

**DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE: EXPLORING
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE
IN POST-CONFLICT SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

BY

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the College of Humanities:
School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

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Date submitted: December 2013

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Sipiwe Eric Mthiyane, declare that: **“Dynamics of school-based violence: Exploring school governing bodies in addressing violence in post-conflict South African schools”** is my own original work and that:

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I, Professor V.S. Mncube,

As the candidate's Supervisor agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

Supervisor's signature

Date

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DEDICATION

This thesis is especially dedicated to:

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing and widespread problem of violence in South African schools which ultimately results in problems of governance and management. School violence manifests itself in many forms including discipline problems such as fighting among learners, bullying, utterances of crude and sexist remarks against fellow learners and teachers, racism, stabbings, shootings at schools and even murder. According to a report by the South African Institute of Race Relations (2008), South African schools are among the most dangerous in the world. This SAIRR report followed media reports of school violence and lawlessness of all kinds engulfing South African schools. Surveys conducted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) on school violence found that only 23% of South African learners felt safe at school.

Working within the emancipatory paradigm and employing a qualitative methodological approach, this case study explored the role of school governing bodies in addressing violence in South African schools. Conceptualised within the social control and social reproduction theories, this study aimed to: elicit perceptions and experiences of school governors and other school members about school violence in the four case schools; to explore the initiatives employed by school governing bodies to combat school violence; and to investigate if school governing bodies are the most appropriate tools to reduce violence in post-conflict South African schools.

All ethical issues were observed before data was generated. To ensure trustworthiness of findings, multiple data generation instruments such as semi-structured and focus group interviews, observations and documents review were utilised. Content analysis was employed to analyse the data. Social control and social reproduction theories were utilised as overarching analytical framework to analyse the data. The conclusions arrived at indicate that SGBs face a cocktail of challenges in curbing school violence and maintaining discipline and safety among learners; some learners view their schools as not doing enough to address violence against them and thus resort to taking the law into their hands to ensure that justice is done; some schools do not follow 'due process' when charging the learners for misconduct; the majority of participants expressed doubts about the SGBs as the most appropriate tools to deal with school violence. Based on the findings and conclusions, this study recommends a 'whole-school and integrated approach' to addressing school violence.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE STUDY

PDoE	Provincial Department of Education
SASA	South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
DSSC	Discipline, Safety and Security Committee
TLO	Teacher Liaison Officer
LO	Life Orientation
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SANCA	South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
NICRO	SA National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders
SAPS	South African Police Service
CPF	Community Policing Forum
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Violence is not an inevitable consequence of the human condition... Protecting young children from violence has vast potential for reducing all forms of violence in society, as well as reducing the long-term social and health consequences of violence against children.

The World Report on Violence against Children (2006, p.6)

To enter education in this day and age is to agree that we understand school violence as a very real possibility and that part of what we do as educators is work to prevent any further occurrence of these types of violence.

Thompson, Burcham and McLaughlin (2010, p.229).

The above statements which acknowledge the existence of violence in schools and the responsibility to protect children are apt quotations for this introductory chapter which is designed to give a bird's eye view of the entire research project on the dynamics of school-based violence and the role played by school governing bodies (SGBs) in reducing it in secondary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) posit that school violence claims the lives and jeopardises learners' opportunities to make use of the learning opportunities that schools should offer. Creating and maintaining a safe, violence-free and disciplined school environment is one of the most critical challenges facing school governing bodies, principals, educators and learners (De Wet, 2007). Similarly, Mestry and Khumalo (2012) state that the school governing bodies have a legal duty to ensure correct structures and procedures are put in place so that any disciplinary measures taken against ill-disciplined learners are administered fairly and reasonably in accordance with the law. It is important at this juncture to explain that there is a permeable interface between the school governing body and the school management committee (SMT) led by the school principal. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the policy-making function is vested in its school governing body while the implementation of such policies is a delegated responsibility of the school principal and his/her

SMT. This relationship will further be explicitly discussed when presenting Literature review in Chapter Two as well as findings in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

In this introductory chapter, I briefly discuss the background to the study, the role of the Code of Conduct for learners in maintaining school discipline and ensuring an orderly environment conducive for effective teaching and learning; the power to search learners; rationale and motivation for the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, theoretical frameworks, research aims and questions, research design and methodology, ethical issues, limitations of the study, validity and reliability issues. The chapter concludes by outlining the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the study

There is a burgeoning literature which suggests there is a growing and widespread problem of violence in both developed and developing countries (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Harber, 2001 & 2004; Panos, 2003; Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006) and South Africa is no exception (Burton, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Burton & Leoschut, 2012 & UNISA, 2012). This violence is spilling over to schools which in turn contributes to high levels of truancy and school drop-out rates, with some schools even hindered in their effective functioning, among other things (Zulu, Urbani, Van der Merwe & Van der Walt, 2004; Outwater, Abrahams & Campbell, 2005; Prinsloo, 2006; Wilson, 2008). This is in turn fuelled by regular reports from newspapers and the electronic media about school violence where learners and even teachers, are stabbed to death at schools, bullied, tormented and sexually harassed by other learners and teachers. To illustrate the extent of this violence, a female teacher was stabbed to death by a learner at a township school west of Pinetown in 2007 allegedly for reporting him to the school authorities for copying during an examination session (News24.com, 2007). In addition, findings in a study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2012, p.11), they found that "...one in five learners (22.2%) had succumbed to some form of violence while at school." These figures translate to over a million learners who had been violently victimised while at school during the research period (August 2011-August 2012). One of the startling findings of this study was that, when comparing the 2008 (20%) and 2012 (20.2%) results, the data indicated that school violence remained relatively constant over the past four years despite the many efforts to tackle the problem.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Van der Walt and Oosthuizen (2006) in the North West Province of South Africa, these researchers found that township schools still seemed to suffer from the disruptive after-effects of the struggle against apartheid that had disrupted their teaching and learning climates. They did not seem to have recovered yet from the ravages of their struggle past. In addition, stories of learner indiscipline and violence from critical friends who are teachers, seem to give credence to the perception that all is not well in some of our schools. Initially, violence in South Africa was inspired by the socio-political system of apartheid and the struggle to eliminate it (Hoffmann & McKendrick, 1990). However, the demise of apartheid in 1994 did not necessarily mean the end of violence. Instead, it continued but changed its form (Burton, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011) from being politically to being criminally inspired and in some cases, has its roots in the apartheid era. These findings on violence in South African schools and in society in general seem to lend credence to the notion that the South African society has accepted violence as way of life.

Furthermore, many learners come from situations where unemployment, poverty, various types of violence and abuse are the norm (Burton, 2008). Linked to this poverty-stricken environment are issues of survival where some youth find solace in joining gangs. Research has shown that most gang-related violence in schools is caused by out-of-school and out-of-work youth and these usually come from areas of poor socio-economic backgrounds (Burton, 2008). Barker and Ricardo also (2005) state that South Africa has one of the highest homicide and sexual violence rates in the world. According to the statistics from the Crime Report 2010/2011 of the South African Police Services, there were 15 940 people murdered and 70 514 raped in South Africa in the reporting year. The figures for 2011/2012 released in September 2012 show that 15 609 were murdered while 64 514 were raped in the reporting year. Even though the latest figures indicate a slight drop from the previous year's statistics, these are still alarmingly high for a country whose population is 51 million (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Shockingly, these figures also indicate that of the murdered people, 793 were children while there were 25 862 rapes involving children (*SAPS Crime Statistics Overview Report, 2011/2012*). These figures confirm the perception that South Africa is a very violent country when considering that she only has a population of slightly more than 50 million citizens (Census, 2011). It is evident that the high crime rate in the country and in the communities in particular has a direct bearing on the schools as they form part

of that community. Barker and Ricardo (2005) posit that an array of factors cause young people to get involved in crime, such as the inability of families to provide social control and constructive guidance, and socialisation into violent versions of manhood associated with rebellion and attaining quick financial rewards. Hunt (2007) also found that corporal punishment was still used in three out of four of her researched schools in the Cape Town area and that pupils experienced incidents of verbal insult and humiliation. The widespread use of corporal punishment at schools, despite it being illegal, is also cited by Morrel (1999 & 2002), The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), Burton, Leoschut and Bonora (2009) in their studies of school violence in South Africa.

Furthermore, Pillay and Ragpot (2010) posit that in South Africa, even though laws have changed as a result of the new democratic dispensation after 1994, the residual effects of the violent history of apartheid still remain. Similarly, Swart (2007) also notes that many black people still recall the violent nature of community life during their childhood and during the political uprisings. In addition, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News Report of 12 March 2008 also maintains that democracy in South Africa is under threat from violence and the country was unlikely to develop into a fully-fledged democracy unless an attempt is made to uproot violence in the country and in its schools. School-based violence manifests itself through discipline problems and as such, any discussion to resolve it will have to incorporate learner and teacher discipline (UNISA Report on The Dynamics of Violence in South African schools, 2012). According to statistics published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 2008), South African schools are among the most dangerous in the world in contrast to schools in Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark which are perceived as among the safest in the world. This report followed media reports of shootings, sexual violence and harassment, abduction of school girls and rape, assault/stabbings and robberies, fighting among learners, bullying, gangsterism, violence by learners against teachers and vice versa; carrying of guns and other dangerous weapons at schools, racism and discrimination, xenophobic attacks and truancy to general lawlessness at South African schools.

In the same vein, the surveys conducted by both the SAIRR (2008) and the HSRC (2005) suggest that some South African schools were not safe havens for many learners. They suffer ill-treatment, sexual harassment, frequent beatings and bullying, abuse and discrimination at the

hands of both peers and teachers. Violence inside and outside schools, especially against girls, was a serious problem and in some cases resulted in some learners dropping out of schools. This finding is also affirmed by a report by Transparency International (Grobbelaar, 2011) which showed that one in four children in the studied schools in South Africa said schools were unsafe and that rape and violence were major problems. In addition, a study on school violence conducted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) and Leoschut (2009) found that schools appear to be environments that elicit feelings of apprehension, with 10.2% of the 4391 young people surveyed indicating feeling unsafe while at school and 9.9% reporting that there was a particular place at school they were scared of. Further, 13.6% of the sampled learners feared travelling to and from school. Feelings of fear were largely attributed to fear of criminals (47.2%), highlighting the extent to which community crime has penetrated South African schools resulting in schools becoming places of fear and anxiety rather than safety for many learners. Being afraid of getting hurt (40%) and fear of classmates and friends (9.8%) were commonly identified as reasons for feeling unsafe at school (Leoschut, 2009). Similarly, studies conducted internationally (Preble & Gordon, 2011; Davis & Nixon, 2011) seem to suggest that the South African case is not an isolated one when it comes to learners feeling physically or emotionally unsafe at schools. In their study on perceptions of safety on elementary school students in the United States, Preble and Gordon (2011) found that nearly 20% of students reported feeling physically or emotionally unsafe at school while Davis and Nixon (2011) reported almost similar findings of 22%.

Promoting and ensuring safety of learners and educators in schools has thus become one of the biggest challenges facing the South African education system as well. To this end, the government has introduced numerous pieces of legislation, policies and programmes (banning corporal punishment at schools, mandating schools to have codes of conduct for learners, allowing schools to search learners for dangerous weapons and banning initiation of learners at schools) to stem the tide of violence besetting schools (Review of National Policies for Education-South Africa, 2008) with very little tangible results that it is succeeding. In addition, the UNISA Report on The Dynamics of Violence in South African schools (2012) and Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) also state that violence in most schools has undermined the delivery of quality education to such an extent that the South African Government amended the South

African Schools Act 84 of 1996 with the Education Laws Amendment Act 31 of 2007. In addition, Section 8A of SASA as amended, gives school principals or their delegated officials, permission to do random searches on learners for drugs and dangerous weapons as well as drug testing. However, despite the presence of this law, the stabbing and killing of both learners and teachers still continues. Daily newspapers and the electronic media are replete with examples of these crimes. The focus of this study is therefore on the dynamics (ever-evolving/changing) nature of school violence in post-conflict South African schools and the role that could be played by school governing bodies in reducing it.

Numerous provisions contained in the Bill of Rights (Chapter Two of the South African Constitution, Act No. 108 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (especially sections 8, 8A, 10 and 10A) protect the rights of learners to study in a safe environment, which is free from all forms of violence including initiation of learners (practice of physical and emotional humiliation of young and new learners at a school as a form of inducting them into the new school). Learners have the right: freedom from racial and gender discrimination, human dignity, freedom and security of the person, the right to be free from all forms of violence and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way, be protected from maltreatment, neglect and abuse or degradation and to a basic education (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). These rights are or have the potential of being infringed by the perpetuation of school-based violence or the tangible threat thereof (South African Human Rights Commission, 2006). The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2006) further reported that one in five learners (21%) had been threatened or hurt by someone at school, and a third (33%) had been verbally abused by someone at school. The perpetrators of school violence are often learners at school, classmates and other young people in the community or sometimes teachers. Statistics on the numbers of young people in prison provide some indication of the extent of involvement of youth as perpetrators of crime and violence (SAPS Report, 2011/2012).

In another similar study, Besen (2008) also found more worrying trends of violence in schools such as the degree of sexual harassment and rape of female, gay and lesbian pupils (the so-called 'corrective rape'), making schools unsafe for lesbians, gays, bi-sexual and transgendered

learners. In addition, there is a new form of violence in South Africa, commonly known as xenophobia where some South African citizens attack and kill foreigners; there is also gangsterism, bullying and racism, to mention a few (Leoschut, 2009). Research by the SAHRC (2006) suggests that perpetrators of violence are pupils and teachers, with both groups carrying the brunt of continuous bullying, gender-based violence, accidental violence, sexual assault or harassment, physical violence and psychological violence. The study by Human Rights Watch (2001) suggests that there is widespread sexual misconduct where teachers engage in serious sexual misconduct with under-age female learners. These findings were based on interviews with educators, social workers, learners and parents. Teachers have raped, sexually assaulted and otherwise sexually abused girls. Sometimes reinforcing sexual demands with threats of physical violence or corporal punishment, teachers have sexually propositioned girls and verbally degraded them using highly sexualised language. At times, sexual relations between teachers and students did not involve an overt use of force or threats of force, rather teachers would abuse their authority by offering better grades or money to pressure girls for sexual favours or “dating relationships” (Human Rights Watch, 2001 p.37). For example, in some schools in South Africa there was a disturbing trend in which schoolgirls allegedly voluntarily engaged in sexual activity with teachers to earn good marks and this tendency was termed Sexually Transmitted Marks (STMs) (Monama, 2008).

Further, there also exists a growing phenomenon of what is termed "corrective rape", where a male rapes a lesbian pupil to “cure” or "make her heterosexual" (South African Human Rights Commission & Actionaid, 2009). Recent newspaper reports on corrective rape suggest this phenomenon is increasing (Taylor, 2011; Fihlani, 2011 & Smith, 2011). These reports further state that lesbian South Africans live in fear as rape and murder become a daily threat in the townships they call home. In addition, more than 30 women were murdered in the recent past (Taylor, 2011) while approximately 510 lesbians had reported corrective rape (Smith, 2011). The UNISA Report on The Dynamics of Violence in South African schools (2012) also reported a culture of silence surrounding gender violence in schools, despite this becoming a norm in ‘black’ urban and rural schools. Most teachers who violate girl children get away with it because victims do not report it as they are afraid of being blamed or victimised by parents and other teachers which, as the authors state, highlights an unhealthy over-respect for the teachers, and

this perpetuates the myth that the person who was raped must have asked for it. Aitken and Seedat (2010) also corroborate the view that there is a culture of silence surrounding violence as the most frequent forms of violence often go unreported and therefore become implicitly tolerated or even actively condoned by society in general.

The use of corporal punishment in schools has been used to silence learners in order to promote authoritarianism. South African schools have traditionally been authoritarian institutions stressing obedience, conformity and passivity (Harber, 2004). This authoritarianism manifested itself in the widespread use of officially sanctioned violence against children in the form of corporal punishment (Holdstock, 1990). Section 10 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 illegalises corporal punishment in South African schools, though it is still commonly used (Morrell, 1999 & 2002; Hunt, 2007) and still supported by many parents and students (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Burton, Leoschut & Bonora, 2009). Consequently, an educator who administers corporal punishment to a learner at school may be charged for assault. However, the abolition of corporal punishment left a definite vacuum in methods dealing with serious learner misconduct (Wolhuter, 2003). In defiance of the law on corporal punishment, in KwaZulu-Natal, the former Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of Education (Mrs Ka-Nkosi Shandu) openly showed support for corporal punishment despite the fact that: "...numerous studies have shown that far from curbing violence, corporal punishment in fact encourages anti-social aggression, vandalism and perpetuates the cycle of violence" (Vally, 1999, p.9).

Further, school-based violence affects both primary and secondary schools and has negative repercussions for school learners. In a study by Bhana (2006), she found that a situation exists where fear and corporal punishment often characterise the classroom atmosphere. Bhana (2006) further states that violence in these classrooms flourishes so that physical violence is a striking characteristic of young boys interaction with girls, such that the boys use their greater body size and strength to bully, control and get rewards by stealing things – and feel they are entitled to do so. Also evident in the power over girls is the verbal and physical harassment relating to sexuality. Further, research by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) suggests that schools are not happy or safe havens for many learners as they suffer maltreatment, discrimination and abuse at the hands of both peers and educators. There is widespread evidence of sexual harassment,

bullying and frequent beatings by teachers. These acts, rather than encouraging and inviting learners to schools, drive them away from the love of education and schooling.

It is against this rather bleak background that I was motivated to undertake this study to elicit perceptions and experiences of school governors about school violence and to identify policies, measures and initiatives taken by school governing bodies to promote a violence-free or secure environment in the schools, and protect learners and teachers against harm.

1.3 The Code of conduct for learners and power to search learners

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, in particular Section 8, states that a school governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school. According to this Act, the code of conduct for learners must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process. The code of conduct is a deliberate tool designed by the state for governing bodies to maintain discipline for learners in schools. It is also mandatory that all learners should comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such learners (Section 8[4] of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996). In addition, a code of conduct must contain provisions of *due process* which should encompass rules of natural justice as well as principles of procedural fairness, namely: *audi alteram partem* (listen to both sides); *nemo iudex in re sua* (no one can be a judge in his own case); *ultra vires* (beyond legal authority) and *in loco parentis* (in the place of a parent) in safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings (Shaba, 1998 & 2003; Joubert, 2008). It is the code of conduct that is a legal entity that should be used to foster discipline in a more democratic way. For the code of conduct to be valid and function effectively, it should be consistent with the current laws of the country and should be kept up to date. The crux of this study therefore, is to examine the manner in which SGBs, through the code of conduct, could be effectively used to reduce violence in schools.

Due to high levels of crime and violence in schools, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2008) conducted an enquiry to investigate the observance of the provisions contained in the Bill of Rights that protect the rights of learners to study in a safe environment, which is free from all forms of violence and whether such incidents, as may be

manifested, constitute a violation of certain rights as set out in the Bill of Rights. Further, to stem the tide of school violence, the South African government amended the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and passed the *Education Laws Amendment Act 31, 2007*. Section 8A of the amended law allows for the search and seizure of illegal drugs and dangerous weapons at schools. School principals or their delegates are now legally authorised to search suspected learners for illegal drugs and dangerous weapons in order to have a safe environment in schools. Despite the existence of this Act, violent incidents continue at schools and most are due to the possession of weapons by learners, sexual abuse; substance abuse on school premises, etc. which have a debilitating effect on the morale of school managers, educators and governing bodies (SAHRC, 2008).

The UNISA Report on The Dynamics of Violence in South African schools (2012) contends that violence in most schools has undermined the delivery of quality education despite the presence of this law. Stabbings and killings of both learners and teachers still continue; and illegal objects and drugs still find their way into the schools. In addition, Goldstein and Conoley (2004, p.9) posit that:

The nature of leadership and governance in a school can be a major correlate of violence within its walls. A firm, fair, consistent principalship style has been shown to be associated with low levels of student aggression. High levels of arbitrary leadership and severe disciplinary actions tend to characterise schools experiencing high levels of aggression.

The focus of this study is therefore to explore the dynamics of school-based violence in post-conflict South African schools and the role that could be played by school governing bodies in reducing it.

1.4 Rationale and motivation for the study

I have worked as an educator, school principal and school-governance workshops facilitator for twenty-two years in KwaZulu-Natal and have experienced authoritarian management in schools (during the apartheid era) and witnessed violence at schools in the form of corporal punishment meted out to learners by educators even though it was made illegal by Section 10 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 many years ago. I have also witnessed other forms of school

violence such as fighting amongst learners, stabbings of learners by other learners, bullying, gangsterism, use of highly sexualised language against girls by boys and vice versa, use of crude language by school boys against female educators, etc. and this has tended to perpetuate school violence. This violence tends to beget more violence as victims begin to believe that they should fight back by using violence or counter-violence to resolve their differences.

I am also motivated to pursue this study because I want to explore whether school governing bodies are the most appropriate structures to address school violence. Further, I am motivated to explore to what extent, if any, is school violence as a result of the legacies of apartheid and what can be done to address it especially at a school governing body level. Having adopted code of conduct for learners at schools, the study seeks to explore other more effective strategies that could be employed by the school governing bodies to arrest the wave of violence engulfing schools in South Africa.

As stated above, I have also facilitated school governance training workshops for many years in Durban and the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal and as a result I know most of the schools and principals who formed part of this study. I also have good professional working relationships with all of them and therefore, it was not be problematic for me to gain access and permission to conduct my research in their schools. Further, I currently work as a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the motivation I have received from my supervisor and immediate colleagues has encouraged me to embark on this study. This research was conducted at four selected secondary schools in the Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal. The research project was an empirical study which aimed to explore the dynamics of school-based violence and the role of school governing bodies in reducing it in post-conflict South African schools.

1.5 Research aims and questions

This research project was driven by the following aims:

- To elicit perceptions and experiences of participants about school violence.
- To investigate the causes of school violence in the researched schools.
- To explore the types of violence that plagued the researched schools.
- To identify measures taken by schools to prevent school violence.

- To elicit perceptions of participants on whether the school governing bodies were the most appropriate structure to deal with violence in schools.

In pursuit of the above aims, this research project was guided by the following broad critical questions:

- What are perceptions and experiences of participants about school violence?
- What are the causes of school violence in the researched schools?
- What are the types of violence that plagued the researched schools?
- How do the researched schools prevent violence that they experience?
- What are the perceptions of participants on the appropriateness/relevance of the school governing bodies to deal with violence in schools?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study hopes to make a contribution to national and international debates by providing some insights into how school governing bodies could be effectively used to curb violence in schools. Studies have been conducted on the nature, patterns and extent of violence internationally and in South African schools (Vally, 1999; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Panos, 2003; South African Human Right Commission, 2006; Dunne, Leach & Humphreys, 2006; Burton, 2008; South African Institute of Race Relations, 2008; Leoschut, 2009; Burton, Leoschut & Bonora, 2009; Barnes, Brynard & de Wet, 2012) but this study purports to examine the manner in which school governing bodies, through the code of conduct for learners, could be used to reduce violence and other indiscipline problems in schools. In a study conducted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), this study showed that only 23% of South African learners said they felt safe at schools. In addition, some schools were found not to be happy or safe havens for many learners as they suffered maltreatment, discrimination and abuse at the hands of both peers and educators. The study also found widespread evidence of sexual harassment, bullying and frequent beatings by teachers. It is my belief that these violent acts, rather than encouraging and inviting learners to schools, drive them away from the love of education and schooling and thus are worth exploring further.

Further, studies conducted by Dunne and Leach (2007) on school violence in Botswana and Ghana analysed the way in which space and spatiality in everyday schooling provides a context

through which gender identities and conflictual relations are produced. In another study by Smith (2007) on education and conflict, he looked at various perspectives to explain causes of conflicts. These were political explanations, economic explanations, socio-cultural explanations and he found that education was implicated in all of these perspectives. Of relevance to every education system is a growing recognition that education can never be value free (West, 2007). Whilst it is an extremely effective tool for human development, it also carries the potential to condone or promote ideas, attitudes and behaviours that form the basis for conflict. West (2007) further contends that alongside the need for all education systems to be more conflict-sensitive, there are additional challenges that arise for the provision of education in situations of violent conflict, as a part of post-conflict reconstruction and as a means towards longer term reconciliation and peace-building.

Further, a study on school violence in a few Durban schools conducted by Singh (2006) focused specifically on teachers as victims of violence. A similar study was conducted by West (2007) in Australia and he also found that student violence against teachers was not uncommon and there was a need for greater attention in research and practice. He further found that male students were the most frequent perpetrators of all categories of violence in schools. West (2007) also states that there is a lot of under-reporting of incidents of student violence towards teachers and this poses significant challenges for educational planners and authorities to address issues of student violence to which teachers are exposed to on a daily basis. A similar finding on under-reporting of school violence incidents was reported by Burton (2008) in his study in South African schools. In another study on school violence in a few Cape Town schools, Hunt (2007) highlighted how deep-rooted tensions between staff and students were being reinvented in schools around a rejection of post-apartheid policy on student rights.

In addition, South Africa has had exposure to democratic schooling since January 1997 (when SASA became law in schools). School governing bodies, as custodians of discipline, safety and security at schools have, therefore, been around for a while now. However, the levels of violence in South African schools seem to be getting worse (Du Plessis & Loock, 2006; Wolhuter & van Staden, 2006; Roussouw, van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2007). School-based violence, as indicated earlier, manifests itself in many different forms. Newspapers and the electronic media

are replete with statistics of these crimes, ranging from sexual violence and harassment, abduction of school girls and rape, assault/stabbings and robberies, fighting among learners, bullying, gangsterism, violence by learners against teachers and vice versa; carrying of guns and other dangerous weapons at schools, racism and discrimination, xenophobic attacks and truancy to general lawlessness (Human Rights Commission : Report of the Public Hearing on School Based Violence, 2006).

Another research study '*Scared at school*' by the Human Rights Watch (2001) looked directly at the incidence of sexual violence against girls in South African schools and found that many girls experience sexually related violence in schools. They are raped, sexually abused, sexually harassed and assaulted at school by both male learners and educators. The report also noted that, although girls in South Africa have better access to school than their counterparts in other sub-Saharan African states, they are confronted with levels of sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools that impede their access to education on equal terms with male students. Many girls interrupt or leave school altogether because they feel unsafe in such a violent environment. Other girls stay at school but suffer in silence, having learnt that submission may be a survival skill and that sexual violence at school is inescapable (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The above research findings and the case of DA, the fifteen-year-old learner who describes sexual harassment at her school, are clear examples of girls who are denied the opportunity of equal education:

All the touching at school in class, in the corridors, all day, every day, bothers me.
Boys touch your bum and your breasts. You won't finish work because they are pestering you the whole time.

(Human Rights Watch 2001, p.56).

The above study also indicates that:

... girls were learning that sexual violence and abuse are an inescapable part of going to school every day so they drop out. This then denies the learners access to education.

(Human Rights Watch 2001, p.56).

Burton (2008) further posits that South Africa is somewhat behind many countries in responding to violence in schools and the government has only recently acknowledged publicly that violence is a problem in South Africa's schools.

This present study is thus different from those presented above and therefore significant in that it sought to explore the dynamics of school-based violence in post-conflict South African schools and the role that could be played by the SGBs in reducing the levels of school such violence and ensure that both learners and educators were safe. It was also hoped that it would further deepen the debates on school violence research in South Africa.

This study is timely since school-based violence in South Africa has become an access problem - only 23% of South African pupils said they felt safe at schools; schools are not happy or safe havens for many learners who they suffer maltreatment, discrimination and abuse at the hands of both peers and educators (The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

1.7 Discussion of key concepts

In order to facilitate a common understanding, the broad definitions of key concepts frequently utilised throughout this thesis are provided below:

1.7.1 School violence

There are many complex and contested definitions and understandings of school violence (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007; De Wet, 2007; Parkes & Chege, 2010; Burton & Leoschut, 2012). According to these researchers, this contestation and different ways of understanding the meanings of it have produced different kinds of definitions which may be narrow and sometimes broad. This view is also shared by Galtung (1981) who states that no universally accepted typologies of violence exist and that no two researchers use the same definition. De Wet (2007, p.249) further posits that:

Violence in schools is present in any situation where a member of the school community (teacher, student, other education worker, parent or visitor) is intimidated, abused, threatened, or assaulted, or their property deliberately damaged by another member of that community or the public, arising out of their activities in a school.

In addition, De Wet (2007) states that school violence includes learner-to-learner violence, educator-to-learner violence as well as learner-to-educator violence. In addition, she posits that gravely serious acts of violence include suicide, rape, murder, drive-by shootings, and the firing of a gun in a crowded school corridor, possession of weapons on school property, extortion and vandalism of one another's property, interracial incidents as well as drug dealing and drug abuse. In addition to the above, The Medical Research Council (2008) in its definition of school violence includes fist fighting, taunting and intimidation, boys slapping and mistreating girls, bullying, gang activity and membership, the wearing of gang identification clothing or slogans, boys teasing and harassing girls, the use of alcohol and/or drugs in schools, group hazing, property or theft disputes, as well as cyberspace and short messaging system (sms) harassment may be seen as potentially serious violent behaviour.

While Miller and Kraus' (2010, p.15) definition of violence also includes the physical nature of violence, it also notes and acknowledges the psychological nature of school violence when the postulate that:

School violence includes but is not limited to such behaviours as child and teacher victimisation, child and/or teacher perpetration, physical and psychological exploitation, cyber victimisation, cyber threats, fighting, bullying, classroom disorder, physical and psychological injury to teacher and student, cult-related behaviour and activities, sexual and other boundary violations, and use of weapons in the school environment.

It is interesting that Greene's (2008, p.12) description of school violence, while similar in many ways to the above cited researchers, includes the locality of school violence:

...as violence that occurs on school grounds, on school-supported transportation, and at school-sponsored activities. It is an intentional form of behaviour in which one person threatens, attempts to harm or does harm another person. Aggression is generally defined as a low-level violence that includes verbal, physical or gestural behaviour that is intended to cause minor harm, psychological distress, intimidation, or to induce fear in another.

As already indicated above, Green (2008) differentiates between school-based and societal-based violence but he nevertheless accepts that violence that is committed on school grounds often derives from conflicts that emerge in the community outside the school.

The general definition of violence by the World Health Organisation (2002) is very significant and necessary in my view even for school violence, in that violence is defined in a more inclusive and integrated manner to encompass the wider context of violence in shaping the more visible forms of physical violence manifested by learners at school. The World Health Organisation (2002, p.5) defines violence as:

...the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

Pillay and Ragpot (2010) further classify violence against others into collective and interpersonal characteristics. Collective violence is inflicted by large groups of individuals, nations or states, and takes the form of social, political and economic violence. The apartheid regime, the treatment of refugee communities like Darfur, and genocidal acts are all examples of state-sponsored collective violence. Group conflicts and intercommunity violence emanating from differences in race, ethnicity, gender, ideology and nationality, are also examples of collective violence that plague many parts of the developing world. There may be some connection between collective violence that breeds interpersonal violence. Interpersonal violence results from the interaction of people which is not directed at furthering the cause of a specific group. Yet, in collective violence there is a breeding ground for interpersonal violence, such as the raping of women in ideological conflict. Violence against women and children is one of the most prevalent forms of interpersonal violence (Pillay & Ragpot, 2010) and it is no wonder it is the topic of many television talk shows aimed at helping women combat this scourge. In the South African context, this type of violence is so prevalent that annually, in December, the government has a programme called "Sixteen Days of Activism against women and child abuse." Regrettably, the regular news reports and statistics provided by the South African Police Services

every year seem to suggest the government and the South African population is not making significant inroads into this problem.

On the basis of all the above definitions and discussion, for me school, school violence is all-encompassing, inclusive and occurs at school or school-related functions and affects both learners and school personnel; may be direct or indirect, physical, sexual or psychological, may be intentional or unintentional and may originate from within or outside the school and is perpetrated by learners at school. This definition excludes violence committed by members of the community outside of the school.

1.7.2 School governance

In order to extend and deepen democracy (which includes relevant stakeholder participation) in South Africa and in schools in particular, the South African government passed the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. According to Section 16 (sub-section 1) of this Act as amended, the governance of every public school in South Africa is vested in its governing body. In terms of this Act, all public schools must have democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs) comprising the school principal, parents of learners at the school, learners in the eighth grade or higher of the school, educators at the school and non-teaching staff employed at the school. These stakeholders are democratically elected by the relevant constituencies. Mncube (2005) states that democratic school governance implies that all the stakeholders including parents, decide on school policies which affect the education of their children. This means there is a genuine handing over and sharing of power with concomitant responsibility and accountability, rather than a shifting of accountability and responsibility as most commentators suggest. In addition, Mncube (2007) posits that democratically governed schools function more effectively than their autocratic counterparts.

In my observations and experience as a teacher for more than fifteen years and school principal (for over ten years), this is true. I found that when all stakeholders were involved in the governance (and management) of the school, whatever problem that occurred, it was not for the principal alone but the entire school governing body. Further, if other people were involved in decision-making, we shared equally in the failure or success of the outcomes of the decisions.

My experience showed me that teachers, learners, parents and teacher unions want to be genuinely involved in decision-making at schools and would tend to support more those decisions where they were involved and this usually had effective and positive outcomes. On the other hand, I also noted that the above stakeholders detested strongly those principals whom they perceived to have undemocratic tendencies. In some cases, especially teachers and learners resisted such principals to such an extent that this led to disruptions of lessons or even the unceremonious removal of the school principals from schools. In the South African case, there is a distinction between school governance and school management. While school governors are responsible for school wide policy formulation, school management refers to the day-to-day management or professional management of the schools which is vested in the hands of the school principals and the other teaching and non-teaching personnel who are physically present at the school on a daily basis.

1.7.3 School discipline

The UNISA Report on The Dynamics of Violence in South African schools (2012) posits that closely linked to school-based violence is the issue of discipline in most schools. In addition, discipline at school has two very important goals which are to ensure safety of staff and learners, and to create an environment conducive to learning and teaching (Joubert, De Waal & Rossouw, 2004). These researchers further posit that discipline is about behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and developing self-discipline and self-control in learners. Similarly, according to Holdstock (1990), discipline refers to behaviour directed from within an individual and is not compliance with demands made by others. It also does not refer to behaviour motivated by fear. Discipline does not require punishment. Punishment, especially physical punishment, generates fear. In addition, discipline does not refer to the regimentation associated with most school procedures such as lining-up, sitting in straight rows, speaking only when spoken to by the teacher and a number of other rigid measures of control (Holdstock, 1990). In my view, discipline is also intrinsically generated in that a learner acts appropriately, not because of fear of violating any code of conduct, but because it is normal behaviour to display. Unfortunately, especially in South Africa, the greater the control that is exercised and the greater the subordination to that control, the better the 'discipline' is considered to be. However, discipline has little to do with the imposition of external rigid regulations. Rather,

rules concerning behaviour should be democratically negotiated with all those to be affected by them. At a school level, this means involving the learners in the crafting of classroom and school codes of conduct.

Even though the SASA requires that learners at secondary schools be included in the crafting of the school code of conduct for learners, my experience/observations as a teacher and a school principal suggest that even at primary schools, it works very well to have rules that are inclusive of learners' views. Further, learners feel a sense of ownership and adherence to the code of conduct if they know and were involved in its crafting. Regrettably, despite the extensive literature indicating the mutual exclusivity of corporal punishment and discipline (Holdstock, 1987; Morrell, 1999 & 2002), the mass of accumulated evidence is currently insufficient to break the stranglehold of the initial belief that discipline is instilled by corporal punishment (Holdstock, 1990). Teachers and parents tend to rely too much on power and force to instil discipline in their learners and children. A vicious cycle of violence thus becomes established hence the saying that violence breeds more violence.

1.7.4 Post-conflict South African society

In this thesis I argue that South Africa, like Liberia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Colombia, Chechnya, the Solomon Islands, etc. is just one example of the countries that can be said to be post-conflict societies (Fairbanks & Brennan, 2006). Post-conflict societies are those that have experienced civil strife such as that of apartheid violence conflict which afflicted South Africa before 1994.

The term '*post-conflict society*' as used in this thesis refers to countries that are undergoing a transition in the aftermath of a civil war or serious violent conflict (Kumar, 1999). Sometimes such civil wars end as a result of negotiated peace accords or after the victory of one party. These societies inherit a devastated political system, a fragmented society and a shattered economy. A general feature of post-conflict societies is the pervasive antagonism, mistrust, lack of faith, lack of social cohesion, dignity and trust among the former political adversaries, and hostility between the former political/religious opponents, even though peace has been agreed upon (Kumar, 1999). In my view, even though South Africa did not have a shattered political and

economic system, the lives of many South Africans were shattered in many ways by the vicious system of apartheid, e.g. the lives of thousands of people from all races who were caught up in the crossfire between the various opposing political parties. The wounds of the apartheid victims were laid bare by the revelations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the mid 1990s even though many were never healed. Economic disinvestment campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s also left the economy weak as many were left unemployed and therefore vulnerable in many ways, for example to criminal activity. In the mid-1990s a new political direction was pursued by the new government after the 1994 elections. This was meant to establish a new peaceful and democratic environment and to close the apartheid chapter and to heal the wounded and begin new lives for the South African people. Unfortunately, South Africa still has many features of a fragmented society such as lack of social cohesion, mistrust among various race groups even though as a country we like to embrace the notion of a rainbow nation, violence, racism, pervasive antagonism and many other features of a post-traumatic nature. In addition, the notion that South Africa is a post-conflict society with post-traumatic problems is echoed by various researchers (Jansen, 2011; Ramphela, 2012; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Khoza, 2002) and is discussed at length in Chapter Three. These problems are also clearly found at schools where sometimes a simple quarrel between learners can easily turn into a racial/tribal conflict. Similarly, the relationship between a post-conflict society and the challenges of school violence are also further explored in that chapter.

1.8 School violence and power dynamics

School violence, especially gender based violence (GBV) reflects socially ingrained gender-based power disparities which exist both inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, Antonowicz (2010) on her report on school violence in West Africa titled *Too often in SILENCE: A report on school-based violence in West and Central Africa* posits that schools are social spaces within which the power relationships, domination and discrimination practices of the community and wider society are reflected. This type of violence is grounded in social norms and gender based socialisation dynamics prevalent in parts of West and Central Africa, some parts in Asia (Harber, 2004; Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006) where male violence is widely accepted, and female submission encouraged. In addition, I would argue that this is also prevalent among patriarchal communities in Southern Africa too where women are socialised

into being polite, submissive and not to challenge male authority and domination. In contrast, boys are taught to be tough, masculine and to tolerate pain as a man. Crying among boys is strictly discouraged. Girls in and around schools across these regions, are particularly vulnerable to three forms of violence: sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Other forms of marginalisation which can increase girls' vulnerability are extreme poverty or disability (Leach, 2006). To illustrate this finding, my own observations as a teacher and a school principal in a township school in the north of Durban was that often poor young girls had intimate relations with men much older than themselves because those men provided them with money or any other material goods which their families sometimes could not. Sometimes even deliberately getting pregnant occurred as the girls desperately sought means to cling to their older boyfriends as they seen as were providers. This theme of school violence and power is elucidated further in the proceeding chapter.

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

This research report comprises nine chapters which are as follows:

Chapter One is an introductory chapter which provides the background to the study, the study focus, the problem statement, the research aims and critical questions guiding the study as well as the motivation and rationale for the study. It is also in this chapter that I define a few key terms used which form the basis of this study; provide the organisation of the thesis and conclude with a chapter summary.

Chapter Two reviews both international and national literature on school-based violence and the role of school governing bodies in reducing it in South African schools. It is also in this chapter where I explore the notion of South Africa as post-conflict society and how conflict impacts on education. The chapter concludes by discussing why South Africa rates among the most violent societies in the world and the implications of this for our schools.

Chapter Three presents and discusses the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study which are: schooling as social reproduction; theories of social control including issues of the impact of internal and external violence in schools; violence by omission; school as microcosm of its society and issues of impact of internal and external violence in schools.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the research design and methodology which is located within the emancipatory paradigm utilising a qualitative case study approach. As such, it uses qualitative methods of data generation which are interviews, documents review and observations. It also addresses all issues pertinent to research such as data generation and analysis procedures, trustworthiness of data, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

Owing to the voluminous nature of data generated during the study, it was necessary to divide the section on data findings and discussion into three chapters as follows:

Chapter Five presents and discusses experiences of school governors with regards to school violence using research questions posed to the research participants during the data generation stage and key issues from literature review and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Six presents and discusses the various measures taken by school governors to curb school violence.

Chapter Seven presents and discusses school organisation and management and how it shapes school violence.

Chapter Eight presents and discusses key emerging themes from the findings.

Chapter Nine is a concluding chapter and presents the conclusions and recommendations of this study as well as forward implications for further research on the role of school governing bodies in curbing school violence.

1.10 Chapter summary

This introductory chapter which was designed to give an overview of the entire research project on the dynamics of school-based violence and the role that could be played by school governing bodies (SGBs) in reducing it in post-conflict secondary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal has outlined the general background and overview of the key aspects of the entire study.

In addition, the focus, purpose and rationale, the significance of the study and key research questions were outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters of the thesis. In the proceeding chapter I discuss the literature that is pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

2.1 Introduction

The violence of the dominated is primarily the reproduction of a social violence of domination. The point is not to stigmatise the “poor” or to naturalise their violence, but to stress the fact that violence is a social construction which can therefore only be deconstructed socially.

Bourdieu (1997), cited in Debarbieux (2003, p.594).

The state of play in schools at the moment is thus one where girls and women are often placed in threatening and dangerous situations.... The issue of male teachers, of boys’ complicity in violence against girls and women, and violence against boys are all important.

(Mills, 2001, pp.3-5).

The burdensome legacy of South Africa’s violent apartheid system makes it even more critical and challenging for school authorities to stop violence in schools. Schools are spaces where violence remains prevalent because it is not effectively challenged by school authorities.

(George, 2005, p.1147).

Where the school is constructed as a space in which children can come and learn in a safe and protected environment, it appears that this is unfortunately not the case in the majority of schools within the South African society.

SACE School-based Violence Report, (2011, p.3).

Having introduced the study in the preceding chapter, this chapter prefaces with quotations on school violence and the role schools should play to reduce it, hence the literature review of the persistent problem of school-based violence, both internationally and in South Africa (Debarbieux, 2003; Astor, Benbenishty & Marachi, 2006; Eisenbraun, 2007; Edwards, 2008; Burton, 2008; Altun & Baker, 2010; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; UNISA, 2012; Burton &

Leoschut 2012). The chapter commences by discussing international and continental literature on school-based violence.

Further, the chapter presents a discussion on literature on internal and external violence in South African schools. For purposes of clarity, throughout this chapter, I differentiate between internal school violence (that which is generated within the school premises but may have origins outside the school) and external school violence (that which is generated externally to schools but has an impact on internal violence) and discuss these two separately. In addition, the causes of school violence; school violence and its relationship to academic achievement; learner drop-out rates and access to schooling are presented. Furthermore, it is in this chapter where I discuss the duty of school governing bodies to create safe schools in order to provide learners with a violence-free environment where teaching and learning can occur; the strategies utilised by school governing bodies to prevent school violence; school-based violence and the legacy of apartheid. The chapter then concludes by discussing why South African schools rate among the most violent in the world and how this impacts on schooling.

2.2 International literature on school-based violence

The empirical evidence indicates that almost all over the world the frequency and number of violent behaviours experienced at schools are increasing (Malete, 2007; Benbenishty & Astor, 2008; Astor, Benbenishty & Marachi, 2006; Edwards, 2008; Demaray, Malecki & DeLong, 2006; Debarbieux, 2003; Leach & Sitaram, 2007). The increasing incidents of violence in schools is not just an exclusive challenge of developed countries but is also observed in developing countries (Astor, *et al.*, 2006; Dunne, Leach & Humphreys, 2006). Regularly, the public is shocked by the vicious acts of irrational violence in their schools (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008). According to Elliot, Hamburg and Williams (1998), external violence on the streets and in some of the homes in the United States has trickled over into the schools. In contemporary years, the USA has been intensely shocked by several dramatic, inexplicable multiple killings of students at school by their classmates and others. The following are a few examples to illustrate this dilemma. In April 1999, two school boys at Columbine High School, Colorado in the United States of America, came to school armed with various weapons and killed 12 of their schoolmates and a teacher, and wounded 23 others before committing suicide (Mills, 2001).

However, Harber (2009) contests what Mills calls ‘inexplicable multiple killings of students’ and proceeds to explain that the shooters had been viciously humiliated by their peers in the presence of their teachers, who failed to intervene on their behalf despite the legal obligation to do so (*in loco parentis principle*). Also in a number of other cases it was reported that individual members of the school staff were aware that the shooters were being bullied or humiliated but did little to end the abuse. On the basis of this evidence, one can conclude that these shootings did not happen by accident. They were a culmination of interplay between the priorities of the cultural environment in which the schools operated the organisational structure of the school and the routine cognitive practices of its staff (Harber, 2009). The Columbine incident is in many ways similar to the story of a learner who committed suicide in a Soshanguve school (a township north of Pretoria). The boy had undergone a lengthy period of bullying by his peers and his teachers had done nothing to protect him despite reporting the matter several times to school authorities. This is in many ways violence by omission on the side of the teachers who unconsciously colluded with the perpetrators.

In another study conducted by Benbenishty and Astor (2008), these researchers also emphasise that school violence is a global phenomenon that affects one of the core institutions of modern society (the school) to some degree in almost all countries. Mills (2001) concurs with this view and posits that violence in schools is clearly disturbing to educators, parents, students and the broader community. To illustrate the seriousness of the problem, in Dunblane (United Kingdom) 16 children and a teacher were murdered (De Wet, 2007). De Wet further states that each year, numerous articles are published on interpersonal violence and vandalism across the world. According to one of these articles: “American children are at war and the school yard is a battlefield” and that ... “a wave of violence in Ontario involving students and schools resulted in the death of 3 teens in 3 separate incidents” (De Wet, 2007, p.248).

In the same vein, Debarbieux (2003) suggests that while school violence appears to be more prevalent in deprived communities, is also found in privileged schools. Edwards (2008) also seems to corroborate this view and states that there are much higher incidences of violence in communities where there is poverty and economic inequality, where racism and ethnic discrimination exist, where there are many single-parent families and familial abuse, where the

density of housing is extreme and where there is high population turnover. Even when taking both individual and family factors into account, the community context has a significant impact on the development of juvenile delinquency. My observations as a former teacher and school principal in a poor township school north of Durban has been that schools in poorer communities seem to have more incidents of violence than those in privileged communities and this has a relationship with the deprived nature of these schools. For many learners in these poor communities, sometimes life is a struggle for survival where other learners rob others of their possessions such as money learners bring to schools to buy food and this in turn increases incidents of fighting, bullying and violence. However, this does not mean in privileged community schools these incidents do not occur.

A study conducted in Australia (Mills, 2001) also found that violence based on gender, together with bullying, were the most systemic and constant forms of violence within Australian schools. In similar studies in developing contexts, Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006) examined the role of the school and of the peer group culture in constructing male and female identity among adolescents within the context of high levels of gender violence in developing countries. The study revealed a worrying sexual socialisation process in which male violence is accepted as the norm in adolescent relationships while obedience and tolerance continue to be expected of girls. In addition, these researchers reported what they called *implicit gender* violence (which relates to every day institutional structures and practices) and *explicit gender* violence (which relates to more overtly sexualised encounters). Similar to studies by Edwards (2008), Leach (2006) also argues that school-based violence is multifaceted and embedded in violence at family, community, national and international levels. Researchers such as Dunne, *et al.* (2006) also emphasise the importance of the school as both a social arena in the construction of gender/sexual identities and a location in which violence is perpetrated. Although not all schools are violent places, the study indicates that many practices of gender violence become institutionalised and accepted as part of the landscape of schooling. The close analysis of gender/sexual relations locates gender violence as an insidious and pervasive practice which is sustained through institutional structures and opportunities, albeit in a range of different manifestations and levels of severity (Dunne, *et al.*, 2006). Their study also reported the potentially damaging effects of gender violence in more social and personal terms. Gender

violence as integral to the school as a social institution presents serious challenges to the achievement of gender equality in education in the developing world. Data vary greatly on the prevalence of sexual exploitation; however the vocabulary used to describe sexual exploitation practices in schools reveals to a certain extent, the prevalence of the problem and tends to trivialise the exploitation. The most commonly reported practice of sexual exploitation is sex for grades, usually involving a male member of staff and a girl student. The persistence of sexual violence in schools may partly be caused by the absence or little reporting by female learners and teachers in both primary and secondary schools; and by the absence of a legal framework and norms regarding violence in educational settings. This is aggravated by inadequate school infrastructures and biases within curricula where violence is trivialised (Leach, 2006). Among the main consequences of sexual violence is unwanted early pregnancies, which can be detrimental to both maternal and child health and seriously compromise girls education. Gender based violence (GBV) is also one of the most common causes of girls dropping-out of school and therefore a constraint to both their economic and social participation (Leach, 2006).

Internationally, scholars have attempted to examine school-based violence from various perspectives. Leach and Humphreys (2007) draw attention to the gendered nature of violence in schools and argue that research into gender violence in schools is limited and has focused on investigating sexual harassment and abuse. These researchers suggest the need to reconsider the female/victim: male/villain dichotomy. This means looking beyond the obvious sensational forms of gender violence that grab the headlines to the more invisible forms often not perceived as violence, and/or not connected with gender, and addressing the way that school processes create the conditions for further violence. I discuss this further in this chapter drawing mainly on the work of Harber (2001, 2002, 2004, & 2008).

Further, all available studies confirm that victims of sexual abuse are mostly girls and women and that abuse is perpetrated mostly by men, be they teachers or school staff, other men from the community (young men, soldiers at check points, bus drivers, sugar daddies), or male students (Mills, 2001). Abuse happens in schools as well as on the way to/from school and in teachers' houses (Leach, 2006). Mills (2001) in his Australian study further posits that harassing behaviour springs from and reinforces the idea that boys are powerful and an esteemed sex and that the

girls' interests and concerns should come second. Poor performances, low participation in class, low self-esteem, irregular attendance and dropout for both boys and girls have all been associated with gender violence. Pregnancy and early marriage were seen as major reasons for girls' dropouts. The research (Mills, 2001; Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lemani & Machakanja, 2003; Leach, 2006; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Wane, 2009) also highlights how the experience of schooling is gendered through the control and use of space and resources, bullying, harassment and abuse. These researchers posit that schools have become breeding grounds for potentially damaging gendered practices, the influence of which stays with the learners into adult life. Sexual aggression goes largely unpunished, dominant male behaviour by both pupils and teachers is not questioned, and learners are encouraged to conform to the gendered roles and norms of interaction which they observe around them (Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lemani & Machakanja, 2003). Consequently, for both girls and boys, the outcomes of violence include disrupted education (absenteeism, changing of schools and sometimes dropping out of school), diminished school performance through trauma, emotional or behavioural disorder, and risk to health (Dunne, *et al.* 2006). In addition to this, De Wet (2007) also posits that fear of victimisation has been found to inhibit learners' educational and psychological development.

Further, Dunne, *et al.* (2006) state that there is also a desperate need for interventions to address and halt the damage and conflict that produce and reproduce irregular gender relations in all our social institutions. Within schools, teachers are key agents of interventions for change but they need to be supported through a whole school approach involving all role players to tackle gender violence in schools. Teachers, however, are gendered beings themselves, who need to be prepared, through deeper reflection and understanding, to confront their own attitudes and experiences regarding gender and violence. Given that some teachers are perpetrators of abuse, and others may be victims of abuse, it is important that strategies to address gender violence in schools acknowledge and address teachers' experiences as well as those of students.

