

**Creating a safe learning environment in two schools in the Butterworth District, Eastern Cape**

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Philosophy (Environmental Studies) in the Department of Geography and Environmental  
Sciences at the University of Fort Hare**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work, except in cases stated, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree or part of a degree to any other department, academic institution or university.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my two daughters who have supported and missed my love during this period of climbing up the ladder. To my mother, my late father for their endless support, commitment, kind words of encouragement and for showing constant interest in my research. To my husband Pumzile Mzamo who has supported me throughout this process and who constantly encouraged me in my studies. Finally I would like to dedicate this to everyone in the MPhil Program.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the creation of a safe learning environment at two schools in the Butterworth District of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The two schools are Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School and Butterworth High School. The study is of a comparative design and aims to assist the communities of Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School, and Butterworth High School to improve health, safety and security issues of their children by reducing their exposure to environmental risks while attending school. An ethnographic study was used to collect data and the study employed questionnaires, document analysis and interviews as methods of collecting data. The primary aim of this study was to assess whether the school is still a safe place for learning and teaching to take place without fear and harm so that both learners and teachers can attain growth and development. Physical risks were assessed through observation and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with the senior members of staff while questionnaires were issued to eighty learners and were all returned back for analysis.

The content analysis and interpretation yielded findings that suggests that hazards that may harm the development of learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High school exist. The study concludes that it is crucial that strategies and necessary interventions be set up and implemented to ensure that all stakeholders perceive school safety as an important aspect, both for the benefit of the school and that of the wider society. The barriers to school safety, specifically to both schools in this study need to be attended to. The study has presented findings that are consistent with those of other studies which emphasized that if barriers to school safety are identified, confronted and tackled, the schools could benefit positively from effects of involving everyone to create a safe learning environment. The conditions under which learners receive education in South Africa have to be closely and constantly monitored by Departmental officials. Teachers and managers need to be trained in their duties so that schools become places where learners are safe and enjoy reaching their future goals.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Although schooling in South Africa is based on the 1996 Constitutional principles of equity, human rights and democracy, (South African Schools Act, 1996) there is still a cry of the educational condition that is still failing the majority of people in South Africa. Safety, health and environment in many schools are a major problem (Roper, 2002; WHO, 2004; Clarke, 2007). Environmental challenges vary from school to school around the world and within communities. These environmental challenges pose social, physical, biological and chemical threats to the entire school community. School community includes learners, teachers, parents, administrative staff, government and non-governmental officials, etc. In order to reduce these environmental hazards, schools need resources to improve the health, education and development of the affected parties, yet resources to manage these threats also differ from school to school among communities around the world.

In his address Kofi Anan, Secretary-General of the United Nations said

Education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and influencing population growth. Education is a path towards international peace and security. (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

To gain this international peace and security the school should therefore offer an environment where teaching and learning take place, for all learners and teachers, without any fear of harm (Roper, 2002). In 1999 the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, noted that policies and frameworks regarding safety and security developed in South Africa were sound but the implementation, delivery and transformation of the education system had been slow and uneven still causing inequalities among communities. To address that, he announced the plan called "Tirisano: Call to Action". The plan focussed among other things, the massive inequalities in access and facilities, the poor morale of the teaching force, failures in governance and management, the poor quality of learning, the need for improvement in the safety and security elements of schooling emphasising the proactive role of schools in addressing high levels of violence in local communities (Pelser, 2005).

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993), teachers and learners should work in an environment that is safe and without risk (Clarke, 2007). If school communities identify key hazards in

schools recognising special vulnerability and exposure to environmental threats and take action, then they send messages that will build skills among learners to protect the environment for life (WHO, 2004).The above therefore, shows that if the environment in which education is to be attained is unsafe, teachers and learners will not attain their goals of learning, teaching and development. Hence, it is important for every stakeholder at school to play an important role of creating a safe learning environment, where learners learn without fear of harm and teachers teach towards the realisation of education goals of every learner- to be effective members of the society (Roper, 2002).

However, many schools are faced with risks that hamper the development of learners. Some of the incidents have been highlighted in various media reports like bullying, intimidation and victimisation of learners by either fellow learners or teachers in schools or even teachers being victimised, feeling unsafe and threatened at schools and various forms of violence in school going children. The Virginia High School Safety Study surveyed in United Kingdom (2007) revealed that teachers reported low rates of serious victimization, although most teachers have had the experience of a student speaking to them in a disrespectful manner. The survey also showed that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report having a weapon pulled on them, while female teachers were more likely than male teachers to report being spoken to in a rude or disrespectful manner. The study showed that teachers with more years of teaching experience reported slightly lower rates of victimization than less experienced teachers.

This research study hopes to assess both the social and physical hazards that make the school no longer a safe learning and teaching environment. These hazards may have both short and long term effects on the lives of the school community. Hence Hutton et al. (2010) says environmental hazards at schools can also potentially damage the mental and psychological health of the individual. That is why the World Health Organisation prepared a document to help individuals, school officials and governments improve the health of children while at school by reducing their exposure to environmental hazards. Physical risks include the location (site) of the school, quality of school buildings, the modernisation process of the school and its impact on climate change, indoor and outdoor pollutants, class sizes, water and sanitation standards, ultraviolet radiation, pesticides, food whereas social risks include bullying and victimisation, the use of alcohol and drugs by either learners and teachers during school activities, the use of cell phones at school, parental involvement and their high expectations of their children, dropouts due lack of social capital, and grade retention due to high-stake testing. These social and physical risks have a negative impact on the safety and security of the school (Clarke, 2007).

The hazardous conditions under which learners receive their education make a crucial contribution to educational achievement (WHO, 2004; Blyth, 2010) and may sometimes be fatal as some learners tend to show violent-related behaviors at the end (Roper, 2002). Learners therefore become socially vulnerable and schools are faced with a big challenge of providing a safe environment for all learners and teachers. The Bill of Rights section 12 and 24, (Freedman, 2010) states it clearly in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996) that everyone has a right to be free of all forms of violence in a safe environment. This right needs to be protected and universally recognized, and it implies that every learner has a constitutional right to learn in a safe environment, so that those who want to study can do so without disruption (Prinsloo, 2005; Clarke, 2007). Although it is the responsibility of teachers to maintain a culture of teaching and learning in schools, they cannot do this if safety and security are not given due consideration in the school environment. Nevertheless it has been reported that some teachers act irresponsibly by leaving their classes unattended, and that creates an opportunity for bullying to take place when the teacher is not in the class. This conduct shows lack of discipline and pastoral care. Clarke (2007) says good teaching and learning cannot take place in the absence of good discipline by both teachers and learners. Schools will only be successful in achieving the good order, that is the characteristic of a well-disciplined environment, because they make it part of the daily business and because it is seen as everybody's responsibility. In schools where discipline is a problem, a significant contributory factor to the problem is an underlying lack of commitment from staff and senior management to dealing with the problem (Prinsloo, 2000; WHO, 2004; Clarke, 2007). The social environment, in which school operates, according to Clarke (2007), clearly contributes very significantly to the difficulty in managing the disciplinary process. The study suggest that this does not make it impossible as there are many schools which are successful in maintaining order and discipline among learners and staff, despite the difficulties of their social environment.

The South African Institute of Race Research Relations (SAIRR) published statistics from the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), a study by the U.S-based Institute for Education Sciences (IES) in 30 countries worldwide. This study revealed that South Africa was ranked last in school safety (SAIRR, 1999). According to the study by the SAIRR, when South African pupils were asked whether they felt safe when they are at school, and whether they had experienced incidents of stealing, bullying and injury to themselves or to others, only 23% said they felt safe

(SAIRR, 1999). It also seems that violence and crime are not limited to either high or primary schools. A Western Cape survey by Eliasov and Frank (2000) revealed that violence and crime are endemic to both primary and high schools, incidents of theft, vandalism, burglary, bullying, verbal abuse and assault with a weapon were reported in the researched schools. These types of disruptive behavior must certainly have a definite negative influence on the maintenance of safety and security in schools. In another study it was reported that approximately 50% of all reported crimes in South Africa are committed by youths between ages of 14 and 18 years (De Wet, 2003). Therefore it was deemed appropriate to include high school learners from Grade 8 to Grade 11, a range which caters for this age group, in the scope of this study.

From another point, De Wet (2003) examined the perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding safety at their schools, and from teachers' responses in the Eastern Cape it was found that the environment in which the schools were located constituted a problem regarding safety. Some potential problem areas were identified, namely, the school grounds, empty classrooms and learner bathrooms. It was also reported in this study that even though teachers are finding it hard to enforce discipline, and complain that learners are unruly, disrespectful and have a "don't care" attitude towards their work. De Wet (2003) further reported that in some of the researched schools, the teachers complained that they often found themselves in classroom situations where they could not handle certain behavioral problems.

This study will argue that schools where there are clear, written school rules, which are enforced fairly and unambiguously and which are enforced in line with the 1996 Constitutional principles of equity, human rights and democracy, prove to be more successful in combating violence in their schools.

Roper (2002) states that "less disorder is found in schools where learners know and understand the school rules, where these rules are enforced fairly and unambiguously, and where there is a clear reward and recognition system for compliance with the rules". In many of the researched schools the learners complained that rules were not consistently applied. According to Gaustad (1992), schools have two main goals, firstly to create an environment conducive to learning, and secondly to ensure the safety of learners and teachers. Failing to make schools safe and compatible to learners, without fear of harassment and bullying, could result in serious discipline problems. It is also a teacher's legal responsibility to act in *loco parentis* where it concerns the safety of learners while they are placed under the teacher's care by the parents (SASA, 1996). In relation to matters concerning learner's physical welfare, Stewart (2004) says that schools are required to implement management systems to

protect learners from harm, including incidences of bullying. The law expects of teachers that they will act like *diligens paterfamiliae* and reasonable persons in the education at all times. Dealing with children requires a higher degree of care than is normally the case when professionals deal with adults, so their conduct as professional persons will be subject to more stringent tests (Beckam and Russo, 1998). In East London a teenager from a local school died, partly because his class was left unsupervised while a teacher was at a workshop (Donian, 2006). The youth of South Africa are often spoken of as representing our hope for the future (Roper, 2002), and it is reasonable to expect that they will be protected and nurtured in the community where they live and go to school (Prinsloo, 2000).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Environmental challenges are still prevalent in many South African schools both in rural and urban communities. These threats to the health and development of learners differ according to the communities in which the schools are located. Learners cannot learn, and teachers cannot teach effectively in an unsafe environment, and therefore strategies to reduce exposure to these environmental threats need to be devised, imposed and managed. Poor management of environmental threats in a school creates an environment that can become violent and unsafe. Learners and teachers have a legal right to learn and teach in a safe environment (Clarke, 2007). It seems that this right is violated in many schools, and many learners feel unsafe at school. Failing to provide a safe environment can lead to violent situations, serious discipline problems, and a high drop-out rate.

## **RESEARCH AIM**

- To investigate environmental conditions that hamper development at Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School and Butterworth High School.
- To suggest strategies to improve health, education and development of children, families and community members of the two school communities.
- To inform members of these communities how to recognise, manage and avoid environmental threats that may exist in or near their schools.

## OBJECTIVES

- To assess the hazards that hamper development of learners while at school,
- To investigate if the school offers an environment that is conducive for learning and teaching to take place without fear and harm,
- To investigate if stakeholders are aware of what should be done to create a safe school environment,
- To assess learners' perceptions on creating a safe school and
- To assess if any support is provided to schools by the relevant authorities to create a safe school.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The word "learner" as used in the Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) refers to those attending school in South Africa from Grade R to Grade 12, and is used throughout this study. (In certain quotations that refer to learners in other countries, the words "pupil" or "student" are used).

The word "teacher" as used in the NCS (National Curriculum Statement, 2005) refers to those who teach in schools. The word "educator" as used in the Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), will also be used in certain contexts.

### Legal terms

The Latin words "*in loco parentis*" are translated as "in the place of a parent".

The Latin words "*audi alteram partem*" are translated as "hear the other side".

The Latin words "*nullum poene sine lege*" are translated as "no punishment without a rule".

The Latin words "*diligens paterfamilia*" are translated as "like a reasonable, caring father".

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### *Research design*

In order to describe how teachers and learners of Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School experience vulnerability while at school, an ethnographical study was used. According to Flowerdew and Martin (2004) an ethnographical study relies on observation, interviewing and document analysis.

To analyze the data collected, the researcher used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The use of more than one method to investigate the different perceptions of teachers and learners on school safety from the past and the present enhanced the reliability of the research. Flowerdew and Martin (2004) agree that the use of more than one method will provide different sets of data which in turn ensure the reliability of the research. The overall research method used in this study was however mainly qualitative. The use of minute books, accident registers and school policies provide actual documentations as primary information sources to obtain a better understanding of the risk factors that schools are facing regarding safety and security in schools, in South Africa and abroad. This also emphasizes that the current problem is not limited to only Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School in Butterworth, but the problems regarding safety in schools are universal.

### *Data collection*

Analyzing documents from the two schools, handing out questionnaires, conducting interviews and observation by the researcher was the methods of data collection used in this study.

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with senior staff members and/or principals from Butterworth High School and Ndabankulu S.S.S. in Butterworth. The schools chosen differ from one another in regard to their infrastructure and school culture.

The following were determined in the interviews:

- Teachers' view on the creation of healthy teaching and learning environment in schools.
- Teachers' perceptions on the management and prevention of factors that hamper safety in schools.

Cohen et al. (2000) define an interview as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest for production of knowledge. It is one of a range of survey methods in social research. The researcher initiated the conversation. Since it is a two way conversation, the researcher probed questions on the issues of safety, security and the whole school environment. These questions may not be fully answered as some of the questions may need respondents to express sensitive information about their workplaces. It had been therefore important for the researcher to reassure respondents of confidentiality to make them comfortable. The researcher encouraged the respondents to share their experiences in a professional way (Flowerdew & Martin, 2004) so as to obtain relevant information as specified in the research objectives.

### *Questionnaires*

Learners between fourteen and twenty years of age and of both genders, from different backgrounds and race were included as participants in this study to reflect an acceptable degree of diversity. A pilot questionnaire was done at Ndabankulu S.S.S. with ten learners who were not included in the final research. After refinement of the pilot study, questionnaires were distributed in Butterworth High School and Ndabankulu S.S.S. where the interviews were conducted. The survey included ten learners from each of the following grades at Butterworth High School: Grades 8,9,10 and 11 and twenty learners from Grades 10 and 11 respectively from Ndabankulu S.S.S. since Ndabankulu S.S.S. starts from grade ten. Grade 12 learners were purposefully not included in the survey, as at the time the questionnaires were distributed they were busy preparing for their preliminary National Senior Certificate examinations.

The questionnaire sought to determine the following:

- Whether learners feel safe while at school,
- The places where they mostly feel unsafe,
- Incidents that make them feel unsafe while at school,

- Incidents that make them feel unsafe inside or outside the school premises and
- The learners' suggestions on how to create a safe learning environment in schools.

### *Document analysis*

Document analysis was used to check the history of learners and to complement questionnaires, observation and interviews. This would include looking at the admission registers for the previous school attended by the learner, attendance registers for tracking rate of attendance and classroom composition, mark schedules for the scores learners attained in tests and examinations, records of parental meetings, school policies, asset registers and ill-health registers. The usage of these documents was negotiated with the principal. The aim of using these documents was to find out whether the two schools had policies in place and if so, whether they were followed.

### *Observation*

The use of the method of observation was to see the characteristics of the physical environments at Butterworth High School and Ndabankulu S.S.S. The number of learners in class would also predict the probability of grade retention and the way a teacher handled disciplinary problems in class. The way learners were seated would determine the curricular and instructional experiences the learners were receiving from those classes. Since there would be nothing learnt from the underlying factors in the behaviors observed, interviews and questionnaires tested that reality.

The research therefore also employed deductive approach since reality in the classes would create the image of high failure rate and increase the probability of learner drop-out (Johnston & Sidaway, 2004) which was the risk to learner achievement. In the deductive design, the teachers set reality beforehand that learners would fail because of lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms and learners not continuously attending classes. Examinations they conducted would just be used to test that reality. Those examinations were used as the verification procedures. If learners had performed less, they did not look at other psychological factors that might have influenced bad performance. Instead they took that as positive feedback because their priori model had been predicted successfully. The teachers would not consider the social promotion as solution to learner's risk

looking at all factors but they would take decision of retaining that particular learner into the same grade which would not lead to learner development.

### *Data analysis*

Data analysis consisted of identifying emerging themes and patterns throughout the data. Legally, it is a child's right to study in safe environment in which learning and growth can take place, without feeling threatened and scared. However, research done by Roper (2002) indicated that learners and educators are often terrified to attend school and that even when they are at school, they are scared to go to the toilet or move around on the school grounds. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), the Bill of Rights, contains various rights that are applicable to the safe environment – that is, one that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Prinsloo (2005) concurs that the purpose of any school is to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place in an orderly environment. Furthermore, South African teachers have an important duty towards the safety and protection of learners (Clarke, 2007), not only in terms of the Constitution and other legislation, but also in terms of their in *loco parentis* status.

