

## Gangsterism: Internal and External Factors Associated with School Violence in Selected Western Cape High Schools

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**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 has 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.

### INTRODUCTION

The scourge of violence in South African schools is a cause for concern; daily reports appear in the written and electronic media about high levels of violence, physical and sexual abuse and gang related activities in our schools. Carrying of knives, guns and other weapons is part of daily school life. These incidents underline the extent of violence and crime we experience in our communities. This impacts negatively on education in general and in what happens in the school in particular. According to UNESCO (undated) schools are supposed to be safe environments where children are free to learn and gain skills through education without experiencing abuse.

During the process of data collection for this study two learners died in the school premises in two unrelated incidents. The Eye Witness News (01 March 2012) reported that a 16-year-old boy was killed at Beauvallon Secondary School in Valhalla Park, Cape Town. The learner was stabbed by another learner during break time. Three others were wounded. Two learners fled the scene and a third one was treated on the school grounds." In another incident, The Citizen, (Friday 02 March 2012) reported that an 18-year-old boy was stabbed once in the neck and died outside the Vorentoe High School gates in Auckland Park, Johannesburg allegedly in a fight over a ball.

Not downplaying other forms of violence that beset the South African schools, this study particularly investigates the internal and external factors associated with gangsterism in the Western Cape province schools. Ground Up (2012) reported that Dan Plato, the Community Safety (Member of the Executive Committee) MEC addressing a community meeting on gangsterism in the Western Cape stated that 60 percent of drug and gang related crimes occur in the Western Cape, even though the province has only 10 percent of the South Africa's population. In the same meeting Kinnes (2012), Conflict Resolution and Crime Prevention Practitioner in the area said some gangsters made it a point to recruit young learners, especially when drugs were involved. According to him, some learners involved in gangs attended school every day, but not for educational purposes.

*"They come to school to specifically work on teachers nerves and to disrupt. There was an incident where one learner brought a firearm to school and wanted to shoot another learner. Educators must also take responsibility. They ought to take care of learners. But it is difficult because these learners demand to be respected by teachers and at the same time teachers want to be respected by their learners," Kinnes said.*

In 2004 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) established Safe Schools Programme aimed at working with schools to ensure safe school environments for effective

teaching and learning to take place. The programme's strategies include installing security systems while also addressing the social environment, by influencing learner behaviour and by working with schools to mobilise community support for safe schools. Safe Schools works in partnership with local police and community organisations such as neighbourhood watches and Community Policing Forums. A Safe Schools' Call Centre was also launched in order to receive calls from learners experiencing any form of abuse, and to provide a contact point for reporting burglaries, vandalism and other incidents that impact on efforts to ensure safe schools. This programme and all other initiatives that have been implemented since then have not borne any positive results as gangsterism continues to plague and ravage the Western Cape province. The current Premier of the province Mrs Helen Zille has proposed to the President of South Africa that drastic measures be taken to curb the scourge of gangsterism in the province through the deployment of the army in the areas which are regarded as hot spots.

According to SABC News (2012) President Jacob Zuma has asked the Defence Minister and the Police Minister to provide him with an assessment report of the situation in areas affected by gangsterism in the Western Cape. After considering a request by Premier Helen Zille to deploy the army in Hanover Park and Lavender Hill on the Cape Flats, the president decided not to deploy the army but opted for more intensive action by the police and long-term interventions by social and economic clusters of government.

It remains to be seen if the president's interventions will yield any positive results in trying to curtail gang violence in the affected area. If the situation continues unabated lives will continue to be lost and the education of the learners will be affected negatively by the gang violence.