Likewise, in Brazil and most of Latin American countries, Werthein (2003) states that school violence is also a pressing issue there. Werthein also acknowledge the multiplicity of violence meanings from the learners, parents, school principals and other stakeholders incorporating physical, discriminatory and social exclusion. According to Werthein (2003), the multiplicity of

perceptions of violence has implications for school leadership and management where some learners have reported feeling not stimulated or would prefer to be absent from school. De Mattos (2005) also studied violence in/and around schools in Brazil and found violence in alarming proportions at schools. Similarly to South Africa, Brazil is profoundly affected by social inequality and social exclusion noted by Werthein (2003). Consequently, the idea that schools are places for protection and also a place that needs to be protected by society no longer correspond to the reality of most school establishments. De Mattos (2005) has used the lenses of educational ethnography for more than 20 years to study school violence in Brazilian society. Her first investigations during the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed how power struggles within schools were associated with symbolic and physical violence, which perpetuated the failure of impoverished students. One of her first investigations was conducted in two distinct areas of Rio de Janeiro: with children and adolescents enrolled in basic education in a rural environment; and with pupils who came from the slum of Rocinha, the largest *favela* (informal settlement) of Rio de Janeiro. The study was published under the title “Picturing school failure” and revealed cases of physical abuse (fights and beatings) and verbal abuse (humiliation and labelling of learners by teachers). It also unveiled the massacre of students who ultimately were led to school dropouts - out of 46 participants of her study, 19 were murdered before their 20th birthdays (De Mattos, 2005).

As indicated in the previous chapter and the entire thesis, school violence is a global problem and Africa is no exception. In a study by Antonowicz (2010) on school violence in West and Central Africa, she found that corporal punishment and other forms of degrading punishment such as insults and threats were widely used in schools. Other forms of violence found were sexual violence, abuse and exploitation which happened in the schools, on the way to/from schools and in teachers’ houses and victims were mostly girls and perpetrators were mostly male teachers, their classmates and men from the community. Other forms of violence included psychological violence, bullying, learners being forced to do teachers’ domestic chores as a form of punishment. Antonowicz (2010) also posits that the level of violence in the home and the community also impacts on upon school-based violence, children and young people being likely to replicate in school the aggressive behaviours to which they are exposed outside of school on a regular basis. In the same vein, findings from studies on school violence conducted in other

countries in East and Southern Africa have found similar findings to those from West and Central Africa (Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lemani & Machakanja, 2003; Moore, Jones & Broadbent, 2008; Jones, Moore, Villar-Marquez & Broadbent, 2008). The literature presented above from other parts of Africa is not different either from that from South Africa which is discussed below.

2.3 Literature on school violence in South Africa

Similarly, as indicated in the introductory chapter, several studies on school-based violence have been conducted in South Africa (Harber, 2001 & 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Zulu, Urbani & Van der Merwe, 2004; Prinsloo, 2006; Singh, 2006; South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2007; Leach & Sitaram, 2007; De Wet, 2007; Jansen, 2008; Burton, 2008; Bester & du Plessis, 2010; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Burton & Leoschut, 2012; UNISA, 2012; Barnes, 2012) and the findings are consistent with the international ones, all pointing to the fact that school violence (bullying, assaults, robbery, physical violence perpetrated by learners on fellow learners, uttering of crude sexist and racist remarks on others, sexual harassment including rape, gender-based violence, fighting, carrying on dangerous weapons, use of drugs, etc.) in South Africa is escalating at an alarming rate, rendering some schools unsafe and threatening the well-being of many young people. In addition, in some cases, school violence is becoming a hindrance to access to education for millions of children worldwide (UN Children's Fund, 1998). According to Burton and Leoschut (2012), violence occurring at schools was not limited to incidents between learners, and included acts perpetrated against, and by educators. More than a quarter of school principals in their study claimed to have received reports of verbal violence, and more than a tenth received reports of physical violence in which educators were the aggressors. Educators were also often victims of verbal violence (52.1%), physical violence (12.4%) and sexual violence (3.3%) perpetrated by learners. Critical friends who teach especially at high schools (who are not necessarily part of this study) have indicated that school violence is also a serious issue in their schools where they do not feel safe. Some even note that they knew of some teachers who have left the profession because of this fear or if they had an alternative employment, they would also leave.

However, both the 2008 and 2012 reports on school violence conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) and the UNISA (2012) suggest that these startling findings should be contextualised within the family and community environments in which the learners reside. In this chapter and throughout the thesis, I discuss the perceived relationship between school violence and the family and community in which the learners live.

2.3.1 Internal or direct forms of school violence

The literature cited in the entire thesis suggest that there is a cocktail of violence in South African schools such as sexual harassment, gendered bullying (De Wet, 2005, 2007 & 2010; Prinsloo, 2006; Wilson, 2008; Burton, 2008) which includes exhibition, sexual propositioning/harassment, abduction of school girls and gang-rape [also called '*jackrolling*' in the Black South African townships] (Human Rights Watch, 2001); robberies, shootings, gangsterism, drug trafficking and related violence, theft of property and vandalism, racially motivated violence, student protests that turn violent, physical and verbal bullying and peer victimisation which includes punching, poking, strangling, kicking, hair pulling, biting, tripping, excessive tickling, violent assault and direct vandalism; persistent teasing, ridicule, taunts, gossip, threats, vulgar language, carrying of dangerous weapons, substance and drug abuse (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; SACE School-based Violence Report, 2011); cyber-bullying (via social forums such as '*Facebook*' and '*Twitter*' on the internet and cell phones) which is also seen as one of the most destructive forms of bullying because it gives perpetrators enormous power, scope and anonymity (Lo, 2012). An example of this is a 15-year old Krugersdorp High School learner who was filmed as she attacked a fellow pupil with a glass bottle at school (Nzama, 2008).

According to Janine Shamos (a teacher and former counsellor at South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), bullying is one of the greatest causes of sleeplessness, depression, anxiety, self-esteem problems and even suicide - among children and teens (Sunday Times, 2012). To illustrate the seriousness of this problem, in February 2012, a 16-year old Grade 10 Soshanguve pupil (north of Pretoria) hanged himself in his home after being beaten, called names and bullied by his classmates at school (Lo, 2012). Further, frequent beatings by teachers (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Hunt, 2007); shootings, assault/stabbings and robberies,

fighting among learners, gang membership and gang activity, the wearing of gang identification clothing or slogans, carrying of guns and other dangerous weapons at schools (Maree, 2000; Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007); racism and discrimination, violence by learners against teachers and vice versa (Jansen, 2008); initiation practices especially at boarding and secondary schools (often ignored or condoned by school authorities despite these being illegal according to Section 10A of the Education Laws Amendment, Act 50 of 2002); xenophobic attacks (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011) and truancy to general lawlessness at South African schools (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007; De Wet, 2007) are all frequently reported. Morrel (1999 & 2002; The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005; Burton, Leoschut & Bonora, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007) also posit that there is widespread and continued use of corporal punishment by some educators on learners at certain schools despite its illegality (Section 10 of the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996) and this poses a threat to a safe environment for learners.

The UNISA Report (2012) states that another form of violence that reflects the wider society and exist in schools relates to racial or ethnic discrimination, i.e. hostility towards the “other” based on skin colour or cultural differences. There is no doubt that the wider apartheid political system and resistance to it impacted on schools in a violent way in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. However, schools themselves have been used to overtly teach learners to hate learners from other ethnic groups, thus reproducing racial and ethnic tension and violence in a range of different societies (Harber, 2004). In South Africa, from 1948 to 1994, the entire education system was based on “racial” separation and inequality with an assumed hierarchy of racial groups. Despite progress in respect of more democracy in schools since 1994, there continues to be problems with “race” as historically defined in South Africa – “black”, “coloured”, “Indian” and “white”. An audit of 90 desegregated schools across all nine provinces published in 1999 showed that racism in schools continued to be pervasive (Vally & Dalamba, 1999). A further study of a community near the Western Cape sheds some interesting light on how education continues to reproduce racial separation and antagonism in South Africa. The researcher found that both “coloured” and “black” parents and children had negative stereotypes of each other but that the school did little to combat this situation. Talking to my post-graduate students (who are not part of this study) who teach in former Indian, Coloured and White schools around Durban, they have

reported similar tales where racist stereotypes are used when there are conflicts among learners of various races. These post-graduate students were of the opinion that learners learnt racist stereotypes from their homes or community as they were not openly promoted in their schools yet they knew and used them.

In addition, critical friends from various schools, especially secondary schools, have also reported witnessing other forms of school violence such as the use of highly sexualised language against girls by boys and vice versa; the use of crude/vulgar language by school boys against female educators; sending of short messaging system (*sms*) messages that have crude messages or pornographic materials by learners to other learners; other forms of cyberspace harassment which may be seen as potentially serious or violent behaviour; the firing of a gun in a crowded school corridor; extortion; vandalism of one another's property and interracial incidents. In addition, fist-fighting, taunting and intimidation, boys slapping, teasing or harassing/mistreating girls, the use of alcohol and/or drugs in schools, group hazing, property or theft disputes, etc. are also reported and this tends to perpetuate school violence (De Wet, 2007).

Regrettably, violence is so much a serious problem in South Africa that Le Roux and Mokhele (2011, p.318) have stated that, "... crime and violence in South Africa is a way of life" and that schools are not immune the violence from the community. Equally, Kgobe and Mbokazi (2007) state that, although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects the rights of citizens to education, these rights are dented by continuing violence in schools. To illustrate this point, the following articles are just a few examples that are published regularly in the electronic and print media to highlight this growing problem. For example, the *Mail & Guardian* (5 February, 2008 p.8), reporting on a study on school violence by the South African Institute of Race Relations, alleged that South African schools were "...downright dangerous" while Magwaza in *The Mercury* (7 May 2010, p.1) had a headline stating, "Pupils arrested for bullying" in a top Durban high school.

Further, many other horrific killings, rapes, violence of a sexual nature involving school girls, fighting among learners, bullying, assault, vandalism, gang fights, stabbings and other forms of violence have regularly been reported both in the electronic and print media. In illustrating the

suffering of sexual violation of schoolgirls, the *Mail & Guardian Online* (2010) had a headline that stated that “schoolgirls suffer in silence” while Prinsloo (2006, p.306) called it “an invisible form of exclusion”. According to him (*ibid.*), more than 30 percent of girls were raped at schools in South Africa. Many also left either because of fear of repeat rape or pregnancy and never returned to school. Another incident that was headline-news was that of a schoolboy from Krugersdorp in Gauteng who went on the rampage, armed with a ninja sword, leaving a 16-year old dead and three other pupils injured (Pillay & Ragpot, 2010). Similarly, another incident ensued at a school in Lindelani (an informal settlement outside of Kwa-Mashu Township, north of Durban) where two schoolboys stabbed each other allegedly over a quarrel for a new chair which was part of a consignment of new school furniture that had recently been delivered at the school. The one boy died at a local clinic while the other was reported seriously ill under police guard at a local hospital (Ndlovu, 2012). Likewise, in another article that appeared in *The Daily News* (4 March 2010, p.5), the headline was: “Violence in South Africa is seven times the norm.” This article further reported that:

South Africa has an extremely high level of interpersonal violence and a lot of it is alcohol related. In the Cape alone, 300 people die every month from alcohol related injuries. In any other country that would actually be a national crisis.

In addition, in an article published in the *Sunday Tribune* (12 August 2012, p.15), Bowman (2012) alleged that violence was endemic in South African schools. This was after a report on the stabbing to death of an Umlazi pupil by a fellow classmate the previous Friday after he wanted to rob him the R500-00 he was carrying to pay for his Matriculation dance. A study by Burton (2007) seems to affirm that violence in South Africa is a serious problem in both primary and secondary schools, across age, gender, race and school categories. Significantly, not only children, but also teachers were affected by the high rates of school violence. Burton (2007) further states that schools have a potential of being a negative or positive reinforcing agent. Equally, a study by De Wet (2007, p.248) emphasises the necessity of changing mind-sets to “reclaiming our lawless schools” and was of the view that schools were failing in their attempts to provide a safe environment in which teaching and learning could flourish. These and other violent incidents not mentioned here clearly indicate the severity of violence in South African schools.

2.3.2 External school violence

Henry (2000) suggests that there is a need to take a much broader approach to examining the causes of school violence. This requires us to address the context of students' lives such as their families, race, ethnicity, gender and social class. Similarly, Watts and Erevelles (2004, p.273) posit that "the systemic causes of school violence are rooted in oppressive social relations" and if we want to understand them, we should examine those structures in the context of the broader political economy of civil society. Likewise, Burton (2007), Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) also concur and state that the causes of violence in society, and by extension, at schools, are multifaceted, complex, varied and even conflicting. For example, Burton (2007, p.12) states that there is no single cause of violence but "... a series of interrelated factors impact on young people in different ways, one of which will be in the perpetrating of violent acts against other young people and society in general". In addition, Burton (2008) posits that for one to gain a sense of the causes of violence in schools one needs to examine and attempt to understand the broader context in which the school is found – the home and the larger community.

Similarly, Edwards (2008) states that the sources of school discipline and violence problems are many and varied and include the home, school and society. In the South African case, they also include external and internal factors including community and social factors such as the dual blow of poverty and the legacy of apartheid violence and colonialism (Ohsako, 2000) as well as certain factors in post-apartheid South Africa which reinforce the legacy of apartheid (Report of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009), individual attributes, familial contexts, as well as educational factors (Clarke, 2007; De Wet, 2009; Leoschut & Burton, 2009). The idea that school-based violence is not the outcome of one particular cause, but can be attributed to wider systemic influences, is also noted by Edwards (2008), Van Vuuren and Gouws (2007) who state that school-based violence can be attributed to social issues such as family breakdown or dysfunctional families, grinding poverty, inequitable educational opportunities, domestic violence, unemployment, poor emotional and cognitive development, drugs, gangs, poor sanitary conditions and even the poor physical conditions of the schools.

Further, during the Public Hearings on school violence of the South African Human Rights Commission (2008), various factors contributing to school-based violence were identified. Of

these factors, some focused on the effect of the immediate school environment upon learners, while others looked more broadly at the linkages between community issues and school-based violence. The list of factors included: the impact of poverty on the community; the presence of gangsters at schools; drugs and alcohol abuse in the community; conditions in the home environment; the social de-sensitisation of youth to a culture of brutal violence (which is itself a legacy of apartheid and colonialism); discipline models in schools and unclear management roles; unattractive school environments; and, the educators' misconceptions regarding the human rights of learners. The list was not comprehensive, neither were the named factors mutually exclusive (Report of the Public Hearing on School Based-Violence, 2008).

Furthermore, Edwards (2008) argues that children often bring problems to school that originate in other areas of their lives (such as divorce, abandonment, death and various other challenges) and suggests that teachers should recognise these and be competently able to deal with them rather than contributing to them. Similarly, Harber (2004) posits that, while the home and society may be sources of school discipline problems, schools however, should also take responsibility for some of these problems because of the various practices and conditions that prevail in some of them. The authors cited in this section further argue that some schools are authoritarian in nature and rely on heavy-handed means of controlling learners which eventually increases student alienation and reduces the possibility for addressing problems constructively (Edwards, 2008) and this fosters the culture of violence in them (Harber, 2004). Edwards (2008, p.10) further posits that schools may promote misbehaviour in students in many different ways such as when: they misunderstand learning conditions and requiring learners to learn information that is not meaningful to them; fail to encourage the development of independent thinking among learners; establish rigid conditions for learners to meet in order to feel accepted; promotes a competitive grading system that prohibits success for the majority of learners and erodes their self-concepts; exercise excessive control over learners and fail to provide an environment in which learners can become autonomous and independent as well as use discipline procedures that promote misbehaviour.

In addition, Harber has carried out research on schooling and violence in Africa, England and south Asia. His long-standing interest in education for democracy (Harber & Meighan, 1989;

Harber, 1997; Harber & Davies, 1997) has also entailed a study of schools as authoritarian institutions (Harber, 2002, 2004, 2009 & 2010) where schools are responsible for initiating, perpetrating and reproducing violence which already exists in the wider society. In this regard, Harber (2010, p.39) posits "... that schooling not only reproduces society fundamentally as it is, but also actively makes the lives of individuals worse and harms the wider society. This is because schools both reproduce and cause violence. Not only do they not necessarily protect pupils from different forms of violence in the wider society but they actively perpetrate violence themselves". In addition, Harber (2004, p.39) is of the view that "... schools can either be a force for violence prevention, or can provide an experience which reinforces violent attitudes and adds to the child's experience of violence." He further posits that schools in Africa are characterised by hierarchical organisations, rote learning and teacher-centred classrooms. This encourages learners to be passive and appears to be a means of control. In addition, Harber (2004, p.36) argues that "...the authoritarian nature of schools is not only a form of violence itself, often causing violent reactions in schools, but it also helps to sow the seeds of violence in the wider society". My own observations as a teacher and school principal for many years also confirm Harber's views. Even though South African schools now have democratic school environments especially after the introduction of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the majority of the teachers who teach in these schools were trained during apartheid years and so tend to do things the way they were taught hence the continued reproduction and reinforcement of old attitudes and values. Most of them do not take kindly to engaging in a dialogue with a learner, instead they prefer to dominate discussions and their views should never be challenged especially by a learner.

Although South Africa adopted a new constitution that enshrines principles of democracy and human rights in 1994, tangible benefits were proving difficult and slow to come by. Most schools remain largely oppressive institutions, however compassionate or gentle that oppression is. The basic problem is that strict hierarchies often mean that principals and staff do not communicate sufficiently with pupils. To illustrate this, Harber (2004, p.36) states that:

...in these authoritarian institutions, there are often problems of poor communication between the school authorities and the learners. This poor communication leads to misunderstandings and generates suspicion. When things

go wrong...no explanation is forthcoming because there is no expectation that there should be one. Complaints are met with high-handedness and resentment grows among pupils anxious about their own futures until a small incident sparks off violence which has included serious attacks on personnel and buildings.

The above sentiments (that some schools are authoritarian in nature) are also shared by many other researchers (Marshall, 2000; Edwards, 2008). Edwards (2008) further argues that several aspects of school organisation and operations also greatly contribute to violent behaviour. These include confining learners to too small spaces and impossible behavioural routines and academic conformity, along with such factors such as large schools and teacher isolation. Further, studies by De Wet (2003 & 2007) also found that poor infrastructure may lead to learner frustration and violence. The same can be said about overcrowded and large urban schools in which learners have either limited space to move around in on school premises, or are part of the faceless masses. Literature (Harber, 2008) seems to support this view. In schools where classes are large, teachers tend not to have sufficient time to attend to and know all their learners by name and this usually leads to negative consequences such as truancy and bunking of classes among learners. In addition, large schools have large school grounds which are a challenge to maintain especially during break times. This is the time when learners are bullied, beaten or robbed of their food, money and other possessions, especially in township schools where generally, teachers (supported by their teacher unions) have consistently refused to do playground duties citing labour issues. This leaves learners exposed to all the negative elements.

In addition, Edwards (2008) states that a confrontational behaviour occurs when rules are viewed as unfair, arbitrary, unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently applied; when students don't believe in the rules; when teachers and those in school management disagree about the nature of the rules and the consequences for learner misconduct; when teachers are too punitive; when learners feel alienated; school environments that lack structure and have no positive, creative and challenging activities to engage in, lead to apathy, boredom and discontent and when other forms of misconduct are ignored.

Similarly, Harber (2002) also maintains that the origins of mass schooling as a form of social control has meant that the predominant form of schooling internationally has always been authoritarian, with pupils having little control or power over school curriculum or organisation and largely being seen as recipients of knowledge and instructions. A key element of these authoritarian relationships is the perceived right of teachers to punish, inherent in the need to maintain control and order in the traditional school setting. De Wet (2007), corroborating Harber's view, also found that autocratic classroom management, inferior instruction and improper curriculum placement may result in learners feeling that their courses are irrelevant and that they have little or no say in what happens in their schools. These learners feel alienated from the school and may commit aggressive acts against their educators, use drugs and become truants (De Wet, 2007). While learners in South African schools have rights and responsibilities bestowed on them by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, issues of power and control are still very much in the hands of the school authorities who are the school governing bodies and teachers. My observations indicate that some school governing bodies and teachers seem not consult parents and learners sufficiently when they craft their schools' and classroom codes of conduct yet this is a requirement. This results in learners not being informed about the policies that directly affect them while at school and the subsequent resentment of those policies. This shows the skewed and authoritarian nature of schools and the balance of power between the schools and learners.

In other studies, Harber (2001, 2004 & 2009), has shown how schools create or perpetuate conditions for violence or are complicit in violence. In addition, Harber (2004) suggests that schools in South Africa also play a part in reproducing violence through their continuing failure to confront issues of racism, sexual harassment and violence which cause schools not to function effectively as well as their continuing use of corporal punishment despite its illegality (Morrel, 1999 & 2002). Unfortunately, Clarke (2007, p.353) states that:

Equally sadly, there are some schools where the abuse of students, particularly female students but also teachers, is a relatively common occurrence, and appears to take place with impunity.

The above view seems to be corroborated by findings from the South African Human Rights Commission (2006) that show that instead of facilitating the healthy development of children and providing them with equal opportunities for education, some schools are sites of intolerance and discrimination. The South African Human Rights Commission (2006) further reports that in some cases, educators fail to protect learners from harassment or attacks by other classmates. Failure to protect learners is also corroborated by De Wet (2005, p.706) in her study on school bullying where a female learner was bullied to drink a bottle of Jik and when she reported the matter to the school authorities for help, her cries were dismissed as those of a “drama queen.” This is a form of violence by omission and is discussed further in the proceeding chapter on theoretical frameworks. In some incidents, educators themselves participate in physical and emotional harassment or violence against learners due to their gender, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, social group or other status. Likewise, the use of corporal punishment in schools has been used to silence learners in order to promote authoritarianism (Morrel, 1999 & 2002).

South African schools have traditionally been authoritarian institutions stressing obedience, conformity and passivity (Harber, 2004). Harber (2009) also argues that education can have very negative consequences for a country. He states that sometimes education merely serves to reproduce things as they are. Children from poor backgrounds go to poor schools and then into poorly paid, low status jobs or unemployment. A small number of children from poor backgrounds succeed and this provides the appearance of a meritocratic system whereas in reality it merely serves to mask the role of education in reproducing and perpetuating inequality. It is clear from this preceding review that a large variety of educational, socio-economical, biological, psychological, political and demographic factors are responsible for school violence. This suggests, therefore, that prevention strategies should be multifaceted as well.

Before 1994, authoritarianism in South African schools manifested itself in the widespread use of officially sanctioned violence against children in the form of corporal punishment (Holdstock, 1990). However, the abolition of corporal punishment through Section 10 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 left a definite vacuum in methods dealing with serious learner misconduct (Wolhuter, *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, according to this law, an educator who

administers corporal punishment to a learner at school may be found guilty of assault. However, studies conducted by Morrell (1999 & 2002) and Bhana (2006) found that the use of corporal punishment was still rampant both in primary and secondary schools. Bhana further maintains that in a situation where fear and corporal punishment often characterise the classroom, this creates further conditions for violence to flourish. This leads to situations where physical violence is a striking characteristic of young boys' interaction with girls such that the boys use their greater body size and strength to bully, control and get rewards by stealing from girls and feel they are entitled to do so. Also evident in the power over girls is verbal and physical harassment relating to sexuality (Bhana, 2006).

Furthermore, the report *Scaling Up for Zero Tolerance: Civil Society Leadership in Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls in Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa* (2008) mentions that the South African government has also identified violence against young girls as a priority. This study further found that there was a serious lack of information about violence provided to young people, which, combined with the lack of life skills education for both teachers and students, has been cited as a root cause of the epidemic of violence against children and the youth. Similarly, many educators were reluctant to teach about sexuality and those programmes that are available were not comprehensive or systematic enough to provide teachers with adequate knowledge and skills. Not only are issues of violence left out of pre-and in-service teacher training courses, but many teachers have also indicated that they lack HIV-awareness training. To compound these challenges further, the South African education system has not fully accommodated HIV/AIDS orphans or other vulnerable children. According to the UNICEF Report (2008) cited above, this includes as many as two million children across the country. Some projects to address violence in schools do exist. For example, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) has a Safety in Schools project (Burton, 2008) which focuses on general youth violence, but also includes a sexual harassment component. Other important civil society initiatives include LoveLife Skills Education Programmes and the education programmes conducted by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). The Department of Education also has a Life Skills Project, which includes gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, but it has been subject to criticism due to its *ad hoc* nature (Burton, 2007).

Furthermore, Haffejee (2006) states that violence against adolescent girls in South Africa takes place against a backdrop of persistent gender violence in society and stems in part from unequal power relations and strong patriarchal values. The impact of such violence is extensive and harmful, causing damage to adolescent girls' physical and psychological health as well as affecting attendance and academic achievement. In addition, studies conducted by De Wet (2003 & 2007) on school-related factors contributing to school violence, corroborate studies by Harber which indicate that learner conflict takes place more easily in unkempt, graffiti-covered and unhygienic schools than in neat schools where positive school climate prevails. This finding lends further credence to the UNISA Report on school-based violence (2012) which posits that a well-organised, inclusive and well-run school can do much to reduce the incidents and impact of external violence because learners and teachers are part of a community with a sense of purpose. Consequently, the community members feel some sense of belonging and valued by the school and that it is worth protecting. Such a well-organised school may have a safety and security committee that ensures that there are proper fences and locks at school but its main strength is that loyalty and commitment by the community to the school will reduce internal collaboration with potentially violent external individuals and groups. As opposed to a dysfunctional or *laissez-faire* school, such external threats will be more readily noticed and acted upon in a cohesive manner in a well-managed school. Talking to an Umlazi principal who leads one of the top five high schools in this township (who was not part of this study), he confirmed this by narrating to me how he and his school were always protected by the community during the violent boycotts in the 1980s and 1990s because he believed the school was highly valued and anchored in its community and this protection continues to this day.

However, Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) have an optimistic view of schools and state that schools are the primary places of learning for most children and thus should be safe, peaceful and stimulating environments where children feel accepted, valued and respected, and where learning should be the main focus. A positive school environment should thus support learning, encourage socially adjusted behaviour and contribute to the general welfare of learners and educators – and ultimately, society. In the same vein, Edwards (2008) also states that creating an appropriate learning environment is critical. Furthermore, Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) also contend that a risky school environment where abuse and violence occur, where weapons and

drugs are present, and where anti-drug regulations are not stringent or enforced, increase learners' defencelessness to physical attack, substance abuse and dropout. Educators who experience risk and violence at the schools where they teach are likely to change schools, which in turn has a negative impact on teaching continuity. They are frequently absent from school, go to class unprepared, lack motivation, seek early retirement, or leave the already under-resourced profession entirely. These responses further compromise the integrity of the learners' learning environment. As a former teacher myself, I fully concur with Le Roux and Mokhele (2011). My observation was that a number of key teachers (those teaching science and commercial subjects) especially in secondary schools left the teaching profession for the private sector where they were well paid and felt safer.

To conclude this section, Edwards (2008) maintains that changes in school organisation and practices hold the best hope for eliminating violence in schools. Current school conditions which encourage misbehaviour have to be reviewed. Not only do learners need to be taught about violence and its causes, but they also need to have school experiences that promote caring and co-operation among peers and school personnel (Edwards, 2008). This suggests, in my view, that school governing bodies and SMTs have to be continuously reflecting on their policies and practices to ensure that these promote peaceful school environments that are conducive to teaching and learning.

2.3.2.1 Community and social factors

Some causes of school violence may originate from larger societal or external factors over which the school has no control (De Wet, 2007; Clarke, 2007). Edwards (2008), Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2010) and Burton (2008) also corroborate this view and state that the increasing violence within the schools is a reflection of the forms of violence that might be experienced outside the school, i.e. in the community (some problems stem from the children's experiences at home or in society and spill over into schools). Since community members are one of the systems the children interact with, there are certain community factors that also contribute to learners' violent behaviour displayed in schools. These community risk factors include poverty, unemployment, inadequate health services, lack of recreational facilities or quality education, exposure to violence, access to dangerous weapons, substance abuse, racial and cultural issues

and media violence (Edwards (2008). Debarbieux (2003) postulates that the recognition that there are many causes of school decline implies that socio-economic factors are not the answer to everything. Consequently, poverty and unemployment alone do not lead to violence. However, when different factors of social exclusion are accumulated, the risk of being a perpetrator or victim increases.

When communities lack sufficient social networks, adolescents growing up in such communities have fewer opportunities to develop social skills for success in life. These conditions create social isolation and a weak capacity to restrain many types of anti-social behaviour (Edwards, 2008). Jolly (2010) posits that, for the majority of South Africa's citizens, life is still characterised by high rates of poverty, morbidity and violence and this has an impact of school violence. This view is also echoed by the CSVr report (2009) which also lists economic inequality and other structural economic factors such as high levels of poverty, structural unemployment, social and political exclusion and marginalisation among citizens as some of the causes of violence. Similarly, Aitken and Seedat (2010, pp.vii) posit that "... when a community's social and physical environment is hostile; the school environment will most likely reflect this". This view is also similar to Pillay and Ragpot's (2010) who believe that human activity does not develop in a social vacuum, but rather is rigorously situated within a socio-historical and cultural context of meanings and relationships. An ecological context is the setting that influences an individual, such as the physical and social, economic and political environment. These researchers posit that the violent manner in which some pupils behave in schools can thus not be disconnected from the context in which they exist. Similarly, Visser (2007) asserts that behaviour is the result of the interface between individuals and the contexts they are exposed to. A violent, crime-ridden South African society can thus not expect a peaceful, crime-free academic environment. The schooling community is but a mini-community, mirroring the greater community within which it exists (Smith & Smith, 2006). As such, these researchers believe that a community educational psychology perspective is essential in conceptualising school-based violence, especially with its underpinnings of social ecological systems theory. This view is also corroborated by Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007) who highlight environmental influences such as the bars or liquor stores near the schools, drug dealers, no fencing at the school and the unavailability of telephones to report emergencies.

In addition, Mills (2001) suggests that learning violent behaviour can come from dysfunctional or abnormal home life (family breakdown including single parent families) perhaps involving domestic abuse or parents who do not respond well to authority such as the police; repeated exposure to violence in the media such as music lyrics, violent video games, television programmes that broadcast violent or graphic scenes, lack of discipline in the schools and the court system, lax gun laws and liberal parents as also contributory causes of school violence. He (Mills) also suggests that masculinity is a major cause of school violence and posits that society seems to accept (and even encourage) the violent behaviour of boys on the basis of “boys will be boys” mentality (Mills, 2001 p. 3). This view is corroborated by Robinson (2005) in a study in Australian secondary schools where she found that in most instances, the dominant violent behaviour is constituted within broader cultural values and power relationships. In the South African case, Leoschut (2009) states that the scourge of violence in South African schools is a reflection of the broader society which is generally very violent. This view is also corroborated by a newspaper article which was published by *News24.com* (26 August, 2008) which purported that school violence was ‘due to social, cultural and religious ills’ in South Africa. This situation of lawlessness is also reported in a study on National School Violence conducted by Burton (2008) on behalf of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention. In his report, Burton also points to pupils’ homes and communities which showed that pupils have easy access to guns, knives, drugs and alcohol.

In addition, De Wet (2007) posits that isolation, powerlessness and dissatisfaction with the treatment by those in authority may be important factors contributing to school violence in a community. This feeling of frustration usually manifests in violent acts. Socio-economic conditions exacerbate conditions of violence. For example, many learners in South Africa come from situations where unemployment, poverty and abuse are the norm. Most gang-related violence in schools is caused by out-of-school; out-of-work youth and these usually come from areas of poor socio-economic backgrounds (Burton, 2008). Clarke (2007) also states that the situation is much worse in some inner-city and township schools, where crime and gangsterism may be endemic to the extent that it has become part of the social fabric of the community and the student body. These views are also corroborated by De Wet (2007, p.253) who states that:

...the most frequently cited community causes of school violence are the deterioration of living conditions accompanied by poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, a high population turnover, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity. The lives of many disadvantaged children growing up in disorganised communities may be subject to violence, hostility, aggression, anxiety and instability.

These children absorb these traits and often turn their aggression on themselves, their peers and authority figures and begin to fight for everything. For many children growing up in disadvantaged communities, "...violence is a way of life which is very real and to cope with it is to survive" (De Wet, 2007, p.254). The notion of violence being "the way of life" is captured and corroborated by UNISA (2012) who also found in his study that there is a culture of silence surrounding violence in schools and this was becoming a norm in 'black' urban and rural schools. In addition, most teachers who violate girl children get away with it because victims do not report it as they are afraid of being blamed or victimised by parents and other teachers.

Furthermore, Harber (2001 & 2004) posits that authoritarianism by post-colonial governments in Africa causes of school violence. In his research, Harber (2001 & 2004) found that governments in Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Eritrea had always legitimised the use of force and violence to promote their causes and this was imitated by ordinary citizens as the correct strategy to solve problems. In South Africa, violence was used as a legitimate political tool to overthrow the apartheid government. Political oppression in South Africa often led to political violence but after the National Party took over political power in 1948, political violence led to intolerance and subsequently more violence, including in education (De Wet, 2007). This view is also corroborated by Morrel (2002) who states that in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s schools in South Africa were the "...trenches of the liberation struggles". This situation, unfortunately, did not change after 1994 and schools, especially in the African townships, continue to be used as political footballs. Harber (2004, p.3), observed that "...South Africa is a very violent society and that South African schools were plagued by violence". This has not changed much more than a decade later and this can be observed through the regular media reports of violent incidents and

other forms of ill-discipline among both teachers and learners that characterise South African schools.

De Wet (2007) also argues that the expectations created prior and after the 1994 elections have not been realised and this has led to frustration among many Black South Africans. Barker and Ricardo (2005, p.31) share this view and state that:

South Africa's townships are currently experiencing much violence because, with the end of apartheid and the realisation that long-standing economic inequalities would not be remedied in the short term, this has caused some young men to turn to crime and violence.

Barker and Ricardo (2007) further state that this is seen as a form of compensatory manhood marked by sexual violence, i.e. men seeking to regain a sense of manhood through criminal activity and violence against women. Morrel (2001) attests to this and states that numerous accounts affirm that township life in South Africa is based in part on the toughness of men- a toughness that can either be channelled into sports or criminal activity. Further, research (De Wet, 2007) suggests a strong relationship between the acquisition of drugs and increasing levels of drugs and alcohol related violence in schools. Some kinds of violence, especially in urban areas can be attributed to conflicts over drugs, drive by shootings related to drug distribution which often spill over to school premises. Alcohol abuse is also suspected to be responsible for at least half of all violent incidents as in most cases it is found that almost half of all perpetrators of violence and their victims had been drinking prior to the violent incident (rapes, homicides, etc.). The ease with which dangerous weapons, alcohol and other drugs are available at schools increases the likelihood that learners will be attacked by fellow learners within school premises or on their way to or from school (De Wet, 2007).

Similarly, the presence of gangs at schools and in adjacent areas increases the incidences of victimisation and harassment of learners and educators. Edwards (2008) postulates that family influences and social influences on discipline problems are usually interrelated. Rejection at home may encourage children to search for acceptance elsewhere and in most cases, they find it among gangs. A gang may satisfy a child's need for attention and for identity. Barker and

Ricardo (2007) state that in the Western Cape alone, it is estimated that 90 000 young people were members of gangs. Further, the annual statistics released by the South African Police Services (SAPS Report, 2010/2011) indicate that South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world and one of the highest rates of sexual violence which is related to gang activity.

2.3.2.2 The home environment

Petersen (2005) and Edwards (2008) posit that the most fundamental influence on the attitudes and behaviour of children is their family life. Given this, Edwards (2008) postulates that if parents spend little time at home, children may seek inappropriate social experiences elsewhere, experiences that may sometimes have devastating consequences. This is true in situations where parents do not spend quality time with their children because of many factors. The working class parents especially, by the time they return from work, are so tired to even check their children's homework or even share their daily experiences around the table. So children develop an attitude that their parents don't care which may or may not be true. Similarly, Petersen (2005) states that family poverty has long been identified as a significant factor in whether or not students are academically successful, as well as a mediating factor in youth misbehaviour and violence. I do not necessarily subscribe to this view though it may be a factor in some cases. As a former school teacher and principal, I have seen children from very challenging backgrounds, succeeding against all odds because they had the will to succeed and refused to allow their poverty-stricken environments pull them down. But it is equally true that some learners blame their environments or allow it to push them further into a desperate position of crime, drugs and squalor. In addition, factors such as divorce and poverty, physical and mental abuse reduce the capacity of children to access needed resources and create stressors on already marginalised family units. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) and Edwards (2008) also state children from severely dysfunctional family structures face enormous adjustment problems which may lead to a variety of interpersonal, emotional and cognitive deficits and violence.

In addition, Edwards (2008) suggests that parents who are withdrawn and remote, neglectful and passive, risk the possibility of shutting their children down emotionally. Hawkins, Farrington and Catalano (1998) corroborate this and state that within a family, poor family management

practices increase the risk for violence by children. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) further posit that families provide for a positive human development and are the repository of social values and thus their role in contributing towards the socialisation of the youth is of vital importance. Further, children growing up in dysfunctional family environments miss important parts of the parenting process that would enable them to benefit from schooling and prepare for adulthood. In the same vein, Leoschut and Burton (2009), Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) posit that research has also identified the link between family violence exposure and subsequent criminal victimisation; that children who exhibit deviance in their behaviour are often found to come from homes where the discipline is lax, over-strict or erratic; supervision inadequate; parents indifferent or even hostile towards their children; family members scattered or not operating as a unit; parents who find it difficult to talk to their children; husband-wife relationship lacking closeness, quality and equality; lack of parental influence in the development of a child; poor parental involvement in the school of a child as well as lack of parental supervision and truancy may also lead to learner violence. In this list, Edwards (2008) also includes problems such as dysfunctional family life, divorce, abandonment, death and various forms of abuse as causes of school discipline problems. As already indicated in this discussion, generally, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds already have many barriers against them which make them prone to violence in order to survive. Generally, a stable family provides the support which allows the child to adjust in society while dysfunctional families provide the opposite and this ultimately has negative and violent consequences for the schools.

The influence of the home on school violence is further corroborated by Brinson, Kottler and Fisher (2004), who found that there was a direct link between violence in the home and violence at school. According to them, a considerable number of children come from families and environments that can be characterised as less than optimal for developing socially appropriate problem-solving skills. These children see people in their homes or community using poor problem-solving strategies such as a slap, screaming, abusive language, threats or even the using of a weapon to someone. This view is also corroborated by Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007, p.220) who state that:

... learners imitate what they see their role models do and consequently do not learn creative ways of solving problems, which, in turn, impacts on their ability to form and maintain healthy relationships.

I agree with this view completely. While working as a school principal in a township school north of Durban that was heavily subscribed by learners from informal settlements, I sometimes was faced with a situation where learners from informal settlements made crude statements or uttered insults which seemed normal to them as this was a daily occurrence in their home environments. Other learners from these poverty-stricken environments were exposed to taverns where drunkenness, fighting, prostitution and pornography were the order of the day. The consequences of this were glaring in their negative behaviour.

According to Brinson, *et al.* (2004), it is not surprising that many children learn to resolve their own differences through similar violent strategies. The impact of the home socialisation on school violence is also captured in a study by Zulu, Urbani and van der Merwe (2004) who posit that school violence and disruption remain realities in S.A schools, and were even gaining momentum in certain areas. Further, they state that it seems as if, as a result of the historical culture of violence and disruption in South African education, children have become socialised to deal with their problems in aggressive and violent ways (Zulu, Urbani & van der Merwe, 2004). I subscribe to this view as well. Unfortunately, this does not apply to young people only but it affects adults as well. South African workers and populace in general do not hesitate to protest, even violently, when they demand improved working conditions, better salaries or the so-called service delivery. One would have expected the violent disruptions to have subsided after the 1994 elections but regular incidents of strikes (some even turning deadly) and service delivery protests where property is destroyed are a few examples that the South African society has truly become desensitised and socialised to resolve their problems aggressively. Outwater, Abrahams and Campbell (2005, p.135) claim that violence in South Africa has "...become normative and to a large extent, accepted rather than challenged". Hence the presence of vigilante groups in many provinces in this country. Learners too, have learnt this and we have seen them burning property or stoning it if provoked. Some learners, in line with vigilantism in the communities where they reside, do not hesitate to take the law into their own hands by beating or fighting with those they perceive to have wronged them.

2.3.2.3 Individual factors

Hamburg (1998, p.47) states that individual temperaments and acquired biological deficits such as attention deficit disorders, antisocial personality disorders, impulsiveness and neurotoxin exposures as well as head injuries may contribute to children's violent tendencies. Similarly, intolerant attitudes towards violence and antisocial behaviour significantly predict membership in the non-offender category (Leoschut & Burton, 2009). De Wet (2007) further posits that a negative self-image, coupled with peer rejection and low frustration tolerance, directly affects the adolescent tendency to express violent behaviour. This view is shared by Blandford (1998) who states that learners with low self-esteem may behave in an uncooperative manner; their frustration and anger will cause them to behave irrationally, disrupting those around them. Adolescents may sometimes choose violence, suicide and death as an alternative to the pain and confusion caused by identity confusion and a lack of meaning (De Wet, 2007). Schools, De Wet further posits, should play a key role in facilitating a positive identity and meaning for adolescents.

2.4 The role of school governing bodies in providing safety and security in schools

Schools, like family homes, are places that should provide nurturance and care and any form of violence on a school campus is an abomination with this overwhelming, positive learner development objective (Jimerson, Morrison, Pletcher & Furlong, 2006). In addition, Hawkins, Farrington and Catalano (1998) also argue that schools that promote pro-social, cooperative behaviour and a culture of learning are central to preventing violence. In the South African context, as part of the transformation process, the national Department of Education (DoE) passed The South African Schools Act No.84, 1996 (SASA) and in terms of this Act, all public schools in South Africa should have democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs) comprising parents, learners (in secondary schools), educators, non-teaching staff and the school principal (Clarke, 2009). These members are elected by their relevant constituencies and it is important to note that parents form the majority of members in the SGBs and that the chairperson of each governing body comes from this component. The primary duties of the SGBs, among others, include developing school policies such as those dealing with learner safety and discipline (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007; Clarke, 2009; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009);

ensuring quality education for learners; promoting the best interests of the school and policies regarding determination of school fees (Mncube, 2007).

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (section 8[1]) also states that a governing body of a public school has a legal duty to adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school. Such a code of conduct, based on human rights principles, should contain the school rules, regulations, sanctions and disciplinary procedures based on the rules of natural justice and that they are administered fairly (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007). Further, with regard to discipline, the school governing body has a duty to ensure that the code of conduct includes policies and procedures that are relevant for dealing with matters such as drug peddling, sexual harassment and other forms of abuse, bullying, and possession of dangerous weapons and that these policies are implemented and revised regularly. Section 8 of SASA thus makes it clear that it is the duty of the school governing body to provide safety and security in a school (Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2007). It should also be noted here that, while it is the responsibility of the SGB to craft the code of conduct for learners at school (and other policies), the actual implementation of such a code (and other policies) lies in the hands of the school principal and his/her school management committee (SMT) and other teachers who are physically present at school on a daily basis. This was also clarified in Chapter One of this thesis. In the South African context, there is a thin line that separates school governance and professional management of the school. It is this intersection of powers and responsibilities between the SGB and the SMT that is sometimes troubling to some, resulting to a situation where there is contestation as to where each party's powers begin and end even though the law is very clear who has to do what. For example, according to SASA, some decisions on discipline such as the suspension of learners, is the responsibility of the SGB or its sub-committee on discipline called the Discipline and Safety and Security Committee (DSCC) but some overzealous principals or teachers have been reported to suspend learners without the 'due process' being followed (Shaba, 1998 & 2003). It is clear from this discussion that the SGB goes beyond policy making to even policy implementation even though the SMT, by virtue of being physically present at school on a daily basis, appears to be at the forefront in addressing school violence. The only aspects where SGBs cannot interfere are on curriculum implementation issues, which are the preserve of the principal and his/her SMT.

Similarly, *The World Report on Violence against Children* (2006) stipulates that, like parents, the adults who oversee, manage and staff schools and other centres of learning for young people, have a duty to provide safe and nurturing environments that support and promote children's education and development. They also have a duty to make sure such environments prepare children for life as responsible adults, guided by values of non-violence, gender equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect. Thus, the first principle that all those involved in education need to understand is the duty to care (Clarke, 2007). In addition, Clarke (2007, p.336) posits that South African educators have an important duty with regard to "...the physical, intellectual and emotional well-being of every learner placed in their care" not only in accordance with the South African Constitution and other pieces of legislation, but also in terms of their *in loco parentis* status (i.e. the educator acting as a parent). Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis, *et al.* (2007, p.215) posits that the law expects educators to act "...as the caring head of a family (*diligens paterfamiliae*) would act- to treat learners for whom they are responsible with the same care that they would treat their own children" at all times in educational institutions. An educator's duty of care is therefore compared to the degree of care that diligent parents would serve towards their family. Further, because teachers have specialised knowledge and skills through their professional training, they are expected to be more competent and better able to exercise care than a normal person - the "reasonable man" test (Clarke, 2007, p.336).

In addition, a code of conduct for learners must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the teaching and learning process. The code of conduct for learners is thus a tool through which the school governing body maintains discipline for learners in a school. All learners are required to comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such learner. Furthermore, a code of conduct must contain provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings. It is the code of conduct that is a legal entity that should be used to foster discipline in a more democratic way. For the code of conduct to function effectively, it should be formulated consistently with the current laws of the country and should be kept up to date (Clarke, 2007). As indicated in the discussion so far in this chapter, while teachers are aware they have a duty to protect learners in their care, some believe otherwise. They believe their rights as labourers supersede those of learners under their care.

Teachers, especially in township and rural schools, generally do not take the responsibility to do playground duties seriously. While playground duties are known they are never performed in most of these schools which is a serious dereliction of duty.

De Wet (2007, p.248) also states that it is the responsibility of each school to provide a safe environment for children “...to develop academically, relationally, emotionally and behaviourally”. This view is also shared by Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007) who state that schools are supposed to be safe places where effective teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is safe for learners, educators and non-educators. Furthermore, learners have a right to an educational experience in which they feel valued and respected; where educators and peers clearly and actively support their development and learning. However, Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007) posit that if one considers the incidence of murder, violence, rape, sexual assault in schools reported in the media, one can safely say that some South African schools are not safe. These researchers (Nieuwenhuis, *et al.*, 2007) describe a safe school as one that is free of danger and where there is an absence of possible harm; a place in which educators, learners and non-educators may work, teach and learn without fear of ridicule, intimidation, harassment, humiliation or violence. A safe school is therefore a healthy place in that it is physically and psychologically safe. Indicators of safe schools include the presence of certain physical features such as secure walls, fencing and gates, buildings that are in a good state of repair; and well-maintained school grounds. Safe schools are further characterised by good discipline, a culture conducive to teaching and learning, professional educator conduct, good governance and management practices and an absence (or low level) of crime and violence.

2.5 The strategies utilised by school governing bodies to prevent violence

In this section I begin by reviewing the strategies that could be utilised by school governing bodies to prevent or reduce school violence while in the latter part, I present and discuss the actual strategies school governing bodies are utilising guided mainly by the legal framework as well as the policy documents from the Department of Basic Education. De Wet (2007) lists the following approaches which school governing bodies could utilise to prevent school violence: zero-tolerance school policies; school-wide or universal interventions, the targeted intervention approaches and implementing school security measures. In addition, zero-tolerance school

policies are widely used and are characterised by their punitive nature to learner behaviour, focusing on a limited number of reactive and punitive responses to problem behaviour, including office discipline referrals, in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion. The UNISA Report (2012) also suggests the need to create a well-managed school community where learners feel they belong, are valued and have values that support peaceful conflict resolution. This view is also corroborated by Edwards (2008) suggests that schools may promote misbehaviour among learners and even put learners at risk and invite discipline problems if they: are not led and managed effectively; misunderstand learning conditions and require learners to learn information that is not meaningful to them; they fail to encourage development of independent thinking patterns in learners; establish rigid conditions for learners to meet in order to feel accepted; exercise excessive control over students and fail to provide an environment in which children can become autonomous and independent and use discipline procedures that promote misbehaviour.

Briefly, the literature reviewed throughout this thesis suggests that the ethos of the school can contribute to a context where violence is more or less likely or possible. The more disorganised, unreliable and inconsistent the school, the more chances of violence are as learners feel that in a laissez faire atmosphere anything goes and they too can do as they please (Edwards, 2008). The new approaches to school leadership and management require leaders and managers to be strategic thinkers, to be direction setting, to be translating strategy into action, to align people and the organisation to the strategy, to develop strategic capabilities of people (the teachers, the SMT and the school governors), to work in democratic and participatory ways to build relationships with all stakeholders to ensure efficient and effective delivery of quality education for all learners in an conducive environment (Davies & Davies, 2009). This also requires school principals, teachers and school governors to constantly reflect on their activities and change where necessary (Starrat, 2009). Edwards (2008) further maintains that disciplinary measures based on social control do not work; instead they produce prison-like schools that remain unsafe.

Similarly, coercive strategies disrupt learning and foster an environment of mistrust and resistance. Instead, Edwards (2008) suggests that it is the responsibility of the school leaders to humanise the school environment by encouraging responsibility and a sense of community to reduce violence. He further states that programmes that truly prevent school violence require

significant change of traditional approaches to teaching and school leadership to those that promote caring and human relationships. In addition, the literature reviewed in this thesis strongly suggests that a well-managed and effective school is able to anticipate problems and thus plan how to navigate around those problems.

2.5.1 Publications by the Department of Education to assist prevent school violence

In order to support schools combat violence and other disciplinary issues, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) as amended was passed. This law, particular Section 8, mandates a school governing body of a public school to adopt a code of conduct for the learners. In order to have a common understanding and clarify procedures, the National Department of Education has over the years also produced various booklets to assist schools in managing/reducing violence, discipline, sexual violence, diversity and racism in schools. The following examples are: *Creating Safe and Caring Schools* (2001); *Educating for Our Common Future: Building Schools for an Integrated Society* (2001); *Opening Our Eyes: Addressing Gender-Based Violence in South African schools* (2001); *Signposts for Safe Schools: Enabling safe and effective teaching and learning environments* (2002); *Speak Out -Youth Report Sexual Abuse: A Handbook for learners on how to prevent sexual abuse in public schools* (2010); *Values In Action Signposts for Safe Schools: A Manual in Constitutional Values and School Governance for School Governing Bodies and Representatives Councils of Learners in South African public schools* (2011); *School Safety Framework: Addressing Bullying in Schools* (2012) and many other programmes at provincial level. Working with non-governmental organisations and SABC, the Department of Education has also initiated the *Soul Buddies* to teach learners various lifelong skills including cultivating a culture of nonviolence in the school. In addition, schools that have creative and innovative leadership have initiated local programmes and other projects to augment the initiatives of the Department of Education, as shown by the findings presented by some schools later in this thesis. These initiatives are useful tools to assist schools to strengthen their anti-violence programmes but they can only be effective if each school adapts these programmes to their local contexts and have the necessary willingness to learn and commitment to succeed. Unfortunately, in some schools, these documents are unknown or are accumulating dust in the principals' offices.

Furthermore, De Wet (2007) suggests that school-wide or universal interventions attempt to create school and classroom climates that promote social and academic growth and a sense of community for all children. These interventions attempt to develop a culture within the school in which respect for the individual, predictability and the perception of fair play shape the behaviour of educators, learners and administrators. Effective school-wide support relies on the development and implementation of a systematic approach to training, monitoring and the reinforcement of appropriate behaviour (De Wet, 2007). Furthermore, the targeted intervention approach seeks to change the behaviour and school experiences for specific learners. Targeted interventions may provide special programmes, classes or schools for those who have engaged in specific acts of misconduct or those most at risk for engaging in anti-social and disruptive behaviour. Interventions aimed at individual learners or groups of learners may also teach specific skills, such as conflict resolution strategies or social skills (De Wet, 2007).