The South African Schools Act, (Act 84 of 1996) seeks to ensure a safe school environment by making the following provisions:

- Section 10 prohibits the use of corporal punishment;
- Section 8(1) places an obligation on schools governing bodies to draw up a code of conduct for the learners;
- Section 8(2) stipulates that the schools code of conduct must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment and
- Section 8(5) stipulates that a code of conduct must make provision for legal process to safeguard the interest of the learner and any other party involved in the disciplinary proceedings.

These provisions affirm that learners have a constitutional right to study in a safe school environment (Roper, 2002; Prinsloo, 2005; Clarke, 2007). Roper (2002) asserts that currently one of the most prominent factors influencing the learning environment in South African schools is the conduct of learners. Clarke (2007) points out that maintaining discipline is seen by educators to be a major problem and source of stress. Oosthuizen (1998) states that school rules constitute a particular form

of subordinate legislation, therefore it is important that schools should have a legally defensible code of conduct.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For this research to be ethically engaged, various ethical guidelines that regulate the conduct of research involving human participants was adhered to (Martin & Flowerdew, 2004). Adhering to ethics guidelines of doing social research does not only protect the research participants but enhances integrity of the study as well. The American Education Research Association (2005) stated that it is of paramount importance that researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institutions within which research occurs.

All the responses of the participants from the two schools was valued irrespective of relevance. This will help understand their perceptions, values, feelings and attitudes towards safety, health and physical environment at their schools. It is important therefore that the researcher should be sensitive to locally established institutional policies or guidelines or the codes of conduct for conducting research at these schools.

To ensure compliance the school governing bodies (SGBs) gave approval to conduct the study in these schools as some of the parents of learners may not be accessed easily. Further approval was given by the school principals on behalf of the school management teams (SMTs). The researcher wrote letters to these two organs of the state detailing the aim and purpose of research. The letters explained the benefits the school will receive after the study. This should be viewed as an attempt to conduct an ethical engaged research as the persons giving approval will be fully informed of both possible risks and benefits that the school could accrue from the findings of the study.

After obtaining approval from the management of the schools, prospective participants in the study were approached individually. They were asked to participate, fully informed of the purpose, aims and objectives of study. Each participant was given a consent form. After reading it she/he signed the document. Research participants were approached in a respectful manner, assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants together with the researcher would choose Study Identity numbers and these would justify their anonymity. Participants were informed of their right not to answer the

question during the interview if they felt not comfortable with it. This made them feel more comfortable as they would be in control of the interview process.

### **The significance of the study**

An analysis of literature would reveal the risks that were there at Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School. It would also show who could be affected and how she or he would be affected. It would also suggest ways to reduce or eliminate hazards in all areas of the schools. The study would serve as a basis of training to members of the school population to assess risks at schools. Collection of information from teachers, parents, learners and possible the other interested stakeholders would help in assessing the risks that might affect their health and safety while at school as those risks might affect them physically, psychologically or socially.

Therefore all stakeholders in the two schools would benefit from the study by generating knowledge on identifying and controlling risks. Parents of learners attending in those schools would increase the social capital of their children by involving themselves in the schools. Learners would be encouraged to attain their educational goals and teachers would use their best practices to minimize risks that made a school an unsafe place to achieve educational goals and to stick to the policies that are informed by the bill of rights, protecting everyone at schools.

### **Delimitations**

This study concentrated on only two high schools in the Butterworth Region, see Location Map, Fig 1. Learners from grade 8 to 11 were asked to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. The findings could not be generalized to the whole of the Butterworth Region or the entire Eastern Cape Province. However, the findings might be an indication that there was a need to create a safe learning environment in schools for learners to be lifelong learners and participate in life.

### **Structure of the study**

**Chapter I:** Introduction of the study

**Chapter II:** A contemporary overview of existing literature regarding the extent of safety at schools.

**Chapter III:** Research Location

**Chapter IV:** Presentation and discussion of findings

**Chapter V:** Conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature supports the view that today schools no longer provide safe environments for learning and teaching to take place without fear, harm and danger. There are various environmental hazards that need to be identified and controlled at schools so that the school remains a safe place to achieve educational objectives. There is an increase in school-based violence, bullying and intimidation, drugs and alcohol abuse globally, tobacco consumption, use of illegal weapons, sexual harassment, lack of social capital, use of cell phones in schools making a frightening task for teachers. These will be discussed as part of social risks found in schools. Literature on physical risks including the size of the school, quality of buildings, modernization of school buildings, class sizes, extreme heat and cold, radiation, traffic and transport, air pollution, water pollution, hazardous waste, hazardous materials and finishes, asbestos, paint and cleaning agents that can lead to climate change will be reviewed and checked against their impact on making the school a safe place for making learners and teachers achieve educational goals. (Roper, 2002; WHO, 2004; Clarke, 2007; Wa Kivulu & Wandai, 2009)

The fact that the learners have legal right to study in a safe environment makes it the legal duty of educators to provide an environment in which learners are protected against various forms of violence in schools (Clarke, 2007). The legal rights of learners and the duty of care of teachers in their role as in *loco parentis* are therefore examined by referring to various law cases, and to the role of subordinate legislation such as school rules and codes of conduct in schools. For the sake of safety and security in schools, schools are now forced to implement security measures such as searches, drug test and closed circuit cameras (CCTV) (Roper, 2002).

According to Roper (2002), an environment that is full of violence, chaos and unruly behaviour is not conducive to learning. Discipline underpins every aspect of successful teaching and learning; therefore it is important to examine the different forms of discipline that might form the basis of good classroom management and orderly schools. Therefore the various forms of discipline used in schools, punitive measures including detention, suspension and expulsion, and preventative and positive measures are all brought under the spotlight in this study. The theoretical framework which

emerges from the review of literature includes a legal perspective on school violence, relevant disciplinary approaches and learner safety.

De Wet (2003) states that school violence is not a new phenomenon; even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, French schools were faced with sword and fist fights, unrest and attacks on educators. The World Health Organization defines violence as,

“... The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death and psychological harm”.

According to Roper (2002) and Clarke (2007), it seems as though there is a perceptible breakdown of school discipline worldwide. In the United States of America, the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes towards the Public Schools concluded that a “lack of discipline” has been identified as the most serious problem facing the nation's educational system (Clarke, 2007). Clarke argues that many teachers and learners are said to be gravely concerned about disorder and danger in the school environment. It was further reported that school personnel, pupils and parents call attention to the high incidence of such problems in the school environment as drug usage, cheating, insubordination, truancy and intimidation, which result in countless school and classroom disruptions, and lead to nearly two million suspensions per year in the United States of America. In addition to these school discipline issues, United States classrooms are frequently plagued by other more minor kinds of misbehavior which disrupt the flow of the classroom activities and interfere with learning. Furthermore, it was reported that approximately half of all classroom activities other than instruction, and discipline, and discipline problems, are responsible for a significant portion of this lost instructional time (Clarke, 2007).

According to Roper (2002), school violence should be considered broadly as a group of undesirable behaviours that result in a significantly negative outcome for another learner entity such as the school building itself, Clarke, (2007). These behaviors can include:

- Acts against objects, such as theft, vandalism, and arson;
- Acts against same-sex peers, such as intimidation, bullying, assault, battery and homicide;

- Acts against opposite-sex peers, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimidation, bullying and rape and
- Acts against staff and faculty such as intimidation, bullying, assault, battery, theft, sexual offences of various types and homicide.

Teachers in the South African schools are familiar with the disruption and harm that are caused in schools by violent behaviour, and would therefore recognize more than one of the above-mentioned undesired behaviours in the schools where they teach. The South African Human Rights Commission reports in their inquiry into school-based violence in South Africa (Wa Kivilu & Wandai, 2009), that such violence takes the following forms and patterns:

- Physical violence and fighting;
- Radically motivated violence;
- Verbal abuse;
- Bullying and intimidation;
- Gang violence;
- Drug and alcohol abuse-related violence;
- Theft of property and vandalism;
- Student protests that turn violent;
- Sexual Violence in schools and gender-based violence, and
- Violence undermining the education of girls by forcing them out of school.

Various factors such as poverty, neglect, ineffective parenting, dysfunctional family life, high-density housing in townships and informal settlements, diverse racial, ethnic or tribal composition, organized crime, as well as childhood exposure to violence, crime and the abuse of alcohol and drugs contribute to unsafe schools in the South African context (WHO, 2004; Clarke, 2007). The research has found all these factors playing a role in the researched schools.

Clarke (2007) concluded that not only could all of these factors spill over into the schools, with serious consequences for education; they could also lead to a collapse of a learning culture. Clarke (2007) and Blandford (1998) claim that some of the causes of violence in schools are the effects of a poor

socio-economic environment and factors such as drug abuse, child abuse, neglect and community and media-related violence, all of which are reverberated in many classrooms worldwide. At the same time, however, there are many schools in the world which, regardless of their size, socio-economic influences, student composition or geographic setting, have safe and orderly classrooms and school grounds.

### **Legal duty of teachers**

Roper (2002) affirms that teachers, however, are not trained to be social workers or psychologists, therefore schools need the involvement of other professionals in the community to provide support in whatever way that is needed. Nevertheless, teachers cannot ignore the violent disruption of education and, indeed, are expected to provide learners with a positive climate that has a protective influence in a potentially violent situation (Geffner et al., 2001). Teachers are not only held responsible for the learners that are entrusted to them due to their in *loco parentis* role, they also have the authority vested in them to create a sound disciplinary environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Teachers need to intervene in attacks on learners in schools and, according to Geffner et al., (2001), it is crucial to report incidents of violence in order to combat violence successfully in schools. Lack of action could lead misbehaving learners to further acts of violence because they see that there are no consequences for their misbehaviour. According to Geffner et al., (2001) what could create an environment in which violence might become more prevalent is that many teachers are reluctant to report or respond to cases of violence, resulting in many perpetrators getting away without being reprimanded. Furthermore, Geffner et al. (2001) conclude that ineffective and non-existent disciplinary measures for dealing with violence and bullying in schools could, in fact, be interpreted as giving approval to the perpetrators. The reasons that are given for some teachers not wanting to intervene is that they feel ill-equipped to deal with the issue; others believe that if they intervene it would make attacks more underground. It is therefore important that programmes to assist teachers in their efforts to become more effective in reducing aggression in the form of bullying and other violent behaviour should be implemented. (Clarke, 2007).

The presence of school violence is not restricted to schools that are situated in poor areas; instead; it is widespread among schools in different communities, income, cultural and language groups, and is present in all nine provinces of South Africa. In a study by Eliasov and Frank (2000) on the nature and extent of crime and violence in schools in S.A., the researchers found that, although problems were reported across all school categories, disadvantaged schools persistently experience more severe problems, particularly relating to vandalism, physical violence, gangsterism and the possession of drugs and weapons.

### **Safety and security at school**

A national study on victimization against children by the Center for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), in which 45 000 young people between ages 12 and 22 were interviewed nationally during 2006, showed some significant results. In the case of assaults against children and youth, as well as the theft of children's property, the school was the single most common site reported for these crimes to occur (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). It was reported that 52,4% of these reported thefts occurred during school hours and 26% of assaults on learners also occurred while they were at school and, furthermore, 21,1% of sexual assaults on learners also occurred while these youngsters were at school. How can learners do their best and concentrate on their work when they are afraid and do not know who is going to wait for them at break or after school, whether it will be to take their money or to steal lunch? Not feeling safe and secure at school could result in psychological harm for learners. Furthermore, Parker (2003) concludes that it seems that when children do not feel safe in their learning environment, not only could their scholastic achievement be affected, but exposure to violence could have significant consequences for the development of their emotional functioning and socialization. It might seem as though the causes of violence as discussed heretofore lie outside the influence of schools. However, the effects usually affect the school climate directly; therefore school violence could be seen as both a school and a community problem.

These factors contribute to the understanding of safety by not only associating it with the physical harm that results from violence, but by noting that harm is also caused by anxiety or apprehension about impending harm, thereby constituting psychological harm. Clarke (2007) says it seems fair to ask "how child-friendly is the school?" He says for the school to be a happy place to be, the principal needs to have skills to manage people, that is, learners, teachers, parents and all other stakeholders

because the school is a people-intensive organization. All these groups have an interest in making a school a safe place to be. The motivation theory by Maslow describes five levels of needs by individuals. It is composed of need to survive in life as the most basic- the need to work in a healthy environment by maintenance staff, security as the second most basic- the need for safety and freedom from fear of physical and emotional injury. For learners to be safe it includes the nurturing protection of a parent or a caring adult like the teacher. Schools are faced with threats related to need for security like drug abuse and gangsterism. Once the basic needs have been met, individuals need to be part of a group linked by bonds of loyalty and support such as the school. This will be followed by the need for prestige or recognition. For individuals to be recognized they have to be unique in a way that gives them status and lastly once all of these needs have been met, the need for self-fulfillment will be achieved which is informed by independence. Therefore it is the duty of the school to make learners independent in life. This will be achieved if the school is able to provide guidelines in the early stages of development of an individual. The school has an obligation of providing a clean, safe secure and ordered environment.

Clarke (2007) concluded by giving the following checklist on safety and security at schools:

- The school boundary fence is intact and is maintained in a good state of repair;
- The school boundary fence is sufficiently high to make it difficult to gain unauthorized access to the school site;
- The entrance gates to the school are locked during the school day to prevent unauthorized access to the school site;
- There is a mechanism to monitor the school gates during the school day so as to allow authorized access to the school site;
- There is a mechanism in place to ensure that all visitors to the school first sign in (providing their names and businesses) and wait at a designated reception area until they are met by a member of the school staff;
- There is a school policy about public (including parental) access to the school buildings during the school day, and the policy is enforced.

- During teaching time, all learners are expected to be in their assigned classes, and this policy is enforced;
- The school has a system in place to supervise the classes of absent teachers, so learners are supervised during these periods and
- The school's code of conduct and disciplinary system ensures that teaching and learning can take place during the school day.

### **School-based violence**

According to Loots (2005), South Africa has some of the highest rates of violent crime in the world. For most South Africans, particularly the poor; crime, and specifically violent crime, is not a recent phenomenon. Extreme levels of inequality and decades of political conflict have produced a society prone to violent crime. Evidence indicates that crime rates in black townships have been high for years, but that racial segregation largely shielded or isolated whites from its effects. The wearing down and then collapse of Apartheid boundaries allowed violent crime to move out of the townships and into the suburbs, where it is more likely to be recorded. In his study he highlights different types of violence as interpersonal violent crime: murder, attempted murder, serious assaults (or assault with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm, common assaults and rape and violence to property crime: these include all categories of robbery, i.e. robbery with aggravating circumstances (armed robbery and car hijacking) and common robbery in some way affect many of our South African schools, and are often interrelated. Levels of violent crime in South Africa are very high and consequently set South Africa apart from other crime-ridden societies.

McMullen et al. (2012) commented about school violence in United States that three teenagers were killed when a 16-year-old gunman opened fire in the cafeteria of Chardon High School, near Cleveland. Two other students were wounded, and countless kids, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members of Chardon—a city of about 5,000—were psychologically affected and will likely never be the same. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics further reported that thirty-three violent deaths occurred at elementary and secondary schools between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, either on campus, on

the way to or from campus, or during a school event. These 33 deaths not only account for students, but also for staff members and others on school grounds, such as parents and intervening law enforcement officials, who were victims of homicide or suicide. However, school-based violence is sometimes triggered by learners and teachers who consume drugs during school sessions whether in or off-campus. As a result learners claim that teachers are not role-modeling their actions to learners. The absence of a teacher during teaching period may lead to learners bullying each other (Roper, 2002).

### **Bullying and intimidation**

Bullying according to Sullivan (2005), can be hitting, kicking, shoving, teasing and making rude gestures, name calling or using force in anyway. These things happen at schools more than once and are usually done by the same persons. They say bullying means to hurt either physically so that the victim feels very bad. They define it as a deliberate, hurtful behaviour that is often repeated over a period of time and in which it is difficult for those being bullied to defend them. Research tells us consistently that from country to country and from school to school bullying is widespread. In a report for the New Zealand Office of the Commissioner for Children, Lind and Maxwell (1996) found that when the secondary students in their study described the three worst things they had experienced, being bullied most often, came second, with the first being the loss of a relative. This indicates that the school should actively seek to provide an excellent learning environment that is safe from intimidation and bullying. It should clearly outline the responsibilities of staff, students and parents to combat any form of social, physical and emotional intimidation and bullying.

