
VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION OF AT-RISK YOUTH**Lucille Meyer¹ and Rajendra Chetty²**

ABSTRACT

School violence, social support, academic achievement, anti-social behaviour, youth transformation, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, gangsterism and punitive/rehabilitation measures to combat youth delinquency are frequently treated as separate domains. This article argues that a safe and effective school framework in high poverty and high crime contexts such as the Cape Flats (Western Cape) aligns the personal transformation of vulnerable learners at an individual, classroom, school and community level. Instead of fragmented interventions, a holistic approach to personal transformation of youth is advocated as a central feature to combat violence in schools located in high poverty communities. Dominant school safety approaches focus on punitive measures, emphasise physical safety and advocate for greater police involvement (as is evident in the Western Cape Education Department's Safe Schools Programme). This article contends that a comprehensive approach, foregrounding personal transformation and addressing the social and emotional as well as the physical aspects of safety is far more valuable. This does not preclude a focus on the socio-economic contexts such as poverty and the societal inequalities, which exacerbate the violence. Personal transformation and societal reconstruction are dialectical processes that need to occur in tandem with each other.

Keywords: *School violence; personal transformation; holistic approach; poverty; youth development.*

INTRODUCTION

Violence is widespread in South African schools. The statistic of one in five learners experiencing some type of violence is cause for concern. According to the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention's (CJCP) 2012 National School Violence Study (see Burton & Leoschut, 2013: 1-12), incidents of school violence have continued unabated in South Africa. Compared to the 2008 CJCP study, not much has changed. Young people continue to be at risk for violence in schools, an environment that is assumed to be safe. The study revealed that 22.2 percent of secondary school learners fall victim to some form of violence at schools (Leoschut, 2013: 1).

Violence at schools can take many forms. The key occurrence (12.2%) are threats of violence which is significant since the psychological harm and fear associated with such intimidation is substantial and impacts negatively on the schooling experience, preventing quality learning from taking place (Leoschut, 2013: 2). The second main form of violence includes physical assault (6.3%): these are cases where learners are attacked or hurt physically with a weapon or at the hands of the perpetrator. This is followed by sexual violence (4.7%), which includes unwanted sexual contact, sexual assault and rape; the figure extrapolates to 216,072 learners who had suffered sexual violence on school premises in 2012, at a rate of 46.9 learners per 1 000 (Leoschut, 2013: 2). A Human Rights Watch report (2001) on sexual violence against

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girls in South Africa cites alarming statistics on the proportion of schoolgirls raped, most often by young schoolboys and their teachers:

“Girls who encountered sexual violence at school were raped in washrooms, in empty classrooms and hallways, and in hostels and dormitories. Girls were also fondled, subjected to aggressive sexual advances, and verbally degraded at school. Teachers have raped, sexually assaulted, and otherwise sexually abused girls, sometimes reinforcing sexual demands with threats of physical violence or corporal punishment” (Astor, Benbenishty & Marachi, 2006: 110).

Other forms of violence experienced by schoolgirls include robbery combined with the threat of violence (4.5%) and online violence or cyber bullying (44.1%). There are no significant differences between female and male learners as regards threats of violence, robberies or assaults at school, but female learners were found to experience sexual assault or rape (7.6%) at rates significantly higher than male learners (1.4%) (Leoschut, 2013: 2). Significant findings of the 2012 national school violence study indicate that a great number of learners were re-victimised following their first encounter with threats, robberies, assaults or sexual violence, and that learners fell victim to the same crime on multiple occasions. According to the report, 4.5 percent of learners had been exposed to two or more types of violence within the school environment (Leoschut, 2013: 3). An underlying factor with school violence is bullying which creates vulnerability to a range of other forms of violence and crime. Bullying behaviour leads to even more serious school violence (Hazler & Carney, 2000: 105-112).

Schools and classrooms should be protected spaces, yet they are common sites of violence. Given the high levels of violence in South African schools, it has become a space where children are harmed and may experience danger. The situation is, moreover, aggravated by teacher attitudes and behaviour. For example, teachers are often absent, which elevates the risk of classroom violence. Teachers leave classrooms unsupervised or do not spend the required time in schools. One of the triggers to violent behaviour is role modelling and the unacceptably high level of teacher-learner violence (49.8%). Learners have complained about their experiences of school violence, of being hit, caned or spanked by teachers or principals for misbehaviour in school. Although the South African Schools Act forbids corporal punishment, there seems to be a high reliance on physical punishment in schools. Apart from the classroom, vulnerable spaces for school violence include sports areas, toilets and open grounds.