2.5.2 School security measures

In addition to the above strategies, De Wet (2007) also suggests that implementing school security measures is another popular strategy in the effort to prevent school violence. This form of intervention is meant to detect and deter potential perpetrators of school violence before they harm themselves or others. The use of metal detectors, school security officers and surveillance cameras are examples of school security measures that have been introduced to prevent school violence. Further, De Wet (2007) posits that effective programmes are those that involve grassroots participation; that empowers both the teachers and learners; are embedded in democratic principles and where schools demonstrate a pro-active vision regarding the violence problem. The study by Mabovula (2009) reports that schools pay lip service to the role of learners in the schools. However, if learners were given a serious voice e.g. to express where at school they feel safe or unsafe, and what their primary safety concerns are – and sufficient reporting mechanisms developed at a school level, the school is likely to be a safer school than when only school management decides what is best for the school. Generally, where people are sufficiently consulted and have participated in decision-making processes, they tend to own and value the decisions taken and ensure they succeed.

The first step in developing a school security plan is for the school governing body to set up a sub-committee called school security committee (SSC) made up of all the members of the school community (learner leaders, educator representatives and community members) who are responsible for preparing, implementing and monitoring the school's security plan. The SSC should identify the school's priority crimes and the most frequent security problems that face the school. The SGB should make available all the necessary human and financial resources to address the priority problems (De Wet, 2007). Each school is expected to have a safety plan that has undergone a consultative process by all members of the school community. This creates a sense of ownership among all stakeholders. Further, schools should keep incidents records which also has details of incidents such as date and time of incident, type of incident, where it took place, a description of the incident, who was involved, the action taken to address the problem (De Wet, 2007). Research conducted by the Independent Projects Trust (IPT) in 1999 posits that successful and safe schools are those where community ownership and partnership is strong; the school premises are physically secure; random searches for both visitors and learners are conducted and vandalism and theft are prevented through the use of burglars bars, strong rooms, proper lighting and boundary fencing. The challenges that most school governing bodies face is that the strategies discussed above seem not to work or have serious challenges. It is easier said than done to expect the school community to own and protect the school in its neighbourhood. In most communities it is the members of the community nearby the school who vandalise and steal school property. There is very little or no sense of community ownership of schools or any public property such as community halls. In some communities, there is even fear to report criminals who vandalise schools to the police for fear of retribution so school governing have a mountain to climb.

2.5.3 Effective and democratic school leadership and management

Democratic school leadership and management, built on the principles of transparency, inclusion and participation improves communication, decision making and a sense of responsibility which in turn reduces the risk of violence within the school, and unites the school to withstand outside threats such as gangsterism (De Wet, 2007). In addition, the IPT report (1999) emphasises training and education as another vital element to ensure school safety and security. The process of education and training, initiated by the School Safety Committee, should begin with

developing joint goals and values for the school through transparent, inclusive and participative workshops. The publication on *'Values In Action - Signposts for Safe Schools: A Manual in Constitutional Values and School Governance for School Governing Bodies and Representatives Councils of Learners in South African public schools'* (2011) might be of value to assist the schools on working on values that are in line with the country's constitution. This would be mean to educate, to inform and to skill all stakeholders about the school's security plan; communication skills, problem solving, teamwork and information sharing should also be developed to increase understanding and harmony (De Wet, 2007).

The IPT Report also emphasises that punitive laws, autocratic leadership and other punitive actions will not end violence; rather the social structures and the discourses that maintain violence should be addressed by the school's leadership. De Wet (2007, p.202) posits that the destructive chain, namely of "... violence, fear → violence, hate and anxiety → retribution (or an increase in the possibility that the victim might develop pathology) → more violence/ developing more pathology" needs to be broken. This could be done by implementing a wide-ranging and comprehensive programme against school violence. This requires the effort of everyone in the school community from the school leadership, school governors, teachers, school community, other stakeholders with interest in the school and learners. The school leadership is pivotal in transforming the culture of the school to conform to the new democratic forms of school leadership and management. There is also some evidence in the report of the schools' failure to take into account the individual needs of young people in an attempt to control them in a "one size fits all" manner, which in itself can result in violent rebelliousness (UNISA, 2012). However, ultimately it is the school management – the principal and SGB – that is responsible for the day to day prevention of violence in schools, and there is considerable evidence in literature to support the notion that schools that are managed well and in an appropriate manner to reduce violence.

2.6 School violence and the legacy of apartheid

The notion of South Africa as a post-conflict society (Weldon, 2010) was introduced briefly in Chapter One. In this section I further discuss school violence in the context of South Africa as a

post-conflict society and its relevance to education. In addition, in this section I discuss the school violence and the legacy of apartheid in South African schools.

The International Platform for Violence Research (IPVR) article on Youth, Institutions and Violence: Challenges for Social Integration (2009, p.5) posits that in post-civil war societies:

...high levels of violence do not often subside, but continue in other forms. Young people are often particularly vulnerable during political transformation. They risk marginalisation in the new societal and political setups and often become both victims and perpetrators of transformed violence.

The statement above seems to have credence in the South African context where apartheid and politically inspired violence have almost disappeared but has been replaced by other forms which appear criminal in nature while in some cases appears to be induced by acute poverty and inequality.

In acknowledging the continuing effects of apartheid in South Africa, November, Alexander and Van Wyk (2010, p.791) state that the “violent” legacy of apartheid places a heavy burden on the current education system. Likewise, McKendrick and Hoffmann (1990, p.1) state that “...South Africa is a country that is currently ravaged and despoiled by widespread violence.” In 1990, when these authors wrote the above article, they were referring to political violence that was devouring the country at the time, however, even though political violence has since been drastically reduced especially after 1994, violence seems to have changed to other forms and is, in my view, manifesting itself in schools. Similarly, Nkomo, Weber and Malada (2007) posit that South Africa has been a high-conflict society for almost 350 years as successive governments’ implemented one form or the other of racial oppression. Consequently, in an article which appeared in *The Daily News* (27 July, 2011), Jansen argues that:

As a nation we have a trauma that is not yet resolved, a deep hurt that has not yet been taken care of. What is lacking is leadership for dealing with our woundedness.

This thesis then interrogates the appropriateness of school governing bodies to deal with violence and indiscipline as the elected body to provide leadership that Jansen (2011) refers to above at a

school level. The notion of “woundedness” is also echoed by Dr Mamphela Ramphele in an E-News TV interview with Mr Justice Malala (*The Justice Factor*, 15 January 2012); by Tom Hamilton (Headmaster of St Albans School in Pretoria) in a paper presented in Johannesburg in May 2012) as well as Du Preez (2013, p.11) who posits South Africa is a “multiply wounded, multiply traumatised and multiply mourning country”. Hamilton (2012) speaks of wanton violence in society which, in his view, is a legacy of apartheid but also of a reflection of the imposition of questionable policies by government without meaningful public consultation.

Similarly, Ramphele suggests that one of the reasons why South Africa is such a violent society is because South Africans have not yet dealt with their “woundedness” which was inflicted by years of apartheid rule. She convincingly argues that as South Africans, we have not dealt effectively with the impact of apartheid on people which is: the socio-economic injustice where poor people, even in the new South Africa, feel robbed, cheated, humiliated, disrespected, marginalised and subjected from a government system that continues to exclude them from a real say in the governance of the country. Ramphele posits that this sense of disrespect manifests itself in many ways. For example, people lose respect for themselves, others and public property. She suggests that many poor people are in what she calls a “passive aggressive state” and this is typical of “subject identity crisis” where there is no sense of ownership but despair. This sense of humiliation leads to the “woundedness” already mentioned. Du Preez (2013) similarly posits that when a person does not or cannot work through a trauma right away, its social consequences, the most frequent of which are apathy, isolation and aggressiveness, are only revealed over time. This author further argues that accumulated pain leads to a diminished capacity to communicate, to be flexible and tolerant, and to accept change (Du Preez, 2013).

The notion of exclusion and woundedness manifests itself in people being prepared to steal and loot the state (corruption) as they don’t have a sense of ownership and belonging (to the state). Further, Ramphele posits that Black people have assimilated the inferiority complex with which they are treated and this manifests itself in their lack of confidence, self-belief and self-destruction which is observed mainly in poor neighbourhoods. This view is also corroborated by Du Preez (2013) who posits that the devastating consequences of apartheid laws, the migrant labour system, the humiliation of pass laws, the trauma of forced removals, the psychological damage inflicted on Black South Africans resulted in them feeling as humans of lesser worth and

capability than other races. Ramphele further cites the annual South African programme on ‘Sixteen Days of Activism against abuse of Women, Children and People with Disabilities’ as an example of a failed programme because, despite the noble intentions of such programmes, violence against women and children seem to continue unabated in this country. The TRC process, in Ramphele’s view, was only a tiny dent on the real problem (Malala, 2012).

The first generation of young people to grow under democracy in a post-apartheid South Africa are overshadowed and afflicted by rampant violence and crime (Kenworthy, Hallman & Diers, 2008). According to these researchers and others cited throughout the thesis, even as the end of apartheid improved the lives of many South Africans and extinguished much of the political violence that preceded the transition, violent crime has increased dramatically within certain communities (Kenworthy, Hallman & Diers, 2008; Naude, 2006). The presence of multiple and simultaneous forms of violence and the systemic lack of safety are experienced most acutely by adolescents - in particular, adolescent girls (Brady, 2002). High levels of violence and crime within the community are coupled with violence within the home and in schools; again, both these phenomena primarily affect girls (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Kenworthy, Hallman & Diers, 2008).

Furthermore, the current economic, socio-cultural stratification of South African society, which was based on entrenched legal inequality, promoted manifestations of structural violence in person-environment transactions. Thus the thrust of promotive intervention would be structural reform. The structural reform requires basic and fundamental changes (socially and economically) to reduce inequalities and ensure a fairer distribution of the wealth and resources of the country (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990). It is doubtful at this stage if this is possible considering the study report by Leibbrandt and Finn (2012) and Ramphele (cited in an *E-News* interview with Justice Malala, 2012) that the gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa was growing, making South Africa the most unequal society in the world and surpassing other equally developing countries such as India and Brazil.

In addition, according to Hoffman and McKendrick (1990), many children in South Africa have no family life and know only fear and violence – a scenario which promotes violence as a

survival strategy in the face of poverty, hunger, inadequate housing, split families and an unresponsive educational system, especially in the township schools. In consequence, the traditional family structure in many instances has been affected by a relocation of the parental seat of power and authority to the children (Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990). Thus the intervention to promote family stability should begin with structural societal change, to be further addressed on the preventive, curative and rehabilitative levels. This, the above researchers acknowledge, may take a number of generations to bear the desired results. These researchers further suggest that personal skills of communicating, forming, maintaining relationships, asserting oneself without harming others, managing or resolving conflicts, negotiating, and above all, skills pertaining to the role of spouse and parent, should be taught to young people.

Furthermore, according to Fairbanks and Brennan (2006), a nation that is migrating from a protracted conflict must completely shift its preconditions for change. In order to develop an agenda for change, there are five mutually exclusive and comprehensive conditions that must be in place. In a post-conflict society, these conditions exist, but are structured to achieve horrific results – therefore, each of these conditions must be addressed in a way to shift the results to a productive agenda. These are: can the *tension* that existed in a divisive way be transformed so that former opponents will see the need to work together on a common agenda; are people *receptive* to considering new ideas and experimenting with new actions that will focus on economic development and not on an environment of violence; does the society embrace a clear sense of *guiding principles* towards the goal of creating wealth for the average citizen, instead of viewing wealth as finite, which requires a violent approach in a zero-sum game; do leaders have an agenda to gain competitive *insights* necessary to make complex choices; and, in conclusion, is the *new leadership* prepared to act on each of the above four conditions for change constructively (Fairbanks & Brennan, 2006).

In addition, Fairbanks and Brennan (2006) posit that the central economic goal for a post-conflict region or nation should be to rapidly attain a high and rising standard of living for all of its citizens. This is reflected in high per capita income and high paying, satisfying jobs for a large proportion of those who are able to work. A high and rising standard of living is driven by high

and rising productivity based on a nation's stock of the seven forms of capital: cultural, human, knowledge, institutional, financial, man-made and natural endowments. Increasingly, countries depend heavily on more complex advantages needed for innovation (Fairbanks & Brennan, 2006). Many have argued that most South Africans do not have the necessary skills to uplift the economy and our productivity is very low compared to other developing countries like India, China and Brazil. To increase productivity and compete effectively, South Africa needs to urgently attend to the seven forms of capital suggested by Fairbanks and Brennan above (2006). But how South Africans execute this in a country where about 80% of schools are either dysfunctional or underperforming (National Planning Commission, 2012) will remain a challenge for many years. These are, perhaps the majority of the schools where, according to the UNISA Report (2012), violence is a serious problem.

Furthermore, indicators of racism at school are: conflict that can be described in racial terms e.g. the 'whites' are doing this or the 'blacks' are doing that or educators making remarks that reinforce stereotypes or generalisations about different race groups (*Signposts for safe Schools*, 2002). Jansen (2008), based on his studies of racism among the young Afrikaner youth, found that white reaction to a black government in South Africa has turned violent in a most intriguing section of the white community: the white youth at the end of school and the beginning of university. This racist violence is illustrated by such incidents as the Swartruggens killings and humiliation of black workers by white students at University of the Free State. Jansen (2008, p.74) also found that "... the loss of political power by the Afrikaner has led them being pessimistic about most things in the country and the messages that they are socialised into by their parents, the church and cultural groups are very crucial in turning them to racism". Similarly, according to a study by Zulu, Urbani and van der Merwe (2004), racial tension between black and Indian learners in the KwaZulu-Natal Province is one of the factors threatening to turn schools into war zones. Racial clashes in this province were common in and out of schools. Unrest and violence in the schools can also be ascribed to, for instance, the unequal treatment of learners in some of the predominantly desegregated schools where the learners were separated according to their home languages on the grounds that black learners were supposedly slower learners and should therefore be taught separately. This treatment of others as slower learners (and therefore inferior) is in many ways viewed as subtle racism which

perpetuates “woundedness” among Black learners which was alluded to by Ramphela (2012) in Chapter One. This subtle racism was self-defeating, counter-productive and delusional (sense of being superior to others). In addition, according to Hlophe (1999), such treatments cause and promote misunderstanding and mistrust among learners and teachers of various racial groups. This, in turn, results in violent flare-ups.

Further, (Burton, 2008) posits that violence has become a part of every-day life in (some) schools. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (1999) lists a number of incidents where educators in the Gauteng Province of South Africa were murdered between January and July 1999. Sewsunker (1999) lists a number of incidences of violent actions that took place in KwaZulu-Natal schools. These incidents include murder, armed robbery, damage to, and destruction of school property, brawling, stone throwing, name calling, knife attacks and stabbings, beatings-up of educators by learners, hostage taking, sexual harassment, arson, physical assault, caching of weapons, drugs and stolen cellular phones. Burton (2008) also found that both primary and secondary schools in South Africa were sites of widespread school violence although this was not unique to South Africa. Furthermore, the rate of violence in schools has escalated to such an extent that it has become an access problem into South African schools (Zulu, *et al.*, 2004) and this study attempts to explore how school violence hinders access to education by all learners. Zulu, *et al* (2004), further argue that school violence and its negative impact on a culture of teaching and learning in a school is symptomatic of deeper seated problems, *viz.* a lack of respect for others, a lack of vision for a better future, and a lack of commitment in ensuring that such a future is made into reality. The problem of school violence and of its impact on a culture of teaching and learning can, therefore, not be combated by the imposition of draconian measures, which could be violent in themselves. The cure for the problem should be sought in a two-pronged strategy addressing the roots of the problem. Zulu, *et al.*, (2004) suggest teaching learners respect for themselves and other fellow human beings as well as assisting them to create a sense of a vision of the future for themselves.

Another research study by Human Rights Watch entitled '*Scared at school*' (2001), which looked directly at the incidence of sexual violence against girls in South African schools, found that many girls experience sexual violence in schools. They are raped, sexually abused, sexually

harassed and assaulted at school by male learners and educators. The report noted that, "... although girls in South Africa have better access to school than their counterparts in other sub-Saharan African states, they are confronted with levels of sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools that impede their access to education on equal terms with male students. Many girls interrupt or leave school altogether because they feel unsafe in such violent environment. Other girls stay at school but suffer in silence, having learned that submission is a survival skill and sexual violence at school is inescapable" (Human Rights Watch, 2001, pp.6-7).

What is also noticeable here is the dynamic nature of school violence. The advent of technology (cell phones and social forums) and the new drugs that frequently flood the market have created new forms of violence where cyberspace and short messaging system (sms) are used to violate other people's rights and privacy. Further, De Wet (2007) posits that most acts of aggression are committed by boys against other boys, however girls were becoming increasingly more aggressive and some even came to school armed. These examples of new forms of school violence indicate the dynamic nature of violence in South African schools and SGBs have to be aware of this to successfully and effectively respond to them.

2.7 Why South African schools rate among the most violent in the world

The UNISA Report (2012) on school violence states that reading the daily newspapers in South Africa for the duration of a week would be enough to convince anyone that South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world. To illustrate this, more than 15 940 people were murdered in South Africa in 2012 (www.saps.gov.za/statistics) while in the United Kingdom, with a much larger population, only 619 were murdered in the same period (www.guardian.co.uk). In February 2007, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation was contracted by the South African government to carry out a study on the nature of crime in South Africa. The study concluded that the country was exposed to high levels of violence and the following factors were cited:

The normalisation of violence where violence is viewed as a necessary and justified means of resolving conflict as well as a patriarchal system which allows males to believe that coercive sexual behaviour against women is legitimate; the reliance on a criminal justice system that is

mired in many issues, including inefficiency and corruption; a sub-culture of violence and criminality, ranging from individual criminals who rape or rob to informal groups or more formalised gangs. Those involved in the subculture are engaged in criminal careers and commonly use firearms, with the exception of the Western Cape where knife violence is more prevalent. Credibility within this subculture is related to the readiness to resort to extreme violence; the vulnerability of young people linked to inadequate child rearing and poor youth socialisation. As a result of poverty, unstable living arrangements and being brought up with inconsistent and uncaring parenting, some South African children are exposed to risk factors which enhance the chances that they will become involved in criminality and violence; the high levels of inequality, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and marginalisation (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009).

As stated above, most literature cited in this thesis on school violence postulates that school violence is a reflection of the ills in the broader society (George, 2005; Cowie & Jennifer, 2007; Edwards, 2008; Leoschut, 2009) and that socio-economic conditions exacerbate conditions of violence. George (2005) states that, in order to comprehend the nature of violence in South African schools, it is important to appreciate the context in which it occurs and trace violence back to the manner in which apartheid in South Africa was administered. The apartheid government used state-sponsored violence constantly to maintain order and thus the political, social and economic conditions of South Africa have been shaped and devastated by this violent legacy. The current administration thus inherited a legacy of social and economic inequality that has extremely high levels of violence throughout all sectors of the South African society to which children are not immune. Schools in particular have long been violent spaces for South African children. Prior to 1994, schools were sites of struggle and political resistance to apartheid (Ntshoe, 2002). Years of violent enforcement of apartheid-era policies resulted in a legacy of vast social inequalities in South Africa and this fuelled a culture of violence. This historical legacy presents a major challenge for schools still ill-equipped to curb violence that remains in many areas (George, 2005; Burton, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

Further, according to the report on violence in South Africa by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) published in 2009, the levels of violent crime, as measured

by the murder rate, were exceptionally high in South Africa as compared to other countries. The scourge of violence in South African society, and by extension, in schools may be attributed to many complex and sometimes historical factors, most of which have been discussed above. One of these factors, according to Huschka and Mau (2006) is what they term *anomie*. This phenomenon is present when there is a breakdown or absence of a common set of social norms, values and behavioural codes that citizens are sufficiently bound to, so as to respect them. The populace interacts in a climate of social norm confusion. When there is anomie, deviance and crime becomes rampant (Huschka & Mau, 2006). The observation of anomie in South African society is true. The various races in the country do not have, as a result of years of racial division perpetuated by the system of apartheid, a common set of social norms, values and behavioural codes that would be expected of citizens in a particular country. Some even suggest we have different loyalty and patriotism to the country as evidenced by some sections of our population to support foreign teams when they play against our national teams. Even the values enshrined in our constitution such as equality of all races, non-discrimination, etc. are still contested by some. These differences tend to ignite fires of division rather than unite us. At a school level, a simple conflict between learners of different races can easily generate into a racial issue and violence erupts.

2. 8 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on school-based violence, not only in South Africa, but also globally as well (Burton, 2008). In doing this, it presented and discussed violence as a power relationship; the typologies of violence in South African schools; the causes of school violence; school violence and its relationship to academic achievement, drop-out rates and access to schooling. Furthermore, the chapter explored the duty of school governing bodies in creating safe schools in South Africa in order to provide learners with a violence-free environment where teaching and learning could occur; the strategies utilised by school governing bodies to prevent school violence; the dynamics of school-based violence in the context of South Africa as a young, developing, post-conflict country. The chapter concludes by discussing why South Africa rates among the most violent societies in the world. The following chapter presents and discusses the theories utilised in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed literature on school violence globally and nationally and the role that could be played by school governing bodies in reducing it in South African schools. This chapter is broadly divided into two sections, namely schooling as social reproduction of inequalities; schooling as social control theory to try to comprehend school violence in South Africa. Within these two broad themes, I further explore the notion of school violence as a power relationship which was alluded to in the introductory chapter; violence by omission; schools as microcosm of its society; impact of internal and external violence on schools; the relationship between school violence, academic achievement, drop-out rates and access to schooling and to conclude this chapter, I discuss the relationship between gender theory and masculinity and how these seem to perpetuate violence in South African society in general and schools in particular.

For purposes of this study, I chose these theories as I deemed the most appropriate for this type of study. Thus, in the rest of the chapter and the entire study, school violence is discussed and analysed in line with these chosen theoretical frameworks.

3.2 Schooling as social reproduction

Sullivan (2002), Dumais (2002) and Harker (1984) posit that Bourdieu's social and cultural reproduction theory and his work on education is important to analyse and understand broader questions of the central role that the schools have in reproducing social and cultural inequalities from one generation to the next and in advanced capitalist societies. The theory of cultural reproduction is concerned with the relationship between original class membership and ultimate class membership, and how this link is mediated by the education system. Bourdieu states that cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society, and especially the ability to understand and use 'educated' language. The possession of cultural capital varies with social class, yet the education system assumes the possession of cultural capital.

Schools are but one, albeit primary, institution within a bigger culture that systematically propagates the unbalanced stratification of race, class, gender and violence (Stoudt, 2006). Further, Stoudt argues that they are sites that implicitly and explicitly teach and reinforce hegemonic values and in so doing help to reproduce the cultural advantages given to economically privileged class. Bourdieu considers the subtle institutional replication of group or class injustice, as well as its mistaken perception of legitimacy and normalcy, systems of symbolic violence (Stoudt, 2006).

In the same vein, Harber (2004) and Bisschoff and Rhodes (2012) posit that schools have always used violence to resolve conflict while performing their traditional role(s) in socialising and indoctrinating individuals into the creation and reproduction of group identities and stereotypes which form the basis for racism and discrimination. Another form of violence that can reflect the wider society and exist in schools relates to racial or ethnic discrimination, i.e. hostility towards the “other” based on skin colour or cultural differences. Harber (2004, p.87) convincingly argues that under apartheid, the entire education system was used to preserve racial inequality and to create mistrust and hostility between racial groups. In addition, Lockat and Van Niekerk (2000, p.293) state that “...one of the most crippling aspects of the exceptionally high levels of violence experienced in South Africa is that violence has come to be expected and may even have become normalised”. These researchers further argue that the use of force appears to have become the first choice in resolving conflicts and that children emerge from violent experiences with a predilection for violence themselves. Similarly, “...schools themselves have been used to overtly teach learners to hate learners from other ethnic groups, thus reproducing racial and ethnic tension and violence in a range of different societies” (Harber, 2004, p.87). Despite progress in respect of more democracy in schools since 1994, there continues to be problems with “race” as historically defined in South Africa – “black”, “coloured”, “Indian” and “white” (UNISA Report 2012, p.14). An audit of 90 desegregated schools across all nine provinces published in 1999 showed that racism in schools continued to be pervasive (Vally & Dalamba, 1999). A further study of a community near the Western Cape sheds some interesting light on how education continues to reproduce racial separation and antagonism in South Africa. The researcher (in the Western Cape study) found that both “coloured” and “black” parents and children had negative stereotypes of each other but that the school did little or nothing to combat this situation hence

perpetuating the negative stereotypes of each other (UNISA Report, 2012, p.14). The reproduction of stereotypes discussed above is depicted in many ways at schools, for instance, when schools continue to use corporal punishment on learners or other schools continue to ignore sexism or racism in their premises and just hope these evils will go away. These examples teach the young minds that it is acceptable to use violence to solve conflict or sexism/racism is acceptable if the teachers/school management/SBGs ignore such incidents in their schools. This manifests itself in many ways even at a school governing body level, e.g. when the school ignores having the necessary policies such as anti-racism policies to combat racist incidents at schools. This finding is similar in many ways to findings in this study and shall be discussed at length in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Likewise, while schooling has the potential to change society for the better, Harber (2004) further postulates that it has the potential as well not to act as an agent of positive change but to reproduce the existing characteristics of the surrounding society such as inequality, racism, exploitation and other unequal social relations of work. Harber (2004) further states that children of working-class parents go to school, experience the social relationships and expectations that correspond to working class employment and then leave school to go into working-class jobs and this perpetuates and supports the status quo. In addition, when schools do not become agents of positive change but ignore or do very little to challenge violence, gender-based violence, racism and other subtle forms of oppression through intentional or unintentional means, the role of schools could be seen as primarily reproductive (Harber, 2004). Schools can also be seen as perpetrating or even multiplying violence that already exist in society by the dehumanising nature of what they do (corporal punishment, racism, gender discrimination and violence, learner measurements and ranking through testing, examinations and other forms of assessment) and thus adding to the problems that already exist. They do this in many different ways, for example, by denying learners a voice in the affairs of the school or the classroom or any other form of learner participation. Similarly, a study by Mabovula (2009) found that although the schools in South Africa have been democratised through the introduction of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 to give all stakeholders a voice in the affairs of the school, she found that learners' voices were seemingly being silenced. This is consistent with Harber (2009, p.85) who posits that "schools are authoritarian institutions with little serious participation by pupils in decision

making...” Congruent with Mabovula’s study, research by Watts and Erevelles (2004), also found that social control over everyday lives of students by the schools prescribes normative codes of behaviour that narrow possibilities for student self-expression.

In terms of school violence, my observations in some schools have been that learners are not seen by school authorities as equal partners who can efficiently add value to the programmes the schools have for addressing violence. They are not even consulted when those programmes are crafted yet SASA requires that learners in secondary schools should be consulted when issues pertaining to them are discussed. In this way the schools are perpetrating what is going on in the society (silencing young people) where learners are seen as inferior and subordinate and therefore cannot contribute anything of value when adults are taking decisions on what has to be done. Learners are not treated as individual human beings but as commodities in a production process (Harber, 2004). There are other countless examples where schools act to reproduce what exist in society instead of challenging it if it is seen to be unfair. These also include the treatment of female learners as less important than boys in many school practices.

3.3 Social control theory

Social control theories are dominant theoretical perspectives through which school violence could be interrogated and explained (Cantillon, Davidson & Schweitzer, 2003; Harber, 2004, Grunseit, Weatherburn & Donnelly, 2008; Burton, 2008) while these researchers acknowledge that other factors not encompassed within these theories may also play a role in school violence. These include: school size, boredom, level of attachment to the school, school performance and racial profile (Grunseit, *et al.*, 2008). The above researchers posit that schools control learners through their bureaucratic, routinised authoritarianism - constantly measuring, categorising, ordering and regulating so that control becomes accepted by the majority as normal and natural. The desired end result is increased docility, obedience and compliance or conformity by learners with the status quo. Watts and Erevelles (2004, p.278) also support this view and posit that “...since the inception of schools, they have always been used as institutions of social control.” According to Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega and Weitz (2002), social control takes place at three levels and these are: through self-control (when individuals internalise the norms and values of their group and police themselves); through informal controls (self-restraint exercised because of

fear of what others will think) and through formal controls (such as administrative sanctions such as fines, expulsion or imprisonment).

Harber (2004) also states that school size may have influence on violence on learners. In his view, "...authoritarian school organisation can be exacerbated by the scale of schooling. Connections exist between mass schooling, mass production, social control and authoritarianism and are perhaps at their clearest in the common phenomenon of the large school. Large schools require a particular degree of bureaucratised and regimented control and order" (Harber, 2004, pp.36-37). Having been a teacher and a school principal myself, I can witness to the fact that the bigger the school size, the bigger the challenges of maintaining discipline in the school. The tendency is to sub-divide the school into zones and certain teachers are assigned to be responsible for discipline and some form of order in those zones. During the apartheid era, and in some schools even today when we have a democratic dispensation, rigid rules were applied. These included corporal punishment, learners being excluded temporarily from school in found guilty of a misdemeanour or even expelled from school. During recess, teachers have a duty roster where learners are monitored by teachers in what is called 'playground duties' by the school authorities. While this is meant to protect learners from harm, it is a means of control as well.

In addition, Burton (2008) argues that social control theory provides the basis for an exploration of the school-delinquency relationship. This theory is basically concerned with the understanding and determining why people obey the law and adhere to society's rules as opposed to the more widely-supported criminological theories concerned with why people break the law (Pittaro, 2007). Similarly, Pittaro states that social control theorists posit that the delinquent behaviour emerges when an individual's bond or ties to conventional social institutions such as one's school, family or community are severed or weakened thereby making the individual more susceptible to temptations of delinquency. The most recognizable and widely accepted of all social control theories is that of Travis Hirschi (1969) which argues that delinquency emerges when social bonds are weakened or broken altogether. The theory proposes that juveniles are simply less likely to engage in acts of delinquency if there is a strong attachment to the family, school and the community. Social control theory suggests that the school experience provides social bonds that restrain children from and adolescent involvement in anti-social behaviour. As

indicated above, Pittaro (2007) and Burton (2008) posit that there are four elements that contribute to the school-bond and these are *attachment, commitment, involvement* and *belief*. This theory also postulates that the stronger each element of the social-bond is, there is less likelihood for delinquent behaviour. In addition, according to Pittaro (2007), Hirschi considered attachment to be the most important of the four elements because attachment signifies an individual's sensitivity and empathy towards others. Violent school delinquents lack this undeniably important element that, according to Hirschi, facilitates in the development of an individual's conscience and overall compassion and empathy towards others. Further, according to Pittaro (2007), this is not evident in violent school incidents like shootings and other forms of extreme school violence.

A student's *attachment* to the neighbourhood in which he/she resides, developed through interactions with community residents, contributes to the student's conformity to appropriate norms and expectations that can lead to positive educational outcomes (Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001). Current research has shown that antagonistic structural constraints (such as poverty, residential instability and racial or ethnic heterogeneity) undermine social relationships in the community, resulting in weak social ties and ineffective methods of informal social control (Ainsworth, 2002; Crowder & South, 2003; Nash 2002). In terms of school violence, my experience and observation both as a teacher and school principal was that learners who had a sense of attachment to the school were unlikely to engage in acts of vandalism and other unacceptable acts of violence and misbehaviour. For instance, if learners were involved in the school garden projects aimed at beautifying the school or planting vegetables, they made sure they protected those gardens or ensured their school was clean. Some even went further and acted as sources of information when a school was burgled into or vandalised because they felt the sense of attachment and therefore had a willingness to contribute to protect the school and its property.

In addition, research has also found that the type of adult role models local youths are exposed to outside the home, influence the development of positive school-related values, attitudes, and behaviour. For example, children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods marked by poverty, joblessness, and residential instability are less likely to develop high educational expectations or

effort, in part, because they have not had direct evidence that these behaviours or attitudes are desirable (Ainsworth, 2002; Crowder & South 2003; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001; Nash 2002). On the other hand, children living in advantaged neighbourhoods with high employment rates, high socioeconomic status and residential stability are more likely to develop normative attitudes and behaviours that lead to success in school due, in part, to the positive behaviours and attitudes modelled by community residents (Ainsworth, 2002; Crowder & South, 2003; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless 2001& Nash, 2002). Strong, long-term relationships take time to develop. Residential mobility can affect the opportunity to develop strong ties and attachment to the neighbourhood for both parents and students contributing to the development of weak social ties and lack of informal social control (Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001). The composition of a community also has an effect on social cohesion and informal social control. A community that has racial or ethnic homogeneity provides opportunities for residents to develop strong social ties instrumental in forming consensus about norms and values (Ainsworth, 2002; Crowder & South, 2003; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001; Smith, Atkins & Connell 2003).

The second element suggested by Hirschi is *commitment*, which pertains to the time and energy one spends pursuing a specific activity such as getting an education or a career. It is an investment in conventional behaviour which the youth risks should become delinquent. In contrast to youths with well-defined goals, adolescents engaged in drinking, smoking, dating and other behaviour not oriented toward future goals are much more likely to get involved in delinquent behaviour (Wiatrowski, Griswold & Roberts, 1981). The third element is that of *involvement* which operates under the premise that if a person is engaged in conventional social activities, that individual will simply not have time or desire to participate in delinquent acts (Huebner & Betts, 2002).

The fourth and final element is *belief* in which an individual believes in the social rules and laws of society (Hirschi, 1969). Several studies (Curran & Renzetti, 2001; Pittaro, 2007; Burton, 2008) support Hirsch's supposition in that the stronger one's moral beliefs in the social norms are, the less likely one is to participate in harmful or criminal activities (Pittaro, 2007). The presence of these factors can provide or reinforce existing protective factors (that enhance resilience to violence and anti-social behaviour), while the absence of any of these factors can

increase the risk of engagement in anti-social or felonious behaviour. A strong commitment to school is easily threatened by unfavourable experiences such as violence within a school, provides a significant protective factor for young people at risk (Burton, 2008).

Likewise, Gottfredson (2001) argues that those learners who show signs of impulsiveness, weak attachment to their school, little commitment to achieving their educational goals and whose moral beliefs in the validity of conventional rules of behaviour are weak, are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour than those who do not possess these characteristics. Social control theory is also very much influenced by the family, the school as well as the individual student factors which are further discussed hereunder. Furthermore, Watts and Erevelles (2004) posit that schools operate as establishments of social control by providing an important supervisory function with respect to the care and movement of children, they also exercise extensive authority over students, and many of the basic civil rights of students are suspended while they are in school. Students are also expected to relinquish a certain degree of individual freedom like complying with the school's code of conduct for learners in exchange for receiving the benefits of education.

In addition, Watts and Erevelles (2004) posit the ineffectiveness of prevention policies such as the increase of security wands, metal detectors, zero tolerance policies and strict learner dress codes, is due to the fact that they all fail to address the broader social context that plays a significant part in constructing the violent or socially aggressive student. Similarly, Clark (2012) postulates that exposure to violence in schools, homes and communities is a significant causal factor of youth violence in South Africa. In the section below, I further discuss family, school and student factors and how they relate to social control and school violence.

3.3.1 Family factors

Current research has shown that family involvement plays a significant role in the educational success of students (Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001; Coleman, 1988; Crosnoe, 2004). Parents are instrumental in providing information related to education and future opportunities, establishing norms of expected behaviour and achievement, and assistance in steering through the educational system (Bankston & Zhou 2002). Parent-student interaction is a key mechanism that provides students with information and support to help them achieve academic success. Parents share their knowledge about school subjects by helping their children with homework,

providing suggestions for classes/subjects to take, and suggestions for behaviour when at school. This interaction also serves as a form of social control that encourages students to comply with school norms and expectations in order to achieve success at school (Ainsworth, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Crosnoe, 2004; Ross & Broh, 2000). The involvement of both parents and other compositional attributes of the family are also shown to affect, not only the opportunity, but also the quality of parent-child interactions. The number of parents and other adults in the form of grandparents in the home as well as the number of siblings can shape the frequency and duration of the interactions between parents and children (Ainsworth, 2003; Bankston & Zhou 2002, Crosnoe 2004; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2004), and hence the quality of control.

3.3.2 School factors

Public schools are social institutions created to help socialise children into mainstream society (Burton, 2008). In addition, Burton maintains that schools are also utilised to develop and reinforce positive citizens with pro-social attitudes and as sites where individuals are prepared for the role they are to play in society at large. Equally, the education process in the schools is intended to provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities to become productive members of society. These also include the values, attitudes and beliefs of the culture in which the students reside (Henslin, 2007). The school system also plays an important role in the development of children by providing a positive learning environment (Anguiano, 2004). Student-school relationships provide an opportunity for school management and teachers to set expectations for appropriate behaviour and provide information that will help students achieve academic success (Ainsworth, 2002; Anguiano, 2004; Brookover & Goddard, 2003). Neighbourhood structural characteristics can also have an impact on school climate through an inability to attract and retain quality teachers. The inability (to attract and retain teachers) may have an additional negative impact on student-teacher relationships through limited opportunity and frequency of interactions (Rosignano, 1998; Ainsworth, 2002). To illustrate this further, currently in South Africa, it is difficult to attract teachers of other races (especially White teachers) to township and rural schools. This is due to structural characteristics where, during apartheid, there was racial segregation and so the factor of who one is and where one comes from is still a serious factor and this unfortunately has a negative impact on the quality of inter-racial relations at a school level. In my observation, in some communities there still exist the isolation

syndromes where people of a different tribe or race are seen as outsiders and therefore not welcome or entitled to certain benefits available in the area such as employment or schooling opportunities.

3.3.3 Community factors

Current research has found that children living in communities with adults, who have limited time to monitor their behaviour or help organise structured activities, are more likely to participate in deviant activities. Further, in communities with ineffective informal social control processes, local youths are more likely to be influenced by negative peer subcultures and adopt anti-school attitudes and behaviours (Ainsworth, 2002; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001; Nash 2002). Ross and Broh (2000) also found that doing well in school influenced a student's perception of personal control. A student's academic success and feelings of competence and being in control of one's life acts like a feedback loop in that academic success fostered feelings of being in control, which then influenced additional academic success. One way students can develop feelings of being in control is through their willingness to talk with parents, school leaders, teachers and neighbours about educational matters. In addition, being engaged in the academic process such as regular attendance helps facilitate the development of social networks within the school that will in turn help improve academic performance (Broh, 2002; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1997).

To conclude this section, in a study conducted in Australia by Grunseit, Weatherburn and Donnelly (2008), these researchers found that a more reasonable approach to understand school-based violence was to combine the social control theory and other theories such as social ecological and social disorganisation theories. The social control theory plays an important role in shaping an individual's propensity to involvement in violence but that the level of informal social control in the school environment plays a key role in determining whether and in what circumstances that propensity is translated into violent behaviour. Viewed from this perspective, social control theory helps us understand the disposition to violent behaviour while social disorganisation theory helps us to understand the circumstances in which violent behaviour is more or less likely to occur (Grunseit, Weatherburn & Donnelly, 2008). These arguments demonstrate the significance of the community and school environment not only in direct

consequential terms of learners' immediate safety, but also how the environment can be a critical social context for crime prevention on a larger scale (Farrington, 2007).

3.4 Violence by omission

In terms of the *in loco parentis* principle, teachers in particular and schools in general are expected to protect learners under their care (Shaba, 2003; Harber, 2004; De Wet, 2007) yet some fail to protect children from violence and suffering when they could and should do so. It is the responsibility of the Department of Education and school authorities (school governing bodies, school management and teachers) that learners are safe while at school. This includes the amenities that learners use while at school such as buildings, playgrounds, school fencing, etc. yet in many schools these are neglected which poses danger to learners and school personnel. In South Africa, a number of schools especially in the townships and rural areas are either not fenced or are poorly fenced which makes them easy targets for criminals and gangs. Some schools do not have security guards and this can be referred to many factors. Harber (2004, p.46) states that "... in KwaZulu-Natal, almost a quarter of schools were reported as being unfit for educational purposes and were too dangerous to be occupied by pupils". It is the responsibility of the state to provide safe schools yet in South Africa, sometimes this responsibility is delegated to the school governing bodies that do not have the financial capacity and knowledge to execute such responsibilities. The omissions referred to above are just a few examples to indicate how the authorities fail to provide safe schools when they have a legal responsibility to do so. Violence by omission is discussed fully in Chapter Three, it is sufficient here to state that the state and the schools have a responsibility to protect learners from harm. Schools and teachers should be equipped to deal with issues such as school violence, racism, bullying, learner pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, gender and sexual violence, etc. so that they are effectively able to deal with them when the need arises.

3.5 School violence as a power relationship

School-based violence is not a problem confined to schools but an intricate, multidimensional societal issue (Edwards, 2008). Schools are social spaces within which the power relationships, domination and discrimination practices of the community and wider society are reflected (Antonowicz, 2010). Similarly, Morrel (2002) posits that violence is inextricably related to

power, serving to reinforce or change the social order. In addition, Henry (2000, p.21) states that school violence is “the exercise of power over others in school related settings, by some individual, agency or social process, that denies those subjected to it their humanity to make a difference, either by reducing them from what they are or by limiting them from becoming what they might be”. Galbraith (1998, p.6) also seems to share this view and states that “all instances of violence relate to power relationships. Inherent in these relationships is the conflict emanating from the unequal statuses involved”. In addition, violence is also perceived as a sign that an individual (or a group) is searching for power, not that they necessarily have it. It can also be a response to some threat or feeling of inadequacy, as in bullying. Henry (2000) also notes the exercise of power in violent situations to deny others their humanity. Examples of this power relationship can be observed in many instances, such as in a bullying relationship (between the perpetrator and the victim) where there is systematic abuse of power and the victim is in a subservient position (Pepler & Craig, 2000). Edwards (2008) and Kiriakidis (2011) also posit that with bullying, there is ordinarily an imbalance of power, physically (the victim may be smaller or weak), numerically (the number of bullies may be many) or psychologically (the victim may be less robust in comparison to the bully) and also is accompanied with malicious intent. Petersen (2005) also argues that violence and misbehaviour promote a culture and climate of concern and fear to both learners and teachers and this sense of fear disempower its victims. Similarly, in a sexual abuse relationship, where, the victim is a female/male student and the perpetrator is a teacher or a school boy, issues of power exist where school girls are sexually harassed and assaulted (Prinsloo, 2006). My own observation as a former teacher and school principal was that violence perpetrators had some form of power over their victims as suggested by Edwards (2008) and Kiriakidis (2011) above and victims felt powerless in these situations unless teachers intervened.

Further, in studies conducted in Kenya by Mudege, Zulu and Izugbara (2008) and The Nelson Mandela Foundation in South Africa (2005), it was found that teachers, who are supposed to provide security to learners, in some cases were the opposite. Teachers emerged as a source of insecurity, even forcing students to drop out. Of great concern was that some teachers even used nefarious methods (such as marking learners work unfairly; abusing their power to grant or refuse learners marks for sexual favours in what is known as ‘sexual transmitted marks’ or

simply use corporal punishment) to victimise learners who refuse their sexual advances (Monama, 2008; South African Human Rights Commission, 2006 & HSRC Report, 2006; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Further, during the public hearings of the SA Human Rights Commission in 2006, it emerged that teachers were abusing their positions and coercing sex from school girls. The teacher, by virtue of his/her position, is in a powerful position over his/her victim who is a learner. Similarly, literature on school violence (Malete, 2007; Benbenishty & Astor, 2008; Edwards, 2008; Dunne, Leach & Humphreys, 2006; Smith, 2007; Hunt, 2007; West, 2007; Leach & Sitaram, 2007) is awash with examples of imbalanced power relationships between the perpetrators and victims of school violence and it is these relationships that have to be interrogated if school institutions are to make a meaningful contribution in reducing school violence and its negative consequences. Galbraith (1998, p.9) also states imbalanced power relationships are maintained through exercise of power "... through intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimising, denying and blaming, using male privilege, economic abuse, coercion and threats, and physical abuse". The example of teachers abusing their powers is an excellent example of what Galbraith (1998) is referring to.

Galbraith (1998, p.10) also asserts that ‘...perpetrators of school violence, whether they are students, staff or leaders, as individuals, in almost all the cases, feel disempowered, threatened, and inadequate and have suffered from the poor role modelling and cultural conditioning’. To correct this, Galbraith (1998) suggests that we should address issues of poverty, unemployment, poor health, inequitable class, racial and gender discrimination, and improve education and reduce failure. In schools, she (Galbraith) further suggests that educators should act as positive role models demonstrating strong values and moral principles, promoting equity and justice for all, and emanating an ethic of care. In South Africa, the government, through the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, has mandated the school governing bodies to maintain discipline in schools. This study explores the role of school governing bodies in reducing violence in South African schools and by extension, addresses the issues raised by Galbraith (1998) above which, in my view, is a significant part of a bigger picture society should be addressing everywhere.

As indicated above in this section, Morrel (2002) has suggested that violence is inextricably related to power, serving to reinforce or change the social order. Physical punishment for

example, is used to maintain the balance of power between adults and children. Intimate partner violence may be used to perpetuate male authority, particularly when a man feels this is threatened by, for example, a woman achieving higher status in education or the labour market (Silberschmidt, 2001 & 2005). Violence against women and girls in wars and civil conflicts can arise from men's struggles to wrest power, resources and political control. Recognising these links between power and violence in relation to girls in school, Leach (2006) has distinguished between explicit and implicit gender violence. Explicit gender violence includes overtly sexual acts, like sexual harassment, including touching, groping or verbal abuse, and forced sex or rape, assault and intimidation. Implicit gender violence includes practices that reinforce gender discrimination like teachers' tolerance of boys' domination of classroom space or of gender differentiated punishments in which girls do cleaning while boys do gardening. These practices, in reinforcing unequal gender relations, may increase the likelihood of explicit acts of gender violence (Leach, 2006). In the next section I discuss the impact of both external and internal violence on schools.

3.6 The of impact of external and internal violence on schools

3.6.1 External violence

Various researchers (Harber, 2004; Smith & Smith, 2006; Edwards, 2008; Burton, 2008) state that schools are a reflection of the societies in which they are located and if one has to gain a sense of the causes of violence in schools, one needs to examine and attempt to understand the broader context in which the schools are found – the home and the larger community and how these are used to socialise young people. Similarly, Edwards (2008) maintains that the sources of school discipline and violence problems are many and varied and include the home, school and society while Ohsako (2000), in addition to the above, specifically includes other social factors such as the dual blow of poverty and the legacy of apartheid violence, colonialism and serious economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa which perpetrate the legacy of apartheid (Report of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2009), individual attributes, familial contexts, as well as educational factors (Clarke, 2007; De Wet, 2009; Leoschut & Burton, 2009). The idea that school-based violence is not the outcome of one particular cause, but can be attributed to wider structural and systemic influences, is also noted by Van Vuuren and Gouws (2007) who state that school-based violence can be attributed to social ills such as

family breakdown or dysfunctional families, grinding poverty, inequitable educational opportunities, domestic violence, unemployment, poor emotional and cognitive development, drugs, gangs, poor sanitary conditions and even the poor physical conditions of the schools. This thesis posits that South Africa is a post conflict society and as such, school violence inflicting schools should be seen in that light and solutions to this problem should take this fact into account. This has led to a significant increase in interest in and publications on education during conflicts as well as post-conflict education (Harber, 2012).

3.6.2 Internal school violence

The above discussion (on external violence) suggests distinctions between how external violence affects schools and how schools themselves indirectly reproduce violence are not necessarily clear cut. With regard to school violence, there are often connections between what goes on outside the school and what goes on inside the school. Research (Morrel, 1999 & 2002; Harber, 2004; UNISA, 2012), however, schools are also more directly involved in internal forms of violence where they actually perpetrate the violence themselves or reproduce it by their failure to act, rather than have it imposed upon them from the outside.

Morrel (1999 & 2002) states that despite its illegality, internal violence in the form of corporal punishment continues to be perpetrated by schools in South Africa. The UNISA (2012) report on school violence maintains that children may well be hit at home but not necessarily in the systematic way that corporal punishment can and is carried out in schools. Moreover, many children go to school from homes where no physical punishment (or sexual harassment) exists and are then exposed to it for the first time in school. So, corporal punishment is a form of violence internal to schools both in the sense that it exists at some schools and that the people who experience it there don't necessarily experience it outside (UNISA, 2012). Similar to Morrel, Hunt (2007), using observations and interviews, found that corporal punishment was still used in three out of four of her case study schools in the Western Cape area and that learners were subjected to incidents of verbal insult and humiliation.

As stated in the background to this study, research conducted by The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) revealed that sexual harassment of female learners by male staff members and

school boys was rife in some schools and is a direct form of violence perpetrated by schools. In addition, a Medical Research Council survey, carried out in 1998, found that among those rape victims who specified their relationship to the perpetrator, 37,7% indicated that they were raped by their schoolteacher or principal (Human Rights Watch, 2001,p.42). According to the Nelson Mandela Foundation Report (2005), sexual violence against girls remains a particular problem in rural South African schools. Gendered violence within schools and violence against girls is a serious problem. Going to and from schools girls are at risk of harassment, beating and rape. Inside schools, relationships between male teachers and female learners can find expression in everything from the ‘sugar daddy’ phenomenon to girls being demeaned and treated as less than equal in the classroom.

In addition, to demonstrate the prevalence of the extent of the problem, twenty-seven complaints of sexual misconduct against teachers were received by the South African Council of Educators between January and October 2008, and in some cases the teacher-learner relationships took place with the consent of the children’s parents based on some kind of financial agreement. The Chief Executive Officer of the Council said:

It has been very disturbing that there have been cases where learners have been minors. Children as young as nine have been found to be involved with teachers. There have also been cases of impregnation. Council finds that completely intolerable. While girl learners are abused by other members of society, we definitely have jurisdiction over teachers. The age of learners, their consent, parental consent or their location in a different school will not mitigate the culpability of a teacher in this regard.

(Mail and Guardian Online, 8/12/2008).

Similarly, in a recent investigation into corporal punishment in schools in South Africa by the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper (John, 2012), citing the children’s rights body Childline, it was reported that corporal punishment was rife in Gauteng. More than 300 cases were reported telephonically to Childline in Gauteng alone in 2011. While doing the empirical investigation, Childline visited 76 schools in Gauteng in the same year and in almost every school, children reported that corporal punishment was still happening. The chief executive of Childline said that corporal punishment was widespread across South Africa but is not reported. The same article

reported that four teachers in KwaZulu-Natal were arrested for allegedly beating a learner so severely that he needed surgery on one of his testicles. The spokesperson of the South African Council of Educators said the council had received 161 formal complaints since April 2011 but warned that incidents of corporal punishment were “grossly underreported”. The article further reported that many parents still favoured corporal punishment and that teachers were not trained in alternatives. However, the Director of the Centre for Psychological Services at the University of Johannesburg noted that in cases where corporal punishment was administered learners viewed violence as some kind of solution to problems, and added that there was a direct link between corporal punishment and violent crime in South Africa.

Another form of direct, internally generated violence within schools is bullying of learners by teachers. A study of violence in the Free State schools found that of a sample of 800 teachers 43% reported that educators in their schools had threatened one or more learners at their schools over the period of a year, whereas 17% had attacked or assaulted one or more learners at their schools during the same period (De Wet 2007).