Sullivan (2005) suggested the following guidelines of a school anti-bullying policy:

- Anti- bullying workshops to be run yearly,
- All members of the school community to have a responsibility to take when they become aware of bullying behaviour,
- Staff should treat any report of bullying behaviour seriously,
- Staff should first listen to both sides,
- Students should be assured that they have acted correctly in reporting bullying,

- The staff should make sure that the victim is safe;
- The staff member should then make a brief written summary of the information and pass it on to the anti- bullying committee of the school which includes the principal. This should be discussed with the students concerned;
- Each case of reported bullying should be assessed by team members and an appropriate response put in place;
- Record and file the case;
- It is important that the staff member to whom bullying was reported should check after a week with both students and the person to whom the information was sent, and
- In cases of serious intimidation, parents of both students are to be contacted.

When the learners were asked where they mostly feel unsafe while at school, sixty out of eighty learners chose the classroom (Sullivan, 2005). To make a class a safe learning environment, learners should be encouraged to develop a student's charter with Rights and Responsibilities of all learners in class. Sullivan (2005) suggest the theme of the charter to be "*This is our place and it belongs to all of us*". This is supported by Clarke (2007). They highlighted some of the rights and responsibilities that should be included in the student's charter as follows:

- Right to learn without disruption;
- Right to aim for excellence and to do our excellent best;
- Right to be safe;
- Right to expect our possessions to be safe, and
- Right to a safe clean environment.

In the study conducted by University of Virginia on Virginia High School Safety in United Kingdom, it was found that for the school to be safe it had to draw school rules and had to fairly and consistently apply those rules to all learners. (Roper, 2002). Rules cannot be fairly applied if teachers are not

strict in applying them to combat behaviour that is not desirable (Clarke, 2007). For teachers to take firm and reasonable decisions to correct bad behaviour, they should listen to all learners reporting any form of social or physical abuse and take corrective measures. By doing so, learners feel safe at school because teachers support them in fighting bullying and intimidation. The study found that schools that scored highest on measures of safety are schools where students report that rules are strictly and fairly enforced and students reported that adults are supportive, caring, and willing to help. As a result those schools had lower levels of student victimization such as theft, threats, and assaults and bullying.

Ngelana (2011) reported an incident of unsafety in the Daily Dispatch newspaper of “ABUSED BY TEACHER- teen in ICU” where a fourteen year old teen was punished by a teacher. The teen was in ICU, admitted at the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital because the teacher hit him. The teacher claimed that the teen was unruly and hit him. Siyanda (2011) commented that corporal punishment was not new as a result he did not believe teachers when they said children are unruly because he recalled as early as in the 1980s when learners were very disciplined, teachers used to brutally punish them, turning their hands blue. He further claims that teachers have psychological problems; they vent their anger on children and suggest that they need professional help. Another similar incident happened in Lusikisiki where a learner was hit by a teacher and lost an eye (Siyanda, 2011).

This issue of corporal punishment makes school unsafe and moreover corporal punishment was abolished as it was deemed unconstitutional. Parents should lay criminal charges against the teacher with the police. Section 28 of the 1996 Constitution provides that children, because of their vulnerability, should be treated with special care. Failing to ensure that the school environment is safe and conducive for learners to learn, without fear of bullying, can result not only in serious health problems, but could also require the victim’s parents and the Department of education (DoE) to engage in high legal costs. Moreover section 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states clearly, that anyone who feels that his or her right in the Bill of rights has been infringed or threatened has the right to approach a constitutional court and the court may grant appropriate relief. Therefore when schools develop a code of conduct as subordinate law, they must be guided by the Bill of Rights that promotes the values that underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom (Roper, 2002).

## **Drug and alcohol abuse**

Recent surveys indicate that drugs are available everywhere from the highest socioeconomic levels to the lowest, from best schools to the poorest schools. They show that (Singh et al., 2006)

- The average age of first drug use is 13 with the average age of first alcohol use to be 12,
- Over 50% of high-school seniors have tried drugs. Over 33% have tried a drug other than marijuana,
- Nearly 33% of all high-school seniors claim that most of their friends get drunk at least once a week,
- Nearly one in 16 has tried cocaine or its powerful, addictive derivative, crack,
- High-school senior girls ingest more stimulants and tranquillizers than boys. Girls almost match the boys' use of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, and
- Approximately 33% of fourth- graders reported peer pressure to try alcohol and marijuana.

In the study about “Tobacco Consumption and Awareness of Health Hazards” (Singh et al, 2006), participants are also faced with a challenge of tobacco consumption and the majority of them are aware of the consequences of smoking. They even said “it is boldly written that smoking is a health hazard on the package of cigarettes”. This means that the majority of learners at schools are aware that smoking is harmful to their health. The study conducted by CANSA added that over 44000 South Africans die from tobacco-related diseases annually ([www.cansa.org.za](http://www.cansa.org.za)). It is also supported in the research conducted in New Delhi, India by Singh et al. (2006) and World Health Organization (2004), which reveal that consumption of tobacco usually begins in adolescence; the time for discovery, challenge and experimentation. Children under study revealed that tobacco consumption is influenced by peer pressure, advertisements on various media, role modeling of teachers and parents. As a result smoking becomes a habit which is not easily removed in adulthood. There is a worldwide belief that smoking will reduce their emotions, anger and frustrations. Learners who take alcohol are prone to smoke after alcohol intake. The study shows that this happens mostly amongst learners from poor backgrounds. Due to cravings and lack of money, early smokers especially amongst poor families tend to use more dangerous tobacco products like gutkha which is a mixture of tobacco, crushed betel nut and sweet savoury (Singh et al., 2006).

Furthermore in trying to reduce tobacco consumption, smoking is generally prohibited from many public places. But learners continue smoking in toilets and bunk classes to take a smoke. They usually buy tobacco from street vendors away from parents because parents discourage the use of tobacco. Some of the learners believe that smoking contributes to weight loss as teenagers are very sensitive to weight gain. That is why some of the learners even steal other learners' possessions to sell them for money to buy alcohol and tobacco (Singh et al., 2006).

It is also found that alcohol is most commonly used by South Africans of all ages. More than one in four South Africans (28%) aged 15 years and over currently acknowledge that they consume alcohol. Among adolescents, aged 15-19 years, 11% are current drinkers (Ensink et al., 1997). The Crime Intelligence Unit of the South African Police Services, for instance, is of the opinion that alcohol abuse plays an important contributing role in crime and violence. The risk of being involved in violent behaviour at school increases with alcohol consumption; this was confirmed by Rossouw & Stefkovich (1995), especially in the case of boys.

It was found that in South African schools, dagga (cannabis) is the most common drug of choice because it is cheap and easy to access. The research findings of Nesor et al. (2000) showed that dagga was easy to get hold of and could be bought within an hour. This ready availability has contributed to a widespread substance abuse market. According to Nesor et al. (2001), one third of the respondents in their survey admitted to having smoked dagga. Learners in more affluent schools who receive more pocket money can afford to buy drugs, while poorer learners who reside in the townships and who have developed the habit could easily become involved in violence to obtain the money to pursue it. This suggests that the proportion of illegal drug use is not negligible and it places young people at risk of negative health and legal consequences that could impact on their education.

In an article on drugs in schools, the National Institute on Drug Abuse Survey researchers found that 50% of high-school seniors in South Africa partake of an illicit drug at some stage of their lives (McEntire, 2007). The Bureau of justice also reports that 85% of teenagers know where to access drugs, such as marijuana, and 55% know how to obtain amphetamines. The fact that drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines (tic), inhalants, Ritalin prescription and over-the-counter medicines are readily accessible to youngsters in South African township and suburban schools, it is bound to impact negatively on education in general, and on what happens in the schools

in particular. Furthermore, knowledge of drug availability is similar, regardless of race or location. However, McEntire (2007) states that what is more shocking is that 29% of students said that someone had offered, sold or given them an illegal drug while they were at school.

### **Cell phone use in schools**

The other hot social debate that impacts on the safety of learners at schools is whether cell phones should be allowed in schools or not. According to Fisher (2010), the 21<sup>st</sup> century school environments need to encourage learners and teachers to attend school. She said the classroom should move away from that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which was traditionally built where the teacher would be the only one with knowledge with learners seated quietly at their desks listening to what the teacher is saying. This is what Fischer calls the “knowledge-age”. In addition McMullen et al. (2012) commented that educators across United States are increasingly embracing digital learning these days—especially after the Obama administration's push for all schools to make the transition to digital textbooks within the next five years.

Fisher, in his study on “Technology-enabled active learning environments: an appraisal”, encourages a “creative age” where learners and teachers create knowledge and integrate it into a variety of fields to solve different problems they may come across not only basing their knowledge on curriculum issues but to apply it in the real world. The focus is on the introduction of the third space which could be the wireless broadband internet access and the cell phones which are easily carried around to make flexibility in the teaching and learning environment. This will be possible if spatial developments are being instigated through initiatives lead by information technology and communication departments (Fisher, 2010). Proponents argue that cell phones should be allowed in schools as they remove a poverty child away from that situation. They argue that cell phones expose learners from poor communities to access information, sharing and making use of the information coming from all over the world for overall growth and development politically, economically, educationally and otherwise. They say the main goal is to mitigate the institutional obstacles faced by the most deprived in societies as some learners were never exposed to computers and therefore lack knowledge. They argue that cell phones in the classroom affirm human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) gave Human Rights legal status.

- Learners are human; therefore they are entitled to Human Rights.

- Human Rights do not have to be bought, earned or inherited; they are inalienable, which means that no one has the right to deprive another of them for any reason, even if the laws of their own country do not recognize or protect them.
- Human Rights thus set standards for states and governments to protect vulnerable individuals and groups against oppression.
- Any modern approach to Human Rights must be rational and sound. It must include the full, indivisible range of Human Rights. Not only do they mean protection from physical oppression, but involve economic, social and cultural rights.
- People face many interrelated problems that can be traced to lack of knowledge on human rights.

Equipping learners with knowledge on human rights and their responsibilities is the best thing ever which can happen to them. They will use the cell phone, as a tool to combat all human rights violations be it economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights. All these will be effective if schools expose learners to the use of internet through their cell phones and be strict on rules about using cell phones. Learners should be allowed to have them but must abide by the rules concerning when and where to use them. But the bottom line is that having a cell phone is a very good thing since it exposes learners especially from disadvantaged and marginalized communities to quality education (Prinsloo, 2005). Moreover, teachers give learners projects that require learners to be technologically and entrepreneurially competent so as to boost the economy, but without the use of learning technologies they may not gain those skills. The skills they might gain when completing their projects may be expanded to include critical thinking, communicating to peers and communities, working in multi-disciplinary teams and environmental literacies (Fisher, 2010). That means knowledge dealt with in class might be linked to the industrial world they are living in. But many schools have policies that ban the use of cell phones (Clarke, 2007). Their hostile economic and political environments result in the implementation of a package of economic programmes that limit the social and economic possibilities and rights of their learners. They limit poor children specifically, their access to quality basic education and health facilities as well as to the enjoyment of adequate care and protection of their parents, (Prinsloo, 2005). Parents in [www.third-way.org](http://www.third-way.org) argue and that when learners have cell phones at schools they are assured of their children's safety and can easily reach them to inform of the changes in their daily plans. The researcher believes that it is common in these busy days that when children are away parents are nervous and want to know if their children are still safe. Hence many parents even from the poor backgrounds buy a cell phone for their children.

Prinsloo and Walton (2008) further argue in their study “Digital literacies as situated Social Practices of Electronic Communication in Marginal Schools” that the view on digital literacies that teacher apply in an African context conceptualizes literacy as sets of social practices that are contextually embedded and situationally variable, rather than as an autonomous skill, practice or social technology whose forms, functions and effects are unchanging and neutral across social settings. They say the drill-and-practice exercises of the educational software simulate the interaction patterns of classroom discourse. Their study argues that the way technology is used in many schools in an African context does not allow learners to participate in the global economy. Computers are there in many schools and so many projects like internet cafes and telecentres have been developed rapidly in African villages and urban centers as an initiative by the World Bank and UNESCO with the hope of connecting people to the vast resources of the “Knowledge Economy” propelling them towards progress and development. Surprisingly, this initiative is seen in an African context as a way of widening the gap between the wealthy people and the poor. Prinsloo and Walton (2008) call this the “Digital Divides”. The use of computers in marginalized schools still leaves the poor people in a technological apartheid. They say this digital divide hazard does not happen in Africa only but it happens in other parts of the world like USA under Bush administration where it was attacked by members of the Democratic Party for its failure to improve reading outcomes in schools. In the USA the “No Child Left Behind Act (McGuinn & Patrick 2002) aimed to ensure that every student would be technologically literate by the time he finishes the eighth grade irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, family income, geographic location or disability. The study conducted by Prinsloo & Walton (2008) suggested that these new media are not a silver bullet and not instantly able to solve the problem of poverty and skewed development. They argue that use of computers and networked environments should not be injected from outside to bring about change to encounter situated social practices that do not simply result in these resources. This means that the schools especially in disadvantaged areas might have computers and networked environments, but the way digital literacies is conducted might be in the form of drill and practice which only takes place in school and not outside the school (Prinsloo & Walton, 2008).

## **Parental involvement and participation**

Parental involvement and participation in governance of the school has been greatly supported by scientific evidence. Researchers have emphasized that parental involvement and participation is fundamental to the development of the school at large. This will reduce the risk of illiteracy among learners and the entire nation later. Henderson & Mapp (2002) have continually stated that there are benefits that directly accrue to learners. These include high pass rate with better scores, low school dropout rates and high chances of success in life at a later stage.

Dewey et al. (2010) supports the argument by highlighting the importance of increasing the family social capital. They noted that most learners in North Carolina complained that they have little family social capital even though some of their parents are educated. The argument is that parents never had 'deep thought conversations' which is meaningful to their education except basic chatter of high expectations of graduating to higher levels of learning. This is the situation even here in South Africa. Parents are mostly concerned about high achievements and have high expectations about their children without giving support to learning throughout the educational life of a child. It becomes worse when learners are at the secondary school experiencing many confusing issues in their lives, like being part of peers, changes in their well being and lifestyles. Parents hardly look at the child's books. They will only be concerned when they see poor performance in the report card. Still then, they will not go to the teacher concerned to ask the actual problem (Dewrey et al., 2010).

Zill & Nord (1994) stress that efforts should be made to develop activities that link home and school in order to facilitate a better working relationship between the two institutions for the child's benefit. The literature highlights scientific based evidence that partnership between the parents and the school is a significant component in enhancing learner performance in schools. It reveals that parents have a major influence on their children's achievement in schools. It is recommended that parents should assume the responsibility for their children's success and actively play the role of participating in most school activities and thus enhance involvement in the education of their children.

Even though most of these studies are conducted in developed countries like United States of America (U.S.A.), they have as much bearing on the under developed situations like that of South

Africa. Parents and children's emotions are alike, regardless of where they are. There is all the reason to hope that similar studies will increase on the African continent (Mothatha & Mda, 2000).

### **Illegal weapons in schools**

Learners carry weapons to school for a variety of reasons, including protection, security, power and status, or to sell them. A study by Eliazov & Frank (2000), of twenty schools in the Western Cape Province showed that the carrying of weapons was particularly widespread where intimidation, drug abuse and gangsterism were present. Thus, early intervention methods addressing bullying, drug abuse and gangsterism may well help to eliminate the use of weapons in schools. Furthermore; 40, 9% of the respondents said that the relative availability of firearms is an important factor contributing to learner violence.

In their findings, they showed that most of the twenty schools that they researched seemed to have a "weapon-free policy", and that most schools confiscated all weapons found on the school premises. However, teachers reported that possession was commonly accepted and often overlooked. Teachers explained that pupils might need to defend themselves on their way to and from school; teachers also said that they sometimes felt too intimidated to confront learners, particularly those affiliated to gangs (Eliazov & Frank, 2000).

In the past teachers and principals have frequently found it necessary to search learners for items which may be harmful to them or to others. Today, however, the prevalence of drugs and guns or other dangerous weapons has increased the importance of school searches as being in the best interest of all learners. The study by Eliazov and Frank (2000) shows that knives were identified as being present in all schools, while in 11 out of twenty schools, pupils were found to be in possession of firearms. However, Sprague and Walker (2005) reported that other items such as razors, box cutters, metal knuckles, chemical irritants, mace and pepper spray are also used as weapons.

Incidents of school stabbings are commonly reported in the media in the Eastern Cape: "Boy stabbed to death at rural school" near Qumbu in the Eastern Cape (Ngcukana, 2008); "Teenager in teacher assault suspended after stabbing" in East London (Prince, 2008); "Schoolboy from Peddie in the Eastern Cape stabbed after a bad joke", "Classmates watch in horror as pupil stabbed to death " in

Mthatha, Ngcukana (2008) and “Pupil tries to save his friend stabbed at school” in East London, Eastern Cape, (Sokopo, 2009). These are just a few of the incidents that have caught the public attention. It is a pity that unfortunate incidents like these first have to happen before people become aware there might be a problem. One incident that caused a major call to action by teachers to search for weapons was the case of Krugersdorp “ninja death”. Here, a matric boy killed a fellow learner with a sword and attacker other three people: “School boy appears over sword death”, (SAPA, 2008). Such incidents are not unusual in other countries as well. The result of incident like the 1999 massacre of pupils at Columbine High School in Columbia, USA, caused national outcry and increased the emphasis, not only on school safety, but on the availability of weapons and bullying as a nationwide problem. In another incident in south West Germany, a teenager went on a rampage at his former high school, killing 16 people by discharging his father’s gun (Smit, 2010).