THE COMPLEXITY OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Children and young people experience violence on physical as well as emotional levels at schools. Garbarino and deLara (2002: 12) note that although learners may miss school because of fear for their physical safety, in many cases, they do so out of fear of emotional ridicule or threat, including being bullied, or harassed by peers and teachers for their appearance, race, class, sexual orientation, language, and clothes. Feeling emotionally safe is critical to learning. Effective learning cannot take place in a space of fear. When compared with advantaged schools, schools in high poverty communities experience a range of social problems that affect the personal development of learners. Disadvantaged schools are negatively affected with regard to curricular demands placed on learners, academic achievement, attitude and motivation of both learners and teachers, appropriate classroom behaviour and parental involvement. For example, teachers in disadvantaged contexts often believe that poor parents are generally not involved in their children's education, and do not contribute to positive interactions with the school. There are probably a

range of reasons why parents in disadvantaged areas could be viewed as less involved in the education of their children, although Harry, Allen and McLaughlin (1995: 364-377) maintain that teachers decreased African-American parental involvement by using technical jargon, ignoring parents' questions and concerns, and not inviting parental input.

High levels of school crime have negative effects on the psychological well-being of children who associate school with fear, as many schools have become sites of violence. While travelling to school, a large number of children experience fear. The larger community is implicated in this factor since it is not only the school, but the social environment as well that abdicates its responsibility towards the safety of children. High poverty communities in the Western Cape are known to experience high levels of crime (Pinnock, 1984: 4). The danger with this situation is that violence in schools may become normalised in disadvantaged contexts concomitant with the desensitisation to crime and violence.

There is a silence in the dominant discourse on issues around race and class with regard to school violence. The majority of violent communities and schools are in high poverty areas. We feel that the dominant discourse sanctions the notion that violence is expected from poor people because of their lifeworld. There is evidence in South Africa that there are huge structural and organisational differences between previously whites-only schools and schools in disadvantaged communities (Motala & Vally, 2010: 87-107). These differences are likely to have far-reaching consequences on the levels and characteristics of school violence. Disadvantaged schools have more learners ranging widely in age in the classroom and the school, which impact age-related patterns of bullying and victimisation. In addition, the presence of many repeaters in a class due to academic failure may have a crucial impact on how safe other learners feel; repeaters are generally much older than their classroom peers (Astor, Benbenishty & Marachi, 2006: 108). It is often assumed that more crime ridden, poor and disorganised communities will have higher levels of violence in the neighbourhood schools (Astor et al, 2006: 109). However, Akiba, Letendre, Baker and Goesling (2002: 829-853), reject the correlation between poor communities and patterns of school violence. Astor et al (2006: 110), indicate that "a certain range of deprivation, inequality and marginality of the school community may not have a strong influence on certain types of school violence, but when there is complete breakdown of the community and families, the school may be devastated by these outside circumstances and violence may be rampant". The South African context is different from other postcolonial contexts given the fact that apartheid was not only based on class-based oppression, but also racial oppression, which was statutory. The Cape Flats, for example, was conceptualised as a ghetto for mixed-race people by apartheid social engineering. Whole communities were destroyed and people were forcibly relocated to dormitory townships without basic infrastructure, far from the city and their places of work. Indicators of high levels of poverty within a community are most strongly and directly linked to undesirable youth outcomes including aggression and delinquency (Stern & Smith, 1995: 703-731). Youth who are exposed to high levels of community violence may have a greater propensity to become violent themselves (McAloney, McCrystal, Percy & McCartan, 2009: 635-648).

