Schools as Sites of Violence: The Role of Social Capital in Reducing Violence in South African Township Schools

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ABSTRACT Violence is a feature of schooling globally; in this regard the experiences of violence in South African schools are not in isolation. This paper presents selected findings of a research study on schools as sites of violence which was conducted in 16 secondary schools in townships across six South African provinces. Data for this study was collected through a literature review as well as an empirical investigation. Bourdieu and Coleman's social capital theories were used as theoretical frameworks for the empirical enquiry. The results of the study revealed the prevalence of violence within the participating schools and that the presence of violence can partly be attributed to the social contexts of these schools, for example, the unique context of South African townships. In this context social capital is not optimised. The researcher thus argue(s) that violence could be reduced through optimising social capital. In this paper it is explained how the social capital theory could be used to change the social contexts of these schools which in turn would reduce violence, improve school safety and enhance learners' academic performance.