Reconceptualising teacher professionalism to address school violence: a quest to end corporal punishment[1]

Vusi Mncube, University of Fort Hare, South Africa
Bekithemba Dube, University of the Free State, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to argue for a need to reconceptualise teacher professionalism as a strategy to mitigate school violence, as manifested with corporal punishment. The article draws data from participatory action research, with a focus on teachers' use of corporal punishment, despite it being outlawed in South African schools. The study found that a lack of teacher professionalism through corporal punishment is a form of school violence. The implication drawn from the researchers' findings is that failure to address the lack of teacher professionalism – especially regarding the use of corporal punishment – derails all other attempts to combat violence in schools. It is against this background that the authors propose a reconceptualisation of teacher professionalism to end corporal punishment. The article concludes with the argument that for school violence, teachers need to put an end to corporal punishment and adhere to basic of teacher professionalism.

Keywords: democratic schooling, school violence, teacher professionalism

INTRODUCTION

School leaders find themselves in the unenviable position of not only having to deal with school violence, but also with inadequate educator professionalism, learner underachievement (Davids & Waghid, 2016) and the continued use of corporal punishment (Cheruvalath & Tripath, 2015). Part of the cause of unstable school conditions emanates from the level and quality of teachers' work, as well as their attitudes (De Clercq, 2013), which appear to be far from professional leading to school violence manifested through the continued use of corporal punishment despite being outlawed. Certain narratives around school violence, however, indicate that the learners are the ones who are violent, ill-disciplined and problematic (Nthebe, 2006; Magwa & Ngara, 2014; Jinot, 2018; Freire & Amado, 2009), without necessarily conceding that the lack of teacher professionalism – as reflected in the use of corporal punishment – is one of the contributing factors to school violence. Cognisant of this, the paper does not intend to give an impression that teachers are the only ones to be blamed for school violence through the use of corporal punishment. It is common knowledge that South Africa is increasingly becoming a violent society (Zulu et al., 2004). Thus, through the paper we address an often taken for granted cause of school violence, which is the lack of teacher professionalism.

Most strategies or suggested solutions focus on how to circumvent schools-based violence from the learners' perspective (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). The argument of this article, however, is that focusing on schools-based violence solely from the learners' point of view narrows attempts to address such violence and also negates the impetus to end the violence, by failing to address factors such as a lack of teacher professionalism. Lack of teacher professionalism, as an understudied phenomenon in school narratives, needs to be reconceptualised with the need to end corporal punishment.

Locating the lack of, and need for, teacher professionalism

Globally, violence in societies is endemic. It is a serious problem which has a negative effect on virtually all education systems especially when some teachers are seen to be perpetrators through the use of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment in South Africa, despite being outlawed, is still prominent in certain schools; its continued practice has become a refrain of many scholars specialising in school violence (Makhasane & Chikoko, 2016; Mashau, Mutshaeni & Kone, 2017; Gershoff, 2017; du Plessis, 2015; Cheruvalath & Tripath, 2015). In addition, the South African media are replete with reports of cases of violence, verbal abuse of learners by teachers, and physical abuse in the form of corporal punishment (van Niekerk, 2019). Similarly, a spokesperson for the Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal Province, Kwazi Mthethwa, elaborated on the lack of professionalism portrayed through teachers' use of corporal punishment:

> The department was concerned that teachers continue to "dish out" corporal punishment despite it being banned more than 20 years ago… Children have the right to be free from all forms of violence, to enjoy their education, and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane, and degrading way… (Mthethwa, 2016: 1).

In light of the above, Mncube and Harber (2013) argue that the use of corporal punishment is indeed unprofessional, and aggravates violence in schools, thus there is a need to relook at how teachers behave and emancipate teachers to use alternatives to corporal punishment. Social media (especially videos taken on cell phones) has exposed the lack of teacher professionalism. In one incident, learners are seen being lashed with an object which looks like a stick. One student is lashed several times on the hand by a male teacher, while in another video clip a female teacher beats a schoolgirl and a schoolboy on their backs. The female teacher appears to be laughing during the violent act, with the learners clearly enduring pain as their classmates snicker in the background (Wicks, Olifant & Naidoo, 2017). At Mdlamfe High School in Esikhawini in the Richards Bay area, a teacher is in hot water following a video of an educator violently beating two girls in a classroom. In the clip, the educator is seen repetitively lashing at the girls with what appears to be a cane, while other students laugh in the background. The second student, who receives markedly more lashings, is heard pleading to be rescued, but instead of helping her, her classmates just laugh – such beatings are seen as a joke or as entertainment (Wicks et al., 2017).

The harshness of teachers' actions against their charges has led some South African learners to commit suicide or abscond from school due to the fear of corporal punishment (The Guardian, 2018). Vilakazi (2017) reports that an 11-year-old grade 6 learner was found hanging from the ceiling of the garage at his home, in his school uniform. This learner chose death rather than having to face his mathematics teacher. A learner from Richards Bay Primary hanged himself because he was scared to tell his mathematics teacher that he had lost his textbook. According to Health24 (2015) a boy at Leandra Laerskool was allegedly slapped with an open hand by a teacher and refused to go back to school as the teacher was no longer attending to his school work. In addition, 13 learners were assaulted for not writing homework at Neo Primary school in the Free State and such learners are scared to return to school (eNCA, 2015). Citing these examples does not imply that teachers are not victims, they are, however, the focus of the paper is not on them as victims but as perpetrators.