The influence of delinquent peers, siblings, or family members is related to a variety of aggressive and violent behaviour in school. In high poverty communities, aggressive individuals such as gang leaders are popular and young people look up to them as they are the only ones in the poor area with big cars, fancy clothes and jewelry. Astor et al (2006: 107), maintain that external contexts in which a school is embedded interact with internal learner characteristics to influence levels of victimisation in schools and posit the notion of 'nested contexts' that include:

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- The school (e.g. structural characteristics, social climate, and policies against violence);
 - The neighbourhood (e.g. poverty, social organisation and crime);
 - The learners' families (e.g. education and family structure);
 - Cultural aspects of learner and teacher population (e.g. religion, ethnic affiliations, race and class); and
 - The economic, social and political makeup of the country as a whole. Our colonial, imperialist and apartheid past have bred and reinforced individuality, greed, profit and violence.

According to Robins and Ratcliff (1979: 96-116), violent and anti-social behaviour begin in early childhood. Youth living in high crime areas pick up problematic and violent behaviour traits very early in their lives. Anti-social and aggressive behaviours associated with conduct disorder constitute the most frequent bases for referral of children and adolescents for criminal behaviour and social maladjustment (Doll, 1996: 20-47). Youth who exhibit such problematic behaviour usually present challenges in the traditional classroom environment, often being associated with poor academic performance, learning disabilities, high rates of truancy and dropping out (Rumberger, 1987: 101-121). In high poverty communities these experiences are exacerbated by the use of alcohol and substance abuse. The social environment is an integral factor that leads to school violence among youth displaying anti-social behaviour. Daily social exchanges between children and their siblings, parents, neighbours and peers within dysfunctional families and high crime communities are key factors that contribute to aggression and violence. The foundation of the social learning model is that youth begin to learn aggressive behaviours through such everyday social exchanges between family members, as well as through exposure to parenting styles that include inconsistent discipline, with both negative and positive reinforcement of anti-social behaviours and cognitions (Jimerson & Furlong, 2006: 6). Jimerson and Furlong (2006) further argue that parents of aggressive children do not model pro-social and appropriate problem-solving behaviours, but instead, inadvertently teach aggressive behaviours (Jimerson & Furlong, 2006: 7).

Discourse around aggressive and anti-social behaviour in school needs to take cognisance of neuroscience research, which has important implications for both the curriculum and teaching and learning practice, especially in poor contexts. Moffit (1993: 355-375) suggests that chronic aggression begins with neurological impairment, which has relevance to the social context of poor children. Sources of neurological impairment such as genetics, maternal drug abuse, exposure to toxic agents, brain injury, poor nutrition, lack of stimulation or affection and child abuse have been associated with children's anti-social behaviour (Jimerson & Furlong, 2006: 8).

Children from high crime areas such as the Cape Flats suffer the consequences of high drug abuse rates, women and child abuse and violent crimes. The consequences of these impairment factors can be poor scholastic achievement, limited social information processing, impulsive behaviour, a restricted behavioural repertoire, social rejection and poor self-concept (Moffit, 1990: 99-169). These deficits can place the learner at risk of more negative outcomes such as substance abuse, dropping out of school and gang membership (Jimerson & Furlong, 2006: 8).

The classroom is a primary context in which a youth's behaviour may conflict with the rules and norms of the school. The skills of the teacher should reduce misbehaviour and encourage positive behaviour (Osher, Van Acker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer & Quinn, 2004: 13-37). Yet, faculties of education that train teachers in Cape Town and the Western Cape Education Department's Safe Schools Project do not empower teachers with appropriate skills to reduce school violence. There are serious developmental lags among poor children in high crime communities (Guerra, Rowell Huesmann & Spindler, 2003; 1561-1576). The absence of

professional teacher development in this area is a cause for concern. Professional development should include teacher management strategies, effective instructional techniques, early intervention for learners with learning problems and positive teacher-student relationships. The problem is aggravated by increased negative attention that works against the establishment of a positive relationship (Reinke & Herman, 2002: 549-560).

The Western Cape (provincial) Education Department (WCED) has a primary intervention known as the Safe Schools Programme. This programme's strategies include installing security systems, addressing the social environment, influencing learner behaviour and working with schools to mobilise community support for safe schools. The programme works in partnership with local police and community organisations such as neighbourhood watches and community policing forums. In spite of the Safe Schools Programme, violence in schools has not abated with regard to victimisation, fights, bullying, classroom disorder, teacher injury, weapons and corporal punishment meted out by teachers to learners (Western Cape Education Department (WCED), 2014a: np; 2014b: np).

