



EXPLORING STRATEGIES FOR THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE AT SCHOOLS

by

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I dedicate this work to:

*My late parents, Moshake “Kgasudi” Freddy
and Seboye Paulina “Dorah” Moloto,
as well as my grandmother, Mantsha Thabitha Modiba,
for their encouragement and motivation to study up to this
level. I wish they were still alive to witness my achievement.*

*I further dedicate this work to my only son,
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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Boledi Melita “Moloto” Masehela, declare that

“EXPLORING STRATEGIES FOR THE PREVENTION
OF SEXUAL ABUSE AT SCHOOLS”

is my own work. All the sources I have used and quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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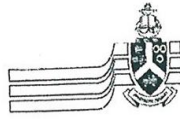
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent and reasons for teacher/learner sexual abuse in South Africa. Using a case study design, the researcher collected contextual data on this phenomenon at six schools in the Limpopo Province. With a view to determining whether or not national and provincial attitudes to school-based sexual abuse affect sexual behaviour at local levels, she also collected relevant national and provincial data. The combination of the three sets of data enabled her to draw not only contextual, but also general conclusions on this phenomenon.

Using interview schedules and questionnaires as instruments, the researcher collected information on school-based sexual abuse from selected school principals, Grade 11 learners, departmental officials, and representatives of various organisations. Informed by the assumption that context and culture affect behaviour, the researcher recorded her observations of the physical and emotional climate and culture of the schools serving as research sites. She also collected statistical data on the incidence of sexual abuse, analysed official documents dealing with sexual issues, and consulted academic literature on the topic.

The researcher used an inductive approach to data analysis, making use of open, axial and selective coding methods. Qualitative data provided information on the nature and causes of school-based sexual relations. Quantitative data provided numerical information on the extent of the problem. Together, the data enabled her not only to paint a picture of the nature and extent of school-based sexual relationships, but also to uncover the role that socio-cultural factors play in this regard.

The particular significance of this study lies in the fact that it approaches sexual abuse from a socio-cultural perspective. More specifically, it investigates the

possibility that teacher/learner sexual abuse has, over the years, become part of African culture, and that the silence on such practices might be rooted in traditional, patriarchal views on gender and social justice.

The research findings indicate that there might well be a growing resistance to what is regarded by some communities as the imposition of liberal, urban, value systems on traditional, rural African people.

Finally, the study provides evidence that legal, administrative and managerial approaches do not have the potential to resolve cultural conflict. This research opens the door to different ways of approaching a difficult problem like sexual abuse. In exploring other strategies, particularly those more tuned to the needs of traditional communities, the occurrence of sexual abuse at schools might be resolved.

Key words

school-based sexual abuse

sexual abuse

sexual harassment

traditional ways

taboos

patriarchal systems

cultural conflict

liberal values

social justice

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COSAS	Congress of South African Students
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DoE	Department of Education
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
HAC	Health Advisory Committee
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
LCJCP	Limpopo Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
LDoE	Limpopo Department of Education
LSAPS	Limpopo South African Police Services
LO	Life Orientation
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NECC	National Education Coordinating Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PCF	Police Community Forum
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SASA	South African School's Act
SAPA	South African Principals' Association
SAPS	South African Police Services
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
Soul City IHDC	Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication
TVEP	Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme
U.D.H.R	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USA	United States of America
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND PARAMETERS

1.1 Introduction and background

South Africa has been a constitutional democracy since 1994. Informing the foundation of this democracy was the dream of a newly united nation where everybody would feel at home and where all people – irrespective of race, culture, gender or any other difference – would be respected as equals (Beckmann & Sehoole, 2004). By implication, in the new South Africa, human dignity would be an inalienable right.

Since the supreme law of any constitutional democracy is its national Constitution, all those residing in such a country are legally bound to uphold the values and rights enshrined in the Constitution. Given that the right to human dignity is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a), no one in the country at any time has the right to undermine the dignity of any other person living or working there. By implication, no person has the right to degrade, exploit, or unfairly discriminate against any other person.

A survey of media reports suggests, however, that many people in the country are being degraded, exploited, or unfairly treated every day. Of particular concern is the continued sexual exploitation of children; school children in particular (Masuku, 2008: 6). In many instances children are sexually exploited by those they trust: their fathers, uncles, friends, parents and teachers. A major concern is that it is not only secondary school children who run the risk of being sexually abused; primary school children are also at risk (Hules, 2005). To illustrate this point, I refer to a number of actual incidents of school-related sexual abuse.

In 2005, two teachers from Bolobedu in the Limpopo Province were found guilty of sexually abusing learners at the schools where they taught. In one instance, the teacher was accused of fixing the learners marks in exchange for sexual favours; in the other, the teacher was caught red-handed having sexual intercourse with a learner (Matlala, 2005: 3). In 2007, a school principal and a teacher were accused of sexually abusing a number of girls under the age of eighteen, two of whom had fallen pregnant as a consequence. Charges against the principal were dropped due to insufficient evidence but the teacher concerned was arrested on charges of statutory rape (Mogakane & Mnisi, 2007: 15-16). In 2009, a high school teacher in Umlazi, Kwa-Zulu Natal, was charged for allegedly having engaged in sexual activities with seventeen different learners (SAPA, 2009: 1). In the same year, a primary school teacher from Bushbuckridge in the Mpumalanga Province was arrested for the alleged rape of a twelve-year old learner (Mbhele, 2009: 2).

A sixteen-year-old learner in East London was repeatedly raped by her teacher after school. She discovered that she was HIV positive and took preventative measures to combat the disease. Her brain was damaged. She died at hospital and the teacher was arrested (Mkhuseli, 2009: 1).

In a similar vein, a deputy principal at one of the secure care rehabilitation schools in Gauteng Province, Soweto, has appeared in court, accused of raping a seventeen-year-old girl. According to the report, this was not the school's first rape incident. Rape has also been committed by learners. In one of the sexual abuse incidents, a sixteen-year-old learner was accused of raping a seventeen year-old-learner. The school is classified as one of those which accommodates and rehabilitates children who have been convicted of various crimes but are too young to go to prison. By providing accommodation, the school aims to assist the residents in changing their unacceptable behaviour. Instead, the institution has become a sexual activity battle ground (Monama, 2011: 5).

The worried and shocked director of Childline Protection Unit in Gauteng Province has indicated that the police do not have profiles of the rapist teachers, and the

Department of Education cannot easily identify and remove sexual predators from the schools (Monama, 2011: 5). The implication is that the police lack information or records of some of the rape incidents and, therefore, teacher profiles cannot be compiled. It raises concerns over whether such cases are being reported or not; and, if these immoral and illegal incidents of rape are being kept secret, what is the reason for keeping them under wraps?

In all these cases, the abuser was male and the victim was female. While this creates the impression that it is only men who engage in illicit sex with female children, this is not always the case. Sometimes the perpetrators are women and the victims are school boys; sometimes both the perpetrator and the victim are of the same sex. In 2008, for example, a twenty-three-year-old female teacher from Painesville was found guilty of having oral sex with one of the boys in her Mathematics class and was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment (Donaldson, 2008: 13). In 2009, two male teachers from Pretoria in the Gauteng Province were found guilty of the sexual exploitation of boys, one having forced himself on a boy learner and the other having raped and sexually assaulted a number of boys, and exposed them to pornographic material (Otto, 2009: 1).

Recently, a deputy principal in one of the private schools in Limpopo Province was arrested for statutory rape and the act of sodomising a fourteen-year-old learner (Matlala, 2011: 5). The perpetrator invited male learners to his house for extra lessons, which included sexual activities. As a result, one of the sexually exploited victims contracted a sexually transmitted disease.

These cases indicate that sexual exploitation is neither age nor gender-specific. Nor is it limited to a particular province. They suggest, moreover, that children are no longer safe even in school since they run the risk of being sexually exploited by their teachers. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), schools are supposed to be safe: neither teachers nor learners should be afraid that they might be physically or emotionally injured, ridiculed, intimidated, harassed, or humiliated. No one at school should feel threatened by unwelcome sexual advances of any kind. On the

contrary, everybody should feel nurtured, respected, valued, and uplifted (DoE, 2002a). The indications are that, currently, this is not the case in South Africa. Here, both the right to human dignity and the right to receive education in a safe environment are undermined.

According to Squelch (2001), school safety has both a physical as well as an emotional dimension. Although the physical condition and appearance of a school can create a feeling of safety, it is the emotional climate and culture – created by the interpersonal and inter-subjective relationships between teachers and learners – that are of greater importance (DoE, 2002a). In schools that are emotionally safe, teachers shield the emerging adults in their care from forces that could cause them harm. According to the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), this is not only a teacher's professional duty but also their moral duty. In fact, teachers are duty-bound to protect, promote, and respect the rights of learners; and to ensure that no child's well-being; education; or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development is at risk while in their care.

Although the above describes the kind of teacher held up as the ideal in the Educators' Code of Conduct (SACE, 2000) the sexually-related incidents noted earlier suggest that not all South African teachers live up to this ideal. In fact, according to Hules (2005), there are still teachers in South Africa who, instead of protecting the children in their care, use their positions of authority to degrade learners. Some still use corporal punishment to maintain discipline. Others, while avoiding physical abuse, utilise sarcasm and sexist or hurtful language to control learners. Worst of all, an increasing number of teachers seem to be abusing their authority and power by sexually exploiting learners, offering them money or better grades in return for sexual favours (Kgosana, 2006: 21).

In terms of the SACE Code of Conduct for Educators (SACE, 2000), this is not only unprofessional but also illegal. The code prohibits teachers from using their position for personal gain; warning them that if found guilty of doing so, they would be deregistered. The Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998) reiterates

much the same sentiment, indicating that any form of sexual engagement between a teacher and a learner constitutes serious misconduct, and could result in the teacher's dismissal.

1.2 Concept clarification

I use a variety of terms and concepts in this report to describe improper sexual behaviour at schools, particularly in Chapter 2. However, to ensure a common understanding of the terms – some of which have already been used in this chapter – a very brief definition of key terms and concepts is provided below (DoE, 2002a):

- *Sexual abuse* is used as an umbrella term for any sexually-related behaviour that makes someone else feel uncomfortable.
- *Sexual assault* implies that violence was involved in the sexual encounter/relationship.
- *Sexual exploitation* refers to the manipulation of children in exchange for sexual favours.
- *School-based sexual abuse* refers to any sexually-related behaviour at schools that make children feel uncomfortable.
- *Teacher-learner sexual encounters* are one-off sexual events occurring between a teacher and a learner.
- *Teacher-learner sexual relationships* indicate that sex between the teacher and learner is not a one-off event and could even be consensual.

1.3 Research problem

Having taken cognisance of the media hype surrounding sexual abuse at schools, I was curious to find out how common it is, and why it is happening at all. I knew that in terms of the Sexual Offences Act (RSA, 2007), any person found guilty of sexually exploiting or abusing a minor could be sent to jail; yet sexual exploitation continues. In fact, there are no indications that school-based sexual abuse is

decreasing. Instead, according to the DoE (2002a), South Africa falls among the countries that experience the highest rates of violence, including sexual abuse, at schools. Sexual abuse incidents including the rape of learners under the age of seventeen years is ever increasing, especially in the poor and rural areas. The DoE report triggered some questions in me. Are teachers disenchanted with their profession? Are they unwilling to accept the 'in loco parentis' role? Or is there some other reason (traditional taboos, perhaps)?

The Department of Education (DoE, 2002b) further indicates that, in most cases, parents do not discuss sex or sexuality with their children. Parents are embarrassed to talk about such things and their silence undermines the teaching of sex education in schools. Hules (2005) argues that parental silence and child sexual abuse are not recent issues. These issues have been spreading throughout all cultures since ancient times. During biblical times, child sexual abuse was kept secret and perpetrators were rarely punished. The church also turned its back on sexual abuse because women and children were considered the property of men. They had no right to refuse men's sexual demands. As a result, rape was not considered a crime. This encouraged sexual abuse to go unchallenged to an extent that children – irrespective of age – had to suffer in silence.

As a teacher, and laterally as a principal of a secondary school in a rural area, the issues noted above have reminded me of the cultural taboos regarding any discussion of a sexual nature. I was reminded of these taboos by three incidents that occurred shortly before I decided to embark on this study.

In the first incident, a secondary school principal had allegedly committed a sexual act with the teenage girlfriend of the school's SRC (*Student Representative Council*) president. The boy's outraged friends reacted by burning down the principal's cottage while he slept. The principal escaped, the boys were expelled from school, and the rest of the learners went on strike. To defuse the situation, the Department of Education transferred the principal to a different school. The principal continued working without any apparent punishment or sanction, while

those who reacted to the alleged sexual activities between him and their fellow learner suffered the consequences.

In the second incident, a female Grade 10 learner, who had been impregnated by one of her teachers, dropped out of school to give birth and care for their baby. When she returned to school a year later, the teacher impregnated her again. Instead of marrying her, he decided to marry a student teacher who was, at the time, doing her teaching practice at the same school. Both of them now teach at this school. The schoolgirl concerned had a nervous breakdown and was sent to a psychiatric hospital for intensive care. The learner's future was doomed, her parents kept quiet, and the teacher is still working at the same school.

The third incident involved a female teacher and a Grade 9 schoolboy who were having regular sex in her cottage, even during school hours. When the principal was informed of the situation, he confronted the boy; who admitted his guilt and left the school. The teacher is still employed at the school. The parents, who were called for a consultation, declined to prosecute. According to them, it was a private family matter in which the school had no right to interfere. In these incidents, parents were not willing to discuss the sexual abuse with the school administrators. They opted to settle the matter within the family.

These cases triggered further questions in me. Do parents and administrators choose to ignore teacher/learner sexual abuse at schools? Do they condone what is happening? Are school administrators protecting teachers? Are learners, as victims, safe in such a school environment? How, if at all, is justice served? In trying to find answers to these questions, I consulted a number of articles and books on sexual behaviour in schools. I specifically wanted to find out what reasons there might be for teachers and learners to engage in sexual activity and what effect such activity had on them and the schools they attended.

To answer some of these questions, Hules (2005) states that African culture and religious tradition have a moral blind spot towards sexual abuse. He ascribes the

perpetuation of sexual abuse to gender inequalities from ancient times. Child sexual abuse incidents were kept secret and were a regular occurrence. Perpetrators took an advantage of the silence and continued abusing children sexually, while the victims did not have any grounds upon which to object.

In line with Hules (2005), the findings of research carried out by Vujovic (2008) indicate that the African tradition of patriarchal social order forbids women and children from discussing sexual matters. Women and children are treated as men's property; a view which serves as a universal code of sexual conducts. The cultural tradition of enforced silence has created an environment that is vulnerable and open to a variety of abuses. It is not surprising, therefore, that the silence surrounding the sexual exploitation of women and children have contributed to a high rate of sexual abuse in South Africa.

In addition to the contributing factors indicated above, a high level of poverty renders women vulnerable to sexual abuse (Sikes, 2006; Van Niekerk, 2005). Men take advantage of this poverty, exercising their role as masculine providers to achieve more power over women. They go to the extent of abusing women sexually because they are in control. Men regarded women as people who cannot take major decisions (DoE, 2002b). Therefore, according to Makgoka (2007: 7) and Sikes (2006), socio-cultural and socio-economic factors contribute to the sexual exploitation of women and children. Sexual abuse is a social and cultural problem. Turning a blind eye to it and pretending that it does not exist will not solve the problem. Social problems need social solutions.

The reasons mentioned above struck a nerve with me. Being a school principal in a rural area, and having grown up in a traditional rural community, I know how poor and steeped in tradition most of the communities are. I wondered whether the secrecy surrounding sexual abuse in the areas where I worked could be ascribed to either poverty or traditional beliefs. Were the values and human rights contained in the Constitution perhaps regarded as a threat to the old customs and ways of being? Was it perhaps symptomatic of a community trying

to protect its identity? Could it be a form of passive resistance against a perceived imposition of liberal western values on traditional African communities? If this is the case, what is the possibility of breaking the silence in order to reconcile traditional and constitutional values and ensure that social justice is served?

1.4 Research rationale

The primary reason for my desire to investigate school-based sexual abuse can be found in the seeming ineffectiveness of the laws, policies and interventions aimed at the eradication of such incidents in South African schools. In addition to this, my own experience of the impact that sexual abuse had on learners has convinced me that stopping them is a matter of urgency. The reason for my stance is that teacher/learner sexual abuse is illegal, immoral and unprofessional. It threatens the culture of teaching and learning and renders schools unsafe.

1.5 Research purpose

Intrigued by the questions raised by the literature on the topic, I decided to investigate not only the extent and possible reasons for the continuation of sexual abuse at schools in Limpopo, the province where I live and work; but also to try to uncover the reasons for the silence surrounding their occurrence. This would hopefully offer some insight into why none of the laws, policies, or other interventions aimed at the prevention and elimination of sexual abuse in schools to date have been effective.

The purpose of my study is *not* to generalise. Rather, it is to gain a better understanding of specific contextual factors that might underline the school-based sexual abuse in Limpopo. I specifically want to find answers to the following three research questions:

- Why does school-based sexual abuse exist?

- Why do schools and communities hide sexual abuse incidents under a veil of secrecy?
- What could be done to address this problem?

Informed by these questions is my assumption that school-based sexual abuse, as well as the silence surrounding the abuse, might be culturally-related. Using this assumption as the point of departure for my investigation into school-based sexual abuse, I have formulated three *working hypotheses* to guide my investigation:

- The sexual abuse of learners in Limpopo Province schools is socio-cultural in nature.
- The secrecy surrounding sexual abuse incidents at schools in the Limpopo Province could have a socio-cultural and socio-economic base.
- Strategies for the prevention of, and/or elimination of teacher/learner sexual abuse in Limpopo schools will only be effective if they take cognizance of socio-cultural circumstances.

Given the contextual nature of my investigation, my primary objectives were to:

- Identify the reason(s) for the teacher/learner sexual abuse at the six schools serving as my case studies by interviewing the principals and issuing questionnaires to learners.
- Determine why these six schools and the communities in which they reside remain quiet about incidents of sexual abuse.
- Develop a sense of the kind of strategies that could be used to address sexual abuse at these six schools.

A secondary objective of the study was to compare the results of my case study investigation with existing information on sexual abuse in the province and the country as a whole. Similarities or correlations of any kind between national, provincial, and study data would – I believed – enable me to get a sense of the

bigger picture; thereby enabling teachers at schools with similar problems to learn from my research.

1.6 Researcher positioning

Given the assumption on which my thesis rests, namely that school-based sexual abuse, as well as the silence surrounding the abuse, might be culturally related; I decided to approach the problem from a socio-cultural angle. More specifically, I wanted to determine whether or not the connection between sexual exploitation, poverty and traditional cultural ways; as mooted by Van Niekerk (2005), Ncaca (2006), Sikes (2006) and Makgoka (2007); also existed in the schools where I planned to conduct my investigation. Informed by this decision was my contention that a critical understanding of socio-cultural issues was crucial to the investigation of a socio-cultural phenomenon like sexual abuse (Hules, 2005).

Deciding on a theoretical framework was somewhat more complicated given my ontological position that, because people's realities are influenced by or constructed during the course of their lived experiences (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Every person's reality is uniquely different (DeMarais & Lapan, 2003; Henning et al., 2004). I therefore used a theoretical framework that accommodated the existence of different socio-cultural realities.

Hules (2005) indicates that sexual abuse is a social and cultural problem. As a result, my epistemological position, namely that insight into such realities requires an investigation of the reasons for people's behaviour, suggests that my research should be aimed at the uncovering of people's beliefs, values and attitudes (Merriam & Associates, 2002). My epistemological position rests on the investigation of African cultures' attitudes and secrecy regarding school-based sexual abuse. Culture is a mixture of values, beliefs, attitudes, and customs shared among people across generations (Mulaudzi, 2003). Richerson and Boyd (2005) ascribe culture to the social interactions accepted by a particular community. The implication is that sexual abuse and the secrecy surrounding it would depend on

how different cultural communities attach meaning to it. Also, since people construct their own realities, the most reliable sources of information on these realities are the people themselves. If, as I argue, sexual abuse is a social construct; the investigation would have to be framed in a theoretical paradigm that would enable me to interact with either the perpetrators or the victims of school-based sexual abuse.

1.7 Research design and methodology

As indicated earlier, the purpose of my study is not to generalise. Rather, it is to gain a better understanding of specific contextual factors that might underlie school-based sexual abuse in the area where I work and live. I have decided, therefore, to design my research in the form of a case study. In this sense, my research is both exploratory and contextual in nature.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), a case study design is particularly appropriate to the investigation of contemporary phenomena in their real life contexts; even more so if the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is somewhat vague. Case study designs lend themselves to the use of multiple sources and instruments (Merriam & Associates, 2002). I have been able to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. The use of more than one method provides different sets of collected data, which proves the reliability of the investigation (Cohen et al., 2000). Since case studies focus on the interaction of beliefs, values, and attitudes typical to particular groups of people over a period of time (Merriam & Associates, 2002), I believe they are particularly appropriate to my own investigation of the origin, evolution, and cause of sexual attitudes and behaviours in the Limpopo Province.

Given my intention to not only describe the nature and extent of sexual activities at selected schools but also to uncover the possible reasons for the formation of school-based sexual abuse, the overall method has been qualitative (White,

2003). The use of qualitative methods have helped me to uncover the subjective meanings that individuals or groups attach to the social phenomenon being investigated (Merriam & Associates, 2002), namely learner sexual abuse. The use of an interpretive approach depends on my own understanding of the investigated problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The use of quantitative methods, on the other hand, has enabled me to collect numerical data on the extent of the problem (White, 2003); thereby indicating whether school-based sexual abuse at the selected research sites is the norm or an exception.

With a view to enhancing the truth value of my research findings, I have complemented data generated through my interactions with people using information obtained from questionnaires, official documents (laws, court records, departmental statistics, and police dockets), my field notes, and literature on the topic (White, 2003). Since the information in the documents is not restricted to the schools in my sample, document analysis has enabled me to also view the problem of sexual abuse from a more general perspective. My field notes, in particular, have sensitised me to my own bias while simultaneously giving me a sense of the climate and culture of the sites concerned.

1.7.1 Sampling and data collection

In adopting a mixed methods approach, I have used different sampling methods – convenience, random, and snowball sampling – in identifying the research sites, participants, and documents (*see Chapter 3 for detail on the actual selection of sites*). I also used different strategies to gain access to research sites: in some instances I had to apply for permission in writing; in others I could simply telephone or say that I had been referred by a colleague or mutual contact.

My primary data collection instruments have been semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (*see Annexure for examples of these*). Interviews are typically used for research into educational matters and issues (Cohen et al., 2000) because they provide the researcher with a structure for data collection while allowing him/her

to probe deeper into issues that need further investigation. In my case, the data generated by semi-structured interviews with school principals and representatives from various other organisations has given me a critical understanding of the different ways in which individuals and groups make sense of their own sexual and cultural experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Data on learner exposure to knowledge, experience and exploitation of sexual abuse has been collected by means of a questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions, consisting of four parts (*see Annexure 11*). Learner responses to the questions have enabled me to: (a) construct profiles of the target group of learners in each school and across schools; (b) determine the nature and extent of learners' experiences with, and knowledge of, sexual activities at their own and other schools in the area; (c) uncover some of the reasons for learners' sexual involvement with teachers; (d) get a sense of the relationship between children and adults in the areas where the schools are located; (e) determine whether or not learners know what their rights are, and how these should be protected; and, finally, (f) to get a sense of the reason for the secrecy surrounding school-based sexual activities.

Apart from principals' interviews and learners' questionnaire data, knowledgeable officials at the provincial education offices have been interviewed to get a picture of the problem in the province as a whole (*see Chapter 4 for details*). Officials from different sections of the Limpopo Department of Education have been interviewed; each person I spoke to referred me to someone else for more detailed information. Interviewees even referred me to related bodies and organisations such as the Limpopo Child Line Protection Services, the South African Police Crime Prevention Section, the Human Rights Commission, and the South African Council for Educators (*see Table 1.1 for a list of interviewees*). All of these interviewees have been very helpful, providing me with statistics, case records, and other documentary evidence to verify the authenticity of the information they provided during interviews. I was even invited to attend a

conference (organised by the Human Rights Commission and observed court proceedings at one of the Provincial Children’s Courts in the Limpopo Province.)

