

The prevention of educator-targeted bullying: the perspectives of school principals

Corene de Wet
Dept. of Comparative Education
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
dewetnc@ufs.ac.za

Opsomming

Die voorkoming van opvoedertreitering: die perspektiewe van skoolhoofde

Hierdie artikel lewer verslag oor skoolhoofde se perspektiewe op die voorkoming van die treitering van opvoeders deur hulle leerders. Bronfenbrenner se sosiaal-ekologiese model van ineen-skakelende stelsels is as teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie gebruik. Data is met behulp van fokusgroeponderhoude ingesamel. Kwalitatiewe inhoudanalise is gebruik om die data te analiseer. Die data toon dat treitering op mikro-, meso- en makrostelselvlak aangespreek moet word. Dit blyk uit die studie dat groter ouerbetrokkenheid, die vestiging van Christelike waardes en die herstel van gesinstrukture tot die bekamping van opvoedertreitering kan lei (mikrovlak). Op mesovlak is die noodsaaklikheid van 'n "lewende" anti-teisteringsbeleid, gespesialiseerde kennis aangaande opvoedertreitering en die belangrikheid van spanwerk beklemtoon. Die rol van die gemeenskap en die regering in die bekamping van opvoedertreitering is ook deur skoolhoofde uitgelig (makrovlak). Op grond van dié bevindinge en bestaande navorsing word aanbeveel dat skole óf alomvattende treiteringsvoorkomingsprogramme ont-

wikkel óf bestaande programme aanpas om voorsiening te maak vir hul unieke omstandighede. Die voorkoming van opvoedertreitering moet óf 'n integrale deel van 'n skool se treiteringsvoorkomings-program vorm óf komplimenterend tot die program wees.

1. Introduction

The directive from the Department of Education in the Free State Province on school safety policy states that all educators have “the right to work in an environment free of crime, intimidation, harassment and discrimination” (Free State Province, 2006:2). These rights to physical and psychological safety, and the right of protection against harassment have been granted to certain sectors of the South African work force, including educators, through amendments of the *Labour Relations Act* in 1981 and 1991 (Rossouw, 2010:49-58; Rutherford, 2009:33-34). Educators furthermore have, in accordance to the founding values of the *South African Constitution*, the fundamental right to human dignity (Rossouw, 2010:47). Researchers (Rossouw, 2010:49-58; Rutherford, 2009:148-162) have nonetheless found that large numbers of South African educators do not feel safe in their working milieu. This may, amongst other things, be attributed to violence (Oosthuizen, Mentz & Van der Walt, 2002:27) and bullying (De Wet, 2010a:189-200; De Wet, 2010b:195-196; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006:53-70; Rutherford, 2009:148-162) directed at them. Violence (e.g. Chen & Astor, 2009:215; Houghton, Wheldall & Merrett, 1988:298; Khoury-Kassabri, Astor & Benbenishty, 2008:163-164; Kondrasuk, Greene, Waggoner, Edwards & Nayak-Rhodes, 2005:638-645) and bullying (e.g. Benefield, 2004:1-22; James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry & Murphy, 2008:165-167; Pervin & Turner, 1998:4-8; Terry, 1998:255-267) directed at educators is not typically South African, but is also an international phenomenon. Risk factors that are attributed to the victimisation of educators have been well documented by the aforementioned researchers, although the relative weighting given to each varies according to research design and focus. These studies concur that risk factors can generally be attributed to a combination of factors associated with the victims' and perpetrators' personal characteristics, the teaching and learning milieu, and the society at large.

Palmer (1993:x) believes that “most (of us) go into teaching not for some fame or fortune, but because of a passion to connect”. Yet research (De Wet, 2010a:189) has shown that educator-targeted bullying may lead to a

breakdown of relations between educators, their learners, parents and the community, and impact negatively on teaching and learning. Oosthuizen *et al.* (2002:27) also found that those educators who perceive their workplace to be insecure are unable to add “pedagogical value to their teaching efforts”. Oosthuizen *et al.* (2002:28) furthermore argue that the enhancement of educators’ safety and security will not only enable them

... to understand their divine calling as well as the nature of pedagogical involvement with learners, but will ... motivate them to also apply pedagogical principles and insight in actual classroom practices.

To date, efforts to prevent bullying in schools have focused mainly on learner-on-learner bullying (e.g. Dresler-Hawke & Whitehead, 2009:197-203; Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton & Flerx, 2003:61-66; Lock & Migliore, 2003:172-175; Morrison, 2007:73-150; Olweus, 1993:63-107; Sullivan, 2000:43-195; Whitted & Dupper, 2005:169-172). Against the background of the foregoing, the following research question arises: what can be done to prevent the bullying of educators by their learners? Studying the perceptions of school principals on the nature and extent of educator-targeted bullying, as well as their views on the risk factors for this scourge in an attempt to understand the situation better (De Wet, 2010b:187-209), seems like a logical first step in any endeavour to prevent educator-targeted bullying. This article, which is a follow-up on an article published in the *Journal for Christian Scholarship* in 2010 (De Wet, 2010b:187-209) reports on school principals’ perspectives on how to address this problem.