The WCED Safe Schools Project is stuck within the traditional disciplinary referral and reprimand/punish paradigm and foregrounds their partnership with the police (WCED, 2014b: np). It is common knowledge that the relationship between the police and the youth in the cape flats is antagonistic given the history of this community. Youth in high crime communities experience law enforcement and the justice system differently from youth in middle class suburbs. Equally, youth in poor areas are generally not eager to comply with the law, which they feel is unjust, unfair and complicit in their poverty. Classrooms are not characterised by high rates of academic engagement, positive reinforcement, and praise. The reprimand and punish paradigm has done little to lower the high rates of school violence and has simply reinforced the cycle of negative learner-teacher interactions (Reinke & Herman, 2002: 549-560). This situation points to the need for an alternate paradigm, such as the personal development approach. Learners need to be involved in activities that promote the development of desired social and emotional skills. A holistic approach should be cultivated when working with youth.

Current programmes unfortunately do not enable teachers and the entire school staff to create and maintain socially supportive classrooms in high poverty communities. A holistic programme should include informational support for parents to help them learn how to recognise signs that their children may be experiencing violence or perpetrating violence in schools and strategies to prevent it. Schools need strategies to respond appropriately when violence occurs and take efforts to prevent it whenever possible. An important contextual factor here is social support. Learners who perpetrate aggression or violence on others are crying out for adequate support in their lives. Positive social support for learners ensures that they function more effectively, reduces stress, handle conflict in the classroom in an appropriate manner instead of lashing out at peers, and are generally healthier. Tardy (1985: 187-202) defines a broad conceptual model for social support for aggressive learners, which includes:

- Direction. Whether the support is being given or received;
- Disposition. Whether the supportive behaviours are just available or if they are actually being enacted or used;
- Description/evaluation. Whether a learner describes the support they receive or evaluates that support;
- Network. The sources of a learner's support network (parents, teachers, friends); and
- Content. The type of support, which includes emotional, instrumental, informational, and or appraisal support.

Instrumental support includes:

- Parents spending time with learners and providing necessary resources;
- A calculator for mathematics class or a soccer ball to practice;
- Informational support involves providing learners with advice, for example, on careers or choice of subjects at school; and
- Appraisal support is when feedback or evaluation is given on tasks completed or decisions taken.

TOWARDS SELF TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH

Much of the pertaining to school violence seldom produces anything new, innovative and impactful. There is still too much emphasis on descriptions and statistics. The voice of the academics, police, social welfare agencies and school authorities articulates what is wrong in schools and how these wrongs should be corrected. The voices of young people are unheard and not included in strategies to deal with the violence. Tignait (2003: 2), drawing on ancient wisdom traditions, argues that the cycle of violence requires everyone to go into the subtle causes that drive such behaviour as selfishness, ego, greed, ethnocentrism and religious differences. These behaviour traits are the reasons why people “fail to do what they know is right and persist in doing what they know is wrong” (Tignait, 2003: 2). The inner world of perpetrators of violence has to be identified as it drives the external behaviour that we describe as violence. Similarly, youth that have experienced abuse have inner worlds that are hurt and in turmoil; their disruptive and often violent behaviour is driven by this trauma. The external consequences of behaviour can be altered only by delving into the inner world. To combat school violence, strategies to enhance self-transformation or personal transformation of the youth should be employed. The emphasis should then be on building peace, rather than waging a war on drugs in the school, or a war on bullying in the classrooms, which are the rallying calls of the dominant discourse (Tignait, 2003: 31).

It is critical to understand that societal reconstruction goes hand-in-hand with personal transformation work. We can put external plans in place, but if we all do not begin to heal the inner trauma that youth experience in high poverty communities, they will find it very difficult to experience a sense of community with young people. They will see themselves as separate from each other. This survival of the fittest approach creates separation, which leads to anti-social behaviour such as bullying, stealing and stabbing. The community, on the other hand, also generates strategies to counter the violence and this often takes on a punitive approach.