Also, in South Africa, school shootings are periodically reported: “Horror school shooting with police service pistol of 14-year old at a Pretoria private school” (as cited in Prinsloo, 2005). In Delft in the Western Cape Province, a teacher was held at gunpoint in a classroom and in Umlazi in KwaZulu-Natal, a high school learner went on a shooting spree. In this case, none was reported to be hurt (Smit, 2010). The reasons behind these shocking attacks are still in dispute. However, the seriousness of the incidents has provoked extensive debate about the safety of schools in South Africa. It has provoked an attempt to ensure that schools are safe places by erecting fences around all schools, installing alarm systems, burglar bars and security gates with security guards on duty.

Taking all of this into consideration, one cannot ignore the reality that violence in our schools does occur, emphasizing the proactive role that teachers, principals, parents and all stakeholders need to play to address high levels of violence in our schools and to provide a safer learning environment for every learner and teacher. The governing bodies in schools should stress the importance of disciplinary policies and interventions that need to be implemented in schools so that all children can have the full benefit of education without fear or stress.

## **Racism, discrimination and sexual harassment**

Recent studies show that racism, discrimination and sexual harassment remain recurring problems in schools. They show that these problems specifically in South Africa emanate from the recent past of apartheid. Clarke (2007) argues that these do not only affect Africa but are global problems that schools face. He said unfortunately, schools are expected by the general members of the public and politicians to treat the nation's ills. As learners are taught to show values in their actions, teachers are expected to infuse in their daily teaching and assessment the principles of tolerance and respect as they interact with shaping the future of their learners (SASA, 1996). When they model the principles of respect, they teach their learners to show respect and tolerance to each other. By that they will be practicing actions against racism, discrimination and sexual harassment. Clarke defines racism, discrimination and sexual harassment as actions based on the assumption that certain groups are better off or more wealthy than others as a result of perceived physical and inherited differences.

## **Quality of school buildings**

Blyth (2010) conducted a study in Portugal about school buildings. He affirms that improving school buildings play an important role in improving the standards of education. According to Blyth (2010), the Portuguese government has put plans in place for the modernization programme in schools. The Portuguese government believes that the quality of school buildings make a crucial contribution to educational achievement. The study reveals that if school buildings have deteriorated then they will no longer provide a learning environment conducive to contemporary education.

The study further reveals that by upgrading and renovating the school, the government attracts the community to be part of the school. As the building after renovation needs long term maintenance, the community members will be responsible for the maintenance of the school. Even here in South Africa, according to South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 (SASA), the governance of all public schools is vested in the governing bodies. Also provided in section 16 (1) were functions the SGBs were to perform in schools, these included, inter alia:

- To adopt a code of conduct for the learners;
- To administer and control the schools properties, buildings, grounds and all other school resources;
- To be involved in policy making and implementation;

- To be involved when crafting vision and mission statements for the school community and
- To support the principal, teachers and other staff members in the performance of their professional functions (Department of Education, 1996).

Blyth (2010) further emphasized that the modernization process would not be possible if the vision of each school in Portugal was not considered because the design process depends on the strategic plan for each school so that quality of school buildings meets both the current and future needs of the school. An article by World Health Organization shows the importance of schools to engage all stakeholders to create a safe learning environment. It says that community members should be involved during the design stage as they are the ones who know the hazardous areas on which the school is to be built. As such it becomes much easier to improve the quality of school buildings and to make the school a safe learning environment that will not affect the health of learners and staff because of different opinions from different groups of people. Griffiths & Fenton (2004) warns that if school buildings are to be renovated, the manufacturers should first carry out a risk assessment and mitigation with all relevant stakeholders making a decision whether to carry on because the level of risk is low or to stop the renovation process as it will have impacts on the school community.

However, improving school buildings contributes to economic development of which it implies the emission of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere making the entire society vulnerable to extreme weather conditions (WHO, 2004). Several national, sub-national authorities and regional organisations have already examined the possibility of incorporating climate change impacts and adaptation measures within the context of EIA modalities whenever there is a modernisation approach to school buildings (Agrawala et al., 2010). Lippman, (2010) speaks of “a responsive design approach” that would help designers create more innovative and sustainable learning environments. Such an approach accepts that the environment shapes the learner, and that learners influence their environment. This means when the learner interacts with his learning environment, he/she has to be careful of the time she/ he takes and the place in which she acquires knowledge. By that he/she will be creating a safe and sustainable learning environment where both the learner and the physical environment are active and interact with each other. Lippman suggests that for the environment to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the designers of technology should teach learners and the stakeholders also on how to act responsibly towards saving the natural environment so that technology that is incorporated in their classrooms should help in their learning without any social

harm. He speaks of corporate social responsibility towards the uplifting the standard of education by everyone and code of conduct drafted by the school governing body.

From his point of view, Lippman (2010) sees the learner and the learning environment both active in achieving educational goals unlike the 20<sup>th</sup> century constructivist setting where the learner was only active in acquiring knowledge and the physical environment passive. He suggests the inclusion of information technologies in the classrooms which will make the classroom the third teacher. Learner will be active in discovering knowledge, interacting with other learners through cooperate learning and the use of technology around him.

But it is still an unfortunate situation that green building designs mostly cater for economic and physical settings, not considering a triple balance of involving the social issue of how technology impacts on the health of beings around (WHO, 2004). Hence Blyth (2010), calls for the involvement of all interested parties whenever there is a new change in the physical environment so that extensive research by manufacturers is undertaken because manufacturers of “green” products rarely provide information on the social impact of their activities.

However in today’s economic crises Blyth (2010) highlights the reasons why school buildings deteriorate which is one of the factors that contributes to the underdevelopment of learners. He mentions the impact of economic and financial crisis on educational building programmes as the implementation of EIA also adds cost to the renovation and modernization of school buildings (Agrawala et al., 2004). He says this process is time consuming. Much as it might seem costly to integrate EIA as a tool to climate-proof the project of modernization, the impact of climate change on the environment is far more adverse than EIA incorporation because failing to integrate EIA in developmental projects, no matter how small they may seem, may be fatal to the entire nation.

When the modernization program takes place it becomes imperative to screen it for the risks posed by climate change (Agrawala, et al., 2004). This however means in the strategic planning of school

building changes, it is important to incorporate climate change impacts and adaptation measures within the context of EIA modalities as it is practiced in few developed countries like Canada, Australia but in developing countries like Bangladesh there is lack of document which notes proper assessment of climate change in designing and implementing structures. That makes structural interventions more prone to climatic hazards (Agrawala et. al., 2004). The important point in climate change impacts and adaptation is to so far have information about climatic impacts on the natural environment and to establish good communication between the developer and the people interested in the environment.

Guldbaek et al, (2011) in Denmark see school development from a different perspective. They suggest development in schools by making learning a personalized learning rather than a standardized learning as learners live in the world that is changing so fast. They identified skills that teachers should have in order to help children develop as how to learn, to be creative, to experiment, communicate, take responsibility, work together and exchange opinions. They further say learners cannot have these competences if teaching and learning is still tied to a single teacher for a particular subject because what that teacher knows has an end and yet according to them learning does not have an end instead they see it as a process not a race. If a subject is handled by different teachers, learners are more likely to gain a variety of expertise in their learning. That therefore will make a class a healthy environment for development and growth in the mind of a child.

They further say Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian novelist, warns teachers that if learners only hear a single story about something they face a risk of critical misunderstanding. If they only hear a single story about another person or culture they are heading towards the risk of becoming ignorant and ignorance is the route to intolerance. Intolerance leads to unsafe school as learners do not enjoy going to school. If learners do not enjoy going to school, they may drop out of school and engage in illegal activities that hamper development. To make the school safe they suggests the importance of one class being taught by different teachers so that in a school environment there should be development that incorporates four elements, the society, the child, the future and the school. Safe school should develop the child with values that will bring new experiences and cultures into the society, knowing that what he does today is subject to be different in future as it will be influenced by what he is doing today. If the school offers these skills, then the school develops the child who will become fundamentally happy beings. In the study conducted by the World Health Organisation (2004), it is stated clearly that “children of today are the adults of tomorrow”. This indicates that the

physical school environment should shape children towards being complete physical, mental and social well-beings. The learners will have basic and professional competences necessary to take part in and develop in the society and participate in life.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH LOCATION

The study is situated within the changing context of school administration globally as well as in South Africa. It is introduced by the history of the two selected schools in Butterworth in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. It also shows how their physical, social, economic and political forces inform school safety. The study will be conducted at Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School. Both schools are physically situated in the former Transkei region in the district of Butterworth under Mnquma local municipality (Fig. 1).

Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School is located in the rural area at Cegcuwana location (Dwarini) an area of poor to middle-income earners. The language that is spoken by the whole population of Ndabankulu S.S.S. is isiXhosa but its language of learning, teaching and assessment is English. It offers IsiXhosa as the Home Language. It is 12 km away from the town of Butterworth and it is situated along two busy roads, the R409 road (from Tsomo to Ndabakazi Railway Station) and the N2 (from Butterworth to East London and beyond). It is 110m away from the R409 and also 550m away from the N2. The school was established in 1995 with a learner enrolment of 100. It grew because of its excellence and the number of students increased from 100 to the 2012 current enrolment of 815. It is surrounded by 8 villages and new settlement areas around the railway line. The overall population of the above mentioned villages is 9787. Most of the learners from Ndabankulu S.S.S are living in rental flats in the villages because parents like the discipline the school displays and the good academic results at end of grade twelve. That makes the school attract learners from different places, to as far as Mthatha- 150 km away, and the surrounding towns- Ngqamakhwe, Tsomo, Cofimvaba and Centane.

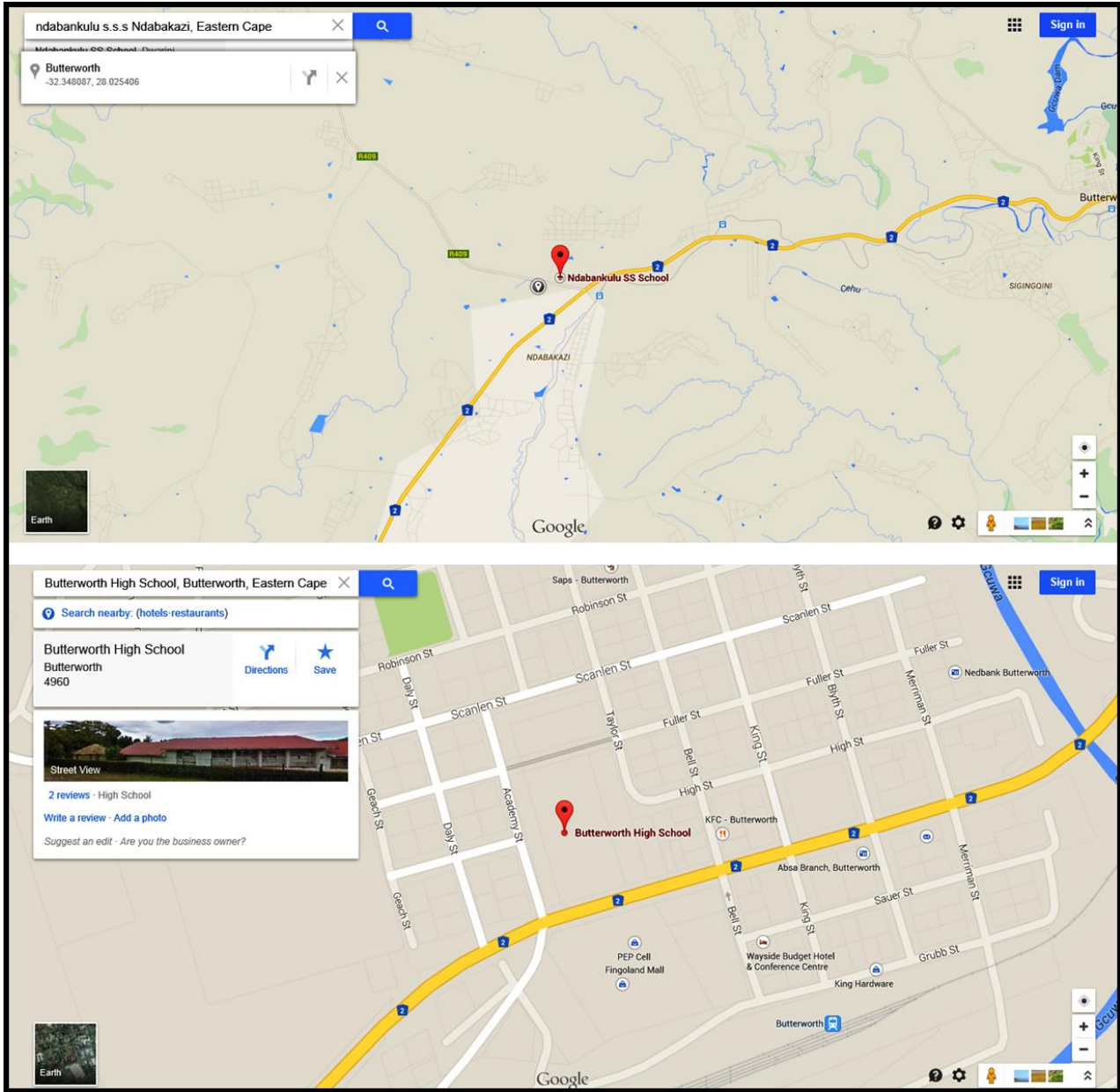


Figure 3.1: Location of Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School

Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School, starts from grade ten up to grade twelve with learner enrollment of 815, who are accommodated in fifteen classrooms. The school was established in 1995 as the Emergency school from Cunningham Senior Secondary School after the call of Back to school Campaign by the then Minister of Education. It started off from the two local church halls with 106

learners in grade ten. In 1996 the school governing body, with the assistance of the community, built three classrooms and asked a local electrician to install electricity. In 1998 they built another two classrooms. In 1999 the National government built a temporary structure with four classrooms. In 2001 the national government built and electrified 6 classrooms, an administration block with a computer laboratory, a science laboratory with a septic tank, two blocks of pit toilets and fitted four water tanks. The school has a computer laboratory with sixty computers which is used for Computer Applications Technology (CAT) classes from grade 10 up to grade 12. Each grade has five classes of which two classes take CAT. In grade ten, each class has a minimum of sixty learners up to seventy learners, grade 11 has a minimum of 55 up to a maximum of 65 and grade 12 has a minimum of 40 up to a maximum of 45 learners. Part of the storeroom of the science laboratory is used as a staff room for two science teachers and other three members of the staff. Ndabankulu S.S.S. is characterized by lack of infrastructure. The school uses local playgrounds for its sporting activities.

There are 26 state paid teachers, a principal, one deputy principal, one administration clerk, one cleaning staff member employed by the school governing body (SGB), four state paid meal servers and two SGB paid caretakers. Members of the school management team (SMT) use their designated offices in the administration block. All learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. uses two blocks of pit toilets with twenty entrances, females separated from males. During break times learners use these toilets as their rest rooms. This is usually the place where illegal activities like tobacco smoking and drug usage start to emerge. These show the physical dynamics of Ndabankulu S.S.S. The literacy rate of participants for Ndabankulu S.S.S. is between low and average. The significant social features of Ndabankulu S.S.S. are persistent dropout rates and movement of learners from one school to another. Many parents of learners are working in cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town where they offer unskilled labour while children reside mostly with their grandparents and relatives.

Economically, Ndabankulu S.S.S. is located in previously disadvantaged area namely Cegcuwana Location, because many of their parents are not working. If they are working, they offer unskilled labour in Butterworth town or in big cities away from home where the children are staying. The school is not adequately resourced. This is shown by overcrowded classrooms and lack of proper sanitation, (Fig. 1). The whole infrastructure at Ndabankulu S.S.S. is underdeveloped as the school was initiated by the community and built by local bricklayers who offer cheap labour for the development for their community.



Figure 3.2: Class size and composition with shortage of desks

Most of the learners catch taxis and hitch-hike as the form of transport from the N2 and R409 roads when coming to school and leaving for home after school. Some walk two to five kilometers and some organize contract vans and taxis which also carry learners to other schools which is mostly in town. These contract vans and taxis drop them along the N2 or R409 as they ride to drop various learners to other schools. There is no scholar transport because those learners who use public transport have left other schools in their neighborhood. They claim that the schools in their proximity are underperforming but the government does not allow scholar transport in the case of a learner who has left a school in his or her neighborhood.

