Corporal punishment contestations, paradoxes and implications for school leadership: A case study of two South African high schools

iD **Sekitla Daniel Makhasane and** iD **Vitallis Chikoko**
Educational Leadership, Management and Policy, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
sdsekitla@gmail.com

The continued use of corporal punishment in some South African schools and the reasons advanced for it make this subject topical even now, twenty years after the abolition of this practice. Corporal punishment is a worrying issue among human rights activists and scholars. This paper reports on contestations and paradoxes regarding the use of corporal punishment arising from a qualitative study in two high schools, and the implications thereof for school leadership. Data was generated through interviews with the principals, selected teachers and learners. These participants were purposively selected with the understanding that they were information-rich regarding the issues at stake. The paper was informed by a two-pronged theoretical framework, involving the social learning and distributed leadership theories. The former was adopted to seek explanation regarding the use of corporal punishment, while the latter served as a lens through which to draw implications for school leadership. Findings show that on the one hand, some community members at the two schools saw corporal punishment as an acceptable, tried and tested disciplinary measure, and that on the other hand, it is viewed as a form of violence, and a thing of the past. Overall, it seemed that the two schools were failing to root out the use of corporal punishment. The paper argues leadership to be the missing link in the two schools' apparent failure, and that the stronger and more distributed leadership was, the more likely corporal punishment would be to be eradicated, and other disciplinary means practised.

Keywords: contestations; corporal punishment; culture; discipline; imitating; influence; leadership; paradoxes; rights; violence

Introduction
Despite the gains of democracy visible in post-apartheid South Africa, as an emerging economy, many challenges still exist. According to Mncube and Harber (2013), South African society is counted among the most unequal in the world, with over 45 percent of the population being regarded as poor, despite the ostensibly sound performance of the country's economy. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002) identify some of the challenges as limited resources, poverty, high levels of crime and violence. They further argue that violence prevalent in the community may spill over into schools. Burton (2008) contends that schools are essential institutions for the socialisation of young people. School violence will most likely reflect the problems experienced by society at large (Mncube & Harber, 2013). As such, addressing school violence is essential for social transformation. In fact, Davidoff and Lazarus (2002) view schools as occupying a central position in educational change. In seeking to contribute to the debates regarding the nature or lack of transformation in some South African high schools, this paper explores the use of corporal punishment and implications for school leadership.

While in some parts of the world, the debate around the place of corporal punishment may now be a tired one, it remains 'alive and kicking' in many schools in the developing world in general, and in some South African schools in particular. This is the case even after the banning of this practice, making the use of corporal punishment in schools a controversial issue. It is one of the most common forms of violence perpetrated by teachers against learners, among other permutations. Straus and Yodanis (1996:826) define corporal punishment as "the use of physical force with the intention of causing pain but not injury, for purposes of correction or control." It may be recognised through, inter alia, such teachers' acts as pulling or pushing a learner with force, paddling, hitting a learner using an object or a hand, pinching and spanking, as well as making a learner do some exercise by force (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000a). In a longitudinal study commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ogando Portela and Pells (2015) paint a grave picture of the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools in four countries (Ethopia, India, Vietnam and Peru), despite the fact that in them, such practice is outlawed. Disregard for the banning of corporal punishment is also a concern in Kenya, as some teachers reportedly continue to administer it though it was abolished in 2001 (Mweru, 2010). In Botswana and Ghana, Dunne and Leach (2007) found that corporal punishment is used in most schools, and more often on boys than girls. These authors further observe that, in Botswana, corporal punishment is sometimes extremely violent, with boys being subjected to punishment involving their heads being hit against the wall, and being beaten with broomsticks and/or electric cords.