2. Concept clarification

Educator-targeted bullying may be defined in the following general way:

An educator is being bullied or victimised when he/she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more learner (adapted from Olweus, 1993:9).

Olweus (1993:9) expands on the term “negative action”. According to him, an action is negative when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Negative actions can be carried out by words (verbally) or by physical contact. It is however also possible to carry out negative actions without the use of words or of physical contact, such as making faces or dirty gestures, intentionally excluding someone from a group, or refusing to comply with another person’s wishes. Olweus (1993:10) emphasises that bullying is characterised by an imbalance in strength. According to Rigby, Smith and Pepler (2004:1) it boils down to the unfair systematic abuse of power. The educator who is

bullied by his/her learner's negative actions thus has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the learner who harasses.

3. Literature overview of anti-bully programmes

A reading of research on educator-targeted bullying, as well as publications on the prevention of bullying reveals that there is a scarcity of publications on how to prevent educator-targeted bullying. The researcher consequently turned to the literature on learner-on-learner bullying to gain insight into intervention programmes. Mention will, however, also be made of strategies posed by educator-targeted bullying researchers on how to prevent the victimisation of educators.

3.1 Learner-on-learner bullying

Whitted and Dupper (2005:169) argue that bullying does not lend itself to the same interventions as other kinds of violence. According to them, conflict resolution, peer mediation strategies and group therapy that focus on increasing self-esteem have shown to be relatively ineffective with bullies, because bullying behaviour results from a power imbalance rather than a deficit in social skills.

Research has greatly expanded the knowledge of 'what works' in school-based prevention programmes, including essential elements in successful school-based programmes (Whitted & Dupper, 2005:169; Table 1 gives a summary of some of the elements that may be included in bully prevention programmes). It appears that the most effective programmes for preventing or minimising bullying involves a comprehensive, multilevel strategy that targets the bullies, victims, bystanders, families and communities. Strategies to prevent or minimise bullying should include school level intervention designed to change the culture and climate of the school; classroom level intervention, targeting educators and other adults in the school; and learner level intervention that targets individual or small groups of victims and bullies (Limber *et al.*, 2003:61-66; Morrison, 2007:125; Olweus, 1993:63-107; Sullivan, 2000:54; Sveinsson & Morris, 2007:15-20; Whitted & Dupper, 2005:170). According to Rigby *et al.*'s (2004:2) stance, it is widely accepted that countering bullying requires a "whole school approach in which the elements and initiatives in a programme are carefully co-ordinated". Existing research findings thus support the point of departure for this study, namely that a multifaceted hands-on programme, embedded in the social-ecological model, may be a possible solution to educator-targeted bullying.

Table 1: Elements of an anti-bullying programme

Level	Elements
Individual (micro)	<p>Identify the types of victims and the bullies involved in bullying.</p> <p>Victims are taught social and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Support system is established for victims of bullying.</p> <p>Bystanders are taught skills to intervene to help victims of bullying.</p> <p>Get parents involved in the education of their children.</p> <p>Develop a parent anti-bullying awareness programme with multiple objectives offering advice on how to address issues relating to bullying to promote a safe school environment.</p> <p>Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect that their children are involved in bullying.</p>
Organisational (meso)	<p>School level</p> <p>A questionnaire is used to assess the nature and extent of bullying and raise awareness.</p> <p>The principal provides a leadership programme in implementing the programme.</p> <p>Anonymous reporting procedures are established.</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive school-wide anti-bullying programme that is integrated with the provincial and national curriculum and the school's discipline policies.</p> <p>All areas of the school are well supervised.</p> <p>Train educational leaders, educators and administrators in bullying recognition, prevention and intervention.</p> <p>Bully prevention programme should regularly be evaluated.</p> <p>Classroom level</p> <p>Regular classroom meetings are held to discuss bullying.</p> <p>Learners should be involved in developing rules against bullying.</p> <p>Educators model positive interpersonal skills and cooperative learning and do not set a bad example by exhibiting dominating or authoritarian behaviour.</p>

	<p>Develop a positive classroom climate. Educators report bullying behaviour. Educators consistently follow the school's anti-bullying policy. Educators send clear messages that bullying is not tolerated. Non-punitive disciplinary measures are used against bullies.</p>
<p>Community and national (macro)</p>	<p>Increase funding for marketing campaigns against the practice of bullying. Increase media coverage on issues relating to bullying. Involve community leaders and business in creating an awareness of bullying. Engage community members in the school's bully prevention programme. Engage community members, educators and learners in bully prevention efforts in the wider community (e.g. the introduction of core programme elements into adult learning classes). Establish a national anti-bullying law; monitor schools' compliance with the law.</p>

Sources: Dresler-Hawke & Whitehead, 2009:199; Galloway & Roland, 2003:46-47; Limber *et al.*, 2003:61-66; Lock & Migliore, 2003:172-176; Olweus, 1993:64; Rigby *et al.*, 2003:2-3; Whitted & Dupper, 2005:170.