Youth in the Cape Flats experience intergenerational trauma, which their parents and grandparents inherited under apartheid; policies of dislocation, racism and relocation from established communities into ghettos. School violence cannot be separated from community trauma. In an effort to enable youth to transform, the effects of intergenerational trauma needs to be recognised. Despite a person who has experienced the original trauma having died, memories and emotions continue to live on in “gene expression” (Wolynn, 2016: 1-2). The “family story is *our* story. Like it or not, it resides with us.” (Wolynn, 2016: 6). He argues that no matter what the story is that we have of our parents, memories cannot be expunged or ejected (Wolynn, 2016: 6). He asserts that when this connection to our past legacy remains hidden, we remain imprisoned. When this past is confronted or brought into our awareness, “the pathways that can set us free become illuminated” (Wolynn, 2016: 143). Awareness of this oppressive past and its consequences can trigger reactions in the body and bring about release.

In an area such as Mannenberg in the Cape Flats, strategies have included the following:

- parents walking their children to school to ensure their safety;
- community policing forum members patrolling the streets;
- (private security company) armed response;
- high fences; and security consciousness/awareness campaigns.

These elements are important, but deal with the exterior threats and not the inner transformation of young people. We have to deal with the consequences of continued, long-standing patterns of power that define modern lives and the inner power struggles characteristic of poor communities and schools where violence is rampant.

The particularly harsh realities that many Black youth face daily point to the need for developmental pathways that can support them during their transition from adolescence and become established in adulthood so that they avoid becoming crime statistics or face early death (Pinnock, 2016: 4). Extrapolating from the research done by Weis and Fine (2001: 501), there is a need for interventions for youth that can be regarded as ‘interrupters’ of inequality, poverty and despair. Weis and Fine (2001: 497-503) argue passionately for the power of disruption. They maintain that while educational institutions do not succeed in educating poor and working class youth, and many schools still reproduce inequalities, youth are impacted upon by social spaces that are created to “interrupt such dynamics” (Weis & Fine, 2001: 501).

Personal transformation takes place when individuals think and act from their true nature. It is the process of burning old patterns of thinking and acting (Beckwith, 2008: 30). A definition of resilience that is relevant to perpetrators of violence in schools is proposed by Masten and Coatsworth (1998) “as the presence or maintenance of competencies in spite of a high risk environment” (as cited in Drapeau, Saint-Jacques, Lépine, Bégin & Bernard, 2007: 978). The aim of any intervention is for the learner to identify a turning point that could catapult him/her onto a path towards resilience. The turning points, also called breaking points, enable the change. From research conducted by Drapeau et al (2007), into twelve boys and girls in foster care, the following turning points were identified: *action, relation and reflection* [authors’ emphasis]:

- *Action*: this is an achievement that gives one a sense of accomplishment. The feeling is the catalyst for the change. This allows the young person to move “beyond the impasse” in their lives;
- *Relation*: Here the turning point is associated with “meeting a new person or creating a significant positive relationship” and the concomitant trust relationship that may develop. Having a significant personal relationship of trust enables the young person to a make a change.
- *Reflection*: For most of the respondents, their own reflections marked a significant change. They arrived at a realisation that they were at an ‘impasse’. This realisation was a catalyst that necessitated a desire for change (Drapeau et al, 2007: 985-987).

In addition to *action, relation and reflection*, Drapeau et al (2007) discerned four processes directly or indirectly linked to these turning points, namely:

- i) increase in perceived self-efficacy;
- ii) distancing oneself from risks;
- iii) new opportunities; and
- iv) multiplication of benefits (Drapeau et al., 2007: 988-991).

These turning points can be seen as the catalysts that set the changes in motion. Turning points voiced by the respondents coincide with those identified by adults and adolescents who live in challenging circumstances.

Jooste and Maritz (2014: 91) also discuss catalysts for change. They researched youth experiences of trauma and found that youth are able to experience personal transformation through a process of self-leadership and self-coaching (Jooste & Maritz, 2014: 91). Jooste and Maritz (2014), found that youth were able to mobilise their inner resources through self-leadership and self-coaching. Self-coaching strategies consist of cognitive strategies, emotional and spiritual care and social support. Youth experienced trauma as a profound catalyst for personal transformation. Through the cognitive strategies, participants started their self-coaching process through setting goals and positive 'self-talk'. Becoming self-aware and mindful was a critical part of the transformation process. Emotional care involved a process of learning to express and manage their emotions. Spiritual practices proved critical with spirituality including a "relationship with self, others and a higher being" (Jooste & Maritz, 2014: 100). Social support came through family, friends and other professionals, including role models who could assist in inspiring and motivating the young person (Jooste & Maritz, 2014: 101).