Table 1.1: Research participants

Research participants	Justification for participation
DoE officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide reports and statistics on the sexual abuse of learners by teachers in provincial public schools. This information serves as an indicator of the relevance and trustworthiness of the case study findings. • To indicate what the stance of the department is on this issue and what steps have been taken to curb school-based sexual abuse in the province. This information has been used to enhance my own data, and provide indicators of attitudes to sexual abuse in the province.
Provincial SACE officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide reports and statistics on the inappropriate sexual behaviour of SACE registered teachers in schools across the country. This information provides a national picture of the extent to which teachers abuse learners sexually and how some parents respond to the problem. As such, it has enabled the comparison of the extent of the problem nationally, provincially and contextually. • To indicate what steps SACE has taken against the teachers involved.
Human Rights Watch officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide documented evidence of their own research into the sexual abuse of school children. This information has been used to enhance my own data, and provide indicators of attitudes to sexual abuse in the province.
School principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To serve as the primary source of information on what happens at their schools and others in the province. • To indicate what they are doing to address the problem; therefore giving an indication of their own attitudes towards the problem.

1.7.2 Data analysis

Data analysis has been both inductive and deductive. Data collected at one site was read before visiting the next site; I worked inductively in the sense that my understanding of the problem evolved with each reading and this understanding was used to probe deeper into pertinent issues during subsequent interviews. A deductive approach has been used to structure and analyse data; firstly, in terms of individual cases, followed by common patterns and themes across cases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; White, 2003). The process began with open coding (*grouping of ideas*), followed by axial coding (*identification of themes*), and ended with deductive analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

1.8 Ethical considerations

Because research is, in effect, an invasion of other people's privacy; every effort has been made to ensure that the research is conducted in an ethical way. In considering ethical aspects, the researcher should have a clear perspective of the difference between what is right or wrong (Cohen et al., 2000). Research ethics, according to White (2003), require the adoption of certain moral principles by all those involved in the research process. In this case, my research proposal was submitted to the research and ethics committees of the university at which I was enrolled. A written application was also submitted to the Limpopo Department of Education to visit schools for data collection purposes. Following this, school principals, departmental officials and directors of different organisations were contacted to arrange access. Finally, in cases where participating learners were younger than eighteen, parents were asked to give written permission to involve their children in research of this nature.

Having gained access to schools, I had to establish a relationship of trust with research participants (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The researcher gave participants the opportunity of opting out of the process when explaining in detail what was required of them. Once they had volunteered to participate, I assured

them of the confidentiality of the procedures and the data; promising not to identify them or their school by name. To further protect their anonymity, intrusive technological instruments (*video cameras, one-way mirrors and microphones*) (De Vos, 2000) were not used.

1.9 Trustworthiness and transferability

In order to ensure that research has truth value, quantitative researchers typically test their findings for reliability and validity (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, must indicate what they did to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process and the transferability of their research findings. To ensure the credibility of my findings, I have used multiple research instruments and sources for the collection and generation of data, and laid down a detailed audit trail of what was done and why (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maintaining an audit trail also enhanced the transferability (the applicability to other contexts and settings) of my findings (Guba, 1981). In doing so, opportunities have been created for the readers of my report to decide for themselves whether or not the findings are also applicable to their contexts and situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

With a view to ensuring that my own bias would not unduly influence the collection and analysis of the data generated by participants, I openly declared my role – as researcher and narrator, and as a school principal – continuously acknowledging the way in which my own cultural and other orientations might be colouring my interpretation of data (Guba, 1981). Finally, to ensure that the findings would be regarded as consistent and dependable, peer checking was employed; utilising the services of a colleague to proofread and critically comment on my analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data. Often this required further explanation of the detailed notes, memos, cross references and questionnaires that were compiled throughout the research process.

1.10 Significance of my research

Sexual abuse including rape is unacceptably high and exists in almost all types of South African school. Limpopo is one of the South African Provinces where most learners who suffer incidents of sexual abuse are under the age of seventeen (Vujovic, 2008). I believe that my research will contribute to current debates on the causes and reasons for this practice in South African schools.

The particular significance of this study lies in the fact that it approaches sexual abuse from a socio-cultural perspective. More specifically, it investigates the possibility that child sexual abuse has, over the years, become part of African culture; and that the silence on such practices might be rooted in traditional, patriarchal views on gender and social justice.

The research findings indicate that there might well be a growing resistance to what is regarded by some communities as the imposition of western, liberal, urban value systems on traditional, rural African people.

Finally, the research is relevant to all stakeholders in education because it provides evidence that legal, administrative, and managerial approaches do not have the potential to resolve cultural conflict. The research opens the door to different ways of approaching a difficult problem like sexual abuse. In exploring other strategies that are more attuned to the needs of traditional communities, the occurrence of sexual abuse at schools might just be resolved.

1.11 Limitations of my research

The greatest limitation of qualitative research is that it is contextual in nature. This investigation was conducted only in the black, rural secondary schools in Maleboho Central Circuit, Senwabarwana, Limpopo Province (RSA); and the findings are therefore only applicable to that area and the schools in my sample. To address this, I also looked at the wider Limpopo Province as well as national

statistics provided by SACE and others; the limitations have therefore been overcome to some extent. I trust, therefore, that readers of my text will find something to identify with or something that they could use to address the problem of sexual abuse at their schools.

1.12 Structure of the study

In structuring this study, both the logic and the layout of each chapter have been considered. This was important to ensure that the content of each chapter built on the preceding one, otherwise my argument might not make sense to the reader.

The *first chapter* provides the reader with the problem that was the focus of my study, the background to the problem, the procedures followed in investigating the problem, and the assumptions that informed the collection and interpretation of data. In this sense, Chapter 1 sets the parameters for the study.

In the *second chapter*, I present the literature review on culture, sexuality, and social justice. These insights are later used as a basis for the interpretation of data collected at schools and from different research participants.

The *third chapter* includes detailed descriptions of the case study sampling and data collection processes, a presentation and comparison of findings, and a discussion of emergent themes.

The *fourth chapter* relates my case study findings to existing information on the problem in the Limpopo Province and the country. It is the information in this chapter that, I believe, could be used as the basis for tentative generalisations on school-based sexual abuse.

The *fifth chapter* presents the insights gained from the investigation as a whole, relating these to my theoretical position. Based on these insights, the original

research questions are answered and an indication is given as to whether or not the research findings support or negate my initial assumptions and working hypotheses. In terms of the research findings and conclusions, some tentative suggestions are put forward on the approaches that could be adopted in addressing the problem of school-based sexual abuse.

1.13 Conclusion

In this chapter I have clarified the objectives of my investigation, which explores strategies for the prevention of sexual abuse in schools. The chapter presented a detailed background to the study and concept clarification.

This investigation is motivated by the fact that existing liberal laws (including the constitution of the Republic of South Africa) and policies seem to be ineffective in addressing school-based sexual abuse (DoE, 2001). The study aims to explore strategies that could be used to promote learners' educational rights by creating a safe school environment.

A literature review regarding sexual abuse is presented in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction and purpose

As indicated in Chapter 1, sexual abuse – with particular reference to the abuse of children – is a serious problem in South Africa. It is not, however, restricted to South Africa. According to Mbunga (2006), and Evans and Tripp (2006), statistics indicate that one in three girls and one in seven boys in the United States of America have been sexually abused or exploited. These statistics do not take into account that ninety percent of sexual abuse victims never speak about their abuse. The United States of America statistics indicates that approximately 15% to 25% of the women and 5% to 15% of the men who were abused state that the abuse occurred when they were children (Hall, Ryan, & Richard, 2007: 459). Sexual abuse could, in fact, be much more common than these statistics indicate.

The problem is escalating to such an extent that it affects all types of schools in South Africa including primary, disabled, and rehabilitation schools (Monama, 2011: 5). According to Human Rights Watch (2001), girls are sexually abused, harassed, assaulted, and even raped by both teachers and male learners. It is not only girls suffering sexual abuse; boys are also sexually abused by both male and female teachers (Matlala, 2011: 5). These sexual activities occur in school premises: in toilets, empty classrooms, and hallways.

The sexual abuse of children, particularly improper sexual relationships between school children and their teachers, is on the rise in South Africa. Most sexual abuse incidents remain unchallenged (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Such incidents traumatise learners and render the school environment unsafe. Human Rights Watch's (2001) findings indicate that the situation is worsened by the fact that reported cases are not given immediate attention. As a result, learners suffer the

effects of sexual abuse in silence; resorting to submission in order to survive. The culprits walk free and are able to move from one school to another, perpetuating the behaviour.

Although men are most likely to abuse children sexually, women commit approximately 14% of offenses reported against boys and 6% of offenses reported against girls (Ferrara, 2002). It implies that not only male abusers are paedophiles, women are also sexually attracted to boys. Moreover, approximately 30% of child abusers are relatives of the child, most often fathers, uncles or cousins; around 60% are other acquaintances such as friends of the family, babysitters, or neighbours. At most, 10% of abused children indicate that the abuser was a stranger.

Just as female learners are abused by their teachers, male learners are sexually abused by their teachers (Kupelian, 2006). A female teacher in New Jersey appeared at the Superior Court accused of engaging in sexual intercourse with a thirteen-year-old male learner. At one of the private schools in Limpopo Province, a forty-five-year-old male deputy principal was arrested; accused of allegedly sodomising a fourteen-year-old male learner. In Gauteng Province (South Africa), another deputy principal at a secure care school for the rehabilitation of delinquents appeared in court; accused of raping a seventeen-year-old female learner (Monama, 2011: 5). This is an indication that both male and female learners are sexually abused by those in positions of authority in schools.

This is a matter of concern given the plethora of acts, policies, and procedures that the government has put in place to prevent such behaviour. Schools are supposed to be places of safety (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Given that they are not, one has to ask 'why?' Teachers, acting 'in loco parentis', are expected to put the needs of children before their own (Higson-Smith, 2003). As bearers of this authority they should, amongst other things, accept responsibility for the creation of a safe teaching and learning environment in which the rights of learners are protected, promoted, and respected. Why are some teachers not accepting this responsibility?

Teachers are trusted with the responsibility of protecting learners but instead there is widespread sexual abuse at schools. Teachers and education authorities fail to protect learners because they lack resource capacity, proper reporting and confidentiality procedures (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The lack of capacity delays disciplinary actions and perpetrators use this opportunity to silence their victims with threats of violence (Higson-Smith, 2003).

Research on the causes of sexual abuse is usually either psychological or sociological in nature; psychologically-oriented research typically focuses on the offender's individual characteristics (Dinwiddie, Heath & Dunne, 2000) and sociologically-oriented research focuses on contributing to our understanding of socio-cultural factors. Psychological research is typically aimed at the identification of common personality characteristics that would enable researchers to construct a generic profile of sex offenders. Informing this approach are two notions: one, that there might well be a set of fixed and stable personality traits common to all sex offenders and; two, that the existence of a generic profile could serve as a basis for the prevention of sexual offences. However, notwithstanding the range of studies conducted for this purpose, the range of research methods used, and the targeting of diverse population samples; findings have been contradictory and inconclusive.

Sociologists, on the other hand, focus on contextual and societal factors (Allen & Mannion, 2002), with specific reference to the identification and transmission – through history, families, media, and institutions – of gender roles and cultural mores. Informing sociological research on sexual abuse is the possibility that society might tacitly accept, and even encourage, aggressive sexual behaviour.

The reasons for the continuation and secrecy surrounding sexual abuse at schools could be culturally-based (socio-cultural and socio-economic). In this chapter, I present the definitions of sexual abuse, the socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectives, and the impact of sexual abuse, as well as the cultural conflicts involved in order to uncover the factors contributing to the silence around school-based sexual abuse. The information in this chapter serves as my theoretical base,

and is used as a frame of reference in the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

2.2 Defining sexual abuse

Abuse is the misuse of something; treating someone in an unacceptable manner, causing them pain or suffering; an unjust or corrupt practice; or the use of power or authority in a wrongful way to hurt or treat someone cruelly (Allen & Mannion, 2002). In line with this definition, sexual abuse could therefore be defined as an unwelcome (physical or verbal) sexual activity and could include, amongst other things, breast or genital touching; oral, anal, or vaginal penetration; displaying pictures related to sexual activities; sex-related conversations and jokes; as well as questions related to sex (Soanes, Hawker & Elliot, 2006).

Society has formulated a whole range of terms to describe improper sexual behaviour. To ensure a common understanding of the way in which the terms are used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

- *Sexual abuse*, also referred to as *molestation*, is the forcing of undesired sexual behaviour by one person upon another; hence *sexual offenders* are typically referred to as '*sexual abusers*' or, often pejoratively, as '*sexual molesters*' (Richter, Dawes & Higson-Smith, 2004). Molestation includes incestual activities (sexual abuse by a family member), which contribute to the likelihood of the victim being abandoned, beaten, terrorised, abused, or killed.
- *Sexual harassment* is a form of sexual abuse (physical, verbal and social) that is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent. The behavior constitutes an abuse of power by one individual or group over one another (DoE, 2002a: 74). An employee being coerced into a sexual situation out of fear of being dismissed, or a child submitting to a teacher's sexual advances for fear of being given a failing grade constitutes *sexual harassment* (Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, McIntyre & Harlow, 2004).

- *Sexual assault* is a form of sexual abuse (physical or verbal) whereby the perpetrator carries out an unlawful attempt or threat to injure another person. Rape is referred to as another form of sexual assault (Whealin, 2007).
- When a person uses his or her position of authority to compel another person to engage in an otherwise unwanted sexual activity, he or she is guilty of *sexual misconduct* (Soanes et al., 2006).
- *Child sexual abuse* is generally defined as contact between a child and an adult or a person who is older or in a position of control over the child, where the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or older person (Soanes et al., 2006).
- Child sexual abuse covers *any* behaviour by *any* adult towards a child to stimulate either the adult or child sexually. In addition to direct sexual contact, child sexual abuse also occurs when an adult indecently exposes their genitalia to a child, asks or pressures a child to engage in sexual activities, displays pornography to a child, or uses a child to produce child pornography (Richter et al., 2004).

In relation to the above definitions, Ferrara (2002) defines sexual abuse in three forms: intrusion, molestation and unknown. Intrusion is ascribed to oral, vaginal or anal penetration. Molestation is associated with actual contact of genital areas without evidence of intrusion. Unknown sexual abuse occurs when a child is exposed to sexual activities.

Although definitions of sexual abuse have been given above, Richter et al., (2004) argue that there is still a lack of agreement among professionals about these definitions. Professionals generally agree on contact and non-contact sexual abuse. Contact sexual abuse refers to any form of physically abusive sexual contact, ranging from non-genital and genital touching to vaginal, anal

intercourse or prostitute activities. Non-contact sexual abuse describes the acts such as that of exposing children to pornographic material.

Contact and non-contact child sexual abuse involve the dependent, immature child (Richter et al., 2004). Children are engaged in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend; there is no informed consent. Such activities sometimes violate social taboos regarding family roles. The perpetrator may engage the child without force. Sexual activities include kissing; touching in a sexual way against the victim's will; rape; attempted rape; sexual comments; and oral, anal and vaginal intercourse. In addition to the definitions of child sexual abuse given above, Richter et al., (2004) argue that although such activities cover a wide range of sexually-related acts, the primary act of child sex abuse ascribes to the stimulation of the perpetrator, which results in touching of a child's genitals. Their argument further indicates that the definitions of sexual abuse differ across cultures. The definitions of child sexual abuse are embedded in cultural practices. Cultural practices refer to the 'actions that are repeated, shared with others in a social group, and invested with normative expectations and with meanings or significance which go beyond the immediate goals of actions' (Richter et al., 2004: 5).

Cultural activities are based on a normative understanding of power relations between the genders (Ferrara, 2002; Richter et al., 2004). Therefore, abuse is strongly associated with the notion of power (Richter et al., 2004). Often, men are perceived to have the power to abuse women. This unequal power balance constitutes the normal relationship between males and females in patriarchal communities. What might be defined as 'good' will depend on what the social group perceives to be natural and moral; these 'good' activities are culturally appropriated and become part of the group's identity (Richter et al., 2004: 5). Children grow within this patriarchal ideology and imitate the behaviour of their elders; girls learn to accept intimidation dynamics as normal (Onyango, 2005). In Zulu and Xhosa cultures, to marry one's sister is a taboo; while in Southern Sotho and Tswana, they encourage what is called 'first cross marriage'. They encourage

siblings to marry each other because they believe that this type of marriage will keep wealth in the family. First cross marriages are common and mostly encouraged in royal families (Richter et al., 2004).

A cultural activity cannot be constructed in isolation. Its meaning is embodied within the context of institutions, beliefs and practices. If the performance of sexual activity is considered to be part of a particular community's culture, then the act is therefore cultural, regardless of the context in which it occurs. Cultural customs can sometimes embroil girls in non-consensual sexual activities (Clark, 2004).

In Zulu culture, for example, rape is contentious. A man may not ignore or leave a woman who initiates or invites him to engage in sexual activities (Krieg, 2007). This is the argument Zuma, the president of South Africa used in his rape trial. According to him, he was in court because of the cultural ignorance of the state prosecutor who did not know Zulu custom and traditions. If he did, Zuma implied, he would have realised that the matter could have been settled in the customary manner, by offering lobola (a bridal price) in payment for sex (Waetjen & Mare, 2010). He explained, moreover, that the complainant was in a state of sexual arousal and that this placed him, as a Zulu man, under the obligation to satisfy her needs.

'And I said to myself, I know, as we grew up in the Zulu culture, you don't leave a woman in that situation, because if you do then she will even have you arrested and say that you are a rapist' (Waetjen & Mare, 2010: 53).

During his trial, Zuma touched on matters of cultural etiquette that are typical of private domestic arrangements in a patriarchal culture or system. These matters include behaviour and property; the significance of dress and gesture; private financial transactions; and sexual messaging; which are meant to illustrate the power of women over men in the domestic setting (Waetjen & Mare, 2010).

Waetjen and Mare (2010) argue that, in attributing his views on women to a specific cultural tradition, Zuma based his argument on Zulu gender cultural norms and beliefs. In asserting his membership to a cultural group with distinctive patriarchal norms, Zuma designated the relationships between men and women as a matter of customary concern rather than that of liberal, universal, or humanist rights. In effect, according to these two writers, Zuma identified gender as a field of properties and etiquette in which the chaotic power of women is rationalised and domesticated through the moral codes of (patriarchal) culture. As a result Zuma was not found guilty.

Implied in this cultural typology is the notion of cultural diversity. Cultural research has uncovered multiple conditions under which certain norms, such as the reciprocity norm or the norm of altruistic punishment, have originated and evolved (Boyd, Gintis, Bowles, & Richerson, 2003). Ethical, religious, and political truths are therefore relative to the cultural identities of people. What is morally right for one group might well be morally wrong for another. Thus, in terms of cultural relativist theory, no one has the moral right to pass judgment on specific cultural ways of doing things (Akhter, 2006; Jackson, Cassere & Hardacre, 2002). Also, according to cultural evolutionists, contact between individuals of different cultural orientations is crucial to a better understanding of the reasons for differences in belief, behaviour, and cognitive processing (Yosso, 2005).

Zuma is a high status political leader; his actions might easily be imitated by his followers. Zulu ideology would also be part and parcel of daily life for children growing up and attending schools situated in such communities (Richter et al., 2004). Incidents of sexual abuse would be ignored and covered up. In contrast, in communities engaged with contemporary western ideas; policies are formulated to protect children against norms and practices that make them vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Irrespective of the public participation in drafting the Republic of South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and the Bill of Rights, the cultural diversity of South

Africa serves as a challenge for the implementation of laws and policies. Laws seem to be imposed from the top down but different cultures demand respect for their traditions, beliefs, and norms. They do not want Western ideologies to violate their cultural roots. The communities still value the uniqueness of their socio-economic and cultural heritage (Klug, 2000). This creates a conflict between cultural traditions and constitutional rights. The differing definitions of sexual abuse compound the problem; what is seen as sexual abuse in the constitution may be seen as a cultural practice that serves social justice by some of the African cultural communities and, as a result, children suffer the consequences of this confusion.

2.3 Socio-cultural perspectives on sexual abuse

The argument of this investigation rests upon the assumption that socio-cultural behaviour is one of the factors contributing towards the continuation of sexual abuse at schools and silence that surrounds it. What these factors are and how they affect sexual behaviour is the focus of sociological research on the subject. Sociologists' purpose is to describe and analyse human social behaviour and the origins, organisations, institutions, and development of human society (Soanes et al., 2006).

The premise on which most sociological theories rests is that individual behaviour is modified, regulated, or quantified by the cultural heritage of the group to which they belong. Allied to this premise is the notion that culture is transferred from one generation to the next and that the social harmony and survival of the group, tribe, or community depends on the cultural flow of values, norms, and beliefs (Ross, 2000). Any person who attacks, ignores, or undermines the particular values, norms, and beliefs of the group to which they belong threatens the cohesion of the group and would either be punished for the transgression or cast out of the group (Klug, 2000).

Allen and Mannion (2002) define culture as the customs, traditions, and civilisation of a particular society or group of people. It could also be defined as the socially inherited, shared, and learned ways of living possessed by members of social or other groups. Usually, according to Mulaudzi (2003), culture is a mix of values, beliefs, attitudes, and customs shared by a group of people and passed on from generation to generation.

It is culture which determines the way in which a community or society is organised, the way in which organisations and institutions operate, and how people treat one another (Yosso, 2005). Individual members of a group acquire their specific culture (or cultures) through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission. Culture is a form of social interaction accepted by a particular community (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). More often than not, culture is reflected in the material and non-material productions of particular groups of people (Yosso, 2005).

Sex and sexuality in African cultural tradition rests upon socio-economic (material) and socio-cultural (non-material) beliefs. The occurrence of sexual abuse is based on the socio-cultural factors of power, authority, age, and gender (Hunter, 2010). Children are trapped and silenced through socio-economic factors such as bribes, kindness, promises, and threats; while from the socio-cultural standpoint, children view sexuality as normal and natural (Dunkle et al., 2004).

However, culture is not static (Gómez-Quiñones, 1977). In fact, it is more than likely that the customs and norms associated with a particular group of people will have evolved over time. It follows that any custom or habit has the potential to change again and again if new contexts, circumstances, or challenges threaten the survival of the group concerned. Much of what is currently defined as sexual abuse, for example, used to be perfectly acceptable in times past.

Hules (2005), describing changed attitudes to sexuality moots that neither child sexual abuse nor rape was condemned or considered criminal in biblical times.

Moreover, parents and adults in ancient cultures commonly abused their wives and children, without any consequences for themselves. The abuse was kept secret; not because they were ashamed of their actions but because women and children were considered the property of their husbands and fathers.

In some black cultural traditions, sex and sexuality are regarded as the transmission of sexual substances between a male and female. Sexuality is seen as part of culture and has its own cultural tenets and structure. African traditional culture regards sex as part of nature; constituting part of life. This culture believes that sex can be practised by anyone irrespective of age or gender, and cannot constitute abuse (Thornton, 2003). Sexual desires are referred to as 'heated blood', which needs to be secreted. This belief is carried from generation to generation. It is not surprising that adolescents in some areas of the Limpopo Province, Archornhoek for example, are still bound by the cultural belief that man and woman exchange and mix blood together during sexual intercourse (Collins & Stadler, 2001).

Thornton (2003) argues that sexuality is a normal, healthy feature of all stages of the human lifecycle; including childhood. In black cultures such as the Xhosa-speaking Transkei region of the Eastern Cape, rural elders encourage *ukumetsha* (sweet-hearting). This activity was historically condoned in unmarried unions. Boys were allowed to sleep with girls through an indirect penetration of thighs without sexual intercourse (Wood, 2005). The boy's family are expected to offer an animal in exchange for this act, which is seen as a natural activity in a teenager's life. Christianity condemns '*ukumetsha*' practice (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). As a result, teenagers have gradually moved towards secrecy in engaging in sexual activities because of fear of their elders. Sexual activities are still regarded as a source of pleasure or excitement, which improve the male teenager's status; therefore sexual activities continue to occur in secrecy.

Some black rural cultures (particularly in KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa) practice *ukuthwala*; whereby young men abduct young

girls and take them to their homes. The man can invite his peers to assist him in carrying the girl if he experiences any form of resistance. Force can be applied and the man's peers can hold the girl down, assisting his penetration. The girl's family will be offered a cow in compensation (Wood, 2005). According to Wood (2005), in this culture, the act is not referred to as sexual abuse; instead it serves as an act that unites the girl and the man, or their two families.