Trajectory of parental involvement in corporal punishment

The involvement of parents in the corporal punishment narratives presents trajectories. Parental involvement concerning corporal punishment has pursued two diametrically opposed goals. In the 1980s, a grouping of parents, teachers and students created an organisation, Education without Fear, to campaign for an end to corporal punishment (Morrell, 2001). In the late 1990s, in a country where corporal punishment was now illegal, several parents and teachers, through Christian Education South Africa (CESA), challenged the banning, claiming that their parental (and constitutional) right to give 'biblical correction' is being infringed by this ruling (Pete & Du Plessis, 1999). Despite the contested terrain of corporal punishment, the National Education Policy Act, 27 of 1996 (RSA, 1996: A-47) states that 'no person shall administer corporal punishment or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution'. This policy has, however, divided opinion since according to Masitsa (2008), learners are believed to have become ill disciplined to the extent that they openly challenge their teachers' authority because they know nothing will be done to them. While this may be true is some cases, we problematise the use of corporal punishment because as argued by Gershoff (2017), it may interfere with children's learning in that children may avoid or dislike school because it is a place where they are in constant fear of being physically harmed by their teachers.

Theoretical framing: Critical emancipatory research

Cognisant of the need to address lack of teacher professionalism as one of the causes for the continued use of corporal punishment, we couch this study in critical emancipatory research (CER). There are various debates on the origin of the school, with some attributing it to Emmanuel Kant (McKernath, 2013), with others attributing it to Karl Marx (McLaughlin, 1999). Despite debates surrounding the theory, Frankfurt scholars in Germany made the CER popular (Schmift, 2007). The mandate of the Frankfurt scholars was clear, which was to change oppressive structures by engaging in research (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). The desired change to eliminate oppression was underpinned by championing values such as social justice, emancipation and social transformation. In terms of social justice, the theory evokes the need to ensure justice is evident in all social structures as a means to lessen school violence, which in this case, is manifested with the use of corporal punishment. Thus, social justice as used in this theory is 'a learned response fostered by progressive human and faith development, which values inherent human dignity of every person, social justice involves working together to establish a just society' (Brady, 2010). Through this, collaboration towards a just society, issues of teacher (un)professionalism, learner discipline and strategies to create safe schools are discussed in mutual respect. This is because as stipulated by Argyris and Schon (1974: 44), CER provides

> a theoretical basis for a view of planning that emphasises widespread public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public dialogue to improve relations rather than exercise of power, avoiding privileging of experts and bureaucrats, and replacing the model of the technical expert with one of the reflective planner.

CER is relevant for this paper based on the view that 'it provides the society with common languages through which to address people's hopes and discontents' (Mandieta, 2003: 80), which when not addressed within the school context, there is likelihood for conflict, which propels the need to engage in violence, manifested through use of corporal punishment. In addition, CER is relevant to this paper in that it 'exposes and questions hegemony, traditional power assumptions held about relationships, groups, communities, societies, and organisations to promote social change' (Given, 2008: 140). The change in this case is to ensure professionalism is adhered to by teachers, which will lessen or eradicate use of corporal punishment.

Justification for the research

Many studies assume that learners are undisciplined (Magwa & Ngara, 2014; Jinot, 2018; Rossouw, 2003; Freire & Amado, 2009; Kourkoutas & Wollhuster, 2013). While such rhetoric may be rooted in the truth, there are other aspects which are often forgotten in narratives pertaining to violence in schools, and those are the lack of teacher professionalism and a failure to grasp the tenets of democracy. While a study such as that of Tdole and Mmankoto (2014) addresses the lack of professionalism, their approach seems to romanticise it – they do not locate the issue within a theoretical framework. The authors appear to assume that pointing out a lack of teacher professionalism is sufficient, without suggesting ways of reframing such professionalism to marry theory and practice and in the process democratising schools and putting to an end to corporal punishment. The gap we seek to address is how teacher professionalism can be reconceptualised to put an end to corporal punishment.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The researchers undertook a qualitative study located within the critical or transformative paradigm, a research approach that advocates that power relations must be addressed at each stage of the research process with the purpose of ensuring positive change in problematic contexts (Mertens, 2007). In line with this paradigm, participants from various social structures were selected to be part of this research with the aim of putting an end to corporal punishment. Data were generated from several workshops on the prevention of violence in schools, presented in two provinces of South Africa, namely Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. The data were generated through participatory action research (PAR), where 24 respondents partook in research and these included school governing bodies, educators, learners and principals. We chose this approach to research because it is emancipatory, critical or transformative in nature, and values social justice as an underpinning factor to guide relations with the school contexts. To ensure the success of using PAR as an approach, we asked the participants to contribute freely and negate any forms of power deferential through understanding that the goal of research is not to expose political and educational muscles but to ensure equality towards achieving safe schools for all stakeholders. Since the researchers and participants are equally involved in the process, they take shared responsibility for the outcome of the research endeavour. In other words, participation, research and action are of major importance in such a partnership. PAR is mainly about relationships between the stakeholders involved in the research process, and the use of research as a tool for action (Kemmis & McTaggard, 2007). Thus, collective action is taken to bring about long-term solutions – in this instance, putting an end to schools-based violence and the use of corporal punishment in particular. PAR thus creates a democratic system that enables stakeholders to become actively involved in finding solutions to identified problems (Mahlomaholo, 2010).