3.7 School violence, academic achievement, drop-out rates and access to schooling

Studies conducted on school discipline problems/violence (Marshall, 2000; Rabrenovic, 2004; Cox, Bynum & Davidson, 2004; Burton, 2008) and learner academic achievement show a strong negative relationship between the two (Petersen, 2005; Eisenbraun, 2007; Mudege, Zulu & Izugbara, 2008). Students who experience academic failure often engage in disruptive behaviour and vice versa (Bloom, 2009). Equally, Burton (2008) postulates that the impact of exposure to or experience of violence at a young age impacts negatively on the cognitive development of the individual as well as on the development of pro-social behaviours. In addition, violence or fear of violence inhibits learners’ educational and psychological development as well as the ability of children to function in a healthy way both within and outside the school environment (Burton, 2008). Petersen (2005) also claims that the relatively low educational achievement of disadvantaged children compared to their more affluent peers can be attributed to poverty. These children are not emotionally, cognitively and socially ready when school starts, but must always struggle to catch up with their peers. Cox, Bynun and Davidson (2004) corroborate this view and state that schools with high rates of crime and violence are less effective in educating learners. In South Africa and Kenya, studies conducted there by the Medical Research Council

(2007) and by Mudege, Zulu and Izugbara (2008) respectively found that amongst poor learners living in slum conditions and who experience sexual violence/harassment and rape, threats to personal and physical security, poor academic performance, absenteeism and aversion to school, pregnancy and dropouts were common. The Kenyan study found that lack of security within schools and in their slum communities in general, poverty, long distances to school (heightening security threats and vulnerability) as well as early pregnancies were common causes of school dropouts. This study also corroborates other studies (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010) that have shown the negative consequences of violence and family breakdown on learners (Mudege, *et al.* (ibid.)). Furthermore, Mudege, *et al.* (ibid) posit that when the family stops functioning, the individuals in that family become generally insecure. This explains why some children from poor families end up dropping out of school. Family violence distracts a student from learning or his/her ability to concentrate is impeded as he/she is often worried about his/her parents fighting. Equally, Kochhar-Bryant and Heishman (2010, p.2) posit that:

Children of divorce and family violence now represent over half of all children in the United States. Research reveals that children from divorced families, or who live with family violence, are more likely to have academic problems than those in intact families, more likely to get into trouble with school authorities and the police, and are more likely to have social and emotional problems. In terms of grades, standardised test scores, and dropout rates, children whose parents are divorced, generally have poorer results.

In addition, generally, sexually abused learners suffer from despondency and depression, emotions and reactions that erode the opportunity to achieve at school (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2007). Similarly, bullying and other forms of violence have been proved to have negative consequences on learner performance and in some cases, eventual drop-out (Human Rights Commission, 2001; Bloom, 2009; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). These researchers further posit that children cannot learn effectively when they are afraid – and intimidation and fear are principal consequences of bullying. The victims feel embarrassed, fearful, angry and anxious, vengeful, self-pity and in some instances they are physically harmed. Academic performance suffers and learners often avoid attending school for fear of further harassment. The school environment in general, is experienced as threatening.

Violent school environment leads to psychological symptoms such as decreased concentration, anxiety and depression and these, in turn, have a negative impact on learners' ability or desire to learn (Eisenbraun, 2007). Left untreated, these feelings of extreme bullying, can lead to more serious emotional distress such as depression and attempted suicide (Bloom, 2009; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). The fear of being a victim of violence, disturbingly, was found to cause some learners to carry a weapon at school for self-defense. Thoughts and worries of victimisation distress the minds of typical school-goers (Eisenbraun, 2007). Other learners simply drop out of school (Medical Research Council, 2007). On the other hand, learners who develop a commitment to succeed in school and who feel attached or bonded to the school community - to teachers and fellow learners- are more successful academically than other learners. They are also less likely to engage in serious crime, including violent behaviour (Hawkins, Farrington & Catalano, 1998). It is abundantly clear from this discussion that the economic and social inequalities reinforced by social barriers make it difficult, if not impossible, for poor children and their families to escape the crippling swirl of failure (Petersen, 2005).

Furthermore, De Wet (2007) posits that both violent incidents and threats of violence at school affect learner attendance negatively. In an environment heavy with the threat of personal injury, learners cannot learn and educators cannot teach. A study conducted by Bemak and Keys (2000) also found that educators concerned frequently for their safety were less able to focus on teaching and likewise learners on learning. This view is also corroborated by other studies (Flannery *et al.* 2004; Zeldin, 2004; Rasmussen, Aber & Bhana, 2004; Ofosky, Ravaris, Hammer & Dickson, 2004) which state that learners who are exposed to violence are not eager to attend school because of the occurrence or threat of violence. It is difficult for learners to concentrate on school work when they are frequently worrying about when they will next be harassed, what they can do to take revenge on their tormentor, or if they will become the next victim. Learners may become withdrawn, isolated or inattentive in class. These effects will impact negatively on their motivation and ability to learn, as well as on their socialisation with peers and the quality of their relationship with adults at their school.

In the same vein, Flannery, *et al.* (2004) posit that exposure to violence is also related to a number of emotional and behavioural problems, such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, anger,

depression, dis-association and self-destructive and aggressive behaviour. In addition, Flannery, *et al.*, (2004) state that bullying may result in severe psychological, academic or physical harm to the victim; irreparable harm to the perpetrator; and a rejection of responsibility for the bystander or observer, particularly if the aggressive or the violent behaviour is allowed to persist over time. Farrell and Sullivan (2004) also state that the learners who had witnessed incidents of violence reported an increase in their frequency of aggression, drug use and delinquency. Such learners also become more accepting of violent behaviour and less supportive of non-violent approaches to addressing problems. They also place increasingly less value on academic achievement. One of the more subtle effects of violence on learners and educators is the attitude some of them develop that violence is an acceptable way of solving problems. Such youth and adults begin to think that using violence to solve problems is the normal way of doing things (De Wet, 2007).

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I commenced by discussing schooling as social reproduction; proceeded to present and analyse theories of social control; school violence as a power relationship; violence by omission; schools as microcosm of their society and how the society's ills are reflected in schools and to conclude, this chapter discussed the impact of internal and external school violence. In line with Grunseit, Weatherburn and Donnelly (2008), who maintain that a more reasonable approach to theorise and understand school-based violence is to combine and utilise more than one theoretical framework, in this thesis, I utilised multiple theories in order to better analyse and understand the phenomenon of school-based violence in post-conflict South African schools. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology utilised throughout this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. This chapter is devoted to the discussion of the research methodology utilised in my study. To accomplish this, I begin by presenting the research paradigm within which I couched this thesis, the research design and methodology, multi-case study design, sampling, data generation tools, data analysis, access issues, trustworthiness, triangulation, ethical issues and conclude by presenting the limitations of the research approach utilised.

4.2 Research paradigm

In this section I begin by discussing the paradigms in research because, in accordance with Durrheim (2009), Creswell (2007) and Nieuwenhuis (2010), any scientific study is embedded within a given research paradigm before I delve into the emancipatory paradigm which I chose to be the paradigmatic lens through which this entire thesis is analysed. Paradigms are thus fundamental to research design because they influence both what is to be studied and the manner in which the question is to be studied (Durrheim, 2009).

4.2.1 Paradigms or world-views in research

Barker (2003, p.312) defines a paradigm as “a model or pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and a design for collecting and interpreting data” while Glesne (2006, p.6) defines it as “...frameworks that function as maps or guides for scientific communities, determining important problems or issues for its members to address and defining acceptable theories or explanations, methods, and techniques to solve defined problems”. Similarly, Mertens (2009) and Creswell (2007) define it as an approach at looking at the world and is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action. Nieuwenhuis (2010) also describes it as a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world-view. Nieuwenhuis (2010) further states that a paradigm addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about form and the nature of reality (*ontology*), the basic belief about knowledge or the relationship between the knower and known

(*epistemology*) and how the researcher goes about finding out whatever s/he believes can be known (*methodology*). Put differently, paradigms serve as the lens or organising principles by which reality is interpreted.

Currently, literature on research methodology seems to agree that there are four major paradigms/worldviews in research which are: positivism, interpretivism, emancipatory and pragmatism and each of these have their assumptions and differences (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 1998 & 2009). For purposes of this study however, in the next section I dwelt more on emancipatory paradigm as it was the lens through which I viewed and analysed my study. My choice of this paradigm is also elucidated below.

4.2.1.1 Emancipatory paradigm

Mertens (1998, 2009) and Creswell (2009) have identified the emancipatory paradigm as one of the major paradigms used in qualitative research and it was this paradigm which I utilised for reasons which are explained below in this section. I used this paradigm because, besides wanting to understand the causes of school violence and how schools governing bodies manage it, in line with Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012, p.9), I also wanted to ‘focus on the ways power is embedded in the structure of society and how individuals become empowered to transform themselves, the social organisation around them and society as a whole’. I believed that empowerment of the study participants on school violence should be the ultimate goal of this study. According to these researchers, qualitative researchers generally hold one or two research perspectives: *interpretivist* or *critical* (emancipatory). I deliberately chose the latter for reasons stated above and more that are presented in this section.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, research paradigms/theoretical paradigms guide the process of inquiry and form the basis for the practice of science by directing the researcher towards appropriate research methods and methodologies, depending on the nature of the phenomenon being investigated (Merriam, 2009; Schensul, 2012). According to Merriam (2009), emancipatory research goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of people’s understandings of their world. Similarly, Robson (2002), Creswell (2007), Mertens (2009), Steinberg and Kincheloe (2010) and Schensul (2012) all postulate that the basic tenet of the

emancipatory/critical paradigm is that research should contain an action agenda for reform, critique and challenge, to transform and empower, that may change the lives of participants and the institutions in which they live and work or even the researchers' lives. Critical researchers believe that social and political structures shape and hold power over the lives of individuals, creating various types of disparities. In addition, critical researchers always locate the behaviours and meanings held by individuals and groups within larger systems of dominance and control and which exclude some people from the resources, policies and power (Schensul, 2012). Critical theory paradigm is also transformational in that it seeks to *question* rather *accept* existing situations (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). It has to be noted that the South African society is also undergoing massive transformation in all possible facets of its life and being a post-conflict society, it ought to *question* rather than *accept* school violence that is tearing its schools (and society) apart. Furthermore, the critical theory paradigm also allows the researcher and the participants an opportunity of self-reflection. The paradigm identifies 'self-knowledge' or self-reflection which involves 'interest in the way one's history and biography has expressed it in the way one sees oneself, one's role and social expectations. Insights gained through critical self-awareness are emancipatory in the sense that at least one can recognise the correct reasons for his or her problems'. Knowledge is gained by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1981, p.68).

Critical researchers further contend that research needs to be intertwined with the politics and political agenda of the participants. Emancipatory/critical paradigm also criticises interpretive/constructive researchers that their research still consists of a small group of powerful experts researching on a large number of a powerless participants (Mertens, 2009). This view of research is also corroborated by Silver (2011) who states that participatory approaches emphasise the need to do research *with* and *for* participants rather than *on* them. Emancipatory research paradigm places greater emphasis on the participation of those being researched throughout the whole process of the research project. They therefore challenge conservative dichotomies between the researcher and the researched. Similarly, Kemmis (2008) also posits that the emancipatory impulse arises when people want to free themselves and others from the constraints that narrow their lives and produce untoward consequences; when people confront social structures and practices that are unjust in the sense that they cause or support domination

and oppression. Furthermore, Kemmis (2008) suggests that the emancipatory impulse springs from the eternal hope those things might be otherwise - more rational, more legitimate, more caring, and less apt to produce differential consequences of suffering and dissatisfaction. In addition, Steinberg and Kincheloe (2010) argue that the citizens in so-called democratic societies are regulated by forces of power operating in a general climate of deceit. In these contemporary conditions, individuals are acculturated and schooled to feel comfortable in relations of domination or subordination rather than equality and interdependence. This paradigm also acknowledges the socially constructed nature of knowledge. However, Creswell (2007) and Mertens (2009) suggest that in the process of knowledge construction, power relations are at play – power is exercised by some groups over the others. For example, school curriculum is thus viewed as a political tool to entrench particular political ideologies. Therefore curriculum inquiry cannot only be restricted to teaching, learning and assessment. Rather, it must be understood in its broader social, political and economic context.

Ontologically, the researchers in this paradigm adopt the stance that social reality is historically bound and is changing, depending on social, political, cultural and power-based factors. They also recognise multiple realities of knowledge - the surface reality and the deep structures (Chilisa, 2005). However, they stress the influence of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender and disability values in the construction of reality. In addition, it emphasises that which seems “real” may be reified structures that are taken to be real because of historical situations. Consequently “...what is taken to be real needs to be critically examined through an ideological critique in terms of its role in perpetuating oppressive social structures and policies” (Mertens, 1998, p. 20).

Furthermore, the transformative sense of ontology embraces a conscious awareness that certain individuals occupy positions of greater power and that individuals with other characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions about the accepted definition of what exists. The transformative ontological assumption rejects a perspective of cultural relativism and recognises the influence of privilege in determining what is real and the consequences of accepting different perceptions of reality (Mertens, 2009). The following characteristics define the transformative paradigm: it places central importance on the lives and

experiences of communities that are pushed to the society's margins (the oppressed groups; violence and poverty - stricken communities, the illiterate, the sickness and disease - stricken people, people with disabilities, women, those who are poor, and more generally, people in non-dominant cultural groups); analyses asymmetric power relationships; links results of social inquiry to action and uses transformative theory to develop the programme theory and the inquiry approach (Mertens, 2009; Creswell, 2007). As these issues are studied and exposed, the researchers provide a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness and improving their lives.

The critical paradigm thus regards the two previous paradigms (post positivism and social constructivism) as presenting incomplete accounts of social behaviour by their neglect of the political and ideological contexts of much educational research (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). The intention of the researchers of emancipatory paradigm is the emancipation/transformation of the individuals and groups in an egalitarian society (Creswell, 2007; Cohen, *et al.*, 2011; Mertens, 2009). In other words, this paradigm seeks to realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members; to emancipate the disempowered; to redress inequality and to promote individual freedom within a democratic society (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). In support of the above assumptions, Mertens (2009, p.3) posits that "...the rationale for this paradigm rests in on-going challenges in the world; the need to acknowledge that addressing issues of power, discrimination and oppression can play a key role in redressing inequities; and supportive evidence from illustrative studies of the potential for social change when researchers and evaluators operate within the assumptions of the transformative paradigm".

This paradigm also posits that power is maintained through ideology leading to the existence of oppressors (those who own the means of production) and the oppressed (the workers and the unemployed people who are usually poor) in all spheres of life – economic, social and political. The critical paradigm further assumes that reality is underpinned by the promotion of the values and interests of those who are dominant in society at the expense of the values of social justice (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2009). This is in many ways very true. Those who have the power in society always have their views dominant. This is because they have the material means to propagate those views whereas those from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to have access to

the means of propagating their views. This is discussed further in the section on schools as social reproduction section of this thesis.

Epistemologically, the researchers in this paradigm maintain that knowledge is true if it can be turned into practice that empowers and transforms the lives of the people (Chilisa, 2005). They also believe that the relationship between the researcher and the participants should be interactive and empowering to those without power; is characterised by a close collaboration between researchers and the participants of the study; communication is achieved by use of the participants' language of choice. Consequently, I intend to use IsiZulu with some respondents whose home language is IsiZulu and may, perhaps not be confident and proficient in English. The research purpose, design, implementation and utilization are developed and implemented with appropriate cultural sensitivity and awareness. In the transformative paradigm, understanding the culture and building trust are deemed very significant (Mertens, 2009). Thus the researcher should examine ways the research benefits or does not benefit the participants.

Methodologically, the inclusion of a qualitative dimension is critical in transformative research as a point of establishing a dialogue between the researcher and the community members (Mertens, 1998 and 2009). Further, the emancipatory researchers utilise mixed methods and are evolving in their methodologies. However, the methodological decisions are made with a conscious awareness of contextual and historical factors, especially as they relate to discrimination and oppression. The emancipatory researchers also emphasise a need for care and rigor in following existing methods commonly associated with the post-positivist paradigm to avoid sexist, racist or otherwise biased results. A common methodology in emancipatory research is the inclusion of diverse voices from within (Mertens, 1998 and 2009). The transformative paradigm leads researchers to reframe not only the understanding of worldviews but also the methodological decisions such as data-collection decisions by using mixed methods; become aware of the benefits of involving community members in the data-collection decisions and the appropriateness of methods in relation to the cultural issues involved; build trust to obtain valid data; make the modifications that may be necessary to collect valid data from various groups; and to tie the data collected to social action (Mertens, 2008 & 2009). This paradigm includes critical theories, participatory action researchers, Marxists, feminists, ethnic

minorities and persons with disabilities (Mertens, 1998 & 2009). Mertens (1998, p.15) also contends that the emancipatory paradigm directly addresses the politics in research by confronting social oppression at whatever level it occurs. Thus, emancipatory researchers go beyond the issue of the powerful sharing power with the powerless and relinquishing control of the research to the marginalised groups.

I also chose this paradigm because it was emancipatory (empowering) both to me as the researcher and I also believe to all the study participants (Creswell, 2009). I believe that it was important that the respondents be empowered through this research so that they could better and effectively understand and deal with violence in their schools, something they would not have understood had they not been empowered. Creswell (2007, p.22) also states that this paradigm is emancipatory in that it helps to "...unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination". The aim of advocacy/participatory studies is thus to create a political debate and discussion so that change will occur. The following, according to Creswell (2007), are also some of the key features of advocacy/participatory practice: participatory action is recursive or dialectical and is focused on bringing about change in practices. Thus, at the end of the participatory/advocacy studies, researchers advance an action agenda for change; participatory action is focused on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in the media, in language, in work procedures and in the relationships of power in educational settings; further, participatory action is practical and collaborative because it is inquiry completed "with" others rather than "on" or "to" others. In this spirit, advocacy/participatory researchers engage the participants as active collaborators in their research projects (Creswell, 2007, p.22).

Through this study, as indicated above, I empowered the respondents to better understand the dynamics of school violence through engaging them as active collaborators in this research project. This was done through workshops on effective and sustainable strategies to combat school violence that I ran with all the willing participants in three of the research schools in this study. This was in line with what Mertens (2009, p.88) calls "an authentic collaboration". I also, through interactions with participants, developed a relationship of trust, partnership and respect with them through what I said and did. This, in my view, could empower the participants to

understand their role in their own oppression (through what they think and do when violence rears its head at schools) besides that which is outside of their immediate control. This collaboration, I hoped, would also help to bring about what Heron and Higgins (2006) in Mertens (2009, p.87) call *research cycling* (participants are prepared to go through the inquiry process several times, cycling between action and reflection, thereby refining their understanding and reducing distortions); *divergence and convergence* (convergence means a strategy that allows participants to revisit the same research focus several times and divergence means that the group moves on to a new research focus as a result of what they learned in earlier cycles of the inquiry process; *challenging consensus* (any group member can challenge the assumptions that underlie the knowledge being created or any other part of the process by which it is created; *managing distress* (this means to develop mechanisms that allow distress to surface and that process of distress happens in a respectful way; *reflection and action* (a balance between reflection and action is necessary so that participants can move through the cycle of action and reflection); and *chaos and order* (balance needs to be maintained and restored as necessary, given that divergence of thought is encouraged).

The group is also taught to deal with differences in a constructive manner, without exercising premature closure for the purpose of maintaining peace) (Mertens, 2009, pp.87-88). Not wanting to further marginalise the individuals participating in the research, the critical/participatory inquirers collaborate with research participants. They may ask participants to help with the designing the questions, collecting the data, analysing it, and shaping the final report of the research. In this way, the “voice” of the participants becomes heard throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007 p.22). In pursuit of the ‘agenda for change’ and empowerment/development for the research participants, as already stated above, I ran several workshops during and after the data collection stage in terms of how, as a collective (the SGBs), they could attempt to reduce violence in their schools including the culturally and socially embedded tendencies that promote violent behaviour that, perhaps, they may not be aware of (such as school initiation practices that are still covertly practised by some schools. Mertens (2009) also states that a researcher could focus on marginalised people and make recommendations that would lead to greater empowerment of those with least power.

Researchers also need to be very sensitive to the social and historical influences on the placement decisions and the school personnel's construction of race and ability.

In addition, Mertens (2009, p.93) highlights the importance of developing partnerships/relationships between the researchers and the researched as follows:

Allies are committed to the never-ending personal growth required to be genuinely supportive.

Similarly, Mertens (2009) suggests that it is significant for researchers to utilise strategies that foster a will to engage in a trusting transformative partnership. In this regard, she advocates that trust, promises made with the community, the language used, the will to engage and ethical partnership strategies should be developed. Mertens (2009) identifies transactional (interpersonal) trust components as contractual trust (trust of character), competency trust (trust of capability) and communication trust (trust of disclosure). Contractual trust means we will do what we say we will do - provide a service, share information, and attend a meeting. This type of trust is facilitated by making expectations clear, establishing boundaries, appropriately delegating responsibilities, honouring commitments and being consistent. Communication trust includes sharing information, being honest, admitting mistakes, maintaining confidentiality, giving and sharing feedback, avoiding gossip, and speaking openly and constructively about what is on our minds. Competency trust includes demonstrating respect for people's knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgements, involving others and seeking their input, and helping people learn the necessary skills. These three components of transactional trust provide the basis for the development of transformative trust in organisations. Mertens (2009) also posits that organisations have achieved transformative trust when they reach a critical point where trust between people takes on a dynamic energy and force of its own. People feel believed in and therefore they believe in what they are doing. When people feel acknowledged and respected, they continue to work together because they know what they are doing makes a difference.

Mertens (2009) further suggests that part of trust is being aware of the consequences of making promises that one may not be able to keep. I therefore did not make any promises to the respondents if I was not going to honour them. To build trust with the community, Mertens further advises that that there has to be "...trustworthy communication by all parties concerned

since trust is multi-layered and based on mutual support and may fluctuate” depending on a number of variables (Mertens, 2009 p.95). In addition, according to Mertens (2009), a relationship ethic has to be grown and this should encompass the notion of researchers and participants as journeying together in a spirit of reciprocity; of participants’ control over decisions and processes affecting them; and of researcher accountability.

Mertens further advises that it is critically important to consult with trustworthy people who can facilitate entry, clarify the relationship ethic, and safeguard the researcher. It was for this reason that as a researcher, I first visited the schools and introduced myself to the school principal who then facilitated my link with the other respondents (HODs, the learners from the RCL and the parents) in this research process. Mertens (2009) also stresses the importance of language as a means to build trust and to unlock meanings that would remain inaccessible if underlying assumptions were not accurately shared. It was for this reason that where appropriate, I used mother tongue language with some respondents (especially with parents and learners, where it was necessary because they had language challenges when it came to the use of English).

4.3 Research design in qualitative research

A research design is a roadmap, a plan or blueprint and procedures of how one intends conducting one’s research and spans the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007 & 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2008; Fouche, 2010; Schensul, 2012). In short, the research design describes the steps one has to follow in conducting one’s study. Creswell (2007, p.5) further defines it as “...the entire process of research from conceptualising a problem to writing research questions, and on data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing.” In addition, Creswell (2009) posits that there are three types of research designs namely the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Creswell (2007, p.11) also suggests that novice researchers should guard against choosing more than one approach in their research and it was for this reason that I foregrounded my research project in a qualitative approach utilising a multi-site case study design. As a novice researcher, I felt utilising one design (a qualitative case study design) was sufficient in view of what it could do to assist me with in terms of my study aims.

Merriam (2009), Fouche and Schurink (2011) posit that qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning participants give to their life experiences, how they create their worlds and what significance they attribute to their experiences. These researchers state that qualitative researchers use some form of a case study to immerse themselves in the activities of a single person or some a small number of people in order to obtain an intimate familiarity with their social worlds and to look at patterns in the research participants' lives, words and actions in the context of the case as a whole. Similarly, in my own study, I wanted to explore the school governors' experiences of school violence and what significance they attributed to those experiences and how they were responding to it. For purposes of this study, I believed this could be accomplished by utilising a multi-case study of four schools representative of the racial demographics in Durban. This is discussed further in the sampling section of this chapter.

In addition, Creswell (2007) states that qualitative research involves a closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and positioning the study within the political, social and cultural context of the researchers, the participants and the readers of the study. Furthermore, Creswell (2007) suggests that in order for qualitative researchers to study a human problem, the generation of data occurs in a natural setting where the participants experience the issue or problem under study; the researcher becomes sensitive to the people and places under study; the qualitative researchers become key research instruments collecting data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants. According to Creswell (2007), they do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. Likewise, qualitative researchers use multiple sources of data such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. Similarly, when analysing data, qualitative researchers use inductive data analysis; they also focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research; qualitative researchers also often use a theoretical lens to view their studies and, in addition, this form of research makes an interpretation of what qualitative researchers see, hear and understand (Creswell, 2007 & 2009). In line with Creswell, I generated my data utilising various methods and this assisted me in triangulation. I also performed my analysis from the bottom up (deductive analysis), i.e. from the perspective of the participants.

Moreover, qualitative researchers attempt to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in the situation, and generally sketching the larger picture of what emerges. The final written report includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem and it extends the literature or signals a call to action. As suggested by Creswell (2007), when presenting and analysing data, I used the voices of participants to strengthen the findings that emerged from the data. Since I foregrounded my research project in qualitative research, I also used multiple sources to generate data; also used inductive rather than deductive data analysis to establish patterns or themes; also focused on the participants' meanings of the issues rather than those of a researcher; had particular theories (which were presented and discussed in Chapter Three) that I utilised to analyse and interpret data; and, as a researcher, I also had to make an interpretation of what I saw, heard, observed and understood.

4.4 Research methodology

As indicated above, this was a qualitative study utilising a multiple-case study design of four schools. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3) posit that 'qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them.' Similarly, Lichtman (2011, p.240) postulates that qualitative researchers investigate "... human experiences and realities studied through sustained contact with persons in their natural environments, and producing rich, descriptive data that help us to understand those persons' experiences." This view is also corroborated by Merriam (2009) and Schensul (2012) who state that qualitative researchers are interested in comprehending how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Further, qualitative researchers believe that their task is to acquire insight and develop an understanding by getting closer to the data in order to understand from the perspectives of those being studied and to obtain social knowledge (Merriam, 2009). In addition, Terre-Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) also state that qualitative methods try to describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences in human terms. In short, qualitative research places more emphasis on the study of the phenomena from the perspectives of insiders (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). In my study, the cases were the four schools and it was a case of

school violence in post-conflict South African schools. This research approach suited my study perfectly as I sought to understand, from the governors' perspectives, their perceptions and experiences of school violence.

Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis (2010, p.75) states that, depending upon the underlying philosophical approaches of the researcher, multi-case studies could be positivist, interpretive or critical. For this research project, I am utilising qualitative methods within the critical/emancipatory paradigm to explore the role of SGBs in reducing violence at schools. I utilised this paradigm as it allowed me space to have 'activism' in my study in the form of workshops on school violence for those schools that needed them to empower them. This I felt morally important for my study. I did not just want to research them and leave without assisting them on how they could analyse, comprehend and deal with school-based violence in their schools. Creswell (2009, p.4) posits that qualitative research is "... a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualise issues in their particular socio-cultural-political climate/environment, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions (Silverman, 2010). Similarly, according to Nieuwenhuis (2010) and Glesne (2006), qualitative researchers attempt to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

In addition, qualitative researchers focus on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences. To make their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. Qualitative researchers generally focus on in-depth, long-term interactions with relevant people in one or several sites (Glesne, 2006). This study utilises multiple sites to obtain data. Qualitative researchers believe that the task of a qualitative researcher is to acquire insight and develop understanding by the researcher getting closer to the data in order to understand participants' point of view and to obtain social knowledge (Clarke, 1999). Qualitative researchers also look

for patterns, but they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a norm (Glesne, 2006). Within social science research, the choice of which aspects of the social world to research, the methods for collecting the data, and then the ways to interpret the data are informed by the broad theoretically informed framework within which the research is carried out, and it is these combined aspects which constitute methodology (Brunskell, 1998). In my own study, I found that the participants understood and interpreted school violence in many ways; in most cases their understanding was very narrow.

4.5 Multiple-case study approach

As indicated earlier in this chapter, in this qualitative study I utilised a multiple-case study approach (Merriam, 2009) to explore school violence and the role of school governing bodies in reducing it. This approach was deemed useful as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the four SGBs' experiences and practices in executing their duties in terms of the schools' codes of conduct set in their real-world contexts. Moore, Lapan and Quartaroli (2012) state that multiple-case or multisite case study research is used to describe complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programmes, in ways to unearth new and deeper understanding of these phenomena. In attempting to do this, this research approach focuses on the concept of a multiple-case of four secondary schools. Moore, *et al.* (2012) also state that multiple case studies can be conducted at one site where many examples of the case are examined or at multiple sites such as different schools. The multiple site case studies are also appropriate for comparison and for enhancing the external validity or generalisability of findings (Merriam, 2009). Similarly, Lichtman (2011), Babbie and Mouton (2009) and Yin (2012) state that the multiple case study as an approach to qualitative research involves a specific and detailed study of cases which results in invaluable and deep understanding, hopefully resulting in new learning about real-world behaviour and its meaning. For this research project, I utilised four multi cases of schools and particular participants within these schools whom I identified as best suited to provide data that was required for this study. The selection of participants is presented under the section on sampling in this chapter. According to Yin (2012), a case study is an exploration or an in-depth analysis of a bounded system (bounded by time, a person, an event a social phenomenon and/or place) or a single or multiple cases, over a period of time. Similarly, Creswell (2007, p.73) states that a "...case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases

within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)". Silverman (2010) and Lichtman (2011) corroborate this view and state that each case has boundaries or parameters which must be identified at an early stage of the research. Each case will be a case in which the researcher is interested and so the unit of analysis must be defined at the outset in order to clarify the research strategy. Yin (2012) posits that the in-depth focus on the case (s) produce a wide range of topics to be covered by any given case study. In this sense, case study research goes beyond the study of isolated variables. In the study sample, I presented and discussed each school context in order to assist me in understanding school violence in the context of each school as this will inform the findings likely to result from each case. Furthermore, case studies seek to preserve the wholeness and integrity of the case (Yin, 2012). To achieve some focus, a limited research problem of school violence and the role of governing bodies are explored and are geared to a specific case.

This study was based on multiple-site case studies as opposed to a single case study. This was meant to provide rich data that could provide greater confidence in my findings (Yin 2012). It was a case study into the exploration of the dynamics of school violence and the role of school governing bodies in reducing it in schools, carried out at four different sites, which in this study were four secondary schools. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.290) also point out that "...a case study is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case". In other words it provides an opportunity for an in-depth study of a case. Nieuwenhuis (2010, p.75) seems to concur with this view when he states that "...case studies offer multi-perspective analysis in which the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them". This opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and the voiceless, like children or marginalised groups. This is essential for researchers to come to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the situation, and this aspect is a salient feature of many case studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The exploration and description of the case/s takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. These may include interviews, documents, observations or archival records (Fouche, 2010). This study went beyond the use of a single research instrument. Instead, I used four sources for data collection which were semi-structured interviews (with school principals and SGB chairpersons), separate focus-group interviews (with educators, learners and

other parents in the SGB), observations and documents reviews. A case study approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the SGBs' experiences in executing their duties to ensure a safe environment for teaching and learning in terms of the schools' codes of conduct. This was in line with the aim/s of a multi-case study approach as it allows the researcher "...a greater insight and understanding of the dynamics of a specific situation" (Nieuwenhuis, 2010, p.76).

A key strength of the case study approach, Nieuwenhuis (2010) posits, is its use of multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. The researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research question/s. Data gathered is largely qualitative, though it may also be quantitative. A major concern with regard to the use of the case study approach is its lack of representativeness of the wider population. This implies that the findings from this study cannot be used to generalise about school violence in all schools. However, Bell (2006) argues that the reliability of a case study is more important than its generalisability. Another concern with the use of the case study approach is that it lacks reliability and that another researcher might come to a differing conclusion. In defence of this charge, Bassey (2012) posits that good case studies incorporate multiple sources of data. My study is not concerned about reliability but more about trustworthiness of data. To this end I utilised various data generation tools (semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observations and documents review) to ensure trustworthiness of my data. Fouche (2010, p.272) further refers to "...three types of case study, all with different purposes: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study and the collective case study". The *intrinsic case study* is exclusively focused on the aim of gaining a better understanding of the individual case. The purpose is not to understand a broad social issue, but merely to describe the case being studied. The *instrumental case study* is used to elaborate on a theory or to get a better understanding or insight of a social issue. The case study merely serves the purpose of facilitating the researcher's gaining knowledge about the social issue. The *collective case study* deepens the understanding of the researcher about a social issue or population being studied. The interest in the individual case is secondary to the researcher's interest in a group of cases. Cases are chosen so that comparisons can be made between cases and concepts and so that theories can be extended and validated (Fouche, 2010, p.272). For purposes of this study, I chose the latter of the three types of case studies described above as this

could deepen my understanding of the social issue which in this case is school violence and could also allow me to make comparisons between cases which could assist in making inductive conclusions. Glesne (2006) further states that various methods and methodologies can be utilised to do case study research. In qualitative case studies, data tends to be gathered through case study tools of participant observation and in-depth interviewing. As stated above in this chapter, I utilised these data gathering tools as well, in addition to documents review and focus group-interviews. Below is a diagrammatical representation of my case sites and participants (per site):

Table 1. Diagrammatical representation of interview participants per school

Schools (4)	Sugar Estate Secondary School (Ex-HOR)	Burmanbush Secondary School (Ex-HOD)	Yellowwood Secondary School (Ex-Model C)	Thandimfundo Secondary School (African school)
School Principal	1	1	1	1
Chairperson of the DSSC and three additional parent members of the SGB	4	4	4	4
Two teacher representatives in the SGB; the TLO as well as any other teacher at the school (preferably one who sits at DSSC meetings)	4	4	4	4
RCL Chairperson and three additional RCL members	4	4	4	4

4.6 Sampling and background information to the case study schools

Sampling refers the process used to select a portion of the population for study (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability or random sampling approaches. In purposive sampling researchers handpick the case/s to be studied on the basis of their judgement, based on prior information, of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought or because of them being the holders

of the data needed for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. In many cases, purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people' i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues (Cohen, *et al*, 2011, p.114).

This study was an investigation of the dynamics of school – based violence and the role that could be played by school governing bodies in reducing it in schools. I purposively chose schools that had recent known incidents of violence, sometimes very serious incidents such as stabbings, racism, bullying and even, murder (of a teacher within school premises). Through interactions with critical friends, these schools were identified. Kelly (2006) also states that sampling is often purposive in that one is looking for particular types of participant, according to what one already knows about the field. Purposive sampling seemed to be the most appropriate form of sampling under the circumstances (Walliman, 2009). This study also involved observation of participants in their natural settings, which were the schools, during school hours. The willingness of individuals to participate in the study was crucial. This also influenced the researcher's decision to use purposive sampling.

Samples of schools chosen were all secondary schools. This was purposive as talking to school based critical friends, it was found that secondary schools generally tend to be affected more by the incidents of serious indiscipline and violence than primary schools. There was one peri-urban African school; one former Indian school; one former Coloured school and one former Model C (formerly whites only) school. The reason for this was to investigate incidents of violence across these schools as they existed before the abolishment of apartheid in 1994. I was mindful of the fact that the learner population in terms of racial demographics had drastically changed in these schools. For issues related to confidentiality as well as sensitivity of the research, the four schools used in this study were all given fictitious names which were Thandimfundo Secondary School; Burmanbush Secondary School; Sugar Estate Secondary School and Yellowwood Secondary School.

The sampled population in the four selected schools were the principals; each school's chairperson of Discipline Safety and Security Committee (DSSCs) and three additional parent

members of the SGBs (preferably those sitting in the DSCC); two teacher representatives in each SGB plus the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and one Life Orientation teacher; Chairperson of the Representative Council of Learners as well as three additional RCL Executive members of each school in the study. These participants, according to South African Schools Act of 1996 (Section 8), deal directly with discipline issues at schools and therefore were expected to be more knowledgeable on issues of discipline/school violence than anybody else in their respective schools.

Sugar Estate Secondary School is a former Indian co-educational school offering academic subjects and was now attended by predominantly African/Black and Indian learners and a few Coloured learners as well. It is situated in the working class area of Nashville, Durban. It had a computer laboratory, a school hall, an adequate number of classrooms compared to some schools in the area even though classrooms are still overcrowded with approximately 45 learners per classroom. Members of the teaching staff were still predominantly Indian even though they now have a few African teachers. The buildings were relatively well looked after. The school enrolled 1 200 learners per year and almost 50% of these could not afford to pay the school fees of R550-00 per year, thus qualifying for school fee exemption. The surrounding community is a mixture of middle and working-class people. The school has a functioning governing body. It struggled to get adequate parental representation from the black community, as parents are not normally willing to stand.

Burmanbush Secondary School is a double story co-educational school. It is a former House of Representatives (Coloured) school offering academic subjects and attended by predominantly Coloured learners. The school is situated north west of Durban and was relatively advantaged in terms of buildings than many other schools in this working class area. It had, for example, electricity and piped water supply. However, the number of classrooms was inadequate, and as many as 45 learners sometimes had to be crowded into a single classroom. Members of the teaching staff were predominantly Coloured even though there were few Indian teachers as well. Learners in the school were mostly Coloured even though there was also a significant number of Africans who spoke isiZulu language at home. The local community consisted of working-class families and unemployment in the area was very high. Education authorities regarded this school

as one of the reasonable schools in the district as it consistently managed to obtain above 70% in the Matriculation results. Generally, it had qualified and highly unionised staff. The school enrolls about 1000 learners per year.

Yellowwood Boys Secondary School (ex-Model C) is a former whites-only boys' secondary school in a suburb west of Durban and in pleasant urban surroundings. The local neighbourhood is composed of upper middle class families of all races now, but still mainly whites. It is a privileged school compared to the other case study schools. It has a majority of white staff, including some of the non-teaching staff. It is a day school and has an enrolment of just above 1200 learners. The school has 26 KZN department-paid teachers and 18 teachers who are paid by the school governing body (from school fees). This means that the school has a total of 44 teachers and is a relatively well-staffed or even overstaffed. Approximately 80% of the learners can afford to pay school fees and only 20% qualified for fee exemption. The school was well managed despite the fact that, it was in the news the previous year for incidents of bullying and initiation.

Thandimfundo Secondary School is co-educational peri-urban school offering academic subjects and it was attended by black/African learners only. It is situated in a semi-rural/urban area west of Durban. It is managed like all public schools but it was built by the community to provide education for this vast rural area in the periphery of Durban. As a peri-urban school, it is relatively poor as compared to its counterparts in urban areas. It had an empty classroom that was used as a laboratory, fifteen classrooms that were overcrowded with approximately sixty learners per classroom. Members of the teaching staff were all African (Black) and speak IsiZulu language. The buildings were relatively well looked after and were built more than twenty years ago. The school enrolled approximately 900 learners per year and almost 60% of these could not afford to pay the school fees of R150 per year, thus qualifying for fee exemption.

Table 2. Other relevant school information

	<i>Sugar Estate Secondary School</i>	<i>Burmanbush Secondary School</i>	<i>Yellowwood Boys Secondary School</i>	<i>Thandimfundo Secondary School</i>
Location	Urban	Urban	Urban	Peri-urban
Enrolment (learners)	1200	1000	1200	900
Number of teachers employed	30 (state paid) 5 SGB posts	30 (state paid) 6 SGB posts	34 (state paid) 25 SGB posts	32 (all state paid)
School Fees	R6000/child p.a	R5000/child p.a	R18 000/child p.a.	R250/child p.a
Dept. allocation/yr.	R105 000-00	R120 000-00	R120 000-00	R450 000-00

4.7 Methods of data generation

Yin (2012) posits that good case studies benefit from having multiple sources of evidence. Further, Merriam (2009) posits that a qualitative inquiry which focuses on meaning in context requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when generating and interpreting data. It was for these reasons that I used various data generation instruments such as semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations in this study. This also allowed me to ensure triangulation. Cohen, *et al.* (2011, p.141) define triangulation as “... the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.” Similarly, Kelly (2006, p.287) defines triangulation as “collecting material in as many different ways and from as many sources as possible.” This, according to Kelly (2006 p.287), “...can help researchers to ‘home in’ on a better understanding of a phenomenon by approaching it from several different angles.” Moore, *et al.* (2012) define triangulation as finding agreement among evidence collected from multiple sources and utilising various methods. Triangulation also increases the validity and trustworthiness (credibility) of findings. Further, according to Cohen, *et al.*, (2011, p.141) the advantages of the multi-methods approach in social research are manifold. Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and in doing so, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data. In contrast, using a single method may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality being explored. The researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artifacts of one specific method of collection. Such confidence can only be achieved, as far as nomothetic

research is concerned, when different methods of data collection yield the same results. In addition, the more methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher's confidence. If for example, the results of a questionnaire survey correspond to those of an observational study of the same phenomena, the more the researcher will be confident about the findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Triangulation may also utilise either normative or interpretive techniques; or it may draw on methods from both these approaches and use them in combination. In addition, according to Cohen, *et al.* (2011), triangulation is intended as a check on data, while member checking, and elements of credibility, are to be used as a check on members' construction of data.

An interview schedule or guide was crafted in advance to guide both the semi-structured and the focus group interviews I held with the school principals and other participants respectively. Schedules were also crafted for both observations and documents review. Greef (2010) maintains that having a schedule beforehand forces the researcher to think explicitly about what s/he hopes the interview might cover. It also forces the researcher to think of difficulties that might be encountered, for example in terms of wording the questions or sensitive areas; the researcher also has to think about the broad range of themes or question areas to be covered in the interview. The areas must then be arranged into the most appropriate sequence (from simple to complex, and from broad to more specific, in order to allow the participants to gradually adjust to the pattern of the interview schedule). Greef (2010) also states that questions should follow a logical sequence; be limited to a few questions only and should ensure that they cover the topic thoroughly.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Walliman (2009) posits that interviews are a very flexible tool with a wide range of applications. They can also offer a richer and more extensive material than other methods of data collection (Yin, 2012). In addition, interviews are particularly useful when qualitative data are required. Further, Walliman (2009) states that interviews can be used for subjects both general or specific in nature and even, with the correct preparation, for very sensitive topics. I believe that school violence was a sensitive issue and therefore semi-structured interviews were utilised for this reason to collect data. Schensul (2012) also posits that critical researchers rely on in-depth

interviews to reveal ways in which dominance and persistent inequities are transferred to the behaviours, opportunity structures and meaning systems of vulnerable populations. I also believed school violence made victims feel very vulnerable and helpless which eventually ushered in a sense of despair to them. Through this research though, I hoped to empower the participants to be able to manage the phenomenon of school violence. This was also done through the workshops that were conducted in at least three of the four schools after the interviews were concluded.

Semi-structured interviews with school principals and focus group interviews with all other study participants were utilised as a major tools to generate data. In addition, documents review and observations were also used to supplement the data generated through interviews. Ribbins (2007, p.208) states that “...we interview people to explore their views in ways that cannot be achieved by other forms of research and report our findings in as near as we reasonably can their words.” Anderson (1993) defines an interview as a specialised form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter. With reference to this study, interviews allowed me to have an in-depth insight from the people who grappled with the issues (of school-based violence) at a personal level and questioning them on their views and experiences of violence formed an integral part of interviews. Lichtman (2006) outlines the different types of interviews and these are in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, informal or casual interviews, focus group interviews and online interviews. This study used face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather descriptive data in the respondent’s own words. Dawson (2009) states that semi-structured interviews are perhaps the most common type of interviews used in qualitative social research. The researcher wants to know specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information gained in other interviews. However, the researcher also wants the interview to remain flexible so that the other important information can still arise (Dawson, 2009). Robson (2002) and Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) also note the flexibility of semi-structured interviews and that they are most favoured by educational researchers since they allow depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses. The other advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are not as rigid as structured interviews as they can be modified based upon the interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate. The interview schedule also assists the

interviewer in keeping him or her focused on the pre-planned questions but at the same time allows room for flexibility (Dawson, 2009; Robson, 2002 & Cohen, *et al.*, 2011).

Although interviews are time consuming and require careful preparation (Robson, 2002), they provided opportunities for in-depth probing. They also allowed for immediate follow - up on interesting responses and investigation of underlying motives in a way that other methods such as self-administered questionnaires could not (Robson, 2002). This is reaffirmed by Bell (2006) who points out that one of the major advantages of the interview is its adaptability. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) also point out that one of the disadvantages of interviews is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. To circumvent this challenge, a common interview schedule was prepared to ensure consistency in the main questions that were posed to the interviewees. The interviews lasted approximately forty minutes. Permission of the participants was sought in advance to use a voice recorder to record the interviews as this allowed me to concentrate on the actual interview and the interviewee's responses. The voice recorder also allowed me as the interviewer to check the wording of the statements made by the interviewee. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that audio-recording the interviews ensures completeness of the verbal interaction and provides material for reliability checks. I also indicated and assured the study participants that the recordings were strictly for the researcher's ease of referencing and would be kept in a safe place with my supervisor and would be destroyed after five years. Further, I assured the participants of strict confidentiality and anonymity during and after the reporting process. Where necessary, the participants were interviewed twice to check the correctness/accurateness of the first interview (both on the side of the researcher and the respondents) and further probing where necessary. Robson (2002) describes probing as a device to get interviewees to expand on a response when an interviewer discerns that they have more to give. Transcriptions were done immediately after the interviews were conducted, and the interviewees were asked to read the transcripts for correctness and validity of issues.

4.7.2 Focus group interviews

Separate focus group interviews were held (in each school's staffroom or office depending on the venue available on a particular day) with the chairperson of the discipline, safety and security committee (DSSC) and three other additional parent members of the SGB; four teachers (the two

that represent other teachers in the SGB, the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and the Life Orientation teacher and, in conclusion, with four learners from the executive committee of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). One of the learners was the chairperson of the RCL. In terms of the operations of the RCL at a school, a Teacher Liaison Officer is an official link between the school management and the RCL and therefore the TLO was included in the study because he/she was expected to be more knowledgeable about learner issues at the school than other teachers. Similarly, permission to record the focus group interviews was requested in advance from the respondents. This enabled me to concentrate on the interview (Robson, 2002) instead of concentrating on writing copious notes during the actual interview. Focus group interviews are also useful to triangulate other forms of data generation methods (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011) and for this reason, they were utilised in this study. Various researchers have different views as to the number that should constitute a focus group. Kelly (2006), Chilisa and Preece (2005), Rule and John (2011) all state that most focus groups are composed of between six and twelve people while Merriam (2009) and Cronin (2011) suggest that ideally, a focus group should consist of between six and ten people whereas Hakim (2000) suggest between four and twelve people (eight being the optimal). Whatever the number is chosen, Babbie and Mouton (2009, p.292) suggests that "...the number of participants should be enough so that the focus group does not fall flat if some members choose to remain silent" while Chilisa and Preece (2005, p.154) warn that "...the group should not be so big that participation by all is impossible, or so small that it is not possible to cover a large number of issues". For this study, my focus groups consisted of a minimum of four participants and a maximum of six participants.

Focus groups are open discussions between a researcher and research participants and expose the researcher to the diverse perceptions held about a particular topic of interest. They are also called discussion groups or group interviews (Robson, 2002; Dawson, 2009; Greef, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In a focus group interview or discussion, individuals meet together to express their views on a topic that they have knowledge about defined by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). A facilitator or moderator leads the group and guides the discussion between the participants (Cronin, 2011). Focus groups are popular as a means of using a group interview setting for data collection in social research (Mertens, 2009) and are commonly used in conjunction with other methods: for example with observation and individual interviews

(Robson, 2002). Greef (2010) also states that focus groups are a means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue, a product or service. The group is “focused” in that it involves some kind of collective activity. The advantages of focus groups are that they are cost effective since they allow for the simultaneous interviewing of several participants. The facilitator is able to build on a single response in order to develop a thicker description of the data by exploring the participants’ perceptions in more detail than would normally be obtained from the use of survey instruments. As participants answer the questions posed to them, their responses may spark new ideas from other participants and in this way contribute to the depth and richness that is characteristic of qualitative data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Greef, 2010). Creswell (2007, p.133) states that “...focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among the interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, ... and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information.” It was on this basis that I split my participants into separate focus groups to prevent intimidation by the presence of other members (power relations) of the SGB that I suspected they might not have been comfortable with, for example, interviewing the learners or parents simultaneously with the teachers or *vice versa*. Merriam (2009) also warns that a focus group is a poor choice for topics that are sensitive, highly personal or culturally inappropriate to talk about in the presence of strangers. For this reason, I chose deliberately to interview school principals on one-on-one basis as I felt some might not be comfortable discussing school violence in the presence of other participants. In addition, I felt that school principals might think and interpret the prevalence of violence in their schools as failure on their part to lead and manage their schools effectively.

Further, Robson (2002, p.284) posits that focus groups “... have a potential to raise consciousness and empower participants”. This study, through the research design and methodology it employs, also seeks to empower and conscientise the participants about the agency role they could play about school violence. Mertens (2009, p.250) offers a process for conducting focus groups that fits within the transformative paradigm and is within three stages which are: *problem identification*, *solution generation* and *implementation and evaluation*. At the problem identification stage, the researcher visits the respondents to get to know them, negotiate and build relationships, identify concerns, opinions and experiences of the participants.

The next stage is solution generation where focus groups are used to formulate solutions and identify resources needed to support the implementation of the interventions. Workshops can be offered to build the capacities of the participants and other service providers can implement and evaluate the proposed solutions. The last stage is implementation and evaluation stage. Staff and co-researchers implement and evaluate the programme, using the focus groups for various purposes. They also facilitate critical reflection and change and consolidate the different knowings/s (Mertens, 2009).

In the focus group interviews reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher, producing a collective rather than an individual view. Hence the participants interact with each other rather than the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge. In this manner, the participants' agenda, rather than the researchers' can predominate. It is from the interaction of the group that the data emerges (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Focus groups bring together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The advantage of focus group interviews is that they can yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview; they are economical on time, producing a large amount of data in a short period of time. Nieuwenhuis (2010) posits that in focus group interviews, participants are able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual interviews while unexpected comments and new perspectives can be explored easily within the focus group and can add value to the study. The disadvantage of focus group interviews is that they tend to produce less data than interviews with the same number of individuals on a one-on-one basis. Similarly, the success of a focus group is largely dependent on the level of interaction between the different participants and their interaction with the facilitator of the focus group discussion (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). For this reason, care was exercised to ensure an adequate level of interaction between the focus group participants. Also, focus groups tend not to produce numerical, quantifiable or generalisable data; the data may be difficult to analyse succinctly; the number of people involved tends to be small; the group dynamics may lead to non-participation by some members and dominance by others; intra-group disagreement and even conflicts may arise; inarticulate members may be denied a voice; and the data may lack overall reliability

(Robson, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Robson (2002) also states that it is difficult or impossible to follow up the views of individuals; and group dynamics may affect who speaks and what they say. A particular problem is when one or two persons dominate and this calls for good facilitation skills on the part of the researcher (Robson, 2002). As an experienced former school teacher and principal, I used my well-honed facilitation, moderation and management skills to navigate these hurdles to ensure no one dominated. I politely ensured that everybody spoke through the facilitator and in this manner domination was eliminated.

4.7.3 Documents review

Within the context of qualitative research, documents review are usually utilised to collect the relevant data (Strydom & Delpont, 2010). Bell (2006, p.125) asserts that the word ‘document’ is a “...general term for an impression left on a physical object by a human being.” Documents are classified into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are original written materials of the author’s own experiences and observations, while secondary sources consist of material that is derived from someone else as the original source (Strydom & Delpont, 2010). These researchers suggest that a primary source should be more reliable than a secondary one. In addition, Cortazzi (2002) posits that documents review offer fresh ways to explore meanings and social functions of texts in educational research. For this study, subject to confidentiality considerations, the following official written documents were scrutinised: minutes of the SGB where issues of discipline were discussed and recorded, School Disciplinary Committee meetings, the schools’ Code of Conduct for Learners, school policy on indiscipline and violence, bullying, racism, harassment, general school behaviour policies, punishment and discipline records, recording of violent incidents, engagement with the police (if available), complaints procedures and log books, minutes of meetings held by staff which discuss discipline related issues, minutes of the RCL where issues of discipline/violence were discussed, communications with outside agencies such as the police and NGO’s such as NICRO, Lifeline and other community organisations relevant to the work were the focus for my study. Official documents were used to corroborate the observations and interviews thus improving the trustworthiness of the findings. Mertens (2009) posits that documents are valuable in that they can provide background that is not accessible from the respondents and can be a basis of conversation with the respondents to stir memories that might not rise to the surface without such a catalyst.