Schools cannot be isolated from the social context in which they are located. Teachers use their age, authority, and powerful position to normalise learners' behaviour (Leach, Fiscian, Kadzimir, Lemani & Machakanja, 2003). The excessive power and authority invested in teachers can develop into the sexual abuse of learners. Despite the fact that the practice often occurs in schools, it is likely to be a reflection of the beliefs and norms of the surrounding culture (Akiba, Le Tendre, Baker & Goesling, 2002). Young girls are used to being exposed to violent acts; they accept sexual abuse by their teachers as part of their daily life and resort to silence (Leach et al., 2003).

The cultural belief that the sexual activities of children facilitate successful maturation (Ferrara, 2002) can worsen the situation. Since cultural behaviour is transmitted between generations (Onyango, 2005), children born in such communities who have learned about this behaviour are less likely to disclose sexual incidents. Sexual activities between teachers and learners, or between peers would not be considered abuse as it is socially acceptable (Hunter, 2010).

Socio-cultural beliefs about gender roles, and power imbalances in relation to age and gender and culture (Hunter, 2010) constitute social hierarchies between younger and older people, men and women; compelling learners to respect teachers as their elders and role models. They respond to teachers' sexual advances (Pattman, 2005) because of social cultural expectations, which force them to remain 'good' and passive. The formation of sexual abuse in South African schools (Moffett, 2006) is encouraged by the society's ignorance to such activities. The silence results in perpetrators not being punished. Consequently, statistics show

South Africa as having the highest incidents of rape and sexual violence in the world (Bhana, 2011).

Like female learners, male learners are also sexually abused because of power relations (Ferrara, 2002). In the past, male learners were more likely to remain silent than girls because of fear, shame, embarrassment, and the belief that boys should enjoy sex. The silence surrounding the formation of boys' sexual abuse leads to uncertainty over the extent of abuse.

In the school context, cultural beliefs that expose vulnerable teenagers to abuse are immoral and illegal (Harber, 2004). Teachers are expected to equip learners with knowledge of social values, gender equality, and sexual abuse (Pinheiro, 2006). Teachers are expected to create gender-friendly environments for teaching and learning. The South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2000) urges teachers to promote gender equity and refrain from illegal sexual activities with learners. Instead, some resort to abusing learners sexually. Factors such as economic, social power, and cultural inequalities in sexual violence (Unicef, 2010; USAID, 2009) constitute a toxic school environment. Such an environment increases learners' risk of sexual abuse.

A toxic environment (Bennett, 2000) is not conducive for teaching and learning activities because it renders school girls the property of their teachers, making them targets for rape and abduction. Learners who reject their teachers' sexual proposals are victimised. A gender-neutral school environment (Grant & Hallman, 2006) reduces the risk of teacher-learner sexual abuse. Cultural values, beliefs, and norms (bound by cultural traditions) affect schools; especially in the black rural areas (Unicef, 2010).

Unicef (2010) states that cultural values, beliefs, and norms – especially in black rural communities – affect schools because of the barriers to sexual discussions between adults and teenagers. Parents ignore the sexual pressures and challenges faced by teenagers (Maluleke, 2007). Teenagers will always be

regarded as children. Sex and sexuality in some black rural communities, VhaVenda for an example, cannot be discussed in public as they are taboo; elders discuss them only in metaphorical terms (Mulaudzi, 2003). Teenagers are reminded to stay secretive about sexual matters. Sexual activities are only communicated at initiation schools with respect to encouraging females to become obedient mothers and submissive wives. According to Maluleke (2007), teenagers are taught how to relate and respond to their partner during sexual intercourse. This practice tempts teenagers to experiment with what they have been taught and engage in secret sexual activities at an early age. Even girls who are forced to have sex with their elders may not talk about it to their parents because doing so could be construed as showing a lack of respect (Mulaudzi, 2003).

What is practiced in the VhaVenda black communities does not differ greatly from the black communities in Nyanga East (Mkhwanazi, 2010). Parents concentrate on teaching their children how to conduct themselves but, during their teaching, discussions about sex are avoided at all costs. Girls are merely informed not to sleep with boys, and there are no further discussions. Mkhwanazi (2010) further indicates that, at school level, children turn to their peers for more information on sexual matters. Sometimes the information is misleading because of a lack of appropriate knowledge. As learners develop through secondary school, they become more sensitive (Khamasi, 2001); they are self-conscious about their physical changes and easily experience emotional disturbances. Learners become easily absorbed as they try to understand themselves. They need intervention measures such as effective guidance and counselling programmes. These intervention measures will promote learners' self esteem, academic achievements and help them understand their problems during their development stages (Wambua & Khamasi, 2004b).

In the same breath, Mulaudzi (2003) argues that there is a cultural tradition of warning teenagers not to engage in sexual intercourse; surprisingly – at the same time – some girls are taught sexual intercourse activities at initiation school. This

contradiction can confuse teenagers, encouraging them to experience what they have been taught in privacy; which can result in teenage pregnancy or sexual disease.

Leclerc-Madlala (2002) and Varga (2003) indicate that some communities encourage child bearing at an early age because it is regarded as a mark of fertility and successful womanhood. These communities still believe that damages should be paid to the girl's family in compensation for a pregnancy. This belief contributes to the secretive sexual activities that lead to the wide spread of teenage pregnancies in rural African Schools (Morrell & Moletsane, 2000).

According to Murphy, Robinson and Koch (2008), proof of fertility is important to women in communities where the would-be groom or his family still have to pay 'lobola' for the woman he wants to marry. Lobola is not without strings; its purpose is to compensate the prospective wife's family for the loss of labour, and to oblige the would-be wife to produce children. In fact, 75% of women who participated in a South African survey on the practice of lobola indicated that a man who had paid lobola for his wife now 'owned' her and could demand sex whenever he chooses.

In Zulu culture, for example, discussions between adults and children emphasise the importance of good behaviour. According to their culture, sex at an early age is wrong. Teenagers keep their sexual relationships secret from their parents in order to comply with social expectations (Harrison, 2008). An appropriate behaviour is referred to as an acceptable act, which is not offensive or harmful. The social group will judge behaviour and deem whether it is acceptable; the transgression of what is referred to by the group as good behaviour would be considered as immoral (Beck & Earl, 2003).

Learners' behaviour (Ingham & Stone, 2002) is influenced directly and indirectly by, among others: social and media influences, the home environment, and parental issues, as well as legal rules formulated by the government. Learners'

behaviour at school also reflects what the child has been taught at home. If sexuality is discussed at an early age in the home and sexual activities are taught in school, learners who happen to be trapped in such activities are likely to disclose the incidents (Adams & East, 2002). Parents who are open to discussions are likely to be informed about incidents of sexual abuse (Rossouw, 2003).

The findings of a study conducted by Lebeso, Davhana-Maselesele and Obi (2011) in the rural villages of the Vhembe District (Limpopo Province) indicate that a lack of communication between parents and children makes teenagers vulnerable to early unexpected sexual practices and pregnancy, and the transmission of sexual diseases. The authors state that the occurrence of teenagers' sexual activities, including sexual intercourse, has increased tremendously; 56% of boys and 73% of girls are engaging in sexual activity. African cultures' (Cebekhulu, Bekisiska & Erulkar, 2001) lack of openness about sexuality leaves teenagers with no option but to be exposed to sexual activities through the media, television and films, magazines, and pornographic pictures; peer pressure; and teaching in school and by family members excluding parents. Irrespective of their level of exposure, teenagers still need to be well-informed about sexuality in order not to put themselves at risk. The secrecy around sexual abuse puts them at risk of being sexually abused.

The findings of a research conducted in the rural villages of the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province in 2002 indicate that teenagers aged between 13 and 19 years were found to have been sexually abused while at school. Male teenagers, about forty in number, reported to have been sexually abused by Roman Catholic priests (Adams & East, 2002). According to Dickson-Tetteth and Foy (2000) contributing factors to the abuse may include among others; lack of communication between teenagers and adults, learners and teachers; fear of adult disapproval and the unfriendly specialised service offered in health service centres.

It was said by Mulaudzi (2003) earlier in this chapter that cultural traditions in black communities prohibit sexual discussion between children and adults

because it is regarded as an act of disrespect. Investigations indicate that cultural values and beliefs also affect schools within those communities (Kirby, 2001). Learners are trapped in cultural traditions with some teachers being unwilling to discuss sex and sexuality.

Sexual abuse is worsened by the fact that adolescents face challenges with different issues, including sexuality and authority (MOEST, 2001). Learners lack adequate knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions. They lack courage and self-esteem and, as a result, they become socially and academically affected (Khamasi, 2007b). Therefore, the learners who were abused by priests in the Roman Catholic Church kept it secret; disclosing the matter only when they left school (Adams & East, 2002). Lebese et al., (2011) argue that sex and sexuality cannot be freely taught or discussed; the dialogue should be more prohibited than encouraged.

The problem of discussing sex and sexuality does not only affect African cultural traditional communities in Limpopo Province (South Africa). In some of the sub-Saharan countries, discussions of sexual intercourse are regarded by Kenya Christians as an offence (Mbunga, 2006). Open discussion of sex and sexuality among parents, teachers and youth is morally wrong. Caribbean societies and communities have deep rooted rural, cultural, and moral sexual taboos (CARICOM, 1999). Caribbean men maintain sexual patriarchal belief of controlling women (Chevannes, 2001). They use violent metaphors such as 'stabbing', 'nailing', or 'slamming' when referring to the penis while engaged in sexual intercourse. The silence around Caribbean sex and sexuality denies young girls sexual information and services, and the necessary resources for safer sex (CARICOM, 1999). In countries like the United Kingdom, teachers feel extremely uncomfortable when teaching about sex and sexuality because is attached to their cultural taboos (Evans & Tripp, 2006). Learners are left with no option except to abide with the cultural norms of the communities to which they belong.

2.4 Cultural socio-economic factors contributing to sexual abuse

In addition to the African cultural traditions that contribute to school-based sexual abuse, socio-economic factors are also considered to be one of the causes. Structural conditions such as poverty, culture, and class contribute to child sexual abuse (Wardlow, 2006). Although there is an inconsistent relationship between wealth and sexual abuse (Madise, Zulu & Ciera, 2007), the evidence shows that poor females are vulnerable to sexual activities at too young an age, and HIV/AIDS. Gendered poverty and chronic unemployment expose teenagers to multiple partners and teenage pregnancy. According to Jewkes, Penn-Kekana and Rose-Junius (2005), socio-economic status affects young women's vulnerability to rape. Those in the poorest regions of the world are more at risk than those in the wealthy ones (O'Farrell, 2001). The national picture is, however, puzzled by the fact that some of the wealthiest countries in sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa and Botswana) are amongst the most affected countries in the world; South Africa is experiencing a high scale of rape with over 50,000 incidents reported annually. Poor nations (Shelton, Cassell and Adetunji, 2005; Fenton, 2004; Richens, Imrie & Weiss, 2003) often become vulnerable to sexual abuse because they lack the resources to combat it. Poverty is further associated with illiteracy, gender inequality, and individuals' failure to negotiate for safe sex.

According to Murphy, Robinson and Koch (2008), cultural customs and gender norms could lock females into relationships where non-consensual sex is inescapable. Even if girls concede to forced sex, they suffer the abuse in silence because this might simply be their attempt to fit in or satisfy cultural and family expectations, or to prove their fertility. Child marriage is one example of such imprisonment. Sometimes young girls are sold into a marriage in exchange for money or other material gains (Krieg, 2007).

Young women are sexually abused even before they reach the age of eighteen (Dunkle et al., 2004). They are silenced and made weak by their cultural beliefs. The provision of gifts by male partners is used in exchange for sexual favours.

Young men use their hierarchical masculine power, making payments for sex to control their female partners (Hunter, 2005).

The hierarchical masculine power in communities is perpetuated by poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, and disrupted families (Hallman, 2004); especially in less advantaged communities where the unlicensed sale and consumption of alcohol is very high. Teenagers accept multiple unsafe sexual activities in exchange for bribes. According to Hallman (2004), teenagers brought up in these environments have such poor living conditions that they are left with little choice but to accept the bribes used to silence them.

Perpetrators, according to Richter et al. (2004), cover up their sexual abuse using gifts and money; some even use threats. Young children are bribed with small incentives such as sweets and chips, or in sums as small as fifty cents. Some learners are used by their families for financial gain. A school principal reported a tragedy whereby a father was sending his daughter out to prostitute as a source of income (Richter et al., 2004). The learner ignored schooling and instead enjoyed the money she received in exchange for sex. If it happened that she returned home without money, her father would punish or assault her. The above incident implies that learners become engaged in unprotected sexual abuse because of poverty, gender, and power inequalities (fear of their father in particular).

MacPhail and Campbell (2001) state that teachers also abuse learners sexually and offer incentives such as gifts, money, lifts, and cell phones in return for their silence. Children who grow up with the cultural beliefs and attitudes incumbent in black rural areas do not consider sexual activities as abuse, but as normal and natural behaviour (Ingham & Stone, 2002).

While sexual abuse is a feature of all social classes, Amadiume (2005) argues that poor socio-economic conditions could well increase the vulnerability of girls and women in the lower classes. It is possible, he argues, that these girls may allow, or

even invite, sexual advances from someone of a higher class; believing that this could improve her and her family's socio-economic position. Not only does the relative helplessness of young and adolescent girls in negotiating sexual matters or resisting sexual coercion increase their risk of contracting HIV, it may also result in unintended pregnancy (Murphy et al., 2008). If the girl is very young and her pelvis is not yet fully developed, she and her baby might even die during labour (Murphy et al., 2008).

Social context and cultural norms render African girls – especially those who are located in deeply poverty-stricken areas – vulnerable to many forms of sexual abuse including rape, disease, and death. The findings of Human Rights Watch (2001) have further indicated that schools are no longer regarded as places of safety because they are situated within a social context and culture that allow gender power inequality and the treatment of women as property. Together with taking advantage of these social values, male teachers misuse their power and authority to perpetuate learner sexual abuse (Leach et al., 2003). They take advantage of poverty and chronic unemployment in communities by providing economic means, such as money and gifts, to silence their victims (Hunter, 2009). In the same breath, this materialism-based sex makes learners vulnerable to HIV/AIDS as they have 'sold' their right to negotiate for safe sex.

Teacher/learner sexual abuse is identified as a widespread ongoing activity in rural African schools (Morrell & Moletsane, 2000). In a study conducted in Durban (South Africa), findings have indicated that learners who refuse to accept teachers' proposals are threatened. Teachers victimise those girls and their boyfriends. Some learners have suggested that single-sex schools could be the solution. However, this potential solution also raises serious concerns because – as indicated earlier (Adams & East, 2002) – even priests in Roman Catholic schools can no longer be trusted as truthful, faithful leaders. According to Adams and East (2002), in cases reported with supporting evidence, the teachers involved were charged; while in cases without supporting evidence, teachers were transferred to other schools and remained unpunished. This indicates that the reporting of

school-based sexual abuse with evidence can lead to the perpetrator being punished. Therefore, mechanisms for breaking the silence are a necessity.

Bhana and Pattman (2011) carried out an investigation in Kwa Zulu Natal regarding how South African teenagers aged between 16 and 17 in poor rural townships attach meaning to love and romance. Findings have revealed that love is based on socio-economic factors such as money and fashionable clothes. This situation reflects economic and social circumstances resulting from a history of apartheid, poverty, and sexual violence and coercion caused by gender inequalities (Human Science Research Council (HSRC), 2005). These communities live in brick dwellings in informal areas, surrounded by an environment of high unemployment. Poverty in this township contributes to young women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Investigations were also conducted at Inanda High School (Hunter, 2010). The school is situated in an informal settlement. Some families stay in slum areas in one room shacks; most dwellings are made from scrap material including metal, wood, steel, and plastic. The water supply and toilet facilities are shared in the community. Some households have a female head, either the mother or grandmother, and they depend on government grants and pensions.

The intertwining of love and material things in this socio-economic situation influences young people in how they strategise their relationships. Love is based on gender inequalities in economic and socio-cultural circumstances. A masculine provider with a high income who can offer lots of gifts has the privilege of engaging multiple partners (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). The presence of these informal settlements is an indication of poverty and chronic unemployment. Sexual activities are considered as a source of income, irrespective of the consequences. The implication here is that the sexual abuse of disadvantaged learners is conducted by advantaged young men. The more privileged engage in sexual activities with multiple women; due to their poverty, these women cannot turn a blind eye to sexual proposals.

Girls in poor rural communities engage in sexual activities with middle class partners based on their economic power (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). In the social hierarchy, masculinity is associated with money and a good life. As a result, girls attach this type of love to prestige and status, refusing to engage in sexual activities with farm boys from poverty-stricken families. They link love with material possessions.

Boys, on the other hand, do not engage with middle class girls. They associate with virginal, rural farm girls because they are attracted by their virginity and glamorous female bodies. Men in Kwa Zulu Natal link love with hardworking and respectful females (Hunter, 2010). In Zulu culture, successful men who have accumulated many cattle are referred to as 'big men' (Hunter, 2005). They have the privilege of marrying several women, have many children, and become successful household 'umnumzana' (head of the family). Furthermore, during the transformation period of wage labour (during the 1940s and 1950s), men with big wages gained more power and control as they occupied the position of bread winner (Silberschmidt, 2001). They engaged multiple partners because they could afford to support the 'umuzi' (homestead).

In contrary to men's earlier financial stability, during the 20th century there was high unemployment and low salaries (Silberschmidt, 2001); men and schoolboys faced the challenge of being unable to secure a single girlfriend because of a lack of money. At the same time, women were exposed to a world of work. They started to challenge men's right to engage in multiple sexual partners. Women demanded equality (50/50) and the right to engage in multiple partners. This practice led to the pleasures of openly celebrating sex.

On the other hand, girls who didn't work resorted to engaging in liaisons that were coupled with money. They engaged with old men, 'sugar daddies' that could provide for their socio-economic needs (Bourdieu, 1990: 399). This implies that sexual activities were based on material things. Sexual activities between girls and elderly men were regarded as a source of income.

Love is based on cultural beliefs. Findings point out that boys and girls have different opinions on love (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Love ideologies are based on the social tension through which love and materiality are connected. Girls are, therefore, trapped in sexual abuse based on socio-economic needs.

In some instances, however, chastity is valued more than fertility; according to Mulaudzi (2003), a virgin fetches a higher lobola price than a used woman. To keep the lobola price high, in the past every effort was made to protect a girl's chastity. Even now, virginity testing is common amongst the Xhosa, Zulu, and Vhavenda tribes (Hayhurst, 2005; Mulaudzi, 2003). Girls who fail the test are said to have 'shamed' their families and it is quite possible that she may never get married. Consequently, any form of sexual intimidation or sexual abuse is kept under wraps.

Farm girls too are trapped by the inequalities of the stereotypical relationships created by cultural beliefs (Hunter, 2010). Most young people in townships and rural areas have few opportunities to engage in discussions regarding love and gender due to the cultural traditions discussed in this chapter. In order to change young people's behaviour, proper guidance is needed in love related matters. (Bhana & Pattman, 2011).

2.5 Impact of sexual abuse

According to the literature review discussed in this chapter, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors make teenagers vulnerable to sexual abuse in schools. School-based sexual abuse has an impact on learners. Mkhwanazi (2010) mooted that learners who had experienced the trauma of childhood sexual abuse would be psychologically damaged for life. Sexual abuse interferes with a child's normal development and can result in secrecy, feelings of shame, and unplanned pregnancy (Grant & Hallman, 2006), which leads to economic stress (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein & Moletsane, 2006).

According to Hanzi (2006), sexual abuse could cause physical, psychological, cognitive, and social disorders. Psychological disorders such as depression; anxiety; substance abuse; low self-esteem; and suicidal thoughts, plans and behaviour; as well as sexually transmitted infections are typical symptoms of sexual abuse having taken place (Hunter, 2010). Physical symptoms include skin rashes, a high temperature, bleeding, and high blood pressure.

Cognitively, according to Fineran (2002), the academic performance of learners who have been abused deteriorates. Often, the abused learner struggles to concentrate on schoolwork, feels embarrassed or ashamed, and eventually drops out of school. In this sense, sexual abuse threatens the culture of learning and the morality of the nation (Ferrara, 2002; Cherrington & Breheny, 2005). Learners fighting amongst each other for a teacher's sexual attentions, as well as the changes in teacher/learner relationships resulting from sexual abuse (Mbilizi, 2001: 3), undermine school discipline (Sikes, 2006) and the quality of teaching and learning (Kgosana, 2006: 21).

The effects of child sexual abuse could include guilt and self-blame, flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia, fear of things associated with the abuse (including objects, smells, places, doctor's visits, etc.), self-esteem issues, sexual dysfunction, chronic pain, addiction, self-injury, suicidal ideation, somatic complaints, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety (Levitan, Rector, & Goering, 2003). It could also cause mental illness including borderline personality disorder and dissociative identity disorder, and a propensity to re-victimisation in adulthood, amongst others (Dinwiddie et al., 2000; Messman-Moore & Long, 2000).

2.6 Cultural conflict perspective

Although African cultural traditions are valued in black communities and transmitted through the generations, liberal laws coded in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a) consider these traditions to be a contributing factor in the vulnerability of teenagers to sexual abuse and

exploitation (Onyango, 2005). Policies drawn from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) have therefore been put in place with the aim of protecting and promoting learners' educational and equal rights; these include, among others, the South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996), the Employment of Educators Act (Act 76 of 1998), and the South African Council of Educators (SACE) (Act 31 of 2000).

Understanding why some cultures change when others don't is difficult. In fact, accurately accessing cultural meaning is a complex process. Tribal African cultures are typical of closed groups: they cling to their customs regardless of how well these still serve them simply because traditional ways of being make them feel safe (Waetjen & Mare, 2010).

Open cultures regard challenges or threats as opportunities for change. They are open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. They accommodate rather than assimilate those who are different from them. The idea of a global village where diversity is the norm rather than the exception is typical of open cultures (Gonzales & Moll, 2002). In such a culture, universal values that ensure societal order and cohesion are complemented by individual values that protect minority cultures and rights. It is in cultural groups like this that each person is likely to have more than one culture (Boyd et al., 2003).

It is the differences in the dynamics of open and closed cultures that lie at the heart of Akhter's (2006: 15) claim that culture is a 'double-edged sword, sometimes promoting and sometimes inhibiting the well-being of the group'. Cultural customs, traditions or views – on gender roles, for example – may render women and children vulnerable to sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS (Jackson et al., 2002). Taboos can also result in individual members of the tribe blindly accepting what their elders tell them, because questioning tradition could result in punishment or exile. In open groups, on the other hand, people are free to make their own choices and freely express their opinions. Taken too far, such freedom could well lead to an increase in licentious behaviour or anarchy.

This is an indication that schools differ according to the communities in which they find themselves. Those which are bound by tribal African culture value their beliefs as a source of social justice; change could violate their traditions. On the other hand, schools which are referred to as having an open culture are open to discuss challenges and changes, which will shape them and serve their social justice (Akhter, 2006: 15).

Potentially, most people could have more than one culture. In fact, people often need more than one culture in order to make their way through the intricate maze of societal structures in which they exist. For example, a rural child who attends an urban school would have at least two cultures: his own and that of his school. A school's location or the physical structure of its buildings could be a reflection of its culture; as well as reflecting the intersections between adults and students (Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001), learners' and teachers' perceptions of the school (Gonzales & Moll, 2002), the availability and quality of teaching and learning resources, school size, academic performance, a sense of safety or danger, and levels of trust and respect. All these attributes could also have an effect on the development or maintenance of specific school cultures (Akhter, 2006: 15).

School cultures are not pre-packaged: they develop over time as teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failure. Culture refers to a form of social interaction that is learned, shared and accepted by a group of people (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). In this sense, school management is cultural, as are stakeholder attitudes and the interactions between members of the school community (Yosso, 2005). In the long run, all of these experiences shape the norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols, songs, and stories that make up the persona of the school (Akhter, 2006: 15).

Where there is diversity, there is the potential for conflict. While conflict is a natural feature of all human societies; its origin and causes differ widely, as do the

ways in which different societies respond to or try to resolve it. Conflict could, for example, be triggered by a scarcity of resources, or the attempts to control or deny control over resources. In this sense, according to Yosso (2005), conflict is rooted in the material world. According to realist conceptions, conflicts over scarce resources are relatively easy to resolve; provided there are no significant power imbalances between the parties concerned. If there are, conflict might well ensue.

Conflict could, however, be triggered by culture; based on the incompatibility of goals, values, beliefs, or perceptions (Yosso, 2005). Differing opinions on what should or should not be taught at schools, the regulation of media freedoms, and different opinions regarding aggression and sexuality are typical of this kind of conflict. Conflicts like these, which have their origin in people's subjective perceptions, are much more difficult to resolve because they require some kind of 'inter-subjective' understanding of the conflict and its probable causes.