Data collection methods and procedures

The participants responded to questions such as the following: What are the causes of school violence related to teacher professionalism, and the absence of democracy in schools? How can teacher professionalism be reconstructed in an attempt to mitigate violence in South African schools? The responses to these questions enabled the researchers to distil several themes for discussion. These themes emanated from subjecting the generated data to the analytical lens suggested by Laws, Harper and Marcus (2003), which involves the following steps:

Step 1: Reading and rereading all the collected data: the data from both the interviews and the questionnaires were read and reread to obtain the views of the participants.

Step 2: Drawing up a preliminary list of themes arising from the data: major issues and themes were identified and arranged according to the two main research questions pertaining to this study.

Step 3: Re-reading the data: this compelled the researchers to verify whether the identified themes aligned with the participants' comments, and corresponded to the research questions.

Step 4: Linking the themes to quotations and notes: the themes emerging from the data were linked to various scholarly views.

Step 5: Perusing the categories of themes to interpret them: in interpreting the data, the researchers remained cognisant of the research questions.

Step 6: Designing a tool to assist in discerning patterns in the data, in order to triangulate these during the data analysis process.

Step 7: Interpreting the data and deriving meaning: this mainly related to highlighting the research findings and arranging material according to categories premised or guided by the research questions.

The data were coded independently by the researchers, before they met with the participants to ascertain whether the findings, as analysed, indeed reflected their views. Such verification confirmed the trustworthiness of the findings, and ensured the transferability thereof to other contexts (i.e. environments in which schools-based violence is induced by a lack of teacher professionalism and failure to act democratically).

Ethical considerations

The participants in this research were assured that their identities would not be revealed, and that their responses would not be used on any other platform without their prior consent (Fritz, 2008). The participants were at liberty to withdraw from the research at any stage, without suffering the consequences. The University of South Africa (Unisa) as part of the broader project ethically cleared the study: 'Putting an end to corporal punishment'. In the spirit of PAR that ensures social justice and recognition of the contributions of participants, we did member checking to ensure that our analysis corresponds to what they had said during the research (Birt et al., 2016; Bygstad & Munkvold, 2007; Gunawan, 2015). The following section, which focuses on a discussion of the research, is divided into various themes in response to the research questions.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents findings that relate to causes of school violence linked to lack of teacher professionalism.

Autocratic handling of learners

One of the causes of violence in South African schools, which depicts a lack of teacher professionalism and democratisation, is the autocratic manner in which learners are treated. To shed light on this claim, two learners noted the following:

> Teachers do not take our position, our feelings and expectations and as such we end up finding ways to make our voices known which sometimes include rebelling.

Another learner noted that

> this school learners are not treated as people, we are just told things to do without explanation, when you seek explanation, you become a target for teachers, thus I leave my own way which often results in clashes.

In addition, learners noted that

> some teachers lack skills, be it interpersonal or intra-personal skills. They lack strategies in improving their performance or that of their learners

they are not a life-long learner

they disregard [   ] the rights of others

[they are] anti-social and disregard [   ] authority, when confronted they resort to use of corporal punishment.

The learners' sentiments speak to the extent to which teachers are not prepared to engage with them, certainly not as professional educators working towards the democratisation of our schools, consequently resorting to the use of corporal punishment. What emerges here that there is a need to reconceptualise how teachers are trained with the aim of infusing strategies to democratise classrooms as a way that can lessen the use of corporal punishment by the teachers.

Buttressing the views of the learners (Harber, 2004; Mncube & Harber, 2013) argue that the dominant or hegemonic model globally remains authoritarian, rather than democratic. Unfortunately, education for, and in, democracy, human rights and critical awareness, are not primary characteristics of the majority of schooling systems. In most schools, power over what is taught, and how, where and when it is taught and learned, and what the general learning environment is like, is not in the hands of learners and when this abnormality is questioned, teachers resort to the use of corporal punishment. In an attempt to address this challenge there is a need to cultivate a culture of tolerance and respect for others, having a voice (participating and expressing views), sharing and disseminating knowledge, valuing equity and equality, and granting learners the opportunity to make their own judgements and choices (Harber, 2004). This should be infused in the initial teacher education and inculcated through various workshops aimed to enhance and foster teacher professionalism.

Lack of giving feedback to learners

The data revealed that a lack of professionalism in many South African schools may be evident in teachers failing to give learners feedback on their work. There is a general tendency amongst teachers not to mark learners' work, which frustrates the learners and is a breach of teachers' professional ethical standards (SACE, 2011). A school governing body (SGB) member noted that

some teachers here are betraying us as parents, just imagine, for the whole month a child's work is left unmarked yet learners need to prepare for matric examination, this just frustrates the learners and incite violence and enmity between educators and learners.

In supporting the observation, one principal noted:

I am always up in arms with some of my teachers who are exhibiting lack of professionalism by not marking learners' work. Marking learners' work is the only constant communication that the school has with the learner and the parents, failure to do; frictions are created unnecessary in schools.