Another advantage of documents, Robson (2002) posits, is that they encourage ingenuity and creativity on the part of the researcher. In addition, documents are unobtrusive and non-reactive, that is the researcher does not have to be in direct contact with the research participant/s. Furthermore, documents provide valuable cross-validation of other methods used in the study. The documents may also reveal aspects that were not found through the observations and interviews. They may even "...shape new directions for observation and interviews" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.52). Fitzgerald (2007), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) also state that documents can provide valuable information about the context and culture of institutions and frequently provide another window for the researcher to read between the lines of official discourse and then triangulate through interviews, observations and questionnaires.

With regard to this study, triangulation was achieved through the use of various data generation tools such as documents review, interviews and observations. Fitzgerald (2007) draws our attention to the fact that documents allow the researcher to generate data from the words of the participants. However, as a researcher I was aware that documents could be subjective, biased and selective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). For this reason, the interviews and observations were utilised to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings from the documents. Finally, Cohen *et al.*, (2011) state that documents can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. Access to documents was negotiated with the principals of schools in advance. At each school the documents were reviewed once.

4.7.4 Observations

Mertens (2009) states that observations are a powerful data-collection strategy that is essential to transformative work. Strydom (2010) also posits that participant observation has been described as fundamental to all research methods. Best and Kahn (2003), Mertens (2009) and Yin (2012) also state that observations usually consist of detailed notation of specific human actions/behaviours, physical environments, real-world events and the contexts surrounding the events and behaviours. Quite simply, observations involve the process of observing behaviour. Alston and Bowles (2003); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) and Creswell (2009) categorise observations as structured and unstructured. Participant observation is a widely used method in flexible designs and its major advantage as a technique is its directness. In observations the

researcher does not ask people about their views, their feelings or attitudes; they watch what they do and listen to what they say (Robson, 2002). The above researchers add that in an observation study, the researcher may choose to be a participant-observer, which involves becoming part of the research situation. On the other hand, the researcher may decide to be a non-participant observer implying that the researcher does not participate in the study situation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) also state that non-participant observers stand aloof from the group activities they are investigating. For this study, I was a *non-participant observer*. This meant I was in the background as undistruptive as possible, recording information. As a researcher and non-participant observer, I made it very clear to the groups from the start that they should ignore my presence as much as it was humanly possible. I then tried to establish close relationships with members of the groups to gain their trust so that they could explain various aspects of what was going on (Robson, 2002). Creswell (2009) states that to be a non-participant observer is useful in exploring topics that the participants may be uncomfortable to discuss. I believed that, especially for school principals, they would be uncomfortable to discuss freely issues of violence and discipline at their schools especially because of the positive public image they might want to portray about their schools as well as the fear that the presence of violence at their schools may be interpreted as failure on their part to lead and manage the school effectively.

Bell (2006) states that observations can be useful in discovering whether people do what they say they do, or behave in the way they claim to behave. Furthermore, observations allow the researcher to obtain data on non-verbal behaviour and communication whilst Creswell (2009) states that observations allow the researcher a first-hand experience with the participants. However, its major weakness is that it is difficult to replicate and that it tends to be time-consuming. Observations can also be used as a supportive or supplementary method to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained by other means (Robson, 2002). In this study, I also used observations as a means to supplement and strengthen data that I was gathering through interviews and documents review. As I conducted observations, I simultaneously transcribed them. This assisted in reducing the risk of omitting crucial data if I transcribed the observations much later. In each school I attended at least two meetings of the Discipline Safety and Security Committee (DSSC). The duration of the observations depended on the time negotiated with the principal and the DSSC Chairperson, although I preferred to

conduct the observations for the entire duration of the meeting. When observing DSSC meetings, I focused on: listening to what participants said and watched what they did, I also took extensive notes on what was said; the details of who was speaking and the length of the discussion; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns and the contribution by each member of the SGB. This was important as it showed power relations among the participants. Further, during observations, I observed the following: participation by each stakeholder member; prevalence of violence issues in such meetings; observing who were the perpetrators (boys or girls/ educators or learners) and violence that could be racially motivated and whether the SGBs understood and implemented the rights of all (learners and teachers). After the observations, I recorded the notes as quickly as possible, since, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the quantity of information forgotten is very slight over a short period of time but accelerates as more time passes by. In line with Robson (2002), I also used codes to record what was observed.

Table 3. Diagrammatical representation of data generation tools

Schools	Sugar Estate Secondary School	Burmanbush Secondary School	Yellowwood Secondary School	Thandimfundo Secondary School	Total
Semi-structured interviews (with school principals)	1	1	1	1	4
Focus group interviews (with 4 SGB/DSSC parent members; 4 teacher representatives & 4 learners from the RCL)	3	3	3	3	12
Documents review (Policy on Code of Conduct for Learners; minutes of SGB and DSSC meetings; how the DSSC is constituted; etc.)	1	1	1	1	4
Observations (of SGB or DSSC meetings where issues of discipline are discussed)	2	2	2	2	8

4.8 Data analysis procedures

Once the data was generated, it was immediately transcribed and preliminary analysis began. Analysis may be described as the attempt to organise, account for and providing explanations of data so that some kind of sense may be made of it in terms of participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1993; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Neumann (1997) states that in general, data analysis means a search for patterns in data-recurrent behaviours, objects, or a body of knowledge while De Vos (2010) states that qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. She (De Vos) further states that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the quantities of data collected. From the above statements it can be said that analysis involves bringing meaning (sense) to the data obtained. In addition, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.461) state that '...qualitative data often focuses on smaller numbers of people than quantitative data, yet the data tend to be detailed and rich'. Cohen, *et al.* further state that a researcher needs to decide earlier whether to present data individual by individual, and then, if desired, to combine key issues emerging across the individuals, or whether to proceed by working within a largely predetermined analytical frame of issues that crosses the individuals concerned. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.152) also state that "...the researcher should use the preliminary research questions and the related literature developed earlier in the proposal to provide guidelines for data analysis." This is because the earlier planning could suggest categories "...that can serve to code the data initially for subsequent analysis" (1999, p.152). Voluminous data collected can be overwhelming therefore analysis of the data should be done systematically so that there is some order in the process.

In analysing data, I subjected the transcripts to narrative analysis utilising the model adapted by De Vos (2010) from Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Creswell (1998) which suggests the following:

Planning for recording of data: In line with De Vos' (2010) views, the interviews with the respondents were recorded after obtaining their consent and written permission. This allowed me to concentrate on the interview and to make notes where it was necessary.

Data generation and preliminary analyses: Data analysis in a qualitative study involves an inseparable relationship between data generation and data analysis (De Vos, 2010). This means

as data was generated, it was analysed. This is also emphasised by Cohen, *et al* (2011) who state that qualitative data rapidly amasses a lot of data, and early analysis reduces the challenges of data overload. Data generation and analysis thus goes hand in hand in order to build a coherent interpretation of data. The researcher is guided by initial concepts and developing understandings, but shifts or modifies them as s/he generates and analyses the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). De Vos (2010) states that overlapping of data collection and analysis improves both the quality of data collected and the quality of analysis.

Managing (organising) the data so that it is retrievable and manageable to work with: De Vos (2010) states that the researcher should plan a system to ease retrieval for analysis by planning ahead. This is done in many ways including data file folders, index cards or computer files. Getting organised for analysis begins with an inventory of what a researcher has. In my case, this involved transferring voice recordings into the computer before transcriptions could begin; getting documents before they could be reviewed. Listening to the voice recordings and reading the transcriptions several times provided me the opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that generated emergent insights into the study (De Vos, 2010). Backup copies of all data were created.

Reading and writing memos: De Vos (2010) states that after the organisation and conversion of the data, researchers continue analysis by getting a feeling for the whole data base. This process involves reading data over several times, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole. Writing memos in the margins of field notes or transcripts helped in the initial process of exploring the data base (Creswell, 2009).

Generating categories, themes and patterns: Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe these as ‘domain analysis’ and involves grouping together items and units into related clusters, themes and patterns, a domain being a category which contains several other categories. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.154) state that “...this phase of data analysis is the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative and fun.” Creswell (2009) states that category generation means taking the qualitative information apart and looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information.

Interpretation involves making sense of data and the “lessons learned” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.116).

Coding the data: Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.155) state that coding data is the formal representation of analytic thinking. This involves generating categories and themes. Colour-coding of notes to keep track of dates, names, titles, attendance at events, descriptions of settings, establishing units of analysis of the data, indicating how these units are similar to and different from each other. The creation of units was done by ascribing codes to the data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Codes may take a variety of forms that include abbreviations of key words, numbers or coloured dots (De Vos, 2010). This was invaluable for piecing together patterns, defining categories for data analysis, planning further data collection and especially for writing the final product of research.

Testing the emergent understandings: as categories and themes are developed and coding is well under way, Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that the researcher begins the process of evaluating the plausibility of his developing understandings and exploring them through the data. This entails a search through the data during which the researcher challenges the understanding, searches for negative instances of the patterns and incorporates these into larger constructs, as necessary. Part of this phase is assessing the data for its usefulness and significance (De Vos, 2010).

Establish relationships and linkages between domains: this process ensures that the data, their richness and ‘context-groundness’ are retained. Linkages can be found by identifying confirming cases by seeking ‘underlying associations’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011 p.184) and making connections between data subsets.

Making speculative inferences: this is an important stage, for it moves the research from description to inference. It requires the researcher, on the basis of evidence, to posit some explanations for the situation, some key elements and possibly even their causes. It is the process of hypothesis generation that feeds into theory generation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011 p.184).

Representing, visualizing (writing the report) /summarising: This involves the researcher in writing a preliminary summary of the main features, key issues, key concepts, constructs and ideas encountered so far in the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; De Vos, 2010).

4.9 Writing the report

The voice-recorded interviews were transcribed immediately after each interview in line with Henning (2004) who states that voice-recordings should be transcribed immediately. The data obtained from the observations, interviews and documents review were organised in a folder under separate files. After repeatedly reading the data, it was organised into categories, themes and patterns. During the process of developing themes the data was coded and reviewed repeatedly. I attempted to bring “meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants in the study” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.152) by analysing and interpreting what they said and did.

4.10 Trustworthiness of data

Golafshani (2003) and Nieuwenhuis (2010) posit that trustworthiness is of utmost importance in qualitative studies and should always be kept in mind by qualitative researchers. This includes consistency checks and credibility or stakeholder checks. Yin (2012) further postulates that it is important for the researcher to check and re-check the consistency of the findings from the different as well as the same sources. Further, in this way one was also triangulating, i.e. establishing converging lines of evidence which makes research findings robust and credible. Barbie and Mouton (2009) equate trustworthiness to neutrality of findings or decisions. Similar to Barbie and Mouton, Golafshani (2003) and Shenton (2004) suggest that for qualitative research to be credible (in preference to internal validity) and transferable (in preference to external validity/generalisability), it should be dependable (in preference to reliability). These researchers state that reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms whereas in qualitative studies, terms such as credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency, dependability, applicability or transferability are preferred. In addition, to achieve credibility, Barbie and Mouton (2009) suggest the following: prolonged engagement until the researcher reaches data saturation, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing and member checks. Transferability (the extent to which findings can be applied

in other context or with other respondents) also forms part of trustworthiness even though qualitative researchers are not primarily interested in generalisations (Barbie & Mouton, 2009; De Vos, 2010). Dependability (if the study were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents in the same context, its findings would be similar) and confirmability (the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher) are also other strategies used by qualitative researchers to enhance trustworthiness (Barbie & Mouton, 2009; De Vos, 2010). Likewise, Nieuwenhuis (2010) suggests the following to enhance trustworthiness: using multiple data sources, verifying raw data, keeping notes on research data decisions taken, ensuring consistency in coding data, stakeholder checks, verifying and validating findings, minimising researcher bias, avoiding generalisation, choosing quotes carefully, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity as well as stating the limitations of the study upfront.

In this research project, I complied with most of the above requirements in that I utilised multiple-case sites and various other respondents to generate, validate and cross-check the soundness and provide confidence in my findings (Yin 2012). Further, during data generation, I spent prolonged time at the research sites and engaged widely with them until I believed there were no new ideas they were bringing to the study (data saturation). In addition, as indicated above, in all schools I also conducted observations and documents review to ensure triangulation, referential adequacy, peer-debriefing and member checks therefore believe trustworthiness of findings is assured.

4.11 Limitations of the study

4.11.1 Fears among school principals

Researching school violence was threatening to most participants, more especially the school principals, who thought, as a researcher, I was spying on their functioning and public image. I suspected that some respondents, especially school principals, might fear their schools developing a negative reputation as a result of a study of something as unpalatable as school violence. I also suspected that principals might fear being perceived as failing to manage their staff, learners or school effectively (Burton, 2008). To allay these fears, I used my knowledge of these schools as I taught in the district for many years and the fact that I did not work for the

Department of Education anymore. I further explained how they and their schools might benefit in the research process and this eased their fears somehow.

4.11.2 Lack of attendance by parents

Generally, the lack of attendance by SGB members, particularly the black African parents has been identified as a hindrance in schools (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004; Mncube, 2010) and was also likely to hinder my research. As anticipated, this was also a challenge for my study. This problem of lack of attendance at SGB meetings was also consistently highlighted by former Ministers of Education in South Africa, Professor Kader Asmal and Ms Naledi Pandor. To navigate this challenge, those parents who could not make it at school for interviews, they were interviewed at their homes or over week-ends, depending on what was most suitable to the participant concerned.

4.12 Ethical issues

The University of KwaZulu-Natal has a rigorous Research Ethics Policy that applies to all members of staff, graduate and undergraduate students who are involved in research on or off the campuses of the university. In addition, any person not affiliated with the University of KwaZulu-Natal who wishes to conduct research with the University of KwaZulu Natal students and/or staff member/s is bound by the same ethics framework. Each member of the University community is responsible for implementing this policy in relation to scholarly work with which she or he is associated and to avoid any activity which might be considered to be in violation of this Policy. All students and members of staff have to familiarise themselves with and sign an undertaking to comply with the University's "Code of Conduct for Research". This is also corroborated by Strydom (2010, p.56) who states that, "until recently, professional ethics and conduct (in research) have for the most part been ignored." Strydom (2010) further cautions that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of what is proper and improper.

In this regard, all due ethical considerations were discussed with the participants before research was undertaken. Robson (2002) states that ethics refers to rules of conduct, a code of principles while Strydom (2010) describes ethics as a set of moral principles which offers rules and

behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. Mertens (2009) contends that ethical guidelines in research are needed to guard against any possible harm. In addition, she suggests that guidelines are also needed to guard against the less obvious, yet harmful effects of research. Mertens' views are also corroborated by Lichtman (2011) who postulates that a basic principle of conducting experiments on humans is that voluntary consent is essential. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 85) define ethics as "...a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others." What this means is that in pursuit of knowledge and truth respecting the dignity of participants takes precedence. Thus ethics are an essential part of every research project. "The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.91). Alston and Bowles (2003, p.21) add that, "...confidentiality means that the information given to the researcher will not be divulged to others, except in reporting research results as agreed, and that the information will not be used for any purpose other than the research." Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.92) also state that another "...way of protecting a participant's right to privacy is through the promise of confidentiality". With the above statement in mind, I assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality that their names and those of their schools would be kept anonymous. In assuring the participants of anonymity and confidentiality, I also made every effort to ensure that these issues were not compromised in any way. In their discussion on the ethics of research, Alston and Bowles (2003) remind researchers about the professional standards of the researcher and make reference to plagiarism, the importance of choosing appropriate research methods, data generation strategies and data analysis techniques. They proceed to state that results must be reported honestly and that data that was not collected should neither be published nor falsified. All these aspects were of paramount importance in my study and were given due consideration when addressing ethical issues.

There are many ethical issues in research, but for the purpose of this study, the following were noted and applied:

Privacy: I informed my participants that I would not reveal information that would clearly identify them or their schools. Instead, *nom deplumes/fictitious names* were used for both their schools and themselves so that confidentiality was guaranteed. Participants were informed of the same.

Informed consent: Cohen, *et al.* (2011) posits that much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of respondents who assist in investigations in what the researcher is exploring. The principle of informed consent (to understand what will happen in the study and then agree to participate) arises from the respondents' right to freedom and self-determination. For consent to be considered to be truly informed participants must understand the nature, purpose and likely consequence of a research project; given this understanding, they agree to participate without coercion, knowing that they can withdraw at any time (Gallagher, Haywood, Jones & Milne, 2010). Mitchell and Jolley (2007) also suggest that participants should freely volunteer to be in the study and sign an informed consent form. Consent thus protects and respects the right to self-determination.

As part of the right to self-determination, the respondents have a right to refuse to take part, or to withdraw at any time they so wish without incurring any penalty. Cohen, *et al.* (2011, p.80) state that the principle of informed consent has four elements which are: *competence, voluntarism, full information* and *comprehension*. Further, these researchers state that if these four elements are present, researchers can be assured that the respondents' rights will have been given appropriate consideration. In addition, Cohen, *et al.* (2011, p.80) also state that informed consent requires an explanation and description of several variables, including, for example:

- the purpose, contents and procedures of the research
- any foreseeable risks and negative outcomes, discomfort or consequences and how they will be handled
- benefits that might derive from the research
- incentives to participate and rewards from participating
- right to voluntary non-participation, withdrawal and re-joining the project
- rights and obligations to confidentiality and non-disclosure of the research, participants and outcomes
- disclosure of any alternative procedures that may be advantageous
- opportunities for participants to ask questions about any aspect of the research
- signed contracts (informed consent form) for participation.

In this regard, I also endeavoured to obtain all the participants' consent without coercion. These participants, as indicated earlier, were the four school principals, four parents from each SGB, four teachers from each school and four learners from each school's RCL. Written permission from the relevant education authority was obtained and attached to the letter to the school principal as proof that the research project was legitimate and approved. The same letter of approval is also attached as appendix at the end of this thesis. Furthermore, I indicated to participants that they were free to withdraw from the project at any time if they so wished without giving any reason. In this study, I also utilised minors (learners) as well. In this regard Cohen, *et al.* (2011) state that seeking informed consent from parents or guardians is crucial. The point of the research is explained, questions invited and permission to proceed to the next stage sought. Objections, for whatever reason are noted and respected. After the permission was granted by the parents, the consent of the minors (learners) was also sought.

Access and acceptance: Cohen, *et al.* (2011) also posit that the relevance of the principle of informed consent becomes apparent at the initial stage of the research project, that of access to the institution or organisation where the research is to be conducted, and acceptance by those whose permission one needs before embarking on the task. Cohen, *et al.* (2011) also cautions that researchers cannot expect access to an institution as a matter of right. They have to demonstrate that they are worthy, as researchers and human beings, of being accorded the facilities needed to carry out their research.

The first stage involves the gaining of official permission to undertake one's research in the target community. In this regard I gained access to the school through arranging a personal meeting with the school principal, where I outlined the purpose of my research, and a description of the methods that I was going to use. I had initially anticipated difficulties in gaining access to schools since I was researching a rather sensitive area (of school violence), and was not sure how much detail of the study I should initially disclose. However, the schools already had a good relationship with the university at which I worked because these schools were used by the University for Teaching Practice, and had supported research projects before and were satisfied with the outcomes and feedback. I informed the school principals and the participants of the exact details of the methods of data production that I was going to employ in the study. I

explained as fully as I could and did not deliberately withhold any information. I worked well within the guidelines for reasonably informed consent.

As indicated previously in this chapter, I also guaranteed the relevant officials at the school that all participants would remain anonymous, and that I would not disclose any information that would identify the school in which the study was carried out. I negotiated access to the learners, and the time frames of my study at the school site at the beginning of the study. I also gained permission to work with the learners during school break-times and after school, where this was possible. I made a concerted effort, in my manner of dress, my attitude to remain detached from the school management and educators. I considered that it important that I was not seen to be part of the establishment. I think that this allowed the learners to feel more at ease to communicate with me, without concern that I would be discussing their personal matters with their educators.

Ethical considerations pervade the whole process of research; at the stage of access and acceptance, where appropriateness of topic, design, methods, guarantees of confidentiality, analysis and dissemination of findings must be negotiated with relative openness, sensitivity, honesty, accuracy and scientific impartiality (Cohen, *et al.* 2011).

Figure 4 below is a box of conditions and guarantees proffered for school-based research projects in Cohen, *et al.* (2011, p.83):

Figure 4

1. All participants must be given the chance to remain anonymous.
2. All the data must be given strict confidentiality.
3. Interviewees should have the chance to verify statements at the stage of drafting the report (respondent validation).
4. Participants should be given a copy of the final report.
5. Permission for publication must be gained from the participants.
6. If possible, the research report should be of benefit to the school and participants.

In line with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Research Ethics Policy, before conducting the research, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Clearance Office of the University; thereafter permission from the relevant authorities in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education were approached to obtain official permission and approval to pursue the study in their schools. The aim of the study was also outlined. In addition, the researcher wrote permission letters and personally visited each school principal to obtain their permission and support to continue with the study at their schools. The researcher also discussed the nature and scope of the projected study with them. Pertinent issues surrounding the observations, interviews and document review were also discussed. Informed consent forms and issues of privacy were also explained to all the participants. Glesne and Peshkin (1992, pp.111-112) state that through informed consent, potential study participants are made aware that their participation is voluntary. In addition, any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being and privacy are highlighted and they are informed that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study. This was strictly observed.

4.13 Chapter summary

In this chapter I began with a discussion of the broad methodological approach used in the study, including conceptual issues related to the methodology that guides this research project. I proceeded to discuss the research paradigms used in the study; detailed the sampling procedure; outlined the various research methods and the reasons for the choices made as well as described the methods of data analysis. Furthermore, issues of quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research were discussed. The importance of triangulation was also presented. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion on limitations of the study and ethical issues. In the proceeding chapter, I present the findings of the data generated and a discussion thereof.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter was devoted to the research design and methodology which underpins this study. Due to the voluminous nature of the data generated, the data presentation section was subdivided into three chapters, namely Chapter Five, Six and Seven. Specifically, this chapter presents the experiences of the various governors with regards to school violence; Chapter Six presents measures taken by the school governing bodies to combat school violence while Chapter Seven concludes the data presentation by presenting the influence of school organisation and management on school violence. The data was generated from the field through the interviews, observations and documents reviews with the research participants. A critique of the findings is then facilitated through interrogating the research questions, literature review and theoretical frameworks which were explored at great length in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

In order to remind the reader of the study aims and broad critical questions which were presented in the introductory chapter and to maintain focus, the critical questions are re-presented here:

- What are perceptions and experiences of participants about school violence?
- What are the causes of school violence in the researched schools?
- What are the types of violence that plagued the researched schools?
- What measures and initiatives are taken by school governing bodies at the researched schools to prevent violence?
- What are the perceptions of participants on the appropriateness/relevance of the school governing bodies to deal with violence in schools?

Further, in presenting the data, I wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. To this end, *verbatim* quotations are used throughout in the data presentation and discussion. Pertinent findings are then analysed through content analysis as discussed in the previous chapter on the research design and methodology.

5.2 Discussion of findings

The following responses were elicited from the various participants from the four researched schools who comprised school principals, chairpersons and members of the School Discipline and Safety Committees, Teacher Representatives from the SGBs, the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) and Life Orientation teachers as they dealt with disciplinary issues at schools, the Representative Council Learners (RCL) Chairpersons and other office-bearers of the RCLs at all the four researched schools.

5.2.1 Perceptions and experiences of school violence

The first question that was asked to all participants in the four case study schools was:

What are perceptions and experiences of participants about school violence?

5.2.1.1 Cocktail of violent incidents and indiscipline problems

In all the four researched schools, the participants indicated that they faced a myriad of indiscipline problems and school violence incidents among learners were on the rise. These challenges ranged from drug taking to drug-selling among learners, stealing of cell phones or forcefully taking young learners' lunch-packs and mugging by big or bullying learners, fighting mainly among boys but of late between boys and girls too, drinking of alcohol, bullying, insolence, physical violence (stabblings and assaults), teenage pregnancies, late coming and absconding from classes. Other misdemeanours included the carrying of weapons at school, making of racist or crude remarks by some learners to other learners and of late increasingly to female teachers, cigarette smoking including dagga and *wunga* truancy, absenteeism, inappropriate boy-girl relationships and failure to complete school tasks such as homework and assignments.

The Discipline Chairperson at Thandimfundo Secondary School said that the habitual offenders were eventually dealt within the Discipline Committee. Similarly, both the principal and chairperson of the Discipline Committee at Sugar Estate Secondary School indicated that drugs and substance abuse at their school was a problem but the principal was quick to state that it involved less than ten percent of the learner population but they had to take action and prioritise it as it could have a ripple effect in the school if not nipped in the bud. The principal said:

Drugs and substance abuse is another issue that we are concerned about. Now remember, this may sound like gloom and doom but it maybe 5% or 10% of the student population that is involved. But we believe that we need to stop that even before it escalates though it is a difficult task.

(Principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Further, the Chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School also indicated that drugs and substance abuse was a problem in their school and had a snowball effect. He said:

There is the problem of drugs and alcohol abuse. Drugs are freely available. This is a sickness in our society. The informal tuck-shops that are around the school sell drugs and alcohol to learners. The police were notified and closed them down. Soon two more mushrooms elsewhere.

(The Chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School)

Similarly, the teachers in all four schools also mentioned and re-affirmed their school principals on the kinds of learner indiscipline problems they were regularly experiencing. The Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) who was part of the teacher focus group from Thandimfundo Secondary said:

We have problems of drugs. The 'wunga' seems to be a popular choice at the moment. Sometimes other learners are caught with cakes laced with drugs; others are charged for acts of misconduct such as stabbing other learners or fighting; others are caught with assortment of dangerous weapons that they bring to school – allegedly to protect themselves. Really, it is scary out there.

(The Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) from Thandimfundo Secondary)

The members of the RCL in three of the four schools also confirmed that some of their fellow learners were problematic and reiterated what was said by their principals and teachers. The chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School RCL said:

Two weeks ago, we had to sit in a tribunal where a learner had stabbed another after a quarrel and the allegation was that the other boy (who was alleged to have started the fight) had been seen smoking the wunga earlier near the school's toilets.

(The chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School RCL)

The schools had various approaches to fight the scourge of drugs in their premises. They used the services of non-governmental organisations outside the schools such as NICRO, SANCA and other government departments such as the SAPS, the Social Welfare, the Correctional Services and Health Departments. To this end, the principal of Yellowwood Secondary School said:

We've TADA (Teenagers Against Drugs Abuse) groups at the school. Learners perform stage- plays against drug abuse and two or three teachers and parents are also involved. These are learners that are interested in creating a drugs-free society. We have those TADA groups and talks at morning assemblies from

different NGO's coming in, talking and motivating our learners. But then the policies that work well generally would be where, at the start of each school year you spend at least an hour or two hours discussing and explaining the Code of Conduct to the learners; where the class teacher will discuss those rules and regulations with the learners and the learners also recommit themselves to that Code of Conduct.

(The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

As indicated through the above quotations, three of the four researched schools were experiencing a serious drug problem. The teachers seemed to understand that this was a big social problem as well and so they utilised a multi-pronged approach to resolve the problem. They also complained that the drugs problem had a snowball effect in that the police closed the informal tuck-shops where the drugs were sold but they mushroomed elsewhere. However, it was noted that the schools in this study were pro-active in that they were doing something about the challenges of violence and indiscipline they were facing.

In addition, as indicated in the research methodology chapter, I also used documents reviews in this study. All four schools allowed me access to school documents such as the Code of Conduct for Learners, Incidents Books, Log books, etc. which gave me an insider view of what was actually occurring at school pertaining to school violence and indiscipline. The records perused had a long list of offences recorded in the past two years which was a focus of my study. These included cigarette smoking - which was a daily occurrence; substance abuse - with one or two cases being reported per week; late-coming which was daily; fighting among learners; gambling; carrying of dangerous weapons to school and bringing and using cellular phone on the school premises which was not allowed. The principals of all the four researched schools also showed me an assortment of weapons such as knives, sharpened objects, a home-made gun and other forms of dangerous weapons confiscated from learners on their school premises. The findings from the interviews were thus corroborated by both the documents reviewed as well as observations. In another incident (which is not part of this research), a principal told me that he had confiscated a home-made gun from a boy who had intended to use it on another learner whom he accused of bullying. This shows the seriousness of violence in some of our schools.

The Code of Conduct for Learners booklets were also made available to me by all the school principals and dealt with all possible issues of indiscipline, violence and other kinds of misconducts schools could face. The presence of the code of conduct for learners which was in some schools reviewed regularly, also suggests that the schools are aware of the legal requirements in dealing with the challenges they were facing. The code of conduct booklets of each school contained mainly procedures of how the policy worked; the various acts of misconducts documented according to different levels from very minor misdemeanours (level 1) to very serious ones (level 4) that warranted suspension or even expulsion from the school. The schools had other documents such as the log book while others had a thick exercise book (called 'Incidents Book' in some schools) which was used solely for recording details of learners' acts of misdemeanours. Through these documents, one got a sense of the criminal history of the school. I perused through the previous two and half years' records and what was so noticeable was the frequency of fighting among learners; the confiscation of dangerous weapons among learners; the bullying incidents; insolence cases; repeatedly non-wearing of proper school uniform; etc. The documents also seemed to corroborate findings from the interviews. In addition, during observations that I did at the schools, I noticed that in three of the four schools, many learners were not following the school dress code. Learners had fancy jackets on and some even wore designer *takkies* which were not part of their school uniform. This corroborated what the Governing Body members of the school had to say about some educators not implementing the School's Code of Conduct with regards to dress code. Learners were generally respectful but I noticed some were using their cellular phones and they made no attempt to hide it when they saw me.

I was also permitted access to the disciplinary records of three of the four schools researched for the period 2009 to 2011. The records seemed to corroborate findings from the interviews that learner misconduct was on the increase. There were more entries in 2010 than it was for 2009 which suggests an increase in incidents of violent misconduct. Similarly, the documents perused in April-May 2011 (when this was done) suggested that by the end of the year, the previous year's figures were likely to be matched or surpassed. These records had entry details of the learners and their offences, the sanctions they had received, the members of the tribunal, etc. There were many entries in the schools' log books where cases of learners involved in acts of

misconducts were recorded. Misdemeanours such as smoking, vandalism, fighting, absconding from class, stealing and use of cellular phones were just a few cases I noted that had been dealt with and recorded by the schools.

Further, the above quotations on the prevalence of drugs and violence in the school community suggest the relative influence of the context both within and outside of the school and its impact on school violence (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). This community influence on the school is also corroborated by the SA Human Rights Commission Report (2006) which states that South Africa was experiencing unacceptably high levels of violent crime and this was spilling over into the schools and playgrounds. Similarly, Astor, Benbenishty and Marachi (2006), Edwards (2008) and Phillips, Linney and Pack (2008) also state that what is happening in schools reflects what is happening in society, i.e. the context in which the school is located interacts with internal school and student characteristics to influence levels of victimisation in schools. These layered and nested contexts include the school (social climate, availability of policies against violence), neighbourhood (poverty, social organisation and crime levels), the students' families (education and family structure), cultural aspects of student and teacher population and the economic, social and political makeup of the country as a whole. Similarly, viewed from a social control theory, a school is a microcosm of a larger society and is therefore affected by the contexts in which it is built. If the society in which the school is located is violent and disintegrating, the school will automatically be affected by the violence in its environment. The addiction of learners to drugs, alcohol and substance abuse has a ripple effect in that other learners want to emulate them and this may end up being the problem of the entire school. More often than not, some parents were unsure how to respond to this challenge and fell back on the schools to provide assistance. Thus the teachers have to familiarise themselves with Departmental policy on drug and substance abuse addiction and refer the learners to the relevant authorities for rehabilitation and counselling. The parents have to monitor their child and report to the counselling authorities the child's progress or regress. In addition, the teachers were responsible for educating the other members of the class about drugs and substance abuse so that nobody else fell into the same trap. This, the teachers believed, was a waste of their precious time which could be better used doing academic work with learners who were serious about their education.

5.2.1.2 Learner pregnancy

The other finding which was a serious challenge in all four schools in the study was the high rate of learner pregnancy. Generally, teenage pregnancy is not a violence issue as there may be consent between the two parties involved. However, when learners are at school, they are not expected to be falling pregnant and there are policies discouraging learners falling pregnant. In addition, it becomes a discipline problem when a teacher is a perpetrator of the pregnancy as there are laws forbidding intimate relationships between the teachers and learners. It is also a discipline/violence issue if a male learner uses violent means to impose himself on the female learner.

The Teacher Liaison Officer from Thandimfundo Secondary School gave his views of the rate of learner pregnancy and lamented its consequences. He said:

As we speak, in Grade 12 alone, there are about eleven learners who are pregnant. Some of them will deliver during the exam time. The experience has taught us that those who do not deliver during exam times, they fail to concentrate on their school work because there is a new baby on the way. There are a lot of complications in their bodies; they are moody as a result, they won't learn properly and that eventually leads them to drop out.

(Teacher Liaison Officer from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

In addition, another teacher who was part of a teacher focus group from the same school indicated that they were concerned about learners at her school contracting HIV/AIDS and falling pregnant. She said:

Young people still think: "It won't happen to me, and that I won't get infected (with an HIV virus) or I won't fall pregnant".

(Teacher and member of the Thandimfundo Secondary School SGB)

Similarly, the principal of Yellowwood Secondary School also admitted the challenge of learner pregnancies at his school but was quick to say it was not as serious as in other schools. He further articulated his concern about the learners' detachable and ambivalent attitudes to HIV/AIDS infection and falling pregnant. The above principal said:

We don't have a high rate of pregnancy in our school as reported in the papers about other schools. We have enough that I can count on my fingers. Yes, we do get girls who fall pregnant. The Department of Education has a policy on this to say we cannot discriminate against them. We allow them to remain at school for as long as possible and later they go and give birth.

(The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

Teachers and parent members of the school governing bodies in all the researched schools also corroborated the views that learners seemed to have an ambivalent and detachable attitude to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. In addition, generally this study found that learner pregnancy rates differed from school to school. Schools in the disadvantaged communities had more learner pregnancies than those in more advantaged communities. The statistics shared to me by the schools indicated that Yellowwood Secondary School was the least affected while Thandimfundo Secondary was the worst.

However, teenage pregnancy remained a stubborn challenge and teachers felt they were fighting a losing battle. The problem seemed to be a social ill that would not quickly disappear. School authorities were convinced that there was a relationship between poverty in the community and social grants that young, unemployed mothers were receiving from the government. Viewed from a social control theory, this finding seemed to suggest the collapse of family and social values that once bonded these communities. In the past it was rare and frowned upon to have a school girl falling pregnant. These days, it is not unusual for learners, even in primary schools to fall pregnant. A study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (2006), also seemed to corroborate views of teachers about the ambivalent and detachable attitudes among young people towards teenage pregnancy (Department of Basic Education, 2009) which could be ascribed to lack of adequate understanding and appreciation of the negative consequences of early parenting. This study (on teenage pregnancy) concluded that the ambivalent attitudes were mostly common among teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with low future aspirations. When contrasted with learners from advantaged communities, it is possible that some learners from disadvantaged communities may view early childbearing as a way out of poverty and perhaps to strengthen the relationship with the baby's father (Department of Basic Education, 2009). The HSRC Report (2006) also found that teenage pregnancy contributes to drop-out in a number of significant ways. Further, countless girls who fell pregnant hoped to return to school but most found this difficult because some did not have anyone to care for the child. Even if they did have someone, they found it difficult to concentrate on their studies as they spent most of their time thinking about the problems that they faced. Many relied on social grants for their livelihood (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Another factor was that the schools were aware of the policy guidelines of the Department of Education in handling pregnant learners but seemed to ignore them as they felt that they were cumbersome to implement. Teachers, especially, indicated that they were not interested in assisting pregnant learners (providing them support with curriculum tasks and activities while at home or assisting them with examination preparation). The pregnant learners had to fend for themselves. Teachers, in most cases, taught large classes and were not prepared to contend with moody, pregnant learners. I found teachers attitude unacceptable though understandable. Teachers in these schools teach very large classes and do not have the luxury of time to contend with pregnant learners despite what the policies say on this matter. Teachers and parents in particular were aware of legislation pertaining to learner pregnancy but believed it to be somehow incongruent with the views of the majority of the citizenry on the ground. Perhaps this explained the disjuncture between what the policies propagate the teachers' negative attitudes and behaviour towards pregnant learners.

5.2.1.3 Lack of confidence on school structures to resolve conflict among learners

Another challenge that the four schools faced was the lack of confidence in the formal school structures and processes in resolving conflicts among learners. The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School noted that, generally, learners tended to take the law into their own hands:

I find that, especially with high school learners, if there is an issue (of conflict) to be sorted out, they think of reporting the matter to the school authorities as the last resort. Most times, they have a feeling that they can resolve the problem themselves. That is a big problem. It is especially so with boys and now also quite often with girls as well. They simply have a go at each other.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

The above finding was also re-iterated by the TLO of Thandimfundo who said:

They (learners) don't have any confidence, trust or faith in the school structures to protect them and that is a serious problem. They also feel that once they leave the school premises (after school hours) they are vulnerable in the open out there. No matter what reassurance that we can give them in the school - that reassurance won't mean much outside the school. So the tendency is not to report incidents of conflict to the school authorities. They feel they must sort it out themselves.

(The TLO of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The above quotations suggest that some learners view their schools as not doing enough to address violence against them and as such, the aggrieved learners tend not to trust school authorities to protect them and hence resort to taking the law into their own hands to see that

justice was done. Davies (2009) states that violence in schools is a problem in itself for student learning as it also strengthens societal aggression and the acceptance of violence as a solution to a problem. Similarly, in a study conducted by Bloom (2009) among more than 15 000 teenage students in the United States of America, it was found that the majority of them did not feel safe at school and also perceived violence as an acceptable solution to their problems. Likewise, studies conducted by Mudege, *et al.* (2008) in the slums of Nairobi in Kenya and The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) in South Africa, found that there were feelings of insecurity among learners as a result of the schools' failure to protect them.

These two latter studies also reported that those entrusted to protect learners at schools (the teachers) were not able to ensure it, or were, in some cases, the source of insecurity themselves. Schools are, however, expected to protect learners and not to violate them and if this does not happen, it is a form of dereliction of duty on the part of the school authorities. The sense of insecurity among learners promotes the kind of thinking where learners don't have trust and faith in the school structures to protect them against perpetrators of violence hence the need to take the law into their hands by fighting back instead of reporting cases to school authorities. The sense of insecurity is also prevalent in some communities in South Africa where members of the community do not trust the police and the criminal justice system to be even-handed and so resort to vigilantism to resolve problems of crime and violence. In some communities, for example, some people have formed vigilante groups such as People Against Gangsters And Drugs [PAGAD] which is very strong in the Western Cape, *Mapogo-a-Mathamaga* in Limpopo and *Mbokodo* in Mpumalanga provinces (Sekhonyane & Louw, 2011).

The print and electronic media is also replete with examples of communities taking law into their own hands all over South Africa as a result of lack of confidence in the police and the justice system of the land. To illustrate this point further, the following are a few incidents reported in the media on this subject: a report in the *Highway Mail* (17 February 2012, p.3) indicated that at Mariannhill (west of Pinetown in Durban), a man was stoned to death by an angry mob after he was suspected of having raped a seven-year-old girl. Warrant Officer Govender of Mariannhill SAPS appealed to the community not to take the law into their own hands and appealed that the community should report all crimes to the police. Likewise, in another case of many mob justice

cases at Khayelitsha Township in Cape Town, it was reported in the evening news bulletin on *The E-News* (now *ENCA*) channel (20 March 2012) that residents had killed (and in some cases burned) six suspected criminals in their area in less than a week. The residents interviewed said they were tired of the indifference of the local police officers. In another similar case, also reported in *The E-News* on 22 February 2012, learners at a secondary school in Umlazi Township (south of Durban) allegedly hunted, caught and killed two criminals from a nearby informal settlement who had terrorised them and their school for a while.

The above examples are just a few to demonstrate how violent the South African society is and how devalued sometimes human life is. But these violent acts originate from somewhere, which among others, is the frustration as a result the justice system that is seen as unresponsive to the plight of the victims. This is observed at various levels of society (the school level or the societal level). If the authorities like teachers, school governors or the police do not respond appropriately and timeously, something has to give, hence the cycle of endless violence. Some learners indicated that some teachers do not listen and assist them when they report cases of violence. Consequently, they carry weapons to school to protect themselves. Bloom (2009) further posits that handling minor misbehaviour appropriately can keep it from escalating into a crisis. The above findings are also corroborated by Harber (2004, p.45) who states that "...the school may actually be harmful if it fails to protect children from violence and suffering when it could do so". Failure (through omission or commission) by teachers to protect learners is also a violation of the *in loco parentis* principle which places a duty on the teachers to protect learners while in their care (Shaba, 1998 & 2003; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). Similarly, positive behavioural support by teachers can be utilised to prevent and reduce disruptive behaviour among the learners. To this end, Thompson, Burcham and McLaughlin (2010) posit that students must feel that someone is available to listen to them, no matter the context or the situation. The students need to be told that an open-door policy to the principal and teachers exist for them and their families. In addition to this, Bloom (2009) posits that teaching conflict resolution skills and non-violence strategies to learners to resolve conflict situations with their peers can go a long way to reduce discipline problems at school.

This discussion so far has shown that the main challenges emerging were varied but included the use of drugs, teenage pregnancy, lack of confidence among the learners in the school policies and structures to protect them and to deal effectively with school violence and other acts of indiscipline. The teachers were also found to be unwilling to support pregnant learners as per Departmental policy. In an attempt to curb violence, the schools were utilising multi-pronged approaches such as NGOs, the local clinics, the police and in some cases even the local churches. This showed that they were concerned about the challenges they were facing and were doing something about them.

5.2.2. Places of frequent violent incidents/serious indiscipline problems at the schools

Another question that was asked to principals, teachers and learners in the four case study schools was:

In most cases, where do most violent incidents/serious indiscipline problems occur in the school?

The majority of the participants said that most violent incidents occurred in classrooms that were unattended too by teachers or where teachers were negligent or lax in applying class/school rules; they also occurred in the schools' toilets and passages or near the schools' tuck-shop/playgrounds where learners were sometimes robbed as well. The Life Orientation teacher from Burmanbush Secondary School said:

One of the factors which contribute to indiscipline or violence in the school is the absence of an educator in the classroom. If an educator honours his/her class periods there is no way that a child can be hit or bullied in the presence of an educator.

(The Life Orientation teacher from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Responding to the same question, another teacher from the same focus group said:

Serious violence occurs when learners go to the toilets. Many boys, especially new-comers and younger ones have been mugged in the toilets. Some are robbed of their money at knife-point. Some of the learners are too scared to report or want to come to school anymore after that.

(Teacher from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Similarly, the principal of Yellowwood Secondary School said:

You know, it's so bad that some learners just don't want to eat their lunch. I know in my previous school, they will go and buy after every one has bought their stuff

from the tuck-shop. Then they will go quietly on the staircase and eat their food because they are afraid that somebody else will come and extort money from them.

(The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

Likewise, a learner who was the Chairperson of the RCL at Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

Sometimes learners quarrel in the classrooms, especially when teachers are not around or are robbed in the toilets by the bigger ones or just plain bullying. In some cases it would also happen in the school grounds. They quarrel over many things like cigarettes or anything.

(RCL Chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School also said the following:

Two learners apparently were playing a horse play game called “gwaza” (stab me) quarrelled outside the school near a mosque. The other boy took out a knife and stabbed the other learner on the chest. Kids came running to report the incident and we rushed to the scene. He was bleeding internally. We rushed the boy to the hospital and he died within an hour. It was my worst nightmare. The other boy ran away but he later handed himself to the police and is now serving fifteen years in jail.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

These findings above suggest that serious violent events/serious indiscipline problems occurred most when learners were all left by themselves; not attended to by their teachers or when they were on their way to or from schools. These findings were consistent with findings by Astor, Meyer and Behre (1999); Goldstein and Conoley (2004); and Thompson, Burcham and McLaughlin (2010) who found that aggressive behaviour frequently occurred in more crowded school locations, in entrance and exit areas, in deserted areas such as stairways, toilets, physical education locations (gyms and locker rooms), playgrounds, hallways and unsupervised areas, cafeterias and other un-owned places and times (between class periods, during breaks or immediately after the school day). These findings also suggest that un-owned and undefined public areas near schools were threatening places and thus posed a serious challenge, like in the case of the boy from Burmanbush Secondary school who was stabbed to death by another schoolmate outside the school near a mosque. Since this incident happened outside the school, I wonder what the school and its governing body were supposed to do or have done to prevent this incident other than to impress upon learners not to carry weapons to school. The parents also

have a responsibility to teach their children values of respect for themselves and other people and not to play with dangerous weapons. We have read so many times, especially in the media where learners are unintentionally killed at school or outside the school by other learners as they were playing with dangerous weapons. Viewed from a social control theory perspective, this expectation on the part of both the schools and parents perhaps is a tall order because some learners feel more secured if armed as they claimed they were threatened or assaulted on their way to and from schools. Some even argue that schools themselves are not doing enough to protect them and therefore feel vulnerable hence the need to take the law into their own hands. A study by Mokhele (2006) on indiscipline among learners in seven Pretoria secondary schools found lack of supervision and control by teachers as attributive factors to this phenomenon.

Similarly, the studies by Mudege, *et al.* (2008) in the slums of Nairobi in Kenya as well as by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) in South Africa respectively, also made similar findings where some learners even left school because they felt unsafe there. Principals of at least two of the researched schools also indicated that in their schools, they were having problems in getting teachers to do playground duties during break and lunch times. Teachers always cited teacher union rights and this had an impact on the levels of indiscipline cases that occurred during break times when learners were not supervised. Teachers were also adamant that they were entitled to their breaks even if this impacted on school discipline. In terms of the *in loco parentis* principle, it is the duty of the teachers to protect and to care at all times for the learners under their care and therefore any teacher who refuses to do this is in violation of this principle and is exposed to prosecution in terms of the law (Shaba, 2003; Joubert, 2009). However, the study by Astor, Meyer and Behre (1999) found that most teachers did not believe it was their professional role to secure dangerous locations or intervene to stop violent events outside their classrooms. As a result, there was professional reluctance and lack of clarity on how to proceed before, during and after violent events. The few teachers who intervened to stop violence (outside their classrooms and in unowned spaces) perceived their actions as a personal, moral conviction rather than an obligatory, organisational response. However, this study also found that the most effective violence intervention strategy was the physical presence of a caring teacher who knew the students well and was willing to intervene, coupled with a clear, consistent administrative policy on violence. The teachers are the most recognisable adults who are in a position to assist the

school to create a safe community as well as set the tone for the school (Astor, Meyer & Behre, 1999).

It is clear from the above discussion that the school authorities, in order to ensure learners are safe, need to vigorously enforce class and playground supervision. Even though schools are now highly unionised spaces, a balance has to be found between teacher rights and learner safety. Teachers' rights should not be seen to be encroaching on learner rights and vice versa. Learners should not be left unsupervised under any circumstances as this is a violation of their safety and the *in loco parentis* principle (Shaba, 1998 & 2003; De Wet, 2007). Further, there should be no ambiguity on the part of the teachers about their responsibility to ensure learner safety at school at all times as well as what procedures to be followed when violence occurred in undefined/unowned school spaces. The school governing body has a responsibility to craft a clear policy on school safety that addresses procedures and professional roles regarding violent events during non-teaching times and that policy, like all others, should be enforced without fear or favour by the school management team of each school. Greater ownership of those spaces found to be threatening to learners has to be secured. The schools need to be aware of these spaces and deal with them appropriately as this has the potential to drastically decrease the prevalence of violence in schools (Astor, Meyer & Behre, 1999).

5.2.3 School violence and its impact on access to education for all learners

All participants in the four case schools were also asked the following question:

What is the impact of school violence on access to education for all learners in your school?

This study found violence impacts negatively on learners' access to schools and academic achievement generally because of the violent culture in some of the schools which breeds an atmosphere of fear among learners. Further, even though initiation practices have also been outlawed by Section 10A of SASA, learners in all researched schools indicated that this practice was still prevalent in their schools especially by senior learners to new-comers and teachers seemed to ignore these incidents when reported. A learner who formed a focus group from Thandimfundo High School said the following:

Muggings usually occur when learners go to the toilets and are robbed of their money. Some of the muggings occur at knife-point because some of the boys carry knives. So you find that a boy, especially the new-comers are victims. In

some cases victims of toilet muggings are so fearful that they don't want to go to the toilets, even when the nature calls. As a result, the child is tempted to leave the school. Some are so traumatised that they don't come back to school.

(A learner from Thandimfundo High School)

Likewise, a teacher from the same school also said:

It (violence) impacts negatively on the self-esteem of the victim. Let us take a case where a child is in the classroom and he is bullied by another fellow learner. The child becomes withdrawn and reserved in the classroom, he/she does not participate because of being ridiculed and bullied. As a result of that the child is not going to give off his or her best in terms of participation in class.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo High School)

Unfortunately, no records were kept of the reasons why some learners left schools because learners did not report in advance why they were leaving. Participants also indicated that some female learners who fell pregnant were ridiculed while at school consequently they dropped out and did not finish school.

Studies such as those of Greene (2005), Burton (2008), Zulu and Izugbara (2008), Bloom (2009), Kochhar-Bryant and Heishman (2010) explicitly show the negative impact of school violence on access to education for all learners. These studies posit that disruptive learner behaviour interferes with teaching; violence or fear of violence impedes learners' psychosomatic development as well as the ability to function in a healthy way both within and outside the school environment; that poor learners living in slum conditions and who experience sexual violence/harassment and rape, threats to personal and physical security, poor academic performance, absenteeism and aversion to school, pregnancy and dropouts were common. Cox, Bynun and Davidson (2004) corroborate these views and state that schools with high rates of crime and violence are less effective in educating learners. The Kenyan study (Zulu & Izugbara, 2008) similarly found that lack of security within schools and in their slum communities in general, poverty, long distances to school as well as early pregnancies were common causes of school dropouts. The negative impact of violence was similarly discussed at length under 5.2.1.2 where I presented the impact of learner pregnancy.

To conclude this section, this study has found that violence impacts negatively on learners' access to schools and academic achievement in many ways. Generally, because of the violent masculine culture in some of these schools and communities, schools breed an atmosphere of

fear among learners, consequently leading some to perform poorly and eventually to leave the schools. It was also found that most learners who leave schools prematurely (through fear of violence, pregnancy or other reasons), do not report when they leave.

5.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the experiences and perceptions of various school governors elicited through the interviews, documents review and observations were presented and discussed in terms of research questions, the theoretical frameworks as well as literature review. In a nutshell, schools face multiple challenges of indiscipline and violence problems. In order to respond proactively to the challenges they face, they have realised they need multiple-pronged strategies.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the measures implemented by schools to curb school violence.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: MEASURES TAKEN BY SCHOOLS GOVERNING BODIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter was devoted to the presentation of the experiences and perceptions of school violence from the various school governors. As indicated in the preceding chapter, due to the voluminous nature of the data generated, this data presentation section was subdivided into three chapters as explained in Chapter Five. Specifically, in this chapter I present the measures implemented by the school governing bodies to combat school violence. A critique of the findings is then facilitated through the research questions, literature review and the theoretical frameworks and which were explored at great length in Chapters Two and Three respectively. Pertinent findings are then analysed through content analysis as explained and discussed in the research methodology chapter.

