School-based violence and other forms of misconduct have an impact on educators, learners, and the teaching and learning environment. Research and media reports often focus on the dire consequences for learners. The consequences for South African educators are equally severe and will be discussed in what follows.

1.1 Lack of work satisfaction and impact on the personal lives of educators
Wolhuter and Van Staden\(^1\) found that the lack of learner discipline caused 85% of South African educators to be unhappy in their work, either at times or regularly, and that this sometimes or regularly caused tension in their family lives. It led to health problems in the case of 54% of educators. Furthermore, 57% of the educators indicated that they sometimes or regularly considered leaving the profession because of the disciplinary problems. Le Roux and Mokhele\(^2\) highlight the fact that educators who are exposed to violence are more likely to transfer to other schools, thus impacting negatively on teaching continuity. Other negative consequences are that these educators are absent from school more often, lack motivation, seek early retirement or resign. Wolhuter and Van Staden\(^3\) indicate that the effect of disciplinary problems on educators may lead to a crisis in future if this is not addressed urgently.

The South African Human Rights Commission report\(^4\) (SAHRC) reveals that several educators who were exposed to gang violence presented with chronic symptoms of post-traumatic stress, which negatively impacted on their ability to teach properly. In such instances, they lose interest and may become detached to the extent that they are unable to relate to their learners. They experience lowered self-confidence and self-esteem, with a concomitant negative impact on their work performance. Continuous stress due to school-based violence sometimes triggers depression and violent behaviour towards learners. They also report feelings of hopelessness, exasperation, and of not being supported and heard. School violence thus often has a negative impact on the personal lives of educators, with some resorting to alcohol or drug abuse.

---

\(^*\)This is an excerpt from the author’s PhD on *The best interests of the child in school discipline in South Africa*. (2013) Tilburg University. The Netherlands.

\(^1\) 2008:397.

\(^2\) 2011:324; see also Pahad & Graham 2012:10 on educators resigning owing to deteriorating discipline.

\(^3\) 2008:379.

1.2 Impact on teaching time and deterioration of the teaching and learning environment

Coetzee, Van Niekerk and Wydeman⁵ aver that half of instruction time is lost due to disciplinary problems in class. The dismal academic results of the system discussed above clearly illustrate the need to improve discipline as a matter of urgency so as to allow more time for much-needed instruction.

Maphosa and Mammen⁶ found that some female teachers find it challenging to discipline older boys. Consequently, they ignore them and leave them to misbehave. This is a strategy that is also employed by other educators who fear that action might impact on their employment security because it might infringe on learners’ rights⁷ or are intimidated by learners as discussed below. This inaction on the part of educators contributes to the further deterioration of the learning environment.

This failure of educators to act reflects poorly on the teaching profession and status of educators. Furthermore, some educators are therefore branded as lazy, unprofessional and negligent.

1.3 Intimidation of educators

An educator in the Eastern Cape study highlighted another dimension of the impact of gangsterism on discipline, stating that it was risky to enforce discipline in schools, especially where senior learners are involved, because they belong to gangs. Educators are threatened by learners and are afraid that gang members will attack them after school “with knives and guns”.⁸ The specific reference to the weapons used by gang members may be indicative of the level of violence and of the fear that this instils in the educator. Therefore, educators do not enforce proper discipline, which impacts negatively on the learning environment, making it less conducive to teaching and learning. Although gangs consist of a very small, but hard-core, group, their impact is significant and devastating for victims.⁹ Another educator reported feeling threatened by learners after trying to prevent them from using drugs at school.¹⁰

---

⁵ Coetzee, Van Niekerk and Wydeman 2008:91.
¹⁰ Pahad & Graham 2012:7.
1.4 Impact on the dignity and other rights of educators and learners

Lessing and De Witt\textsuperscript{11} are of the opinion that disruptive behaviour indicates a lack of reliability, trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, and care for the educator and fellow learners. If a learner refuses to obey the instructions of an educator, this is indicative of some cheekiness and audacity on the part of the learner. In addition, this has an impact on the educator’s image as a person in a position of authority and indicates disrespectfulness towards the educator. Misconduct often provokes the educator, which might lead to an emotional outburst by him or her, with a resultant negative impact on the atmosphere in the class. An emotional outburst by the educator not only causes the educator stress and even humiliation, but also has a negative impact on learners’ conduct and the sense of dignity that should prevail in a class.

Apart from the right to dignity of educators and learners, other rights which are impacted by misconduct include personal security rights, labour rights, and the right to education to mention but a few. It is thus imperative not only to address the consequences of misconduct, but also to endeavour to prevent it.

In conclusion, the impact of disciplinary problems on educators ranges from mere frustration to post-traumatic stress and resignations. Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to quantify the extent of the disciplinary problems in exact terms. Even if the disciplinary problems are not so serious in a particular school, they should be addressed, since every child has the right to be taught in an environment that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning. Equally important is the right of every educator to teach in an environment that is not only safe but also lends itself to job satisfaction, self-fulfilment, success and joy.

It is submitted that restorative practices can contribute significantly to achieve this because this approach focuses not only on the transgressor but also on the impact of the misconduct on those affected by the misconduct. In addition one of the main aims of this approach is to fix the harm caused by misconduct, to set things as right as possible and to find solutions to ensure that the misconduct does not re-occur and if it does that mechanisms is in place to deal with it appropriately.

\textsuperscript{11} 2010:25
Bibliography

COETZEE SA, VAN NIEKERK EJ & WYDEMAN JL

LE ROUX CS & MOKHELE PR

LESSING AC AND DE WITT MW

MAPHOSA C & MAMMEN KJ

MAPHOSA C & SHUMBA A

PAHAD S & GRAHAM TM

SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SAHRC)

WOLHUTER CC & VAN STADEN JG