This study therefore seeks to explore internal and external factors to the schools that contribute to the gangsterism phenomenon

### **Social Control Theory**

This study is underpinned by Hirschi's social control theory, which assumes that delinquent acts will result when one's bond or connection to society is weak or broken. Curran and

Renzetti (2001) as quoted by Pittaro (2007) describe social control theories, as primarily concerned with 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 determining why people break the law. According to social control theory delinquency occur when an individual's bonds to society weaken, also known as a decrease in social capital. Kramer (2000) defines social control as involving "all the sanctions and constraints used in an effort to control another individual's behaviour (to make him or her conform to social norms)"

Hirschi (1969) relied on the four elements of a social bond to explain why some juveniles resort to delinquency. The major premise of his work suggested that delinquency occurs when an individual's bond to society is weak and/or broken. The bond is composed of four elements that include: (1) attachment; (2) involvement; (3) belief; and (4) commitment. The stronger these elements of the bond are, the more likely an individual will be inhibited from delinquent activities. In contrast, the weaker the four elements are, the more likely an individual will commit a delinquent act. In the context of the current study, the implication here is that if the learner has got strong ties to society he/she is unlikely to participate devious behaviour such in the school.

McCabe and Martin (2005) as quoted by Pittaro (2007) also believe that the social control is applicable to school violence. The four elements of social control (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) all play a part. The attachment element regards peers and family. The commitment is to society, and is shown by following the rules. According to Intravia (2009), commitment to conventional activities refers to an investment that an individual will not want to risk losing by engaging in delinquency. These include educational and occupational commitments. An investment built in these conventional activities inhibits youths from delinquency because they do not want to jeopardize what they have acquired. Involvement is an opportunity to create a social bond. This means that if one is involved in a socially acceptable activity, there is little or no time for delinquency. And finally, belief regards the rules of the school. If a student does not believe in the rules, he or she is more likely to break them and become delinquent.

Gangsterism is regarded as a deviant behaviour in our society; it should therefore be dealt with in the context of Hirschi's social control theory which proposes that exploiting the process of socialization and social learning builds self-control and reduces the inclination to indulge in behaviour recognized as antisocial.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sampling

The study used a purposive sampling technique. The purpose of using this sampling technique is not to assure representativeness in statistical terms, but to ensure that data on perceptions and experiences of those who are directly involved in a phenomenon being investigated are collected. The sample for the study included 8 learners, 4 school principals, 4 School Governing Body (SGB) members, 4 Life Orientation teachers and 4 non-teaching staff drawn from 4 different schools were interviewed. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich-cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied and can be used with both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Three secondary schools were selected from the Western Cape province for the purpose of carrying out interviews. Criteria used for selection was based on anecdotal evidence of incidences – this evidence was garnered from media reports and conversations with 'critical friends' (teachers, principals and ward managers and school governors etc.). The schools were chosen on the basis of their being seen as violent, as per discussion with critical friends mentioned above. Further, based on the criteria, the five identified schools were put on the short list in the province and the three most convenient schools in terms of access and proximity to the researchers were finally chosen for data gathering.

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

#### *Semi-structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 4 school principals, 4 School Governing Body (SGB) members, 3 Life Orientation teach-

ers and 4 non-teaching staff drawn from 4 different schools. "Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information. Unlike the questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulating ahead of time, semi structured interviewing starts with more general questions or topics. Not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues" (Case D.D: 1990). In this study interview schedules were used to guide the discussion with the interviewees.

This research project focused on experiences and insights of the participants, which was the main reason of using mainly qualitative approaches. Interviews were used to "get under the skin" of the organizations concerned. As already indicated, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine dynamics of violence in schools and measures used to try curbing it. Mertens (1998) contend that interviews allow intimate, repeated and prolonged involvement of the researcher and the participant, which enables the researcher to get to the root of what is being investigated. Rubin and Rubin as cited, in Arskey and Knight (1999: 33), suggest that semi-structured interviews are a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people's lives, routines, behaviours, and feelings.