In 2005 the school received learner support materials of calculators and school bags from ABSA as part of their community outreach program (BBBEE Act, 1998). According to Broad-Based Black

Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE), companies especially large ones, are forced by law to meet the needs of the communities that support them. The school also received sponsorship from Old Mutual. Old Mutual entered into a three year contract from 2007 up to 2010 with the school to provide science kit and has bought fifty computers to equip the computer laboratory.

Butterworth High School is in the centre of Butterworth. It is situated in a multicultural area. Since it is also in the Mnquma Local Municipality, the language that is spoken by the majority of the population is also isiXhosa. The language of teaching, learning and assessment at Butterworth High School is English. The school offers English as the home language. It is 110m away from the newly established taxi rank and 100m away from the busy N2. It starts from grade R up to grade twelve with learner population of 1300. It is a comprehensive school. A comprehensive school includes all grades of basic education, that is, from grade R up to grade twelve.

The school has well-built sporting grounds that are maintained by the school. It is a well-established, well-built school which caters for almost all the basic needs of the school, like enough classrooms with learner population between 28 and 30 in each class, a big hall, three computer laboratories for each phase of learning, staff cottages, a school bus, beautifully fenced-school grounds with trees and flowers, locked gates all the way, private security guard by the gates, one entrance for visitors and another one for learners and staff.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 1, a learner population of eight hundred and fifteen accommodated in only fifteen classrooms is an indication of overcrowded classes at Ndabankulu S.S.S. This is one of the contributing factors to school violence and crime. When learners were asked through the questionnaires where they feel most unsafe at school, thirteen out of twenty chose the classroom. Most of them at Ndabankulu S.S.S. complained of issues of violence like threats by fellow classmates, theft in the classroom of their valuables like calculators, cell phones and stationery. This means that they sacrifice their break times by remaining in class or taking turns to visit the restrooms.

Table 1: Summary of each school profile as in 2012

	<b>NDABANKULU S.S.S.</b>	<b>BUTTERWORTH HIGH SCHOOL</b>
Location	rural	urban
Learners per school	815	1300
Teachers per school	28	68
State paid teachers	28	37
SGB paid teachers	0	31
Learner- teacher ratio	1: 55	1:28
No. of classrooms	15	46
No. of learners per class	Between 40 and 70	30

One learner complained that,

*“Even if I report the unsafe conditions of our class to our class teacher, he does not care. Locks are broken in our class, we cannot lock our classroom. Some learners from other classes get into the class whilst we attend CAT periods in the computer lab and search our school bags and steal our*

books. Some of the classmates may remain back in the class and steal our belongings". This is an indication that

### **Drug use, tobacco consumption and awareness of health hazard**

The majority of respondents knew that tobacco consumption is detrimental to their health. Parents and teachers discuss the harmful effects of tobacco with their children. Girls had a belief that smoking reduces weight. Boys believe that smoking relieves their morning motions and prefer to smoke first thing in the morning. Toilets are their place of smoking during break times while at school. Most of the learners buy tobacco from street vendors away from their parents. Some of the learners sell tobacco products while at school during break times. Teachers are aware that learners smoke in the toilets during break times. 98% of learners are aware that their teachers and parents smoke. A respondent had this to say,

*"The classroom is full of smoke smell after break from both from boys and teachers. I do not like that because it makes me sick, I am asthmatic and that affects my health".*

This shows that teachers and parents are not role-modeling what they preach to the youth. They do not take care of their well-being as smoking kills at all ages and causes cancer. When learners were asked if their code of conduct clearly indicates a drug policy, one learner had this to say

*"it is just written as one line that no learner should use drugs in school premises and school activities and it was never discussed with us the seriousness and the consequences of drug use during school sessions"*

This is shown by the manner learners use drugs during school activities. As a result one teacher commented that:

*I am no longer interested in attending any school function outside the school because learners freely display their drug use... they become so drunk that you become afraid of your safety....even using your vehicle is a big risk as it may be easily damaged by the drunken ones and you have nowhere to claim for the damages caused and almost all learners consume alcohol and drugs during school activities.*

A grade eleven learner reported,

*“A boy who is a drug addict in class steals our files and dictionaries and sells them to the grade ten classes for cheap prices. When I confront him because my younger sister in grade ten has told me that he sells our valuables to them, he would be bold enough to tell us that he has enough money to buy drugs, his parents provide enough pocket money”.*

On the question about what things they do not like about their school and schoolmates, one learner said:

*“My classmates steal other learners’ belongings, books, as they do not take care of their books because they did not have the tasks that are due for their year marks , they take away books and dip them in toilets”.*

One female learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. said:

*“I do not like bullying by boys... they take my chair by force and when I report no one takes that serious ... my class teacher once said I must share my desk mate’s chair as there is a big shortage of chairs at school.”*

When learners were asked whether they feel safe while at school, one learner said:

*” the whole school environment is a mess and boring, it is so stereotyped and confusing. I so wish that this was my last year but I am still in grade ten”.*

On a follow up question on what exactly is boring as this exercise may change her attitude, she said, *“for an example if one learner’s cell phone is found ringing in class, a teacher would search for all the cell phones in class and take them to the office where we will be required to pop out fifty rands to get them back or sometimes to be told that yours is not seen and no one cares... interestingly though some of the teachers would ask us to take out our cell phones and Google out a certain topic under discussion in class”.*

## **The unethical nature of school**

The overcrowded classrooms at Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School and many learners admitted at both Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School have led to numerous environmental hazards such as bullying and victimization, use of corporal punishment, various acts of violence leading to the high drop-out rate, sexual harassment and rape. When the researcher asked learners if they feel safe while at school, 76 out of 80 learners from both Ndabankulu Senior Secondary School and Butterworth High School said they find the school not to be a safe place anymore. One learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. had this to say

*“I was severely punished by my teacher and broke my arm for coming to school late. The teacher did not want to listen to the reason why I was late... My parents took me to the doctor and the doctor told them to open a case against the teacher and they did... but later I discovered that the school asked my parents to drop the case”*

This is a social sin according to Clarke (2007). The school knew that the action of the teacher was highly charged (South African Council for Educators Code of Professional Ethics, SACE) which could lead to loss of employment by the teacher. The school forgot to note that it has sacrificed the long-term greater good of the community for short term benefits that serve their selfish needs because what was done to this child would remain with him for the rest of his life. The school did not serve the educational interests of the child but sadly the leadership team condoned behavior that was morally and ethically inexcusable. Clarke (2007) highlights that SACE clearly states that the teacher should avoid any form of humiliation and should refrain from any form of abuse, physical or psychological.

A learner from Butterworth High School complained:

*“The school is discriminatory...both teachers and my friends show that discriminatory behavior. For example my friends from other cultures are not showing any interest in understanding isiXhosa as one of the languages. They do not become part of the conversation when we mix languages but funny they are so sensitive when I pronounce their surnames and names funny and I try. It is worse with our teachers, they will correct my pronunciation. I told everybody how to pronounce my name but none gives even a try”*

## External threats at Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School

As Ndabankulu S.S.S. is located in a rural area near two busy roads and around the railway station, safety and security of the school itself and that of the staff and learners is a serious problem. School children experiences threats and hazards that result from individuals, objects or substances that enter the premises almost on a daily basis. These threats include among other things the following:

- Risks from gang members coming onto the school site
- Drugs being passed through the school fence or learners bringing them to school
- Risk of injury to learners and teachers
- Potential harm of dangerous gases released from the road transport near the school
- Release of raw sewerage and smell from the pit toilets and poor infrastructure

## Impact of rampant crime and drug abuse

The researcher observed that Ndabankulu S.S.S. has a large site which is protected by a fence made from wire mesh. This makes easy access to the entire school. Entrance gates are always not locked.



Figure 4.1: Gates wide opened for free entry and fence of wire mesh around the school yard

Inside the school premises one meets different people who are hawking and those who freely enter and leave the school anytime of the day. To strengthen that observation, the researcher analyzed documents to see who is legally allowed to be inside the school premises.



Figure 4.2: Hawkers selling their wares to school children

There is no list of hawkers permitted to be selling goods to the school children. An unfamiliar face a researcher came across inside the school premises said “ *I am sent by my aunt to sell her chicken feet, fat cakes and sweets to learners during breaks... today she has gone to East London to order chocolates... she used to sell here every day*”.

The researcher found that it is therefore difficult to differentiate between people who should legally be at Ndabankulu S.S.S. When the senior member of the school management was asked how safe the school is from people visiting the school. A senior member of the staff had this to say:

*There is no monitoring of people coming in and out of school. There is only one caretaker who is sometimes working behind the classrooms who cannot see who comes in and out. Gates are always opened for free entry of visitors.*

*In connection with hawkers, the school allowed them to sell anything to learners because the hawkers claim that the school is in their vicinity and that helps them to have a market to sell their cheap stuff like fruit, sweets, chocolates, bread, fried chicken feet, fat cakes... but now it is not only local hawkers, some come from far away areas and that causes fights among them.*

Those who come from other areas said *“we claim the school as it is fed by our children, parents from this community have taken their children to town schools... the principal should allow us to sell, we are not working, and we depend on the money we collect from school children to pay for the needs of the school”*

The researcher found that fights among hawkers made it difficult for the management of Ndabankulu S. S.S. to restrict hawkers and the school decided to leave it up to them to run their small businesses inside the school. Hence it becomes easy for learners to invite their friends to sell drugs inside the school because they know that there are less restrictions on access to the school premises.

The study also found that there are no clear roles for the caretaker of the school. The caretaker at Ndabankulu S.S.S. acts as a caretaker, a general worker and also as a security guard. The study found that there is no clear distinction of who is the gatekeeper or the grounds man. The caretaker does not have job description and it is not clear when he should be starting working. He just follows his plan the way he likes. A teacher serving in the school governing body (SGB) said that there is a lot of mischief and loss happening to the assets and equipment of the school. He further *commented* *“After school, during holidays and over the weekends you find windows and doors wide open with desks and chairs lying outside the classroom... when you pop in there is no one but the gates are locked... you could not enter the school site”*. When the researcher asked if there have been any losses identified in the last two years he has been serving at the school, he said... *“the principal reported that a water tank was once stolen one night, garden tools like wheelbarrows, rakes, forks and so many are stolen, no one knows when and how they got lost”*

When the researcher asked the caretaker whether he feels safe at school as his workplace, he had this to say:

*“I do not know because I am working one week as a day care worker, the other week as a night watchman. It makes it difficult to know what my duties are exactly. At night I am afraid because I was not provided with anything to safe guard myself... I just stay in that room next to the gate, I cannot face anything coming to rob the school except to lie low and call the principal”*

It is clear that there is no one watching the school during the night as the caretaker said he is afraid to be alone and the SGB teacher confirmed that by saying, *“when I come to school to finish my preparation after hours or to check any order, there is no one to open the gate even if I pop the hooter”*. Caretakers do not have anyone to report to, they do not sign in their presence and it was never monitored, hence they take advantage and leave anytime they wish. The study found that they only do face presentation during the day. The member of the maintenance committee said:

*“I gave them duties to follow during each day and wrote them down but I only find that during the day they stay almost the whole day with the aunties selling here at school... even if I call them they will take a garden fork whilst I am watching them, the moment I go to class I find them with hawkers and now I am tired to be after them”*

To triangulate what was reported, the researcher analyzed the minute book and time book. She found nothing that showed the names of caretakers except when the principal put them on the agenda when something went missing. Their names appeared in school documents only when there was going to be a report on their actions, like the incident of the stolen water tank. This indicates that they were never part of any meeting held at the school. This results in the caretakers not knowing the culture and values of the school.

When the researcher asked the principal of Butterworth High School, how are they maintaining order, discipline and safety at school, the principal said *“To maintain order, safety and security the members of the SGB decided to hire a security company to monitor the school gates”*. Through document analysis, the researcher found that at Butterworth High School there are security guards at the two entrance gates, five general workers and a caretaker. The contracts of their employment was adopted and signed by both the worker and the school governing body chairperson. Each worker at Butterworth High School has his/her copy highlighting clearly the roles, times, holidays, leaves, their immediate supervisors, the manner to conduct themselves whilst on duty and their methods of payment. The researcher observed that when one enters the school premises, a security guard comes out of his room and hands out a book to the visitor before he opens the gate. The security guard asks the visitor to write his/ her name, the purpose for visiting the school, his business, telephone number, car registration number, time in and when leaving, the visitor signs time out. Before the visitor enters the school premises he is supplied with a visitor's badge with a number

corresponding with the number on the visitor's register and is asked to pin it on the chest area. The visitor will then be asked to wait in the reception area where he will be attended by a secretary. Learners and staff at Butterworth High School are sensitive to whoever is found unfamiliar in the school premises. A learner once came across the researcher while she was busy enjoying the beauty of the school grounds during break time. She approached the researcher and politely asked, "*Excuse me mam! Can I accompany you to the reception area where you could get help?*"

In support of that, the principal affirmed, "*it is the policy of the school that no one should be allowed access to the school buildings during the school day. This also includes parents of learners, their friends and relatives*". This action by a learner, sensitive to strangers indicates that every member of the school community at Butterworth High School is aware of the school policies and enforces them. The researcher also observed that all learners are in their respective classes during teaching time and teachers are seated in their designated classes. Immediately the bell rings everyone rushes to his/her designated class without being followed.

The principal of Butterworth High School further said

*"To create a safe working environment, the school has designed digital classrooms, where in the absence of a teacher, learners complete their tasks using the latest technology like surfing the net to teach each other. All learners have been trained on how to operate the systems in different subjects and are aware of how to take care of everything in their classroom. Hence the school has no problem of allowing them to carry their cell phones and iPods in case they want to connect to the school's technology....They are aware of the consequences should they misuse their digital classes. Learners at BHS are always occupied ... that helps them realize their competences. Recently some learners launched their INDALO YETHU PROJECT which is part of community outreach program."*

### **Indalo Yethu Project**

The study found that BHS has engaged learners in a program called "Indalo Yethu" meaning caring of our natural environment. The project was launched in August 2011. Learners themselves mobilise both the community and the school population to strengthen health and environmental programs.

They work together with the community and Umnquma Local Municipality drawing upon their local knowledge and ensuring consideration of their preferences and opinions to implement feasible, effective and sustainable environmental improvements. One participating learner had this to say about their project:

*“We are doing this project to improve health and to protect our natural environment. We realised that some of us are using drugs and are smoking. We decided to take care of each other and support those that are drug addicts. The project teaches us a lot about physical environment of the school and overall health of children”*

A member of the local municipality said:

*In this project learners and parents themselves are able to suggest low cost changes in their old school facilities like beautifying their rest places by planting trees and flowers. We only support them with trees that are useful for recreation.*

The researcher also noted that learners participating in the project are also engaged in a water conservation program. They asked permission from the local municipality to install two 1000ml water tanks to harvest rainwater so that they could reduce water costs for the school and save water. A learner participating in the project said:

*That we learnt about water scarcity and escalating water demand, we decided to harvest rainwater which is free, by installing two big water tanks to irrigate our garden and wash hands. We are spreading the water wise behavior both at school community and the community businesses at large as water is an important resource for living. When we harvest rainwater into schools' tanks we also reduce the amount of rainwater runoff that ends up in nearby waterways”*

The researcher noticed that these learners do not only conserve water but they also gained skills and knowledge for educational perspective. Seeing the first-hand, how rainwater is collected, stored and used provides opportunities for these learners to learn about resource management, science and engineering. Equally so, learners participating in the Indalo Yethu Project, incorporated caretakers of the school and teach them about natural conservation. They say they want to spread the voice of

saving both their health and the entire planet and empower them with the necessary skills that might be necessary for their job.

A caretaker working in the project commented:

*“...I have been using DDT on my flowers to protect them from dying. Now that the project was launched here at school I now know that DDT is a pesticide that causes cancer and it may cause residues to the school’s drinking water, food and learners’ books”*

This indicates that BHS community was accumulating a large percentage of their lifetime health risk because prior to the Indalo Yethu Project pesticides were commonly used against insects both indoor and outdoor whilst everyone is still at school. According to the WHO (2004), recent studies conducted in the United States found that nearly 85% of schools that were treated with pesticides had the potential to cause short-term and long-term effects like vomiting, diarrhoea, convulsions, headaches, skin irritations, liver damage, neurological problems and behavioural and emotional disturbances. This might be the case at BHS because when the researcher looked at the illness register, she found that sometimes learners were released early from school due to illnesses similar to those found in the study conducted in US. A girl learner participating in the project commented, *I once wondered to what happened to me, I felt dizzy, vomited and fell down one day when the caretaker was working around my class... the teachers rushed me to hospital and my mother thought I was pregnant... I was worried because I knew it was still too early for me to engage in sexual activities. Now that I am in the project I started to realise the reason for my blackout.* This shows that by engaging learners to various projects, Butterworth High School is expanding their scope of knowledge and limiting their time to engage themselves to unhealthy lifestyles like that of engaging to early sex and the use of drugs. The study also found that learners at Butterworth High School are always occupied during school hours and even after hours. They are exposed to various curricular and extracurricular activities.