In light of this, du Plessis (2015) argues that displaying children's artwork, posting academic work prominently throughout the building, respecting students' diversity establishes a climate that demonstrates care and a sense of community. A principal who participated in the focus group described an unprofessional teacher as someone

not willing to assist, [who] does not have work ethics, does not respect, [is] not duty conscious, not committed to their work.

Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), without which learning is meaningless – that causes frustration among learners and creates tension

between them and their teachers. When learners challenge the lack of professionalism, which is evident in their work not being marked, teachers tend to resort to using corporal punishment, rather than addressing their own negligence.

Teacher absenteeism

Apart from failing to give learners feedback, it also emerged from the focus group discussions that another contributing factor to school violence was teacher absenteeism. A parent noted that

> in one school I cannot name, we as parents have a problem with two teachers that are always absent, we have tried to report the issue to the district but it seems it doesn't work since it appears the teachers are always protected. Because of their absence, learners are left alone to engage in various activities which often results in violence.

In supporting this observation, a teacher noted, that

> the department is to blame for teacher absenteeism because they do not have effect punishment measures on teachers that are always absent in schools, beside issues of absenteeism in schools depends on how you are close to the principal. So teacher absenteeism affects us teachers as we are confronted with load that we cannot carry, thus learners are left unattended, opening ways for violence.

Commenting on teacher absenteeism, Musyoki (2015) notes that it is one of the most serious transgressions of ethics facing institutions worldwide. Much attention has been focused on learners' school attendance and the impact that frequent absences have on student learning (Finlayson, 2009), with little attention being given to how teacher absenteeism affects schools-based violence. Teacher absenteeism presents significant barriers to equitable and effective instruction, by undermining stable learning environments and inhibiting student success – the implications of this can be profoundly detrimental and far-reaching (Knoster, 2016). When challenged, many teachers resort to authoritarian means which, when resisted, result in corporal punishment being meted out – despite the fact that it is unconstitutional – and such punishment becomes a means to silence learners, consequently, causing physical harm, mental and behavioural health problems, and impaired achievement (Gershoff, 2017). Thus, with the lens of CER, it is critical that school conditions are transformed and it can only happen if the reality is named and problematised (McLaren, 1995).

Love relationship with learners

Romantic relationships between teachers and learners constitute one of the leading causes of school violence, and are emblematic of a lack of teacher professionalism. Love relationships create competition between learners and teachers, which often ends to teachers resorting to corporal punishment, as a counter strategy to deal with social issues under the disguise of addressing delinquency at school. A learner noted that

> teachers use money to entice our girls, they end up dating teachers because they offer them money, yet we can't. So as a result, we clash with teachers so that we can win back our girls.

Another student echoed these sentiments:

> I notice that most of the problems we have in schools are linked to love relationships. Once a teacher proposes or sleep with a learner, respect ends and in order for the teacher to gain control, violence becomes an option.

Such relationships reproduce and perpetuate violence (Harber, 2004). The main fault in a teacher-learner relationship is the lopsided power equation: the teacher occupies an influential position (KwaZulu-Natal DoE, 2016), which creates an undemocratic environment, which where conflict arises, teachers have the upper hand and resort to the use of corporal punishment. This negates those power negotiations which Foucault (1995) proposes as a means to end school violence. Hence, the authors concur with the suggestion that, because of power imbalances, it is a risk for students to enter into any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with teachers (Davis, n.d.).

Aggressive language and verbal abuse

Teachers' use of derogatory or aggressive language was noted as one of the factors contributing to school violence. The art of responding in an adult way to learners' misbehaviour has a great impact on the democratisation of schools – and more so on the promotion of safety in schools. Power relationships, when not managed well, have sufficient impetus to spark violence. In buttressing this observation, Davids and Waghid (2016) note that the aggression, which some teachers display, appears to be especially problematic. One principal of a KwaZulu-Natal school noted,

> The problem I have in my school is the failure by some teachers to handle learners. Many teachers think being vocal or use of intimidating language solves [the] problem, which in the contrary propels violence.

Similarly, one learner noted,

> we end up fighting with teachers because they use language that reduces learners, especially on learners that become pregnant in school. So such learners often want to prove that they are also adults, and eventually violence erupts.

In addition, a parent participating in the focus group discussion noted that undemocratic teachers are seen to be

> busy with private ventures…[they indulge in] alcohol abuse…[such a teacher] lacks leadership and strategic direction…lacks commitment…[is] involved in tenders…[there is a] general decay of the moral fibre in society and teachers are a reflection of this…over-politicisation and lack of understanding of unionism…[there are] unqualified teachers…teachers suffocating under financial debts…teachers frustrated by too many programmes.

In support of the foregoing arguments, Leoschut and Bonora (2007) contend that increased exposure to, and the reinforcement of, aggression and violence serve to normalise such behaviour, thus contributing to an increasingly violent society. This negates the observation by Tdole and Mmankoto (2014) that communities and societies hope teachers can show learners that their lives and futures can be different, by modelling behaviours that are oriented towards promoting peace.