Although corporal punishment is illegal in South African schools, it remains a contested issue in some communities. However, most literature, as reported in this paper, suggests that corporal punishment has negative consequences on the victim. From one perspective, some commentators link corporal punishment to school violence. Harber and Mncube working both together and separately, have consistently argued that corporal punishment is a form of violence which in some South African schools demonstrates, inter alia, authoritarianism (Harber, 2004; Harber & Mncube, 2011). In a study on causes of youth violence in South Africa, Burton (2008)

contends that schools that utilise corporal punishment often socialise learners into violent behaviour. Soneson (2005) agrees with this viewpoint, and argues that administering corporal punishment to children is tantamount to teaching them that violence is a way of solving conflict. It also implies that children learn that violent behaviour on the part of a powerful person at the expense of a weaker one, is acceptable. Sharing the same sentiments is the South African Department of Education, which acknowledges that learners who are subjected to corporal punishment at home and in their school, are likely to adopt violent means to solve problems (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000a). Learners are socialised to view violence as an effective tool for social control, used by the teachers (Burnett, 1998). In response to the use of corporal punishment, learners may become angry, hostile and aggressive against teachers (Veriava, 2014), peers and school property (Hayman & Perone, 1998). Veriava (2014) further contends that corporal punishment negatively impacts on learners' self-esteem, emotions and academic performance. In addition, corporal punishment undermines the culture of respect and patience between teachers and learners. Mthanti and Mncube (2014) found that corporal punishment impacted negatively on learners, and resulted in such ills as absenteeism, fear, bunking of lessons and anti-social behaviour. Learners may end up developing negative attitudes towards education, and may experience a decline in self-esteem. Learners, meanwhile, may have feelings of revenge. This may lead to truancy and a high rate of drop outs (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000a).

Yet, from another perspective, some teachers are of the opinion that the ban on corporal punishment has disempowered them and enabled learners to indulge in unruly behaviour. For example, they claim that learners are verbally and nonverbally abusive, out of control and noisy, and that they question authority and commit acts of vandalism (Hunt, 2007). According to the South African Department of Education (2000a), corporal punishment appears to be a preferred method of punishment for some teachers, for a number of reasons. It is simple and quick to administer, while alternative approaches demand skills, patience and time that teachers claim not to have. There is a belief that some learners can only be disciplined through the use of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is also reportedly acceptable in some religious and cultural circles. Ogando Portela and Pells (2015) found that advocates of corporal punishment believe it is a harmless form of enforcing discipline. It makes children obedient and respectful.

A survey of 13 schools in rural and township areas of KwaZulu-Natal (largely populated by black learners) reveals mixed results pertaining to the use of corporal punishment. The study suggests that corporal punishment still persists in such schools while it is no longer administered in former white schools (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). However, they found that in the latter schools, implementing alternatives to corporal punishment was not easy. The issue of corporal punishment touched on deeply held values about disciplining a child. Also, school principals had to take time explaining to teachers and parents that learners would still be agreeable to alternative disciplinary measures.

Corporal punishment was historically accepted and tolerated as one of the disciplinary methods used by South African teachers (Hayman & Perone, 1998). As pointed out earlier in this paper, despite its abolition 20 years ago, it is still administered in some South African schools. This is a worrying issue, which has attracted the attention of human rights activists and researchers. Since corporal punishment is administered within the school setup in this case, there remains questions as to the nature and quality of leadership in such South African schools. In essence, leadership is considered to have the ability to resolve multiple challenges facing schools, including learner discipline (Riley & MacBeath, 2003). Principals and teachers, as leaders, play a central role in socialising learners. One of the roles required of a South African teacher is to be a "leader, manager and administrator" (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000b:6). Literature on the use of corporal punishment seems to be dominated by research conducted in developed countries, especially the United States of America, mainly in the field of psychology (Ogando Portela & Pells, 2015). In South Africa, available literature discusses corporal punishment from psychological (Hayman & Perone, 1998), educational (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2000a; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010; Mthanti & Mncube, 2014) and human rights perspectives (Burton, 2008; Harber & Mncube, 2011; Hunt, 2007; Payet & Franchi, 2008; Veriava, 2014). However, there is dearth of literature specifically on the role of leadership. Yet school leadership is only second to classroom practice when it comes to impact on the school (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010). Given the prominence of leadership in the functioning of a school as an organisation, it is expected that teachers could adopt alternatives to corporal punishment if effective leadership is exercised in schools. Among "seven strong claims about successful school leadership" made by Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008:27), distributed leadership is one of them. According to these scholars, effective

schools achieve their various goals when leadership emanates from various sources. Such sources include principals, teachers and learners. In this sense, leadership emerging from different sources is likely to have a bearing on the discontinuation of corporal punishment. This explains why this paper seeks to use the distributed leadership theoretical lens to interrogate the use of corporal punishment in the two selected schools. The paper draws from a study the authors conducted in two South African High Schools from 2011 to 2014. Out of that study, this paper seeks to address two critical questions as follows:

1. What are the dominant perspectives regarding the practice of corporal punishment in the two South African schools?
2. What implications for school leadership can be drawn from the perspectives on corporal punishment?

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations
This section briefly explains the term 'leadership' in the way it is used in the paper, and highlights the theoretical lenses of the paper, namely the distributed and social learning theories.

Leadership is an intentional process of influence aimed at achieving organisational goals (Bush et al., 2010). It is concerned with the persuasion of people to work towards the achievement of common goals (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Northouse (2010:5) has noted "the process view point is a phenomenon that resides in the context of interactions between leaders and followers and it makes leadership available to everyone". Leadership as a process of influence can thus be exercised by anyone in an organisation regardless of their position (Bush et al., 2010). This is the essence of the distributed theory of leadership. According to Spillane (2005), the distributed leadership perspective is rooted in the notion that leading and managing schools require multiple individuals. Leadership is therefore dispersed within schools. In the context of this paper, disciplining learners in a school, which in itself entails leadership, can only happen successfully if exercised by school management, teachers, learners and other stakeholders.

Bandura's social learning theory says that people learn violent behaviour through modelling or direct reinforcement (Higson-Smith, 2006). As Bandura (1977:22) puts it "most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." Social learning can influence children and adults positively or negatively (Louw & Edwards, 1993). Since behaviour is learnt observationally, children who are subjected to corporal punishment may in turn be aggressive during childhood, and later as adults (Muller, Hunter & Stollak, 1995).

According to Allen (2010), teachers learn leadership and management at various phases of their learning stages, which incorporates the phase in which they were learners themselves. Amid teaching, they may manage learners' behaviour, drawing from the conduct of their own teachers. It is, along these lines, suggested that where teachers experienced corporal punishment while they were learners, they may also use corporal punishment to discipline their learners. Arguing from another perspective, Maina and Sindabi (2016) point out that principals and teachers have the potential to model and encourage positive behavior, instead of relying on corporal punishment to discipline learners. In other words, the way in which principals and teachers exercise or do not exercise leadership may lead to curbing or continuation of the use of corporal punishment. Thus, social learning theory was used in this paper to understand the research participants' perspectives regarding corporal punishment.

In summarising this section, the theoretical framework adopted in this paper is two-pronged. Through social learning theory the paper seeks to explain what were found to be contestations and paradoxes of corporal punishment. It was applied with the understanding that through observation, human beings learn to behave in certain ways. As a result, the reasons for continuation of corporal punishment could be understood from the social learning theory perspective. The second part, distributed leadership, was adopted in search of a holistic understanding of implications for school leadership, and of the contestations and paradoxes of corporal punishment in the two participant schools. Through distributed leadership, the skills and talents of various leaders within the schools could be enhanced so as to exert desirable behaviour of learners as opposed to subjecting such learners to corporal punishment. The two theories, therefore, complemented each other, and constituted an appropriate framework for this paper.

Research Method
Given this paper's focus on seeking to understand contestations and paradoxes of corporal punishment in two schools, and the implications thereof for school leadership, it was appropriate to adopt the qualitative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and case study design. When the case study design is adopted, it is essential that the researcher identify the actual case (Yin, 2009). In this paper, the case comprised of the participants' perspectives on the use of corporal punishment. The two schools were purposively selected, following a pilot study on the prevalence of the use of corporal punishment in schools in a particular Ward (a geographical area with about five or six high schools). It was found that the two selected schools experienced high levels of violence in general, and of corporal

punishment in particular. Consistent with research ethics on anonymity, these schools are identified through pseudonyms as: Turning High School (THS) and Market High School (MHS). Both schools are located in semi-urban areas. THS's community is largely black Africans, while MHS's is mostly coloured, as for the teachers and learners, respectively. Both schools were no-fee-paying, indicating the low income status of both communities.