Cross-cultural and cross-class conflicts belong to the second category. The more complex and differentiated a society, the more likely it is that conflict will arise between subcultures. Often such conflicts occur simultaneously at many different levels within professions, institutions, or work organisations. It may even occur within individuals who, by virtue of their overlapping and multiple group membership, are themselves multicultural and find it difficult to choose what is 'right' or 'wrong' (Yosso, 2005). One such conflict, which is the focus of social capital theory, regards the status of and access to the kind of knowledge that is crucial to upward social mobility.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Amadiume (2005) describes sexuality in terms of modernist and African religious traditions; acknowledging the existence of ambiguities regarding sexual behaviour in post-colonial African society, ascribing it to the inevitable mix of modernist and traditional African mores and cultures. Sexuality in Africa is centered more upon

prescribed sexual practices than on individual sexual freedom that could open up the chance for severe resistance to the changes and challenges brought about by modernity. Women have become subservient to their husbands as a result of male power over female sexuality. Wives compete with daughters and younger females with the intention of securing their husbands. Male sexual controllers display extreme patriarchal power towards their women.

According to liberal laws, the above practices are forms of serious sexual abuse. Liberal laws demand the right to sovereignty, and judicial and political equality, irrespective of gender. Law enforcement agencies will not hesitate to take steps, however drastic, against offenders for any such practices. Discussions of sexuality and sexual behaviour are normal, but forcing a woman or child to have sex against their will would be construed as sexual abuse or rape (Amadiume, 2005).

African culture, beliefs and traditions support the cutting of female genitals for sexual pleasure and reproductive organ elongation; and the twirling of fire sticks on the inside of the woman's thighs during the 'ritual lighting of a marriage'. These types of cultural practice are viewed as serious sexual abuse by western laws but remain acceptable in some traditional African societies, where male dominance still reigns supreme. Practices like these put women under the spotlight and create the worldwide view of all women in Africa as being sexually repressed, sexually inferior and sexually mutilated; because the idea of sexual equality for girls is directly rejected in some societies (Amadiume, 2005: 6).

Urbanites and Western globalists regard themselves as superior to the uninformed or primitive African societies. They reject traditional African rituals. The advance of capitalism has raised concerns about gender, class, and race; further complicating any kind of cultural discourse. Carefully crafted progressive laws, such as the Children's Act of 2005, have not succeeded in preventing multiple killings and potentially deadly child-related incidents like rape, circumcision, and virginity testing (Rapport and Overing, 2000).

Despite the South African constitution being regarded as the most liberal and westernised constitution in the world, sexual abuse continues to take place in various forms. In his trial Zuma ignored the constitution and chose to use culture to defy structures of power by addressing the court in his native Zulu tongue (Waetjen and Mare's, 2010: 58).

Another high profile incident where liberal law was ignored concerns the sexual harassment of a young woman by ANC chief whip Mbulelo Goniwe (Xhosa) in 2006. According to the liberal laws in this country, this act warrants a charge but the perpetrator was let off the hook, being given a (culturally-based) fine of cattle to pacify the victim in the public sphere (Waetjen & Mare, 2010: 60). It would appear that liberal laws and the right to sovereignty in terms of political equality irrespective of gender have not been properly applied in the above cases.

The new world, with its alien and abstract political realities of modernity, is unable to stop disenfranchised communities from returning to the indigenous ways of doing things that – they believe – help them to remain stable and keep political authority of the '*amakhosi*'(chiefs) (Maud, 2008).

Undoubtedly, describing sex and sexuality in terms of modernist and African traditions exposes the existence of the ambiguities that create confusion in the post-colonial African society, due to its mix of modernist and traditional African mores and cultures. When it comes to law enforcement, the patriarchal framework seems to enjoy first preference.

Addressing the ambiguities outlined above, Cowan, Dembour and Wilson (2001) argue that society exaggerates that culture and rights are at odds, with no possibility of reconciliation. Such people believe that there is no common ground that could lead to social transformation. If this is the case, it would mean that African women would have to do away with their cultural traditions and beliefs before enjoying their rights as stated in the liberal laws (Tamale, 2008).

According to Schech and Haggis (2000), cultures are fluid and interactive rather than distinct from each other. Cultures are inconsistent; in a state of flux, adopting and reforming. They are driven by economic forces. Therefore, some cultures – exploited, submerged and depreciated as they may be – are liberal and empowering. Both universalists and relativists are touched by all these qualities of culture.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (U.D.H.R) gives every person the right to freely participate in the cultural life of their community (Karim & Wayland, 2001). The right to culture is an integral part of other fundamental rights articulated in the U.D.H.R. such as freedom of conscience, expression, and religion. Norms, values, inspiration and interest of Western culture of a specific stage of evolution are reflected in this right.

The emanation of human rights from a specific history is an indication that many cultural norms and values are also rights. They are also supportive and reinforce women's rights. Despite the fact that U.D.H.R recognises the right to culture and its development and enforceability (Karim & Wayland, 2001); the potential for culture to liberate women in Africa is often buried or ignored, with cultural practices such as genital mutilation being referred to as barbaric. In a similar vein, in modernist cultures, gynecologists may perform an episiotomy during child birth (where the perineum is cut and sewn) but this practice is not referred to as sexual abuse (Amadiume, 2005).

According to Mutua (2001), Africans were encouraged to reject traditional beliefs and values, and adopt the civilised ways of their masters during colonial times. An-Na'im and Hammond (2002) argue that instead of culture being rejected, it should be regarded by human rights societies in Africa as the best vehicle for the transformation and protection of rights.

Culture is not static but constantly changing and responding to socio-economic and political conditions (Tamale, 2008). It needs to be approached in a dynamic

and non-ritualised way. The linkages between the positive cultural aspects and the emancipation of women need to be carefully examined. One should interpret the underlying African cultural values within the changing socio-economic circumstances. People should speak freely about culture. The approach should start with supporting culture; appreciating the limitations of cultural reductionisms and the negative practices therein. Critical questions relating to human rights such as equality, equity, non-discrimination, and tolerance should be embraced. The radical transformation of women's sexuality can only happen within culture (Tamale, 2008; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

Taking into account the perception that cultural beings are influenced by an infinite number of forces that shape their mental outlook and perspectives on life (Tamale, 2008; Cowan et al., 2001), there is a dire need for a change in people's behaviour in order to clear a 'new path' towards a more equitable life for women. To achieve this, we must recognise the inherent tensions between the abstract ideal (notion) and its implementation (actualisation) in the real world.

It is imperative to strike a balance between principle and practice in the implementation process (Amadiume, 2005) by expanding sexual awareness while incorporating the positive messages from cultures, religions, politics and science; without opting for the wholesale use of one at the expense of another. There is a need for a broader perspective (Mutua, 2001), which would gradually lead to a social behavioral change.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the sociological perspectives on the nature and causes of sexual abuse. It has been indicated, moreover, that the influence of socio-cultural factors cannot be ignored. There is sufficient evidence that sexual behaviour is influenced by changing gender roles and cultural mores. According to the information gathered in this chapter, African traditional beliefs, power and gender imbalances, a lack of openness and communication regarding sex, closed

cultural traditions, poverty and chronic unemployment, unfriendly specialised health services centres, and the misinterpretation of love and romance based on socio-economic materialism, as well as misleading information regarding sex are all contributing factors in the continuation of sexual abuse and the secrecy that renders children vulnerable.

In South Africa, the increase in sexual abuse could also be symptomatic of cultural resistance. A number of theoretical perspectives on the ways in which resistance could be overcome and value changes effected have been presented. There is an indication from the literature review that a conflict exists between the cultural and liberal laws based on their interpretations of sexual abuse. This conflict implies that there is a need for culturally-based intervention strategies to curb the problem.

In Chapter 3, I present the findings of my case study. The school and community contexts within which sexual abuse occurs are described, highlighting what I consider the most probable causes for school-based sexual abuse. I also describe the extent and severity of the problem as revealed by the analysis of the data.

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CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction and purpose

Teachers are the bearers of authority in schools. The way they behave determines whether the school climate and culture will be positive or negative. A positive school culture gives teachers greater job satisfaction (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, it stimulates personal growth and academic success, and motivates all members of the school community to teach and learn at optimum levels. In other words, a positive school culture yields positive educational and psychological outcomes for students and staff alike (Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001). A negative school culture, on the other hand, prevents optimal learning and development.

As indicated in Chapter 1, teachers are required by law, as well as by the SACE (South African Council of Educators) Code of Conduct, to protect every learner's right to education and to create a school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. By forcing or bribing learners to have sex with them, teachers abuse their power and authority. Learners enter into a relationship of trust with teachers and any violation of that trust would constitute abuse. Such teachers are also undermining learners' human rights – their right to a safe environment, to human dignity, and to education. In engaging in sexual activities with a learner, irrespective of it being consensual or not, teachers are committing a statutory offence (Akiba et al., 2002).

In terms of the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998), teacher/learner sexual abuse is considered to be serious misconduct. Any form of misconduct could lead to the dismissal of the teacher involved. Specifically, the Act warns in Article 17(1) that a teacher who commits an act of sexual assault on a learner will be charged; that teachers may not assault, physically harm or engage in sexual relationships

with a learner at the school where s/he is employed. In Article 18(g) the Act states moreover, that a teacher could be charged with misconduct if s/he misuses her/his position in the Department of Education or in a school, for her/his personal interests.

The South African Council of Educators Act (RSA, 2000) urges teachers to acknowledge the noble calling of their profession by, inter alia, adhering to the SACE Code of Conduct. The Code reminds teachers that they are obliged to respect the dignity and the constitutional rights of learners, to acknowledge their uniqueness and specific needs, and to assist them in the realisation of their potential and the acquisition of sound moral values, such as those on which the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a) is founded. The Code further urges teachers to exercise authority with compassion, not to humiliate learners, not to abuse their position for personal gain, to speak and behave in ways that warrant learners' respect, and to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the safety of all learners.

In terms of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996b), teachers are expected to act 'in loco parentis', putting the needs of children before their own. Parents entrust the custody and control of their children to teachers (Duke, 2002). As bearers of this kind of authority teachers should, amongst other things, accept responsibility for the creation of a safe teaching and learning environment, an environment in which the rights of learners are protected, promoted and respected. In terms of Section 16 (3) of this Act, the primary responsibility for this rests on the shoulders of school principals. It is up to them to ensure that learners are not subjected to criminal injury, assault, harassment, maltreatment, degradation, humiliation or intimidation from teachers or other learners. It is principals who are tasked with the responsibility of protecting learners' human dignity and ensuring that teachers do the same.

As regards behaviour that could be classified as sexually inappropriate, the SACE Code stipulates that any behaviour that undermines gender equality, constitutes

abuse, whether physical or psychological, including sexual harassment, improper physical contact or any form of sexual relationship with learners, is unacceptable. Inappropriate sexual behaviour is defined in the South African Sexual Offences Act (RSA, 2007), which is specifically aimed at protecting children and mentally disabled persons against sexual exploitation and exposure to pornography. In terms of this Act, all forms of sexual penetration without consent, sexual intercourse between an adult and a child younger than eighteen years, and even consensual sex between children under the age of eighteen, are regarded as criminal offences. Consequently, both parties may be charged and prosecuted if found out (Makwabe & Davids, 2007: 14).

This chapter aims to determine to what extent these laws and codes are upheld and/or ignored in the schools selected as my case studies. It is in the presentation and discussion of case study data that I hope to create a sense of the nature and extent of school-based sexual abuse in the area where I collected my data. I hoped also that, in the analysis of the data, I would uncover some of the reasons for the continued occurrence of school-based sexual abuse.

3.2 Case study context

Informed by my working hypothesis (*see Chapter 1*), namely that sexual abuse might be culturally based, I used culture and context to frame my presentation and discussion of sexual behaviour and attitudes in the sampled schools. I therefore include a description of the community and school contexts within which the sexual abuse problem was investigated.

The six schools selected as cases for the purpose of my study are all located in Senwabarwana, in the Blouberg municipality (*see Figure 1*). The people of Blouberg, a deep rural, isolated area of Limpopo, are desperately poor, and in many cases, steeped in what can best be referred to as 'traditional African ways'. Senwabarwana, one of the rural areas in Blouberg, where I am a school principal, is more than a hundred kilometres from the city of Polokwane. Most of the

villages in Senwabarwana have limited access to water and/or electricity. Although some families have been fortunate enough to be allocated

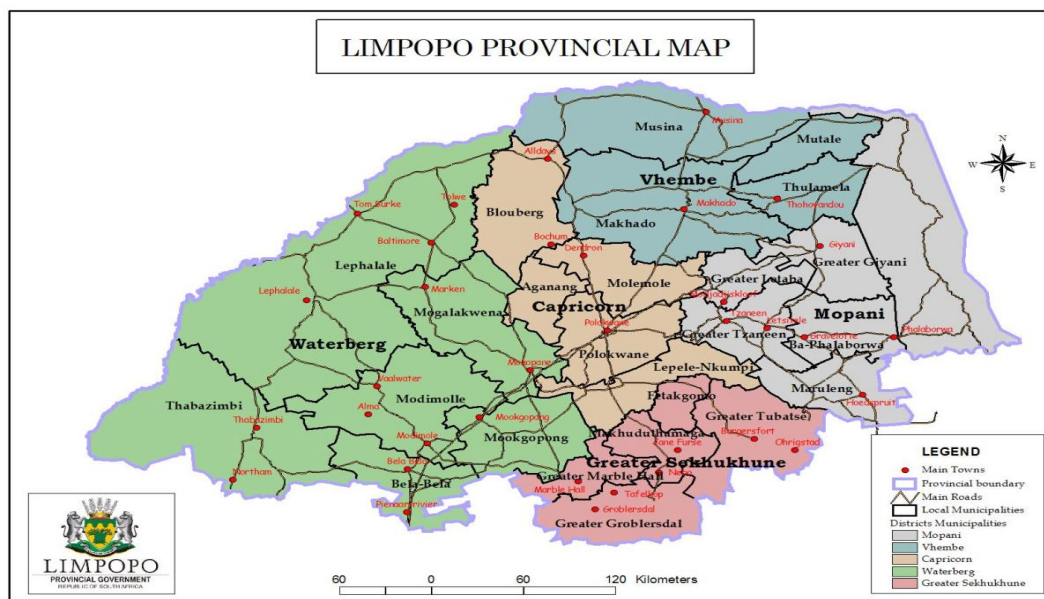


FIGURE 1: Districts and local municipalities in the Limpopo Province

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, many families still live in clay or mud huts. Most of the adults in this area are unemployed and depend on government grants for their survival. Those who do have jobs typically work on farms, earning barely enough to make ends meet. Most of the adults have never learnt to read or write and opportunities for learning to do so now are basically non-existent. There is no adult learning centre in the vicinity, but even if one existed, they would not be able to afford it.

The six schools in my sample are all regarded as ‘disadvantaged’ or, in terms of government terminology, as *Quintile One schools*. Learners at a Quintile One school do not have to pay school fees, and the government provides them with food. Learning facilities at these schools are often sub-standard, primarily because there is no electricity. Because of this, neither teachers nor learners have access to computers. Moreover, very few schools have standardised libraries, computer rooms, or science rooms/laboratories.

3.3 Case selection

As indicated in Chapter 1, I opted for a case study design because it afforded me the opportunity to focus on the interaction of factors and events that have, over time, shaped the values and beliefs directing sexual behaviour in the community and schools where my study took place (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Given the sensitive nature of the problem I was investigating, I knew that I had to get secondary school principals interested in and involved in my research. If not, they might either refuse me access to their school, or undermine my efforts to uncover the truth about sexual abuse practices. As I am also a secondary school principal in the Senwabarwana district, I have a relatively amicable relationship with other principals in the area. During one of the meetings of secondary school principals, I therefore requested a platform to tell other principals about my intended study.

The principals at the meeting acknowledged that teacher/learner sexual abuse is a problem, and suggested that I should conduct my investigation in all the secondary schools in the circuit. I explained that, due to the limited time at my disposal, this would not be possible. I therefore gave principals the opportunity to volunteer. From the volunteers I selected three schools whose learner enrolment is high, and three whose enrolment is low.

Having identified the schools that were to serve as cases, I had a brief meeting with their principals. I told them that, as part of my research, I would have to conduct a one-on-one interview with them to determine the nature and extent of the problem in their particular schools. I promised not to conduct any investigations during school hours and not to disrupt the schools in any way. For confidentiality reasons, participating schools and learners are not named. Instead, I refer to the schools by means of alphabetical letters and the learners by means of pseudonyms.

I indicated moreover, that I would need their help in identifying thirty Grade 11 learners who would be willing to participate in my study. I explained that I specifically wanted to use Grade 11 learners because they have been at school long enough either to know about, or to have personally experienced sexual harassment or abuse. Besides, Grade 11 learners are mature and literate enough to provide me with accurate information. Finally, Grade 11 learners do not have to prepare for an external examination; consequently they would have sufficient time to complete the questionnaire I would provide.

Having obtained the principals' cooperation, I followed the prescribed procedures to gain access to the schools. This included applying for permission from the Department of Education to conduct research in the identified schools (*see Annexure 2*), obtaining provisional ethical clearance from the university through which I was studying (*see Cover Page*), and obtaining written permission from the parents (*see Annexures 7 and 8*) to involve their children in my research project.

3.4 Case study data collection

As indicated in Chapter 1, I decided to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect, analyse and present my research data (White, 2003). The use of primarily qualitative methods helped me to uncover the subjective meanings (Merriam & Associates, 2002) that principals and learners attach to teacher/learner sexual abuse. It also gave me the opportunity to approach sexual abuse issues from an interpretive angle, which enhanced my own understanding of its occurrence in schools (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The use of quantitative methods, on the other hand, not only helped me get a sense of the extent of the problem, locally and provincially, but also enabled me to determine the accuracy (or otherwise) of my working hypothesis (White, 2003), namely that sexual abuse in rural communities might be a form of cultural resistance.

Having gained access to the schools, I made appointments with the relevant principals to interview them and to issue the questionnaire to participating

learners (*see Table 3.1*). In order to avoid inconveniencing the schools concerned, I arranged to conduct the principals' interview and distribute the learner questionnaire on the same day. The questionnaires were completed by learners in my presence, after school, between 15h15 and 16h30. This arrangement also saved me time and money as the schools are situated far away from one another. Moreover, learners stay after school for study purposes, so they were not inconvenienced in any way.

TABLE 3.1: Data collection schedule

Name of school	Date	Principal	Learners
School A	18 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30
School B	19 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30
School C	20 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30
School D	21 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30
School E	25 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30
School F	26 February 2010	14h00-15h00	15h15-16h30

My starting point at every school I visited was the principal's office. On my way there, I took note of measures taken to ensure the safety of teachers and learners, the state of the buildings and school premises, and the appearance and attitudes of teachers and learners. I also paid particular attention to the way I was welcomed and the way in which the principal, teachers and learners related to each other. These observations, which were recorded in my field notes, gave me a sense of the climate and culture of the particular school which, I believe, could either promote or prevent the occurrence of improper sexual behaviour at the school.

I used a semi-structured interview schedule (*see Annexure 9*) as the basis for my interviews with school principals. Although I probed deeper into issues where applicable, the questions I asked were more or less the same. I did not use a tape

recorder, because it might have intimidated interviewees and they might not have felt free to express themselves. I did, however, ask principals' permission to take notes. In the end the interviews were more like two-way conversations, with principals freely sharing information that they felt was relevant to the identified problem and making inputs or recommendations on how to address the problem in their schools.

On completion of my interview with the principal, I usually asked them to accompany me to the classroom where identified learners were waiting for me. After introducing me to the learners the principal returned to their office. This procedure was followed with the intention of gaining learners' trust: if I was the only adult present they would, I hoped, answer the questions honestly, without fear of reprisal or intimidation. To avoid legal repercussions, learners first had to hand in their parents' permission letters before I personally issued the questionnaire to them. Questions were phrased in two languages, learners' home language (Sepedi) and English, which is their medium of instruction. They could choose the language in which they wanted to respond to the questionnaire.

Before I issued the questionnaires, I explained to the learners what I meant by the terms 'sexual abuse' and 'sexual harassment' (*see Chapter 2*). After I had handed out the questionnaire I read through it with the learners, explaining exactly what was expected from them in answering each question. Although the process was time-consuming, learners understood what was expected from them, and not a single questionnaire was spoilt.

The questionnaire consists of a mix of closed and open-ended questions (*see Annexure 11*) divided into four sections. Answers to questions in the first section provided me with information about the group of learners who completed the questionnaire. Answers to questions in the second part indicated the extent to which participating learners had been sexually abused – directly or indirectly. Answers to questions in the third part not only suggested reasons for learners engaging in sexual activities with their teachers, but also made me aware of the

impact that such abuse had on the learners and the schools concerned. Answers to questions in the last part gave me a sense of learners' understanding of their human rights and how these should be protected in a school situation.

Learners were free to answer all the questions on the questionnaire without fear of being identified. They were not required to put their names on the questionnaire and they dropped completed questionnaires in a box on their way out of the classroom. Nobody else handled the questionnaires except the learners themselves. There was therefore no risk of anyone knowing which questionnaire was completed by which learner.

3.5 Case study data

The data I collected during my visits to each of the selected schools is presented in three parts. First, I describe the school context, using my field notes on school appearance, culture and climate as a basis. I then present a summary of the interview I had with the principal. Finally, I present a report, interspersed with tabular information, on the data I collected by means of the learner questionnaire. Typical of qualitative research, I include as part of the data my own questions and comments on what was emerging from the data itself.

3.5.1 School A Profile

The school is situated in a rural village very close to Thabananhlana Mountain but far from neighbouring villages. There is no road to the village or the school. Consequently adults cannot be transported to white farms as labourers, as is the case in many villages in this area. Very few of the villagers can read or write which was evident from the permission forms I required them to sign. Most of them could not even write their names so they indicated with a cross where they were supposed to sign, and asked someone who could, to write their names on the form for them.

Poverty and illiteracy levels are high. Villagers have not as yet been supplied with RDP houses and traditional mud huts are the norm. The huts are very small, the yards being fenced with cut-off branches. Water is very scarce and people use wheelbarrows to fetch water from streams. There is no electricity and most families live on government grants. Those who do not have the correct identify documents are not able to receive government grants.

The school was clean when I arrived, but it was not properly fenced. There is an irregular electricity supply at the school and water is scarce. Cell phone reception is very poor. Teachers' cell phones were piled on a particular window sill to attempt to find good network reception. There is a shortage of classrooms, furniture, library, and science laboratories. The school does not have computers; learners share desks, with up to six learners at one desk. The principal and teachers utilise a single classroom as an office, staffroom, and library, but on my arrival, the teachers vacated the room to give us some privacy. Regardless of all these challenges, teachers and learners appeared to be disciplined and friendly and I was warmly welcomed by them all.

3.5.1.1 School A Principal interview

When I asked the principal whether he knew of any instances of sexual abuse in Limpopo schools, he indicated that he knew of teachers engaging in sexual activity with learners elsewhere in other schools in Limpopo. In justifying his answer, he referred to two incidents that occurred in the Senwabarwana cluster. In the first incident a 'whistle blower' (*unknown person who was aware of the incident*) informed the media that the principal of one of the secondary schools in the cluster regularly abuses girl learners. Although teachers and some community members were aware of the situation, the matter was kept under wraps. Even when two of the girls fell pregnant, no action was taken: the parents, who allegedly had been 'paid' in groceries and money, refused to talk to the media and prevented their daughters from giving evidence. According to the parents, the

principal in question was taking care of his children born to the girls; hence there was no reason to punish him.

Indications are that the sexual abuse was kept secret due to socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. The principal occupies a high position of authority at school and is respected by parents and the community. Since he gave them groceries and money, they would not expose him. The physical survival of their family was more important to them than the dignity of their daughter, or so it seems.

In the second incident, a learner from another secondary school was admitted to hospital after she had gone to have an abortion which had been paid for by the man who had impregnated her – one of her teachers. The teacher was never reported. The girl's parents were divorced and, according to the girl's father, the mother condoned her daughter's 'affair' with the teacher concerned. The secrecy around learner sexual abuse affected the family because of cultural gender roles. The father, as head of the family, accused the mother of failing to carry out her responsibility to take care of the daughter.