6.2 Discussion of findings

The following responses were also elicited from the various participants who comprised of school principals, SGB chairpersons and members of the School Discipline and Safety Committees, Teacher Representatives from the SGBs, the Teacher Liaison Officers, RCL Chairpersons and other RCL members) at all the four researched schools.

6.2.1 Measures implemented by schools to promote a violence-free and secure environment

The next question that was asked to participants in all the four case study schools was:

What measures and initiatives are implemented by schools to promote a violence-free or secure environment for the learners?

What was so heartening about this rather depressing study on school violence was that the schools were proactively trying to respond positively to assist the learners. The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School spoke of a huge rehabilitation programme which they had at his

school and was on-going for learners who were abusing drugs; teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes; the utilisation of social workers and nurses; etc. to curtail the tide of violence. He said:

We refer them (drug abusers) to the rehabilitation centre. The important thing here is that we say to them: "... go get yourself rehabilitated either at a state institution or a private institution and come back and say that you have been there.
(Principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

These programmes were conducted in conjunction with state institutions and Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) in the community. Initially, the disciplinary issues were dealt with in the Life Orientation classes by the teachers before they were referred to the disciplinary committees before eventually involving the NGOs. The schools also understood that they could not win the fight (of violence, drugs, alcohol and substance abuse) on their own and sought the expert advice of outsider agencies such as social workers, local churches, the local CPF (Community Policing Forum) members, police officers from their local SAPS stations, Lifeline and National Institute For Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) as forms of interventions. Indicating the significance of this collaboration, the principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

I'm very fortunate in that I've got a parent and her name is Dr X who is actually the President of Lifeline and she takes special interest in disciplinary issues and therefore we have a very, very strong person and a very structured intellectual who takes care of that from Lifeline.
(Principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

In echoing what other schools do to combat school violence and indiscipline, the Life Orientation teacher (who was part of the teacher focus group) from Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

We have got the structures that are put in place to try and assist us such as the Representatives Council of Learners (RCL). Each classroom elects two learners to represent them in the RCL. The RCL works closely with the TLO and we encourage open lines of communication. We also use the services of the social workers from the Department of Social Welfare and various local churches and the clinic who visit us to talk and work with our learners on a regular basis.

(Life Orientation Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Further, the problem of drugs also seemed to have a snowballing effect. Police were notified of drug sources, for instance, the informal tuck-shops or taverns near the schools. The police closed them down but two or more would mushroom elsewhere near the school. The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School stated that the indiscipline/violence problems they were facing at school were emanating from the community surrounding the school. He said:

What happens in society also affects the school ...a school is a microcosm of society and what happens outside [the school] also affects the school... and you know [the drugs problem] it's there in society.

(Principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Equally, a teacher who was a member of the focus group at Thandimfundo Secondary also echoed the above sentiments and said:

The school is a mirror of the community. It (the school) reflects the kind of community it is situated in and learners in our school are a reflection of their community. This school, for instance serves a very poor community where there is violence, drug abuse, alcoholism and so on. The school can't escape the influence from the community.

(Teacher and focus group member from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Similarly, a teacher who was also a member of the Discipline and Safety Committee at Burmanbush Secondary School indicated that there was a relationship between fighting among learners in the school and the violence in the community where the learners were coming from. She said:

Fighting is an on-going problem. The problem of school violence is getting worse and I don't foresee it improving soon. The whole country is lawless, it is in the families, and it's everywhere. Schools are not exempt. Society is deteriorating. Look at the values and morals of our society. These days you even find priests accused of sexual assault. It's frightening what is going on out there.

(Teacher and DSSC member from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Another teacher from the Thandimfundo Secondary School focus group, in emphasising the influence of home on school violence, said:

We are coming from a background where violence was the order of the day. We come from families which applied violence in order to resolve issues. We come from households where a father would use a stick to discipline either his wife or his children, to show who the boss is. That alone sends a message to a child that in order for you to maintain discipline you must use violence, unfortunately. We have got to change our mind-set otherwise, we are going nowhere.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Likewise, another teacher from the same focus group said:

I think we should do something about the culture violence in our country because it manifests itself in schools. If people want an increase in salary or in wages, they must go on strike which, more often than not, turns violent and they must damage property. That is violence.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

In addition, she further made the following suggestion:

People who are currently in political leadership know that they were brought up in a violence ridden society so the only way they know perhaps of resolving problems is through violent means, which does not help. So you know here in our schools, we also have a huge task of helping these learners - especially boys, that they should understand that violence will never resolve any problem.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Likewise, the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) from the Sugar Estate Secondary School focus group made the following suggestion:

I think it is important to teach strategies such as decision making skills, conflict and dispute management skills, as well as change management skills. Those are some of the skills we need to teach not just our young people but adults as well.

(Teacher Liaison Officer from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The TLO further commented about the problem of bad role models in the community and how it affected the young people. He said:

We also need to have good role models in our communities. Currently, we have a lot of bad ones. These are people who steal cars; people who will kill in order to get and drive around in a beautiful stolen car; people who are corrupt in many ways. These are the people we have in our communities. Children see them and say: I don't need to finish school and go to work. I've got to use violence to get what I want quickly. It's a very complex problem that needs a multi-pronged approach.

(Teacher Liaison Officer from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The above quotations further emphasise the relationship between school-based violence and the ills of the community served by that school and that the two cannot be separated (Edwards, 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Young people see and emulate what adults do. According to developmental psychologists, one of the most salient influences on the development of violent behaviour patterns among children and youth is exposure to violent role models. South African societies have previously been described as 'very violent' and the recent findings of the National Youth Victimization Study confirm this assertion (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007).

Similarly, the challenges of school violence as a reflection of society serviced by a particular school are shared by Visser (2007) who asserts that behaviour is the result of the interaction between individuals and the contexts they are exposed to. Visser (2007) also adds that a violent, crime-ridden South African society can thus not expect a peaceful, crime-free scholastic environment. The schooling community is but a mini-community, mirroring the greater community within which it exists (Smith & Smith, 2006). Leoschut (2009) also corroborates this view and states that the scourge of violence in South African schools is a reflection of the broader society which is generally very violent. In addition, the view that the South African society is dangerous is also corroborated by articles which were published by *News24.com* (26 August, 2008 p.1) and the *Mail & Guardian* (5 February, 2008 p.8) respectively, which alleged school violence was “due to social, cultural and religious ills” and that South African schools were “...downright dangerous.” Viewed from a social disorganisation theory, the collapse of community values and morals where criminals and corruptors of society are valued and emulated is worrying. This trend suggests the reversal of human values of honesty, social justice and decency which are enshrined in the South African constitution. The use of violence to achieve whatever goals in society is also a cause for concern. The children observe and copy these behaviours and this propagates/reproduces the endless cycle of violence (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007).

In this thesis, the studied schools, to a large degree, faced similar challenges when it came to learner indiscipline and school violence. The main challenges found were the uses of drugs, bullying, fighting among learners, insolence, carrying of dangerous weapons at schools, the scourge of teenage pregnancy and a host of other forms of indiscipline/violence. The schools also understood that the sources of their problems were the community which they serviced, and therefore realised that, in order to succeed in reducing school violence and indiscipline, they needed to work together with other stake-holders such as social workers, members of the Community Policing Forums (CPFs), other community organisations, the local clinics and churches and this multi-pronged approach was thought to be likely to bear positive results than the do-it alone types of approaches.

6.2.2 The policies and structures schools have to resolve violence problems

The next question that was asked to all participants in the four case study schools was:

What are the policies and structures that schools have to resolve disciplinary/violence problems?

All the participants at the researched schools indicated that the schools have the Code of Conduct for Learners and Discipline Committees to resolve disciplinary problems. Each school principal even gave me a copy of their school's code of conduct for learners for my perusal. The school principals stated that, in line with the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA), all the stakeholders in the school community were involved in its crafting. The Code of Conduct policies for learners catered for all possible acts of misconduct by learners including fighting, stealing, carrying of weapons at school, cheating during tests and examinations and bullying (which seemed to be the biggest problem in all the researched schools). The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School said:

We have the Code of Conduct for learners which cover a lot of the other stuff, including bullying, racism, etc. I think it's sufficient to cover all aspects of misdemeanours. We've never had a separate anti-racism policy. We never really believed it was necessary. However, we do have a separate anti-bullying policy which is being put together as we speak.

(Principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

All the schools in the study were pro-active in that they had other special policies to deal with specific disciplinary problems such as bullying and racism. The chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School DSCC said:

We have a number of these policies. They are the code of conduct for learners, anti-bullying policy, anti-racism policy, the gender policy, etc.

(Chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School DSCC)

Similarly, the TLO of Sugar Estate Secondary School also said:

We have a Code of Conduct for Learners as well as an anti-bullying policy; obviously the Code of Conduct covers a lot of the other aspects of behaviour as well.

(The TLO of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The chairperson of the RCL at Thandimfundo Secondary School also confirmed that they have a Code of Conduct for learners at his school. He said:

Yes, we have a Code of Conduct for Learners in my school even though it was drawn before I joined this school.

(Chairperson of the RCL at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The findings suggest that some school governing bodies understood that in order to deal effectively with all kinds of disciplinary and violence related problems, they had to have problem-specific policies such as bullying and racism policies in place. It was noteworthy that three of the four researched schools were multi-racial yet two of them did not see the need to have separate detailed anti-racism policies at their schools. They claimed it was unnecessary as racism was dealt with sufficiently in their schools' Codes of Conduct for Learners. Further, what was a little disturbing though was that some principals in at least two of the multiracial schools researched did not want to admit that there were problems of racism in their schools even though their schools' names had been in the newspapers because of race related issues in the previous two years. They seemed to want to sweep the problem (of violence and racism) under the carpet and downplay their existence.

In contrast, the other third multi-racial school (Yellowwood Secondary School) initially did not deem it necessary to have problem-specific policies to deal with other categories of serious indiscipline/violence. The principal said, because of the steady increase of violence incidents at his school, there was a need to amend their Code of Conduct for learners and have a policy to have a detailed section on bullying but it appeared not to be a top priority for the school governing body. Perhaps they were in denial that this problem exists. A study by Khoza (2002) on schools as safe havens or sites of violence also found that generally, there was reluctance to engage with the problem of violence or even an attempt to minimise its extent in his study. Similarly, in my study, two of the three multiracial schools seemed to trivialise and downplay the extent of the racism problem in their schools, yet incidents narrated by learners seem to suggest overt or covert racism existed in some of these schools. In one of the three multiracial schools (where the school had anti-racism and anti-bullying policies), it was interesting that the participants in that school believed these structures were helpful to address violence problems. It was impossible to evaluate to what extent the presence of these structures would have on violence in these schools as they did not have them but one would be left to speculate.

Edwards (2008) also posits that schools need to promote humanising environments and encourage responsibility and a sense of community among all stakeholders instead of disciplinary measures that are coercive in nature and built as a means of social control, as these produce prison-like schools that remain unsafe. The inclusion of all stakeholders in the committees of the SGBs including the Discipline Committee, viewed from a democratic school governance theory, can be viewed as a means to encourage participation, inclusion and a sense of responsibility among SGB members. Whether they are willing or have the capacity to exercise the responsibilities that go with this form of participation is another question all together. Studies by Mncube (2005, 2010) seem to suggest that participation in school governance has positive benefits. In addition, the banning of corporal punishment and initiation practices at schools through sections 10 and 10A respectively of the SA School Act 84 of 1996 as amended, are another attempt to promote the humanising environments referred to above by Edwards (2008) in our schools which are a huge departure from the institutionalised violence that was the order of the day during apartheid. It is hoped that as these more humanising initiatives are entrenched in the schools and communities, the levels of violence will subside.

Further, all the participants indicated that they were aware that the Code of conduct for learners needed reviewing on a regular basis by the sub-committees responsible for that but indicated that this was not regularly done as envisaged in the legislation. The Chairperson the Discipline Committee of Thandimfundo Secondary School who was serving in the SGB for the second term said:

I am aware that the code of conduct should be reviewed regularly but this has not happened in the last five years that I have been here.

(Chairperson the Discipline Committee of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School also said:

The code of code is reviewed when the need arises. We haven't reviewed it in the last few years.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

A teacher participant at Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

The code of conduct was formulated years ago and is revised on an *ad hoc* basis. It is undergoing revision as we speak for implementation next year.

(Teacher from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The Teacher Liaison Officer of Burmanbush Secondary School said:

The advancement of technology requires the revision of the code of conduct. Learners are carrying cellular phones to school and our school's code of conduct for learners does not address this issue.

(Teacher Liaison Officer of Burmanbush Secondary School)

Another challenge facing Thandimfundo Secondary School was that their learners, especially the new ones, seemed not to be informed about the code of conduct and there was an urgent need to educate them on it. A participant teacher from this school remarked:

There is an area which needs immediate attention and that is most of the new learners don't know that code of conduct for learners. We have a serious challenge in that we educate our learners about the code of conduct but they quickly forget it. When a new learner is admitted to school, he/she is given a copy of the code of conduct but sometimes the majority doesn't even read it. So we have got a challenge of attempting to educate them on the content of the "code of conduct" as well.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The Chairperson of the Discipline Committee of Yellowwood Secondary School similarly said that there was an urgent need to review their code of conduct "*because offences have changed and some have intensified.*" All the principals unanimously agreed that as learner misconduct was on the increase, this necessitated a more vigorous and in-depth introspection of the level of offences, sanctions to be imposed and the procedures that are set out to rehabilitate learners. Regular reviews are necessary for any policy if it is to remain relevant as legislation is changed or amended regularly as well. This view is also corroborated by Glover, *et al.* (2000) and Joubert and Prinsloo (2009) who state that policies require periodic review and modification to remain relevant to the school and its students.

Learners were also in favour of the regular review of the code of conduct. This sentiment was also shared by educators of all the participant schools. Likewise, at Thandimfundo Secondary School, the teachers indicated that their code of conduct for learners needed a serious overhaul and therefore had been circulated to all stakeholders for their inputs. In addition, a parent member of the Discipline Committee at Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

This is the first time the school's code of conduct is reviewed in five years that I have served on the SGB at this school. When we attend workshops, the facilitators there remind us that the code should be revised regularly because every year the school admits new learners and new learners bring in new problems.

(Parent member of the DC at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The findings seem to suggest the majority of respondents acknowledge the dynamic nature of the acts of misconduct/violence in their schools necessitated the review of the codes of conduct for learners regularly but this was not always done as envisaged in the policy. The respondents, especially the parents, appeared not sure as to who should initiate the review process. Further, in line with democratic school governance principles, the South African School Act 84 of 1996 requires that all stakeholders should be represented in all the structures of the school, including the Discipline Committee, it was found that some principals deliberately did not include learners in this committee. Many reasons were advanced as to why they were not represented. The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School had the following to say:

They (the learners) won't have the time (for disciplinary meetings) and secondly they would fear that they will be targeted by the student population. They will be seen as if representing the school, so they could face problems of reprisals. I know that our Disciplinary Committee, including myself, having been threatened by the community time and time again. You can imagine if a learner was to be in the committee itself and the learner was partly responsible for a sanction. They will say now you were there and so they will target the child. I can imagine the child living in the community now will be living in fear. So that is not a very good thing at all.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

This poses a serious challenge to democratic participation at a school level when there is so much fear prevailing that it is even felt it is better not be represented in a structure as important as the discipline committee. The time when the discipline committee sits is important as this determines who attends and who does not. At the same time, the issue of safety is important. If the inclusion of the learners in the discipline committee compromises the safety of learners, this call for forward thinking on the part of the school governing body to know what works and what does not in their particular context.

The schools in this study also realised that in order to deal with violence, it was not sufficient to have only the code of conduct for learners. They had to go beyond that and have violence-specific policies such as anti-bullying policies, anti-racism policies, etc. even though some were slow to finalise them. It was encouraging that all four case study schools had codes of conduct and that some were in the process of reviewing them to accommodate the new indiscipline challenges they were facing. For instance, when SASA was introduced in 1996, there were no

problems of cell phones at schools as they are now. Cyber-bullying, where cell phones are used as a tool to bully other learners was unknown at the time. It was, however, disheartening to note that the some principals in at least two of the multiracial schools did not openly admit there were racism problems among their learners and wanted to sweep this under the carpet. Similarly, some of these principals seemed to pay lip service to learner representation in the structures of the governing body such as the Discipline committee. This finding is consistent with the finding by Mabovula (2009) in her study on giving voice to the voiceless through deliberative democracy. Mabovula's study found that the voice of the learners in the SGBs was limited. Similarly, Mncube and Harber (2009) also found similar sentiments among various governors with regard to the participation of learners in SGB structures.

6.2.3 The contents of the Code of Conduct for Learners

The next question that was asked to all participants in the four case study schools was:

What are the contents of the Code of Conduct for Learners and its viability in the four researched schools?

As indicated in the preceding chapter, I was also given access to school documents such as the code of conduct for learners; some discipline records of learners; the minutes of the school discipline committee and other related documents in all the researched schools. All the Codes of Conduct for learners were modelled on the exemplar provided by the provincial Department of Education. Generally, the code contained four sections even though there were variations especially at Burmanbush Secondary School: Section One provided the preamble to the document; it also outlined the school vision and mission statement and gave a preamble to the code, outlining the aims of the code. Section Two covered general issues such as arrival and departure times, assembly, commencement of the school programme, movement of learners, use of toilets, attitude to property and equipment and learners academic responsibilities. Section Three outlined learner conduct with regards to the attitude and behaviour of learners in all aspects of school life such as respect for all, general rules, extra and co-curricular activities, administrative matters, appearance and uniform, grievance resolutions and procedures. Section Four outlined the disciplinary procedures for learners. In this section the four levels of the acts of misconduct were outlined. Level One dealt with minor acts of misconduct in the classroom.

Level Two was listed as ‘serious’ misconduct – breaking of school rules. Level Three dealt with ‘very serious’ acts of misconduct and Level Four consisted of ‘extremely serious’ (criminal) misconduct which warranted suspensions and possible expulsion. The violations were listed under each level. The significance of the contents of the code of conduct for learners became important when learners had to be taught and clarified of their rights as well as responsibilities with regards to behaviour and peacefully co-existence at schools. These documents were made available to learners and parents and this eliminated any ambiguities in terms of understandings and interpretations.

It was noted though that the researched schools were not uniform in the manner they issued and disseminated the information from the code of conduct to the learners and parents. The Code of Conduct for learners was written in English, the official medium of instruction at the four researched schools. It was also noted that the vast majority of learners at the schools were black, African learners who come from the surrounding townships of Kwa-Mashu, Newlands and Inanda, Clermont, Hammarsdale, KwaNdengezi and other African townships around Pinetown. Learners at three of the four schools that were sampled indicated during the interviews that the Code of Conduct in their schools was not a user friendly document because it was written only in English. While they (learners) generally understood the contents of the Code of Conduct, many of their parents who are predominantly IsiZulu speaking did not fully comprehend the issues outlined in the document and were therefore not in a position to reinforce the contents of the Code of Conduct at home as they did not fully comprehend them.

In addition, the code of conduct was made available to learners on the day of admission into the school. Parents and learners were required to sign the acknowledgement of the code of conduct annually when the process of re-admission was done. It also emerged during the interviews with learners and educators that not all learners returned the acknowledgement slips to their classroom teachers and this created problems later. The return rate of the acknowledgment slips varied from class to class. This factor compounded the disciplinary process as learners and parents could declare that they were not sufficiently informed about the rules that the learners had to abide by. An educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School stated that:

Learners are given a copy of the code of conduct on admission. Parents must sign the acknowledgement slip and return it to school. Not everyone acknowledges receipt of the code of conduct for learners.

(Educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Furthermore, the document was not explained in its entirety to the learners or parents at two schools (Thandimfundo Secondary and Burmanbush Secondary Schools). Parents were given the policy document and were expected to read and unpack the different sections on their own. Learners were exposed to the document *via* talks during morning assemblies or in class. At no stage was there any indication that the document had been fully explained to the learners by any school authorities. A learner from Burmanbush Secondary School said:

The code of conduct is given to us at the beginning of the year. Our parents had to sign for it. Educators only talk to us about discipline when learners misbehave.

(A learner from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Offences such as ‘possession, sale or use of alcohol or being under the influence of alcohol’ and ‘possession or use of narcotic substances or being under the influence of such substances’ were categorised as level two offences requiring minimal punishment such as verbal warnings, detention, engaging in disciplinary talks and summoning of parents to discuss the misconduct.

The official records perused indicated that these offences were on the increase and bordered on the verge of criminality and therefore should be classified as a level 3 offences requiring stricter sanctions. This document did not adequately cover the issue of learners bullying other learners. Learners indicated that bullying of younger and smaller learners was on the increase and this led to fights. A learner from Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

The older and bigger learners bully the younger ones and those they feel don’t fit in and these lead to fights. The children who are being bullied bring their relatives to deal with the bullies.

(A learner from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The Code of conduct document from Thandimfundo Secondary School was comprehensive (it had twelve pages) and could not be deemed as being user friendly. It did not have a cover page. It could be mistaken for a set of learner notes. An important document such as the Code of Conduct for learners must make an impact when given to learners and parents. The appearance and format of the document must indicate that is an important document that is going to have serious consequences if not abided by. In the formulation of the policy, it must be kept in mind that this document is also going to parents who, in some cases, have a limited grasp of the

English language (as indicated by one of the learners who were interviewed). The language used must be simple yet effective. The training manuals on School Discipline and Learner Behaviour Policies (2007) state that the schools' Code of Conduct policy should be so easy to explain to pupils of any age ability; should provide a healthy balance between rewards and sanctions and promote positive behaviour. In all the participant schools, the code of conduct for learners was explained and issued to all new learners at registration. In this regard, the principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

The Code of Conduct for Learners is issued to the learners and parents when the admission is complete and is attached to the admission forms which are managed by the admission officer who is an educator in charge. The educator goes through the school's "Code of Conduct" with each learner as they bring the application forms in. The interview process for each learner, as one of the fundamental aspects of the admission, encompasses going through the code of conduct for learners and the parents accept that before the child is admitted to the school. Both the learner and the parent then have to sign as proof that they have been explained the code of conduct for the learners.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

In the Code of Conduct for learners of Burmanbush Secondary School, sections One to Three referred to the learner's relationship with the school, his/her peers and other stakeholders. The code of conduct is found on page two - titled 'Conduct'. Section Four outlined what constitutes misconduct. Section Five to Six refers to the school's dress code. Section seven and eight discussed general issues and sports code behaviour. This was followed by two other sections which were not numbered - 'The legal authority for the control and discipline of learners' and 'Rights and Responsibilities of Learners/Educators/Parents'. The Disciplinary Rules and Regulations which outlined the way learners were to conduct themselves with the various stakeholders, were then outlined. This was followed by an extract of chapter two, page four from SASA which dealt with compulsory school attendance. Section Nine was labelled 'Accountability' and outlined the discipline procedures to be followed for some of the offences. A total of 23 offences were listed and against each one, the sanctions were listed. The offences were not graded into the different levels.

The Code of Conduct of Yellowwood Secondary School was also issued on enrolment and learners and parents had to sign acknowledgement of the said document. On an annual basis, learners and parents acknowledge possession of the code of conduct by signing documents to that effect which must be returned to the school for filing. There was no evidence to support that this document was discussed in its entirety with the learners or parents. Learners did allude to educators talking to them about discipline and behaviour whenever an incident occurred. It was surprising to note that one school governor had indicated that he had never seen the document. A parent governor (who was a participant in the study) from Yellowwood Secondary School stated that:

I haven't seen a copy of the document that was given to my child. I have not signed any acknowledgement slip. We didn't have any meetings for the code of conduct but I'm sure my child must have handed the slip back to the school.

(A parent governor from Yellowwood Secondary School)

Before a code of conduct is implemented, it must be clearly communicated to all learners and parents (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). From the responses of the interviewed participants, it can be concluded that schools were not clearly communicating and informing parents about the contents and procedures contained in the code of conduct for learners when it is given to them. Joubert and Prinsloo (2009) and Mestry and Khumalo (2012) list the following procedures to be considered in the formulation of the code of conduct for learners: Specific attention should be paid to the structure and content of the code of conduct to make it a document that encourages all role players to be positively involved in school activities, proactively combating all forms of minor or more serious offences; the language and terminology should make it accessible to all learners at whatever level, including younger learners; before the code of conduct is implemented, it must be communicated to all learners, educators and parents by means of rules, policy and procedures .

As indicated earlier, I was also given access to disciplinary documents at three schools of the four schools. These documents were analysed utilising the schooling as social reproduction and social control theories already discussed in Chapter Three. Among the many things that the documents revealed was that learners who were to appear before the disciplinary committees of the schools concerned were given written notices which were addressed to the learner's parents. During the interviews with the principals and teacher governors, it was noted that the some

learners did not deliver these notices to their parents. This was evident by many forms not being signed by the parents. So, from a participation point of view (which is one of the pillars of democratic participation in the decision making process), parents were already disadvantaged. The school used other means to contact the parents such as telephone calls or dropping letters off at the learner's home by members of the SGB (where learners' homes were known). This was not the case for learners that lived in the areas far from the school. The only means of communication was by telephone. In some cases it was noted that the learner's parents could not be informed and the process was concluded without the parents being present. It is unclear whether the parents were ever notified of the learner's misconduct and the subsequent sanction imposed thereafter. Poor communication also led to the disciplinary hearings taking place without following prescribed procedures of just administrative action (action/s taken that they are lawful; reasonable and procedural fairness) which is based on the fundamental principles of law (Shaba, 1998 & 2003). The individual's right to a fair and reasonable hearing is further endorsed in Section 33 of the Bill of Rights, as included in the Constitution. A notice about the hearing must be delivered in writing to the parents and learner, five workdays before the hearing. The notice must include information about the alleged offence, as well as information about the time, place and date of the hearing. The learner who has been accused must be given the opportunity to present his/her side of the matter and to call witnesses.

From perusal of the documents, it was noted in many of the recent cases that the rule of giving the learner and parents a minimum of five days written notice of the date, time and venue of the disciplinary hearing was not adhered to. Regulations also state that the SGB must formally appoint two people to serve on the Tribunal. Thandimfundo Secondary School had an SGB Chairperson who dealt with all disciplinary issues that were referred to the Tribunal on his own. There were no recordings of the Tribunal process. The regulations state that the school must make arrangements for the word-for-word recording of the proceedings. The only records that are on file are the notice of the Tribunal, and the outcome of the Tribunal, which were a verbal warning, written warning, final written warning or suspension. There were no cases that were referred to the Department for recommendation for expulsion. There was no evidence that minutes of the process were taken and recorded. Failure to comply with Departmental

regulations and procedures when holding tribunals could be analysed and interpreted to mean acts of omission on the part of schools which, in most cases, was to the detriment of the learners.

Documents further corroborated findings from the interviews in terms of common acts of misconduct by learners such as fighting among learners, possession of dagga, theft, bunking and the carrying and use of cellular phones at school. There were two files that were kept: A discipline file and a Tribunal file. Most learners were dealt with by the school and a record of the sanction was kept in the discipline file. Serious cases were referred to the Tribunal for consideration. In some cases, there were no records of the letters issued to parents informing them that the learner had transgressed the school rules and had to appear before a Tribunal. It would appear that the school did not keep a copy of the letter that was given to the parent. There were no measures in place to ascertain whether the parent received the letter. Adequate five days written notice of the time, date and venue of the disciplinary hearing was not adhered to at all times. Tribunal meetings were conducted during the school week and during the school day. In most cases, the parents were present. Educators and learners who witnessed the offence were required to compile a report on the incident. There was no evidence attached to the case which outlined the learner's profile in terms of his/her disciplinary record at the school for the Tribunal to make a more informed decision about the learner's sanction.

There was only one instance of detailed minutes being kept which dates back to 2009 where there was a recommendation for the expulsion of the learner for carrying a dangerous weapon to school and attempting to stab another learner. This entailed the comprehensive filling in of documents, providing detailed evidence by the school and the acknowledgement by all the relevant education authorities. The recommendation was granted and the learner was expelled from the school. There was no evidence of arrangements made for the continuation of the learner's education by either another school or the Department of Education.

Permission was also obtained to conduct observations at the four schools which took place on a number of occasions. Late coming was a common problem at all the four schools. I was present one morning with the principal and some members of the School Management Team of Thandimfundo Secondary School who were monitoring late coming when a learner arrived late

and was clearly smelling of dagga. The learner was reeking of dagga and when questioned he responded that some passengers on the bus were smoking and that was how the smell got on to him.

At certain areas there was a stench of urine and this brought to mind what some governors had said about learners urinating wherever they felt like. At Thandimfundo and Sugar Estate schools, during teaching time, there seemed to be a lot of learners loitering around. This could be attributed to educator absenteeism or educators being called to workshops on a school day. Learners were left on the grounds without supervision. Prinsloo (2005) and Shaba (2003) state that educators as persons *in loco-parentis* are vested with special status that empowers them to act authoritatively over learners in terms of the law. Not only do they have both delegated powers (delegated by the principal of the school to act on his or her behalf) and original powers (powers originating in the common law) of authority over learners on the school grounds and during the normal school session, but (in terms of the common law) they are also granted authority over the learners during extramural activities on or away from the school grounds.

Observations at Thandimfundo and Burmanbush Secondary schools showed that the schools were well maintained though there were a few broken window panes in some classrooms and the toilets. There were also odd instances of graffiti on the toilet walls. This was an indication that some learners do not respect the property of the school and have seen it fit to deface the walls. I also noticed some educators on duty during the break but the learners were not confined to specific areas and were allowed to wander freely amongst the blocks. Learners were generally neatly attired and respectful but I witnessed the odd cases of learners not adhering to the dress code especially at Thandimfundo. Generally the four schools looked safe and neat. A safe school is therefore a healthy school in that it is physically and psychologically safe. Indicators of safe schools include the presence of certain physical features such as secure walls, fencing and gates; buildings that are in a good state of repair; and well-maintained school grounds. Safe schools are further characterised by good discipline, a culture conducive to teaching and learning (Prinsloo, 2005).

In conclusion, it was interesting that all the researched schools had the Code of Conduct for Learners yet the challenges of serious indiscipline and violence prevailed. This could partly be caused by inconsistent application of the code by all at the school level. Mestry and Khumalo (2012) posit that learner discipline should not only be measured against a well-drafted code of conduct for learners, but to a greater extent against the proper implementation thereof. Since the enforcement of the code of conduct is a delegated task, it is important that the school management team, educators, the learner leaders (especially at secondary schools) and the discipline committee proactively work together to stop indiscipline and violence.

6.2.4 The challenges SGBs experience in implementing the Code of Conduct for learners

The next question asked to all participants in the four schools was:

What are the challenges experienced by SGBs in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Learners?

The participants in all four researched schools indicated that they faced many challenges in implementing the code of conduct. These include: the non-availability of governors for SGB and disciplinary committee meetings; lack of parental support and involvement in what schools do; some parents appear to have abdicated their responsibility of their children's education; misbehaviour at school; difficulty in imposing sanctions such as community service and detention due to lack of human resource to monitor. Learner transport arrangements and safety concerns also make it difficult to impose detention as a form of punishment. A large population of learners in all the researched schools lived outside the areas where they attended school; therefore detention would compromise their safety and thus exposing schools to liability if anything was to occur to them on their way home after detention.

The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School faced similar challenges but added that the school notes the Department of Education's intention of restorative justice which is meant to rehabilitate learners. The principal stated that:

There has to be someone on site to deal specifically with the cases of discipline and to track the progress of the learner's rehabilitation process. Schools do not have the capacity to do this due to the stringent measures applied in the

application of the post provision norms (PPN) which stipulates how many teachers a school may have based on the total learner enrolment.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

The school was aware of the mandate of the Department of Education but the challenge it was faced with was in the implementation of the process. Schools were grossly understaffed. The Discipline Committee Chairperson and the principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School experienced the following challenges in the implementation of the disciplinary process: lack of parental support (those who were members of the committee) to manage the tribunal process, therefore it was generally a '*one man show*' where he (the Discipline Chairperson) had to do most of the work on his own; parents who lacked interest in their negligent children and so did not attend tribunal meetings when they were invited to do so or a discipline policy perceived as too lenient.

I wish corporal punishment could be brought back; incidents of misconduct have increased and the nature of offences are evolving into serious criminal issues such as substance abuse, selling and distribution of drugs, robbery and violence. Schools are not coping.

(The Discipline Committee Chairperson of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The seriousness of the offences committed by learners has increased drastically. Some of the learners' conduct borders on criminal behaviour. The Disciplinary Committee Chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School also said that:

The support from Department of Education is lacking. The Department does not provide parent members with sufficient training to deal with discipline issues. The school (Principal and Deputy) conducts workshops with governors on an adhoc basis and training manuals on school governance are made available to governors. The Department of Education must engage schools more frequently on learner indiscipline and empower all stakeholders in the management of the discipline process.

(The Disciplinary Committee Chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

School disciplinary chairpersons believe that the challenges they face with learner discipline are further compounded by the lack of Departmental support. Mncube (2010) contends that the lack of parents' interest in participation in SGBs might be due to their lack of familiarity with the contents of South African Schools Education Policies, namely the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Educators at Sugar Estate Secondary School believe that the social problems of learners have a bearing on the conduct of learners at schools. One educator from this school commented that:

A vast number of learners come from single parent households where discipline is lacking. Parents are unable to discipline learners at home and look to the school to instil discipline at school level. Parents have abdicated their responsibility of their children's discipline. We need to remember that school is an extension of society and we are experiencing the same social evils (crime) that plague society such as substance abuse, theft and violence.

(Educator from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The learner's home environment and upbringing dictates how the learner conducts him/herself at school. Educators should have knowledge of the learner's background which would assist when dealing with the learner. Educators need to acknowledge that the school is an institution of the broader society and that the effects of society can sometimes be reflected in the learner's behaviour and attitude. Joubert, Waal & Roussouw (2004) confirm that it is imperative that all school principals, educators and school governing bodies bear in mind the contextual factors prevalent in their communities in fulfilling their moral obligation and functions as stipulated in SASA. Another educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School stated that:

Disciplinary tribunals have no impact on the rehabilitation of the learner's behaviour. The process is not taken seriously; learners have a serious negative attitude and do not respect the school's code of conduct.

(Educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Educators need to assert their authority as the masters of their classrooms and as custodians of the school. The manner in which the educator communicates with the learner is important. The school must not be seen to be dictating to the learners but rather incorporating them into managing the process. A senior educator and a member of the Discipline Committee at Thandimfundo Secondary School who has been serving on governance structures for a number of years indicated that:

There is no problem with the policy, it's the implementation of the policy that is the problem and that if all stakeholders took ownership of the policy then it would work. Procedurally, the process gets held up along the way due to human resource issues and falls apart. Everyone's level of management and authority is different and learners know with which educators they can take advantage of.

(An educator and a member of the DC at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Systems that are drawn up by the school must be simple yet effective. The school must take into account all the other activities it is required to do. The channels of communication for disciplinary cases must be clearly defined. All stakeholders must be made aware of this protocol and each must be aware of their function before they could send it on to the next level. The

recording of offences must follow a simple yet comprehensive format. All details must be stipulated and the case should be recorded to track the number of times the learners are involved in disciplinary issues.

Educators also report that some learners resort to bullying and intimidating younger and female educators. Educators who lack capacity should be mentored by senior educators and by those who have good control over their classes. Educators have to be well prepared when they enter the class so that learners are aware that specific tasks have to be completed. Learners who show blatant disrespect for educators must be severely dealt with using the procedures set out within the code but the underlying cause for the learner's disrespect has to be investigated. Mncube (2005) indicates that schools should strive to achieve school-community relations and curriculum development programmes which will allow for all stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the school and thus take responsibility for what is happening at the school.

Educators from Thandimfundo Secondary School indicated that there was a breakdown in communication between the parents and their school. The teachers were of the view that the majority of parents do not take an active interest in the education of their children and this is evident by the turnout at parents meeting or parents not coming to school when called, for discipline issues. It would seem as if parents have abdicated their responsibility of their children's education and behaviour to the school. This is corroborated by McGrath (2005) who states that a significant number of schools that focused on working with parents reported that they had found it difficult to engage parents in behaviour management education, activities and policy making. Research by Roberts, Hanvey and Varga-Toth (2003) also found that parents need to become more aware of the everyday problems in their children's lives, including general violence and bullying. If parents do not understand the seriousness and extent of the problem, they cannot help their children to respond appropriately.

Another educator in the same school (Thandimfundo Secondary) reflected that:

Parents rely too much on educators to guide and lead the process when it is the duty of the Department of Education to capacitate parents to fulfil their role function. The Department wants to retain delinquent learners at schools but don't

provide firm guidelines to deal with repeat offenders and thus educators are burdened with the learner who is continuously disruptive.

(An educator from Thandimfundo Secondary)

The problem of lack of training of SGBs was also highlighted by another teacher from the focus group at Sugar Estate Secondary School who said the following:

First of all, they need to be trained. They need to know how to handle things like family and community problems. They need to understand the dangers of drugs and drug addiction. They need to understand family violence, the origin of the problem, why these problems arise and how they can help the school in solving these problems. So a major educational process of training has to take place for all SGBs at the present moment. The Department of Education undertakes training of SGBs to conduct elections and it ends there, but they are not given any kind of training or support mechanism by which they can resort to as governing body.

(Teacher from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

In addition, this teacher also said:

Secondly, I think if you are a chairperson of governing body you need to be remunerated or compensated somehow because they are ordinary parents. They have their own work environment to worry about. Now they are expected to leave all that and worry about school problems. That's why many of them don't want to participate in school governing body activities because the responsibility is too high. So, remuneration, training and support are just a few examples to motivate them to participate. I think creating governing bodies has not done us a favour but actually, it has created more problems and resentment between parent governors and educators which may be traced back to the lack of training.

(Teacher from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Wolhuter, Lemmer & De Wet (2007) state that professional knowledge is indispensable to the functioning of schools and forms the basis of the professional autonomy of teachers. If lay persons on governing bodies are to fulfil the task with which they are charged, they need to acquire some professional knowledge themselves; otherwise the bureaucratic professionals will not only retain their power but extend it. Although most school governors work hard to extend their knowledge of relevant educational issues, they do not constitute an expert body on what are often delicate and technical matters. Many governments recognise this and provide additional training for school governors.

Section 19 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 mandates provincial governments in South Africa to provide training for governing bodies. However, most provincial departments claim not to have the resources to do so, which makes it extremely difficult for the provinces to provide adequate training for school governing body members. This threatens to defeat the aims

of governing bodies as it is unlikely that governing body members can make informed judgements without adequate training (Wolhuter, Lemmer & De Wet, 2007). The empowering of parents is primarily the role of the Department. It has been noted that there is a serious shortcoming on the part of the Department to capacitate parents. Schools should take it upon themselves and not wait for the Department to empower parents (Mthiyane, 2006). This would benefit the school as these stakeholders are involved in important decision making processes. The educators from Thandimfundo Secondary School also reported that:

It becomes the duty of educators to do all the spade work such as disciplining learners, compiling reports on learner misconduct, sending communication to parents, following up on communication which is rarely given to parents (by their children), telephoning parents to report on learner's misconduct and checking availability of SGB members for disciplinary hearings.

(Educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Communicating with parents of learners that are required to appear before a disciplinary tribunal is a big challenge to the schools. These teachers further said:

The learners do not give the notice of the tribunal meetings to their parents. Schools have to resort to phoning parents and hand-delivering the notices. Telephone numbers sometimes are not working or false and learners give incorrect addresses. This process is time consuming and impacts on the educator's core function which is teaching. The sad part is that some learners are repeating offenders who do not fear serious disciplinary measures being meted out to them.

(Educator from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Educators were also frustrated by the fact that the sanction of suspension was perceived too lenient and most learners viewed suspension as a 'holiday' from school. The majority of the school principals in this study also felt that sanctions such as learner-detention were ineffective and counterproductive. If a learner was detained, this meant the teacher has to remain at school as well to enforce the sanction. The teachers did not take kindly to that as it interfered with their time, especially in the afternoon. Educators also pointed out the tedious process they had to follow in order for the disciplinary process to unfold. It would be unreasonable and not practical to expect working parents (those who are SGB members) to fulfil that function. Wolhuter, Lemmer & De Wet (2007) say that in many instances, parents and educators must also contend with other demands on their time. In many families both parents work outside the home, making it difficult, if not impossible, to attend to school meetings. Single parents may find it extremely difficult to meet with educators due to work and other obligations.

Educators also report that it is difficult to get qualified parents to serve on SGBs and schools have to therefore accept the services of parents who volunteer or if there are any, they would be lowly educated which also poses huge challenges. In most townships and rural areas, educated parents have moved their children to former white schools and township schools are left with those learners whose parents cannot afford the fees and other expenses charged there. Most parents lack the capacity to deal with some of the issues involved in the disciplinary process. This has an impact on the depth of quality in their involvement and most look to educators for guidance. This leads to the process being compromised as the educators are generally involved in presenting the cases against the learners.

In addition, parent governors of Thandimfundo Secondary School were of the opinion that some educators were not setting a good example for learners to emulate. Some educators did not dress appropriately, used cellular phones in classrooms, did not report to classes on time and had high absentee rate. These factors, in the eyes of the parent governors, did not contribute to setting a good example for learners to follow. Parents were also of the opinion that educators were not uniformly applying the code of conduct. A parent member of the Discipline Committee at Sugar Estate Secondary School asked:

How is it possible that there are learners on the school premises who contravene the school's dress code? Why this learner was not dealt with by his or her form/grade teacher and the applicable sanction applied? It is important for the school to be uniform in the application of the policy. Educators who are not complying with its application should be dealt with or mentored.

(A parent member of the DC at Sugar Estate Secondary School)

However, another seasoned SGB parent member at Burmanbush Secondary School indicated that random searches were conducted at their school but these were counterproductive because:

These searches yield very little results. Some educators keep the learner's cellular phones during raids due to feeling sorry for them. This contributes to an increase in disciplinary issues because learners are well aware of methods to overcoming procedures set in motion by the school and some stakeholders are not responsible in the implementation of the process. Some teachers sympathise with the perpetrators.

(A parent member at Burmanbush Secondary School)

The principals of Burmanbush, Sugar Estate and Thandimfundo also confirmed this and felt that those teachers who compromise the process must face sanction for defeating the hands of justice. The school should not be seen to be showing favours to any individual in carrying out its role

function. Backman and Trafford (2006) acknowledge that children don't do as we tell them to do, but they do as we do. The example that the educators set is vitally important (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). Therefore learners and other members of the school community must be given influence and learn the responsibility of true participation and endorse a sense of belonging to the school and the community.

In two of the four researched schools, it was also found that some parent governors were fairly new in their positions and highlighted the fact that no capacity building programmes had been conducted by the Department of Education to capacitate them to handle disciplinary procedures. Mthiyane (2006) also states that it is asking too much to expect SGB members to perform their duties effectively if they are not inducted and trained properly and timeously of their governance roles. Some parent members gave credit to the school management especially the principals for assisting them in their duties. Mncube (2008) also affirms that in practice, parent governors are not participating fully in governance matters due to the lack of the necessary skills to perform the duties assigned to them. In such instances the principal and educators perform the functions that were supposed to be the responsibility of the SGBs.

It was also evident from the learner's responses that the RCL of Sugar Estate Secondary School plays little or no role in the implementation of the code of conduct at the school. Learners indicated that very few meetings were held for them to raise concerns of learners. RCLs were not allowed to call up meetings of their peers without the TLO being present. Further, RCLs were not fully capacitated to fulfil their role functions. Learners believed that they can make a positive contribution but were not given the opportunity or the platform to do so. Some learners believed that they are generally coerced into behaving well, when it should be inculcated in them as a way of life. Backman and Trafford (2006) outline that learners are given trust by the school authorities become more responsible. Rules are necessary, but a ruling based on trust is far more sustainable than ruling by threats. Pepler and Craig (2000) emphasize the importance of involving learners in the early stages of developing a policy. When learners feel they have contributed to the policy, they feel empowered to respect and implement it (Pellegrini, 2002). Some educators and parent members are not very good role models to emulate. A learner, who was the member of the Burmanbush Secondary School RCL, felt that educators were taking far

too much time to discipline delinquent learners and was therefore short-changing them in respect of teaching activities. This learner said:

The teachers' time is taken to deal with the children who misbehave and we are disadvantaged. We are then given the work with no explanation. This makes it very difficult for us because educators pile us with work to cover up for the time lost.

(An RCL member from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Likewise, learners at Sugar Estate Secondary School were also in agreement that many learners engaged in delinquent behaviour due to peer pressure and the need to fit in.

Other learners misbehave to please their friends or to want acceptance from them. The other day, one small boy was being ill-treated in the schools toilets and all the other friends took part even though, later (when a disciplinary committee sat to try them), it emerged that others in the group did it in fear of being isolated or being victimised by the other members of the group.

(Learner from Sugar Estate Secondary School)

RCLs were not involved in discipline issues and were not party to any decision taken by school disciplinary committee. Learners believed that far too much of the educator's time was taken up to discipline learners and very little time is spent on teaching the concepts of the required lesson. Learners were then given the activity without the full benefit of the lesson. Public Agenda (2004) states that educators admit that their teaching would be more effective if they did not have to spend so much time dealing with discipline issues. It is vital that educators manage the process of discipline with as little disruption to class time as possible. In this regard, well-resourced schools were employing school discipline officers to deal with discipline issues to relieve teachers with this burden. Unfortunately, poorly resourced schools in disadvantaged schools do not have the financial means to do this and teachers have no choice but to continue managing discipline issues thus impacting negatively on their teaching time. Coetzee, Van Niekerk and Wydeman (2008) point out that discipline has nothing to do with controlling disruptive or other unacceptable bad behaviour but has everything to do with ensuring a safe and valuing environment. It would be deemed as gross negligence if educators fail to carry out their core function of teaching.

To conclude this section, the findings indicate that the school governing bodies faced a plethora of challenges in the implementation of the code of conduct for learners. These ranged from non-availability of parent governors to SGB or Discipline Committee meetings, lack of parental

support and some teachers were also accused of being lax in implementing discipline as well as difficulties in imposing sanctions such learner detention because of safety in the afternoon when a learner has served his or her detention. The participants in the study also lamented poor or limited support from the provincial Department of Education. Precarious as the situation is, the schools are not sitting on their laurels but are involved in various initiatives to remedy the situation.

6.2.5 How school governing bodies resolve violence/indiscipline problems

The next question that was asked to all participants in the four case schools was:

How do school governing bodies resolve violence/indiscipline problems at your schools?

The majority of the participants indicated that indiscipline problems were first dealt with by the teachers in the classrooms and only very serious cases were brought before the deputy principal or principal of the school. If the matter was so serious that it warranted suspension or possible expulsion, it was then referred to the discipline committee. The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School indicated that the learners were counselled on a regular basis to try and modify their behaviour. Counselling was done, depending on the situation, in groups and on one-on-one by the Life Orientation teachers and others within the school as well as by social workers that were invited to schools from time to time. The principal further indicated that he preferred to speak to the learners on a one-on-one basis because he felt he could rehabilitate the bad behaviour on some of them and also this allowed him to get to the crux of the learner's problem. He also indicated, however, that this strategy was not possible on a regular basis due to the heavy workload that principals of secondary schools have to carry out. Learners were also spoken to at assemblies in the morning. The school also drafted a policy on class protocol which every educator had to implement to ensure compliance with the code of conduct. This principal also showed concern for pupil discipline which he felt needed to be corrective rather than punitive. He said:

There is a problem with sanctions that are basically punitive in nature. Now punitive action, as I said, is not a corrective action, it is just a preventative action and as a result, I have noticed that it never stops children from fighting with each other and it doesn't discourage drug taking. It is just that it passes on to somebody else. So in other words, the issue of ill-discipline continues may be with other learners. You have got to introduce the therapeutic measure into the discipline

system. Now that is the difficult part. The therapeutic aspect will cure the learner of the criminal nature so he won't perform the misconduct again.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The participants of both Burmanbush Secondary School and Thandimfundo Secondary School also pointed out that many counselling sessions were scheduled for learners who were repeat offenders. Counselling was conducted by the principal, management members and other educators, especially Life Orientation educators. The school had taken this process a step further by appointing one educator to deal specifically with learners who were presenting behavioural problems.

Similarly, the principal of Yellowwood Secondary School strongly stated that generally, secondary schools were faced with huge problems of parent apathy which the schools were struggling to deal with. Van Wyk (2010), Van Wyk and Lemmer (2009) and de Wet (2007) state that involving families in schools has become a major goal of education professionals. However, in most cases, collaboration among the home, the school and the community remains a distant reality due to many factors that limit or impede parent involvement such as parent's limited knowledge and experience of what is required of them; time constraints of working parents; cultural and social barriers and un-educated parents and caregivers. Schools have a core of parents that comply and support them but they were in the minority. Smith (2000) states that the main goal of involving parents is to improve the lines of communication between the school and parents as well as to secure their support for the school's policy on discipline. The school has to engage in methods such as sending circulars to inform parents about school activities, telephone calls to parents, sending messages through learners, relatives or neighbours and even conducting home visits. The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School also said the following with regard to parent apathy:

It is a social ill of society that reaches far deeper than meets the eye. Some parents don't care. They see schools as some dumping grounds for their children. In some case substance abuse amongst our parents is rife; learners come from broken homes where the structure of discipline is non-existent.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

These factors were uncovered during home visits of learners by educators and parent members of the SGB. McGrath (2006) emphasises that schools should work in partnership with parents in

finding positive ways to engage them in Safe School initiatives; keeping them informed and encouraging them to model pro-social attitudes and behaviour for their children.

The principal of Thandimfundo Secondary School indicated that some learners tend to bunk classes due to the learning disabilities that they may have. He said:

Many learners are coming through the system without the basic skills of reading and struggle to cope with their work. They tend to either bunk classes or become disruptive during the lessons. I have introduced a reading programme to help learners, but some of the learners, who are really in need of help, do not turn up for these classes.

(The principal of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Many learners abscond from classes due to their incapacity and fear of being laughed at by other learners. Joubert, Waal and Roussouw (2004) point out those learners who tend to misbehave, perform poorly in school and tend to absent themselves frequently.

Further, the Discipline Committee Chairperson of Sugar Estate Secondary School strongly intimated that the school was fighting a losing battle with learner misbehaviour. This statement mainly emanated from the fact that parent support was lacking and that many parents had abdicated their responsibility of discipline of learners to the school. Some parents play no part or shown no interest whatsoever in the way their children conducted themselves at school. The Chairperson of the Discipline Committee of Burmanbush Secondary School also echoed the same sentiments with regards to the lack of parental involvement at secondary schools. He suggested that:

Schools must form ward or local support teams to help SGBs with issues pertaining to learner discipline problems.

(The Chairperson of the DC of Burmanbush Secondary School)

The educators from Yellowwood Secondary School stated that the school conducted regular staff development workshops to rectify problem areas that have been identified. Mentorship programmes were put in place for educators who were experiencing problems. The school communicated with the parents via letters, telephone calls, bulk message system and home visits. Educators mentor learners on the value of education. This is only done when time permits as educators have a structured programme to follow due to syllabus requirements.

Educators from Burmanbush Secondary School also referred to staff development meeting as a means to discuss challenges they were experiencing and ways to overcome these challenges. But they were adamant that the Department of Education had to enact regulations which would force parents to play a more active part in their children's education. These calls are indications of the frustration that educators experience with the lack of parental involvement. Steers (2010) state that all schools in the United Kingdom are required to have home-school agreements which place emphasis on learner behaviour and the role of the parents in working with the school to support and maintain good standards of discipline.

The SGB Chairperson of Sugar Estate Secondary School called for educators to be more vigilant and visible. He said that:

The Principal's office should be in the block which is visible to the entire school so that he/she can monitor what is happening.