Creswell (2007) indicates that purposive sampling applies to both site selection and participant choice. In this connection, on grounds of their potential richness in information, the two school principals, eight teachers and eight learners (four from each school respectively) were purposively selected as research participants.

Qualitative researchers use multiple techniques in order to generate data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In keeping with this approach two methods were adopted. Individual face-to-face interviews were held with each teacher and school principal. These participants were interviewed once each. Each interview lasted for about one hour. This type of interview was appropriate, since it allowed the participants an opportunity to tell their stories regarding corporal punishment in their schools (Patton, 2002). For learners, one focus group interview was conducted in each school. The focus group was composed of four learners in each case, two boys and two girls selected from Grades Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve. At MHS, a teacher liaison officer assisted with the selection of one class prefect from each of the four grades. One Head of Department (HoD) at THS assisted with selection of one class prefect from the four grades (Neuman, 2006).

Data was analysed through an inductive process of content analysis, thereby developing patterns, themes and categories (Patton, 2002). Data was presented and discussed through emerging themes. Regarding ethics, permission was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Consent from all the adult participants and permission from parents of the learners were obtained. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained in all cases.

Findings and Discussion
This section is organised according to the themes that emerged from the data. The principal of THS is identified as Tom and the four THS teachers as Trainer 1-4. The MHS Principal is Mike, and the teachers from MHS are Evaluators 1-4. As a way of differentiating THS learners' focus group (hereafter referred to as FG) from that of MHS, the name of the school is indicated immediately after referring to a focus group.

Corporal Punishment is a Corrective Disciplinary Measure
The 'in loco parentis' status of teachers places them in a position to take disciplinary measures against learners, in order to maintain order and discipline in the school (Burnett, 1998). In this regard, some teachers in the two schools viewed corporal punishment as an essential disciplinary measure. Mike (MHS) indicated: "*in certain classes, learners who do not do the homework are made to stand on the chairs and the teacher hits them on the legs.*"

A teacher from the same school said: "*but I don't think a teacher can beat a learner just for entertainment. A teacher beats a learner to correct them*" (Evaluator 2). Similarly, Evaluator 4 shared this same sentiment. Here, corporal punishment was viewed as well-intentioned. As a result, when a learner complained about corporal punishment teachers ignored such complaints:

> There was a situation where a teacher used a broomstick to hit me. My hand swelled. It had to be bandaged. I reported the incident to other teachers, but they were not interested. Only one teacher advised me to tell the principal. The principal said I should forgive that teacher, because the teacher said we don't do the tasks he gives us (FG, MHS).

These views from MHS participants suggest that little progress has been made in reducing or doing away with corporal punishment since its abolition (Burton, 2008). Participants from THS held similar views. Tom, for example, argued that corporal punishment was used by the teachers for the benefit of the learners:

> But I see that some learners cannot work unless you use corporal punishment. So a teacher who is concerned about learners' progress may resort to using corporal punishment. In a sense it is used for the learners' benefit.

Trainer 4 said: "*corporal punishment inflicts pain and nobody likes pain. In order to avoid pain, learners will do anything to ensure that they are not punished*". Learners reported negative experiences of corporal punishment. One said: "*it is painful and embarrassing because when you are beaten other learners will be looking at you and some of them laugh at you*" (FG, THS).

To the learners, corporal punishment was both painful, and a stigma before other learners, and therefore not beneficial to them. To teachers, it was a necessary evil, but certainly was not perceived as a form of violence.

It is African Culture
Every organisation has its own culture (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Evaluator 2 (MHS) questioned what is regarded as corporal punishment:

> I don't know what corporal punishment is. As far as I am concerned, it has to do with culture. That is how we were raised. As an African, I know that

corporal punishment was used when I was in school. But I did not leave school. In a way, it helped me in my education.

