

School Violence: Reimagining Schools as ‘Safe Havens’

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ABSTRACT School violence is a reality and it is increasing at an alarming rate around the globe in the 21st century. The vast majority of schools have been transformed into battlegrounds in which the safety of learners is not guaranteed. Schools are supposed to be safe places where all learners have equal access to equal educational opportunities and are treated equally. This paper aims to investigate factors that contribute to schools being violent institutional role models. A qualitative inquiry was used in the study. Data were collected using individual interviews with school principals and focus-group interviews with learners. The study was conducted in two provinces in South Africa, namely, Gauteng and North West. Four schools in the two provinces were deliberately selected to participate in the study. This study found that when learners report cases of violence in the school, either their teachers or their school principal often dismiss them. The study also discovered that the school does not challenge unequal power relationships found in wider society but instead reproduces them. The study concludes by proposing strategies that could enhance safety in schools to allow for effective teaching and learning taking place.