The above observations differ to what the researcher observed at Ndabankulu S.S.S. She found that while teaching is taking place in classes, some of the learners rush to the bathrooms without any proof of emergency. Sometimes classes are left without any teacher for the whole teaching contact period. The researcher found that this is mostly the time when learners said they do not feel safe in the classroom. One learner said, *“some of the learners from other classes would come to our class and*

*disturb us... they dodge their teachers because they did not complete their homework....because there is no teacher in our class, the noise level is over the top*” According to the code of conduct a learner should only go to the bathrooms during breaks and only when she has asked for written permission that s/he can be outside the classroom to go to the bathroom for an emergency of three minutes. This shows that safety and security is compromised at Ndabankulu S.S.S. Seemingly at Ndabankulu S.S.S., people lack motivation to create a working environment that encourages individuals to give of their best and to derive satisfaction from the work that they do. Learners are left unattended, bullying, teasing, name calling and victimization start to emerge in classes without supervision.

The staff meeting minutes showed that a senior teacher once complained during staff meeting that teachers do not observe their teaching periods; some are seated in the staff room while the timetable indicates that they should be in class. She further complained, *“It becomes difficult to teach and concentrate in your work and class, because you find those unattended learners make a lot of noise and sometimes fight. The bad behavior disturbs you and you have to waste your instructional time, disciplining the learners without a teacher”*. This clearly indicates that Ndabankulu S.S.S. does not have a system to supervise the classes of absent teachers and both teachers and learners do not follow the school’s code of conduct because in the school’s code of conduct it is stated that learners should always be in their assigned classes during teaching and teachers should always observe their classes according to the school time table.

The study also found that learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. had cut openings in the fence through which they use as their entrances when they want to leave the school early or when they have arrived late at school. It is through these openings that gang members from outside enter the site during break times to sell drugs in the bathrooms. Through minute book analysis, the researcher noted that teachers complain about the behavior of learners. One teacher complained during the staff meeting, *“we need to pay attention to the use of drugs here at school...learners after break do not want to take orders and are so unruly...classes are filled with a bad dagga smell”*. This results to teachers being reluctant to maintain order and discipline in their classes. One teacher even said *“I am afraid to be moving in between their desks especially when they are from breaks because they are under the influence of drugs and may easily stab me... When these learners consume dagga or drugs they tend to be violent to whoever comes their way”*

Seemingly teachers are aware of the use of drugs in school by learners but Ndabankulu S.S.S. lacks a well written and clear policy in drugs. It is not clear how to act, for those concerned, when confronted with a situation that is deemed to present a health risk for the learners. As an example, out of school youth normally visit and wander around the school under the cover of being hawkers, during school hours, carrying dangerous weapons and drugs. Because of this, there have been cases observed over the years where such youth wanted to physically or had physically assaulted a learner inside the school premises. Recently in South Africa, through media, it has been reported that there is a lot of violence that happens in South African schools. We have witnessed crimes ranging from robbing, stabbing, raping and killing of learners by fellow learners or out of school youths of other learners coming from other schools. This highlights an apparent need for a clearly crafted policy on safety at school that will guide the process of dealing with risky situations at the school. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in an effort to create safe school for the learners.

Teachers complain that they always receive reports that learners fight each other either inside or outside the classrooms. This indicates that learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. receive their education under a harsh and violent environment. One learner said *“we were preparing for choir competition, just before we got to the stage to sing I was stabbed by my colleague, I could not believe... Because I could not allow him to stand in front me, he drew his knife and stabbed me and I was injured. Teachers rushed me to hospital.”* One learner commented that:

*Why should I really regard school as a safe place? I am no longer interested in doing or joining any moral activities of the schools because I fear others who bully us. There are gangsters inside the school... I fear them and teachers also fear them. Even if I report a case of bullying and victimization to the teachers, the victimizers scare me more outside the school, teachers also fear those who bully us... when they seem to be under influence of drugs, teachers would not do anything to them.*

This study found that bullying, intimidation and victimization take place in almost all schools in South Africa among all ethnic groups. A parent from Butterworth High School said,

*“I do not want to pass by the school when BHS learners are out of school. They walk in groups shouting on top of their voices and in bad language... or in pairs, girls are fondled by boys publicly in their school uniform in shop hallways, streets,...to avoid that you better just avoid meeting with them”*

This has a detrimental effect not only on schools but to families, peer groups, communities as well as wider society (Roper, 2002). Roper (2002) suggests the development of “Safety Nets” where learners can learn in peace and safety, free from fear and victimization. He said this can develop safer school approach which is based on international experience in youth-focused intervention strategies which have shown success in preventing children and youth from becoming victims or offenders and in diverting youth away from delinquent or criminal behavior.

A girl who walks to Butterworth High School, staying less than a kilometer from school, doing grade eleven said:

*my parents were forced to hire me transport to and from school because when I walk home or to school I am followed by people I do not trust... when I walk I cannot read my messages from my cell phone because one day I was robbed of my expensive cell phone my father bought me as my Christmas present. That cell phone was helping me in completing my school work because it had most of the features needed for school work. That increased costs to the rest of the family... my parents cannot drop me to school before six in the morning because they open our business in town at six o' clock*

Another learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. commented that she is not feeling safe at her community. She said:

*“A place which I thought could guarantee me safety and security is the one I am scared to be in when it starts to get dark. I cannot even do group discussions after hours with my schoolmates. I have this fear that maybe I will be the next victim. In my community there are anonymous people who go to houses at night which they know there is no man living in that particular household. They go there just*

*to rape and kill those living in that house. Well I and my family were almost one of the victims, if it wasn't for my cousin we would have been stabbed to death"*

*"It was about twelve o'clock and we were deeply asleep when a man silently opened one of the kitchen windows and got inside; fortunately my cousin sister was not asleep. So she got up and went to the kitchen because she was thirsty that is when she saw the man, she screamed her lungs out, the scream was so loud that it woke up neighbors but the man had already run away. The neighbors came and called the police but ever since that day I cannot sleep at night because I wonder if he would come back for us. The police said to us they are still doing the investigation. I do not feel safe at all; I will feel safe when I know that this person is behind bars.*

The researcher followed up the story from the girl because from analyses of her performance using school schedules, it has been shown that her academic performance has dropped. She found that the girl comes from Toleni location in Butterworth, which is the area reported in newspapers and television, as the area with stranglers since 2007. One man from this location was arrested in 2010 but the action of hacking, raping and killing people was still continuing even in 2012. According to one victim in the area," *the one locked in jail could not reveal the names of other gang members and the whole community is in fear and some of the other families have left their homes"*. One parent reported that immediately it becomes dark, they leave their houses, the whole family, and gather to sleep in one house where there is a man. The house would accommodate school children from different families, young children and their parents. Looking at the situation, the researcher understood why some of the learners from Toleni Location schooling at Ndabankulu S.S. S. looked lost and worried while they were at school. One learner from Toleni Location said:

*I will never go back home, I am now staying with my friends who rent a hut next to the station... I am afraid to go home because I lost my mother, my niece and my younger brother who were hacked one night in my location... it was just fortunate that I slept over with my friends that night because we arrived late from a school match. I will leave Butterworth next year and stay away with my uncle in Cape Town. The only person left at home is my father and sister. I do not even want to see Toleni Location, my place of birth"*

As Ndabankulu S.S.S. receives learners from Toleni Location, the school should devise strategies to have significant adult among teaching staff who would help learners who feel lonely and isolated from

what they are experiencing particularly in this community. This would help learners to relate and trust this significant adult with their fears. Having this relationship of trust would be of great value especially to learners who have lost their hopes of having homes and education. Such learners should be encouraged to join societies and sport activities rather than feeling lonely and isolated while at school. The significant adult would be of help when s/he conducts a one-to-one interview and refer such learners to professional counselors when s/he sees the situation under which learners live.

The study found that Butterworth High School has a home room which induces a sense of belonging by all members of the school. Learners, teachers and management of Butterworth High school who feel insecure for any reason benefit and feel safe and secure when they enter a home room. Moreover, the learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. who lives in fear of her community would heal, would Ndabankulu S.S.S. afford to have such a facility. In this home room at Butterworth High School, one to one interview is conducted among learners who seem to have problems. In this room a home environment is set with a student professional counselor. The room is decorated with good artwork and previous years' achievers. This room is painted with bright and cheerful colors. Also learners, who need help, consult with the school counselor and sometimes they are referred to a social worker for the area to attend professional help.

When one learner from Butterworth High School, who was known to be mischievous at school, was asked how he is feeling when at school, he said, *"The moment I enter the homeroom I regret all what I have done...because attending this school is a good experience. I so wish that one day I would be like those painted against the wall."*

Another violent act experienced at Ndabankulu S.S.S. is the open use of alcohol and drugs during school outings. Learners drink alcohol and carry their liquor in front of teachers. Teachers feel threatened as they cannot question the abusers of alcohol. This is an enormous challenge facing the entire school community because it results to violent behavior and some learners are deprived their right to fully enjoy their outing. One teacher said:

*"I cannot be part of any school trip with learners because I cannot allow learners to carry and use alcohol in front of me and some teachers tend not to worry and care about this bad behavior and I will seem to be the only one who is a stereotype. Hence learners now use drugs even inside the school premises... Only a week ago a learner was caught in toilets consuming dagga. When the parent was*

*called for hearing to what his son has done, he only said he is not schooling, teachers have to do whatever they wish”*

According to the school’s code of conduct, smoking dagga at Ndabankulu S.S.S. is a serious misconduct which can lead to total expulsion of the learner. If the parent does not want to even be part of a disciplinary hearing of his child, it means the school is faced a big challenge of ineffective parenting, lack of positive role models and lack of family stability (Roper, 2002). Ndabankulu S.S.S. will find it difficult to improve discipline and help learners with disciplinary problems if a parent would not even want to be part of the disciplinary hearing. According to Clarke (2007), to help learners with disciplinary problems, it requires the inclusion of parents and community in formulating and implementing their strategy to help offenders.

This shows the reason why the teacher does not want to be part of the school trip anymore. Teachers at Ndabankulu S.S.S. lack parental support. This teacher wants to do his duties excellently and professionally. He feels that if he allows learners to drink liquor openly he is not in education for good teaching and good results. He will not be having pleasure and joy in his work because he is not contributing value to his job. Therefore he prefers not to be part of the trip at all. Clarke (2007) argues that for school to have good order it needs to have good discipline. This clearly shows that Ndabankulu S.S.S. operates in a difficult social environment. On the other hand, if the teacher prefers not to be part of any school trip, it means he is not approaching his work in a professional way. According to Clarke (2007), like any other professional, a teacher is expected to have knowledge and skills to do the job that is entrusted to him and not to shy away from his responsibilities or blame extrinsic factors for their failure. He is supposed to manage disruptive learners. If he gives up, Clarke (2007) calls that ‘the easiest route’ that teachers and schools take while struggling with issues of discipline which lead to shams and fraud because teachers are paid to maintain good order and discipline in schools.

## **The use of corporal punishment**

A teacher complained that:

*"I lost contact and interest with teaching ever since the government insisted of not using corporal punishment. Here at school we used to be one of the recognized disciplined schools because learners knew what was expected of them by punishing them corporally. Parents were aware and supported us in our decision because they also agreed that their children are unruly and it would worth punishing them corporally and moreover they saw the good academic results at the end. That is why we have such overcrowded classrooms, parents insist of learner admissions even if we say we do not have enough classrooms. This results to a lot of stress and we had to resort to corporal punishment. ... But today the same parents who agreed on the use corporal punishment are also the ones who take us to courts of law for using corporal punishment"*

A learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. also complained:

*"If one wants to feel tortured, he/she has to come to this school. Teachers fail to control the pupils and that has a negative impact in both teachers and learners. Schools are no longer safe! Teachers play a big role in turning school into a hot spot of war zone. Having to mention what teachers do, they do corporal punishment in grooming up children which is not allowed anymore... Some learners tend to fight back for themselves (self-defense). They feel that teachers no longer teach and groom but they bully them... and in self-defense they throw tempers in front of the class or other learners which is not good"*

Another learner said:

*"The rapid destruction of schools is not only caused by students but teachers who still apply corporal punishment because that activity leaves students terrified and you would find that it is hard for them to focus in class. They live in fear. Corporal punishment is the leading reason for the high failure and dropout rate in schools. When I am corporally punished in front of the class, I feel embarrassed and humiliated... that increases my temper and I become emotional. I am not saying we must not be punished for the wrongs but not to be embarrassed and dehumanized"*

This clearly suggests that in Ndabankulu S.S.S. the use of corporal punishment still occurs, but this is against the Constitution Act, No. 108 of 1996. This school is a public school and therefore is a juristic person. It has a legal capacity to perform its functions in terms of the act. According to this act, schools should be risk free- where teachers have legal obligation to care for the physical and emotional well-being of every student placed in their care. Seemingly some of the teachers at Ndabankulu S.S.S. are negligent in carrying out their duty of care- to create a safe environment for all learners vested in them. The school does not take into account the following pieces of legislation which affect the school:

- Protected Disclosure of Information Act, No. 26 of 2000- which allows any member of the public (who may not be parent as the teacher claims in his complaint) to reveal unlawful or irregular practices by the teacher;
- Occupational Health & Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993 – which provides for health and safety in the workplace;
- South African Council for Educators Act, No. 31 of 2000- which ensures that the teachers and other members of staff understand their professional duties and responsibilities in relation to the students they teach.

Learners have rights which are based on the values of human dignity, equality and freedom, which are enshrined in the constitution. One of those rights which are not protected at Ndabankulu S.S.S., which they complained of, is that of the use of corporal punishment. They feel that their right to freedom and security is violated at school because they are punished in a cruel, inhuman and degrading way and they say that sometimes leads to some forms of violence in self-defense. For Ndabankulu S.S.S. to be a safe and caring school and to provide a good working environment, the school should provide both internal and external professional development among its staff.

### **The use of unsafe vehicles to transport learners**

The researcher observed that most of the learners schooling at Ndabankulu S.S.S. use unsuitable forms of transport organized by their parents. The school attracts many learners from far away communities because of its discipline and academic excellence. Learners from the nearby community attend English medium-schools in town as the school is surrounded by low to medium- income earners. This is supported by the report from a parent who took his child from a boarding school to

start grade ten at Ndabankulu S.S.S. When she was asked for the reason to transfer a child when doing grade ten at an English medium school to start for the first time a Home language, IsiXhosa, she had this to say:

*“To be honest with you Mam, my child was caught using drugs at the hostel and was expelled. Anyway it was not the first instance I was called for his misbehavior at school. That is why I decided to bring him to this school as I have heard good discipline about the school. I have organized transport for him to and from school so that I can monitor his behavior. We will be staying at Tsomo”*

The researcher found that this learner will be travelling 46 kilometers to school and another 46 kilometers home. Such a long distance exposes learners to road accidents. However, the parent is attracted to Ndabankulu S.S.S. by good discipline and the use of corporal punishment. One teacher complained that *“parents have a tendency of taking our school as a “rehabilitation center, a scrap yard”, where we have to change bad behavior of their children... This indicates that this is not the only learner at Ndabankulu S.S.S. who is using drugs and travelling long distance to the school. The study found that teachers complain that they are bombarded with a lot of social issues other than their academic issues, exhausting a lot of their teaching time disciplining learners who skip classes during teaching, some engaging themselves in promiscuous behaviors in the toilets and empty classrooms and others not getting transport to school.*

Another learner said:

*“I hitch hike to and from school every day. I have to leave my home at 5.30 a.m rushing for morning classes at 6.45 a.m. Sometimes it is not easy to get transport early and I could not walk to school ... I travel almost 25km to school and another 25km back home. By the time I leave and reach home it is sometimes dark especially in winter and I am afraid... my parents insist coming to this school and I do not like the school. I cannot complete my home works sometimes because I become so tired.”*

This confirmed the researcher's observation. Learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. walk long distances around the two busy roads and in big numbers. There are no sidewalks along the busy roads and the cars move fast as there are no rumble strips, no pedestrian crossings, and no scholar patrols around the school. This exposes the school to tragedies every year. One learner commented when she was asked if she feels safe to and from school,

*“My school is geographically in a very bad location. We have N2 on the other side and the R409 road on the other. How could one feel safe in that kind of location? I don’t feel safe at all when I leave school because I cross two of the busiest roads in Butterworth... myself and other students. There is no pedestrian crossing, no pedestrian assistance and no side walk. Now imagine that, lives that are just begging to experience life being put in danger every day”.*

*Another learner said:*

*“There is not a single year that goes by in Ndabankulu where no innocent students were involved in a fatal accident and that got me thinking, am I the next. You never know when it’s your day to die but you wish and pray that you through the next day. You pray for your friends to make it too, because it’s never easy facing death whether it’s a close family member or not, you get a reality check. Just a few weeks ago 2 grade 12 learners passed away on the road, and the only thing that comes into my mind is I am next...The roads near my school make me feel uncomfortable when I live school especially when there is fog and rain. I get scared for my life every day before and after school every day I fear for my life”*

Although the researcher found no crafted accident register at Ndabankulu S.S.S., it is clear that learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. suffer road accidents or die almost every year. Learners live in fear of their lives. The fact that the school is surrounded by two busy roads places the lives of learners at risk on a daily basis. According to Clarke (2007), the minister of education called a special meeting of the council of education ministers in June 2006, where it was agreed to recommend the amendment to the regulations for safety measures at public schools. Some of the recommended amendments were:

- To strengthen relations between schools and the local police services;
- On the possible introduction of safety officers at vulnerable schools;
- To explore the introduction of counseling services at schools and
- To identify specific problem schools.