This response suggests a positive correlation between one's experience of corporal punishment during childhood, and the approval of its use as an adult. Because it is regarded as an African asset, it reportedly did not cause learners to drop out of school. However, literature suggests that corporal punishment has led to learners dropping out of school (Mthanti & Mncube, 2014).

It was also reported to us that learners sometimes encouraged teachers to use corporal punishment:

Sometimes learners, particularly black learners, will encourage the teacher to beat them, pointing out that they are misbehaving, because they are not beaten. When I first came to this school, they used to encourage me to beat them as their previous teacher did (Evaluator 1).

In this case, learners viewed corporal punishment as consistent with their expectations of a teacher's role. In such an environment, a teacher punishes learners who do not respect classroom rules (Payet & Franchi, 2008). Paradoxically, the learners still reported that corporal punishment affected them negatively:

Most learners do not go to class if they have not done Mr. X's work, because he will beat them. Some teachers do not beat learners all the time like he does. We know him very well. So if you know you are in the wrong you do not want to see yourself near him (FG, MHS).

It is apparent that teachers who used corporal punishment, like Mr. X, were notorious, and learners avoided them whenever possible. This finding is consistent with some previous studies, such as those by Mthanti and Mncube (2014), and this has a negative impact on their academic performance (Veriava, 2014).

Similar findings emerged from participants at THS. Tom argued that apart from corporal punishment having been administered on some teachers when they were learners, parents still apply it at home to their children:

But the main problem is that the law is against something which has been done for centuries. Corporal punishment was used by our teachers on us. We also used it before this law was passed. The parents use it at home. So these learners know how they are punished at home when they misbehave.

Culture is simply defined as a way of life in a given institution or organisation (Walker, 2010). Here, corporal punishment is seen as part of culture. Adults had cultural authority to administer it to children.

Trainer 3 specifically referred to black learners:

I think corporal punishment should be legalised. Teachers have to be forceful to get results from a black child. I am specific about a black child. Maybe corporal punishment is not working in former model C and white schools, but for teachers

teaching in black schools corporal punishment is necessary.

The learners also reported that corporal punishment constituted part of their school's culture:

We are beaten all the time. Teachers use the hosepipe. If a teacher comes and asks us who was making noise, and we say we do not know, then he will beat all of us. They also beat us when we have not done homework (FG, THS).

The regular use of the hosepipe, as reported above, points to corporal punishment as a norm at THS. Consistent with this finding, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) found that teachers in Township schools still continue to administer corporal punishment. Township schools are still attended by mainly black learners in South Africa. However, it is paradoxical that teachers insisted on corporal punishment for black learners on the basis of it being in alignment with African culture, when it was no longer applied to black learners at former white schools (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010).

As observed by Dupper and Meyer-Adams (2002), each school has its unique culture; in THS, corporal punishment was an overt practice, while in MHS, it was covert. In both schools, however, there was a strong sentiment among teachers that corporal punishment still had a place in achieving learner discipline. Interpreted from the social learning perspective, the teachers learnt to use corporal punishment by observing and experiencing it, and later performing it (Bandura, 1977) in school.

It was Effective on Us

For some of the participant teachers, corporal punishment was not just administered to them during their school time, it was actually effective. In this regard, Tom said: "*Corporal punishment has been very effective. I am in the office today because of corporal punishment*". Emphasising this same idea, a teacher from THS said:

Personally, corporal punishment has worked for me. Not that I was a troublemaker at school, but there were incidents where I used to get punished. If I remember correctly, it was Mrs. X, she was teaching business studies, and I got 98%, and she asked why I did not get a 100 percent. She used to beat us for such things. It was her way of encouraging us (Trainer 4).

At MHS, Mike did not think that corporal punishment was effective when he was in school, but teachers shared similar views with their counterparts at THS. One said:

When we were learners, our teachers used corporal punishment and we were a well-disciplined generation; but now that corporal punishment is not allowed, look at how badly these learners behave. I think the government should bring back corporal punishment (Evaluator 3).