Schumacher (1978: 79) agrees that personal transformation is about exploring the inner landscape. He points out that the journey into the interior is for heroes only and requires an inner commitment; there is something heroic about a commitment to that which is not known. He maintains that this heroism is within everyone's capability. In support of his ideas, he drew on many of the major religions such as Islam and Christianity to illustrate the emphasis on the need for all human beings to know themselves. The process of knowing oneself is a first step to personal transformation. In addition to speaking about 4 levels of being, Schumacher describes four levels of knowing. He argues that information which we receive through the senses does not provide us with insight: something that is gained by the special instrument often referred to as the "eye of the heart". Schumacher (1978), contrasts experience with illumination and asserts that "the great truths teach us that restriction in the use of instruments of cognition has the inevitable effect of narrowing and impoverishing reality" (Schumacher, 1978: 60). When using our senses alone, we attain objectivity, but fail to attain knowledge of the object as a whole (Schumacher, 1978: 64).

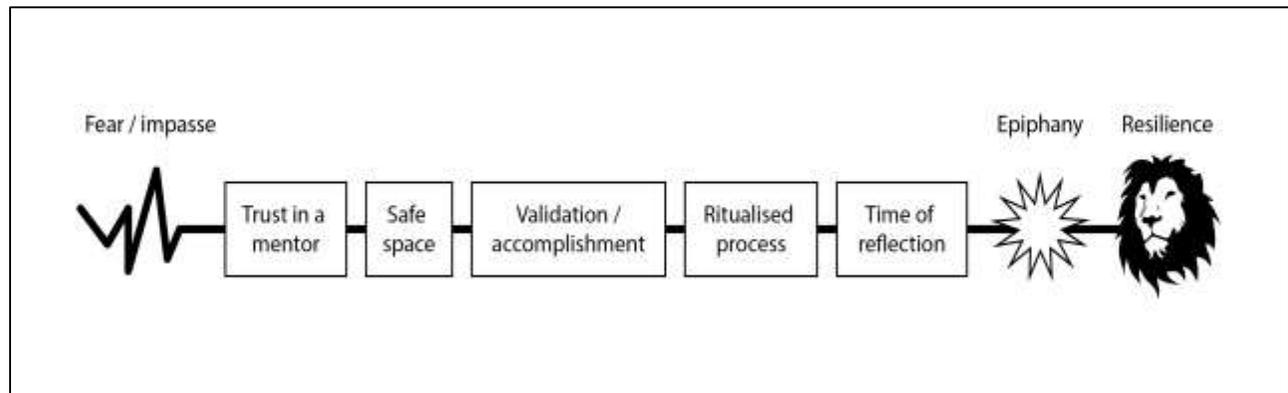
Pinnock (2016: 272), in his book, *Gang Town* (reference to Cape Town), also maintains that transformation is a personal process, and that no matter what "opportunities, inducements or rituals" are provided, transformation must come from within. Abrahams (cited in Pinnock, 2016: 265) from the Ministry of Social Development in the Western Cape argues that what is required in youth development is a secular theory of personal transformation. Abrahams points out that this theory would be about an inner process. Pinnock (2016) believes that the answers lie in a "transcendent" belief system, which involves "a letting go of the old identity and creating a new self" (Pinnock, 2016: 266). Pinnock (2016) calls this "footsteps to epiphany", the elements of which are not easily found in research, but which form an important part of a 'secular theory of personal transition' (Pinnock, 2016: 266). He outlines a model of personal transformation aimed at building personal resilience which includes:

- A role for mentors: *This is for support, empathy and guidance;*
- Altering the environment of youth: *Youth need to be in a less harmful environment which is safe and structured to enable them to grow;*
- Use of wilderness work, including use of ritual: *Wilderness is capable of providing a space for connection, silence and inner healing;*
- Creation of a safe space: *learning and growth requires a safe space;*

- Allowing youth to tell their stories: *Providing youth with an opportunity to tell their stories is critical in making them feel heard; and*
- Time for reflection: *A time for reflection is critical. It allows young people to think freely without the distractions that they may encounter in their homes and in communities* (Pinnock, 2016: 266-267).

