

LYNETTE JACOBS & CORENE DE WET**ESSENTIAL VALUES FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: HOW DO SOUTH AFRICAN LEARNERS FARE?****Abstract**

Respect for oneself, for one another, for property and for the world is needed within the global context. In line with global trends, the South African government has consistently included these principles in its policy documents over the last 20 years. While media reports suggest that the behaviour of learners, specifically in secondary schools, reflect disrespect we acknowledge that media reporting can be biased. Thus, a survey was conducted in 11 secondary schools from 3 provinces. The aim of this study was to evaluate the behaviour of learners in the schools through the experiences and observations of the participants, taking into account the various contextual factors within which the South African school system functions. An international questionnaire, adapted for the South African context, was administered to a non-probability sample of 690 learners. We found that in line with media reports, the behaviour of secondary schools learners to be in dissonance with the values of global citizenship and as portrayed in the curriculum documents of South Africa. Particularly in more privileged schools, learners seem to be engaged in destructive behaviour, such as consuming alcohol on the school premises, and destroying school property.

Introduction

On 15 March 1995 the ideals for education in post-apartheid South Africa were published in the *White Paper on Education and Training*, the document that directed education policy development by the Government of South Africa after 1994 (RSA, 1995: 2). In chapter 2 (section 6) it is stated that:

Successful modern economies and societies ... require citizens ... to take responsibility for personal performance, to set and achieve high standards, and to work cooperatively.

Chapter 4 of this document describes the values and principles of education and training. It documents the Government's vision of education and training as part of "basic human rights" (section 2), with the "realisation of democracy, freedom, equality, fairness and peace as prerequisites for learning" (section 13). It is further stated that "restoration of the culture of teaching, learning and management involves the creation of a culture of accountability" (section 12) and foregrounds the "importance of due process of law" (section 16). It is explicitly stated that through the envisaged education system, citizens will become "empowered to participate confidently and constructively in social and civic life" (section 16). Over the past twenty years, the different curriculum documents have also captured this vision by explicitly stating issues of human rights and social justice as core principles on which education in South Africa is based (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 5).

This vision that the government of South Africa had at the start of the so-called *new* South Africa, resonates with what is required for global citizenship. Johansson

(2009: 90) explains that children, as world citizens, should learn to “take care of themselves as well as others and the world”. While nobody disputes the need for good mathematical, reading and writing skills, these are not the sole indicators of being adequately prepared for life (Zhao, 2008: 48). Helderbrant and Strahler (2013: 311), based on several authors, *inter alia* identify competences such as “integrity”, “responsibility” and “respect for people and things” as essential characteristics that should be developed in children.

The realities in South African schools however, appear to be quite different from the ideal that is captured in the baseline policy document (RSA, 1995) and the drive towards global competent citizenship described in the literature. The South African media regularly lashes out at the school system in the country, creating the impression that there is chaos. Under the headline **Pupils beg cops for protection**, Nair (2013: 6) reports on learners who are desperate for protection, following the death of a pupil after being assaulted by his peers. Gibbs (2013: 6) reports that **Teachers work in constant** fear, and claims that pupils have no respect for authority at schools. Under the heading **Criminalising bad behaviour at schools fails to address root causes**, Burton (2013: 9) avers that learners and staff need to be equipped with skills to identify and mitigate problematic behaviour. Similarly, Stokes (2011: 10) (**Schools should teach attitude**) argues that schools should focus on the virtues such as politeness, diligence, punctuality, enthusiasm and cooperation in addition to academic prowess. If these and many other media reports are to be believed, South African schools might be failing in their task as set out in the policy documents.

However, newspaper agencies have their own agendas, and the possibility exists that these representations can be skewed. De Wet (2003: 36) points out that media reports are sometimes biased, and reporting often focuses on severe cases that will sell newspapers (Jacobs, 2012: 27-28). Thus, in order for us to refute or confirm newspapers’ portrayals, and to explore the efficacy of policy implementation, the following research question is posed: *To what extent does the behaviour of secondary schools learners in the country resonate with the values needed of global citizens, as portrayed in the curriculum documents of South Africa?*

Research methodology

This paper is the result of a larger research project on school violence in South Africa (refer *inter alia* to Jacobs (2013 and 2012)). We used an existing research instrument that has been implemented extensively in comparative international studies (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). The specific questionnaire was designed for learners, and we adapted it for the South African context before distributing it to a convenient sample of 11 schools in three of the nine provinces in the country. The selection of these schools was based on warnings in the literature about the difficulty of persuading people in developing countries to take part in surveys (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006: 120-121), and recommendations to use as good a sample as possible under the circumstances (Davies, 2007: 54-55). We obtained the necessary permission to conduct the survey and each of the schools was requested to randomly select 80 pupils who were willing to participate in the study. Of the 880 questionnaires, the schools returned 713, and we were able to use 690 (78%). We took specific steps to promote the integrity of our research.