When a language of violence is answered with a language of violence, then society disintegrates under the weight of languages that are devoid of humane engagement and caring (Davids & Waghid, 2016). The problem is that the majority of teachers have deeply ingrained negativity and scepticism towards their jobs and towards developmental programmes aimed at their teaching practices, as they have mostly experienced these as seriously inadequate (De Clercq, 2013). In the quest to democratise schools and mitigate schools-based violence and informed by CER, we agree with Davids and Waghid (2016) that when learners are exposed to a language of mutual engagement, instead of corporal punishment or exclusion from the classroom, they will learn what it means to engage with the other in a language that is not necessarily constituted by disregard, ignorance and harm.

Reconceptualising teacher professionalism in South Africa, in response to violence

This section of the article attempts to respond to the research question by investigating how teacher professionalism in South Africa can be conceptualised to respond to violence in schools. First, it appears an apt moment to begin by defining what is meant by 'teacher professionalism'. According to SACE (2011), they are tasked with a sociological project (that centres on the work and status of teaching as a profession) as well as a pedagogical project (that centres on the internal quality of teaching as a profession), with its relative control in making autonomous decisions regarding teaching practices. In addition, Talbert and McLaughlin (1994: 126) view

> professionalism as being built on a specialised knowledge base and shared standards of practice; a strong service ethic and a commitment to meeting the client's needs; a strong personal identification with, and commitment to, the occupation; and collegial versus bureaucratic control over entry to, and performance evaluations and retentions in the profession.

In this paper, corporal punishment as an indicator for the lack of professionalism is defined as administering ear twisting; ear pulling; slapping; beating; whipping with a cane or rod; forcing students to stand outside the classroom, in a corner, with hands up, holding ears, in the sun; and forced sit-ups (Cheruvalath & Tripath, 2015). It is also used to indicate the way that teachers think about their profession, why they should be professional, and how they behave and implement their knowledge and skills which are related to their profession to create a conducive learning environment (Wardoyo, Herdiani & Salika, 2017). In addition, teacher professionalism includes adhering to ethical standards set by the South African Council of Educators (SACE), which prohibits the use of corporal punishment. Unfortunately, some educators, teacher unions and other quarters of the profession do not deliver adequately on its mandate to ensure teacher professionalism (SACE, 2011).

The challenge posed by a lack of teacher professionalism in this country is arguably a remnant of the colonial era. Post 1994, a new socio-political and educational configuration emerged, with implications for the professionalisation of teaching, as well as the social construction of teacher professionalism (De Clercq, 2013). Echoing these sentiments, Msibi and Mchunu (2013: 19) state that the 'challenges of the present education system are largely rooted in the historical apartheid construction of teachers, which positioned white teachers as professional while casting black (African) teachers as mere technicians'. Maphosa et al. (2012) argue that teachers often hide behind the education department, the standards, the examinations and the (lack of) resources, when taken to task about their poor instruction, their lack of adequate care for the learners and their limited commitment to duty. In responding to the research question underpinning this section, four issues were raised as ways in which teacher professionalism in South Africa can be conceptualised to mitigate school violence and bring about the greater democratisation of schools. The four discussed below are: teachers charged for neglecting duty, infusion of professional studies in initial teacher education, in-service training to promote professionalism, and formation of parent, teachers and learners associations.

Being charged with neglect of duty

The second aspect of reconceptualising what it means to be a teacher, is for the Department to take measures against teachers who deliberately violate the ethical and professional standards of their profession. This will make educators value their work and strive to ensure that teaching as a profession is respected. During the workshop, one respondent noted that

> the challenge is that the department is taking light penalty for the teachers that are neglecting their duties because of the fear of teacher unions, so the solution to enhance teacher professionalism is to charge misguided teachers so that others will learn.

Another respondent noted that

> punishing teachers who show wayward behaviours is the only way to bring sanity in teacher professionalism, without that our schools in the near future will be warzones because of misguided teachers.

Stricter control is possible if the Department develops various monitoring tools to deal with such shortcomings or any neglect in showing professionalism. Wayward teachers can and should be charged if uncompromising monitoring systems are in place. Such monitoring, as suggested by Prew (2009), will compel teachers to adhere to ethical standards. Oversight can be in the hands of external, independent bodies, as well as the community in which the school is located. While this may contribute to teacher professionalism, it is imperative to remain cognisant of the role played by governments and teacher unions, which may complicate efforts to reconceptualise teacher professionalism in this country. The authors concur with De Clercq (2013) that the social construction of teacher professionalism continues to be monopolised (albeit also being contested) by education departments and unions, with their conflicting agendas. Lunenberg, Dengerink and Korthagen (2014) note that because teacher education is ubiquitous and an integral component of education systems worldwide, concentrating on the organisation of teacher education has overshadowed the development of deeper understandings of those who work in the system.

Infusion of professional studies in teacher training

Zimbabwe, which has arguably maintained a level of ethics and professionalism among its teaching cohort, has infused in teacher training colleges and university courses teacher professionalism as a way of instilling the strict ethical values that make someone a good and valued teacher. By emulating this example, South African universities and teacher training colleges will generate deep changes in the intellectual knowledge, mindsets and values of teachers (De Clercq, 2013). Bear in mind that Creasy (2015: 23) defines professionalism as an art of 'preparing aspiring educators to possess and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to be an effective instructor'. During the workshop, one participant noted that for

> teacher professionalism to be instilled in teachers, it must be taught as a major subject to all teachers.