#### *The Focus Group Discussions*

The focus group discussions were conducted with a group of 8 learners from 4 different schools in order to collect data. The purpose of the focus group discussion is to produce qualitative data to provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of participants (Krueger 1994). Consent to tape record the interview was established with the participants. Pseudonyms were used when referring to each other throughout the discussion to protect the identity of learners. The focus group discussions guide covered the following broad areas:

- Background to selected schools
- School values and ethics
- Types of violence

- Places where violence occur
- Effects of violence
- Strategies for dealing with violence

Learners who were 14 years and older participated in the focus group discussion. Two groups of learners were interviewed. One group consisted of learners who had been affected by violence, while the second group consisted of those learners who had perpetrated violence.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study confirms that is that in the Western Cape, unlike other provinces, there is a scourge of gangsterism, especially in the coloured in communities where gangsterism is prominent and in most cases spills into schools. The IOL News, July 26, 2012 quoted the Bronagh Casey, spokeswoman for Education MEC Donald Grant as saying that “thirty stabbing gang related incidents on school grounds were reported to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) in the first two quarters of the school year 2012.

This study only reports on the major findings relating to internal and external factors to the schools that contribute to the gangsterism. In the process of data the following themes emerged:

- The context of gangsterism in the coloured community
- Socio-economic background
- Fight over territories
- Easy access to school
- Effects of violence on learners and teachers

### The Context of Gangsterism in the Coloured Community

According to Lancaster (2010) the Western Cape has the largest Coloured population of any province in South Africa. She therefore contends that it is no coincidence that it also has the highest incidence of gangsterism and gang-related crime. She further argues that “Coloured” and “gang” tend to be closely associated. In addition to the often impoverished condition of the Coloured population in South Africa and their constant lower-class status, both during Apartheid regime and today, drug use (*tik, dagga*, and mandrax are some of the most common) is also most prevalent among the Coloured community. The White community tends to use cocaine, and

the Black community generally sticks to alcohol abuse. The presence of highly trafficked drugs and the fiscal rewards involved in the drug trade lend the Coloured community easily to gangsterism.

Gangsterism is one of the sources of school violence in the Western Cape schools. Learners as young as 13 years of age are being recruited to belong/ join the ranks of gangs. Because there is strength in numbers when fights break out, gangster groups compete to recruit as many learners as possible. Carrying of weapons, be it a gun or a knife is a symbol of power. Fear is a great determining factor in joining a gang. As the school is regarded as a microcosm of the society as it reflects what happens in the society. Diesel (1997) in Smit (2010) argues that gangs in schools should be seen as a community problem in South Africa and, since schools are a part of the community, they reflect the problems of that community.

*“There is also other type of violence that we are exposed to and that is the violence in the area, the gang violence and that also exposes the school to a particular type of violence and what happens here is that whatever happens in the community impacts on the school, so we are also exposed to now the area that we work in is particularly over the years there’s always been a flair up at different stages of the year like just at the beginning of this year when we returned to school there was huge amount of gang violence and then they signed a piece form which well was very fragile and will last a very few weeks or months and then 1 incident happens and you must understand that especially in the colored community gangs is part of the fabric of that community there is huge number of gangs in any colored community especially given the social community background that people lives in here. There is a lot of gangs in these areas” (School A Principal).*

The Portfolio Committee on Education (18 June 2002) found that gangs emerge from within communities themselves and this phenomenon has many root causes. Firstly there are the socio-economic conditions such as low-income employment, unemployment, poor living conditions all leading to conditions of poverty and deprivation. Secondly, within schools and particularly in the Grade 4 year the following behaviours become more and more prevalent:

- Anti-social behaviour because of having no sense of belonging resulting in a low self-esteem.
- Poor academic performance
- Learning difficulties are multiplied
- Finally truancy and the incidence of dropping out.

The views of the Portfolio Committee on Education on gangsterism are consistent with Last's (2001) observations, that there are many reasons why young children choose to join a gang. In the school setting students who are underachievers, poor learners, or have language difficulties see themselves as losers in the academic setting. They can be approached by a gang and be recruited into the organization. Here they become "someone", part of an organization of kids just like themselves. They have a new "family" whom they tend to spend more and more time with. These gang leaders recruit younger members who are unhappy and struggling. They lure them with the promise of fraternity and brotherhood. They are told that the worst that can happen to them if they commit a serious crime is two years in a juvenile facility, which is a small price to pay for belonging (Last (2001).