(The SGB Chairperson of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Another parent governor from the same school supported this view and stated that:

If not the Principal, then the other members of the Management team should do the monitoring of the school.

(Parent governor of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

This request stems from the perception of parents that some educators were not fulfilling their obligations in the implementation of the code of conduct; that some educators are poor role models for learners to emulate. The continued presence of the Principal or Management members will give some level of authority for a more vigilant enforcement of the school rules by educators.

The SGBs in all the researched schools were also appealing to parents to get more involved in school activities. Parent members were also targeting parents of learners who have the expertise from the financial sector, security companies and SAPS and government employees to visit schools to motivate learners to stay away from crime. It was envisaged that the invited people would provide more authority, legitimacy and strengthen the messages given by the SGBs and teachers. Schools also invited people with legal expertise to assist disciplinary committees in handling serious cases that may lead to suspension and expulsion (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). Mncube (2008) also notes that the functioning of school governing bodies varies from school to school due to varying managerial expertise among the parents. Generally, former Model C

schools (schools that served White learners during apartheid years) operate more effectively than other schools and that there were vast differences between urban and rural schools.

Further, one learner governor at Sugar Estate Secondary School was of the opinion that her school was failing with the implementation of the code of conduct. The learner stated that:

Schools have disciplinary hearings but the parents don't attend. Parents are then unaware of the sanction/s imposed on the learner. There are doubts if the parents are aware that the learner has been involved in misconduct.

(Learner governor at Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Learners suggested that the schools should conduct meetings on days that were considerate to those that are working and those that don't have access to private vehicles. Another learner governor from Burmanbush Secondary School stated that:

In some cases schools call parents to disciplinary meetings in the evenings when it is not possible to attend as they are working. Some parents do not have private vehicles to make these trips.

(Learner governor at Burmanbush Secondary School)

This leads to learners being tried in absentia and thus not taking the Code of Conduct seriously. Other learner governors also noted the ineffectiveness of the disciplinary process in that the same learners who were engaging in acts of misconduct and seemed to be repeat offenders. The learner governor said:

They appear before a discipline committee but are back in school within days only to commit the same offence again.

(Learner governor at Burmanbush Secondary School)

Learners stated that this did not show exemplary behaviour and led to negative influence to the rest of the learners. Nieuwenhuis (2007) states that inconsistent behaviour management practices can contribute to a negative school climate and the development of anti-social behaviour. Some participants (in the discipline committees) were frustrated by the fact that they spent endless meetings with the same offending learners and they could not expel them. These teachers felt some of the serial offenders did not belong to normal schools but perhaps a reformatory school could do better. They were also frustrated by parents who did not attend disciplinary meetings.

The above findings in this section seem to indicate that the schools used various strategies to resolve indiscipline and violence problems that beset them. The learners were first counselled by

their teachers to try and modify their behaviour. Counselling was done, depending on the situation, on a one-on-one basis or in groups by the Life Orientation teachers and other teachers within the school. Social workers were also regularly invited to schools. The findings also revealed that schools organised morning assemblies where learners were addressed by the school principals and invited experts from NGOs, the SAPS, Lifeline, Nicro and other organisations. This was meant to assist learners to stay away from drugs, substance abuse and other dubious activities. This also helped to rehabilitate the bad behaviour on some of them.

6.2.6 The appropriateness of school governing bodies to maintain discipline and prevent violence in schools

The following question was asked to all the participants in the four case schools:

Do you think school governing bodies are the most appropriate tool to maintain discipline and curb violence in schools? Please elaborate.

The majority of the participants believed that SGBs were not the most appropriate and effective tool to maintain discipline and curb violence in their schools and advanced a number of reasons why they believed so. Generally, parents in the researched schools were unwilling to serve in SGBs; parent members were also finding it difficult to find time (from their workplaces and other commitments) to be available to the schools for meetings or to deal with discipline cases promptly; their lack of expertise to deal with disciplinary problems which were very complicated legal matters also discouraged many from participating; some parent members feared victimisation by the very same learners they were attempting to discipline and many other factors. The participants also felt that school violence was beyond the SGBs and for a variety of reasons such as they were incapable of dealing with it effectively. In addition, discipline was an on-going and daily factor that prevailed in schools and some working parents could not fulfil their obligations in the implementation of the school's code of conduct but were required to rule on matters pertaining to discipline. In contrast, at Yellowwood Secondary School, while the majority of the participants acknowledged the powerlessness and ineffectiveness of the SGBs, they still felt it (the SGB) was the only body legally entitled to handle discipline and school violence matters and therefore it had to have some role to play, even if it was in an advisory capacity. The discipline committees (tribunals) were also perceived as ineffective. One educator

even compared the tribunals to ‘*a bulldog with no teeth*’. Principals and educators put in a lot of work to curb violence and discipline problems but the end result did not justify all the effort. Further, the learners were well aware of the limitations of the tribunals and were taking advantage of the situation. A seasoned Teacher Liaison Officer from Thandimfundo Secondary School even called for the re-instatement of corporal punishment to be administered by the school principals under strict and controlled conditions stating that this alone would serve as a deterrent. He said:

Power has been removed from us (the teachers and principals) and placed in the hands of the pupils. They (the learners) can do anything to us, and where do we turn to? There can be no success teaching children unless they are disciplined. But discipline has ended. We can teach until we are blue in the face, but some children do not care.

(Teacher Liaison Officer from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Similarly, the principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School had the following to say:

You know for me, the power that the SGB’s are given is a major problem. I find that to fill up vacant positions of parent members in the governing body is a problem because most parents do not want to volunteer for many reasons. The biggest reason for fear to be in the governing body is the fear of victimisation by learners. Secondly, the governing body members are only there for three years. There is no permanency, there is no obligation. The voluntary nature of the school governing body renders it ineffective in maintaining discipline.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

In addition, this principal also said the following about the urgent nature of dealing with disciplinary cases which creates many problems for working parents:

If I have caught a learner with drugs, I can’t deal with him a week down the line when all parents can meet. I need to do it urgently. Can you as a parent leave your job and come and sit on the Discipline Committee? So, to put governing bodies in charge of discipline is not practical. They have no sense of obligation to do it, and the fact that they are not prepared to take any risk or prepared to be victimised on behalf of the school.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Further, this principal said:

Secondly, you need somebody who has an intellectual understanding to solve the problem. So, as far as I am concerned, they should not come anywhere near it. It is a sheer waste of time. There are legal processes involved in enacting sanctions against a learner and some parents are not fully capacitated to handle this process. They can provide us with support services but they should not be an integral part of discipline because the structure (the SGB) is such that we cannot rely on them.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Echoing similar sentiments, another teacher from the focus group at Burmanbush Secondary School said:

No, they are not. I think that too much emphasis is placed by the Schools Act and the Department of Education on the school governing bodies, their effectiveness and the parents' willingness to be involved. I remember in the last SGB elections, to actually get the parents to stand for the SGB was a huge problem. They are not willing to serve and we barely obtained the number of parents that we needed. I think there is this big expectation on the effectiveness of the governing bodies but parents themselves are not prepared to serve on them. They don't have the time.

(Teacher from Burmanbush Secondary School)

This teacher further said:

I don't think that they (SGBs) are in a position where they have the time. I think that a lot of the parents in the governing body are there for specific reasons and that is, maybe to smooth the way for their own children at this school. But I don't think that the Governing Body is the road ahead.

(Teacher from Burmanbush Secondary School)

Another teacher from the Yellowwood Secondary School focus group who also served in their discipline committee, in expressing similar sentiments, said:

My own perception is that the SGB is not the right structure to deal with school violence and learner indiscipline because someone who deals with these issues has got to be on site all the time. You have got to be here all the time and to get them (the parent governors) to the disciplinary tribunal is a painful exercise. To put it mildly, it's demanding. That means an evening or an afternoon or something like that attending meetings. To come to school I don't mind, but to get people together is difficult because you've got to give somebody five days' notice.

(Teacher from Yellowwood Secondary School)

The poor turnout at parents' meetings was a problem in all four researched schools. The deputy principal, who was part of the focus group at Yellowwood Secondary School:

Even among the white communities, they don't attend meetings. I think it is related more to the degree of professional qualification of parents in terms of their high profile jobs. I think, they need to get involved; they need to go to those meetings, your lawyers, your doctors, your engineers. I think in our community here we don't have such a big percentage of those high flying professionals and therefore they don't have that insight that they need to be involved. I don't think that it is has to do with race at all. So basically, it comes to the class thing now, the upper class is there to support their children at the schools. Not much the middle class down there, they are not interested. It's just across all colours.

(The deputy principal from Yellowwood Secondary School)

Similarly, another teacher from focus group of Thandimfundo Secondary School, echoing his disapproval of school governing bodies in managing discipline matters said:

We have the safety and security committee in place which, off course is not functional. That needs to be revived. It is the responsibility of that committee to deal with cases of ill-discipline and violence but they are nowhere. We don't know what happened to them, they don't come to meetings. They just disappeared.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Another teacher from the Yellowwood Secondary School, also echoing similar sentiments, said:

Well, to put it bluntly - to get the discipline tribunal together is a lot of work and time consuming. Then you have to sit down and get everything 100% correct because the Department wants paperwork than results.

(Teacher from the Yellowwood Secondary School)

Likewise, the learner governors at Sugar Estate Secondary School were of the opinion that schools were failing with the implementation of the code of conduct and seemed to blame it on poor parental involvement at school. One learner governor had the following to say:

Our school sometimes holds disciplinary hearings but the parents don't attend. Parents are then unaware of the sanction/s imposed on their child. There are doubts if the parents are ever aware that their child has been involved in a misconduct case.

(A learner governor at Sugar Estate Secondary School)

However, most parent members of SGBs in all researched schools, seemed to support the current system as an appropriate structure in the maintenance of discipline at the school. One parent from Burmanbush Secondary School stated the following:

All stakeholders must be involved and make a positive contribution. Our job is to assist the school. Everyone should play their part in making the school a safe place for our children.

(Parent member of the SGB from Burmanbush Secondary School)

The parents also indicated eagerness to help the schools, but called for intensive capacity building programmes to be conducted to equip them with the skills to make a positive contribution to the schools. Parents were also vociferous in stating that the Department was not serious about empowering them. A parent member of the SGB from Thandimfundo Secondary School said:

Some workshops are conducted during the weekdays, some in the evenings – SGB parents are working and none or very few attend those workshop meetings.

(Parent member of the SGB from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Another finding from all four researched schools was that many qualified parents with the relevant expertise did not make themselves available for elections to school governing bodies for various reasons. At times, those that volunteer are not very literate and require many hours of capacity building after elections. These factors impact negatively on important decision-making processes. The challenge is for the schools to capacitate parents while fulfilling all other obligations. Educators feel that they have a wide range of tasks to oversee and become overburdened and frustrated with the increasing levels and rate of learner misconduct which seriously hampers their core function of teaching.

The chairperson of Sugar Estate Secondary School believed that SGBs could fulfil their role if they were provided with the appropriate support. He noted that most parents lacked capacity and were therefore easily influenced by other stakeholders who were deemed to be more knowledgeable than they were. The lack of capacity, in most cases, could be blamed for the flawed decisions some governing bodies sometimes made. Mthiyane (2006) states that the ultimate success of school governing bodies in many communities will depend on the type and extent of training the Department of Education was prepared to undertake. This suggests that school governing bodies have to be properly trained to be aware of the Department of Education's policies and to understand their roles as school governors. Otherwise school governance will remain an elusive term for many schools. An additional strategy would be the involvement of parents and the community in school activities and making them part of the anti-violence initiative in schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

The findings in this study suggest that the majority of participants believed the school governing bodies not as an appropriate tool to reduce violence in schools for a number of reasons already enunciated above such as time to serve in the SGB being the scarce resource which working parents don't have. Poor attendance by parent members at school governing body meetings cut across all four schools and race was found not to be a determining factor.

However, the parent members in the four researched schools felt that school governing bodies had a role to play notwithstanding the challenges this posed.

6.2.6.1 Alternatives to school governing bodies in maintaining discipline and curbing violence in schools

As a follow-up to the immediate question above, all the participants in the four case schools were asked the following probing question:

If school governing bodies are not the most appropriate tool to maintain discipline and prevent violence in schools, what then do you suggest should be done?

In view of the litany of problems with school governing bodies, the majority of the participants, especially the teachers and principals, suggested various ways as alternatives to school governing bodies in maintaining discipline and to curb violence in the schools. The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School said the following:

The School Governing Body should not be given these powers (discipline powers), instead, they must be handled by the principal and the Discipline Committee made up of teachers within the school who have a specialist training in legal matters to be effective.

(Principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

A deputy principal who was also a member of the focus group from Yellowwood Secondary School said the following:

The teachers need to be trained more in the issue of discipline. The classroom landscape has changed tremendously. When I started teaching in 1975 and what we deal with now are two different issues and there is a need for teachers to be trained in handling discipline issues. One of the things that I have used is a DVD that I got by Derek Jackson “Discipline without tears” and I will give it to you but you have to get it back to me soon.

(Deputy Principal from Yellowwood Secondary School)

Another teacher from the focus group at Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

If I had my way, each school would have a fulltime disciplinary officer employed by the state just for that purpose. Not a teacher but obviously somebody who can work within the legal framework of the state and the school. That is the person I believe would take the responsibility for that himself or a small committee and leave the teachers to teach and to administer the school. That’s how XY High School has it and it works wonders.

(Teacher from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Their arguments mainly centred on issues of timeous availability of parents at school and capacity to resolve indiscipline problems. The participants felt the current system was time-

consuming, cumbersome and unsustainable. Parent members represent the aspirations of all parents who have nominated them to act on their behalf. Parents are not fully capacitated to implement these procedures and regulations. It is left to the school to educate and capacitate parents. The support from the Department of Education is grossly lacking, especially to newly appointed governors. Parents also do not fully comprehend the dynamics that are involved in the management of a secondary school. The principal re-iterated that discipline was a major factor that hampers the educational process and stated that:

The Department of Education is trying to fix curriculum issues. We need to find out why learner discipline is eroding and find solutions to these problems. Then we can implement curriculum changes.

(Principal from Yellowwood Secondary School)

The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School strongly stated that:

My job is to manage and facilitate the education process of learners and not to police them.

(The principal of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

Similarly, the principal of Burmanbush Secondary School suggested that while SGBs have a part to play in this process, it was '*controversial*'.

Current legislation diminishes the power of the school by giving authority to the parent component that does not have the full capacity to deal with the evolving issues of discipline and for me - this is controversial.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

SGBs, according to this principal, were not the most appropriate structure to deal with discipline because individual stakeholders were working in isolation. It is the educators and the school management that have to implement and enforce the school's code of conduct only to have parents come in to make a ruling on offending learners. In most cases the ruling is seen as a counselling measure which has no real benefits in remediation of delinquent learners. The Schools Act clearly states that SGBs have a duty to ensure that the code of conduct includes policies and procedures that are appropriate for dealing with disciplinary matters and the members that carry out the duty of the Tribunal must apply the appropriate sanctions as outlined in the code of conduct.

The chairperson of the disciplinary committee of Thandimfundo Secondary School also expressed doubts whether SGBs were the most appropriate structure to deal with discipline. This doubt emanates from the fact the parents do not have sufficient time to commit to the schools

and some were not even aware of the processes that were required to be implemented during a tribunal hearing. He felt that:

More authority needs to be given to the school, where educators and manager must implement more stern measures to curb the increase of misconduct incidents.

(The chairperson of the DC from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

This chairperson also felt that if the Department of Education was serious about school governance structures being responsible for discipline at schools, then more support would have to be rendered to this structure by means of continuous workshops and concrete assistance to deal with violence and indiscipline challenges that the schools were faced with.

However, parent members still believed that they have a role to play at schools in the form of support for the educators and management. The SGB parent members of Burmanbush Secondary School, who were newly elected members, were very positive about the role of parents in the maintenance of discipline at the school. One of them stated that:

All stakeholders must be involved and make a positive contribution. Our job is to assist the school. Everyone should play their part in making the school a safe place for our children.

(The SGB parent member of Burmanbush Secondary School)

The parents were eager to help the school, but called for intensive capacity building programmes to be conducted, to equip them with the skills to make a positive contribution to the school. Parents commended the staff and management on the way they managed the school. Some learners at Thandimfundo Secondary School believed that the SGB was not the most appropriate structure to deal with discipline at school and disciplinary measures in their school were not very effective. One learner felt that parent members came across as *'dictators'* and were not very tactful in dealing with learners; they instead threatened them with corporal punishment. One learner from the focus group of Thandimfundo Secondary School even stated that:

SGBs act like police-officers and impose discipline on us.

(RCL member from Thandimfundo Secondary School)

In an authoritarian environment, people tend to form alliances for protection or favours. It is a breeding ground for discrimination and bullying. A sense of mutual respect and trust must be prevalent at the school to ensure an ethos that is much safer and conducive to a culture of teaching and learning (Backman & Trafford, 2006).

The South African Schools Act N0. 84 of 1996 clearly states that school governing bodies have a duty to ensure that each public school has a code of conduct for learners which includes policies and procedures that are appropriate for dealing with disciplinary matters and that the Discipline Committee members carry out their duties as outlined in the code of conduct. However, in view of the litany of problems with school governing bodies, the majority of the participants in this study, especially the teachers and principals, seem to reject the school governing bodies as appropriate tools to curb school violence. In their view, the nature of indiscipline problems/violence at their schools are such that, they need urgent attention and that can only be provided by people on the ground and these are teachers; hence the suggestion of a committee comprising of the principal and other teachers who would be highly trained in discipline and legal matters to execute this task. The unavailability of parent governors during the day because of work commitments renders them ineffective and therefore inappropriate in the eyes of many participants in this study. In contrast, some parents were of the view that parents have a role to play and emphasised the need for their training to capacitate them in their work.

6.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings elicited from the participants in terms of each research question, the theoretical frameworks as well as literature review were presented and discussed. In a nutshell, schools face multiple challenges of indiscipline and violence problems. In order to respond proactively to the challenges of violence that they face, schools have realised they need to utilise multi-pronged strategies.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the impact of school organisation and management on school violence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: IMPACT OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter was devoted to the presentation, analysis and discussion of measures taken by school governors to curb violence in their schools. This chapter concludes the data presentation section by presenting the impact of school governance, organisation and management on school violence. As in the two preceding chapters, a critique of the findings is then facilitated through interrogating the research questions, theoretical frameworks and literature review which were explored at great length in Chapters Two and Three respectively. Pertinent findings are then analysed through content analysis as explained in the research methodology chapter.

7.2 Discussion of findings

As indicated in the two foregoing chapters, the data was elicited from the various participants who comprised school principals, SGB chairpersons and members of the School Discipline and Safety Committees, Teacher Representatives from the SGBs, the Teacher Liaison Officers, RCL Chairpersons and other RCL members) at all the four researched schools.

7.2.1 The impact of school governance, leadership and management on school violence

The following question was asked to all the participants in the four case schools:

How do school governance, leadership and management impact on school discipline and violence? Please elaborate.

This study also found that schools and classrooms that were effectively governed and led were less likely to be breeding grounds for school violence than those that were dysfunctional. In this regard, the principal of Burmanbush Secondary School had the following to say:

Times have changed. Gone are the days when principals could lead the schools alone. These days, if you want to have a stress-free environment, you have to lead and manage the school with other teachers. In my school, I have a school governing body, the SMT and a number of other committees which assist me in the running of the school. One such committee is the School Discipline Committee to handle disciplinary issues. For me, when a school has a proper functioning school governing body, it helps in that they handle discipline and is not the problem of the teacher and the school principal alone.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

A teacher from Yellowwood Secondary School also echoed similar sentiments when he said:

A school that is well governed and managed generally has fewer challenges of discipline and violence. This is because such schools pre-empt problems and plan around them. They have visionary leadership which prevents problems before they actually happen. I believe our school is such a school. This does not mean we do not have problems (of ill-discipline and violence) but we have policies that attempt to address them.

(The TLO from Yellowwood Secondary School)

The chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

As parents, we feel a sense of pride that we are involved in the education of our children. Yes, there are challenges such as poor participation of our parents in the school but as the SGB we ensure that the school functions properly.

(The chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School)

The above sentiments were also voiced by teachers and learners in the focus groups of all the researched schools. A Teacher Liaison Officer of Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

Schools that have proper functioning governing bodies and involve other stakeholders like teachers and learners in decision-making processes, are well organised, have proper school policies like the code of conduct for learners to address discipline and other related issues have better prospects of addressing school violence.

(Teacher Liaison Officer of Sugar Estate Secondary School)

A learner who was also the chairperson of the RCL at Burmanbush Secondary School said:

As the RCL of this school, we feel privileged to serve other learners. We are involved in the maintenance of school discipline like proper wearing of school uniform by learners; assisting teachers with monitoring of late-coming; drafting of the school's annual programmes meant to fight the use of alcohol and drugs by learners. We feel a sense of achievement and we are glad we are involved.

(The chairperson of the RCL at Burmanbush Secondary School)

However, the learners indicated that their involvement was time-consuming as there were many meetings to attend which was impacting on their time which could be used for studies and homework in the afternoons. Notwithstanding these challenges, the learners felt a sense of pride

and attachment to their schools, which was discussed earlier in Chapter Two and Three of this thesis.

Edwards (2008) postulates that, because learners live in on-going democratic communities and will continue to do so, it is essential that classroom life be an authentic preparation for democratic life. They should, for example, learn problem-solving strategies that will help them solve significant problems both now and the future. Currently, schools are characterised more by their coercive, autocratic practices than for teaching students how to live successfully in democratic communities. In the South African context, an effective school is a democratic school which is led and governed in accordance with the democratic values and principles as enshrined in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and the constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Similarly, the UNISA study on school violence in South Africa (2012), the researchers found that a key factor which determines the extent to which schools can resist violence in the broader society is the extent to which the school is, and sees itself as, a well-organised and managed community with a determination to protect and care for its learners by means of a clear approach to safety and security. These schools have clear policies, rules and regulations which are known by every member of the school community and are efficiently enforced.

Research conducted at three schools in the Durban area of Kwazulu-Natal (Harber, 2001a) suggests that the more effectively the school is run, the less chance of violence coming in from the outside and the less chance of it being generated inside. The UNISA (2012) report on school violence cited above further postulates that a well-run school with a more inclusive, democratic environment helps to foster a climate of openness and a sense of ownership, commitment, and responsibility amongst all members and therefore strengthens its determination to resist external violence and minimise internal violence. It was also important that all three schools had actually stopped using corporal punishment in line with the South African Schools Act, therefore both reducing an internal climate of violence and improving relationships between teachers and learners. Instead, through codes of conduct, clear implementation of the rules and alternative forms of punishment, such as clearing up litter in the schools, were used to provide an ordered, safe and essentially peaceful environment where both internal and external crime and violence were reduced to a minimum. Such a school also tries to reach out to and have good relationships

with the local community, though at these three schools this is not easy because of the physical distance of many parents from the schools (UNISA, 2012).

In conclusion, all the participants seemed to concur that an effective school is a well governed and managed school where all the stakeholders are involved in the running of the school. Participants seemed to value consultation and involvement in decision making at the school and believed this minimised indiscipline and violent incidents. This is also in line with research which postulates that teachers value and want to be involved in decision- making at their schools. This also finds resonance in democratic governance and management of schools where stakeholders value participation and consultation.

7.2.2 The impact of parental involvement on learner discipline and violence at schools

The other question that was asked to all participants in the four case study schools was:

What is the impact of parental involvement on learner discipline and violence at the schools?

All the participants acknowledged the importance of parental involvement in the maintenance of discipline and the quest for violence-free schools. The majority also indicated that where parents were more involved, there was evidence of less indiscipline and violence problems. However, they presented divergent and sometimes contrasting pictures of how parental involvement operated in each of the schools and how this impacted on learner discipline. While other school discipline committees appeared to be proportionately staffed with all relevant constituent members and working well, others seemed to be struggling. The lack of parental involvement went beyond the discipline committees into parents who failed to turn up when invited to schools, especially on discipline-related issues and this impacted negatively in speedily resolving learner discipline cases.

The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School said the following about the functionality of the discipline committee at his school:

All the constituent members in the school governing body are there. We have been fortunate in that the Chairman of our governing body is a lawyer. In addition, a husband of one of our teachers is also a lawyer and he assists us a lot

in all these things. So, we get the two of them involved with other members of the committee in any serious disciplinary matter. We also invite both parents concerned to come to the school and we sit down and resolve the issues.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

This principal further said they followed all the procedures when they heard dispute cases of learners. He said:

The due process is followed to the letter of the law when we sit for dispute cases. We try by all means to avoid suspension or expulsion. As you probably know- we have the right to suspend for a couple of days but expulsion and removal from school- that is the prerogative of the provincial Head of Department. This is where we need to ensure that we have our ducks in a row and that we follow the due processes.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

While parental involvement was working well at Burmanbush Secondary School, this could not be said of the other three researched schools. There were challenges in the discipline committees and other sub-committees of the school governing bodies and this negatively impacted on learner discipline at the school. The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School said:

When you invite them (the parents) here, unfortunately, due to their own pressing needs and other personal circumstances, you can't get them. And when you need them, sometimes you need to schedule a meeting like it is an emergency situation.

(The principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

Echoing similar sentiments, teachers, parents and learners from the focus groups from the above school also reiterated the views of their principal. One of the teachers said:

The parents have their own commitments. They are working people and they have families to take care of. They have little or no time for school matters.

(Teacher from Yellowwood Secondary School)

Similar challenges were experienced at both Sugar Estate Secondary and Thandimfundo Secondary schools where discipline committees were found to be dysfunctional. At Thandimfundo Secondary School, there was only one parent member serving on the discipline committee. He happened to serve as the governing body's chairperson as well. As referred to by the principals and teachers, parent governors were unable to attend meetings due to work or personal commitments. I was also informed that, in most cases, even parents of learners who had misbehaved and were invited to appear before a Discipline Committee, did not turn up for the

disciplinary committee meetings. For various reasons related to their work commitments and time constraints, the other parents were not prepared or available to serve on this very crucial committee. In most cases, the other components of the SGB (excluding parents) found themselves having to deal with serious indiscipline cases such as fighting, bullying, insolence, learners being under the influence of alcohol/illegal substances, etc. all by themselves as other parent members did not come to meetings when invited. The Chairperson of Thandimfundo Secondary School governing body indicated that there were supposed to be two other parents in the Discipline Committee of his school but were not honouring the meetings. He said:

Discipline is left primarily to the educators to enforce. Parents and the RCLs are not active.

(The Chairperson of the SGB at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

In more serious learner discipline cases, he further said:

Together with the other teacher members, I sit in the discipline committee and we observe all protocols. The teachers first conduct one-on-one counselling meetings with learners before they are brought to us. But you can see that learners some learners do not take the code of conduct seriously.

(The Chairperson of the SGB at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

A seasoned TLO and educator from Yellowwood Secondary School also believed that the parent component of the SGB played a limited role in the disciplinary process as they (as teachers) mainly oversaw the Tribunal process. Educators are confronted first hand by the misconduct of learners. They have to deal with the learners, draw up reports of the misconduct, and communicate the learner's misconduct to the grade supervisor and to the learner's parent if required. All these procedures were time consuming and hampered the educator's core duty of teaching. This is corroborated by Public Agenda (2004) which states that educators admit that their teaching would be more effective if they did not have to spend so much time dealing with discipline issues. It was evident that educators and school principals/other school personnel were the front line in the implementation of the code of conduct as they were interacting with the learners on daily basis. The learners at all the four researched schools also acknowledged that educators were responsible for the management and implementation of the code of conduct at their schools. Strangely, at Thandimfundo Secondary School, it was found that learners had witnessed some parents assisting teachers with late-coming at the school gate. This is strange in that, according to the SA Schools Act 84 of 1996, this is a management function and not a

governance function. The parents, through the SGB are expected to enact policies which are expected to be implemented by the principal and her/his teachers. This poses role conflict in case this matter has to come to the Discipline Committee of the SGB.

Joubert and Prinsloo (2009), as well as Mestry and Khumalo (2012) affirm that a governing body of a school should realise that a statutory or legal duty rests upon it to establish “a disciplined and purposeful school environment” in terms of Section 8A (2) of the SA Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 although the principal, the school management team and other educators normally form the most visible front in the disciplinary process. This function though, appeared to be fulfilled more by the teachers and principals than by the parents in the researched schools.

This study found that schools were facing a major challenge in getting parents involved in the disciplinary cases that plague them. Halsey (2005) points out that there are barriers which seem to hinder their involvement such as parents’ attitude towards educators; their low self-esteem; the school environment and the lack of clear roles that parents have to play, which hinder parents from actively participating in their children’s discipline at schools. A study by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) strongly indicates that parents from impoverished backgrounds also need to be empowered if they are to make a meaningful contribution to the education of the learners. It was also evident from the interview with the Disciplinary Committee Chairperson of Thandimfundo that not all stakeholders, especially parents, were fully represented on the Disciplinary Committee of his school. Joubert and Prinsloo (2009) also state that the disciplinary committees should consist of at least the principal or deputy principal, the chairperson of the school governing body, a parent member of the governing body, an educator and a learner in the case of a secondary school. The inclusion of parents in school governing bodies has created an environment more conducive to parental involvement in schools, but actual parental involvement in South African Schools remain weak (Wolhuter, Lemmer & de Wet, 2009). However, democratic governance theory requires that all stakeholders should be represented in all the committees where important decisions are taken. The failure by some parents to avail themselves to serve on some committees in the schools defeats the noble aims of democratic governance.

It is evident from this discussion that all participants concurred that the implementation of the code of conduct is primarily the duty managed by educators and the school management. However, it is the duty of a properly constituted discipline committee to attend to more serious cases of indiscipline and violence among the learners. Furthermore, the role played by parents was found to be minimal because of various reasons and this was a major challenge. While Pellegrini (2002) suggests that the successful implementation of any school policy requires the leadership of the principal, the support of teachers and learners, the involvement and support of parents is equally important.

7.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the findings elicited from the participants through the interviews, documents review and observations were presented and discussed in terms of each research/interview question, the theoretical/conceptual frameworks as well as literature review were presented and discussed. In a nutshell, the data presentation chapters have shown schools face a cocktail of challenges of indiscipline and violence problems. In order to respond proactively to the challenges they face, they have realised they need multiple-pronged strategies.

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the themes, trends and patterns that emerged from the presented data.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THE FINDINGS

8.1 Introduction

Chapters Five, Six and Seven were devoted to the presentation of the findings, analysis and discussion thereof. In this chapter I present and discuss the key themes that emerged from the data. The chapter is not an attempt to exhaust all the themes and sub-themes that arose but focus on the major themes that I believe were significant for the purpose of responding to the research aims and questions posed earlier in this study. Each finding led to a particular theme and sometimes a sub-theme, which are presented and analysed in this chapter. In discussing the themes, deliberate attempts were made to relate the findings to the research questions, literature and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter Two and Three respectively in this thesis.

8.2 The following key themes emerged:

The themes that emerged from the study were: multiple experiences of school violence; persistent problem of teenage pregnancy, lack of faith among learners in school structures to resolve school violence; perpetration of internal violence by schools; relationship between drugs and substance; denialism and school violence; poverty and school violence; dysfunctional family structures and school violence; learners exposures to community violence and dysfunctional school safety and community policing forums.

8.2.1 Multiple experiences of school violence

The recurring key theme throughout this study was that schools faced a myriad of indiscipline and school violence problems among the learners and that there was a strong relationship between violence at school and the broader social conditions both at homes and in the communities where learners reside and how this negatively impacted on the school (Burton, 2007 & 2008; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; SA Human Rights Commission Report, 2006). Researchers such as Burton (2008, p.2), have postulated “violence in South African schools is embedded in the broader violent South African environments”. Linked to this, the study participants stated repeatedly that schools were a microcosm of society and what happens

outside (the school) also affects the school (Astor, Benbenishty & Marachi, 2006; Edwards, 2008; Phillips, Linney & Pack, 2008). So violence was viewed as symptomatic of a society whose morals and values were in decay and this was directly affecting the schools. Therefore, when attempting to understand school-based violence in the South African context, one needs to explore the problem from multiple perspectives taking into account the many dynamics that have influenced this phenomenon (Burton, 2007, p. 12).

The challenges that the four schools faced ranged from drug taking to drug-selling among learners, stealing of cell phones or forcefully taking other learners' lunch-packs and mugging by big or bullying learners, fighting mainly among boys but of late also between boys and girls, drinking of alcohol, bullying, insolence, physical violence (stabblings and assaults), teenage pregnancies, late coming and absconding from classes, carrying of weapons at school, making of racist or crude remarks by some learners to other learners and of late, increasingly to female teachers, cigarette smoking (including *dagga* and *wunga*) truancy, absenteeism, inappropriate boy-girl relationships and failure to complete school tasks such as homework and assignments.

Further, the literature on school violence cited extensively in Chapter Three clearly showed that the prevalence of drugs and violence in the school community was suggestive of the relative influence of the context both within and outside of the school and its impact on school violence (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). The community influence on the school is also corroborated by the SA Human Rights Commission Report (2006) which states that South Africa is experiencing unacceptably high levels of violent crime and this was spilling over into the schools. Similarly, Astor, Benbenishty and Marachi (2006), Edwards (2008) and Phillips, Linney and Pack (2008) also state that what is happening in schools mirrors what is happening in society, i.e. the context in which the school is located interacts with internal school and student characteristics to influence levels of victimisation in schools. These layered and nested contexts include the school (social climate, availability of policies against violence), neighbourhood (poverty, social organisation and crime levels), the students' families (education and family structure), cultural aspects of student and teacher population and the economic, social and political makeup of the country as a whole.

Similarly, viewed from a social control perspective, a school is a microcosm of a larger society and is therefore affected by the contexts in which it is built. If the society in which the school is located is violent and losing control of its young people, the school will automatically be affected by the violence in its environment. The addiction of learners to drugs, alcohol and substance abuse has a ripple effect in that

other learners want to emulate them and this may end up being the problem of the entire school. More often than not, some parents were unsure how to respond to this challenge and fell back on the schools to provide assistance. From the social control theory perspective, this is symptomatic of communities who have lost their moral fibre and were looking at others to do for them what they should do for themselves.

However, it was noted that the schools in this study were pro-active in that they were doing something about the challenges of violence and indiscipline they were facing. In addition, the participants seemed to understand that school violence and indiscipline was a broader social problem consequently they utilised a multi-pronged approach to resolve the problem. These included their own internal processes at school as well as also enlisting help and services of non-governmental organisations such as the local churches, SANCA, NICRO as well as sister departments such as Social Welfare, the SAPS, the Correctional Services and the Department of Health. Another sub-theme was that the drugs problem had a snowball effect in that the police closed the informal tuck-shops near the schools where the drugs were sold but they mushroomed elsewhere. At least three of the four researched schools indicated that they also worked with their local Community Policing Forum (CPF) to resolve serious criminal school problems. This was positive in that the schools were not working in isolation but with the local community structures to face the challenges of school violence. The presence of the code of conduct for learners and other discipline policies also suggest that the schools were aware of the legal requirements in dealing with the challenges they were facing.

8.2.2 Persistent problem of teenage pregnancy

Linked to the above challenges, another theme that came up prominently in the study in all four research schools was the challenge of teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy per se is not school violence but it becomes a social issue when learners are coerced to leave school because of pregnancy. This issue was a challenge in all the four schools studied. The participants also articulated their concern about teenage pregnancies as a stubborn problem which seemed to be a losing battle and the learners' detachable attitude to HIV/AIDS infection. Many learners were caught unprepared for this reality and as a result, many dropped out of school and only a few returned to write their examinations or finish school (de Wet, 2007). The problem seemed to be a social ill that would not quickly disappear. School authorities were convinced that there was a

relationship between poverty in the community and social grants that young, unemployed mothers were receiving from the government. The HSRC/Department of Education Report on Teenage Pregnancy in South Africa (2009) further corroborates the long held view of the strong relationship between poverty and teenage pregnancy. This study also identified that learner pregnancies were more concentrated in the provinces of the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal which are generally known for poverty. In this current research, three of the four schools served poor township and semi-rural communities and one (Yellowwood Secondary School) served an urban middle class community. The schools that served the poorer communities (Burmanbush Secondary, Sugar Estate Secondary and Thandimfundo Secondary) reported the highest rates of pregnancies which seem to corroborate the above study.

Viewed from a social control theory, this finding seems to suggest the family and society as a unit were losing social values that once bounded these communities. In the past it was rare and frowned upon to have a school girl falling pregnant. These days, it is not unusual for learners, even in primary schools, to fall pregnant. A study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, with support from UNICEF, on behalf of the Department of Basic Education also seemed to corroborate views of teachers about the ambivalent and detachable attitudes among young people towards teenage pregnancy (Department of Basic Education, 2009) which could be ascribed to lack of adequate understanding and appreciation of the negative consequences of early parenting. This study (on teenage pregnancy) concluded that the ambivalent attitudes were mostly common among teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with low future aspirations. When contrasted with learners from advantaged communities, it is possible that some learners from disadvantaged communities may view early childbearing as a way out of poverty and perhaps to strengthen the relationship with the baby's father (Department of Basic Education, 2009). The HSRC Report on Education in South African Rural Communities on behalf of the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) also found that teenage pregnancy contributes to drop-out in a number of significant ways. Further, countless girls who fell pregnant hoped to return to school but most found this difficult because some did not have anyone to care for the child. Even if they did have someone, they found it difficult to concentrate on their studies as they spent most of their time thinking about the problems that they faced. Many relied on social grants for their livelihood (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Another sub-theme related to teenage pregnancy was the frustration and hostile attitude that educators seemed to have towards pregnant learners. George (2001) cited in De Wet (2007, p.86) also found in her study on learner-on-learner violence that "... schools respond with hostility and indifference to girls who complain about sexual violence and harassment." Even though they know of the policy guidelines of the Department of Education in handling pregnant learners, they seemed to ignore them as they felt the learners have access to all the information on preventing teenage pregnancy and therefore anyone who falls pregnant does so deliberately and this does not deserve their sympathy and support. This again, is a form of violence by commission as most teachers are aware of the policy by the Department of Education on managing pregnant learners. Teachers, especially, indicated that they were not interested in assisting pregnant learners (providing them support with curriculum tasks and activities while at home or assisting them with examination preparation). The pregnant learners had to fend for themselves. Teachers, in most cases, taught large classes and were not prepared to contend with moody, pregnant learners. The whole-approach to resolving school indiscipline and violence problems suggested in the concluding chapter suggest that the Department of Education still has a long way to go to address this hostility.

8.2.3 Lack of faith in school structures to resolve conflict among learners

This study also found a disturbing trend where some learners have no faith in the school structures to resolve conflict among them and so have resorted to not reporting violence incidents to their teachers but to take the law into their own hands to see that justice is done. This could also be seen as violence by omission when school authorities such as teachers are expected, in terms of *in loco parentis* principle, to act against perpetrators of violence but choose to do nothing to protect the learners under their care. In addition, the schools' Codes of Conduct for Learners were in some cases also viewed as ineffective to provide any protection hence the perception that counter violence was a quick and effective response to resolving problems among themselves. This can also be seen as violence by omission on the side of teachers where they are expected to act against perpetrators of violence but choose to do nothing. In a study conducted by Bloom (2009) among more than 15 000 teenage students in the United States of America, it was also found that the majority of them perceived violence as an acceptable solution to their problems.

To counteract this problem, Greene (2005) posits that a school and class climate of trust among students, teachers, parents and school authorities is of paramount importance since it has a profound impact on the nature and extent of school-associated violence. Teacher norms that ignore minor forms of aggressive behaviour act to sustain violence and bullying behaviour. School climate also can affect the degree to which students are emotionally attached to their schools as well as levels of commitment to violence prevention and peace promotion efforts (Greene, 2005). School discipline policies and rules that were clearly understood and perceived to be fair and consistently applied across gender, academic prowess and race stood a better chance of being accepted by learners.

Similarly, studies conducted by Mudege, *et al.* (2008) in the slums of Nairobi in Kenya and The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) in South Africa, found that there were feelings of insecurity among learners as a result of the schools' failure to protect them. These two latter studies also reported that those entrusted to protect learners at schools (the teachers) were not able to ensure it, or were, in some cases, the source of insecurity themselves. This kind of thinking (where learners don't have trust and faith in the school authorities to protect them against perpetrators of violence and hence taking the law into their hands) is also noticeable in some communities in South Africa where members of the community do not trust the police and the criminal justice system to be even-handed and so resort to vigilantism to resolve problems of crime and violence. In some communities, for example, some people have formed vigilante groups such as People Against Gangsters And Drugs [*PAGAD*] which is very strong in the Western Cape, *Mapogo-a-Mathamaga* in Limpopo and *Mbokodo* in Mpumalanga provinces (Sekhonyane & Louw, 2011). The print and electronic media is also replete with examples of communities taking law into their own hands all over South Africa as a result of lack of confidence in the police and the justice system of the land.

The above examples are just a few to demonstrate how violent the South African society is and how cheaply sometimes human life is valued. But these violent acts originate from somewhere, which among others, is the frustration as a result the justice system that is seen as unresponsive to the plight of the victims. This is observed at various levels of society (the school level or the societal level). If the authorities like teachers, school governors or the police do not respond appropriately and timeously, something has to give, hence the cycle of endless violence. Some

learners indicated that some teachers do not listen and assist them when they report cases of bullying and violence. Consequently, they carry weapons to school to protect themselves. Greene (2005 & 2008) and Bloom (2009) further posit that handling minor misbehaviour appropriately can keep it from escalating into a crisis. Harber (2004, p.45) also states that “the school may actually be harmful if it fails to protect children from violence and suffering when it could do so”. Failure (through omission or commission) by teachers to protect learners is also a violation of the *in loco parentis* principle which places a duty on the teachers to protect learners while in their care (Shaba, 1998 & 2003; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). Similarly, positive behavioural support by teachers can be utilised to prevent and reduce disruptive behaviour among the learners. To this end, Thompson, Burcham and McLaughlin (2010) suggest that students must feel that someone is available to listen to them, no matter the context or the situation. The students need to be told that an open-door policy to the principal and teachers exist for them and their families. In addition to this, Bloom (*ibid.*) posits that teaching conflict resolution skills and non-violence strategies to learners to resolve conflict situations with their peers can go a long way to reduce discipline problems at school.

8.2.4 Schools as perpetrators of violence

Linked to the above and is a prominent theme on its own, was the schools’ perpetration of violence, consciously or unconsciously through their policies and acts of commission or omission. As shown in the preceding discussion, this study also found a disturbing trend where some learners have no faith in the school structures to resolve conflict among them and so tended to take the law into their own hands to see that justice was served. In terms of the law, the teachers are expected to protect the learners from aggressors but if they (the learners) see teachers turning a blind eye, as some learners alleged, this is a dereliction of duty and consequently influences aggrieved learners to retaliate, exacerbating the already worse situation. There is an abundance of literature (Harber, 2004; Edwards, 2008; Morrel, 1999 & 2002; Clarke, 2007) to show that serious school violence cases could have been avoided if teachers and other school authorities had acted on time or nipped the problem in the bud when it was still minor. Therefore, failure to act in time when problems are at an infant stage can lead to disastrous consequences later. To act or not to act against violence or indiscipline as a teacher when the law requires you to do so is a form of complicity in violence against the victim.

Harber (2004) and Edwards (2008) posit that, while the home and society may be sources of school discipline problems, schools however, should also take responsibility for some of these problems because of the various practices and conditions that prevail in some of them. These authors argue that some schools are authoritarian in nature and rely on heavy-handed means of controlling learners which eventually increases student alienation and reduces the possibility for addressing problems constructively (Edwards, 2008) and this fosters the culture of violence in them (Harber, 2004).

Harber (2010, p.39) posits "... that schooling not only reproduces society fundamentally as it is but also actively makes the lives of individuals worse and harms the wider society. This is because schools both reproduce and cause violence. Not only do they not necessarily protect pupils from different forms of violence in the wider society but they actively perpetrate violence themselves". In addition, Harber (2004, p.39) is of the view that "... schools can either be a force for violence prevention, or can provide an experience which reinforces violent attitudes and adds to the child's experience of violence." He further posits that schools in Africa are characterised by hierarchical organisations, rote learning and teacher-centred classrooms. This encourages learners to be passive and appears to be a means of control. In addition, Harber (2004, p.36) argues that "...the authoritarian nature of schools is not only a form of violence itself, often causing violent reactions in schools, but it also helps to sow the seeds of violence in the wider society".

Although South Africa adopted a new constitution that enshrines principles of democracy and human rights (through Act No. 108 of 1996), tangible benefits were proving difficult and slow to come by. Harber suggests that most schools remain largely oppressive institutions, however compassionate or gentle that oppression is. The basic problem is that strict hierarchies often mean that principals and staff do not communicate sufficiently with pupils. To illustrate this, Harber (2004, p.36) states that:

...in these authoritarian institutions, there are often problems of poor communication between the school authorities and the learners. This poor communication leads to misunderstandings and generates suspicion. When things go wrong...no explanation is forthcoming because there is no expectation that

there should be one. Complaints are met with high-handedness and resentment grows among pupils anxious about their own futures until a small incident sparks off violence which has included serious attacks on personnel and buildings.

The above sentiments are also shared by other researchers (Marshall, 2000; Abello, 1997; Edwards, 2008). Edwards argues that several aspects of school organisation and operations also greatly contribute to violent behaviour. These include confining learners to too small spaces and impossible behavioural routines and academic conformity, along with such factors as large schools and teacher isolation. Edwards (2008) further states that school climate and social stratification created by teachers in their treatment of learners affects the prevalence and impact of school violence; confrontational behaviour from learners also occur when class or school rules are perceived as unfair, arbitrary, unclear and inconsistently applied; when students don't believe in the rules; when teachers and those in school management disagree about the nature of the rules and the consequences for learner misconduct; when teachers are too punitive; when learners feel alienated; school environments that lack structure and have no positive, creative and challenging activities to engage in, lead to apathy, boredom and discontent and when other forms of misconduct are ignored.

De Wet (2007), corroborating Harber's views (2004), also found that autocratic classroom management, inferior teaching and improper curriculum placement may result in learners feeling that their education is irrelevant and that they have little or no say in what happens in their schools. These learners feel alienated from the school and may commit aggressive acts against their educators, use drugs and become truants. In other studies, Harber (2001, 2004 & 2009), has shown how schools create or perpetuate conditions for violence or are complicit in violence. Harber (2004) suggests that schools in South Africa also play a part in reproducing violence through their continuing failure to confront issues of racism, sexual harassment and violence which cause schools not to function effectively as well as their continuing use of corporal punishment despite its illegality (Morrel, 1999 & 2002). Equally, sadly, Clarke (2007, p.353) states that:

...there are some schools where abuse of students, particularly female students but also teachers, is relatively a common occurrence, and appears to take place with impunity.

The above view seems to be corroborated by findings from the South African Human Rights Commission (2006) that show that instead of facilitating the healthy development of children and providing them with equal opportunities for education, some schools are sites of intolerance and discrimination. In some cases, schools officials fail to protect learners from harassment or attacks by other classmates. In some incidents, educators themselves participate in harassment or violence against particular young people due to their gender, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, social group or other status.

8.2.5 Drugs and substance abuse in promoting school violence

Another theme that was prominent in this study in at least three of the researched schools was the snowballing effect of the problems of drugs in the community as a result of their being freely available and how difficult it was to eliminate them. All the participants in the study reported an incident of some kind where these substances were an issue. The most popular one seemed to be the '*wunga/nyaope*' which was presented in the preceding chapter. Principals even showed me exhibits that had been confiscated from some learners. The Discipline Committee chairpersons at Sugar Estate Secondary, Thandimfundo Secondary and Burmanbush Secondary Schools indicated that drugs and substance abuse at their schools was a serious problem. The Chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School also indicated that drugs and substance abuse had a snowball effect. He said:

There is the problem of drugs and alcohol abuse. Drugs are freely available in the community. This is a sickness in our society. The informal tuck-shops that are around the school sell drugs and alcohol to learners. The police are notified and they close them down. Soon, two more mushrooms elsewhere.

(The Chairperson of Burmanbush Secondary School)

The abundant availability of drugs in the community made it very difficult to deal with even by the police. Community tuck-shops that served the learners were alleged to be the sources and the police closed them down but would soon mushroom elsewhere making the whole exercise futile. In some cases,

some learners were known to be selling drugs to other learners covertly. Again, the strong link between the presence of drugs at school and the community is evident in this finding. Linked to this theme was that schools were pro-active in dealing with drugs and substance abuse. They had initiatives within the schools to fight the scourge of drugs such as TADA (Teenagers Against Drugs Abuse) but also collaborated with outside agencies such as the church, the non-governmental organisations such as SANCA and NICRO as well as government departments such as the Health Department, the Social Welfare, the Correctional Services and the South African Police Services. The schools were also actively involved in the local Community Policing Forums.

8.2.6 Denialism, school violence and indiscipline at schools

Another theme that came out strongly in this study is the denialism that violence problems of different kinds exist in the researched schools or the downplaying of the serious nature of school violence and other related problems such as teenage pregnancy and racism, especially by the principals. School violence is a very sensitive topic and therefore it was not surprising that it took a lot of persuasion on the principals' part to even agree to be part of the study. A possible reason for this could be the fear (of school principals) about the perceptions a community might have if it became known that their schools have violence problems or a fear that the presence of school violence might be interpreted as a failure on his/her part to lead and manage the school properly. Similarly, both the principal and chairperson of the Discipline Committee at Sugar Estate Secondary School indicated that drugs and substance abuse at their school was a problem but the principal was quick to state that it involved fewer learners in the school. The principal said:

Drugs and substance abuse is another issue that we are concerned about. Now remember, this may sound like gloom and doom but it may be 5% or 10% of the student population that is involved.

(Principal at Sugar Estate Secondary School)

The following is another example of school principals' under-emphasising the serious nature of drugs at their schools. The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School used words such as "*the occasional smoking of dagga on the school premises*" to trivialise the problem yet the same principal told me that a week before, he had caught another school-boy selling eleven sticks of dagga on the school premises. In addition, on the morning of the interview, there were two boys outside his office and he informed me they had been seen on their way to school with dagga.

Similarly, he said his school had a huge on-going programme which focused on drugs in the first term and teenage pregnancy in the second term. Why would the school have such programmes if these two were not serious challenges at the school?

At Yellowwood Secondary School, there had been negative newspaper reports about bullying and racism among learners yet the deputy principal of the school indicated during the interview that: *“We’ve never had an anti-racism policy. We never really believed it’s necessary.”* However, the teachers and learners I interviewed corroborated the newspaper reports and gave examples of quarrels among learners which they believed were racially motivated as learners had allegedly used offensive racial terms against each other. It then begs a question why those in leadership at the schools downplay the challenges they know exist.

Literature I have been exposed to has suggested possible reasons for this phenomenon. An observation made by Mills (2001) in his book on *“Challenging Violence In Schools”* indicates that principals in his research were concerned that if the local community knew that the school was doing a programme on gender and violence, they would perceive that the school has a problem with these issues, and were fearful parents might withdraw their children from attending the school. Likewise, de Wet (2007) notes a similar finding of under-emphasising and disregarding the serious nature of incidents of school violence in her study on learner-on-learner violence in the Free State. Under-emphasising or disregarding the existence of school violence is similar to sweeping problems under the carpet and pretend they do not exist. This ostrich mentality of burying the head in the sand has dire consequences for any school as it fails to confront the real challenges that it faces.

8.2.7 Inequalities, poverty and school violence

This study in many ways also showed a strong relationship between poverty in the community and school indiscipline problems and violence. To illustrate the implications of poverty on violence, Gilligan, (1996, p.191) has even suggested that *“...the deadliest form of violence is poverty”*. Learners who live in poverty (some come to school on an empty stomach according to their teachers and school principals) sometimes have to steal/rob others in order to survive and this exacerbates the problems of school violence. The principal of Burmanbush Secondary

School alluded that “factors like poverty and unemployment in the community may fuel school violence.”