When asked whether any such incidents ever occur at his school, Principal A indicated that he had discovered some time ago that they do and that the incidents were not reported to him. According to him, he first became aware of this when some girl learners suddenly dropped out of school. On further investigation he discovered that they were pregnant and that their parents had advised them not to return to school. He had no idea who had impregnated the girls. In an attempt to protect their right to education, he persuaded the parents to let the girls come back to school. They refused. It was only when the police visited the school to serve summons for child maintenance on six of the teachers that he realised who the perpetrators were.

According to the principal, there was nothing he could do because the abuse had not been officially reported. One of the guilty teachers asked for a transfer to

another school, but the rest are still staff members at the school. The principal's management style raises a concern. He has been assigned with the task of managing and leading the school (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), yet he only discovered teacher-learner sexual abuse when the victims had already dropped out of school.

Principal A ascribes the secrecy around the sexual abuse of learners to tribal traditions, poverty, and illiteracy, all of which are still typical of rural areas. According to him, there is no independent thinking and most of the time parents are bribed with little incentives. Moreover, parents do not seem to be aware of the fact that children have rights, and are unwilling to accept responsibility for protecting the rights of their own offspring. It is not surprising, therefore, according to him, that parents are easily manipulated into keeping quiet about the sexual abuse of their children, even when the perpetrator is their child's teacher.

When asked how he would handle a similar situation in future, Principal A indicated that he would conduct workshops with various groups of people on the seriousness of sexual abuse. Having realised that even teachers who know the relevant policies and codes of conduct do not take them seriously, he would continue to conduct workshops with teachers on this topic. He would also urge the Health Advisory Committee (HAC) to work more closely with learners, to teach them about sexuality and their rights, and to encourage them to report sexual abuse and harassment when these offences occur.

In addition to these interventions, he plans to hold workshops with the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) on the seriousness of sexual abuse, urging them to encourage their peers to report cases of sexual harassment or abuse. He indicated that his aim in conducting these workshops is to help learners move away from traditional ways of viewing and dealing with sexual issues so that they can talk freely about matters that concern them. In the process, he suggested, they might work up the courage to give evidence in sexual abuse cases, if and when the need arises. Finally, he would meet with the South African

Police Service (SAPS) and social workers on a quarterly basis, hoping that they could share reports of abuse and workshop strategies aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse at school.

3.5.1.2 School A Learner questionnaire

In Section A, learners had to provide information about their age, gender, school grade, and location (rural or urban). They were asked to express their views on sexual abuse and its management at school.

Sections B and C had to be answered by specific groups only: those learners who had been abused at some time or another had to respond to Part 2, and those who had never been abused to Part 3.

Table 3.2: School A Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
13	17	0	0	0	30	0	30	11	19	11	8

As indicated in Table 3.2, thirty learners, all in Grade 11 and eighteen years or older, completed the questionnaire. All the learners grew up in a rural area: thirteen are male and seventeen female. With regard to their experience of sexual abuse, eleven of them indicated that they had themselves been abused, while nineteen not. It is clear therefore that very few children from this community have not been exposed to some form of sexual abuse before they turn eighteen. This made me wonder what effect such exposure might have on the children's sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Having given an indication of their own exposure to sexual abuse, all learners were asked to indicate, with reasons, *whether they thought it was important that sexual abuse by teachers should be stopped*. All of them indicated that teachers

should be prevented from abusing them. According to them, teachers are so used to sexually abusing learners that it has become the norm rather than the exception.

All the respondents agreed that sexual abuse has a negative impact on the victim's future: victims are 'dumped' when they fall pregnant; their school work suffers; the abuse leaves them with psychological scars, makes them lose respect for teachers in general, and undermines the education system as a whole.

Learners were asked to indicate *what steps they thought schools should take to eliminate the sexual abuse of learners*, and why they thought these steps would be appropriate. Only one of them indicated that both the perpetrator and the victim should be punished, but twelve learners agreed that teachers found guilty of sexual abuse should be dismissed and/or that their certificates should be withdrawn. Some learners also felt that teachers should be criminally charged. In justifying their response, these learners indicated that such punitive measures could make teachers think twice before entering into sexual relations with learners and, in addition, would remove the perpetrator from the victim, thereby ensuring the future safety of the latter.

The other seven learners exhibited greater tolerance, arguing that workshops on sexual abuse should be conducted not only for teachers and learners, but should be opened to other stakeholders as well. According to these learners, all parties concerned would leave the workshops with factual information about sexual abuse as well as with direction on the procedures to follow in reporting such cases.

With regard to preventive compared to punitive measures, some learners suggested that boys and girls should be separated for teaching/learning purposes, with male teachers teaching boys and female teachers teaching girls. They argued that sexual abuse typically takes place at teachers' cottages. Some learners

further suggested that schools should either remove the cottages or prohibit learners from going near them.

Finally, learners were asked *whether or not they thought the government had a responsibility to stop sexual abuse in schools* and to justify their answers. Learner responses indicate that there is absolute consensus amongst learners that it is the government’s responsibility to keep schools safe, to protect learners, and to punish teachers where applicable. For this purpose, learners argued, the government should monitor teacher behaviour and ensure that the requisite laws and policies are implemented in schools.

Table 3.3: School A Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosures	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other		Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
2	9	2	0	7		5			1	4	

As indicated in Table 3.3, only two of the eleven learners who indicated that they had been sexually abused at one stage or another are boys. Although the majority of this school’s abused Grade 11 learners are girls, the evidence indicates that sexual abuse is not restricted to girl learners. Although the girls indicated on the questionnaire to what category of perpetrators their abusers belonged, boys did not respond to this question (*Table 3.3*). This made me wonder whether this is an indication that the boys are more ashamed of what happened to them than are the girls. I also wondered whether the girls had really been abused, given the large number of peer abuse incidents and the prevalence of abuse when they were seventeen. Was what they called abuse not simply regret at having engaged in consensual sex?

What is disturbing is the indication that age does not seem to matter to sexual abusers: although most of the girls in this group seemed to have been sexual

abused when they were seventeen, two of them were only seven years old when they were first abused, by one of their teachers.

The fact that only five of the eleven abused learners reported the incident, of whom four reported it to one of their peers and not to a trusted adult, is also of great concern. Once again I asked myself whether this could be an indication that the abuse was actually consensual. If it was abuse, why did they not confide in an adult? Do they not trust adults? Are they afraid of the consequences? Do they feel ashamed? Is it culturally taboo to talk about such things with adults, or is sexual abuse simply so common that it does not warrant reporting?

Some of the questions I asked myself were partially answered by learner responses to the next question, that is, how they felt after the incident. Most of them indicated that they were badly hurt, angry, threatened, ashamed, scared and stressed. Their answers also indicate that most of them were disappointed by the response of those they told about the incident – their friends, in most cases – because instead of being comforted, they were told to ignore what happened or to keep quiet about it.

Feelings regarding friends who told the victims' parents about the incidents varied: in some cases their divulging the incident was seen as a breach of trust. Others appreciated it because, although their parents did not take the matter further, they would protect them from similar incidents in future. It was only the learner who reported the matter to the social worker who could be absolutely confident that the abuser has been stopped in his tracks, because the social worker immediately reported the incident to the police.

The nineteen learners who indicated that they had never been sexually abused indicated that their non-abuse could be ascribed to their strict upbringing. Since they are in the majority, I concluded that parenting is important not only in terms of monitoring/controlling children's sexual behaviour, but also in the infusion of values and attitudes.

The same group of learners was also asked to indicate *whether any of their friends or family had been abused and if so, by which abuser category*. Eleven of the nineteen learners mentioned that, despite the fact that they were not personally abused, they knew about friends or family members who had been abused. In five of these abuse cases, the abusers were teachers, three were peers, two were family members, and one, another person.

3.5.2 School B Profile

The village in which the school is located is large and the houses are neat and electrified. Even so, the community experiences water problems and levels of unemployment are high. Roads are not well constructed, and there is moral deterioration in the behaviour of adults and youths: abusive incidents have become the order of the day in this village as has the use of drugs and alcohol.

Situated opposite a *shebeen*, the school consists of five blocks of four classrooms. The yard is well fenced and, on the day of my visit, an aged male was guarding the gate. However, a sense of neglect pervaded the school: the yard was dirty; windows were broken and floors were full of cracks. The sloppiness and neglect was also evident in the way teachers and learners were dressed: learners were even wearing caps in the back-to-front style.

Discipline seemed to be non-existent. When I arrived, some learners were dawdling around the school yard, some were roaming the streets – in school uniform, during school hours – and some were seated in the shebeen. There were very few learners in the classrooms and those who were, were making a lot of noise because there were no teachers present. The chaos was worsened by the principal's obvious lack of preparation for my visit. It took a long time for him to get enough learners together and then to get them into a classroom so that I could issue the questionnaires. Learners' lack of discipline was apparent here as well. They forced their way into the classroom without showing me or the principal any respect. I eventually had to intervene in order to restore order. Even

then, non-participating learners peeped through the windows throughout the process.

The culture and climate of this school raised my doubts about the contribution that it makes to the future of learners. The lack of discipline and the air of neglect were sure signs of poor school management, raising further concerns about the safety of teachers and learners.

3.5.2.1 School B Principal interview

According to Principal B, the sexual abuse of learners by teachers is a serious problem in Senwabarwana. In justifying his statement he related what he regarded as a 'shocking incident' that occurred at a school where he had previously taught. In this instance a drunken teacher was accused of raping the daughter of one of the female teachers during a Grade 12 farewell function. The incident was reported to the police and the accused was subsequently arrested.

At another secondary school in the same cluster, the SAPS received a report that two girl learners were fighting to spend the weekend with a male teacher at their school. During the course of the altercation the girls started throwing stones at the teacher's car. He then left both of them behind and drove off. The principal did not know what happened to the girls or the teacher afterwards.

Principal B admitted that there had also been a sexually-related incident at his school, between one of his learners and a teacher from a neighbouring school. The girl learner, having been selected as the best netball player in the Senwabarwana cluster, was part of the regional team that was on its way to a provincial competition. The team was accompanied by top sports officials from the region, most of them male teachers. When the girl did not return home that night, her parents reported her missing. The principal and the school's netball coach started looking for her, but to no avail. She arrived home at noon the next day and, unaware of the fact that the coach knew that she had been reported

missing, she told her parents that she had stayed over at his house the night before. The reason she gave for this was that they had returned late from the match. When the principal, the netball coach and her mother confronted her about her lies, the girl alleged that she had been sexually abused by one of the male officials.

The principal offered to take the girl and her mother to the doctor and the police station in his own car, but the mother refused. She wanted to first consult her relatives, particularly the girl's uncle, on whom they were financially dependent. After the consultation, the mother informed the principal that the incident would be handled as a family matter, and that one of the family members had already been delegated to demand payment from the perpetrator. She then instructed the principal to drop the matter and the girl not to discuss it at school.

Some months later the girl had a spontaneous abortion in the school toilet. She failed at the end of the year and dropped out of school. Was justice served in this case? – possibly not. Was the girl lying? Was the sex consensual or forced? Did the official pay the fine because he was guilty or because he could not prove his innocence? No-one but the girl and the official will ever know the truth because the matter was never investigated. In this case, the indications are that the learner's mother was bound by traditional stereotyped cultural thinking about the ability and right of women to make their own decisions, hence her reliance on the girl's uncle. Her financial dependence on the uncle could also have played a role. The family handled the problem in the traditional way: the culprit had to pay money as compensation for sexually abusing the learner and the matter between the two families was settled. No one spoke of it again.

Having failed to persuade the mother to report the teacher to the relevant authorities, Principal B resolved not to try to handle similar cases on his own. Instead, he decided that in future he would immediately report the matter to the police and a social worker, who are professionally trained to handle such matters. He was of the opinion that this would make it very difficult for perpetrators,

family members and others with vested interests to prevent the victim and her parents from testifying, or to manipulate them into dropping the case.

3.5.2.2 School B Learner questionnaire

After introducing me to the learners the principal returned to his office. When I started talking to the selected group I noticed that learners who were not included in the sample were peeping through the windows and listening. I had to go out and explain to them what my visit was all about and apologised that I could not accommodate all of them. Their response indicated that they were under the impression that I had been sent by the Department of Education to come and investigate sexual abuse at the school. Some of them became quite emotional when they realised that this was not the case. I immediately suspected that there could be a sexual abuse problem at the school.

Having succeeded in sending the redundant learners away, I went back into the class and explained to participating learners what my research was about. As usual, I told them which meanings I attach to the terms *sexual abuse* and *sexual harassment*. I then issued the questionnaires, read the questions out loud, and indicated exactly what was expected of them in answering each question.

When I asked whether they had any questions before we started, they indicated that they would rather tell me about some of the sexual abuse incidents that had occurred at their school because the questionnaire would not give them the chance to report the perpetrators. I reiterated the purpose of my visit to the school, emphasising that I was not a departmental official and that I was not there to gather evidence about particular people, only to get a picture of the extent to which teachers and learners in this school engaged in sexual activities. I assured them that the questionnaire would enable them to express their feelings. They were still not satisfied, and asked why they should fill in the questionnaire if the culprits would remain at school. After a long discussion they did, however, agree to complete the questionnaire.

TABLE 3.4: School B Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
20	10	0	0	0	30	0	30	17	13	9	4

As indicated in Table 3.4, the majority of the learners who completed the questionnaire are male. All of them are older than eighteen and live in rural areas. With two exceptions, all the learners indicated that they wanted the teacher-learner sexual abuse to stop, indicating that it ‘disturbs’ teaching and learning.

Specifically mentioning the negative effect that sexual abuse can have on learners’ future lives, some learners claimed that it affects their education in one of two ways. In the first instance they lost concentration, which made them fail. In the second instance, pregnant girls had to drop out of school to give birth. More often than not, the perpetrator dropped them when he found out about the pregnancy. This not only affected the girls’ education but also their psychological state of mind.

One of the reasons learners gave for entering into sexual activities with teachers was preferential treatment. According to them, teachers pay the ones who give in, with various incentives; and administer corporal punishment to the ones who refuse to give in to their sexual demands. Other incentives, like being given money to keep quiet, and being accommodated in rented rooms in town while the teacher’s family visited him in his cottage, are common temptations. Learners agreed, however, that this kind of behaviour makes the school ungovernable and unsafe.

According to learners, teachers who abuse learners sexually should be summarily dismissed because it results in the victim being deprived of the opportunity to get married and start her own family. Two learners who disagreed were of the opinion, however, that mutually agreed actual intercourse is a personal matter,

even if it occurs between teachers and learners. According to them, schools have no right to interfere in anyone's personal love affairs.

Indications from learner responses are that they are aware of the fact that sexual relationships between teachers and learners are against the law. Most of them, twenty-three in all, indicated that teachers who abuse learners sexually should be suspended, lose their certificates, be exposed in the media, be arrested and charged. Seven learners indicated that the school should take the initiative to hold workshops with all the stakeholders (School Governing Body (SGB), teachers, and learners) with a view to eliminating teacher/learner sexual abuse. One learner thought employing a security guard to monitor the situation would suffice.

According to the group that favours workshops, learners should be informed about their rights as well as about the procedures to be followed in reporting cases to the police and social workers. Again they mentioned that teachers would be afraid of being exposed, losing their jobs, or being arrested. This would contribute to stopping them from sexually abusing learners and encouraging them to concentrate on their job. Parents, too, would then look after their children and report cases when they occur.

With one exception, all the learners indicated that it is the government's responsibility to stop teachers from sexually abusing learners in their care, because teachers are government employees, such abusive acts are against the law, and they are a disgrace to the teaching profession. They added that the government is obliged to ensure learners' right to be taught in a safe environment. The government should, therefore, according to the learners, conduct research about teacher-learner sexual abuse so that learners may have a bright future.

Seventeen learners indicated that they have been sexually abused. Of the seventeen, seven were girls and ten were boys. Of the girls, two had had intimate

relations with their peers, four with teachers, and one with a family member. Of the males, one had a sexual relationship with a peer and nine with teachers. Furthermore, nine of the learners indicated that they knew of friends or family members who had been sexually abused. Of these, according to learners, four were abused by teachers, three by peers, and two by ‘other’ people. What I find especially disturbing is the age at which learners had their first sexual activity – from fourteen (one girl) to nineteen (one girl and two boys). Within this range, five girls first had their first sexual encounter between the ages of fifteen and seventeen; three of boys had their first sexual experience when they were eighteen; four between fifteen and seventeen; and one at fifteen.

Table 3.5: School B Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosures	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other		Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
10	7	13	1	3		13	2	2	0	9	0

Learner responses to my questions about the way they felt after their first encounter indicate that they did not enjoy it. Five of them said they had felt hurt, two that they felt bad and uncomfortable, one that he felt ashamed and scared, and two that they were embarrassed and upset. One of the girls indicated that she felt good at first because her family appreciated the affair, but her feelings changed when she discovered that the teacher with whom she had had sex was sick.

The rest of the seventeen learners focused on the impact that sexual abuse had on their school work. One mentioned that he had lost interest in schooling, while another said that she was shocked at the unexpectedly high mark she received in the subject taught by the teacher with whom she had been intimate. The others indicated that they had lost their concentration, or were stressed, worried about what had happened, and afraid of failing at school.

Most of the learners who indicated that they had had sexual activities (thirteen of the seventeen), told someone else about their first sexual activities. Of these nine told their friends, two their parents, and two their teachers. The other four kept quiet about the incident and did not even tell their friends. Why, I asked myself, did they not tell adults? Don't they trust them? Are they afraid of the consequences? Or could it be that they have all been brought up in rural areas and taught the cultural taboo surrounding sexual discussions? While learner responses to my questions on their feelings about the abuse gave me some idea of possible reasons, these were not sufficient.

One incident was reported to the principal and another to the teacher but, according to the learner, no action was taken against the perpetrator. Nine incidences of sexual abuse were shared with friends and two with parents. The advice these friends gave varied quite markedly. In six instances learners were advised to stay away from the teachers. Four of them accepted the advice, although they were not sure that it was the best thing to do. In one case the learner involved was afraid that the teacher might fail her at the end of the year, while the other one was unhappy about the fact that the teacher would not be punished. The other two rejected the advice, and continued their sexual relationship with the teachers concerned.

Two victims were advised to inform their parents about the sexual abuse. One did, the other did not. The parents of the one who did inform them, confronted the teacher and told him to stay away from their child. The other victim told a teacher about the abuse. The teacher promised to approach the culprit, but never did. The one who chose to keep quiet was afraid that her parents would blame her for what happened. In one case the friend in whom the victim confided told the victim's brother. He, in turn, approached the accused teacher. In that case, too, the teacher distanced himself from the learner afterwards. The learner involved indicated that, while appreciating the brother's response, she still needed help to deal with the incident at an emotional/psychological level.

3.5.3 School C Profile

School C is located in the centre of four disadvantaged villages with houses scattered here and there. It is situated near the tarred road. The level of poverty and illiteracy is high and many people are unemployed. They therefore depend on government grants for their survival. Some work on white farms, and are transported home during weekends.

School C made a good impression on me. The school was well fenced, the premises were clean and the gate was locked. There was no movement anywhere – no learners or teachers wandering around. All the teachers I passed on my way to the principal's office were formally dressed, making them look professional and businesslike.

3.5.3.1 School C Principal interview

At the time I visited the school there was no officially appointed principal, hence my dealings were with the deputy principal. When I asked about the previous principal I was told that he had recently taken early retirement and that the deputy principal had been appointed acting principal.

The acting principal indicated that he knew of three incidents in Senwabarwana. In two of these, teachers had sexually abused learners. In the third incident the perpetrator was a fellow learner. One of the teachers accused of sexual abuse was found guilty and dismissed. The teacher concerned had allegedly had simultaneous sexual activities with two girls at the school where he was teaching. The boyfriend of one of the girls, having found out about her relationship with the teacher, confronted him. The teacher then shot the girl and she died. The teacher was arrested, tried, and found guilty of murder. Needless to say, he lost his job. In this case, justice seems to have been served, but at what cost? The victory seems hollow because the dead girl could not be brought back to life.

In the second case, the principal was informed that one of the best performing girls in his school had been raped by a fellow learner, so he called the parents to the school to discuss the matter. Having heard all the details, the parents decided not to report the matter to the police. Instead they opted to settle the matter with the perpetrator's family, insisting on monetary compensation for the harm done and the loss of respect that the girl's family would have to endure as a consequence. With regard to the family's reputation, justice seems to have been served according to custom. But what about justice for the girl? Was it her gender that resulted in her welfare not even being considered, or was it something else?

The acting principal recalled three sexually-related incidents that occurred at the school while he was still deputy principal. In the first incident he described, a female teacher from a neighbouring school entered the premises without permission and beat up one of the Grade 11 girls, who according to her, was sexually involved with her husband. This incident occurred in the classroom, in front of other learners. The matter was reported to the previous principal, who instructed the School Management Team (SMT) to leave the case to him. He promised to attend to it but never did. He has now retired. This case shows that some school leaders with high levels of authority ignore sexual abuse incidents reported to them.

In the second incident, one of the male teachers, a member of the SMT and a friend of the previous principal, was sexually involved with both a female teacher and a girl learner at the same school. When the girl, who had given birth to the teacher's child, found out about the teacher's 'other' girlfriend, she arranged with some of her relatives and friends (fellow learners) to beat up the female teacher. They did so, at her cottage. When the matter was reported to the principal he organised transfers for both teachers and advised the male teacher to arrange an out of court maintenance settlement for the girl concerned. The case was never reported to anyone else.

In the third incident, the parent of a girl who fell pregnant after being sexually abused by one of her teachers came to the principal to ask for advice on how to deal with the matter. Unfortunately the principal was not at work on that particular day. The mother spoke to the deputy principal, now the acting principal. He reported the matter to the principal who, once again, without initiating disciplinary measures, arranged an exchange transfer to another school for the accused teacher. It was only when the teacher from the other school arrived for duty that the SMT became aware of the matter, mostly because the newly exchanged teacher did not teach the same subjects as the one who had departed. The sexual incident was regarded as being a closed case.

The acting principal I spoke to believes that staff members and learners in his school still engage in sexual activities. He realised this recently when maintenance summonses for girl learners who had dropped out of school were served to certain teachers. He had no idea who reported the matter to the police. Moreover he had, on several occasions, noticed girl learners leaving teachers' cottages in the early hours of the morning. In some cases different girls left the same cottage on different days.

With a view to discovering what was going on, he called learners to his office for questioning but they refused to disclose any information about their visits to the teacher's cottage. He also confronted suspected teachers to explain the possible consequences of their actions to them, should they be found guilty of sexual abuse. Instead of confessing, the teachers warned him not to interfere with their personal lives after working hours. In desperation the acting principal reported the matter to the SGB. Their response was, however, disappointing. He later found out that some of the SGB members' daughters had borne children conceived during sexual activities with teachers, but, because the teachers concerned had compensated the family, the matter was settled as far as they were concerned.

Principal C, the acting principal, indicated that he accepts as a given that sexual relationships between teachers and learners are a feature of life at his school. He has realised, from the way the previous principal handled sexually related cases in the past, that poverty and illiteracy in rural communities would make it difficult to stem the tide. Indications are that teachers, realising that parents would sacrifice their daughters' honour for food and money, bribe them with gifts of money and groceries to keep quiet.

Notwithstanding these barriers, Principal C claims that he is determined to root out the problem over time. He was adamant that he would not tolerate teachers found guilty of sexual abuse at his school. He urged Life Orientation (LO) teachers to teach learners about children's rights, sexual abuse and its consequences, and to encourage them to report learner sexual abuse cases. He plans to discuss the problem of teacher/learner sexual abuse with the deputy governance officer in the Maleboho Central Circuit and to organise workshops for SGB members (of primary and secondary schools) in the Senwabarwana cluster. There are six circuits in the Senwabarwana Cluster.

To ensure that SGB members are provided with the best training, Principal C plans to invite professionals (police officers and social workers) to conduct these workshops. SGB members who attend the workshops will be expected to work with the SMTs, and conduct workshops with parents in their communities on sexuality issues. Finally, he plans to ensure that the rights of pregnant girl learners are protected by encouraging parents and children alike to report all sexual abuse cases to the police or social workers. What Principal C said raises a concern, because teachers have been abusing learners sexually while he was deputy principal and he seemed not to have done anything to assist the former principal.

3.5.3.2 School C Learner questionnaire

Principal C, having walked with me to the classroom, warmly welcomed me and introduced me to the thirty Grade 11 learners who would be participating in my study. I was as impressed with the learners' appearance as I was with that of the

teachers. All of them were wearing their school uniform and were quietly talking amongst themselves when we arrived. Their mood changed, however, when I explained the purpose of my visit. They objected loudly, claiming that such sexual abuse activities do not take place at their school, but that they knew of such incidents occurring at other schools. I had to stop them right in their tracks, emphasising that the purpose of my visit was not to discuss other schools with them, but to find out what was going on at their school.