The integrity of the research

We requested the Life Orientation teachers at the schools to administer the questionnaires during class time. This was done not only because moral education falls within the scope of this learning field, but also to provide a safe environment for debriefing the learners (Strydom, 2011: 122). The questionnaires were unmarked and not numbered. The participants were requested not to write their names or the names of their school on the questionnaires. The participants were also assured that they were free to refrain from responding to the items and they could even return their questionnaires blank. Once they had responded to all items with which they felt comfortable, they were requested to seal the questionnaires before returning them to the teacher.

Analysis of data

The data were captured by an experienced person, and analysed using the StataC11 package. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency of responses was calculated as 0.9176, which suggests a high level of internal reliability (Pietersen & Maree, 2007: 216). The aggregated data were explored based on the mean scores of the data, and the significance of differences between mean scores from respondents in various contexts analysed using the Student's *t*-test and the one-way ANOVA statistics (using the *Sheffé post-hoc* test). While these are often used to infer findings, in this paper we used them to differentiate between groups without claiming to generalise the findings.

The following independent variables were used to explore the various school contexts:

- Different geographical-demographical contexts:
 - School setting (urban schools and rural schools);
 - Enrolment figures (750 or fewer learners and more than 750 learners).
- Different economical-technological contexts:
 - School classification system of South Africa (poorer schools and more affluent schools).
- Different socio-political contexts:
 - Race composition of the schools (single race schools; schools in which the majority of the learners are from one race with a small number of learners from other races (partially integrated); and multiracial schools (fully integrated)).

In the questionnaire, statements were made about the behaviour of others that the participants experienced or observed. Respondents had to indicate on a five-point scale whether specific behaviours had taken place in the 12 months prior to the survey. On the scale, 5 indicated that the specific behaviour *always* occurs, and 1 indicated that it *never* occurs. While any score of above 1 indicates that such behaviour does occur, in the percentages indicated in our discussion of the results, we use the term *regular* to denote a score of 3 or higher (*sometimes*, *often* and *always*). Using the behaviours as dependent variables in the discussion that follows, we will refer to differences between the means of variables as follows: *similar* differences (small differences); *notable* differences (moderate to large, but not statistically significant); and *statistically significant* differences (95% probability).

Results

In the questionnaire, the learners were asked about the behaviour of others that they observed or experienced themselves. We selected from the survey questionnaire, items that related to learners' respect for themselves, others and other people's property. We first provide an overview of some behaviours in each section, after which we compare the prevalence of these behaviours in different contexts.

Harmful practices

The participants in the study were asked to indicate how often they observed harmful practices at school. It became clear that many learners in the secondary school environment engage in harmful practices, thus showing disrespect for themselves. Learners seem prone to often becoming involved in fights (72.01%). Regular alcohol consumption on the school premises was reported by 49.64% of the participants, while using illegal drugs (including marijuana) at school was reported by 58.42%.

In the schools in our sample, the level of fighting between learners in urban and in rural schools was similar. However, the levels of alcohol usage on school premises were found to be statistically significantly higher in urban schools than in rural schools ($t=5.342$; $p=0.000$), while the usage of illegal drugs on the school premises were notably higher in rural schools than in urban schools.

From the sample, it appears that fighting among learners is statistically significantly higher in larger schools (enrolment of more than 750) than in smaller schools ($t=4.2829$; $p=0.0000$). Alcohol usage on campus is similar in larger and smaller schools, but illegal drug usage is notably more common in the smaller schools than in the larger schools.

It appears that destructive behaviour is more common in more affluent schools than in economically disadvantaged schools. Fighting was reported to occur statistically significantly more often ($t=3.4033$; $p=0.0007$); alcohol consumption on the school premises also takes place statistically significantly more frequently ($t=7.0950$; $p=0.0000$); while using illegal drugs on the school premises occurs notably repeatedly in the affluent schools in the sample.

The data from this sample furthermore show that fighting happens statistically significantly less often at single race schools, than at partially integrated schools ($F=$) or fully integrated schools ($F=$). The prevalence of fighting in the latter two categories of schools was similar. Alcohol usage on the school premises ($F=22.21$; $p=0.0000$) and illegal drug usage ($F=16.89$; $p=0.0000$) however, is significantly higher in partially integrated schools.

Attitude towards others

The participants were furthermore asked about their own experiences in being on the receiving end of disrespectful behaviour. Of all the participants, 35.62% indicated that they regularly experience intimidation by other learners; 33.04% indicated that they are regularly mocked, insulted and humiliated; 17.33% reported that they are regularly marginalised and 16.52% regularly experience sexual harassment. While these are examples of many acts that could be used to measure disrespect towards others, it does indicate that a notable number of learners in the schools in our sample regularly experience a lack of respect from their peers.

The analysis of the data furthermore showed that participants in rural schools that participated in the study experienced intimidation, notably more often than their peers in urban schools, while participants from urban schools in the sample are significantly more regularly mocked, insulted and humiliated ($t=3.5809$; $p=0.0004$). Notably, more participants from rural schools experience regular marginalisation and social exclusion, while the levels of sexual harassment are similar in schools from these two contexts.