Through professional studies in teacher training, as suggested by Hutchings (2016), there is a possibility of producing teachers who exhibit caring demeanours, a willingness to go above and beyond the time spent in the classroom to help their learners, the ability to reach children who are not engaged, and a personal knowledge of each student which will enable the educator to help them find their passion as individuals.

In-service workshops to promote professionalism

The issue of teacher professionalism cannot be left to teacher training colleges and universities, but has to cascade down to various districts by engaging in more frequent teacher professionalism refresher courses, as a way to enhance this attribute. Workshops allow teachers to address problematic issues as they arise, for instance violence involving cell phones. Such interventions allow teachers to share their experiences and the solutions they reach. The issue of constant workshops was raised by one principal, who noted that

> workshops allow us to be in touch with the realities that happen in the contemporary classroom and through workshops we share ways to address school violence, lack of teacher professionalism and democratisation of schools.

Through in-service training in teacher professionalism there is a possibility that teachers will no longer need to champion their vocation as a professional line of work, or to resort to physical violence to maintain

discipline. Through related in-service experiences, teachers can discover the negative impact of using corporal punishment, especially when it transpires that it can lead to their dismissal from service.

Teacher, parents and learners' associations

Teachers and learners are the end users of the curriculum, thus it is important that within schools associations are formed where learners, parents and teachers can enter into dialogue to find the best ways of overcoming the challenges confronting them as educational stakeholders. In the process, they will be promoting democracy. The result will be democratic schools that foster the values of peaceful conflict resolution and decision-making through discussion and participation – among all stakeholders (Harber, 2004). Such an approach is important since change happens when people collaborate to solve a common problem. One focus group participant (a parent) noted that

> all we need to address school violence is for us teachers and learners to form associations in each and every school, to discuss problematic issues such as discipline that arise in our schools.

Another parent added that a democratic teacher is someone who is

> consultative, promotes delegation without abdicating their authority, a problem solver [who] promotes information exchange and teamwork as opposed to an authoritarian. An authoritarian is prescriptive and instructional.

The value of associations which give voice to all stakeholders is that the power of the dominant figures (in this case the teachers) is negotiated towards striking a balance in relationships that evoke democracy and mutual respect. That is the essence of a Foucauldian notion of power dynamics. If schools are to educate for democracy, then they must practise what they preach. They must be organised in such a way as to develop democratic skills and values through experience (Harber, 2004). As suggested by Harber (2004), this amalgamation will establish a culture of non-violence, which requires citizens to be committed to peaceful conflict management through discussion, negotiation, cooperation and compromise, based on mutual respect among differing parties. The reconceptualising of teacher professionalism in order to make schools more democratic, must also involve working to avoid a lowering of expectations and a deprofessionalising of teaching, which simply convert schools into factories where the workers (teachers) merely have to follow a set manual (curriculum) to produce a particular product (learners) (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013). Despite the pitfalls exhibited by a lack of teacher professionalism, Harber (2004) believes there are powerful arguments for greater democracy and teacher professionalism, in particular in ending the use of corporal punishment.

CONCLUSION

This article has addressed the causes of school violence, which are associated with a lack of teacher professionalism and democracy. Several researchers have pointed out that learners are at the forefront of championing school violence, yet the contention put forward here, is that school violence is (in part) attributable to a lack of teacher professionalism and their negligence in recognising that democracy must be a key element of contemporary schooling. The authors suggested ways in which teacher professionalism can be conceptualised to put an end to corporal punishment. The argument made here is that for schools-based violence to end in South Africa, the focus must not only be on the learners but also on teachers who, through lack of professionalism and democratic approaches, fuel such violence. The authors therefore recommend that teacher professionalism and democracy be prioritised in schools as a means of creating safe learning environments. In addition, power relationships in schools should be negotiated, to avoid resistance and any counter-hegemonic strategies that have the impetus to promote violence in our classrooms.

REFERENCES

Argyris, C. & Schon, D. (1974) *Theory in practice. Increasing Professional Effectiveness.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Ball, D.L. & Cohen, D.K. (1999) Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.) *Teaching as the learning profession.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp.3-31.

Brady, J.A.O.P. (2010) A burning desire for social justice. *Religious Education* 105(1) pp.8-11.

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C. & Walter, F. (2016) Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation. *Qualitative Health Research* 26(12) pp.1802-1811.

Bygstad, B. & Munkvold, B.E. (2007) The significance of member checking validation in qualitative analysis: Experiences from a longitudinal case study. *Proceeding of the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.* https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/52058218.pdf (Accessed 31 September 2018).

Cheruvalath., R. & Tripathi, M. (2015) Secondary School Teachers' Perception of Corporal Punishment: A Case Study in India, The Clearing House. *A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 88(4) pp.127-132, doi:10.1080/00098655.2015.1045821

Creasy, K.L. (2015) Defining professionalism in teacher programs. *Journal of education and social policy* 2(2) pp.23-25.