Having settled the learners down, I explained the procedures they had to follow in completing the questionnaire, taking special trouble to explain what I meant by terms like *sexual harassment* and *sexual abuse*. I also stressed, as I did at other schools, that no-one would ever know what they had written on the questionnaires since they were not required to write down their names. I then issued the questionnaires, read them through with the learners, answered questions for clarification and told them to start.

Table 3.6: School C Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
17	13	0	0	0	30	1	29	12	18	11	7

Thirty learners (seventeen males and thirteen females) completed the questionnaires. They are all over eighteen years. Twenty-nine of them grew up in rural areas; one male learner grew up in an urban area. Twelve learners, five males and seven females, mentioned that they have been sexually abused by their peers.

Asked whether they knew of someone who had at some stage been abused, eleven learners indicated that either a friend or a family member had been abused. Of these, according to learners, the majority had been abused by peers, one by a teacher, one by a family member and two by 'other' people.

With the exception of a male learner, all the learners were in favour of teacher/learner sexual abuse being stopped. Those who wanted sexual abuse stopped gave various reasons for their stance. Most of them (nineteen in all) said that the abuse usually has a negative effect on the victim's education: girls not only fall pregnant and have to leave school but are also typically dumped by the person who impregnated them. Others simply pointed out that teacher/learner sexual abuse hampers progress at school because the learner concerned loses focus on their school work due to the abuse.

Other reasons put forward by the learners included learners fighting amongst themselves because teachers engaged in sex with multiple learners. The sexually abused learners run the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and teachers mislead learners with incentives such as money and false grades. The boy who disagreed with the group argued that learners should be allowed to choose partners who would satisfy them.

Learners at this school were adamant that it is the school's responsibility to take the necessary steps to eliminate sexual abuse. They reiterated their right to a safe learning environment using this as the reason why guilty teachers should be suspended, dismissed and/or deregistered.

Eleven of the learners mentioned the importance of workshops for stakeholders; three of them suggested that school policies should provide for the arrest of those who engage in such activities, and one suggested that teachers should not stay in school cottages but somewhere else, with their families. These strategies would work, according to the learners, because everybody would be provided with the knowledge they needed; teachers would be afraid of exposure, suspension, arrest or even dismissal; parents would know how to handle their children and the teachers involved in sexual abuse; learners would know what their rights are but they would also be wary of exposure. Moreover, teachers who live with their families would, out of respect for their families, stay away from learners.

Learners did not, however, approve of the government shifting its responsibility onto schools. According to the learners, the government, being the one that employs and pays teachers, should ensure that its laws and policies are implemented and that teachers are disciplined. Three learners, though, had different opinions on this: one argued that the government should stop protecting learners; one indicated that all stakeholders should know what the policies are and ensure that they are implemented; and one argued that the government would never be able to stop sexual abuse because they could not even stop corruption.

All twelve learners who claimed that they had been abused indicated that they felt differently from the way they had felt before the incident: some felt embarrassed, others sad, hurt, disappointed, ashamed, some angry, and confused. One of them indicated, however, that it made her want to do it again.

Table 3.7: School C Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosed	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other		Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
5	7	0	0	12	0	6	1			5	

The School C profile indicates that a large number of male learners (five) have been sexually abused. This shows that not only female learners suffer incidents of sexual abuse – male learners can also become victims. In response to questions aimed at finding out whether or not they had told anybody about the incident, six of the affected learners indicated that they had reported it; the other six had not. Of the six who disclosed what had happened to them, five had told a friend, one (a boy) had told a teacher.

According to the victims, the people in whom they had confided did not respond as expected: two of them, having expected their friends to advise them as to which steps they should take, were laughed at. One of the learners' friends advised her to stay away from the person who abused her; the other one was advised to inform her parents. The former followed her friend's advice and has not had any trouble from the perpetrator again. The latter ignored the advice because she wanted to keep it a secret. The learner who told a teacher about the abuse was advised to report the matter to the police or the social worker. Because this learner wanted to keep the incident from his parents, he decided not to do what the teacher had advised. The sole learner who had developed a taste for sex after the encounter simply shared the experience with a friend, not expecting any action to ensue after the disclosure.

3.5.4 School D Profile

The location of school D does not differ much from that of school C, although the two schools are about 20 km apart. School D is very small, consisting of two blocks of classrooms only, but the yard was clean and well fenced. The gate was still locked when I arrived, presumably to protect learners and teachers who stayed after school for homework and study purposes. On my way to the principal's office, which he shares with the rest of the school management team (SMT), I noticed that staff members looked quite presentable and that all the learners were dressed in the prescribed school uniform.

3.5.4.1 School D Principal interview

The fourth principal is an older person in his late fifties. Like the other principals who were interviewed, he believes that the sexual abuse of girl learners has been going on for a long time. He recalled an incident that occurred when he was still a secondary school learner. At the time, he said, a very intelligent girl learner was approached by a male teacher from one of the secondary schools in the Mankweng Circuit. When the girl rejected his sexual advances he started

humiliating and ill-treating her in front of her fellow learners. This intimidating behaviour eventually led to her succumbing to his sexual demands.

The learner fell pregnant and her mother, who was unemployed, reported the matter to the principal. However when no action was taken, the learner attempted to abort the foetus. The abortion was unsuccessful but she had a miscarriage and lost the baby anyway. The ‘father’ of the baby dumped the girl and she dropped out of school. Neither she, nor her mother claimed, nor was offered any compensation for the girl’s loss of dignity or for the shame that the teacher had brought on the family. The principal ignored the matter as reported by the learner’s mother. The mother could not take the matter further. The silence from both the principal and the learner’s mother contributed towards the girl’s failure in pursuing her educational career. Justice is clearly questionable in this particular case.

Principal D acknowledged that the forming of sexual relationships is a problem in secondary schools, indicating that it is also increasing at primary schools. In justifying his claim he referred to a media article on child pregnancy, written by Matlala (2009: 13). According to the report, four Grade 6 and Grade 7 learners, aged between twelve and thirteen, were pregnant with the child of the same teacher in one of the primary schools in Tzaneen (Limpopo Province). The abuse was discovered by the parents of two of these children, who started wondering why their children were no longer interested in attending school. The matter was reported to departmental officials and, at the time of the interview, investigations were ongoing.

Principal D pointed out that it is not only teachers who are guilty of sexual abuse, but also community members, pensioners in particular. Rumour has it, that pensioners residing in his village were allegedly engaged in ‘intimate’ sexual activities with a number of children at a particular primary school in the Mankweng Circuit (Limpopo Province). When the matter was reported to the principal of the school, she invited the parents to school to discuss the matter.

Instead of standing up for their children, the parents, and some of the community members, laid the blame at the door of the children, accusing them of teasing the pensioners to have sex with them in exchange for money, although such teasing behaviour from children of primary school age is doubtful. The principal could not discuss the matter further because parents ignored the abuse.

Like the principals in the other case studies, Principal D indicated that he was aware of sexual activities between teachers and learners at his school, three in particular. In the first incident, parents informed him that one of the teachers was in the habit of having sex with learners at teachers' cottages, which are on the school premises. The principal reported the matter to the relevant departmental official. A disciplinary hearing ensued, with the accused teacher being represented by his union. On the last day of the hearing, however, the parents who had initially reported the matter, as well as the learners involved, withdrew their case. Neither the SGB nor the departmental official then wanted to pursue the case and it was dropped. The principal suspected that the parents could have been silenced with incentives, since they reported the matter to him, but then suddenly decided not to give evidence. The silence of the SGB and the department officials also caused him concern.

In the second incident, shortly after the first one, the night watchman informed the principal that he regularly saw learners leaving teachers' cottages in the early hours of the morning. The principal, too, had seen these learners pass his own cottage in the morning. Having been thwarted in his pursuit of justice the previous time, the principal decided to warn one of his staff members about the matter and the staff member concerned blamed the principal of 'singling' him out as the other male teachers were also involved in similar relationships with learners. He then warned the principal not to interfere in his personal affairs.

The third incident involved a particular pregnant girl learner. Because she had a good academic record, the principal advised her not to leave school, but she dropped out anyway. It was only when a police official came to the school a few

days later to deliver a maintenance summons on the teacher who had impregnated the girl, and the principal realised that one of his staff members was involved. This principal, as with the principal of school B, had no idea who had reported the matter to the police. He suspected that some members of the community could have advised the learner to report the case.

When asked how he would deal with problems like these if they were brought to his attention again, Principal D indicated that he had already started encouraging Life Orientation teachers to address learners about the importance of education as the route out of poverty. He has started conducting learner workshops, which he uses to inform learners of their rights and to build their sense of self-worth. He plans to approach the deputy governance official in the circuit to organise workshops on sexual abuse for all the principals and SGBs in the circuit. The workshops should not only focus on sexual abuse, but also on the role that principals and SGB members should play in preventing it. The SGBs, in turn, should conduct workshops with parents, and principals should do so with teachers. Should the official be amenable to the suggestion, the principal will advise him/her to invite the police and social workers to the workshops as well. He is also of the opinion that principals should attend workshops on their role in the prevention of sexual abuse.

According to Principal D, his attempts to deal with these incidents have generated a great deal of tension between him and his staff. Not only have the teachers accused him of interfering in their personal lives, but the learners are also out of control. Matters have now got so bad that the principal fears for his own safety. The most he was willing to do himself, therefore, was to constantly remind teachers that they are in 'loco parentis', and to appeal to their better nature because he has neither the courage nor the will to put himself 'in the line of fire' again.

3.5.4.2 School D Learner questionnaire

As with other schools, I had arranged to issue and collect learner questionnaires after school, during study time. The principal accompanied me to the class, where the learners were waiting for me. Having introduced me, he returned to his office. The learners seemed to have been looking forward to my visit. Not only did they welcome me warmly but pestered me with questions when I explained the purpose of my visit and the procedures they had to follow in completing the questionnaire.

I settled them down and took special trouble to explain what I meant when I used the terms, *sexual harassment* and *sexual abuse*. I also stressed, as I did at the other schools, that no-one would ever know what they had written on the questionnaires since they were not required to write down their names. I then issued the questionnaires, read them through with the learners, answered questions of clarification and told them to start.

After everybody had completed the questionnaire, when I was about to leave, a group of five girls tagged along behind me. As soon as they were sure that we were alone they told me that *they* had been abused, that they had reported the matter to the social workers and the police but nothing had come of it. I volunteered to discuss their situation with the principal if they wanted me to. They did and, when I called the principal later to find out what had happened, he told me that he had followed up on the reported cases, the learners were being counselled and were making good progress.

Table 3.8: School D Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
12	18	0	0	0	30	1	29	15	15	8	7

As indicated in Table 3.8, there were more girls than boys in this group. All the participants were older than eighteen, and all lived in rural areas, with the exception of one male learner who lived in an urban area. Half of the participants (eight boys and seven girls) had been sexually abused in their lifetime, one of them – a male – multiple times, and eight of them knew about friends or family members who had been sexually abused. Of these, four were abused by teachers; one by a peer, one by ‘other’ and two did not mention the abuser.

All but one learner, a boy, indicated that they wanted sexual abuse at school to stop. The boy who disagreed argued that learners, like any other person, have the right to engage in sexual activities with whom they like. All the other learners indicated that continued sexual abuse would have a negative effect on their education because it undermines safety at school. According to these learners, schools are meant for education, not actual intercourse.

With regard to the impact that teacher/learner sexual abuse has on education, learners mentioned that pregnant girls have to drop out of school, teachers give their sexual partners better grades and/or the memos to tests and exams, and fights occur – amongst learners, between teachers and learners, and between teachers’ wives and learners. The fights in particular, are, according to respondents, bad for discipline, threaten the culture of the school, and reflect badly on teachers, who are supposed to be their ‘school parents’. Moreover, they claimed, the abuse has a debilitating psychological effect on the victims: most of them end up feeling miserable and confused and, in some cases, consider resorting to suicide.

Strategies that could help control sexual abuse, as suggested by these learners, included the appointment of security guards, the installation of cameras and alarms, the formation of school/police partnerships, conducting stakeholder workshops, implementing policies on sexual abuse, and the suspension, dismissal and/or arrest of teachers found guilty of abusing learners sexually. Learners specifically raised the issue of learners visiting teachers at their places of

residence, suggesting that this should be monitored by the police and/or security guards. They also suggested that all stakeholders should be given one or more telephone numbers that they could phone to report not only these visits but also other sexually related incidents.

A different suggestion, which had also been mentioned in school A, was that the government should create separate boys' and girls' schools. According to learners, this would prevent not only the possibility of sexual abuse but also decrease the risk of learners contracting HIV/AIDS. As opposed to school A, learners in school D did not mention whether the issue on teacher gender should be considered or not.

With regard to workshops, learners indicated that these should focus on sensitising all those concerned to the existence of sexually-related incidents at school and the impact on education, but it should not stop there. Apart from providing them with information, learners suggested, the workshops should also guide those who attend on how to handle such cases, and encourage them to report and disclose all information regarding the abuse to the proper authorities. This would be particularly useful to community members because, according to one of the learners, sexual abuse is rife in the village where the school is situated. According to this learner, the community does not know how to deal with this crisis.

As was the case at the other schools, learners were adamant that, since teachers are employed by government, it is the government's responsibility to ensure that teachers do not pose a threat to learners. Not only should the government support school principals in getting rid of teachers who are a threat to learners' safety, they argued, but it should also institute specific measures to ensure that sexual abuse by teachers does not take place.

Although fifteen learners indicated that they had been abused at some time or another, some learners were abused more than once (*twenty incidents in*

number) and by different categories of people, hence the seemingly inconsistent figures in Table 3.9. The age at which learners had their first sexual experience ranged from thirteen to eighteen, with the majority falling in the sixteen to eighteen age range. One of the abused boys indicated that he was first abused by a peer, at the age of sixteen, and thereafter by family members, a teacher and ‘others’. Another boy, also abused at age sixteen, was abused twice, once by one of his peers and once by a teacher.

Learners described their feelings after the abuse as *shocked, hurt, hopeless, worthless, ashamed, angry, frustrated* and *confused*. Two responses deviated from the norm, though, with one learner indicating that he felt sad at first, but comfortable later, and the other one that she enjoyed the experience because she and the person with whom she was having sex were of the same age. The response of this last learner could indicate why only nine of the fifteen sexual incidents were reported – in the majority of cases (*thirteen of the fifteen mentioned*) sexual activities occurred between peers, not between adults and children, but they did not mention whether or not there had been mutual consent. Technically, therefore, such an incident would not be regarded as abuse. This may also explain why learners shared the experience with a friend rather than with an adult.

Table 3.9: School D: Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosed	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other		Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
8	7	3	1	13	3	9		1		8	

Most learners confided in their friends who, on the whole, advised them to tell their parents about the incident. Two of the abused learners were advised to forget that it ever happened and to concentrate on their futures. One – an abused boy - was advised to ‘kill’ the teacher. A learner who rejected a friend’s advice

that she tell her parents has since been unable to concentrate on her studies and is now failing. Parent who was told about the sexual abuse typically warned the teacher to 'back off'. In one case the teacher, according to the learner concerned, did not take this seriously, suggesting that the abuse must have continued. One of the victims was betrayed by her confidante, who told everybody she knew about the incident, thereby shaming the victim even more.

3.5.5 School E Profile

School E is situated in a very big village next to the Blouberg Mountain. The village is electrified, but water is scarce. The people are poor, illiterate and unemployed.

School E was the biggest of the schools on my list. There were many blocks of classrooms and a large, well fenced school yard, but neither the yard nor the buildings were well maintained. Most of the classroom windows and doors were broken and there was litter everywhere. If the classroom allocated to me was an example of what classrooms in the school look like, I would have to conclude that nobody cares, not about appearances or about education: the paint on the classroom walls was peeling off; some of the window frames were without panes; some window panes were broken; there were numerous holes in the floor, and it looked as if the classroom had not been swept for days.

The air of neglect was also reflected in the way learners were dressed: they wore clothes of contrasting colours and it was difficult to even determine what colour the school uniform was supposed to be. Most of the boys were wearing caps and their shirts were hanging out of their trousers. This did not seem to bother teachers at all, as none of them made any attempt to tell the boys to tidy themselves. I already had the impression that the image of the schools is not important to either the teachers or the learners.

As with the other schools, I had arranged to issue the questionnaires in the afternoon, during study time, so as not to disrupt teaching and learning. However, it did not look as if anyone was studying when I arrived. Some of the learners were roaming around the school yard, some seemed to be on their way home,

and others were just sitting under the trees. The classroom I was supposed to use had not been prepared for me in advance, and it seemed as if our arrangement was remembered only on my arrival. In the end, one of the female teachers instructed participating learners to carry desks and chairs from another classroom to the one that I was supposed to use.

3.5.5.1 School E Principal interview

When asked whether he was aware of any incidents of sexual abuse in Limpopo schools, Principal E mentioned three cases, two in Thohoyandou, and one in Sekhukhune. In one of the Thohoyandou incidents, where a school principal had impregnated a Grade 7 learner, the principal bought the parents' silence with money. In the other, which involved a teacher, the case was reported and the teacher dismissed. In the Sekhukhune incident the teacher was charged but the principal could not remember what the final outcome was.

Unlike the principals in the previous cases, this principal denied the existence of any sexual abuse incidents in his school. He ascribed this to constant communication between himself and the teachers. Learners are regarded not as equals but as 'partners in education'. The principal spoke proudly of the teachers on his staff, emphasising that they work as a team for the development of a child in totality and treat learners with love. According to him, teachers provide learners with guidance on proper and improper behaviour. Learners also understand what sexual harassment and sexual abuse are and what the consequences would be if they were to make themselves guilty of either.

Other factors that contribute to the non-existence of sexual problems in his school, according to the principal, is the clear school policy on child/learner abuse or sexual harassment, parental involvement in school matters, and regular staff discussions of media reports on school safety and sexual abuse issues. According to him, these discussions are usually informal and focus on lessons that could be learnt from the reports. In addition, so he claimed, he makes a point of inviting

motivational speakers to the school to address teachers and learners alike, and sexual abuse issues are often raised and addressed during these talks.

When asked how he would respond should he learn that sexual abuse was taking place in his school, Principal E indicated that, as far as he was concerned, any such behaviour amongst teachers and learners would be regarded not only as grounds for dismissal but also as a criminal offence. It would be reported, first to the circuit manager (as a representative of the Department of Education) and then to the police.

3.5.5.2 School E Learner questionnaire

Contrary to his claim of ‘hands-on management’ and ‘fatherly involvement’, this principal neither accompanied me to the class nor introduced me to participating learners. I therefore had to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visit to them. My presence had obviously aroused curiosity, since learners who were not supposed to be part of my sample kept coming into the classroom asking for permission to participate. I explained that this was not possible as my sample size was predetermined. When the situation was calm I told the remaining learners what the questionnaire was about, how they should go about answering the questions, and what the terms *sexual harassment* and *sexual abuse* meant in the questionnaire. I then read through the questionnaire with them and ensured that they knew exactly what to do.

I explained why I was conducting this kind of research. Participating learners tried to convince me that we should discuss the issue rather than make use of questionnaires. I explained that this was not possible because the research tool had to be the same in all the schools and they eventually agreed to complete the questionnaires. My doubts about the accuracy of the utopian picture painted by the principal were strengthened by non-participating learners’ insistence that I allow them to complete the questionnaire, as well as by participating learners’ preference for discussion.

Table 3.10: School E Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
9	21	0	0	0	30	0	30	21	9	9	0

As indicated in Table 3.10, all the learners in this sample resided in the rural area nearby, but very few boys (*only nine*) were included in the sample. All the learners were older than eighteen, many of them already twenty years of age.

All the learners who completed the questionnaire were of the opinion that teacher/learner sexual abuse had to be stopped. They argued that teachers have their own wives therefore the only reason they could possibly have for sexually abusing learners was to destroy their dignity. Moreover, they argued, such relationships doom the future of the victims because they usually drop out of school, either because they are pregnant, or to escape the shame.

As was the case in the other schools, learners in School E mentioned the use of good grades or memorandums for tests as incentives – either to persuade them to engage in sexual activities with teachers, or to encourage them to keep quiet about it afterwards. Regarding the steps that could be taken to eliminate teacher/learner sexual abuse, participants emphasised the principal’s responsibility to listen to learners and to report incidents to the relevant authorities, because some parents support the abuse. They also argued that the principal should stop learners from visiting teachers’ cottages, because this is where most of the abuse takes place.

More than half (sixteen of the thirty) learners indicated that workshops with stakeholders could help prevent sexual abuse, provided that workshop participants are informed about the relevant laws and policies, the procedures for reporting sexually related incidents, and the consequences for the perpetrator should s/he be found guilty.

Table 3.11: School E Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosures	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other		Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
4	17	3	2	12	4	9		1		8	

As indicated in Table 3.11, most of the learners (*twenty-one of the thirty*) in this school had engaged in sexual activities during the course of their lives, half the boys (*four out of nine*) and nearly all the girls (*seventeen out of twenty-one*). As was the case in School D, their sexual experiences were primarily with peers (*twelve out of twenty-one incidents cited*). Only three incidents involved teachers, which suggests that teacher/learner sexual abuse is not common in this area.

Nine learners indicated that they had never been abused but knew about friends or family members who had been sexually abused at some time or another. Of these, three were abused by their peers, one by a teacher two by family and three by 'other' people.

Two of the three learners who claimed to have been abused by teachers indicated that this occurred when they were already twenty-one years old. Since they were adults at the time, it is questionable whether this was abuse or not. The age at which the other learners were sexually abused ranged from fourteen to twenty.

As to their feelings after the incident, abused learners indicated that they felt hurt, shocked, confused, sad, ashamed and humiliated. Like learners at the other schools included in my sample, the tendency amongst learners in this school was also to confide in a friend rather than an adult. Some of them 'disclosed' what happened as a means of spiritual healing; others simply accepted that it happened and concentrated on getting on with their lives. There were, of course, the ones who enjoyed the experience, indicating that they felt satisfied afterwards.

The advice that abused victims received from the friends in whom they confided ranged from keeping quiet about it, through staying away from the perpetrator, to informing their parents. In one case the friend told the abused learner not to take the abuse seriously since she was not the first one to be abused. Another advised a victim that she should pretend it never happened, the third, to keep quiet now, but report it if it happened *again*, and the fourth, to keep it secret at all costs. Only one of the friends advised a victim to report it to her parents. This she did, but instead of the parents reporting it to the police, as she had hoped, they confronted the teacher concerned, verbally assaulting him, and that was the only action taken.

To their credit, none of the victims accepted their friends' advice on face value. Instead, they considered much of the advice to be inappropriate. In fact, all of them indicated that what they had wanted to hear was how to bring the perpetrators to book. The learner who was told to keep it secret at all costs had allegedly been abused by a teacher. She followed the advice, but always felt scared, expecting it to happen again.

3.5.6 School F Profile

Like the other schools mentioned above, School F was located in a disadvantaged village, similar to that of School A. Although there was a tarred road next to the school, there was no electricity and water was very scarce.

I was not impressed with the appearance of School F. Although it is a small school, consisting of four buildings only, the buildings were dilapidated and obviously in need of renovation. The school yard, however, was clean. I got the sense that there was a lack of discipline at the school: although it was study time and learners were in classes, there was a lot of noise and there were no teachers around. I wondered how learners could study under such circumstances.

I was warmly welcomed, the class where learners were waiting for me was well arranged, and they were well behaved, with the exception of a few male learners whom I had to reprimand throughout the investigation. Most learners looked presentable and disciplined.

3.5.6.1 School F Principal interview

Principal F (female), like the other principals I interviewed, was aware of the occurrence of sexual abuse in Limpopo schools. She referred specifically to three incidents, all of them at secondary schools in the Senwabarwana Cluster.

In the first incident, allegedly reported to the principal by parents, teachers were accused of engaging in sexual activities with girl learners in the school toilets. The department, having been notified of the incident, instituted a disciplinary hearing. During the first session of the hearing, learners admitted that the incident had indeed occurred. During the second session, the unions of which the accused teachers were members, pleaded with departmental officials present to issue the accused with warnings only. The case was consequently not reported to the police and the teachers are still employed at the school.

The second incident, in which a female teacher was accused of sexually abusing male learners, was also reported by parents. As in the previous instance, there was a disciplinary hearing, learners gave evidence and the accused teacher was represented by her union. On the last day of the disciplinary hearing the learner's parents and the SGB decided to treat the incident as a family matter. The principal was left out of the discussions and discovered afterwards that the parents and the SGB members had withdrawn because they had been 'paid off'.