Considering the school size, it was found that participants in large schools (more than 750 learners) experienced being mocked, insulted and humiliated statistically significantly more frequently than their peers in smaller schools ($t=4.320$; $p=0.000$), as well as experiencing intimidation more often. However, the experience of participants from larger schools and smaller schools were similar with respect to sexual harassment and marginalisation and social exclusion.

Being mocked, insulted and humiliated occurs statistically significantly more often in the affluent schools in the sample than in the poorer schools ($t=4.5312$; $p=0.0000$), while marginalisation and social exclusion seems notably more common in the economically disadvantaged schools. The levels of intimidation, as well as that of sexual harassment were measured as similar in the more affluent schools and in the schools in poor communities.

The regularity with which participants from single race schools are mocked, insulted and humiliated is statistically significantly lower than their peers in partially integrated schools ($F=13.65$; $p=0.0000$) or in fully integrated schools ($F=13.65$; $p=0.0000$). However, the levels of intimidation, marginalisation and social exclusion, as well as sexual harassment in the schools in the sample, were found to be similar.

Attitude towards things

Four indicators were used to probe the experiences of participants, in terms of the attitude of other learners towards property. Two indicators related to their own experiences, and two to general observations in the school. 57.60% of the participants indicated that they regularly experience their personal belongings or equipment being stolen at the school, while 24.08% regularly experience other learners intentionally destroying or breaking their personal belongings. Furthermore, 70.18% of the participants reported that other learners destroy property at school, draw graffiti on the walls or damage the furniture, while 77.37% indicated that learners steal things from other learners and from teachers.

We then explored the experiences and perceptions of participants from various contexts, to get a better understanding of these behaviours. The data suggest that learners from urban and rural schools have similar experiences with regard to the theft of personal belongings or equipment, but that there is a notably higher incidence of intentional destruction or breakage of personal belongings by participants from rural schools. The destruction of things at school, drawing graffiti on the walls or damaging the furniture ($t=3.6543$; $p=0.0003$) and also stealing items from other learners and from teachers ($t=2.6713$; $p=0.0077$) takes place statistically significantly more often in rural schools than in urban schools.

Considering the behaviour of learners towards property in smaller and larger schools, the data suggest that learners' experiences in these contexts with regard to their personal belongings or equipment being stolen at the school; learners

intentionally destroying or breaking their personal belongings, as well as learners stealing from other learners and teachers, are quite similar. However, participants from larger schools (more than 750 learners) indicated a statistically significantly higher level of destruction of property at school, drawing graffiti on the walls or damaging the furniture ($t=4.1943$; $p=0.0000$).

Analysing the responses of learners from more privileged schools, compared to participants from economically disadvantaged schools, it seems that the theft of personal belongings of the participants occurs more frequently in disadvantaged schools. However, learners intentionally destroying or breaking others' personal belongings, learners stealing from other learners and teachers, as well as the destruction of items at school, drawing graffiti on the walls or damaging the furniture in these two contexts were reported to be similar.

Lastly, schools with different learner compositions were considered, and again experiences seem to be fairly similar across different types of schools. The only difference which emerged was that the destruction of property at school, drawing graffiti on the walls or damaging the furniture takes place statistically significantly more regularly in integrated schools, than in single race schools ($f=4.00$; $p=0.024$).

Discussion

The aim of the paper is not to generalise findings to all secondary schools in the country. Yet, if one considers that quite diverse schools took part in the study, there is reason for concern about the behaviour of learners. It seems common practice to engage in behaviour that will cause harm to themselves, as well as showing disregard for their peers and the school.

Schools in specific contexts need to address certain realities. Substance abuse is a particular problem in urban schools, and so is hurtful behaviour, such as ridicule and humiliation. However, these schools seem to be more successful at preventing the destruction of personal and school property. Learners in rural schools, on the other hand, seem to more regularly use illegal drugs; to exclude and marginalise others; to damage school property; and to steal from others.

Fighting seems to be a problem specifically in larger schools, together with vandalism, intimidation, humiliation and general rudeness. More affluent schools need to be aware of the high levels of substance abuse, while social exclusion and theft are particular problems in poorer schools.

In terms of learner composition, partially integrated schools show the highest level of alcohol and drug abuse, while vandalism is highest in fully integrated schools. However, it seems that in general, disrespectful behaviour does not particularly vary across schools with different learner compositions.

Conclusion

Globally, there is a need for people to show respect, and this requirement is acknowledged in education policy documents in South Africa. This said, looking at the way in which secondary school learners act, success cannot be claimed. It is apparent that the behaviour of secondary schools learners in the country renounce the values that are needed by global citizens, as portrayed in the curriculum

documents of South Africa. Roleplayers need to heed the warning expressed by the author E.M. Forster in 1938, in an essay titled 'What I believe':

"Tolerance, good temper and sympathy - they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse they must come to the front before long".

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