It is a paradox that the teachers sought to equate the way they were treated then with how today's learners must be handled. They actually contested

the notion of corporal punishment as an outdated practice (Payet & Franchi, 2008). Findings suggest that some learners who are subjected to corporal punishment will accept it as a desirable disciplinary measure, either as parents, or as teachers in future (Higson-Smith, 2006).

It is Violence

According to Harber (2004), corporal punishment is a form of violence perpetrated by teachers against learners, and it leads to learners' violent behaviour. At THS, Tom the principal did not explicitly describe corporal punishment as a form of violence. However, some teachers at the school were adamant that, although corporal punishment was still administered there, it was to be regarded as a form of violence:

> *I don't want to be nasty. I don't see any benefits of corporal punishment. You see we bring violence to the school. We endorse it and then these learners go out of the school and violence continues. We should try to build a non-violent society. That must start in the school. We should not tolerate violence in any part of our life. The school should be a 'violent free zone' and we should also have a 'violent free zone' outside the school. In the school, a 'violence free zone' should be enforced by the teachers and outside the school it should be enforced by the police* (Trainer 1). [sic]

Another THS teacher said:

> *From where I am sitting, if we are genuinely saying we want a violence-free society, then we need to think twice in terms of corporal punishment* (Trainer 2).

The sentiment of corporal punishment as violence also featured in the focus group interview we held with THS learners:

> *This thing of being beaten by teachers is not good for us girls. Some teachers really beat us hard and you find girls crying. It is really bad. It is painful. Again, some learners will laugh at you and you feel like a fool* (FG, THS).

Overall we learnt that corporal punishment was a daily practice by some teachers at THS. Some learners had found a survival strategy of bunking lessons. Unlike his counterpart at THS, Mike the MHS principal was of the view that corporal punishment was a form of violence, and that it undermined learners' rights:

> *Corporal punishment is a violation of learners' rights. Some parents have come to the school threatening to attack teachers who smacked their children.*

The participant teachers also shared the principal's view. In this regard, one said:

> *I don't physically punish learners. However, I have seen it happen and I found that, especially with African learners, some like that sort of punishment. They seem to prefer that as opposed to having their parents being called to the school, whereas to the coloured learners in the school, physical violence does not work on them, because they would rather call their parents to the school and argue on their behalf* (Evaluator 2).

Our discussion with learners showed that there were still cases of corporal punishment at MHS, nevertheless, in some cases it was accompanied by verbal abuse by teachers:

> *The teacher said 'all you do is to come here and make noise. Why don't you stay at home and make children'? The learner got offended and said to the teacher 'don't talk to me like that, Miss'. The teacher said, 'you do not have a right; I am the teacher in this class. I make the rules of this class.' The learner kept arguing until the teacher beat her* (FG, MHS).

These findings are consistent with the previous studies, which found that by using corporal punishment, teachers are likely to socialise learners into violent behaviour (Burton, 2008). While the teachers' main role in the school is to teach, their behaviour can either lead towards or away from violence (Sugut & Mugasia, 2014). In using corporal punishment to respond to learners' unacceptable behaviour, the teachers model a behaviour which the learners may imitate later (Higson-Smith, 2006). Such imitation may be demonstrated through solving conflict with violence (Soneson, 2005) since children who experience violence are likely to use violence to solve problems (Harber, 2004).

The findings show that in the context of the study reported in this paper, corporal punishment is a highly-contested phenomenon. From a policy perspective, corporal punishment is outlawed. However, from the real school life perspective, there are different schools of thought and practice.

Implications for Leadership

This paper argues that continued administration or condoning of corporal punishment in a school is evidence of a dearth of leadership. Leadership is associated with transformation or organisational change (Morrison, 1998), direction setting, and movement (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). The dearth of leadership in the schools studied manifested in a variety of ways. One of the principals did not view corporal punishment as violence. Both principals did not seem to purposely stop teachers from administering corporal punishment, even in such case where the principal himself did not support it. This suggests that the principals did not set direction in this regard. They did not lead transformation. There is empirical evidence to show that in schools where corporal punishment is no longer applied, the principals took a leadership initiative to influence the teachers against that practice (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010).