In the third incident a male teacher was accused of inviting girl learners to his cottage, showing them pornographic videos, and ordering them to perform actual intercourse like the ones on the video. The principal, having been informed of this teacher/learner sexual abuse, confronted the learners concerned. At first they admitted that the incident had occurred, claiming that they had been invited to

the teacher's cottage under false pretences. According to them, he had offered to help them with one of their subjects. The next day, when their parents arrived at school as per the principal's request, the girls recanted. Their new story was that the teacher showed them the video to teach them Life Sciences. The principal had to drop the case but since then, relations between him and his staff have been extremely tense.

This principal, like Principal E, claimed that there had never been any sexual harassment or sexual abuse incidents at her school. Like Principal E, she ascribes the absence of such incidents to her management style and the culture of the school – good communication, disciplined teachers and learners, and what she calls his generally 'firm but fair' approach to issues.

With regard to effective communication, which she regards as her strongest weapon, Principal F indicated that this is a two-way process. She meets all the stakeholders (teachers, learners and parents) in groups once per quarter, discussing, amongst other things, sexual issues, human rights, and teenage pregnancy. Teacher meetings usually take the form of workshops, where the principal motivates teachers to maintain their dignity as professionals and serve as examples to the learners and the community at large. Sometimes the SAPS and representatives from the Department of Health and Social Welfare are invited to share their views on ways in which teachers and learners should behave. Teacher/learner sexual abuse and its consequences are also emphasised at such meetings.

According to the principal, all teachers at her school are free to share incidents of sexual harassment or abuse in informal meetings with her as soon as they hear about them. Learners too (boys and girls separately), have the opportunity of talking to the principal. In addition, she has separate meetings with male teachers to discuss alleged sexual abuse incidents, the impact they have on the victims and the school, and the consequences for the perpetrator. Moreover, she claims,

prospective employees are informed of the school's 'zero tolerance' policy towards sexual abuse.

The principal also claimed that she organises joint gatherings of parents, learners and the neighbouring clinic staff, where the latter are invited to provide guidance on sexually-related issues. Usually, these gatherings take the form of gender-specific group discussions on sexual matters. Group discussions are typically followed by a plenary discussion where the principal has the opportunity of addressing them on aspects/issues of concern highlighted during the gender-specific group discussions.

According to the principal, she initiates these types of meetings because she is aware of the fact that black communities, especially in the rural areas, do not talk to their children about sexual activities. According to her, the meetings contribute to the creation of harmonious relationships between the SGB, parents and the school. As a result, parents participate freely in their children's education and they are welcome to share their concerns about their children's behaviour with the principal whenever they need to.

According to this principal, the existence of various education laws and policies, as well as the Constitution, makes it easier for her to manage the school and to monitor the implementation of school-specific policies and the school code of conduct. Not only learners, but teachers too, are expected to abide by the code of conduct. Teachers are expected to serve as role models for the learners, not only in what they do, but in the way they dress, the way they speak, and the way they perform their official duties. This means, amongst other things, that they must dress in accordance with their professional status, must not use intoxicants while on duty (including during school trips/tours), must not use foul language, and must not form inappropriate relationships with learners.

When asked what she would do in the event that inappropriate sexual engagements occurred at her school, the principal indicated that she would

immediately report the matter to the circuit manager and the police. She would, moreover, ensure that learners and parents alike give evidence of what transpired and would protect them from being misled by those who may want to bribe or threaten them to drop cases. In addition, she would ensure that the victim (that is, the learner concerned) received proper counselling. In doing this, she assured me, she would ensure that the law takes its course. Other teachers would see the consequences and not be tempted to engage in similar activities.

3.5.6.2 School F Learner questionnaire

The principal, who had accompanied me to the classroom where participating learners were waiting for me, introduced me and returned to her office. As was the case in School B, learners were unhappy that I had come to the school after hours. According to them, the investigation should have taken place while the teachers who sexually abuse learners were still on the premises. They argued that it was a waste of time completing questionnaires.

It took me a long time to calm them down, to explain that this was not an investigation in the way they understood it, but personal research for my own studies. Even then they were adamant that they wanted to name the culprits. I denied them the opportunity, insisting that we got on with the business at hand. The learners' evidence was contrary to what the principal had told me. According to the learners, teachers were abusing learners sexually, whereas the principal claimed that such incidents do not take place in her school.

Table 3.12: School F Learner profile

Gender		Age				Location		Abused or not		Know of abused others	
Male	Female	15	16	17	18+	Urban	Rural	Yes	No	Yes	No
12	18	0	0	0	30	9	21	21	9	9	0

Thirty learners completed the questionnaire, twelve boys and eighteen girls, all of them eighteen years or older. Twenty-one of the thirty learners live in rural and nine in urban areas. Nine of them indicated that they had never been sexually abused, but knew of friends and family members who had. Of these friends, seven learners had been abused by teachers, one by a peer and one by a family member.

All the learners at School F who completed the questionnaire indicated that school-based sexual abuse should be stopped. Learners were unanimous in their view that it is primarily the government’s responsibility to take action against teachers. They gave two reasons for this. Firstly, they argued, the government is the employer and therefore has to keep its employees in check. Secondly, the government is constitutionally obliged to ensure that schools are safe so that learners’ rights to education are not undermined in any way.

Table 3.13: School F Profile of sexually abused learners

Incidents		Perpetrators				Disclosed	Confidant				
Male	Female	Teacher	Family	Peer	Other	20	Teacher	Parent	Social worker	Friend	Other
9	12	11	1	9			1	5		14	

Twenty-one of the thirty learners indicated that they had been sexually abused during their lifetime. Of these, nine were boys and twelve girls. Five of the nine boys and six of the twelve girls indicated that they had been abused by teachers. With the exception of one learner who indicated that she had been violated by a family member, the rest of the victims indicated that their abusers were peers. The incidents occurred after they had turned thirteen.

Contrary to what happened in other schools, none of the victims in this school bar one (a boy) hid the fact that they had been sexually abused. Fourteen of them told a friend, five their parents, and one her teacher. All five of the parents who

were told about the sexual encounter gave their children the same advice, namely to cut all ties with the perpetrators, unless they wanted to doom their future. Of the fourteen friends who played the role of confidant, eight advised the victim to keep it a secret and to stop contact with the perpetrator. One of the peer confidantes advised her friend to go to another school. Another confronted the perpetrator and told him to stop running after her friend. The teacher who was told informed the girl's parents about the abuse but that seemed to be the end of it. No action was taken thereafter.

As to the emotions that these incidents aroused in them, learners indicated that they were hurt, confused, frustrated, surprised, stressed, angry and ashamed of themselves. One of the girls indicated that she hated herself afterwards, while another one decided to drop out of school. Only one, a nineteen-year-old girl, indicated that she felt so good after her sexual intercourse with the teachers that she had to share it with a friend. The friend was not impressed and advised her to stop but she decided not to because she was enjoying herself too much.

Learners who had been abused, according to them, either lost focus on their studies or were given higher grades than they deserved. Either way, they argued, the failure rate increased and their futures looked bleak. They also mentioned the occurrence of fights among them for teachers' favours, pregnancy, and a loss of respect for teachers and their authority. Their cynicism and lack of trust in the system, was neatly captured in the comment of one of the boys, who said that it would be impossible to stop the abuse since teachers have become used to it.

With regard to strategies that could perhaps be utilised to stop sexual abuse at schools, learners mentioned teacher dismissal, stakeholder workshops, putting a ban on learner visits to teacher cottages, and principals reporting cases to the police. According to them, strategies like these had been successfully used at other schools: through workshops stakeholders had come to know the law, their responsibilities to uphold the law, and the procedures that could be followed in reporting actual cases. As was the case in some of the other schools included in

my study, learners seemed to assume that fear of exposure or dismissal would stop teachers from sexually abusing learners.

3.6 Case study analysis

Immediately after each visit, I entered the raw data from each school on the computer, organising it in terms of the questions asked. I translated information into English where possible. I then structured the data in a manner that would enable me to first get a sense of sexual attitudes and behaviour at each school, and then followed the same procedure in analysing the data across all schools.

As is common in qualitative research, I used inductive reasoning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; White, 2003) to reflect on the data and to identify themes/patterns emerging from the data. These themes are discussed first in terms of the cases – in this chapter – and then in terms of my theoretical orientations – in Chapter 5.

To minimise personal bias in my interpretation of the data, I used one of my peers as a critical reader. His involvement minimised the role that my own bias might have played in the interpretation of the data and enhanced the trustworthiness of my findings. In addition, it ensured that my final text is systematic and reader-friendly at the same time.

3.7 Emerging case study patterns/themes

Six principals and one hundred and eighty learners (30 from each school) participated in the project. They were all from rural areas except eleven learners, from schools C (one learner), D (one learner) and F (nine learners). Eighty three (83) males and ninety seven (97) female learners participated in the study.

3.7.1 School climate and culture

Schools included in the study are similar in that all of them are located in poor rural communities where unemployment and illiteracy are high, water is scarce and electricity is a privilege rather than a given. Two schools, A and E, are situated in relatively isolated, mountain villages; one school, B, is situated close to a shebeen, in a community riddled with drugs, alcohol and crime. Schools C and D are 20 kilometres apart, with School C located in the centre of four equally poor villages. School D is situated in a community where the sexual abuse of children is the norm rather than the exception, with pensioners allegedly being the prime offenders.

Differences between the schools were most obvious in the physical appearance of the school grounds, the state of repair or disrepair of the buildings, the management style of the principals, relations between teachers and learners, and the presence or absence of order and discipline.

The principal of School A can at best be described as a hands-on administrator. Seemingly unaware of what is going on in his school, particularly with regard to teacher/learner sexual abuse, he does what he sees as his duty and passes on to those above him that which he feels ill equipped to do himself. Even so, the physical and emotional culture of the school is conducive to teaching and learning: teachers and learners are disciplined, staff members, including the principal, share office/classroom space and look out for each other, and learners respect each other and their elders.

School B has an air of neglect and despair about it. The buildings are not cared for, the school yard was dirty, teachers and learners were dressed slovenly. Learners were noisy, rude, uncooperative and ill disciplined. Teachers, according to the learners, control them either with a cane or with sexual favours. In order not to be beaten, so learners claimed, they have no choice but to give the teachers the sexual gratification they demand. The principal, according to his own testimony, has tried, unsuccessfully, to impose a culture of respect, transparency

and collegiality in the school, but to no avail. Having failed, he now passes sexual abuse problems to those who have the professional knowledge and expertise to deal with such matters – the police, social workers, and the department of education.

School C is neat, clean, safe, and well cared for. Teachers exude an air of businesslike professionalism. Learners are disciplined, yet outspoken, and show evidence of independent thinking. They are proud of their school and resent any insinuations of sexual abuse or other improper behaviour. They do not, however, have much confidence in the government, and believe that it is up to the school to see that everybody is safe and respected. The principal, who is in an acting capacity, is courageous and determined to infuse the school with the liberal values of the modern world. The previous principal was, and the current SGB are more inclined towards traditional, patriarchal values, but there seems to be a healthy balance between the two attitudes in the school as a whole.

School D looks neat, safe, orderly and disciplined, but it seems to rest on turbulent waters. Child abuse is rife in the community where the school is located – the principal has personal knowledge of pensioners abusing primary school children; one of learners also mentioned this in his questionnaire. Staff relations are tense and the principal literally fears for his life. Having been told by teachers to stop interfering in their personal lives, he is no longer willing to put his life on the line. All he does is mark time. He fervently desires training in how to deal with sexual abuse matters, because he feels totally out of depth with what is happening in his school. Until this takes place, he delegates his authority upwards, to circuit and district officials.

School E, if one believes the principal, is Utopia. He is proud of his staff, claiming that they are ideal role models for learners who, according to him, are regarded as their partners in education. I found no evidence of this, however. The biggest of the six schools in my sample, it was also the dirtiest and most neglected. Nobody, from the learners to the staff, seemed to have any pride in their own, or

their school's, appearance. There was no evidence of forward planning, order or discipline in the way the principal, his staff or the learners behaved. The learners, especially, were rude, arrogant and uncooperative.

School F, in contrast, is the smallest of the six schools. The buildings are dilapidated but clean. The children were noisy but disciplined and, on the whole, respectful. School F is the only school with a female principal where workshops and meetings are conducted in terms of gender. Whether this has any bearing on the research case was not investigated. It is clear that the principal seems to be out of touch with what is happening in her school, notwithstanding her knowledge of theory, policy and the law, or her 'open-door' policy. Like the principal of School E, this principal understands education management theory and believes that she is near to the perfect ideal of a principal: she has an open-door approach to management and does everything in her power to train all concerned in new ways of doing things. Even so, she bows to the old ways by separating boys and girls, males and females in workshops and meetings.

Principal F's obeisance to two seemingly conflicting ways of doing things could be one of the causes for the simmering tension between her and the staff on the one hand, and between her and the unions on the other hand. Teacher unions seem to be very powerful, and, in alliance with the parent community, this makes it difficult for the principal to maintain a balance between the legal justice that she is supposed to effect in the school, and the social justice to which the community as a whole still subscribes.

3.7.2 The nature and extent of sexual abuse

While all six principals agreed that sexual abuse at schools is a problem and that it should be addressed as a matter of urgency, only four of them knew, or were willing to admit, that sexual abuse features in their schools. Further, the exact nature of sexual abuse as it occurred in the sampled schools was not clear. Whether it was sexual harassment, sexual assault, or consensual sexual intercourse was not indicated in the data. What did emerge, from incidents

related by principals, is that pornography was involved in only one instance, and not in any of the schools where my research took place. The data does indicate that, in teacher/learner sexual abuse, financial incentives play a major role – to solicit sexual favours from learners, to pay for abortions, to buy their or their parents’ silence about the abuse, as compensation for the abuse, or as maintenance for a teacher’s illegitimate child.

While it is not possible to generalise about the extent of sexual abuse in the six schools concerned – the findings are applicable only to the 180 learners who participated in my research – indications are that learner sexual abuse is a feature at all six schools (see Table 3.14). The abuse of learners by teachers, however, occurs in only five of the six schools, School C being the exception. The data also suggests that, in the case of learners who completed the questionnaire, most of the sexual encounters took place between learners, not between them and their teachers.

The data further shows that learner sexual abuse is highest in Schools E and F. Twenty one learners in School E and the same number in School F who completed the questionnaires indicated that they are sexually active. These are, ironically, the two schools where principals claim that teachers and learners always behave with propriety. Sexual abuse is average in School B (seventeen of participating learners have had sexual activities some time or another), and comparatively low in Schools C, twelve and A, eleven learners. The comparison of school cultures indicates that School A, where sexual activity is lowest, is emotionally safe – learners know their rights and responsibilities, are disciplined, and teachers and learners show concern for each other. Parenting is also good – parents stand up for their children, reporting abuse if and when it occurs.

In Schools E and F, where sexual abuse is highest, the school cultures and climates are negative. School E, the biggest of the six schools, was dirty, the buildings were poorly maintained, teachers and learners did not seem to care about their appearance, and there was a general lack of discipline. Although the principal

bragged that they regard learners as partners in education, learners showed no respect for the principal, the teachers or the researcher. In fact, they were particularly rude and uncooperative. School F, the smallest of the six schools in my sample, was also in a state of disrepair, but at least it was clean; learners were noisy but disciplined, even though they were agitated and uncooperative when I insisted that they complete questionnaires rather than engage in discussions. There was tension between the principal and the staff, and the union seems to yield a great deal of influence.

Table 3.14: Sexual abuse profile across schools

School	Number of incidents	Teacher		Peer		Family		Other	
A	11	2	F=2	7	F=7	0		2	M=2
B	17	13	M=9 F=4	3	M=1 F=2	1	F=1	0	
C	12	0		12	M=5 F=7	0		0	
D	20	3	M=1 F=2	13	M=6 F=7	1	F=1	3	M=1 F=2
E	21	3	M=1 F=2	12	M=2 F=10	2	M=1 F=1	4	F=4
F	21	11	M=5 F=6	9	M=4 F=5	1	F=1	0	
Total	102	32	M=16 F=16	56	M=18 F=38	5	M=1 F=4	9	M=3 F=6

Teacher/learner sexual abuse is the highest in School B (13), followed by School F (11), Schools D and E (3 each) and School C (zero). The relatively high occurrence of teacher/learner sexual abuse in School B could possibly be ascribed to poverty and/or communal influences. Parents, struggling for survival in a society where crime, drug and alcohol abuse are the norm, are willing to sacrifice their children's future and honour in exchange for pay-offs (money or groceries) to help the rest of the family to survive for a little while longer. This is also the only school where boys outnumber girls as sexual abuse victims. It could be because the boys loiter around the shebeen and roam the streets during school hours. The zero

percentage at School C, on the other hand, is probably inspired by the courage and determination of the acting school principal in confronting and rooting out sexual abuse, regardless of resistance from those who lean towards traditional, patriarchal ways of dealing with the problem.

While I expected to find that teachers were the main perpetrators of sexual abuse, this was not the case. Instead, actual intercourse amongst peers was much higher (*see Figure 2*). The high number of learners who claimed to have been sexually abused by their peers suggests that they either do not understand what sexual abuse is, or that, as claimed by those who long for a return to the old ways (*see discussion of this issue in Chapter 2*), they are using sexuality to give males a bad name. Nevertheless, teachers do abuse learners sexually, albeit on a much smaller scale than I anticipated: in my sample alone, thirty-two learners were sexually abused by teachers in their care (*see Figure 2*), and that thirty-two is too many.

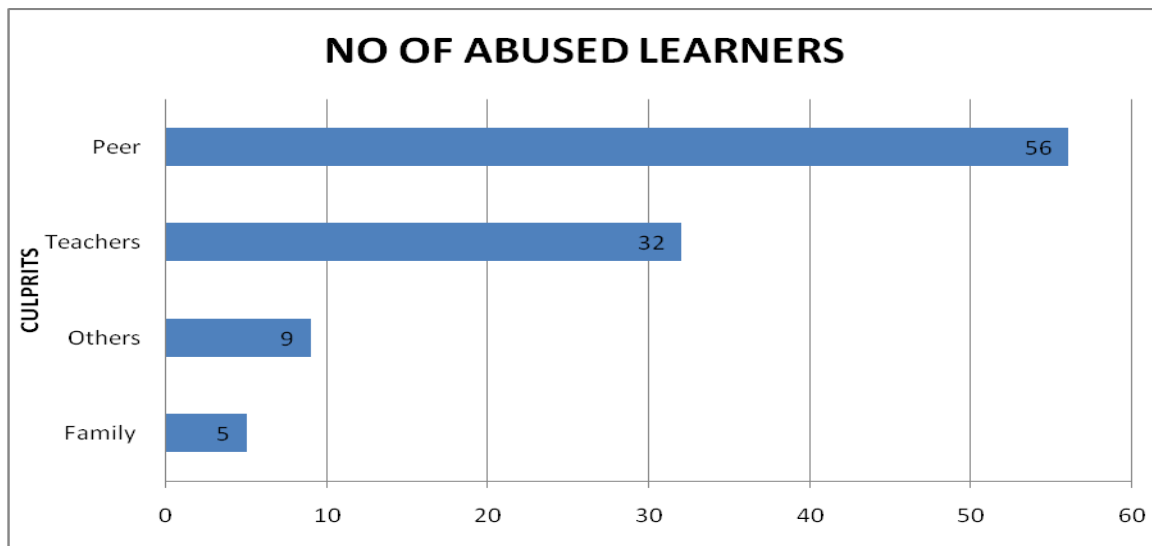


Figure 2: Sexual offenders per category

Sexual relations between learners and their peers is highest in School D (13), followed by Schools C and E (12 each), School F (9), School A (7) and the lowest School B (3). The reason for the high number of learners who experiment with sex in School D is not clear. Perhaps it is simply their adolescent curiosity; or it

could be that the tension between the principal and his staff has affected the children who therefore seek comfort in peer relations.

Table 3.15: Disclosed incidents

School	Number of incidents	Number of incidents disclosed	Friend	Social worker	Parents	Teacher	Others	Number of incidents not disclosed
A	11	5	4	1	–	–	–	6
B	17	13	9	–	2	2	–	4
C	12	6	5	–	–	1	–	6
D	20	9	8	–	1	–	–	11
E	21	9	8	–	1	–	–	12
F	21	20	14	–	5	1	–	1
Total	102	62	48	1	9	4	–	40

The number of incidents indicated in Table 3.15 does not reveal the exact number of incidents per culprit, because not all incidents were disclosed. It shows that of the hundred and two (102) incidents mentioned by learners in their completion of the questionnaires, only sixty two (62) were disclosed; forty (40) were kept a secret.

Whereas female learners seem to be more sexually abused, out of ninety seven (97) participated, sixty four (64) of them were sexually abused than male learners. Eighty three male learners participated and thirty eight (38) of them were sexually abused across schools, this is not the case in School B, where male learners twenty (20) outnumber female learners by ten (10). As already indicated, this might be because the male learners frequent the shebeens where they are in regular contact with adult males whose natural inhibitions might be reduced by

the effects of alcohol. Consequently the boys are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Since no data was collected in this regard, the inference is merely speculative.

Table 3.16: Sexual abuse victims known to research participants

School	Abused by peer	Abused by family	Abused by other	Abused by teacher	TOTAL
A	3	2	1	5	11
B	3	-	2	4	9
C	7	1	2	1	11
D	1	2	1	4	8
E	3	2	3	1	9
F	1	1	-	7	9
TOTAL	18	8	9	22	57

Learners who participated in my study at the sampled schools mentioned that they know friends and family members who have been sexually abused. As indicated in Table 3.16, fifty seven victims were known to participants across the schools. In this case sexually abused learners in the six sample schools, the number of learners abused by teachers is higher than those abused by peer. The findings also show that other victims were abused by family and/or other members. The number of sexually abused learners known to participants in my research is lower than the number of sexual abuse incidents (*Table 3.14*) in the schools I visited. I could not determine whether this was true or false, nor what the reason might be if it were true. Another common pattern across schools (*Table 3.17, below*) is the number of learners who have never had sexual experience. A total number of eighty three learners have never been exposed to sexual activities.

Table 3.17: Non-abused learners

School	Learners not abused
A	19
B	13
C	18
D	15
E	9
F	9
Total	83

3.7.3 Factors contributing to sexual abuse

Indications from the data on the possible causes for school-based sexual abuse, with specific reference to teacher/learner sexual abuse, are that there are several factors at play. Key among these, according to learners, but mentioned by only one principal, is the location of teacher cottages on school premises. According to learners, this is where most of the abuse takes place, often on the pretext of extra tuition.

Other causal factors emerging from the data are principals' management style, and school culture and climate. Where discipline is sound, teachers and learners respect one another, and the school environment is emotionally safe, the data suggests that sexual abuse decreases; where there is tension – between teachers and the principal, between learners and teachers, or among learners fighting for a teacher's attention – sexual abuse increases. Other possible causal factors mentioned by learners but not further interrogated, are material incentives, better marks, higher status, and avoidance of corporal punishment.

The four principals who acknowledged that sexual abuse occurs in their schools indicated that their efforts to stop the abuse were being hampered by various

factors. Key amongst these is the fact that sexual abuse cases are often not reported. Even when sexual abuse was reported to them and they tried to intervene, these four principals indicated that their efforts were blocked and/or their lives were threatened.

Indications from the data are, moreover, that the factors most likely to prevent the occurrence of improper sexual behaviour are pride in self and the school, good parenting (discipline, coupled with caring), naturally good behaviour, disinterest in the opposite sex, and self-respect.

3.7.4 Response to sexual abuse

Responses to teacher/learner sexual abuse were varied: some learners indicated that it should be stopped – by the government, the school, or the principal – while others mooted that what they do in their private capacity is nobody's business but their own. What is interesting in terms of categories of behaviour is that learners and principals tend to judge sexual behaviour in terms of human rights. They verbalise their opinions of what should be done to perpetrators found guilty of sexual abuse in legal terms, while parents and community members frame their responses in terms of traditional or communal values and ways of doing things. Implied in these differences are notions of changing value systems and different interpretations of social justice.

What is also clear is that the majority of learners want sexual abuse at school to stop. One hundred and seventy four (174) of the hundred and eighty (180) participating learners supported this opinion. Some of them justified their position with reference to teachers' responsibilities and professional image, but the majority wanted it to stop because it caused them harm, physically and/or emotionally. Many of the girls could fall pregnant and drop out of school, their futures are destroyed and they have little chance of upward mobility – again, this is evidence of a lack of social justice.