There have been considerable variations in anti-bullying programmes concerning what is actually included and what is strongly emphasised. Rigby *et al.* (2004:3) and Sullivan (2000:85-132) found that in some programmes a great deal of attention is, for example, given to motivating educators to address the problem of bullying and provide them with training, whereas others emphasise the surveillance and monitoring of learners. Furthermore, there seems to be numerous approaches towards the prevention of bullying, involving educators, peers and the community (e.g. 'befriending', counselling and mediation, the 'no blame' approach, 'a circle of friends', restorative justice, a Bully Buster programme, the P.E.A.C.E. Pack and bullying in schools approach and the 'Pikas method of shared concern') (cf. Sullivan, 2000:85-192).

Researchers (Galloway & Roland, 2003:46; Limber *et al.*, 2003:76-79; Morrison, 2007:147; Rigby *et al.*, 2003:6; Sveinsson & Morris, 2007:15)

emphasise the importance of moving beyond the drawing board: schools should not only develop anti-bullying programmes; they should implement, monitor and measure the outcomes of these programmes in order to assess the effects of their programme, as well as their chosen intervention approach(es). If the stated outcomes were not met, schools should either readjust the existing programme or decide on a new programme.

3.2 Researchers' guidelines on how to prevent educator-targeted bullying

There is an abundance of literature on how to prevent learner-on-learner bullying. On the other hand, only a few researchers offer general and often vague guidelines for addressing educator-targeted bullying. According to Fox and Stallworth (2010:24), the following approaches may lead to the prevention of the bullying of educators by their colleagues and/or learners: individual solutions (e.g. therapy, turnover); organisational solutions (e.g. internal policies and programmes, alternative dispute solutions); and union intervention and public policy solutions (e.g. legislation prohibiting violence and harassment). De Wet and Jacobs (2006:70) found that a "code of silence" surrounds educator-targeted bullying. They therefore emphasise the importance of a whole school anti-bullying policy. According to them, such an approach will empower victims of educator-targeted bullying to take action and seek support if it is needed, without feeling that they are alone. Pervin and Turner (1998:8) also emphasise the necessity of school management's "formally" acknowledging the complexity and existence of educator-targeted bullying. They suggest that a working party should be set up to investigate the links between the relevance of the curriculum and educator-targeted bullying. Victims of educator-targeted bullying should also be made to feel "that their problems are being taken seriously". They lastly recommend that whole school prevention strategies which involve educators, learners and parents aimed at addressing educator-targeted bullying, need to be sought.

A golden thread that links the foregoing literature overview is the contention by researchers that bullying should be addressed in a holistic manner: the individual (victim or perpetrator), the school and the society in which the school is situated should all be involved in creating a school (and ultimately a society) in which bullying is not tolerated.

4. Theoretical framework

This study approaches educator-targeted bullying from a social-ecological perspective. The idea that multiple environments influence individuals is

not a new concept. Much has been written on the reciprocal nature between the individual, family, peer group, school, community and culture: all individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the centre and move out from the centre to include all systems that affect the individual (Swearer & Espelage, 2004:2). Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory it can be argued that bullying does not occur in isolation and has to be understood across the different ecological systems. Bullying is encouraged and/or inhibited as a result of the complex relationships between the individual, family, peer group, school, community and culture (Swearer & Espelage, 2004:1).

This study uses a three-level ecology model to represent the complexity of the risk factors, as well as the impact of educator-targeted bullying on the victims, their work and their social environment (De Wet, 2010b:197-198). The first level identifies the biological and personal factors that influence how individuals behave and thus increases their likelihood of becoming victims or perpetrators of bullying: demographic characteristics, personality disorders, and a history of experiencing, witnessing or engaging in bullying behaviour. This level also focuses on the association between family environment and behaviour (e.g. inadequate parental supervision, hostile discipline practices and domestic violence). The second level focuses on the organisational or institutional factors that shape or structure the environment within which the individual exists and in which interpersonal relations occur. These aspects can be rules, policies, and acceptable behaviour within more formal organisations (e.g. schools). The third level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which bullying is encouraged or inhibited: the responsiveness of the criminal justice system and/or trade unions, social and cultural norms regarding gender roles, the social acceptability of bullying and violence and political instability (cf. Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg & Zwi, 2002:1085). To prevent educator-targeted bullying it is imperative that the risk factors should be addressed on all three levels, namely the personal level (first level), the organisational level (teaching and learning milieu) (second level), and the community level (third level).

5. Research methodology

5.1 Research design

This study followed a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research design. Qualitative research can be used to provide understanding of a specific phenomenon. The focus of this study was school principals' per-

spectives of educator-targeted bullying. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:46), exploratory studies are a way to find out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light. The aim of this study was exploratory, as it aimed to gain a new understanding into educator-targeted bullying. The study furthermore aimed at providing a description of school principals' insight into educator-targeted bullying (Bless *et al.*, 2006:46). The research was undertaken within an interpretative framework with its emphasis on experience and interpretation. Interpretive research is concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand people's definitions and understanding of situations. Henning (2004:21) emphasises that the interpretive paradigm does not concern itself with the search for broadly applicable laws and rules, but rather seeks to produce a descriptive analysis that emphasises deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena. This ties in with the focus of this study, as its aim is to gain an understanding of school principals' views on the topic.