The study found that during gangster fights both learners and educators are terrified to be caught in crossfire, not only at school, but also on their way to school and back home. Therefore they opt not to go to school until the situation is calm and this has a negative on the teaching and learning. According to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED 2003), gangs appear to choose the arrival and departure times of educators and learners deliberately, and they wait for learners at the school gate. This brings with it a terrorising "fear factor" which traumatizes educators, learners and parents. Threats, intimidation and harassment engender fear, and result in the absenteeism of both educators and learners (Segoe and Mokgosi 2006: 5). The WCED (2003) reported that not only does violence have a serious impact on learning, but educators are often absent because they need time off for trauma counselling and debriefing. According to a procedural manual for managing safety and security within WCED institutions, activities outside the school can often have a disruptive influence on what happens inside the school in a variety of ways (WCED 2003). De Wet (2003: 93) points out that gang violence is therefore both an internal and an external problem.

Donald et al. (2002) in Smit (2010) contend that, "gang violence is often born out of need and a socially disadvantaged situation". Thompkins (2000: 7) states that sometimes, innocent learners can be drawn or forced into violent behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse by joining gangs, as this provides them with a sense of belonging.

### Socio-economic Background

The study reveals that the socio-economic background plays a major role in driving youth in the Coloured communities to gangsterism. Standing (2005) as quoted by Dos Reis (2007) contends that gangsterism has become worse by the transition to democracy as there has been resentment at the way Coloured people have suffered economically and politically. According to this argument, the Coloured working class lost some of the few privileges that the apartheid system gave them over black South Africans. Privileges such as housing and grants have been reduced to accommodate other previously disadvantaged Black South Africans.

*"The learner and teacher population in the schools range from 1000 to about 1300 learners to between 28 and 35 staff. In terms of the race, the majority of learners in the two schools are and mainly Xhosa in the other school – "We have 1 Indian learner in our school, 250 Xhosa speaking and 759 Coloured" and "The majority of them (learners) are Xhosa speaking, no Indians I think because their places are too far away from the school and there are no Whites because this area in a sense was an informal settlement" (School A Principal).*

The principal noted that because of the history of racial segregation in the country between Blacks and Coloureds, even the incidents of violence that take place in the school amongst the learners are easily reduced to race.

Most people are not employed and there are a lot of single parents. The female/male ratio is 55% and 45%. Teachers find they have to share lunch because learners approach them and ask for lunch or money:

*"I'm sure a lot of teachers in this school spend a certain percentage of their salary to meet some of the basic needs of the kids such as food. I have also heard that some of these kids abuse the generosity of the teachers, for example these kids would go to the teacher- counsellors*

*and claim that their parents are behind with 6 months accommodation rent and they would then ask for a sum of R500 from a teacher. Sometimes the teachers believe them and give them money which they spend as they wish and not on what they asked the money for. It becomes difficult therefore to tell which kids are genuinely in a needy situation (School A Principal)*

In this particular community teachers constantly find stolen items and the community members come to school and want to sell the stolen goods to educators. Women always play an important part in the life of the child and it is difficult for them to be always there for the children and because of work, they find it difficult to always attend to school related problems. There are a lot of gangs in these areas. In terms of values, the school maintains that it tries and teaches values around respect, accountability, and responsibility. The problem, according to a principal is the difference between school and home values:

*“So we have a huge challenge to bring these values out and make learners understand that respect for your fellow learner and respect for those around and the assets around you and respect for your educators, at home they are not taught those things and we see how they speak to their parents - there is absolutely no respect to their parents” (School A Principal).*

Young people are recruited into gangsterism at an early age, from the ages of ten to sixteen years. Their leaders would be between thirty and fifty years of age. Because of the poverty-stricken environments they come from, many young men are drawn into the gang arena by the attraction of money, power and glamour with which they associate gangsterism.