A depiction of Pinnock's building blocks for personal transformation is as follows:

Figure 1: Stepping stones to resilience



(Source: Pinnock, 2016: 273).

The model outlines critical processes that contribute towards personal transformation and considers the complex environments within which youth navigate their lives. However, it does not explain fully the inner workings of personal transformation and exactly how different elements bring about personal transformation. A comprehensive model should promote wellness, behaviour change, holistic practice and healing (Epstein, Senzon & Lemberger, 2009: 475). Reorganisational healing is a paradigm that provides a map to enable individuals to assess themselves and capitalise on their strengths to create sustainable change (Epstein et al, 2009: 475). The model consists of three key elements that bring about change by synchronising the timing and process of the change with the energetic aptitude required by the change (Epstein et al, 2009: 478). The three elements are:

- *Four seasons of wellbeing*: This element refers to the processes to *Discover, Transform, Awaken and Integrate* which can be seen as phases in one's journey. The metaphor of the season is used: although they are not sequential, they can represent moments in an individual's life. Each of the seasons presents an opportunity for the individual to ensure a re-organisation of his/her life. *Discover, Transform and Awaken* are the stages an individual goes through during different phases in his/her life. *To Integrate* is the ability to know and consciously choose the seasons that are required in different circumstances.
- *The triad of change*: This is the key focus of the map and is indicative of the fact that all change includes structure, behaviour and perception. For each structure, there is a concomitant behaviour and perception;
- *The five energetic intelligences*: These refer to bio-energetic, emotional energetic, thought energetic, soul energetic and universal spirit energetic (Epstein et al, 2009: 475-481).

Lawrence (2006: 38), in exploring the links between individual and organisational transformation and drawing on a Freirean analysis, maintained that for her, transformation is more than change. Transformation is about individuals realising that they are able to change things through collective action, which involves an ongoing journey of self-development. Equally important in appreciating youth in South Africa and the challenges around personal transformation is the work of Bourdieu (1986: 245) with respect to social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986: 245) ascribes success in education to cultural capital, both in the quantity and type, which one inherits from one's family background. He regards cultural capital as cumulative and explains that students with higher levels of cultural capital, which is largely acquired from primary socialisation in the family, tend to be able to use this investment of cultural capital to gain further cultural wealth through the secondary socialisation process in schools. This social and cultural capital is the basis upon which learners are rewarded by schools. Those seen to have high social capital are rewarded - largely the wealthier students. Those seen to have low social capital are punished - often learners from poorer homes. This leads to lower self-esteem and low achievement among poor learners.

Bourdieu's notion of *Habitus* is central to understanding the lives of poor children and must be taken into consideration when conceptualising the notion of personal transformation. *Habitus* can be described as a set of values, practices and norms, which people assimilate as part of who they are and how they operate (Bourdieu, 1971: 83). It represents how individuals make use of their past and present experiences to address a current situation (Bourdieu, 1971: 83). *Habitus* is manifested in ways of "standing, speaking, walking, feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990: 70) Colley (2003: 93) explains *habitus* as a combination of a person's sense of who they are, lifestyle, personality, beliefs, values and background. The *habitus* of children from high poverty communities and all its complexities of crime and violence are embedded within their bodies (Bourdieu, 1985: 113). Despite 'habitus' making allowance for individual agency, it makes an individual more pre-disposed to particular ways of behaving (Reay, 2004: 433). An individual's history is important in understanding the notion of *habitus* (Reay, 2004: 434). The *habitus* developed in the family becomes the basis for the school experience, which in turn becomes the basis of all subsequent experiences (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 134).

Understanding the concept of *habitus* is an important foundation for an authentically holistic approach. In too many instances, youth are viewed as passive recipients of programmes. When they do not respond to the programme in a manner envisaged by the organisers, they may be regarded as deviant (Colley, 2003: 95). The concept of *habitus* can help us understand how young people may respond to certain turning points in different ways. When *habitus* encounters a 'field' with which it is not familiar, the subsequent disjuncture can result in change and transformation (Reay, 2004: 436).