5.2 Sampling

Participants in the two focus group interviews were 12 school principals (9 male and 3 female). Five of the principals were attached to primary and seven to secondary schools. The average number of years in the teaching profession for the participants was 21 years (SD = 5,77). The mean experience as a school principal was 8 years (SD = 4,22). The interviews were conducted during 2008. School principals busy with their Advanced Certificate in Education Leadership studies were invited to take part in the research project. Twelve of the invited principals were willing and able to attend the scheduled focus group interviews.

5.3 Data collection

Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Reflective field notes were taken for the sake of triangulation. The participants were provided with a tentative interview schedule during preliminary discussions with the researcher. The following questions were put to them:

- What are your experiences and observations of educator-targeted BULLYING?
- What are the risk factors of educator-targeted bullying?
- What is the impact of educator-targeted bullying?
- What can be done to prevent this type of behaviour?

The research aim and method were explained to the participants. During the interviews a 'funnel structure' was used, starting with the broad question: 'Would you please tell me of incidences of educator-targeted bullying at your respective schools?' Through this question, the participants were eased into a process where they were actively interacting, sharing their personal, as well as members of their staff's exposure to educator-targeted bullying. Through this question, followed by probing and follow-up questions, the participants were guided to address different aspects of educator-targeted bullying. Thus, the interview guide was only an aid to ensure if the groups had addressed all the preset categories.

5.4 Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the transcribed interviews. Henning's (2005:104-106) guidelines were used to reduce, condense and group the content of the interviews. A coding frame was drawn up, also providing for verbatim reporting where applicable. The researcher used preset codes (*a priori* coding) that she had identified whilst doing the literature review for this study. She worked through all the data and coded them. Related codes were thereafter organised into preset categories. These preset categories were also identified whilst doing the literature review. After she had completed her categorisation, she re-read the transcriptions to check whether she had captured all the important insights that had emerged from the data. From the categories, patterns and themes which could also be linked to the research, questions and sub-questions were identified and described. The identification of emergent themes allowed the information to be analysed and related to the literature. The researcher used an independent qualitative researcher to do an independent re-coding of some of the data, in order to determine whether the same themes became evident and could be confirmed. Consensus discussions between the researcher and the independent expert were held in order to determine the final findings of the research.

5.5 Validation

Validation within an interpretive approach to qualitative research is marked by a focus on the importance of the researcher, as well as on the interpretations that are temporal, located and always open to reinterpretation (Creswell, 2007:205). Two validation strategies were used: data (interview transcripts and reflective field notes) and investigator triangulation (the independent expert and the researcher read and coded the transcripts and

took part in consensus discussions) were used to strengthen the study. Rich, thick descriptions allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability. The detailed descriptions in this article may enable the readers to transfer information to other settings and thus determine whether the findings can be transferred.

5.6 Ethical measures

Care was taken to adhere to ethical measures during research on a topic that may have been sensitive to the participants. When the interviews were conducted the principals received an explanation of the research aim and method. They were informed in writing of the prevailing ethical considerations (Strydom, 2005:57-68), e.g. the participants' voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. All the participants gave their informed consent.

6. Findings

This article focuses on school principals' perspectives on what is currently being done in their respective schools and what needs to be done to prevent educator-targeted bullying, against the background of their acknowledgement that educator-targeted bullying is a reality in most of their schools, and findings on their perceptions of the risk factors for educator-targeted bullying (De Wet, 2010b:195-204).

The ensuing presentation of findings emanating from the data analysis of the interviews will show that, in line with Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological systems theory, the participants searched for solutions for educator-targeted bullying on the micro, meso and macro systems levels.

6.1 Theme 1: Micro systems level

Several participants blamed lack of parental involvement for, amongst other things, educator-targeted bullying. It is therefore understandable that they saw parental involvement as a prerequisite for preventing educator-targeted bullying. It is interesting to note that none of the participants gave suggestions on how to improve parental involvement. Two of the male participants believe that this lack of interest by parents in the education of their children may be ascribed to the disintegration of Christian values and family life. These participants are thus suggesting that the enhancement of parental involvement, the improvement of family life and the advancement of Christian values may curb educator-targeted bullying.

6.2 Theme 2: Meso system level: teaching and learning milieu

The following discussion of principals' views on how to prevent educator-targeted bullying will focus on the following sub-themes: the necessity for schools to have anti-bullying policies, the divergence between policy and practice, the need for specialised training to address educator-targeted bullying and the importance of teamwork.

6.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: School's anti-bullying policy

The participants spoke at length about the importance of anti-educator-targeted bullying policies for their schools. More than half of the participants said that bullying and victimisation should be specifically mentioned as unacceptable behaviour in their schools' codes of conduct. The participants were furthermore insistent that the learners should be informed that educator-targeted bullying is unacceptable behaviour:

Policies should be communicated to the learners ... the beginning of the term is the best time when you can send a clear message to the learners. I usually discuss aspects of the policy during assembly and give them copies of the policy so that they can become familiar with the content. They must be aware of what exactly is expected from them in terms of behaviour.

