneducation.gov.za](http://www.kzneducation.gov.za)



## Appendix 8 - Turnitin Report



### Turnitin Originality Report

Learner conflict within spaces and places:

The case of one primary school in Kwa

Zulu Natal by N Ntombela

From MEd Social (MEd Social Justice)

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## **Appendix 9 - Letter from Language Editor**

K Maduray  
131 Silvermount Circle  
Moorton  
Chatsworth  
South Africa  
4092

vaneshree.maduray@yahoo.com  
C: 072 467 2797  
H: 031 404 8063

---

15 December 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have:

- carried out language editing
- made suggestions for the student to address at his/her discretion

on the dissertation:

**“Learner conflict within school spaces and places: The case of one primary school in  
KwaZulu-Natal”**

by

**Nqolobane Ntombela**

K Maduray  
(Language Editor)