Should have these recommendations been put into practice, Ndabankulu S.S.S. would not have experienced death of a learner every year. The researcher asked the principal if there had been any

counseling services to learners after the tragedy. The principal said *“there was never any counseling service except to be visited by local radio station to ask how the tragedy occurred and how we feel”*. He further said *“we only see traffic officers a day or two after the incident, controlling speed near the school and we will never see them again”* (Zipho, personal communication, 12 September 2013).

The researcher then asked the traffic officers if they noted that Ndabankulu S.S.S. is a vulnerable school due to its location. The traffic officer had this to comment:

*“We understand the vulnerability of learners along these two busy roads but the problem to check on the road on a daily basis is the shortage of traffic officers... This year alone near this school, statistics shows 80 deaths of people using this road, drivers are reckless and speeding... we asked the department to install robots but it was said it is a national road and there are no robots on the national road ... our officials said they are still planning a pedestrian bridge”* (V.Ngozi, Personal communication, 23 September 2013).

The study found that the principal of Ndabankulu S.S.S. does not take an active role in making safety the priority of the school. This is shown by the absence of records of incidents that jeopardize safety and security at Ndabankulu S.S.S. He should not wait for the department but had to work hard to create close ties with the wider community like traffic officers to be visible most of the time during the start and end of the school day.

The researcher learnt that at Butterworth High School, learners are not allowed to hitch-hike to and from school and that has been documented and sent to the attention of all parents. The senior member of staff said, *“The school made an arrangement with the bus company to bring learners to school and take them home after school and ensured that the bus driver is qualified to drive the bus”*. Worth noting, the researcher found that the school keeps copies of inspection sheets of the bus company.

## **Poor and ineffectual maintenance of the school's physical amenities**

This study found that some of the environmental challenges that exist at Ndabankulu S.S.S. are posed by actions of teachers, learners, cleaning staff, and parents. Their actions affect the school buildings, furniture and the school site itself. The school building itself exposes learners to threats while they are learning. The researcher observed that the school governing body (SGB) of Ndabankulu S.S.S. and the departmental officials forgot to pay more attention during the planning stage of building to the fact that the school is people-intensive. She found no document showing hazards and risk knowledge to assess risk, vulnerability, hazards, and capabilities. There was nothing written on structural and non- structural safety to evaluate safe construction and retrofit initiatives (Bastidas, 2011). According to the study conducted by Bastidas (2011), before any construction of the school building there should be a team created with personnel specializing in the building industry, architects, engineers, etc., and natural hazard scientific information specialists.

This research study found that infrastructure contained costs; as a result the structures built have limited use and are costly to maintain. Ndabankulu S.S.S. was only sixteen years old but it had a costly and unsuitable structure that needed expensive maintenance and alterations. Clarke (2007) says the schools are expensive long-term investments with buildings that should last at least 100 years. Therefore it becomes important to carefully design and build structures to the highest standards to fit their purpose. The researcher directly observed that inside classrooms there were open holes in the ceilings. Some parts of the ceiling boards were peeling and falling down on top of learners' heads whilst they were focussing on their studies. The researcher also observed that electric lights are poorly maintained, some are working and some lights are not working posing poor lighting in the classroom. A learner who is an orphan in one class complained that ever since he started schooling at Ndabankulu S.S.S., he experienced severe eye problems and was undergoing medical examinations at Frere Hospital in East London. He had this to say:

*"It began as if I could not clearly see from behind the class and I changed my seat to be near the chalkboard... but as the year progressed my teachers complained that I was writing on lines not in between lines. The problem is now worse I cannot see words. I depend on my elder brother to read for me when I am preparing for my tests and examinations."* (T. Londi, personal communication, 1 September 2013).

One finds electric cables in ceiling boards hanging because the ceiling board is broken and hanging. The researcher found that the medical condition of the boy was made worse by the poor lighting system in class and the teachers failed to refer the problem to the attention of medical officers immediately. The class teacher said because of the big number in her class, she could not take note of the problem of the boy until she noticed his skewed writing.



Figure 4.3: Leaking and falling ceiling boards in a class room at Ndabankulu S.S.S.

The study also showed that there was no construction team that focused on systems, procedures and skills to analyse emergency preparedness plans, implementation and policies, and curricula to analyse education as a platform for a culture of safety (Bastidas, 2011). Bastidas (2011) argues that this team should be created with personnel from the education sector, teachers, curriculum specialists, etc., and emergency preparedness and response specialists. Bastidas (2011) further argues that safe construction at schools should take place under the four main dimensions and the information should be available from the national level up to the local level. These dimensions are (Bastidas, 2011):

- Hazards and risk knowledge which refers to the assessment of risk, vulnerability, hazards and capabilities. This also refers to the schools' physical information in terms of location, infrastructure, and furnishing, and the schools' administrative information, for example population, levels of operations, and shifts. This dimension includes the identification of natural hazards posing threats to schools, sites assessment before the schools are built,

and vulnerability assessment of existing school buildings with respect to local hazards. It also includes regular reassessment of risks, if performed;

- **Structural and non-structural safety:** refers to safe construction and retrofit initiatives. It includes the design of school buildings to meet building code standards, the use of building codes that provide guidance on hazard resilient design, and the determination of performance objectives (maximum level of damage or disruption that can be tolerated in the presence of a hazard of a certain magnitude and frequency.) It also includes the supervision of school constructions (or retrofitting) by qualified engineers, construction of schools (or retrofitting) to meet performance objectives, and the design and correct installation of school furnishings and equipment to minimize potential harm they might cause to school occupants. Management of the schools' maintenance program and implementation of mechanisms to ensure that schools' maintenance are being financed and executed should also be considered as part of this dimension.
- **Systems, procedures and skills:** refers to emergency preparedness plans implementation and policies. It includes the creation of backup plans to ensure that schools operations continuity in case natural hazards create disruptions in the school calendar, and the identification of safe locations in case of evacuation. Also, it considers preparedness information provided to students, teachers, staff, and school administrators regarding what to do before, during, and after a hazard event, as well as regular school drills to practice and improve skills and plans, and the creation of disaster management committees in the schools or the local communities. It takes into account whether hazards, vulnerability and risk evaluation, alert systems and evacuation routes, as well as first-aid kits or disaster kits are part of the plans. Management and accountability systems, as safeguards to ensure that policies and plans are carried out and in place are also considered, and so are the response preparedness for the sector and the school community psycho-social recovery plan, considerations, and consequences for using the school as a refuge and recovery coordination centre.
- **Curricula:** refers to education as a platform for a culture of safety. It includes teaching disaster-risk reduction as part of the regular school curricula, educational material development, and active and future teachers training. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) inclusion into the curriculum and educational material development encompass the inclusion of disaster prevention and preparedness through formal, as well as non-formal, co-curricular and informal means in order to target the most vulnerable (children living or

working in the street, child headed households or children who are enrolled in schools but who rarely show up). Mainstreaming DRR principles and practice throughout the educational system should include secondary and tertiary education as well. Awareness campaigns - from and for the school- that contribute to increase risk's awareness to the school population and the local community, and risk management policies and regulations for the education sector in the national context should also be included in this dimension.

One learner once came to the class teacher crying that her eye was hit by a ceiling board on a windy day. She reported the following:

*“The door was not properly closing, it has no lock for the whole of this year... ever since we occupied this classroom we feel so cold. We asked our class representative to report our condition to the school management and our class teacher but up to this far nothing was done. Today wind has blown down the ceiling board and I am injured”.*

From this report, it is clear that Ndabankulu S.S.S. lacks routine maintenance. The classroom door has not been closing properly the whole year. There is no one who takes responsibility of the safety issues affecting both learners and teachers. This shows that the school has no safety committee which is the sub-committee of the SGB. In the study conducted by Bastidas (2011), he supports the WHO when it says the safety committee should include parents who are artisans with special skills such as plumbers, electricians, painters, building constructors, engineers and architects. Clarke (2007) suggests that community members with special skills should be co-opted to the school governing body because of their special skills and knowledge. These parents or community members should form part of the safety committee. According to Clarke (2007), this safety committee should do a thorough inspection of the school every year before the budgeting process for the following year so that they can submit the maintenance budget that is realistic. The SGB can use this inspection report as evidence when they are applying to the Eastern Cape Department of Education for them to do major refurbishment or routine maintenance. The WHO (2004) calls this broader participation which will help Ndabankulu S.S.S. to meet its needs of providing a secure environment for learning and teaching.

The researcher also noted that the whole infrastructure at Ndabankulu S.S.S. is under severe strain. Leaking roof starts from the principal's office to classrooms, paint is peeling off, classes have loose and missing tiles, windows not opening and some not closing, damaged items like desks and old computers are left unattended and dumped by the school yard (Fig. 4.4).



Figure 4.4: Old desks and tanks thrown in the school yard near the kitchen where food is prepared

The study also noted that learners use pit toilets as their rest places as there is no rest area prepared and cared for. The study found that this is the area where most illegal activities start to emerge like they freely smoke dagga and sometimes consume alcohol by the toilets. They plan their mischievous behavior here.



Figure 4.5: Learners resting near pit toilets

On the other hand, Butterworth High School looks beautiful, neat and tidy, with trees and flowers well catered for. Its infrastructure and facilities no matter how basic are, are well-maintained, litter and graffiti free. One of the cleaning staff said *“I feel comfortable working for this school since 1990 because I am given opportunities to grow my skills and knowledge and I have a lot of certificates acknowledging my good work... I love my job although learners are sometimes careless... I sometimes attend classes for caring for the environment”*

Looking at the two pictures above, they show lack of ground maintenance at Ndabankulu S.S.S. The study showed that the whole school yard is covered with weed and grass.

The principal of Butterworth High school supported what was said by the cleaner. He said,

*“We provide training to our caretakers once in two years so that they bridge the gap between the old and the current as time flies and waits for no one. We want our school to advertise itself to the whole community of Butterworth” (J. Mkibi, Personal communication, 24 September 2013).*

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assessed a variety of issues that contributed to the vulnerability of both learners and teachers while at both Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School, making the school environment healthy for learning and teaching to take place without fear and harm. These include risks of two kinds, the external risks and internal risks. External risks at Ndabankulu S.S.S. arise from gang members coming onto the school site, drugs passed through the school fences and dangerous gasses from two busy roads causing air pollution. On the other hand internal risks are posed by staff members who lack vision, knowledge and skills in maintaining physical amenities. These include threats posed to staff members staying in the science laboratory with hazardous chemicals, cleaning agents, hazardous waste, water pollution, and faulty infrastructure, learners and teachers carrying of dangerous weapons to school, bullying and victimization of both teachers and learners and the use of drugs. These indicate lack of commitment of all role players in the achievement of educational goals and development of the nature of relationships between the various stakeholders.

External risks at Butterworth High school emerge from the location of the school site. Since the school is in the centre of town, there is potential harm from the businesses and roads surrounding the school. These external risks include noise pollution, flooding or release of raw sewage as a result of storm damage, learners and teachers finding themselves the targets of muggers who prey on them on their way to and from school because of the likelihood of them carrying valuable items like cell phones and iPads.

Ignorance runs through the whole school environment at Ndabankulu S.S.S. Teachers and parents are not role modeling values to learners and that behavior results to learners becoming violent. The school is surrounded by a community that lacks values. This is shown by teachers smoking in public and violating the rights of non-smokers. Parents freely smoke at homes, claiming that they are adults and have a right to smoke anytime they want. They are not role modeling the anti-smoking campaigns as smoking according to CANSA is a health hazard. Learners from Butterworth High school admit that their teachers and parents smoke but they hardly have seen them. The school promotes anti-smoking behavior to all members of the school community. There is a signage at the entrance gates

of Butterworth High School “No smoking”, and a writing that reads: *“Smoking in school premises is prohibited by law. Anyone found smoking will be prosecuted”*.

Girls, who believe that smoking reduces weight, forget that they increase the chances of cancer by smoking.

Ndabankulu S.S.S. lacks social capital (Drewey et al., 2010). Social capital is the credit the school community receives from the support of family, community and the school itself. Data showed that some parents do not want to involve themselves in issues of disciplining their troubled children. They say they leave everything in the hands of teachers. Teachers become so stressed that they resort to the use of corporal punishment which is, according to the South African Council of Educators (SACE), a punishable and dismissible offence on the part of the teacher. Some parents take teachers to court and incur punishment yet they were trying their best to create order and discipline so that their children could attain educational goals. There is no time set aside for professional development at Ndabankulu S.S.S., except that teachers attend once-off workshops organized by the district. Clarke (2007) argues that external agencies may not be effective to meet the needs of the Ndabankulu S.S.S. He argues that external professional development tends to be of general nature and is usually short-lived. Therefore it becomes imperative for Ndabankulu S.S.S. to ensure that it will take a planned follow-through strategy if it needs any positive effects of an external professional program.

Butterworth High School provides staff development both internally and externally. Staff, learners and every stakeholder get training and know what is expected of him or her to make BHS a safer, health promoting school. This has been shown by learner sensitivity to people visiting the school to avoid any threats and damages to the school. The homeroom at Butterworth High School provides every stakeholder with skills, knowledge, training and development because anyone who feels insecure would be referred to a counselor of the school. Learners who attend school at Butterworth high School feel secure while on the school site and feel unsafe while out of school because muggers prey on them as they are most likely to carry valuable items like cell phones and Pads.

The fact that some of the learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. come from Toleni Location, a location that was once broadcast on TV as a risky, bloody location where innocent people were killed, means that learners could not pay attention to higher order needs of attaining self-esteem and fulfilling their

dreams. These learners are fearful, hungry and tired while at Ndabankulu S.S.S. They could not do their homework peacefully because immediately it becomes dark, the whole family had to leave their home and be gathered in one home. The study also noted that learners walk long distances to school. This exposes them to dangers of hitch hiking, human trafficking and hijacking.

The study concludes that Ndabankulu S.S.S. operates within poor socio-economic background. Hawkers claim that they are the ones who support the school; as a result the school management team does not fully control the actions of the hawkers within the school. They are given a market to sell their foodstuff to the school children. As Fig. 4.2 shows, the wares that is sold to learners is not healthy enough. The spot of sale is surrounded by filthy standing water from a leaking tank. Flies move about the food they sell. The food is kept in closed buckets the whole day in sunny, rainy and windy days without shelter. Sometimes, learners get early release letters because they suffer diseases that are caused, according to the WHO, by unsafe food, like from improper food handling such as use of contaminated equipment; contamination by infected persons; use of contaminated raw ingredients; cross-contamination; and addition of toxic chemicals or use of food containing natural toxins.

It is worth noting in the study that Butterworth High School takes reasonable care with the food sold to learners and staff. There is a clean tuck shop run by the SGB where learners get fresh food items. The sick register shows that, learners from BHS get early release letters due to the location of the school site. Learners at BHS suffer from diseases associated with air pollution like asthma attacks, lung infections since the school is in the industrial location and they suffer from exhaust fumes due to traffic.

Another health risk found at BHS is the use of pesticides like DDT to treat gardens and school grounds, with no notification or vacancy requirement. But after training, skills building and knowledge from Indalo Yethu Project, the number of affected learners by diseases from the use of pesticides, from the illness register was reduced to more than three-quarters.

But due to lack of knowledge and skills, Ndabankulu S.S.S. community suffers from diseases through improper food handling and the use of pesticides. The researcher concluded that no training was ever set aside to general workers at Ndabankulu S.S.S. This was shown by a cleaner who was using

cleaning agents labelled with warnings of health effects that may include reproductive system disorders, flu-like symptoms and asthma-like problems without any protective clothing.

Looking at the recent past of apartheid, the SASA of 1996 emphasises that schools should address the past imbalances and disparity and provide for an equitable and democratic system of governance, management and funding (Roper, 2002). Seemingly B.H.S and Ndabankulu S.S.S. are faced with many forms of discrimination which include discrimination on the basis of gender, race, social status, poverty, disability, language, sexual orientation and faith. This is shown by a boy learner from Ndabankulu S.S.S. who said *"I always feel intimidated by the way I speak where my classmates laugh at me and at my actions...as a result I do not like answering questions in class even if I know the correct answer, I cannot freely express myself, even if there is argument they say I speak like a sisi"*

This clearly indicates discrimination against sexual orientation of this young boy. None has taken the matter seriously. This is treated according to Clarke (2007) as unconscious discrimination. Learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. are not aware that by making a laughing stock of their colleague is hurting his feelings. However, Clarke (2007) suggests the strategy to deal with such forms of unnoticed discriminatory behaviour as to invite the minority group within the school to note examples which they perceive bias and to report on their frequency in an open and frank discussion so as to avoid their occurrences in future as they are hurtful to others.