6.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: The divergence between anti-educator-targeted bullying policies and practices

The participants' acknowledgement that their schools' existing anti-bullying policies are not 'living' documents was initiated by a member of one of the focus groups who, whilst they were discussing the importance of schools having anti-bullying policies, twice asked the following question: "Are they living documents?" A fellow principal's reaction was a definite "no". This principal elaborated:

I should be frank. For me, the policy is just a mere piece of paper because we only developed it for the sake of the department.

Principals emphasised the necessity to move beyond the development of policies; policies should be put into practice. The following two quotations exemplify this stance:

Everybody should know the direction the school is taking, how the school will be addressing incidences of victimisation; otherwise an anti-teacher victimisation policy will only gather dust in a desk or a file.

Policies are useless. One should develop an action plan from the policy. Otherwise the policy will just gather dust in some desk drawer or file.

One of the principals, in his plea for “a living document”, recalled a visit to a Bloemfontein school. He said:

When you walk into the school grounds and there are some kids sitting down they stand up and greet you. Why? It is the policy of the institution and they live it out. If you come to your school, your school may have the same rule ... but do they live it out? In most cases our policies are dead documents on the shelves.

Several principals mentioned that even if there are policies and procedures in place to discipline learners who commit serious acts of misbehaviour (such as educator-targeted bullying) it is difficult to discipline these learners. One of the participants said, for example, that he has been through the whole process of trying to suspend or expel learners at least ten times:

... there are so many loopholes ... human resources, lawyers; everybody has to be consulted. You can't be a principal; you need to be a lawyer.

6.2.3 Sub theme 2.3: The need for specialised training

The view of the participants that role-players often ignore the existence of educator-targeted bullying and consequently do not address it effectively, is highlighted by their pleas for awareness campaigns and specialised training. The latter is verbalised as follows by two of the school principals:

... when you attend some of these workshops by private organisations ... there is somebody who will speak about discipline and how to handle discipline with learners, but it is basically people addressing issues of discipline ... we get some tips on how to go about handling discipline and bullying.

We had an anti-bullying week – we had to develop a programme, but that was for children bullying one another.

The necessity of specialised training is also emphasised by a participant who said that he and his colleagues are “trying to manage violence and bullying through natural instinct”.

6.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: The importance of team work

The realisation by principals that they will not be able to fight educator-targeted bullying on their own and consequently, the importance of getting all educators on board, was verbalised by several participants. The following quotation illustrates their view:

If half the staff is not worried about discipline and they are not doing anything and the rest of the staff have to carry the load of the whole dis-

cipline of the school ... so you should get the whole staff together as a team ... and then you can start addressing this dead document and make it come alive.

The principals' insight that all role-players should come on board in the fight against educator-targeted bullying is expanded in the next theme.

6.3 Theme 3: The role of government and the community in preventing educator-targeted bullying

Several of the participants placed the onus for preventing educator-targeted bullying on the community, the Department of Education or on government (educator-TARGETED bullying "should be addressed at the highest level possible"). No specific guidelines were supplied by participants on how the community, educational authorities and government should go about preventing educator-targeted bullying.

7. Discussion

Notwithstanding educators' legal and constitutional rights and departmental directives to ensure a safe working environment for educators, research has shown that educator-targeted bullying is a reality in the lives of educators. It is therefore important to note Hess and Leal's (2003:538) finding that violence against educators is usually associated with significantly higher levels of violence prevention activities than for learner-on-learner violence. An awareness of educator-targeted bullying may thus create a will amongst all role-players to develop and implement an all-encompassing prevention programme that will address all types of bullying in the school environment.

A social-ecological model approach to educator-targeted bullying assumes that the relationships of learners to one another, their educators and the community are reciprocal and interconnected. A multilevel approach is therefore necessary to address risk factors at individual, organisational, community and national levels. At the individual level there should be a strong focus on identifying the types of educators and learners who bully, in order to deal with the social skills and assertiveness problems of these individuals (De Wet, 2010b:197). Findings from this study (cf. Theme 1), as well as those by Dresler-Hawke and Whitehead (2009:201) have indicated that parental styles and their involvement in the education of their children play a vital role in children's bullying behaviour. The importance of getting parents on board in a school's anti-bullying programme is underlined by research findings (Myers, 2009:50). School principals' perspective

that the inculcation of Christian (positive) values will prevent educator-targeted bullying will be discussed in the latter part of this section of the article.

Principals who took part in this study spoke at length on their problems of creating a 'living' document to instil discipline in their schools and how to discipline learners who were guilty of serious acts of misbehaviour (Theme 2). The development and implementation of an all-encompassing anti-bullying programme that will prevent, amongst other things, educator-targeted bullying at organisational (meso) and community (macro) levels, is supported by the literature (e.g. Dresler-Hawke & Whitehead, 2009:201; Whitted & Dupper, 2005:171) and official directives (Free State, 2006:4). All members of the school community need to be committed to a comprehensive approach in promoting a safe school environment. The main goals at meso level should be to integrate anti-educator-targeted bullying themes into the school curriculum and to establish clear anti-educator-targeted bullying rules and policy. These rules and policy should not be a postscript, but an integral part of a school's code of conduct. Programmes should also focus on promoting the quality of educator-learner relations, as well as educators' classroom practices (cf. Table 1). Research has found that educator-targeted bullying may often be attributed to educators' teaching styles, as well as to either their inability or unwillingness to discipline learners or to too harsh punishment (De Wet, 2010b:198).