### **Fight Over Territories**

According to Cape Argus (2012) violence spills over into schools because the area is part of disputed gang territory, gangsters are fighting for spoils. Gangs control large areas, usually communities or parts of cities and towns. These areas are known as “turfs.” Each gang normally has their own turf, which they guard with their lives from other gangs. Here they manipulate their illicit activities, which include prostitution, drug dealing and *shebeens*.

Pinnock (1997: 42) as quoted by Dos Reis (2007) refers to territory as a section of a community that gangs claim to be their ‘own’.

Claiming a territory means that only the gang to which this territory belongs may operate their criminal activities there.

Gangs use schools to practice their criminal activities to make money through selling drugs to learners.

*“You see what happens in our community is that learners belong to different gang groups this the “Mongoros”, “Americans”, “Chicco boys”, “B13” and MZ’s; they don’t see eye to eye and now when the violence starts, it then affects also the school and that’s also a concern. They fight over control of territories, girlfriends and control drug market in schools and in the community” (School B Security guard).*

Standing (2005: 2) as quoted by Dos Reis (2007) concurs that school children become victims as gangs target schools for selling drugs such as *mandrax*, *dagga* and the drug most frequently used by the youth, ‘*tik*’. He defines ‘*tik*’ as a notorious drug that is widely used by the youth on the Cape Flats. Evidently it has destroyed many young people’s lives and created many social problems in the school community.

### **Easy Access to Schools**

A major concern of the learners, teachers and the principal in School A was easy access to the school due to lack of fencing around the school. Learners and teachers generally don’t feel safe within the school premises because there is free drug sale and weapons are easily sneaked in and people with dodgy characters gain free access to the school.

*“Fencing, that is the one thing and the fence is for our own safety and the safety of our teachers and if there is no fence we don’t feel safe and we as learners feel that our safety has been taken away from us and which means our education cannot continue because if you sit in the class wondering what’s gonna happen, when is the gangster gonna come in and open fire on the learners that is what is going through our minds as learners and I think the fence play a big role in the safety of the learners and the teachers in our school, so that is one thing that must be changed at the school” (School A learner).*

Generally public schools have a ‘low security’ system in place. This means that a majority of these schools may not have guards, metal detectors or even a security fence. The study reveals that easy access to schools due to poor

security measures contributes to the incidents of violence taking place within the school premises.

### **Effects of Violence on Learners and Teachers**

In one principal's view, a lot of learners are not coping with the curriculum and the main problem is especially at grades 9 and 10. Some of the learners even opt for dropping out of school. The biggest challenge, according to a teacher in this school is learners who find it difficult to speak. The teacher reported that he did not feel safe especially during interval because "outsiders" come to the school because there is no fence. To learners in this school, a security system is crucial. One of the learners mentioned that he raised this concern with the provincial department official on radio and asked him to assist the school with the safety measures. The learner argued:

*"Why is government spending lots of money on naming roads, changing names of roads and do not deliver to our people so I want you to take this into consideration that the safety is neglected and the security is neglected in most of our schools here in the Western Cape than in the other 8 provinces in the country. I firmly believe if there is security there will be better education"* (School B learner).

Another principal explained that sometimes teachers fear for their lives and because the community violence spills over to the school, the violence contributes to absenteeism amongst educators and learners. A teacher in this school maintained that violence can have a big impact on learner absenteeism and drop out. The teacher suggested that there is a need for more people to communicate with learners - professionals to guide them. Some learners in this school stated that they do not feel safe in school because there are always people standing in front of the school for girls who walk alone, they get scared.