Some learners, especially girls, see pregnancy as a way out of poverty as they then have access to social grants as well as some form of child maintenance from the children’s fathers, if they are employed (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). If teenage pregnancy is viewed from a violence perspective, then one could argue that girls who fall pregnant because they need access to state social grants have been violated by the social system beyond their powers and perhaps understanding. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation Report entitled “Adding Injury to Insult: How Exclusion and Inequality Drive South Africa’s Problem of Violence” (2008) states that South Africa has high levels of inequality, high levels of poverty, structural unemployment, exclusion, social and political exclusion, marginalisation and deprivation which are concentrated mostly in poverty-stricken rural and township areas. These factors lead and exacerbate hopelessness, crime and violence. The inequality referred to above also results in the pattern of poor-on-poor violence in unequal societies. The principals indicated some secondary schools do qualify for the nutrition programme from the Department of Education and in a particular year were offered a stipend by the Department of Education to the value of R12 000-00 from the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Programme, which is never sufficient.

8.2.8 Family structures and school violence

An equally important theme that came out of this study was the dysfunctional/poor parenting skills exhibited by some parents and how it impacts on school violence. According to the majority of the participants, poor parenting skills in schools cut across racial lines. Most participants indicated that their learners came from working family backgrounds where parents left very early in the morning for work while their children were still asleep and returned home very late and too tired to supervise their children properly. Some of the learners also came from single parent families where one of the parents was absent for various reasons and this had its own negative consequences. Some learners also came from child-headed families and were orphans because of HIV/AIDS. This also has an added dimension on parenting where young people who still need to be cared for by parents/care givers find themselves having to play a role

of parents themselves. The deputy principal of Yellowwood Secondary School said the following about parenting at his school:

I find somewhat disturbing, that there are a lot of single moms in the school and there is no male figure. You find, for whatever reason, that a lot of these children, especially the boys, are very aggressive towards the woman teachers in the school. Where that comes from, I don't know.

(Deputy Principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

He further said:

I think another issue that could be a problem is that many of the African families have relatives who look after their children. While they (parents) are away through circumstances that may be beyond their control, they might be working in another town or province and I think that level of control falls away. These children don't know there are boundaries and they don't know when to stop and therefore you get a lot of this aggression whether it is intentional or unintentional that is coming through, particularly to the lady teachers. This is very disturbing.

(Deputy Principal of Yellowwood Secondary School)

Some participants even suggested parenting courses to equip parents on parenting skills because many parents were finding it difficult to parent their children effectively. In some families, parents appeared to have lost control and need tools to guide their children. One participant even suggested that parenting be made a compulsory section in the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum. Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) posit that children growing in dysfunctional contexts miss important parts of the parenting process that would enable them to benefit from schooling and prepare for adulthood. These researchers further state that dysfunctional family environments manifest in various forms such as deficient parenting styles; compromised social and economic conditions; inconsistency in the family and emotional disturbance.

8.2.9 Learners' exposure and experience of violence in the community

One other theme that came out strongly in this study on what could be causing learners to be violent was the learners' exposure and experience of violence in their communities and in some cases in their homes. The participants indicated exposure to violence made learners to believe violence as a means to resolve problems. To illustrate his point, the principal of Burmanbush

Secondary School even used the example of a teachers' strike that happened in 2010. The strike was at times violent and somehow the message conveyed to young people was that it is acceptable to solve labour/community problems through the use of violence and think that violence is the way to do it. The principal referred to above said:

If you look at what is happening and why there is violence in society - the biggest one right now is lack of service delivery in the country. Everyone is rising in the townships, burning and destroying even the little that they have. They believe, by so doing, the authorities will listen. It is counterproductive.

(The principal of Burmanbush Secondary School)

Echoing similar sentiments, a teacher from the focus group at Thandimfundo Secondary School also said:

A child, who comes from a background of violence, will learn that to solve a problem she/he must be violent. I think we should do something about this because a culture of violence manifests itself in schools. For example, if people want an increase in their salaries or in their wages, they must go on strike and whilst on strike, they must damage property. That is violence. By using violence to solve a problem, you are sending a message to the people around you that the only way of solving a problem is through violence and not negotiations.

(Teacher from the focus group at Thandimfundo Secondary School)

Similarly, a teacher from the focus group at Sugar Estate Secondary School said:

Personally, I think it's because certain political promises made cannot be fulfilled. Kids have an expectation of politicians because you have to create jobs and have to do this and that. I don't think those promises can be fulfilled because of practical reasons. I think the youth out of school is frustrated because we are not meeting expectations and is then filtering down in the schools because they see what is going on.

(Teacher from the focus group at Sugar Estate Secondary School)

In addition, a study conducted by Dubow, Boxer, Huesmann, Shikaki, Landau, Gvirsman and Ginges (2009) among Palestinian youths found that exposure in the social environment is a serious and significant factor for the development of psychopathology in children and adolescents and leads to aggression, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress symptoms and academic difficulties. Similarly, Farrell and Sullivan (2004), Flannery (2004), Osofsky, Rovaris, Hammer, Dickson, Freeman and Aucoin (2004), Rasmussen, Aber and Bhana (2004) and Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) corroborate the above findings and state that witnessing violence among young people may lead to increases in behaviours such as aggression, anxiety and

depression, suffer from eating and sleep disorders, lack concentration which leads to truancy and delinquency, have low self-esteem, and drug use, promote attitudes that support violent versus nonviolent methods of addressing problems, and weaken attachments to conventional institutions such as schools. Citing Bandura (1986), Farrell and Sullivan (ibid.) further state that witnessing violence provides a powerful context that can teach children aggressive behaviours and weaken inhibitions about behaving aggressively. There is so much that has also been written to illustrate that children learn more by emulating what adults do than what they (adults) say.

Closely linked to the theme of learners' exposure and experience of violence in the community, this study also showed that serious and chronic violence exposure may lead to the learners becoming numb or experience desensitisation (reduced or flattened affective arousal in response to violence) to violence (Youngstrom, Weist & Albus, 2003; Dubow, *et al.* (2009). This has very severe outcomes for the entire school when learners do not fear violence because it has become part of their normal lives (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). In other words, this speaks to the normalisation of the abnormal.

8.2.10 Dysfunctional school discipline committees and Community Policing Forums

Another main theme that emerged from this study was the dysfunctionality and ineffectiveness of some of the school discipline committees and the negative impact this was having on learner discipline at the school. This meant that cases of ill-discipline and violence were not attended to on time and this eventually affected the tone and morale of the school. In contrast, Joubert (2009) maintains that learners have a right to a fair hearing when charged with serious offences. This means that the disciplinary committee should be properly and timeously constituted as well. Paradoxically, the dysfunctionality of this very important school committee was equally matched by the Community Policing Forums (CPF) who seemed to also have endless problems of their own. These community structures were not functional their membership was voluntary and availability of time for meetings was an issue for most of its members. The participants indicated that the police have their hands full with community crime and so school violence and indiscipline is not a priority.

8.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have attempted to integrate some aspects of the existing literature and theoretical frameworks with the key themes that emerged from the research findings. In a nutshell, these themes are: multiple experiences of school violence and indiscipline; teenage pregnancy; lack of faith among learners in the schools to resolve conflict among the learners; perpetuation of violence by schools; snowball effect of school violence; fear among school authorities to acknowledge that violence and indiscipline exist in their schools; the relationship between community poverty and school violence; poor parenting and its impact on school violence; learners' exposure and experience of violence in the community; high levels of exposure to violence leads to desensitisation/numbing of feelings among the learners as they are exposed to violence frequently and its negative consequences as well as dysfunctionality of some Community Policing Forums. In order to respond proactively and skilfully to the challenges the researched schools face, they have realised the need for multiple-pronged strategies which they are utilising to combat school violence and indiscipline among learners. In the concluding chapter, the main conclusions and recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER NINE

LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with a presentation, analysis and discussion of themes that emerged from the study. After careful consideration of the data presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven and the themes that emerged in Chapter Eight, certain clear lessons emerged from the study. Based on the findings and themes outlined in the four preceding chapters and the lessons of this study, pertinent recommendations and implications for further research on the role of school governing bodies in addressing school violence are made.

9.2 Lessons learned

This study explored the actual experiences and practices of school governing bodies in addressing violence in post-conflict South African schools utilising a qualitative multi-case study design. Section 8 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 mandates school governing bodies to formulate codes of conduct for learners at each school aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process. The overall objective of the study was to explore the dynamics of school-based violence and the role of school governing bodies in reducing it in schools. After a careful consideration of the findings of this study, the study revealed a number of lessons to be learned. The majority of the participants indicated that schools faced a plethora of indiscipline and violence problems among the learners and concluded, based on the myriad of challenges facing specifically school disciplinary committees, that some school governing bodies were failing their schools. On the basis of this failure, most participants believed SGBs were not the most appropriate tools to reduce violence and indiscipline in their schools, despite the law mandating them to do so. The researched schools seemed to be victims of violence from the communities they were serving which hinders school governing bodies in implementing their mandates as presented above.

However, the study also indicated that well organised and well-run schools were better able to manage and minimise the impact of violence in their schools.

The abundant literature utilised in the study has shown the influence of the context both within and outside of the school and its impact on school violence (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). This community influence on the school is also shared by the SA Human Rights Commission Report (2006) which states that South Africa was experiencing unacceptably high levels of violent crime and this was spilling over into the schools and playgrounds. Similarly, Astor, Benbenishty and Marachi (2006), Edwards (2008) and Phillips, Linney and Pack (2008) also state that what is happening in schools reflects what is happening in society, i.e. the context in which the school is located interacts with internal school and student characteristics to influence levels of violence in schools.

This thesis has demonstrated that, despite the presence of legislation (as amended) to curb school violence and indiscipline among learners in South African schools, there is very little to prove that these laws were having the desired outcomes. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) has been in existence for more than sixteen years now, however, perhaps it is too much to expect immediate changes/ decrease in school violence since the structural inequalities that fuel school violence have not been addressed at a societal level (Burton, 2008). While schools have been democratised in line with the new dispensation in implementing/managing discipline and violence since 1994 and specifically with the introduction of SASA in 1997, it will not only take time to see tangible results but will also require more innovative and proactive action from all stakeholders to support and sustain it in order to reduce and eventually curb violence and indiscipline in schools.

Further, rather than focussing primarily on the social control of learners, schools should define alternative modes of practice that will enable both the learners and their communities to advocate for social transformation and social justice where learners are listened to and have a say in how their schools are run. Schools should become active participants and work with the community to enable learners to establish meaningful relationships with each other (and across race) – relationships that support feelings of trust, respect, diversity and connection in line with the values of the South African constitution and remove the feelings of distrust that currently exist in some communities.

9.3 Recommendations

This section presents and discusses recommendations which are made based on the research questions, findings and lessons of this study.

9.3.1 An integrated approach to school violence management

This study has highlighted that school governing bodies experienced a cocktail of violence incidents which are caused, not by one but many factors such as individual factors, home environment, school and community factors. Rather than focusing on individual aspects when dealing with school violence, an integrated, comprehensive (whole-school) approach that is immediate, effective, consistent, lawful and based on human rights and sustained through continuous human resource (SGB and other key community members, the school principal and SMT members, level one teachers and learners) development programmes is recommended to reduce and perhaps ultimately eradicate violence in schools. The advantage of an integrated (whole-school) approach is that it proceeds beyond a limited focus on the school itself to collaboration with all stakeholders in the community when addressing school violence (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007; Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2012). An integrated approach is also consistent with emancipatory paradigm utilised in the research methodology in this thesis in that it “brings voice” to excluded and marginalised groups as important role-players in the fight against school violence (Preble & Gordon, 2011, p.38). Inclusion of otherwise people who would have been marginalised sends a message that the school cares and values their input as people who live in the community and are also affected by what transpires in the school. In addition, Harber (2004) states that a more inclusive and democratic school fosters a climate of openness and a sense of ownership, commitment and responsibility. Further, Preble and Gordon (2011) posit that when a school intentionally expands its membership of its leadership beyond the typical academically or socially successful people, and reach out to many people who fall outside the range of traditional leaders; this conveys a desire to understand their school in new, inclusive ways. This is in itself a form of empowerment and is also consistent with democratic practices of collaboration, participation and emancipatory approach to leadership and governance.

Similarly, literature presented in this thesis shows that understanding the problem context is important in differentiating the underlying issues of school violence. Further, in the introductory

section of this thesis extensive literature was presented to show that South African is a post-conflict country which suffers from post-traumatic problems and that its violence at all levels has to be framed in that context. This calls for deeper understanding of the causes of violence and indiscipline issues and then responds appropriately. Teachers, school leaders and governors have to be continuously trained to understand these deeper issues. Cowie and Jennifer (2007) also posit that violence at school is not simply a school problem; specific features of the local neighbourhood and wider community, such as the presence of racial tension, often pervade school communities, creating a climate of fear and anxiety among young people and staff that supports violent attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, cooperation between learners, educators, principals, school management teams, non-teaching staff, school governing bodies, parents/caregivers, community leaders, non-governmental organisations, other government departments outside the school are similarly paramount when trying to resolve school violence and are more likely to succeed (Petersen, 2005; Cowie & Jennifer, 2007; Burton, 2008). Literature exists on managing post-conflict societies and therefore it is suggested that our education curriculum should include aspects of education in post-conflict countries so that teachers, learners and parents are empowered in this regard. It should be noted that this will be long term and therefore sporadic incidents of violence here and there should not cause people to be dismayed. This view is also shared by Nkomo, Weber and Malada (2007) who argue that apartheid wrought great harm with deep roots that will take generations to remove therefore, bringing normalcy to a structurally and psychically tortured society is a huge challenge facing South Africans and will take some time.

Similarly, to fight drugs and substance abuse, it is suggested that schools should establish partnerships with all stakeholders who have an interest in education including the small business people around the schools, the youth formations, the churches, women's organisations, the SAPS and CPF, NGOs and sister departments in some kind of an integrated (whole) school approach. The benefits of involving so many people from the various sectors are immense because they bring along diverse expertise. This calls for strong, committed, innovative and visionary leadership at all levels especially at a school governance/leadership level to drive the process (Greene, 2005).

The success of this approach, Cowie and Jennifer (2007) posit, lies in all the members of the school community being empowered to participate meaningfully in its development and implementation. This approach is also in line with democratic school governance theory which incorporates the inclusive and democratic pillars of involvement, providing information, participation/consultation, collaboration and partnership (Harber, 2004).

Furthermore, rather than focusing primarily on the social control of students, schools should find alternative modes of practice that will enable both students and their communities to advocate for emancipatory social transformation that addresses issues of social justice and violence. This thesis suggests this could be done through schools becoming more active participants in the community they serve, enabling all learners to create meaningful relationships with one another in an atmosphere of trust.

9. 3. 2 Multi-pronged approaches to school violence reduction

One of the findings of this study was that the majority of participants (except a few parents) did not believe school governing bodies were the most appropriate tools to combat indiscipline and violence in their schools. In the light of this finding, it is suggested the education law should be amended to allow schools to use that which works in their contexts but within the law. The law currently imposes the use of school disciplinary committees as enacted in the SASA to manage discipline issues and does not allow any deviation to accommodate varying local contexts. Disciplinary committees, as has been shown through this thesis, are confronted with a myriad of challenges which render them ineffective in many schools. In addition, this thesis has argued that the majority of the participants do not believe SGBs are the most appropriate structures to reduce/eliminate violence in schools. This is problematic in that it is difficult if not impossible to implement a policy you do not intrinsically believe in. It is therefore suggested that in schools, where current disciplinary committees are dysfunctional, be legally allowed to constitute discipline committees made up of senior teachers led by the principal to manage discipline cases. In this manner, the discipline committees are likely to be quicker, more efficient and less time consuming in managing learner indiscipline and violence. The due process will still have to be followed but it will be less cumbersome than the current practice.

9.3.3 Design comprehensive programmes to address teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was generally identified as a serious challenge in the researched schools and therefore it is recommended that the Provincial Department of Education, working with schools and other stakeholders in education, should have viable programmes to address not only teenage pregnancy but to educate young people on gender issues as well. This thesis also supports a whole-school approach in addressing teenage pregnancy that requires all stakeholders such as other government departments, key organisations in the non-governmental sector, the research community, the religious sector, community leaders, parents and learners themselves (HSRC/Department of Basic Education Report on Teenage Pregnancy in South Africa, 2009) to be involved. The state will also have to be responsive to the criticism levelled at its door that the social grants it gives to unemployed teenage mothers, as this is viewed as promoting a dependency syndrome among young people to fall pregnant to access social grants. In the long term, there are very few countries in the world who can sustain the current social grants system available in South Africa. It is also recommended that both parents and school leaders should work together to foster a strong attachment and commitment to schools among female teenage learners and youth in general to complete their schooling. This can be done through a number of pro-active programmes as already suggested above.

9.3.4 Develop training programmes on the management of gender/violence/racism

This study also found that, school principals especially were reluctant to admit that indiscipline and school violence problems exist in their schools and this could be attributed to fear that the presence of these factors at school may be interpreted as failure on their part to lead and manage their schools properly. This thesis argues that it becomes impossible to manage an issue if you do not admit it exists in the first place. Gender/violence/racism problems are a factor in many South African schools and so to sweep them under the carpet or downplay their existence as a problem is counterproductive. I therefore recommend that both the school principals and school governors should be adequately developed through a variety of training programmes on how to manage gender/violence/racism issues so that they would naturally lose the fear (to admit their existence) in their schools and begin to candidly address them. The schools also need to be pro-active and

design various inclusive and non-discriminatory policies and procedures to ensure school safety. These would include anti-racism policies, anti-bullying policies, gender management policies, appointment of a school safety officer (among senior staff members) to work closely with the school disciplinary committee and co-ordinate and implement the school's safety strategy.

One of the findings that came out clearly in this study was that schools were aware that they needed to review their policies on a regular basis to ensure they were relevant to the changing contexts in which they found themselves. Yet, despite this knowledge, very few were doing it. Somehow, they kept mentioning they were going to do it yet it was never done. It is therefore recommended that school leaders should be continuously trained on school safety issues but also monitored and evaluated through the various performance measures that already exist like the Integrated Quality Management System, to ensure compliance. It is recommended that school safety and security should be made one of the key performance areas in the IQMS document.

9.3.5 Continuous development programmes on effective schools

This thesis has shown that schools in South Africa are grappling with new policies and regulations as they navigate the new terrain of democratic school governance and management after many centuries of authoritarian management. There is an urgent need for change from autocratic discipline to democratic discipline where school leaders have to be continuously empowered to faithfully employ democratic principles in managing learner discipline. In this new democratic environment, teachers should be more explicit and be moral examples themselves, be open and democratic in the manner they manage their classrooms so that learners would find it easy to approach them when the need arises. The school leadership (the principal, the SGB and the SMT) should understand that the changes they implement will not bear fruits overnight but will be a long process. The SGBs and school management also need to understand that disciplinary measures based on social control are less effective and should thus be encouraged to utilise more inclusive types of strategies. This approach to school leadership and development will prevent unnecessary changes to policies that have a potential to succeed but need more time to gel with the school ethos and culture. For instance, when schools embark on programmes that are inclusive and democratic, when they encounter challenges, they are quick to

withdraw to undemocratic tendencies such as mistrust, blaming others, authoritarian treatment and claim that democracy is not working. Democratic discipline is important and is characterised by complete and genuine involvement of all stakeholders in a learning community (Edwards, 2008). This means parents; teachers and learners are treated as equal partners and respected when in the school structures such as discipline committees. In order to achieve the above educational goals, Harber (2004) also suggests that schools should have two twin goals which are peace and democracy. In addition, Harber (2004, p.136-137) convincingly argues that "... democracy provides the best political environment available for the peaceful solution of disputes and conflicts" in society and schools but this is not possible without democrats. Democracy is only sustainable in a supportive environment where there is commitment to democratic values, skills and behaviours. However, this is only possible if all stakeholders are genuinely committed to the same school's democratic practices and goals pursued in line with the schools' code of conduct if we are to succeed to turn around our schools. All these goals cannot succeed if there are no continuous development programmes to empower school governors, school principals, teachers, learners and parents on effective and democratic school schools.

9.3.6 Learning students' names and mentoring

Research has shown that one of the reasons why some learners are violent, it is because they have no attachment or connection to the school. One way of ensuring learners are connected to the school in by making sure someone in the school knows them personally. Thompson, Burcham and McLaughlin (2010, p.241) propose that principals and teachers should "create a community of inclusion" from day one of the school year by making a conscious effort to learn each and every student's name. This shows learners that as a school, you care and value them and they become more active and willing to talk. This may appear a daunting task but it is possible. The above researchers also suggest that, as part of knowing the students, one should also extend this to knowing the family. Parents also need to receive a clear message that they are valued as teammates in educating their children.

One other way that is suggested to break the cycle of violence is to deliberately assign students to mentors where each staff member is assigned a manageable number of students who are not in

his/her class to mentor and make sure they learn their names and check with them on a regular basis. The learners begin to build strong relationships with the staff members. The focus in these relationships should be character building and student learning. It is equally very important to know that any intervention programmes that are started will have its challenges, therefore it is important to ensure everyone is on board and challenges are addressed instead of being swept under the carpet.

Further, one of the findings in this study was that learners did not have faith in the school authorities to resolve their problems and those teachers were not listening to them. It is significant that learners must feel that someone is available to listen to them, no matter the context or situation. The learners need to know their teachers and those leading the school are prepared to listen to them. In this way, they are unlikely to resort to violence to resolve issues. Recognising learners through special awards and recognitions, fairness when promoting learners to leadership positions, involving them in community projects and partnerships will go a long way in promoting a violence-free school environment.

9.3.7 Schools should review policies that perpetuate violence

Another theme that came out prominently in this study was that of schools perpetuating violence, consciously or unconsciously through their policies, school cultures, and actions by school leaders, governors and teachers. As shown in the preceding discussion, this study also found a disturbing trend where some learners have no faith in the school structures to resolve conflict among them and so tended to take the law into their own hands to see that justice was served. When teachers do not protect the learners from bullies, this sends a message to bullies that what they are doing is acceptable. This consequently influencing the aggrieved learners to retaliate, exacerbating the already worse situation. Schools should regularly review all their policies, their culture and school climate to ensure that they do not perpetuate violence unintentionally. Harber (2004) has indicated in many ways how schools perpetuate violent behaviour and research done in this area should be used by schools to empower themselves to effectively deal with violence in schools.

9.3.8 The need for school-community partnerships

The whole school approach adopted by this thesis emphasises the need for schools to work closely with families of their learners to promote non-violent home environments to reduce the levels of violence at schools. Schools should support wider dialogue among learners and teach them conflict management skills to encourage peaceful discussion that proceeds beyond the conflict, tension and violence (Hilker, 2011). Harber (2004) proposes that to achieve peaceful societies, we need to institutionalise greater levels of democracy than we are currently doing. Further, he posits that democracy provides the best environment for peaceful solution of disputes and conflicts. It is in this context that I propose the genuine involvement of both learners and parents (who are continuously capacitated) to deal with school violence as they know the community the schools are serving better. Arrangements could be made that experts are invited to schools to address parents during parents-meetings or that kind of information could be disseminated through the learners. Parents' views could also be solicited through surveys/questionnaires on what parents would like to be addressed on in future meetings. Research has shown that much of the violence within families stems from an inability to resolve conflicts constructively (Leoschut & Burton, 2009; Bester & Du Plessis, 2010). This suggests the need for targeted interventions aimed at raising awareness about appropriate conflict-resolution strategies among families as these constitute the primary role models for children and youth. Similarly, Davies and Leoni (2007), Bloom (2009) and Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) also emphasise teaching both the learners and teachers conflict management skills to empower them to deal with conflict without resorting to aggression. In this study, it was evident from the participants that the learners did not have the culture of reporting abusive and violent behaviour; instead they were quick to resort to violence to settle their differences. During conflict management workshops, learners and teachers could also be taught emotional/self-awareness as well as relationship/anger-management skills to address anger, fear, bullying tendencies and violence in general.

9.3.9 Visibility of teachers to monitor learners during breaks

Taylor and Ryan (2005) suggest that to maintain discipline, good school principals and their teams should be highly visible and this could be done by regular patrols of school corridors and

visiting classrooms. These movements ensure that the school principal and teacher are aware of everything that is going on in the school and also own those remote and isolated areas in the school. Research has shown that learners cannot learn when they are fearful. This study has also shown that some teachers were not honouring their periods in class nor supervising their learners during break-times. In terms of the SASA, learners should not be left on their own without adult supervision while at school. Educators have to be reminded regularly of this legal expectation and be monitored that they do ground duties without fail to deter or address abuse and violent behaviour during break- times. They should also be visible near those areas that are known to be prone to violence problems such as toilets and school corridors. Teachers should be monitored by their principals and members of the school management teams that they implement this as failure to do so may expose their schools to litigation in terms of their *in loco parentis* responsibilities.

The schools should also be seen to be responsive to all forms of indiscipline/violence problems no matter how small they may be as it is the small problems when left unattended, which result in more serious problems. The school rules should be properly known and appropriately and consistently enforced to deter misbehaviour. In this way, there will be no reason why learners should not have faith in the school authorities to protect them. An attitude of ‘zero tolerance’ should be adopted (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Mestry, Moloi, & Mahomed; Bloom, 2009) but should be implemented with caution to avoid hindering learner rights (Reyes, 2006). Zero-tolerance policies, although controversial when applied to domestic violence situations, are appropriate and effective in eradicating school violence; particularly school bullying (Meadows, 2007). However, zero-tolerance policies tend to be overly punitive and not preventive and have the potential to stigmatise some learners; thereby infringing on the students’ constitutionally guaranteed rights to a quality education (Reddy, *et al.*, 2001). The literature appears to suggest that zero-tolerance policies are not likely to be as effective as originally predicted. It is suggested that teachers should play a more meaning role in creating and fostering a positive school atmosphere. In addition to continuously working towards fostering a positive school culture, schools should also adopt policies that embrace diversity and nurture a value and belief system that respect multicultural issues in relation to one’s race, ethnicity, culture, religion and sexual orientation, respecting the fundamental values of the South African Constitution. This

should be done in the manner in which teachers interact with learners both in and out of the classroom environment. Research has also shown that learners have a tendency not to approach a teacher unless the teacher has gained their trust and admiration and therefore feel sufficiently confident to confide in that teacher. This trust is earned through showing as a teacher/principal that you care or are concerned about the welfare and safety of the learners under your care. In this study it was found that learners do not have faith in the school system to protect them. This would not happen in a school where learners have confidence in their teachers or the school principal. Principals and teachers have to be conscientised of this important school/classroom management skill.

9.3.10 Involvement of the District Office to combat school violence

The local education district is currently the lowest local office that has personnel which should have expertise to manage violence at schools. It is recommended that these officials should work closely with schools and other interested stakeholders to combat school violence. These officials, working with schools, should ensure that each school is linked to a local Community Policing Forum to share information on school violence such as frequency of violence in a particular area, the type of violence, the police personnel responsible for school safety in a particular area, etc. This would ensure that schools become more effective in their efforts to combat violent crime.

9.4 Implications for further research

In this thesis, a qualitative approach was utilised to delve into the experiences of school governors at four schools in addressing violence in post-conflict South African schools. The results of this study cannot be generalised for other schools but there are lessons that can be learned and extrapolated. As shown in the findings of this research, violence is a serious problem in many schools – urban, peri-urban, township, rural, rich or poor. This study found that school governors had multiple experiences of school violence and indiscipline and there was a strong relationship between violence at school and the broader social conditions in which the school was located. The implications for this are very clear: school leadership has to be conscious of societal problems if they are to comprehend and effectively deal with school-based violence. Schools should not, like an ostrich, bury their heads in the sand and pretend problems do not exist and therefore do nothing. They need to reflect on what is going on in the society and its

bearings on the school itself. Literature cited extensively in this thesis bears testimony to the strong relationship between the school and the community that it services.

Further, it was found in this study that almost all the principals, who should be at the forefront of the battle against all forms of violence including racism, claimed not to be aware of racism in their schools and so did not have anti-racism policies yet some of the learners I spoke to stated they endured racist remarks on a regular basis while at school. At least, two of the researched schools had been in the newspapers on allegations of racist practices at the schools. The implications for this are that, unless school leadership admits that problems (of racism) exist in their schools, there can be no solution to these problems and a desire to address them. Further research on why there is such serious denialism on issues of racism in schools should be conducted. I am advocating for this because it is a known fact that South Africa was a racist country for centuries therefore it is expected that racism should be embedded in our psyche. We therefore should not feel ashamed to discuss it openly so that we can begin to heal our wounds, yet we do. So many researchers have said South Africans were wounded by apartheid and we need to heal. How do we heal if some of us do not acknowledge we were wounded in the first place? This thesis has argued, as a post-conflict society, we need to approach school violence differently.

Secondly, as this study shows, some schools do not treat all cases of indiscipline/violence seriously, which is clearly violence by omission by the school authorities where teachers are aware there is a problem of violence (of any kind), and does little or nothing to try to attend to it. Research done all over the world suggests serious incidents of violence like shootings begin as minor incidents at school but are ignored. The implications here are that each reported case should be treated seriously so that there is no need for the victims of violence to feel let down by the school system as these are the same learners who end up taking law into their own hands. Proper handling of indiscipline by teachers and record keeping is important and teachers and schools should be held accountable for this. School violence is a serious issue and therefore the manner in which it is dealt with should be seen to be proportionate to its seriousness. This should even, if necessary, mean that teachers and schools be sanctioned if it can be proved they were negligent in their exercise of their duties to care and protect learners. This has obvious implications for teacher training and how they practice classroom and school leadership and

management. This ultimately has implications for the SGB as well– they have to be more assertive in their governance role with regards to school discipline. There is sufficient evidence in this thesis to suggest that school discipline committees are sometimes not properly constituted and therefore incapable of exercising their functioning by reducing violence in schools. This has implications for the training of SGBs and their committees.

The study also found that schools were aware that they should work with the South African Police Services in minimising violence in schools but it was found that this was rather haphazardly and inconsistently done. The police had their hands full (of community crime) consequently regarded school crime and violence as trivial issues. This perception has to change, there is no such thing as ‘trivial violence’ as it begins small and ends up being unmanageable.

This study also found that schools faced problems of school safety and security committees not being properly constituted and this had implications for their functioning and decision-making. More on-going training for school governing bodies is necessary as well as the need to educate our communities on the need to get involved in the activities of their schools even if it is on voluntary basis. In this way school governing bodies and their committees would be staffed by people who are knowledgeable and are legitimate leaders in their communities.

Talking to teachers and learners, this study found that many teachers still need training on the alternative methods of managing school discipline that is embedded on democratic values and practices. Many teachers, even though they were no longer using corporal punishment, were still shouting and abusive to learners and this revealed they still do not fully understand how they should manage democratic class discipline. Many were frustrated by the time-consuming nature of democratic discipline which suggests more rigorous training on democratic management and governance is necessary. Teachers should also be conscientised that there are no quick-fix solutions to this. The teachers need to understand that the masculine nature of the South African society we have promotes and supports violent behaviour over more feminine styles of behaviour and needs to be challenged. Alternatives to aggressive and violent masculinity need to be explored and discussed in schools and this has curriculum implications for our pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. Mills (2001, p.139) postulates that “... changing

gender patterns and relations is a long-term process that will require major cultural shifts” and as South Africans, we have to make those decisions to change.

9.5 Chapter summary

The above recommendations to help school governing bodies and schools to overcome the detrimental effects of school violence and implications for further research are by no means exhaustive. It is only in a non-threatening environment that learners can concentrate on their lessons and make progress: violence and intimidation rule out the child’s constitutional right to education. The most effective programmes for developing safe schools are those that focus on prevention, the development of psycho-social skills and socially competent behaviour, and improving resilience which can and should be taught to learners during conflict management lessons in Life Orientation and other lessons at schools. The role of school governing bodies in all this is immense. Discipline and safety can only be promoted by providing an environment in which students are kept gainfully occupied, and where there is a caring and visionary leadership (the SGBs, the SMT, Teachers, RCLs and other players) which promotes an expectation of academic achievement in a violence-free environment.

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APPENDICES

- A. Ethical clearance certificate
- B. Permission letter to the KZN Department of Education to conduct the study in their schools
- C. Permission letter from the KZN Department of Education permitting me to conduct the study in their schools
- D. Permission letter to school principals
- E. Permission letter to school governing body/Disciplinary Committee chairpersons
- F. Permission letter to parent members
- G. Permission letter to teacher participants
- H. Consent letter to parents/guardians whose children were study participants
- I. Consent form to parents/guardians of learners who were study participants
- J. Permission letters to RCL members
- K. Interview schedule for School Principals
- L. Interview schedule for Teacher governors
- M. Interview schedule for Learner & Parent governors
- N: Observation schedule
- O: Documents review schedule
- P: Language clearance certificate

Appendix A
(Ethical clearance certificate)



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN
4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

26 November 2010

Mr. SE Mthiyane (962115754)
School of Education and Development

Dear Mr. Mthiyane

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1353/010D
PROJECT TITLE: Exploring school governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

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)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor – Dr. V.S. Mncube
cc. Mr. N Memela

APPENDIX B
(PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

P.O. Box 852
New-Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention: The Superintendent-General (Dr Cassius R. Lubisi)
Department of Basic Education
Province of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree fulfilment, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in four secondary schools under your jurisdiction in and around Durban. The schools are: Thornwood Secondary School, Newlands West Secondary School, Centenary Park Secondary School and Pinetown Boys Secondary School. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security

Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member; representation of stakeholders in such meetings; adherence to meetings procedures; following of the *due process principles*; frequency of such discipline hearings; prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in DSSC meetings; who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues; etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

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

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me directly using the following contact details: Sphiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Cell: 073 377 4672

E-mail: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane.

APPENDIX C

(Permission letter from the KZN Department of Education)



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

**MR SE MTHIYANE
PO BOX 852
NEW GERMANY
3620**

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Date: 05/10/2010

Reference: 00100/2010

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF VIOLENCE IN POST- CONFLICT SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU NATAL.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the attached list has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educator programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The investigation is to be conducted from 05 October 2010 to 05 October 2011.
6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s) please contact Mr Sibusiso Alwar at the contact numbers above.
7. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal of the school where the intended research is to be conducted.
8. Your research will be limited to the schools submitted.
9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Resource Planning.

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, PIETERMARITZBURG 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/8611 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za / smiso.sikhakhane@kzndoe.gov.za



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

10. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Resource Planning
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards

R. Cassius Lubisi (PhD)
Superintendent-General

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, PIETERMARITZBURG 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/8611 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail: rlubisi@kzndoe.gov.za / miso.ikhakhandi@kzndoe.gov.za



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

MR SE MTHIYANE
PO BOX 852
NEW GERMANY
3620

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Date: 05/10/2010

Reference: 00100/2010

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **Exploring school governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post- conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal.**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, PIETERMARITZBURG 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/8611 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail: info@kwazulu-natal.gov.za / info@kwa-natal.gov.za



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

**MR SE MTHIYANE
PO BOX 852
NEW GERMANY
3620**

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Date: 05/10/2010

Reference: 00100/2010

LIST OF SCHOOLS

1. [REDACTED] Secondary School
2. [REDACTED] Secondary School
3. [REDACTED] Secondary School
4. [REDACTED] Secondary School

Kind regards

**R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General**

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building; PIETERMARTZBURG 3201

TEL : Tel: +27 33 341 8610/8611 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail: info@kzn.gov.za / imho@education.gov.za

APPENDIX D
(PERMISSION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

P.O. Box 852
New-Germany
3620
14 February 2011

Attention: The Principal
Sample High School

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development 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 advance from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and has been granted (See copy attached). I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in your school. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore the dynamics of school based violence and also if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson and three other parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC), as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal; focus group interviews shall be held with the SGB chairperson and three other parent members, four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded. In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member; representation of stakeholders in such meetings; adherence to meetings' procedures, adherence to the *due process principles*, frequency of such meetings, prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in such meetings, who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues, etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and learners/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Sphiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane.

Declaration

I (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu 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 any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance
Mr Siphwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX E
(PERMISSION LETTER TO THE SGB/DSSC CHAIRPERSON)

P.O. Box 852
New-Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention: The Chairperson of the SGB/DSSC (His/Her Name if known)
Sample Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development 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 advance from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and has been granted. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research with you at the school in your capacity as the SGB Chairperson. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners. The

study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member, representation of stakeholders in such meetings, adherence to meetings procedures, following of the *due process principles*, frequency of such meetings, prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in such meetings, who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues, etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and your child/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Siphiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane.

Declaration

I (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu 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 any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance
Mr Siphwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX F
(LETTER TO THE PARENT MEMBERS OF THE SGB)

P.O. Box 852
New Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention: The Parent Members of the SGB
Sample Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree requirement. Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission in advance from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and has been granted. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research with you in your capacity as a member of the SGB at your child's school. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member; representation of stakeholders in such meetings; adherence to meetings procedures, following of the *due process principles*, frequency of such meetings, prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in such meetings, who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues, etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and your child/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Siphwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated

Thank you immensely

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane

Declaration

I (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu 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 any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance
Mr Siphwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX G
(LETTER TO THE TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES IN THE SGB)

P.O. Box 852
New-Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention: The Teacher Representatives in the SGB (Their Names if known)
Sample Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree requirements. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research with you in your capacity as a teacher representative in the SGB at your school. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member; representation of stakeholders in such meetings; adherence to meetings procedures, following of the *due process principles*, frequency of such meetings, prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in such meetings, who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues, etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and your child/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Sphiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane.

Declaration

I (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Durban, Kwa-Zulu 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 any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance
Mr Siphwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX H
(CONSENT LETTERS TO THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS)

P.O. Box 852
New Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention: The Parent of Child (Their Names if known)
Sample Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

**LETTER TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN REQUESTING FOR INFORMED CONSENT
FOR HIS/HER CHILD'S PARTICIPATION**

My name is Siphwiwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my degree requirements, I am required to conduct research. Please be informed that I have sought in advance the necessary permission from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and has been granted. I therefore, humbly request you to allow your child/ward Siphosethu Mthembu (fictitious name) who is a member of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) at his/her school to take part in the study. Should my request be acceptable, his/her participation will include taking part in a focus group interview which shall take place at school. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably

a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners. The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s and all your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and your child/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Siphwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane

Declaration

I (Full name of parent/guardian) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu 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 for my child/ward to take part in the study

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project any time should I so desire.

Signature of Parent/Guardian of child: -----

Signature of Learner: -----

Date: -----

Thanking you in advance

Mr Siphwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX I

(For Parents to sign on behalf of their Children)

University of KwaZulu-Natal
School of Educational and Development
Private Bag X03
Ashwood 3605
South Africa

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

I _____ parent/guardian of _____ (name of child) consent to her/his participation in the research study: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal** conducted by Mr S.E. Mthiyane (student) and Dr V.S. Mncube (supervisor) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Education and Development. I understand that my child's name will not be used; that her/his participation involves only answering questions regarding her/his involvement with the RCL/SGB of the school where she/he is a learner, and that this research project has been approved by the University's Research Committee.

Parent's/Guardian's name: _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

Witness : _____

APPENDIX J

(To the RCL Chairperson and three other learners from the RCL)

P.O. Box 852
New Germany
3620
5 June 2010

Attention:

To the RCL Chairperson and three other learners from the RCL (Their Name/s if known)
Sample Secondary School

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Siphwe Mthiyane, a PhD student and lecturer in the School of Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am required to conduct research as part of my degree requirement. Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission in advance from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and has been granted. In pursuit of this objective, I therefore kindly seek your permission to conduct research with you in your capacity as a member of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) at your school. The title of my study is: **School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.**

This study aims to explore if the school governing bodies are appropriate tools in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African secondary schools. The planned study will focus on school governing body members (especially the school principal, the SGB chairperson, four parent members of the SGB, both teacher representatives in the SGB and two others- preferably a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) and another who sits in the Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) as well as four learners from the Representative Council of Learners. The study will use semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, documents review and observations.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the school principal and SGB chairperson; focus group interviews shall be held with four parent members, the four teachers mentioned above as well as four learners from the RCL. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded.

In addition, I will do observations of SGB meetings (in particular, I would want to observe at least two DSSC meetings). When doing observations I will listen to what participants say and watch what they do and take extensive notes. What will be included in the note-taking will be: what was said, the details of who was speaking; how long the discussion took; the seating plan of the members in the meeting; the speaking turns; contribution by each member of the SGB. Further, I will observe the following: participation by each stakeholder member; representation of stakeholders in such meetings; adherence to meetings procedures, following of the *due process principles*, frequency of such meetings, prevalence of issues of discipline/violence in such meetings, who the victims and perpetrators are of discipline issues, etc. I will also observe whether the following issues are taken into consideration: rights of learners to be heard (freedom of expression), equity, etc.). In addition, I will observe the extent to which parents and learners participate in meetings.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s.

All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent your names.

Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on your part.

The interviews shall be recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

You and your child/ward will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr V.S. Mncube at 031-260 7590 / 076 562 5104. E-mail: Mncubev@ukzn.ac.za.

In addition, should you have any queries please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Sphiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated

Thank you immensely

Yours sincerely

Mr S.E. Mthiyane

Declaration

I (Full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:
**School governing bodies in addressing issues of violence in post-conflict South African
schools: case studies of four secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu 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 any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance
Mr Sipiwe E. Mthiyane

APPENDIX K

Individual Interview Schedule for school principals

This Interview schedule is designed to explore the actual roles of SGBs in addressing issues of violence in South African schools.

1. Biographical Information of the School Principal

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Highest Educational qualification/s:

1.3 Experience as school principal (Number of years and previous positions held, etc):

2. Preparation for SGB work

2.1 Have you attended any training on school discipline/school safety as a School principal? Please elaborate.

2.2 Would you consider the training you attended adequate/inadequate in preparing you for the role in managing school discipline and violence? Please elaborate.

3. Tasks/ roles and policies:

- As a principal of a school, what are your perceptions and experiences of violence at your school?
- What are some of the challenges you experience regularly in implementing discipline at your school? How do you overcome them?
- Does your school have a Code of Conduct for Learners? Could you also elaborate on how all the stakeholders were involved in its crafting?
- Your school governing body - does it have a sub-committee called Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) or a similar structure? Could you share with me how it works, who its members are and the challenges it experiences in maintaining discipline in the school?
- Are there any other discipline-related policies in your school that help to prevent disciplinary problems among learners, e.g. anti-bullying, anti-racism policies, etc.? Please elaborate.
- Could you also share with me if you regard your school's DSSC as effective in its duties? Please explain.

- The S.A. Schools Act 84 of 1996 places the responsibility of learner discipline on the shoulders of the SGB. To this end, do you believe that the SGBs are the most appropriate tools to maintain discipline and reduce the levels of violence in South African schools? Please elaborate.
- What policies, measures and initiatives are taken by SGBs to promote a violence-free or secure environment that protects learners against harm?
- The SGB/school management is expected to follow ‘*due processes*’ (listen to both sides in a dispute and follow natural laws of justice) in dealing with discipline issues. How does your DSSC implement this in your school? Please explain.
- As part of maintaining discipline and safety at schools, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 empowers school principals to search and confiscate illegal drugs and dangerous weapons from learners. As a school, how do you implement this disciplinary procedure?
- How does violence in schools influence access to education for all learners

OR

- Are you aware of any learners who may have dropped out of school as a result of violent behaviour on them either by other learners or by teachers? Please explain.
- Would you say that the Code of Conduct for Learners is an effective tool in dealing with school based violence OR are there any other means/strategies that can be utilised to reduce violence at schools? Please elaborate.
 - The South African youth is considered to be among the most violent in the world, according to a recent study by the S.A. Institute of Race Relations. In your view, why is it so?
 - As a way forward, are there any other suggestions you would like to make regarding the role of the SGB in maintaining discipline/reducing violence at schools?

APPENDIX L

Focus group Interview Schedule for teacher members of the SGB

1. Biographical Information of the School Governing Body Members

3.1 Gender:

3.2 Highest Educational qualification:

3.3 Experience in RCL work (Number of years involved in RCL, position/s held, etc):

2. Membership and duration in the SGB

How long have you been serving the SGB?

3. Preparation for SGB work

3.1 Have you attended any training as an RCL and SGB member to prepare you for the role that you play in the both these structures?

3.2 Would you consider the training you attended adequate/inadequate in preparing you for the role of RCL and SGB member? Please elaborate.

4. Tasks/ roles and policies:

- As teachers, what are your perceptions and experiences of violence in your school?
- What are some of the challenges you experience regularly in implementing discipline at your school? How do you overcome them?
- Does your school have a Code of Conduct for Learners? Could you also elaborate on how all the stakeholders were involved in its crafting?
- Your school governing body - does it have a sub-committee called Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) or a similar structure? Could you share with me how it works, who its members are and the challenges it experiences in maintaining discipline in the school?
- Are there any other discipline-related policies in your school that help to prevent disciplinary problems among learners, e.g. anti-bullying, anti-racism policies, etc.? Please elaborate.
- Could you also share with me if you regard your school's DSSC as effective in its duties? Please explain.
- The S.A. Schools Act 84 of 1996 places the responsibility of learner discipline on the shoulders of the SGB. To this end, do you believe that the SGBs are the most

appropriate tools to maintain discipline and reduce the levels of violence in South African schools? Please elaborate.

- What policies, measures and initiatives are taken by SGBs to promote a violence-free or secure environment that protects learners against harm?
- The SGB/school management/teachers are expected to follow '*due processes*' (listen to both sides in a dispute and follow natural laws of justice) in dealing with discipline issues. How does your DSSC implement this in your school? Please explain.
- As part of maintaining discipline and safety at schools, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 empowers school principals to search and confiscate illegal drugs and dangerous weapons from learners. As a school, how do you implement this disciplinary procedure?
- How does violence in schools influence access to education for all learners

OR

Are you aware of any learners who may have dropped out of school as a result of violent behaviour on them either by other learners or by teachers? Please explain.

- Would you say that the Code of Conduct for Learners is an effective tool in dealing with school based violence OR are there any other means/strategies that can be utilised to reduce violence at schools? Please elaborate.
- The South African youth is considered to be among the most violent in the world, according to a recent study by the S.A. Institute of Race Relations. In your view, why is it so?
- As a way forward, are there any other suggestions you would like to make regarding the role of the SGB in maintaining discipline/reducing violence at schools?

APPENDIX M

Focus group Interview Schedule for learner/parent members of the SGB

1. Biographical Information of the Learner/Parent Members

1.1 Gender:

1.2 Highest Educational qualification/s:

1.3 Experience in RCL work (Number of years involved in RCL, position/s held, etc):

2. Membership of the RCL and SGB

a. How long have you served in the SGB?

3. Preparation for SGB work

a. Have you attended any training as an RCL and SGB member to prepare you for the role that you play in the both these structures?

b. Would you consider the training you attended adequate/inadequate in preparing you for the role of RCL and SGB member? Please elaborate.

4. Tasks/ roles and policies:

- As learners/parents and members of the SGB, what are your perceptions and experiences violence at your school?
- As learners/parents and members of the SGB, what are some of the challenges you experience regularly in implementing discipline at your school? How do you overcome them?
- Does your school have a Code of Conduct for Learners? Could you also elaborate on how all the stakeholders were involved in its crafting?
- Your school governing body - does it have a sub-committee called Discipline, Safety and Security Committee (DSSC) or a similar structure? Could you explain how it works and who its members are?
- Are there any other discipline related policies in your school that help to curb disciplinary problems among learners, e.g. anti-bullying, anti-racism policies, etc.? Please elaborate.
- Could you also share with me if you regard your school's DSSC as effective in its duties? Please explain.
- The S.A. Schools Act 84 of 1996 places the responsibility of learner discipline on the shoulders of the SGB. To this end, do you believe that the SGBs are the most

appropriate tools to maintain discipline and reduce the levels of violence in South African schools? Please elaborate.

- What policies, measures and initiatives are taken by SGBs to promote a violence-free or secure environment that protects learners against harm?
- The SGB/school management is expected to follow ‘*due processes*’ (listen to both sides in a dispute and follow natural laws of justice) in dealing with discipline issues. How does your DSSC implement this in your school? Please explain.
- As part of maintaining discipline and safety at schools, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 empowers school principals/delegated officials to search learners and confiscate illegal drugs and dangerous weapons. How is this disciplinary procedure implemented in your school?
- In your view as parents/learners, how does violence in schools influence access to education for all learners?

OR

Are you aware of any learners who may have dropped out of school as a result of violent behaviour on them either by other learners or by teachers? Please explain.

- Would you say that the Code of Conduct for Learners is an effective tool in dealing with school based violence OR are there any other means/strategies that can be utilised to reduce violence at schools? Please elaborate.
- The South African youth is considered to be among the most violent in the world, according to a recent study by the S.A. Institute of Race Relations. In your view, why is it so?
- As a way forward, are there any other suggestions you would like to make regarding the role of the SGB in maintaining discipline/reducing violence at schools?

APPENDIX N

Documents Review schedule

The document that will be reviewed will not be older than two years and will include:

1. Written sources such as minutes of the SGB where issues of discipline are discussed and recorded.
2. School Disciplinary Committee meetings and tribunals will be studied. Frequency of these incidents as well as who are involved shall also be noted.
3. The school's Code of Conduct for Learners' policy shall also be the focus for my study.
4. The school's Log Book and the Incidents Book shall also be extensively studied.

Official documents will be used to corroborate the observations and interviews thus improving the trustworthiness of the findings. The documents may reveal aspects that were not found through the observations and interviews. They may even "shape new directions for observation and interviews" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.52). Fitzgerald (2007) also states that documents can provide valuable information about the context and culture of institutions and frequently provide another window for the researcher to read between the lines of official discourse and then triangulate through interviews, observations and questionnaires.

Extensive notes will be taken on matters relating to discipline and school-based violence.

APPENDIX O

Observation schedule (Of meetings for SGB and Discipline, Safety and Security Committee [DSSC].

This observation schedule is aimed at observing the formal meetings of the school governing body and in particular the DSSC meetings at all four participating schools.

When attending the formal meetings of SGBs/DSSC I will focus on the following:

Listen to what participants say and watch what they do.

I will take extensive notes, and what will be included in the note-taking will be:

What was said?

The details of who was speaking;

How long the discussion took;

The seating plan of the members in the meeting;

The speaking turns;

Contribution by each member of the SGB.

Further, I will observe the following:

Adherence to the principles of ‘*due process*’ at disciplinary/tribunal hearings (*due process* should encompass rules of natural justice as well as principles of procedural fairness such as:

- *Audi alteram partem* (listen to both sides);
- *Nemo iudex in re causa* (no one can be a judge in his own case);
- *Ultra vires* (beyond legal authority);
- *In loco parentis* (in the place of parent).

Participation by each stakeholder member at disciplinary hearings (especially parents and learners);

Representation of stakeholders in such meetings;

Further, I will observe the following:

Prevalence of issues of violence/discipline at such meetings;

Who the perpetrators (boys or girls/ educators or learners) are and the commonality of

misdeemeanours; issues of violence along racial/gender lines –if any; and whether the SGB

understands and implements the rights of all learners and how they implement these in the context of school violence.

I will record the notes of what was observed during the actual observation/s as quickly as possible thereafter, since the quantity of information forgotten is very slight over a short period of time after the observation but accelerates as more time passes by.

APPENDIX P

(Language clearance certificate from the Language Editor)

25 Maple Crescent Phone 031 – 7075912
Circle Park 0823757722
KLOOF Fax 031 - 7110458
3610 E-mail:
 wyebanksec@telkomsa.net

Dr Saths Govender

17 JANUARY 2013

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the thesis titled:

**EXPLORING SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN
POST-CONFLICT SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF
FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL, by S. E. Mthiyane.**

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D Admin.