Participants' view that government and educational authorities should play a role in reducing educator-targeted bullying (Theme 3) is supported by the literature (Dresler-Hawke & Whitehead, 2009:201). According to Dresler-Hawke and Whitehead (2009:201) the media should be used to create awareness in the general public on unacceptable learner behaviour. This may, according to them, create the platform for government involvement. There are two approaches to national involvement in educator-targeted bullying; namely through the implementation of a comprehensive nationwide anti-educator-targeted bullying programme endorsed and supported by national education authorities, and through anti-bullying legislation. The Free State Province's School Safety Policy (2006:4) states that schools should use all role-players in its fight against bullying: the School Governing Body, an anti-bullying committee, the District Office (Inclusive Education), the Department of Social Welfare and the Learners Representative Council should all play a role in the prevention of bullying.

Table 2: Elements of an anti-bullying programme as identified by the school principals

Level	Elements
Individual (micro)	Get parents involved in the education of their children. Strengthen family ties. Inculcate Christian values.
Institutional (meso)	Develop an educator-targeted bullying-prevention policy. Policy should be communicated to learners. Implement an educator-targeted bullying-prevention programme ('living document'). Develop and implement procedures to discipline learners who are guilty of educator-targeted bullying. Train educators to deal with educator-targeted bullying. Create an awareness of educator-targeted bullying. Involve all role-players (learners, educators and administrators) in the anti-educator-targeted bullying programme.
Community and national level (macro)	Involve the community in the educator-targeted bullying prevention programme. Engage educational authorities and government in the fight against educator-targeted bullying.

A scrutiny of the findings (Section 6) revealed elements of an anti-educator-targeted bullying programme that were identified by the participants (Table 2). These elements seem rather scant if compared with the extensive list of elements for learner-on-learner bullying prevention programmes identified by researchers (cf. Table 1). It is therefore important to look at existing bully prevention programmes in the quest to address educator-targeted bullying. Several learner-on-learner bully prevention programmes are available (cf. Section 3). The literature (Chen & Astor, 2009:14; Whitted & Dupper, 2005:175) stress the importance of selecting a programme and approach that fit a specific school, because patterns of bullying differ with age, gender and school types. This is *mutatis mutandis* true for educator-targeted bullying prevention programmes. In the absence of anti-educator-targeted bullying programmes, it is thus important that

schools should either develop their own educator-targeted bullying prevention programme or adapt an existing learner-on-learner prevention programme (e.g. the Olweus Prevention Programme). This programme should either be compatible with their school's learner-on-learner prevention programme or form an integral part of their school's learner-on-learner prevention programme.

This study has shown that a greater understanding of educator-targeted bullying, the constitutional and judiciary guarantees and the departmental directives, as well as the perfunctory implementation of an anti-bullying policy is not enough to prevent educator-targeted bullying. This argument is supported by several scholars who emphasise the relationship between positive learner behaviour and instilling Christian values (e.g. Biemond, 2010:1-19; De Klerk & Rens, 2003:353-371; Lessing & De Wit, 2010:31-36; Roos, 2003:481-497). Schoeman (2006:98) states that Christians regard "the central commandment of love for God and neighbour as a super-arbitrary, trans-subjective (universal) principle that is regulative for all human conduct" – thus also between learners and their educators. Weeks (2008:127 & 130) found, for example, that in "caring" schools, built on the foundation of Jesus as "the exemplary care-giver", learners' capacity for self-discipline is strengthened by caring educators. Learners are also less likely to become involved in misbehaviour and show positive interpersonal behaviour. Biemond (2010:9) supports this view and contends that learners attending schools which underwrite Christian values will develop empathy and respect for other people (including their educators). A study by Francis (2005:139) among 13-15-year-old boys attending independent Christian schools in the United Kingdom revealed that the participants are "less likely to be troubled by bullying and more likely to respect their teachers" than those attending non-denominational state maintained schools.

Christian schools' prevention programmes should be aligned with the Christian values of education, discipline, interpersonal relations and order (cf. Sullivan, 2000:54). This implies, according to Roos (2003:497), an understanding of the goals of education from a Biblical perspective; namely to guide, enable and equip learners to become prepared for their task as "stewards of God on earth". Learners should be equipped to care for themselves, their neighbour and creation in general, and be prepared to fight the negative impact of sin that has flawed all people. Learners have to be guided and enabled to understand the will given by God and be prepared to do His will. This means that schools' anti-educator-targeted

bullying policies are not drafted merely for the purpose of preventing educator-targeted bullying, but are useful instruments in the hands of educators to guide learners to live Mark 12:29-30:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment. And the second [is] like it; [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