Some other forms of discrimination are intentional but teachers play down such incidents because they fear that it may stain the reputation of the school. In some cases learners report issues of unfair treatment like a learner from Butterworth High School who said:

*"I am in a C class of which I know I should be in an A class... because I know my academic performance deserves to be with those learners in an A class... when I asked my class teacher why am I allocated in this class...I was told that learners were alphabetically allocated yet I can see no alphabetic arrangement has been followed. As a result I find learning boring in this class because I quickly understand things than my fellow classmates."*

This shows some of the wider social ills which still exist in our schools, learners being discriminated because of structural arrangements and institutionalised practices resulting in racial inequality. Another girl learner said *"I could not play in an A team of the school because I am not a member of a local club... my coach tells me that I deserve to play for an A team since I have good hockey"*

*skills...and moreover I excel in sprinting but when something happens to any member of an A team I play for A team".* This tells the researcher that learners are not given equal opportunities for their development because of poverty and their social status.

If learners are faced with such risk factors, these risk factors have a potential to push a child towards delinquent or violent behaviour, (Roper, 2002). According to Roper (2002), risk factors refer to the immediate social system within which the child is developing, that is, the underlying socio-economic and environmental elements that have a pervasive or direct influence on the development of the child. Some risk factors identified in South Africa include: disadvantage and relative deprivation, lack of economic opportunity, shortages of social services, lack of family stability, ineffective parenting, lack of positive role models, pervasiveness of violence as a form of problem solving, sexism, intolerance, lack of community support and access to firearms and drugs. But Roper (2002) further said that risk factor does not necessarily determine aggressive, delinquent or violent behaviour. But it is the accumulation of three or more risk factors that overpower children which then results to children facing a high probability of becoming violent. The study concludes that schools have a potential to push learners towards violent delinquent behaviour through their actions.

Another challenge faced by schools in South Africa is that of sexual violence and harassment experienced by girls on a daily basis. Learners at both NDK S.S.S and B.H.S were fondled, subjected to aggressive sexual advances and verbally degraded by teachers and their male counterparts. These take place in classrooms either empty or in front of other learners, in school toilets, the passages or even in school buses. The study agrees with what Roper (2002) identified as five types of sexual violence that occur within the school environment. These are:

- Physical assault between learners;
- Sexual assault perpetrated by boy learners on girl learners;
- Assault (physical and sexual) by those outside of the school on learners or teachers;
- Assault by teachers on learners and
- Assault by learners on teachers.

The study found that learners experience these violent actions as either victims or witnesses or perpetrators. These actions therefore may either pose psychological harm or maldevelopment on the lives of children.

## **Recommendations**

The study recommends that workshops should be conducted to educate all stakeholders about the importance of school safety and be informed of the possible benefits of this. This should involve how teachers should accept community members as equal partners of the school so that the school attains a variety of expertise (WHO, 2004; Clarke, 2007; Drewey et al., 2010).

School designers and modernizers should tutor teachers on how to change furniture arrangements in their classrooms to enable them to teach in different ways and make classroom environment a third teacher (Blyth, 2010). This will assist teachers to find innovative ways of using their buildings to make every learner achieve his or her educational goals.

The study also recommends that learning technologies like the use of cell phones in class should be allowed in schools where digital teaching and learning cannot be afforded by the school. This will enhance teaching. Learners become the active creators of knowledge rather than the passive recipients of knowledge. Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High School should work together to address their economic, social and environmental challenges so as to respond to new developments and concerns. This will help them compare their policy experiences, seek answers to common problems and identify good practice (Blyth, 2010).

Managers of schools should continuously attend managerial workshops and not delegate subordinates when invited to such programs. This will help them to update themselves on issues to keep the school a safe learning environment for all the interested parties of the school community. They should also read the posted materials addressed to the school principal as some of the companies do their community outreach programs by sharing the latest managerial skills and knowledge to the school principals by post.

School Management Teams should be capacitated on issues of safety. Equally, they should put in place clearly defined policies that is followed and accepted by everyone. To avoid free entry to the school site, the SMT should put clear signage on various points along the boundary fence and at the school gate, indicating that the school site is private property and that trespassers will be prosecuted. This signage should consist of “No Trespassing” signs, “Visitors must please report to reception”, “In terms of Government Notice 22754 (No 1040), this school is a dangerous-object-free, gun free and drug free zone. Any person entering this site may be subject to search without warrant” (Clarke, 2007).

Clarke (2007) highlights that some of the problems schools face are a result of poor management. If managers of schools put policies in place and make sure that everyone follows and understands them, then fewer problems would be faced by these schools. This is what Clarke (2007) and Roper (2002) call the preventative maintenance which does not only improve safety but making the working environment a welcoming and a motivating one.

Regarding the problem of learner behaviour which is so severe and almost unmanageable, the school should not resort to expelling the unruly learner unless all alternative strategies have been exhausted. Expulsion of a child leads to an increase in violence as the learner who is expelled from school will have enough free time to engage in illegal practices like car hijacking, housebreaking and underground attacks. Hence the Department of Education (2007) provides guidelines for the prevention and management of learner problems so that principals and teachers should start early intervention programs with learners to keep the school a safe learning environment and to reduce the dropout rate and crime by youth in the country. These intervention programs should start during early adolescent stage when children are more amenable to modifications in behavior and adoption of good habits.

The youth should be involved in these intervention programs as some of the respondents claim that when the school want to improve the welfare of the school community, it only incorporates adults from

the neighbouring community. Yet adults do not think and see things the way youth do. It therefore becomes imperative that young people should be placed in the design and implementation of the programme so that they can advise the safety committees on the values, attitudes, norms and behaviours of the youth. Programs that create mental health awareness amongst learners should be put in place. They should include learners, teachers and any interested stakeholders.

Despite learners living in conditions where three or more risk factors occur, children can still be resilient towards the adverse conditions. Roper (2002) suggests key resilience factors identified in South Africa as: supportive social networks, positive moral grounding, positive self-esteem, developed communication skills, confidence in dealing with adversity, conceptual problem solving skills, and competency at school and involvement in community activities.

Teachers should be trusted by learners so that learners can report any issue which make them feel hurtful. Through that all learners at school may feel a sense of belonging and they might feel secure and attached. That will develop and build caring relationships that will create a positive self-esteem. Both Butterworth High School (BHS) and Ndabankulu (NDK) S.S.S should provide character education which provides learners with character building programmes aimed at developing values such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. This will fight any form of discrimination and sexual harassment. Although it might be a simple enough matter to explain the importance of tolerance and respect, this will not change the way people respond to one another's differences. Both schools should continuously make every effort to do what is needed to change the way in which students and teachers view differences by working with people who are different and by modelling their behaviour on their leaders and those they respect like sporting heroes, politicians, religious leaders, teachers and parents.

Schools should also partner with the police force and social workers of the area to assist troubled learners. Learners should be made aware of random searches and seizures that can take place so as to reduce the carrying of dangerous weapons and the use of drugs in schools. To prevent youth from becoming victims or offenders and in diverting youth away from delinquent or criminal behaviour, the Department of Education in South Africa should partner with other Departments like the South African

Police Services (SAPS). The police officers should be assigned to schools as “school resource officers” (SROs) or education resource officers who are intended to serve various roles: safety experts and law enforcers, problem solver and liaison to community resources, and educator, (Raymond, 2012).

According to Raymond (2012) these SROs will act as safety experts and law enforcers at schools by:

- Assuming primary responsibility for handling calls for service from the school and in coordinating the response of other police resources;
- Addressing crime and disorder problems, gangs and drug activities occurring in or around the school;
- Making arrests and issuing citations on campus;
- Providing leads and information to the appropriate investigative units;
- Taking action against unauthorized persons on school property;
- Serving as hall monitors, truancy enforcers, crossing guards, and operators of metal detectors and other security devices;
- Responding to off-campus criminal mischief that involves students and
- Serving as liaisons between the school and the police and providing information to students and school personnel about law enforcement matters (Raymond, 2012).

Looking at the duties that can be offered by SROs the principal and school management teams at BHS and Ndabankulu S.S.S. will have enough time to concentrate on the core business of the school – to make sure that teaching, learning and development of all learners are taking place in a secure environment.

To make Ndabankulu S.S.S. a safer school, the stakeholders should identify community leaders, South African Police Service, the Department of Social Development and the NGOs operating in their area of jurisdiction and host a meeting to discuss safety problems that impact on the school. This will send a message to the community that the school stakeholders are serious about making the school a happy and safe school. They should also ensure good order and discipline within the school environment. Lessons should start promptly from the first day of school until the last day according to the agreed planned programme of the year. The principal should never allow extra-curricular activities to disturb teaching time. This will show learners that Ndabankulu S.S.S. is a place to work and play (Clarke, 2007) and that will create a sense of belonging to all members of the school community since everyone knows where to be and to be there throughout the year. A variety of extracurricular

activities should be held after school. This will reduce idle time of all learners and allow them to be differently occupied as their leisure time. Furthermore, the principal should walk through the school buildings at the start of each school day and after break to see that teachers and learners are in their classes with teaching and learning taking place and none are outside.

A safety committee should be established at schools and it must be functional. It should ensure a clean and well maintained school. As the principal moves around the school yard he should take note of all the aspects that need to be maintained and repaired at school. This will reduce crime and grime in the school. Cleaning and maintenance of the physical school environment should be an ongoing process with clear standards and regular monitoring which should never be underestimated. Clarke (2007) says fixing broken windows means restoring order and reducing crime in our communities. For the schools to create a sense of belonging, teachers should acknowledge good work of learners by displaying their artworks and pictures of learners in corridors of the school. This will also decorate the school and make it attractive to the stakeholders.

For schools to be family affairs, parents should be encouraged to become involved in the school. In that way, teachers and parents will know each other better and their relationship will be more trusting. Learner behavior will improve if parents and teachers discuss problems experienced by learners in a calm and systematic manner. Schools should also keep parents and learners informed of the activities of the school. This can be done by sending them monthly or quarterly newsletters with photographs of achieving learners. This will motivate all interested members of the school. In motivating staff, the principals of schools should think of the things that they need to do to create a working environment which caters for the physical, emotional and professional needs of the staff. Teachers with experience should be allowed to conduct workshops of an hour for several days. Clarke (2007) suggests that staff development contributes to professional and personal growth.

Since there have not been a well-developed professional development programme at NDK S.S.S., it would be better if the school starts by employing outside agencies and trainers. This will motivate the staff as these trainers are experienced in producing a good quality product that will meet the needs of the entire school. Since Ndabankulu S.S.S. is characterized by overcrowded classrooms some of the areas that need development at NDK could be managing large classes, learning styles, multiple

intelligences, managing disruptive students, teaching strategies for second language learners, counseling students, improving student numeracy skills, supporting HIV-positive students and students from child-headed households or, dealing with difficult parents, student rights and teacher rights and managing change.

For Ndabankulu S.S.S. to be a caring school, it should appoint a significant adult whom the learners can relate to and can trust when they feel isolated and lonely for personal reasons. That Ndabankulu S.S.S. is a “No Fee School”, it might not afford a professional counselor and therefore might appoint one of the senior teachers to be a significant adult with whom learners may discuss their personal issues in an informal setting. This significant adult should be someone who is sensitive to the academic needs of learners because learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. will be academically successful if their personal needs are first identified and attended to. This significant adult at Ndabankulu S.S.S. should be an experienced teacher or a life skills teacher because learner-pupil ratio is large. Learner-teacher ratio will not allow for one teacher to be full time student counselor. The teacher-counselor should be charged with responsibility of offering counseling and support services in isiXhosa language since all learners speak isiXhosa as their mother tongue at Ndabankulu S.S.S. If she or he is not a qualified counselor she should only provide basic counseling. H/she should be cautious to refer those learners who need professional counseling, like those learners who reported that their families have been hacked and killed and those who are affected by drugs and HIV.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that hazards that may harm the development of learners at Ndabankulu S.S.S. and Butterworth High school exist. The study has, however, shown that although the majority of people interviewed in this study demonstrated willingness to make their schools safe learning environments, there was a number of respondents who lack knowledge about how to contribute to creating a safe learning environment. The study concludes that it is crucial that strategies and necessary interventions be set up and implemented to ensure that all stakeholders perceive school safety as an important aspect, both for the benefit of the school and that of the wider society. The barriers to school safety, specifically to both schools in this study need to be attended to.

The study has presented findings that are consistent with those of other studies which emphasized that if barriers to school safety are identified, confronted and tackled, the schools could benefit positively from effects of involving everyone to create a safe learning environment.

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**APPENDIX I: Structured Questionnaire for Learners: Please tick where necessary.**

1. Are you feeling safe while at school?

Yes

No

2. Which places at school do feel mostly unsafe?

Classroom

Bathrooms/ Toilets

Playgrounds

All of the above

3. Are teachers willing to solve issues of safety?

Some

Few

All

4. Outside school, are you involved in community activities?

Yes

No

5. If not, why are you not involved?

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6. Do your parents show interest in school activities?

Yes

No

## APPENDIX II: INTREVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

- How old are you?      Between                      14 and 16      16 and 19      20 and up
- With whom are you staying?                      Both Parents      Relatives      Friends
- Who are your closest friends?
- Are they at school?
- Please tell me what you like about your school and why?
- Things that you do not like about your school, why?
- What do teachers usually do which you do not like?
- How do you relate with your teachers?
- What activities are you involved in at school and outside the school?
- Do you feel safe while you are at school? Why?
- Do you feel safe outside school? Why?

### **APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- Does the school have enough classes that cater for the learner environment?
- If no, how do you manage the shortage of classes to ensure effective teaching and learning?
- What is the teacher-learner ratio?
- If classes are big what are the disadvantages of such classes?
- Is there enough furniture, desks chairs, cupboards?
- If no, how does the school cope with such problems?
- Are teaching materials and resources available?
- If no, what are the disadvantages of not having enough material?
- Have you experienced learner and teacher behavioural problems at your school?
- If so, what behavioural problems do they show?
- What procedures does the school follow when there are teacher or learner problems?
- Are there any programs in place to capacitate with more teaching and management skills?
- If so, how do teachers with inadequate teaching and management skills cope?
- Are extra curriculum activities properly managed?
- How are they managed?
- Are parents involved in the school activities?
- In which activities are parents involved and how are they participating?
- What activities are there in the community?
- Are learners and teachers part of those activities?
- Does the community participate in the activities of the school?
- If yes, how do they participate?
- If no, what measures does the school take or plan to ensure that the community participates in the activities of the school?

**APPENDIX IV: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

7 Duchess Road  
Haven Hills  
East London  
5247

The Principal

.....

Butterworth

4960

Dear Principal

**Request for permission to conduct the research study**

I Miss Z. Vokozela, hereby request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am a master's student with student No. 200505683 at the University of Fort Hare, East London Campus in the faculty of Agriculture and Geography.

As a partial fulfilment of the degree, I am required to conduct a research project. The purpose of the study is to assess whether the schools create a safe learning and teaching environment for teaching and learning to take place without fear and harm. I hope the results of the study will benefit the school.

The execution of this research may under no circumstances disrupt the normal programmes of the school. It will be ensured that teachers and learners are interviewed during break times or after school. Participation of teachers and learners is entirely voluntary. I will explain fully the purpose of the study to them and that they do not have to participate in this study unless they understand the purpose and are willing to participate.

I thank you in advance for your support on this research.

Yours truly

Miss Z. Vokozela

**APPENDIX V: Isicelo esiya kumhlali-ngaphambili wequmrhu elilawula isikolo (SGB)**

7 Duchess Road  
Haven Hills  
East London  
5247

Kumhlali-ngaphambili

.....

P.O. Box 43

Butterworth

4960

Mhlekezi obekekileyo

**Isicelo sokuqhuba uphando ngokhuseleko lwesikolo sase.....**

Mna Nkosazana Z. Vokozela ongumfund kwidyunivesiti yase Fort Hare apho ndenza imfundo enomsila, ndifunda ngokubanzi ngokhuseleko ezikolweni, ndicela ukwenza uphando kubazali, abantwana nabafundisi-ntsapho apho esikolweni sakho.

Njengoko imfuno- lwazi iyinto ephambili kule mihla siphila kuyo,ndicela inxaxheba yabantwana, ootitshashala kunye nakubazali. Olu phando ndiqinisekile luya kuba lulutho ekwandiseni ulwazi kumntu wonke osesikolweni.

lingxelo zolu phando ziya kuchazwa esikolweni nakwiqumrhu elilawula isikolo.

Enkosi,

Ozithobileyo

Miss Z. Vokozela