Gangsterism: Internal and external factors associated with school violence in selected Western Cape high schools

Mncedisi C. Maphalala[1] and P. L. Mabunda[2]

*[1]Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, [2]School of Teacher Education,
University of South Africa, College of Education P.O. Box 392, UNISA, 0003, South Africa
E-mail: [1]<mphalmc@unisa.ac.za>, [2]<mabunpl@unisa.ac.za>*

KEYWORDS Gangsterism. Violence. School Discipline. Drug Abuse

ABSTRACT Media reports indicate that the incidents of assaults, drug abuse, sexual harassment, robberies, vandalism and gangsterism were on the rise in South African schools. Many schools have put in place policies and codes of conduct to deal with the issue of violence within their premises. Despite the existence of these policies violence, physical and sexual abuse and gang activities are still the order of the day in South African schools. In the Western Cape gangsterism is regarded as one of the prime sources of school violence. Factors both internal and external to the schools have been found to contribute to the gangsterism phenomenon. Violence have a serious impact on learning, but educators are often absent because they need time off for trauma counselling and debriefing. A qualitative research design was used to explore internal and external factors to the schools that contribute to the gangsterism phenomenon. Semi- structured interviews and focus group interviews were used to collect data. 8 learners, 4 principals, 4 School Governing body members, 4 Life Orientation teachers and 4 non- teaching staff from four schools were interviewed. Content analysis was employed. The findings from this study indicate that fight over turf /territories, socio-economic background and easy access to schools are some of the factors that contribute to gangsterism in the Western Cape schools.