As indicated earlier in this paper, in an effort to reduce school violence, the South African government passed legislation against the use of corporal punishment in schools. The intention was to promote a democratic culture embedded in the principles of tolerance, freedom, equality and social justice (Department of Education, Republic

of South Africa, 2000a). However, in the two schools studied, this endeavour seems to have been crippled by a dearth of leadership. As rightly argued by Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:5), "the school is where educational policy is put into practice." This paper argues that without sound leadership, the presence of a policy will not necessarily translate into envisioned educational change or social transformation.

Distributed leadership is rooted in the notion that there are various leaders in the school (Spillane, 2005). Such leaders include those with designated positions, as well as those without. In both of the schools studied, there were teachers who neither administered nor supported corporal punishment. Such teachers are potential assets in the fight against continued use of corporal punishment, although there was no indication that they actively condemned and discouraged it. They did not have to be in any formal management position to fight this battle. Similarly, there were learners who condemned corporal punishment. But the school principals, as leaders, did not seem to recognise the assets in their midst. It takes a good leader to be able to set in motion a culture of distributed leadership. Without direction-setting at the top of the organisation, change cannot occur further down.

Conclusion

While research suggests that the practice of corporal punishment has been discontinued in many South African schools, it is still practised in some. The practice remains a matter of contestation on a few grounds, where it has worked before, the adage 'why change it if it's not broken?' is cited. Some parents use it, and if the school is an extension of the home and society, then the argument is forwarded that it makes sense to follow suit in schools. It is further held that there are learners who would not benefit from school without its use; and that it is effective. It is a doubly paradoxical that, within schools, there are teachers who show potential to lead the fight against corporal punishment, but that this potential is not exploited; and, that some learners still see the place of corporal punishment, where they ought to be, in our view, fighting against it. Based on these contestations and paradoxes, this paper argues that leadership provides the missing link.

Note

i. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.

References

Allen KP 2010. Classroom management, bullying, and teacher practices. *The Professional Educator*, 34(1):1–15.

Bandura A 1977. *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Burnett C 1998. School violence in an impoverished South African community. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22(8):789–795. doi: 10.1016/S0145-2134(98)00058-1

Burton P 2008. *Merchants, skollies and stones: Experiences of school violence in South Africa* (Monograph Series No. 4). Cape Town, South Africa: Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention.

Bush T, Bell L & Middlewood D 2010. Introduction: new directions in educational leadership. In T Bush, L Bell & D Middlewood (eds). *The principles of educational leadership & management* (2nd ed). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Corbin J & Strauss A 2008. *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell JW 2007. *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Davidoff S & Lazarus S 2002. *The learning school: An organisation development approach* (2nd ed). Cape Town, South Africa: Juta & Co.

Department of Education, Republic of South Africa 2000a. *Alternatives to corporal punishment*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education, Republic of South Africa 2000b. National Education Policy Act (27/1996): Norms and standards for educators. *Government Gazette*, Vol. 415(No. 20844). Pretoria: Government Printer. Available at http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/20844.pdf. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Dunne M & Leach F 2007. Gender conflict and schooling: Identity, space and violence. In F Leach & M Dunne (eds). *Education, conflict and reconciliation: International perspectives*. Oxford, UK: Peter Lang.

Dupper DR & Meyer-Adams N 2002. Low level violence: A neglected aspect of school culture. *Urban Education*, 37(3):350–364. doi: 10.1177/00485902037003003

Harber C 2004. *Schooling as violence: How schools harm pupils and societies*. London, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Harber C & Mncube V 2011. Is schooling good for the development of society?: the case of South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 31(2):233–245. Available at http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/483/241. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Hayman IA & Perone DC 1998. The other side of school violence: Educators policies and practices that may contribute to student misbehavior. *Journal of School Psychology*, 36(1):7–27. doi: 10.1016/S0022-4405(97)87007-0

Higson-Smith C 2006. Violence and traumatic stress. In L Swartz, C de la Rey & N Duncan (eds). *Psychology: an introduction*. Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University.