Darling-Hammond, L. & McLaughlin, M.W. (1995) Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. Phi Delta Kappan *76*(8) pp.597–604. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Linda_Darling-Hammond/publication/243783117_Policies_That_Support_Professional_Development_in_an_Era_of_Reform/links/54a5945c0cf267bdb9082773/Policies-That-Support-Professional-Development-in-an-Era-of-Reform.pdf (Accessed 30 October 2018).

Davids, N. & Waghid, Y. (2016) Responding to school violence in post-apartheid schools on social leadership as mutual engagement. *Education as Change* 20(1) pp.28-42.

Davis, U.C. (n.d.) *The ripple effect: Sexual harassment and students.* www.hdapp.ucdavis.edu/local_resources/docs/ripple-effect_students.pdf (Accessed 28 August 2018).

De Clercq, F. (2013) Professionalism in South Africa education: The challenges of developing teacher professional knowledge, practice, identity and violence. *Journal of Education 57*(2013) pp.31-53.

Dube, B. & Hlalele, D. (2018) Engaging critical emancipatory research as an alternative to mitigate school violence in South Africa. *Educational research for social change 7*(2) pp.74-86.

du Plessis, P. (2015) Learner Discipline in Crisis: Can South African Schools Overcome the Problem? *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 9(3) pp.383-394, doi:10.1080/09751122.2015.11890 328

eNCA. (2015) Thirteen pupils beaten by school teacher. www.enca.com/south-africa/corporal-punishment-sends-13-hospital (Accessed 29 January 2019).

Finlayson, M. (2009) *The impact of teacher absenteeism on student performance: The case of the Cobb County school district*. Dissertations, theses, and capstone projects. http://digitalcommons.kennesaw. edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=etd (Accessed 30 October 2017).

Foucault, M. (1995) *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Freire, I. & Amado, J. (2009) Managing and handling indiscipline in schools. *International Journal of violence and school* 8 pp.85-97.

Fritz, K. (2008) *Ethical issues in qualitative research*. Bloomberg: John Hopkins University.

Garet, M., Porter, A.C., Smithson, J. & White, P.A. (1997) Upgrading high school mathematics instruction. Improving learning opportunities for low achieving, low income youth. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis* 19(4) pp.325-338.

Gershoff, E.T. (2017) School corporal punishment in global perspective: prevalence, outcomes, and efforts at intervention. *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 22(supp.1) pp.224-239, doi:10.1080/13548506.201 6.1271955

Given, L.M. (Ed.) (2008) *The Sage Encyclopaedia of quantitative research methods* 1 and 2. London: Sage.

Goodson, I. (1997) Trendy theory and teacher professionalism. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 27(1) pp.7-22.

Gunawan, J. (2015) Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Nursing Journal* 1(10) pp.10-11.

Harber, C. (2004) *School effectiveness and education for democracy and non-violence*. http://ulis2. unesco.org/images/0011/001112/111227EO.pdf (25 November 2018).

Hassel, E. (1999) *Professional development: Learning from the best*. Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL).

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007) The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research* 77(1) pp.81-112.

Health24. (2015) Corporal punishment is rife in Mpumalanga schools. www.health24.com/Parenting/ Child/News/Mpumalanga-learners-beaten-daily-for-anything-with pipes-and-sticks-20151007 (Accessed 20 January 2019).

Hord, S. (1997) *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry*. American Institutes for Research. http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/ (Accessed 15 October 2017).

Hutchings, T. (2016) *Protecting the profession: Professional ethics in the classroom*. www.ets.org/s/ proethica (Accessed 12 August 2017).

Hyland, T. (2002) *Theory, practice and performance in teaching: Professionalism, intuition and jazz*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30502964_Theory_Practice_and_Perfor (Accessed 20 September 2017).

Jinot, B.L. (2018) The causes of a lack of discipline among secondary schools in Mauritius. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 9(1) pp.35-46.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (2007) Communicative action and public sphere. In N.K. Denzil & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp.559-603.

Knoster, K.C. (2016) *Strategies for addressing students and teacher absenteeism: A literature review.* Prescott Valley, Arizona: Northcentral University, US.

Kourkoutas, E.E. & Wolhuter, C.C. (2013) Handling learner discipline problems. A psycho-social whole school approach. *Koers-Bulletin for Christian scholarships* 78(3) pp.1-18.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (DoE). (2016) *No to teacher–learner relationships.* www.kzneducation.gov.za (Accessed 10 August 2017).

Laws, S., Harper, C. & Marcus, R. (2003) *Research for development. London*: Sage.

Leoschut, L. & Bonora, A. (2007) Offender perspectives on violent crime. In P. Burton (Ed.) *"Someone stole my smile": An exploration into the causes of youth violence in South Africa. CJCP Monograph Series 3.* Cape Town: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, pp.89-112.

Louis, K.S., Marks, H.M. & Kruse, S. (1996) Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal* 33(4) pp.757-798.

Lunenberg, M., Dengerink, J. & Korthagen, F. (2014) *The professional teacher educator: Roles, behaviour and professional development of teacher educators*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Magwa, S. & Ngara, R. (2014) Learner discipline in South African public schools. *Review of Arts and Humanities* 3(2) pp.79-88.

Makhasane, S.D. & Ckikoko, V. (2016) Corporal punishment, contestation paradox and implication for school leadership. A case study of two South African high school. *South African Journal of Education* 36(5) pp.1-8.