### **Security Measures in the Schools**

#### ***Random Search and Seizure and Drug Testing at Schools***

Despite the fact that Western Cape Provincial School Education Act clearly states that no

person may bring any dangerous objects, alcohol or illegal drugs onto the school premises during or after school hours, the study found that learners are commonly caught in possession of these objects and substances. The Act which was passed in January 2011 empowers any school principal or his or her delegate to search any learner, or the property of any learner, for any dangerous object, alcoholic liquor or illegal drug, if the principal reasonably suspects the presence of a dangerous object, alcoholic liquor or an illegal drug on the school premises or during a school activity. If there is reasonable and reliable evidence that a learner is concealing a dangerous object or illegal substance in the body of that particular learner, the principal may request a member of the South African Police Services to conduct a more extensive search of that learner's person, which may entail the removal of clothing.

The Western Cape Provincial School Education Act is in line with the Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007 which provides for random search and seizure and drug testing in schools. This piece of legislation is designed to allow schools to stop weapons and drugs being brought by pupils to SA's public schools, this is aimed at curbing violence in South African schools, which has led to numerous deaths, through strengthening principals' powers.

As part of the intervention strategies to curb violence in schools in the Western Cape, schools have resorted to search and seizure and drug testing within their premises. One school has a standing agreement with the local police station that from time to time during the course of the day police would patrol around the school area and also conduct search and seizure in the school.

*"We always conduct search and seizures anytime, we have a community forum they call it cluster committee, in this committee there is a police officer who is the commander of the cluster committee so about 2 times in the month I call him and to request his visibility and they will bring all the forces that they have like the sniffer dogs and everything. Then they will say we are here for about 7 days and he will ask which classes are problematic then we will send them to those classes and then they will go and conduct searches in those classes. Through this we are sending a message to the learners that carrying of weapons and drugs in our school*

*premises will not be tolerated. We never had a gun in our premises I'm not saying that these boys don't have guns because I don't stay with them in the townships but they never get exposed to us because they know that if they get exposed they will be arrested, so the police in that way they actually help me" (School B Principal).*

According to one principal although the legislation aim at assisting and giving them rights to search learners, some of the learners simply refuse to be searched, turn around and walk away because they know they have got something illegal.

This school has a drug kit and if the results are positive, there is a professional procedure followed. Parents are also made to take responsibility and get their children into a programme. The biggest problem in this school is that there is no fence and this impacts negatively on the school safety plan. But if you don't have a basic infrastructure like a fence it's very difficult to like when you have a problem with the kids and you want to search them they come from all sides into the school even from this door and if there is no fence it is very difficult to implement some of these policies because we don't have the proper infrastructure at this school.

While teachers hail random search and seizure as a deterrent for school violence, learners view it in different light. According to the learners the random search and seizures rob them off valuable time for learning and sometimes in the process their rights are violated.

*"Now on the point where the police is searching the learners, this is my personal opinion that is also stealing time off our education whether the search is for our safety but I personally think if they have search for 3 to 4 hours how many hours is left on the clock for our learning,. That is a point that I have to make so if it is possible for the department of education that they can provide the schools with metal detectors so as to save time" (School A learner).*

Another learner lamented the treatment meted to the learners during search and seizure sessions.

*"The police haven't done searches for this term, but last year they did it up to 4 times in a month and if they wanna come now they can and they don't tell us when they are coming and for me it's almost like they just come whenever they feel they want to come and they disturb us*

*in our classes and also they are disrespecting the learners because when they talk to you they would use a filthy language. I mean it's not good for those who come from the environment that is not violent and now they have to come and witness the violence by the police which is the people that should protect us and they are also disrespecting the learning during the session of the search" (School A learner).*

In another school, learners indicated that the search and seizure policy does not apply in their school. One of the learners in School B mentioned that the police used to visit the school 2 days in a week and search for drugs and weapons and stand at the school gate". A principal in the same school mentioned that teachers search anytime when they suspect that learners carry weapons. They also call the cluster community commander and captain and request them to be visible.

*"they will bring all the forces that they have like the sniffer dogs and they would be with us for about 7-10 days and they would ask which are the classes we think are problematic then go to those classes and check for whatever. We just send them a message when we require their services".*

The principal of school C stated that searching is not common in his school but the police patrol the school a lot.