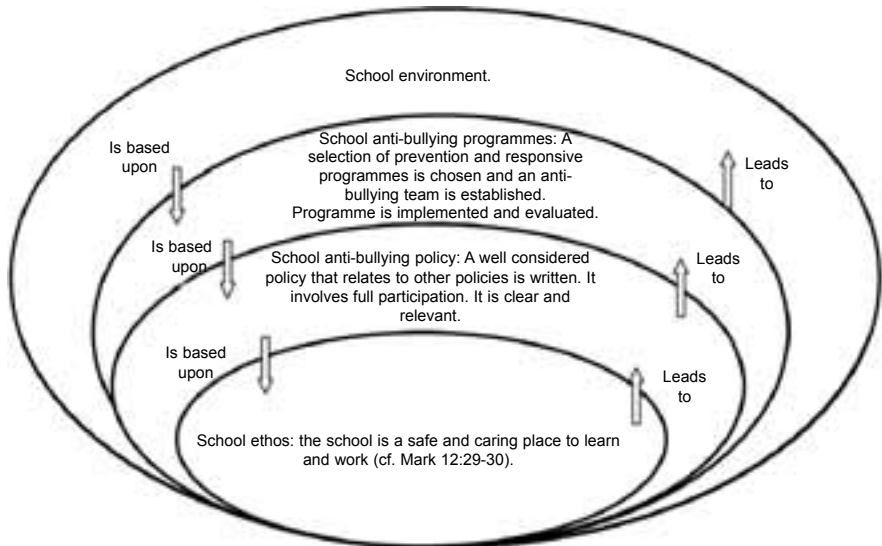


Figure 1: The relationship between a school's ethos and its anti-bullying policy and programmes and the school environment (adapted from Sullivan, 2000:54).

On the macro systems level (cf. Table 1 and Section 4), the reciprocal relationship between a school's ethos, its anti-bullying policy and programmes, as well as the school environment should be recognised (cf. Figure 1). Clarifying and examining a school's ethos does not mean that everyone has to agree or that rules become inflexible. What it means is that all role-players agree to live by the guiding principles (e.g. Mark 12:29-30) and that rules can be articulated into anti-bullying policy. When a school's ethos is clear, then internal processes can be constructed and external programmes and strategies chosen. The resultant ethos and anti-bullying policy and consequent programme will be consistent. What

happens every day in school will also be found in the school's philosophical foundations, policies and programmes. The school's ethos will therefore inform and reinforce all aspects of school life, together with the relationship between the educator and his/her learners.

8. Conclusion

The research base regarding bullying has grown since Dan Olweus' pioneering intervention research in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, the field is still in a relatively early phase of development, especially with regard to educator-targeted bullying. Within the premises of the social-ecological framework it has been argued that schools need to move beyond 'a mere piece of paper' and develop and/or adopt, implement, monitor and evaluate all-encompassing programmes to prevent all forms of bullying, including educator-targeted bullying. Parents, learners, educators, curriculum developers, government officials, the judiciary and members of the community should work together to create schools that discourage abusive behaviour and are permeated with love and respect for all human beings.

Bibliography

- BENEFIELD, J. 2004. Teachers – the new targets of schoolyard bullies? <http://www.ppta.org.nz/cms/imagelibrary/100894.pdf>. 2007, April 13.
- BIEMOND, M. 2010. De school as morele gemeenschap. *Journal for Christian scholarship*, 46 (Special edition 1):1-20.
- BLESS, C., HIGSON-SMITH, C. & KAGEE, A. 2006. *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective*. 4th ed. Cape Town: Juta.
- CHEN, J. & ASTOR, R.A. 2009. Students' reports of violence against teachers in Taiwanese schools. *Journal of school violence*, 8:2-17.
- CRESWELL, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications.
- DE KLERK, J. & RENS, J. 2003. The role of values in school discipline. *Koers*, 68(4):353-371.
- DE WET, N.C. 2010a. Victims of educator-targeted bullying: a qualitative study. *South African journal of education*, 30(2):189-201.
- DE WET, N.C. 2010b. School principals' experiences and observations of educator-targeted bullying. *Journal for Christian scholarship*, 46 (Special edition 1):187-209.
- DE WET, N.C. & JACOBS, L. 2006. Educator-targeted bullying: fact or fallacy? *Acta criminologica*, 19(2):53-73.
- DRESLER-HAWKE, E. & WHITEHEAD, D. 2009. The behavioural ecological model as a framework for school-based anti-bullying health promotion intervention. *The journal of school nursing*, 25(3):195-204.
- FOX, S. & STALLWORTH, L.E. 2010. The battered apple: An application of stressor-emotion-control/support theory to teachers' experience of violence and bullying. *Human*