Hogan R & Kaiser RB 2005. What we know about leadership. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2):169–180. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.169

Hunt F 2007. Policy in practice: Teacher-student conflict

in South African schools. In F Leach & M Dunne (eds). *Education, conflict and reconciliation: International perspectives*. Oxford, UK: Peter Lang.

Leithwood K, Harris A & Hopkins D 2008. Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, 28(1):27–42. doi: 10.1080/13632430701800060

Leithwood K & Riehl C 2003. *What do we know about successful school leadership*. Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.

Louw D & Edwards D 1993. *Psychology: an introduction for students in Southern Africa*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Lexicon Publishers.

Maina SW & Sindabi AM 2016. The impact of the ban of corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary schools: A case study of Bahati division of Nakuru district. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 14(3):850–862.

Maphosa C & Shumba A 2010. Educators' disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 30(3):387–399. Available at http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/361/213. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Mncube V & Harber C 2013. *The dynamics of violence in schools in South Africa. Report 2012*. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa.

Morrison K 1998. *Management theories for educational change*. London, UK: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Mthanti B & Mncube V 2014. The social and economic impact of corporal punishment in South African schools. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 5(1):71–80. Available at http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSSA/JSSA-05-0-000-14-Web/JSSA-05-1-000-14-Abst-PDF/JSSA-05-1-071-14-028-Mncube-V/JSSA-05-1-071-14-028-Mncube-V-Tt.pdf. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Muller RT, Hunter JE & Stollak G 1995. The intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment: A comparison of social learning and temperament models. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 19(11):1323–1335. doi: 10.1016/0145-2134(95)00103-F

Mweru M 2010. Why are Kenyan teachers still using corporal punishment eight years after a ban on corporal punishment [Special issue]? *Child Abuse Review*, 19(4):248–258. doi: 10.1002/car.1121

Neuman WL 2006. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Ngcobo T & Tikly LP 2010. Key dimensions of effective leadership for change: A focus on township and rural schools in South Africa. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(2):202–228. doi: 10.1177/1741143209356359

Nieuwenhuis J 2007. Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In K Maree (ed). *First steps in research*. Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers.

Northouse PG 2010. *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed). London, UK: Sage Publications, Inc.

Ogando Portela MJ & Pells K 2015. *Corporal punishment in schools: Longitudinal evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*. Innocenti Discussion Paper No. 2015-02. Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research. Available at https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/CORPORAL-PUNISHMENT-IDP2finalrev.pdf. Accessed 16 November 2016.

Patton MQ 2002. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Payet JP & Franchi V 2008. The rights of the child and 'the good of the learners': A comparative ethnographical survey on the abolition of corporal punishment in South African schools. *Childhood*, 15(2):157–176. doi: 10.1177/0907568207088420

Riley K & MacBeath J 2003. Effective leaders and effective schools. In N Bennett, M Crawford & M Cartwright (eds). *Effective educational leadership*. London, UK: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Soneson U 2005. *Ending corporal punishment of children in South Africa*. Arcadia, South Africa: Save the Children Sweden. Available at http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/2872.pdf. Accessed 5 March 2016.

Spillane JP 2005. Primary school leadership practice: how the subject matters. *School Leadership & Management*, 25(4):383–397. doi: 10.1080/13634230500197231

Straus MA & Yodanis CL 1996. Corporal punishment in adolescence and physical assaults on spouses in later life: What accounts for the link? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 58(4):825–841. doi: 10.2307/353973

Sugut WK & Mugasia FA 2014. School factors associated with student violence in secondary schools in Nandi South District, Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(1):123–132. Available at http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_1_January_2014/14.pdf. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Veriava F 2014. *Promoting effective enforcement of the prohibition against corporal punishment in South African schools*. Pretoria, South Africa: Pretoria University Law Press (PULP). Available at http://www.pulp.up.ac.za/pdf/2014_03/2014_03.pdf. Accessed 14 November 2016.

Walker A 2010. Building and leading learning cultures. In T Bush, L Bell & D Middlewood (eds). *The principles of educational leadership & management* (2nd ed). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Yin RK 2009. *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed). London, UK: Sage Publications, Inc.