### **Community Action Group**

The principal in school A thought that the one thing that works for the school is outside agencies For example, a community action group is a structure where we can refer learners with psychological problems from physical abuse. In the principal's view, the Department of Education has its own referral structure but it is not effective because there is only 1 psychologist and 1 social worker for 20-30 schools. When it comes to using the other departments like Social Services there is a very good working relationship in the area. There are once a month meetings with various community stakeholders and various issues, including gang violence in the community are addressed. The principal maintained this is an effective way for the community to deal with issues:

*"We meet and it's actually from a local government they set up the structure and it is very successful and its running in quite a few com-*

communities, so it's shared by somebody from community safety and it's a very effective way of dealing with issues in the community. Stakeholders are teachers, police, social services getting together and all the NGOs that help in the community, the businesses in the community, so it becomes this huge meeting you name it and you are welcome to come to the particular meeting if maybe you have an issue and address it and they come up with who is going to handle it and what's going to be done in our next meeting and a report back you know was it successfully done or is it still outstanding" (School A principal).

### Youth Development Programmes

Learners in this school are encouraged to go to camps organized for learners, especially those that are involved in gangs. According to the learners, this helps a lot because learners realize what they can become and that they do not need gangsters to become something in life.

*"The learners also get excited when an announcement is made about the camp coming up and they look forward to it and one can tell it's like they almost want to come out of gangsterism, drugs and the violence think of becoming something and learn and have a good education"* (School A Principal).

Another strategy is the "life choices" programme and this is where facilitators come to the school and select some of the learners who would be peer educators. After training, the peer educators go to classes and teach fellow learners how to make choices in life and how this can be done. The consequences of making wrong choices are also discussed and preventative measures against gangsterism, drugs and teenage pregnancy.

*"The training is for the whole career guidance is offered every Saturdays. The school also has two counselors, police who come in and address learners, the community safety and parents who come in to school on a weekly basis to help prevent violence in the school. The principal thought that these programmes make a difference"* (School C Principal).

### Alternative Measures to Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment in South African schools has been outlawed. Schools have been

warned to desist from using physical, cruel, inhumane, degrading punishment to deal with learner ill-discipline. Alternatives to corporal punishment have been suggested by the Department of Education to assist in dealing with ill-discipline in schools

*"I am proud of the school because learners know that if they do something wrong, they face the consequences and will be punished. The punishment is that for two months, learners stay after school in detention"* (School B Principal).

The principal also suggested that patience with learners, teachers and parents and instilling them with character is a useful strategy. Learners argued that the suspension strategy does not help because suspended learners come back after a few days or a month and they continue doing the same things. If the violation is serious, learners suggested that the offenders must be sent away to counsellors or relevant institutions. One learner felt that more security guards are needed in the school. Another one suggested the use of more vigilant security guards.

### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the extent of gangsterism in the Western Cape is far-reaching to such an extent that even the police have not been able to contain the situation. Innocent lives continue to be lost and the education of the learners is adversely affected by the gang violence. The intervention strategies by the Western Cape Department of Education have not yielded any positive results. The schools have policies and codes of conduct for learners in place to deter substance abuse and violent behaviour. These school policies and codes of conduct for learners amongst other things are meant to inhibit the use of drugs or any intoxicating substance, carrying of weapons or any sharp objects, using violent or vulgar language and making threats. Despite the existence of these policies, physical and sexual abuse and gang activities are still the order of the day in Western Cape schools

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Like all problems that exist in today's society school violence will not go away overnight. It is a concern that will require diligent work of

all parties combined. Parents, teachers, police, counselors, Non-Governmental Organisations, Department of Social Development and communities working together with the students guiding them in the right direction, giving them the tools necessary to become non-violent individuals. When stakeholders work together they can will provide a safe and a conducive for environment in which learners can be nurtured to become responsible citizens.

Entrance-and-exit access points to a school need to be minimised to reduce the chances of strangers entering the school grounds freely.

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