Mahlomaholo, M.G. (2010) Towards sustainable empowering learning environment. Unmasking apartheid legacies through scholarship engagement. *South Africa Journal of Higher Education* 24(4) pp.287-301.

Maphosa, C., Mutekwe, E., Machingambi, S., Wadesango, B. & Ndofirepi, A. (2012) Teacher accountability in South African public schools: A call for professionalism from teachers. *Anthropologists* 14(6) pp.545-553.

Mashau, T.S., Mutshaeni, H.N. & Kone, L.R. (2015) Learner Discipline: Finding Lawful Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (Learner Discipline). *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 11(3) pp.285-290, doi:10.1080/09751122.2015.11890400

Masitsa, G. (2008) Discipline and disciplinary measures in the Free State township schools: Unresolved problems. *Acta Academica* 40 pp.234-270.

McKernan, J.A. (2013) The origins of critical theory in education: Fabian socialism as social reconstructionism in nineteenth century Britain. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 61(4) pp.417-433.

McLaren, P.L. (1995) Collision with otherness. Travelling theory. Post-colonial criticism and the politics of ethnographic practice. *Critical theory and educational research* 3 pp.271-300.

McLaughlin, N. (1999) Origins, myths in the social sciences. From Frankfurt School and the emergency of Critical Theory. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24 pp.109-139.

Mendieta, E. (Ed.) (2003) *The Frankfurt school on religion. Key writing by the major thinkers.* New York: Routledge.

Mertens, D.N. (2007) Transformative paradigm. Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of mixed methods research* 3(4) pp.212-225.

Mncube, V.S. & Harber, C. (2013) Learners' democratic involvement in school governing bodies in South Africa. Making the voice of the voiceless heard. *SA-eDuc journal* 10(1) pp.1-24.

Morrell, R. (2001) Corporal punishment in South African schools: A neglected explanation for its persistence. *South African Journal of Education* 21(4) pp.292-299.

Msibi, T. & Mchunu, S. (2013) The knot of curriculum and teacher professionalism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Education as Change* 17(1) pp.19-35.

Mthethwa, K. (2016) *News24.* www.news24.com (Accessed 11 September 2017).

Musyoki, K.I. (2015) *Key words influencing teacher absenteeism in public secondary schools in Nzaui Sub-county.* Master's dissertation. South Eastern Kenya University, Kenya.

Nthebe, B.G. (2006) *Managing learner-discipline in secondary school.* Master's dissertation, Potchefstroom, North West University, South Africa.

Perez, M., Anand, P., Speroni, C., Parrish, T., Esra, P., Socias, M. & Gubbins, P. (2007) *Successful California schools in the context of educational adequacy.* http://cepa.stanford.edu/content/successful-california-schools-context-educational-adequacy (Accessed 8 November 2017).

Pete, S. & Du Plessis, M. (1999) *A rose by other name "Biblicl correction" in South African schools.* University of Natal: Durban, South Africa.

Prew, M. (2009) *Challenges facing education in South Africa.* www.cepd.org.za (Accessed 18 July 2017).

Putnam, R. & Borko, H. (2000) What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher* 29(1) pp.4-15.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1996) *National Education Policy Act, 27 of 1996.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Rossouw, C. (2003) Learners discipline in South African public schools-A qualitative study. *Koers* 68(4) pp.413-435.

Schmidt, J. (2007) The eclipse of reason and the end of the Frankfurt school in American schools. *American Educational Research Journal* 33 pp.757-798.

South African Council of Educators. (2011) Redefining the role and functions of the South African Council of Educators. Position paper. http://sace.org.za/assets/documents/uploads/sace_61547-2016-08-31-The%20Role%20of%20the%20South%20African%20Council%20for%20Educators.pdf (Accessed 12 January 2019).

Talbert, J. & McLaughlin, T. (1994) Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. *American Journal of Education* 102(2) pp.123-153.

Tdole, M.J. & Mmankoto, R. (2014) Teacher attitudes, professionalism in relation to school violence. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 5(1) pp.19-27.

The Guardian. (2018) Corporal punishment at school saw that pupils live in fear. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/mar/27/corporal-punishment-at-school-saw-that-pupils-lived-in-fear (Accessed 20 January 2019).

Timperley, H., Wilson, H., Barrar, H. & Fung, I. (2007) *Teacher professional learning and development*. New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis.

van Niekerk, S. (2019) What parents need to know about corporal punishment. https://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/family/parenting/what-parents-need-to-know-about-corporal-punishment-18807448 (Accessed 28 January 2019).

Vilakazi, Z. (2017) *Boy hangs himself*. www.dailynews.co.za (Accessed 20 September 2017).

Wardoyo, C., Herdiani, A. & Salika, B. (2017) Teacher professionalism: An analysis of professionalism phases. *International Education Studies* 10(4) pp.90-100.

Wicks, J., Olifant, N. & Naidoo, Y. (2017) *New school corporal punishment video emerges*. www.heraldlive.co.za/news/2017/09/12 (Accessed 23 September 2017).

Zulu B. M., Urbani G., Van der Merwe, A. & Van der Walt, J.L. (2004) Violence as an impediment to a culture of teaching and learning in some South African schools. *South African Journal of Education* 24(2) pp.170-175.