Notions of social and cultural capital and *habitus* are synergistic with the work of Garbarino (2001: 361-378) who advocates an ecological approach when dealing with delinquency. He argues that some young people experience an "accumulation of risk" as a result of their primary socialisation, while others experience an "accumulation of opportunity" (Garbarino, 2001: 362). This social and cultural capital or accumulation of risk or opportunity largely determines how youth behave in school and their potential for success in the education sphere and in life.

Chapman (2010: 19) points out that many training and development programmes focus on outer domains which are visible, easier to measure and remind us of wisdom traditions which profess that, by focusing on the inner domains, the next level of evolutionary development can be achieved. The objective is not to exclude any of the domains, but to integrate them into a holistic approach (Chapman, 2010: 19).

Many schools see their mission simply as imparting knowledge, while a holistic approach integrates the learner's many selves into the learning experience (Best, 2008: 344). A whole person approach to education is important in that it enables the learner to integrate the power of the 'mind, heart and will' and to develop a sense of identity as part of a global family (Podger, Mustakova-Possardt & Reid, 2010: 342). The dominant viewpoint in our society largely proclaims that learning resides within the domain of the mind or intellect. This view is that the body is used primarily to serve the mind.

According to Campbell (2006: 29), holistic education sets out to encompass and enlist three key aspects of the whole person – mind, body and spirit in the learning process and environment. This is critical since the education system fragments each discipline. Campbell (2006: 29) maintains that teachers should regard their students as whole developing humans with a variety of needs, including their need for personal transformation and neither teachers nor students should suppress such dimensions as spirituality.

Connecting a person's inner qualities and his/her experiences in the outer world is important (Greene, Younghee & Korthagen, 2013: 24). They believe that little attention is paid to the internal and natural qualities that individuals bring to teaching and learning. Furthermore, if education is oriented towards an approach that seeks to work with all dimensions of a learner's being, then deep transformation is likely to take place. They note that "when learning becomes a joyful or meaningful experience for students, it touches the spirit in ways that cannot always be measured, but that can leave a lasting imprint on their deeper sense of being" (Greene et al, 2013: 5).

In support of a whole person approach, Garbarino (1999: 154), who has worked with youth who have committed violent crimes, outlines what he calls a conceptual toolbox to save lost boys, which include the spiritual dimension. He points out that of all the things he found when working with violent youth, a spiritual emptiness was the most common thread. He says that for him, spirituality is a recognition that as human beings, we are not only "humans with a brain", but spiritual beings as well, and that not having one's spiritual needs met can be as harmful as not having one's physical or emotional needs met.

CONCLUSION

School violence, social support, academic achievement, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and punitive/rehabilitation measures to combat youth 'delinquency' are frequently treated as separate domains. This fragmentation has resulted in many school safety strategies not impacting meaningfully on the lives of many of South Africa's youth, particularly in poorer communities. In fact, as the article illustrates, violence is widespread in South African schools.

We argued that any strategy to deal with violence and crime in schools must be holistic and include the personal transformation of young people. However, given the socio-economic context of at-risk youth, that personal transformation must go in tandem with the process to reconstruct society to eradicate poverty, unemployment and the deepening inequality that exacerbate violence at the individual, family and community levels. A safe and effective school framework in high poverty and high crime contexts such as the Cape Flats (Western Cape) aligns the personal transformation of vulnerable learners at an individual, classroom, school and community level.

A holistic approach to personal transformation recognises that young people ought to be at the centre of the strategy to eradicate violence from schools. Personal transformation strategies should include processes where young people are enabled to delve into their inner worlds as a

catalyst for their personal transformation. Young people must be supported to explore who they are; they should be allowed to express their emotions and engage in self-coaching processes through setting goals and positive self-talk.

A holistic approach is gaining currency as a pedagogic approach, which recognises that personal transformation involves all dimensions of a human being. This approach has direct implications for the culture of teaching and learning in schools. It can transform at-risk youth and teaching practices of teachers in schools that experience high levels of violence. A holistic approach can integrate the curriculum, and foster use of a broad range of modalities such as bodywork, art, dance, mindfulness practices and peer mentoring to enlist all dimensions of a young person's being. All options should be investigated in eradicating violence in our schools. The residual violent past that remains lodged within the hearts and minds of our citizens, including our children has to be confronted.

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