- relations*, 20(1):1-20.
- FRANCIS, L.J. 2005. Independent Christian schools and pupil values: an empirical investigation among 13-15-year-old boys. *British journal of religious education*, 27(2):127-141.
- FREE STATE PROVINCE. 2006. School safety policy. Circular 60/06. Bloemfontein: Department of Education.
- GALLOWAY, D. & ROLAND, E. 2003. Is the direct approach to reduce bullying always the best? In: Rigby, K., Smith, P.K. & Pepler, D. (Eds.), *Bullying in schools. How successful can intervention be?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 37-53.
- HENNING, E. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaiks.
- HESS, F.M. & LEAL, D.L. 2003. Technocracies, bureaucracies, or responsive policies? Urban school systems and the policies of school violence prevention. *Social science quarterly*, 84(3):526-542.
- HOUGHTON, S., WHELDALL, K. & MERRETT, F. 1988. Classroom behaviour problems which secondary school teachers say they find most troublesome. *British educational research journal*, 14(3):297-312.
- JAMES, D.J., LAWLOR, M., COURTNEY, A., FLYNN, A., HENRY, B. & MURPHY, N. 2008. Bullying behaviour in secondary schools: what role do teachers play? *Child abuse review*, 17:160-173.
- KHOURY-KASSABRI, M., ASTOR, R.A. & BENBENISHTY, R. 2008. Middle Eastern adolescents' perception of school violence against peers and teachers: a cross-cultural and ecological analysis. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 24(1):159-182.
- KONDRASUK, J.K., GREENE, T., WAGGONER, J., EDWARDS, K. & NAYAK-RHODES, A.N. 2005. Violence affecting school employees. *Education*, 125(4):638-647.
- KRUG, E.G., MERCY, J.A., DAHLBERG, L.L. & ZWI, A.B. 2002. The world report on violence and health. *The lancet*, 360: October: 1083-1088.
- LESSING, A.C. & DE WIT, M.W. 2010. Karakterbou en Christelike waardes vir die bevordering van gedissiplineerde klaskamergedrag: 'n Kritiese beskouing. *Journal for Christian scholarship*, 46 (Special issue 1):21-37.
- LOCK, R.H. & MIGLIORE, E.T. 2003. Eliminating bullying in your classroom. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 38(3):172-176.
- LIMBER, S.P., NATION, M., TRACY, A.J., MELTON, G.B. & FLERX, V. 2003. Implementation of the Olweus bullying prevention programme in the South-eastern United States. In: Rigby, K., Smith, P.K. & Pepler, D. (Eds.), *Bullying in schools. How successful can intervention be?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 55-79.
- MAREE, K. & VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, C. 2007. Planning a research proposal. In: MAREE, K. (Ed.) *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik: 24-45.
- MORRISON, B. 2007. *Restoring safe school communities*. Sydney: The Federation Press.
- MYERS, J. 2009. Managing discipline now. *Principal leadership*, October: 50-54.
- OLWEUS, D. 1993. *Bullying at school. What we know and what we can do*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- OOSTHUIZEN, I.J., MENTZ, P.J. & VAN DER WALT, J.L. 2002. Die geborgenheid van die onderwyser as voorwaarde van opvoedende skoolonderwys. *Koers*, 67(1):27-44.
- PALMER, P.J. 1993. *To know as we are known*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- PATTON, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- PERVIN, K. & TURNER, A. 1998. A study of bullying of teachers by pupils in an Inner London School. *Pastoral care*, December: 4-10.

- ROOS, R. 2003. Legal requirements for school rules and disciplinary sanctions. *Koers*, 68(4):481-498.
- ROSSOUW, J.P. 2010. *Labour relations in education. A South African perspective.* (2nd edition.) Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- RIGBY, K., SMITH, P.K. & PEPLER, D. 2003. Working to prevent bullying: key issues. In: Rigby, K., Smith, P.K. & Pepler, D. (Eds.), *Bullying in schools. How successful can intervention be?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1-12.
- RUTHERFORD, R. 2009. A creativity development model to enhance educator security – a labour law perspective. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Potchefstroom: Northwest University.
- SCHOEMAN, P.G. 2006. In search of a 'New Morality' for South African education. Part 1: Preliminary deliberations: between fundamentalism and relativism. *Journal for Christian scholarship*, 42 (1 & 2):81-101.
- STRYDOM, H. 2005. Ethical aspects of research in the social science and human service professions. In: De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. (Eds.) *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human service professions.* (3rd edition.) Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers: 56-70.
- SULLIVAN, K. 2000. *The anti-bullying handbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SVEINSSON, A.V. & MORRIS, R.J. 2007. Conceptual and methodological issues in assessment and intervention with bullies. In: Zins, J.E., Elias, M.J. & Maher, C.A. (Eds.) *Bullying, victimisation, and peer harassment.* New York: Haworth Press: 9-26.
- SWEARER, S.M. & ESPELAGE, D.L. 2004. Introduction: A social-ecological framework of bullying among youth. In: Espelage, D.I. & Swearer, S.M. (Eds.), *Bullying in schools: a social ecological perspective on prevention and intervention.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum:1-12.
- TERRY, A.A. 1998. Teachers as targets of bullying by their pupils: a study to investigate incidence. *British journal of educational psychology*, 68:255-268.
- WEEKS, F.H. 2008. "Caring schools" – a solution for addressing challenging behaviour in schools? *Koers*, 73(1):121-144.
- WHITTED, K.S. & DUPPER, D.R. 2005. Best practices for preventing or reducing bullying in schools. *Children & school*, 27(3):167-175.