Another common response is to keep the matter under wraps. While learners and principals are of the opinion that perpetrators must be brought to book, they seldom succeed in doing so. Learners are either too ashamed or too fearful of confiding in adults, who can do something about the abuse, or they submit to sexual demands in return for higher grades, money or other benefits; principals are either too afraid of the consequence of acting against the perpetrators, or their efforts to do so are thwarted by staff, parents, or the teacher unions; parents choose to settle, because they need the money (poverty), are not familiar with human rights laws, subscribe to traditional cultural practices and taboos, or because the head of the household (usually male) ordered them to do so; teachers keep quiet for their own protection, or perhaps sexual abuse of learners has become a regular practice and therefore does not warrant discussion.

3.7.5 Impact of sexual abuse

The data indicates that there is agreement amongst principals and learners about the negative impact of sexual abuse on learners, teachers, the school and the community. Broadly speaking, the effects are both physical and psychological. Physical effects include viral infections (like HIV), pregnancy, dropping out of school, and rejection (by the father of the unborn child, the parents, or the community). Psychological trauma includes shame, rejection (at an emotional level), lack of concentration (at a cognitive and emotional level), depression (which could result in suicide), and cultural confusion. In terms of education, according to learners, sexual abuse by teachers cause them to lose their respect for teachers and for the system, it undermines school discipline, it negatively affects their academic performance, and it undermines their rights to education and human dignity.

3.7.6 Participant strategies for the prevention of sexual abuse

Those who participated in my study mentioned various strategies as possible routes to prevent school-based sexual abuse. These strategies seem to rest on a number of assumptions.

The most common strategy is based on the assumption that *knowledge is power*; therefore knowledge of the law and of what steps to take in reporting sexual abuse should stop it from happening. Those who subscribe to this notion typically recommend the use of workshops or training programmes to stem the tide of sexual abuse. That this is not as effective a strategy as commonly thought, is evident from the fact that sexual activity is highest in the three schools where principals claim that workshops are an integral part of how they manage their schools, their staff, and the learners in their schools.

The second strategy addresses *fear*. The assumption seems to be that fear of exposure, prosecution, deregistration, loss of status/reputation, or even divorce, would prevent teachers from abusing learners sexually. The point is, such deterrents are already in place – in the form of legal acts, codes of conduct, criminal law – and seem to have little effect. Further, nowhere in the literature on the subject is fear even mentioned as an inhibitor of sexual behaviour. In fact, so research has indicated DoE (2002b), fear might even be a stimulant that promotes sexual abuse.

A third strategy which was mentioned only by learners in School C, is the use of security guards, cameras and other electronic equipment to *monitor* the behaviour of teachers and learners. Informing this strategy is the notion that prevention is better than cure; that if a person knows that s/he is being watched, this will inhibit him/her from engaging in improper behaviour. This strategy might work, if the decrease in crime in areas where CCTV cameras have been installed is taken as an example. The problem is that such equipment is expensive and the

schools in this area are all Quintile 1 – poor, non-fee paying – schools. They would therefore not be able to afford such monitoring equipment.

Fourthly, as mentioned by learners in two schools, and partially implemented by the principal of one school, is the strategy of separating boys and girls for educational purposes. Informing this strategy is the false assumption that sexual activities occur only between people of opposite *gender* and that, by not only keeping boys and girls apart, but also by ensuring that they are taught by someone of the same gender, the problem will be solved. The international furore about the abuse of boys by priests in Catholic institutions proves that this is not a viable proposition.

Finally, and on a more practical note, learners suggested that *teacher cottages* should be removed from school premises since this is where sexual abuse most often takes place. The problem with this suggestion is that it does not address the underlying reasons for sexual abuse, only the opportunity. The reason does not lie in the availability of the cottages, but in the psyche of the perpetrator, or the socio-cultural context within which the abuse takes place. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The two principals who claimed that teachers at their schools do not abuse learners sexually, are of the opinion that it is possible to control the occurrence of school-based sexual abuse by means of regular workshops. According to them, the workshops create a forum in which traditional taboos on sexual issues can be temporarily put aside. Regular, two-way communication with all stakeholders is also of the essence, in their opinion, as well as the adoption of a ‘firm but fair’ management style.

3.8 Conclusion

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the data presented here could be used as a basis for determining whether the laws, policies and codes aimed at

preventing and/or curbing sexual abuse in South African schools are upheld or ignored in the schools that served as my case study. Any conclusions in this regard are inferential since my data is based on evidence collected only from the principals, thirty Grade 11 learners from each school (180 learners in total), and my own observations of school culture and climate. Even so, the data I collected provided me with valuable insights into the 'sexual life worlds' of my research participants. More specifically, it gave me a sense of the nature and extent of sexual abuse in the Senwabarwana cluster in general, and in the schools selected as cases for my study in particular.

A number of patterns, or trends, related to sexual abuse in these schools, with specific reference to the experiences of the principals and learners who participated in my study, emerged from my analysis of the data. In the first instance, evidence suggests that the extent to which learners engage in sexual activities varies across schools, being lowest in schools where learners feel emotionally safe, and highest in those where they do not. Indications are that the sizes of the schools do not have any bearing on the extent to which sexual activity takes place there. In fact, the two schools where sexual abuse is highest are the largest and the smallest schools in my sample.

Neither do the poverty levels of the communities in which the schools are located, nor the management style of principals seem to play a role. What do seem to have an effect on the percentage of children who are abused by teachers, are school culture and climate; the values of the community in which the school is located; the use of incentives; the secrecy surrounding sexual encounters between teachers and learners; and the opportunity for private, uninterrupted sexual activities presented by on-site teacher cottages. Factors most likely to prevent the occurrence of improper sexual behaviour are an inclination to naturally good behaviour, disinterest in the opposite sex, and self-respect.

Regarding the way in which various parties respond to, and deal with sexual abuse and revelations about it in the schools concerned, indications are that principals and learners are inclined to interpret the issue in terms of existing legal frameworks. On the other hand, parents do so in terms of patriarchal systems, cultural traditions, survival needs, and stereotyped gender roles. More to the point, principals and learners want to ensure *legal* justice by reporting abuse to the relevant legal authorities, professional bodies and/or departmental officials, whether parents prefer to effect *social* justice by means of monetary or other forms of compensation. It seems that these differences in the meanings attached to the notion of justice result in tension between principals (as representatives of the school) and the parent community; between parents and their children; between the principal and his/her staff; and between professional teacher unions and the school.

There is, however, relative consensus between learners and principals across the six schools that teacher/learner sexual abuse has a negative impact, not only on learners' academic performance and future life opportunities, but also on their social development, morality and psychological state of being. The data indicates that strategies currently used to address not only the incidence of sexual abuse, but also the impact it has on those concerned, are fairly predictable – workshops, Life Orientation classes to educate learners in this regard, disciplinary hearings, and monetary compensation. There is little evidence of innovative thinking from principals; rather, their primary concern, with one or two exceptions, seems to be defending their own stance and/or not upsetting the status quo.

In terms of determining whether or not the relevant laws and policies regarding school-based sexual abuse are being upheld in the schools serving as cases for my study, I must, therefore, conclude that this is not so. In many instances, in fact, nobody even considers the policy and legal framework. Possible reasons for this situation are considered in Chapter 5.

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CHAPTER 4

THE BIG PICTURE

4.1 Introduction

Although the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalise (Struwig & Stead, 2001), I was curious to find out whether the trends and patterns identified in my case studies are typical of the broader provincial and national context. The opportunity to investigate such broader patterns became available to me when I visited departmental officials to cross check my school-based data. They then referred me to other officials who, in turn, referred me to various organisations. All the people I spoke to were very helpful, providing me with statistics, case records, and other documentary evidence. The insights I gained from reading these documents gave me a sense of the bigger picture, i.e., of the impact that the national and provincial culture might have on community and school cultures.

By making use of snowball sampling, I arranged meetings with knowledgeable officials at the provincial education offices and spoke to officials working in different sections of the Limpopo Department of Education. Not only did they talk to me, but they also referred me to Child Line Protection, the South African Police Crime Prevention Section, the Human Rights Commission, and the (national) South African Council for Educators (SACE). These interviewees provided me with statistical and other data on the sexual abuse of children across Limpopo, and from SACE, in schools across the country. I was even invited to attend a conference organised by the Human Rights Commission, and observed court proceedings at one of the provincial children's courts in the Limpopo Province. These activities enabled me to collect data to assist in formulating strategies that could possibly be used to prevent sexual abuse in schools.

Because much of the information regarding the problem is recorded in writing, I also looked for relevant information in a range of documents – legal documents, court records, departmental statistics, police dockets, etc. The value that document analysis added to my research findings is twofold. In the first instance, it helped me view the problem of sexual abuse from a general, as well as a context-specific perspective. Moreover, objective quantitative findings complemented by factual documented records, enhance the truth value of the subjective data gathered by qualitative means (White, 2003). It is the presentation of the data collected on these broader contexts that is the focus of this chapter.

4.2 The Limpopo context

As indicated in Chapter 3, Limpopo is one of the nine provinces of South Africa and is divided into five district municipalities, namely Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Waterberg and Vhembe (*Figure 1*). Each district municipality is further subdivided into at least three local municipalities. The Maleboho Central Circuit, which was identified for the purpose of this study, is located within the Blouberg local municipality which, in turn, falls under the Capricorn District Municipality.

The Blouberg area, which is where my investigation took place, consists mostly of deep rural settlements. The greater Limpopo area, however, is a mix of rural, peri-urban and urban cultures which, at times, conflict with one another. Rural people, typically subscribe to a common, often patriarchal, culture, living, as they do, under the leadership of a chief or headman (Soanes et al., 2006). Talking about sex with adults, for example, is still taboo in such communities, even in cases where children are being sexually abused (Govender, 2008: 1-2). In contrast, those living in urban areas are more inclined to imitate Western/European cultures in the clothes they wear, the language they speak, and the values to which they subscribe. In fact, as mooted by Gómez-Quiñones (1997) (*see Chapter 2*); individual and group behaviour in urban areas might well reflect more than

one culture in particular situations and/or at particular points in time. This, I would argue, is particularly true with regard to sexual behaviour.

4.3 Sexual abuse in Limpopo

Media reports Matlala (2009: 7) on sexually-related offences in Limpopo suggest that not only are these increasing, but the conflict between traditional and Western ways of dealing with these problems is causing strife in families and seems to be threatening the cohesion of some rural communities.

A case in point is the series of media reports Matlala (2009: 7) about a sixteen-year-old girl who was fighting for her life in one of the hospitals in the Senwabarwana area. According to the media, the girl had fallen pregnant as the result of having had sexual intercourse with one of her teachers. The teacher gave her R300-00 for an abortion. However, something went wrong during the course of the abortion and the girl was admitted to hospital, in a critical condition.

Apparently the parents were unaware of the situation until their daughter was hospitalised. It was only when the perpetrator sent someone to the family to apologise on his behalf, that they found out what had caused their daughter's condition and who the culprit was. The mother was furious, especially since the teacher was a married man, and accused him of destroying not only her daughter's reputation, but also her life. The girl's father, on the other hand, objected to his wife's behaviour, regarding it as disrespectful, and ejected her from his house.

In 2005, the media reported that a male high school teacher in one of the villages in Giyani, had sodomised one of the boys in his class. He traded the Afrikaans examination memorandum with the boy concerned, in exchange for sex and silence. It was only when questions were asked about discrepancies between the boy's earlier and end-of-year academic performance, that the matter was investigated. It was then revealed that the teacher gave the boy a lift home,

sodomised him, then offered him the memorandum in return for his silence. The teacher was subsequently arrested (Matlala, 2005: 3).

Two Bolobedu teachers were investigated in the early 2000s. One of them had given the learners concerned an inflated progress report in exchange for sex; the other had used the school science laboratory for his sexual pursuits. Both matters were reported to the school governing body, who forwarded them to the regional education department (Matlala, 2005: 3). In response to the allegations, the provincial spokesperson for the Department of Education revealed that, at the time, 120 twenty teachers were facing charges of misconduct, many of them for sexual harassment. He also promised that the Department of Education in Limpopo would no longer employ or tolerate teachers who were ‘hobos’, ‘rapists’ or ‘embezzlers’, and that any teacher found guilty of transgressing the South African Schools’ Act would be summarily dismissed (Matlala, 2005: 3). Also, according to Matlala (2009: 2), the MEC for the Mopani District announced at an *imbizo* (gathering), that he would dismiss all teachers who were found guilty of sexually abusing learners.

Another incident reported in the media was that of a forty-five-year-old white male teacher who was sent to prison in April 2007 for having sexually abused eight male learners at his school. They succumbed because he had promised them better grades, bursaries and money. Having told their parents that he was giving them extra lessons, he drove them to his place of residence at night where he sexually abused them. It was only when he did not keep his promise as to the incentives that the boys reported him. It emerged that the teacher had been found guilty of a similar offence in 1998. At the time, he was sent for rehabilitation, where after he returned to teaching, notwithstanding the earlier public proclamation of the Department of Education that they would not employ sexual offenders as teachers. Based on this evidence, the Tzaneen magistrate ruled that he should no longer be employed as a teacher since he could not be rehabilitated (Makgoka, 2007: 7).

Matlala (2009: 2) reported the concerns of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) about the increase in teacher-learner sexual abuse in the Mopani District. The chairperson of school governing bodies in Limpopo responded to this concern, pointing out that school-based sexual abuse was also a problem in Phalaborwa and Senwabarwana, where my investigation took place. What makes matters worse in Limpopo Province is the fact that some school principals also engage in sexual activities with school children. A principal, as school manager, is required, among other things, to ensure the safety of learners at school. Not only should s/he ensure that school policies are in place and implemented, but as a respected figure in the school and the community at large, s/he should lead by example. This does not, however, always seem to be the case in Limpopo, as described below.

A married school principal in one of the rural villages of Senwabarwana, for example, was accused of sexually abusing female learners between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Being aware of the poverty in the area, the principal silenced children and their parents by giving them groceries and money up to the value of R500-00. According to media reports, one of the victims of this principal's unprofessional behaviour was a fifteen-year-old girl who subsequently gave birth to his child. She did not want to prosecute him, warning investigators not to interfere with her private life. As long as the father of the child provided for her family, she would be grateful (Ncaca, 2006: 1).

Another victim of the same principal did, however, prosecute, because he stopped paying maintenance for her children. During the investigation, it was found that the principal had fathered two children with this woman, who, at the time of the investigation, was thirty-two years old. Since her children were then twelve and fifteen years old, she could have been no older than seventeen when she gave birth to the first child fathered by the principal. The Senwabarwana Magistrate's Court ordered the principal to pay R300-00 for each child (Ncaca, 2006: 1).

Another incident, cited by Maponya (2008: 6), concerns a fifty-four-year-old school principal from one of the villages in the Masisi Magistrate's District. He was accused of raping a fourteen-year-old learner from another school in the nearby village. He gave her a lift, raped her and then paid her R100-00 for her silence. She did not, however, keep quiet. Instead, she reported the incident to her parents, and the principal was arrested. Some community members then came forward, accusing the principal of constantly abusing women in the area, and he was convicted.

Indications from media and official reports are that sexual abuse among peers is also becoming a problem, especially between boys, who sodomise one another. Even primary school learners have started engaging in sexual activities. According to media reports primary school boys between the ages of twelve and thirteen use magazines and DVDs to sexually stimulate themselves. According to Govender (2008: 1-2) older boys pay younger ones anything from fifty cents to five rands to engage in sexual activities with them. In one of the senior primary schools, a fourteen-year-old boy, for example, forced four learners aged between seven and nine years to have sex with him after he had shown them a pornographic DVD. The act was also recorded on another boy's cell phone.

Given discrepancies between official statistics and media reports on sexual abuse, with specific reference to school-based sexual abuse, I decided to turn to other sources for information. First, I visited the children's court in the Capricorn District, which deals specifically with child sexual abuse cases. Court officials provided me with statistics on the number of cases reported, tried, and withdrawn during the 2009/2010 period.

Table 4.1: Court statistics on child abuse in Limpopo

Month	Enrolled	Trials	Withdrawn	Convicted	Acquitted	Outstanding
June 2009	121	9	3	3	6	100
July 2009	94	7	3	2	5	77
August 2009	112	6	5	4	2	95
September 2009	73	7	5	5	2	71
October 2009	110	8	7	4	4	87
November 2009	99	5	4	5	0	85
December 2009	77	2	7	2	0	66
January 2010	62	7	1	5	2	47
February 2010	89	9	4	4	5	67
TOTALS	837	60	39	34	26	695

The court statistics presented in Table 4.1 indicates that, whereas there are fluctuations in the numbers of reported cases, the number of convictions remains relatively constant. On average, from June 2009 to February 2010, out of eight hundred and thirty seven (837) cases reported only sixty (60) cases were attended to, while six hundred and ninety five (695) remained outstanding. The highest number of reported cases was experienced in June 2009, and dropped in January 2010 (62). What is of most concern is the highest number of outstanding, withdrawn and acquitted reported cases. This is questionable whether the delay and withdrawal of these cases could be culturally or economically based. As indicated in the table reported cases with evidence lead to the arrest of the perpetrators

While I was at the court building, the officials invited me to observe the court proceedings of a case then in progress. The victim was a rural, sexually abused Grade 10 girl. The perpetrator was approximately twenty years old and lived in and around the urban city of Polokwane. According to testimony given during the trial, this young man raped the girl during the weekend, while she was on her way home, after he had spent the evening with two friends in a nearby tavern. They met the girl in the street, and the accused told his friends to leave him alone with her. He then raped her several times. During the court proceedings the victim appeared to be frightened and was reluctant to disclose what had happened to her. As a result, the evidence she gave was contradictory and the accused was acquitted.

In order to find out what the Limpopo Department of Education was doing to stop the sexual abuse of school children, I decided to make an appointment with one of the departmental officials responsible for school safety. Phishego (not his real name), the person I was referred to, is, amongst other things, responsible for ensuring that learners in Limpopo schools are taught in a safe environment. Because he had not been in the post for long, Phishego could not provide me with departmental statistics on school-based sexual abuse in the province, but was willing to grant me an interview.

After our interview Phishego referred me to Karabo (also a pseudonym), who works in the labour relations sector of the Limpopo Department of Education, and who could, according to Phishego, provide me with statistical information. Moreover, Phishego advised me also to talk to the South African Police Services, Limpopo Childline Protection Unit, and the South African Human Rights Commission who, he suggested, would be able to give me more detailed information on child sexual abuse cases.

The school-based sexual abuse statistics that I received from Karabo cover the period from 2004 to 2009 for three districts only, namely Mopani, Capricorn and Vhembe (*see Table 4.2*).

Table 4.2: LDoE statistics on teacher/learner sexual offences (2004-2009)

DISTRICT	TYPE OF SEXUAL ABUSE	INCIDENT DATE	DATE REPORTED	STATUS
Mopani	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2002	2004	Pending Withdrawal recommended due to lack of evidence
	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2009	2009	Pending charges
Capricorn	Teacher-learner sexual harassment	2008	2008	Finalised (Withdrawn) due to lack of evidence
	Teacher-learner sexual harassment	2008	2008	Teacher resigned (pending), to be recommended for closure
	Teacher-learner sexual harassment	2008	2008	Pending Scheduled for disciplinary hearing
	Teacher-learner sexual harassment	2009	2009	Scheduled for disciplinary hearing
Vhembe	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2005	2005	Pending, hearing scheduled
	Teacher-learner sexual relationship	2005	2009	Finalised, perpetrator demoted
	Teacher-learner sexual harassment	2007	2009	Pending, scheduled for hearing
	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2007	2007	Pending, scheduled for hearing
	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2008	2008	Pending, scheduled for hearing
	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2007	2007	Pending, compiling report
	Teacher-learner sexual relations	2007	2008	Pending
	Teacher-learner sexual abuse	2009	2009	Pending, investigation at district level

Table 4.2: LDoE statistics on teacher/learner sexual offences (2004-2009)(ctd)

DISTRICT	TYPE OF SEXUAL ABUSE	INCIDENT DATE	DATE REPORTED	STATUS
Vhembe	Teacher-learner sexual abuse	2009	2009	Pending, investigation at district level
	Teacher-learner alleged rape	2009	2009	Pending, hearing date to be scheduled

If these statistics are a true reflection of what is happening in the Limpopo Province, sexual abuse is higher in deep rural areas (Vhembe) than in urban districts (Capricorn and Mopani). The statistics reveal differences between the occurrence and the elapse of reported cases. There was no time lapse between occurrence and reported cases in Capricorn (an urban area) four (4) cases, ten (10) cases in Vhembe (a deep rural area) and two (2) in Mopani (a peri-urban area). In Mopani the time lapse was two years; in Vhembe it ranged from one to four years. As suggested earlier, this could possibly be due to differences in urban and rural areas, with the former being more susceptible to and accommodating of cultural change than the latter.

I gained a number of other insights about the occurrence of school-based sexual abuse from the tabulated statistics. Firstly, in Capricorn, teachers were accused mostly of sexual harassment, and in Mopani of harassment and intercourse. In Vhembe, though, accusations run the whole gamut, from harassment to rape. Secondly, very few cases (only 2 of 16) have as yet been finalised, one in Capricorn and one in Vhembe. Both cases in Mopani, one of which occurred in 2002 and was only reported in 2004, are still pending. In one of these, there is seemingly a lack of evidence; in the other the perpetrator has yet to be charged. In the one case that has been finalised in Capricorn, charges were withdrawn. By implication, the alleged abuser is still employed as a teacher. In Vhembe, although the process took four years, the offender has been dismissed.

I returned to Phishego later, asking him to explain apparent discrepancies with regard to these issues. He then told me that the department runs into many difficulties in their attempts to root out this practice, and to illustrate his point, he referred to five particular cases. In one instance, a teacher was accused of having multiple school-going sexual partners. However, the case was dropped because the acting head of department at the time pronounced judgement before the disciplinary hearing process took place.

In the second incident, neither parents nor learners wanted to press charges. In a third case, the learner wanted to press charges but the parents were keen on having the teacher as their son-in-law and prevented her from testifying. The fourth case, in which Phishego was personally involved, was revealed in a radio broadcast. The Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) investigated the matter as instructed by the national Department of Education (DoE) but has not yet finalised it. In the fifth incident, parents reported a perpetrator at an *'imbizo'*. He was later arrested, while attempting to rape yet another girl.

4.4 The national context

As indicated in Chapter 1, school-based sexual abuse is a serious problem in South Africa. In a submission made to the Task Group on Sexual Abuse in Schools, the Department of Education (2002a) acknowledged that sexual abuse of school children by their teachers is a reality, but argued that it was a social rather than a school problem. Classifying it with other forms of school violence (bullying, substance abuse, sexual abuse in general, verbal abuse, racism, gangsterism, guns and weapons, and vandalism), the report ascribes it to old mindsets, in which the abuse of women and children were the norm rather than the exception (DoE, 2002a). Claiming that these mindsets are unlikely to change regardless of the opportunities offered by post-apartheid laws, the report calls on all South Africans to break society's current resounding silence on sexual abuse, especially the abuse of vulnerable women and children (DoE, 2002b).

Focusing specifically on sexual abuse in schools, the report argues that it happens everywhere, in dormitories, empty classrooms, hallways, and toilets, and at all schools, irrespective of their socio-economic status. The DoE defines sexual abuse as any unwelcome sexual advance, including sexual harassment, touching, verbal degradation, rape, and sexual violence. Arguing that sexual abuse of any kind makes schools unsafe, the report claims that it turns the school experience, for girls in particular, into a battle for survival rather than academic achievement, and in the process, suffocates their dreams of a better future (DoE, 2002a).

4.5 Causal and contributing factors

According to the DoE (2002a), the under reporting of school-based sexual abuse is a major concern. It occurs for the following reasons, amongst others:

- Fear (of stigmatisation, of not being believed, of being blamed for the abuse);
- Unequal power relations (teachers intimidating learners into silence);
- Bullying (learner abusers intimidating their victims not to report the abuse);
- Unwillingness of learners to talk about sexual matters with adults (for cultural or other reasons);
- Poor and ineffective management systems (basic rules and regulations lacking or not consistently enforced);
- Schools ignoring, or playing down incidents of sexual abuse so as not to harm their image/reputation;
- Confusion amongst some school communities regarding what is or is not socially acceptable sexual behaviour;
- Uncertainty about the steps to take in sexual abuse cases;
- Different understandings of sexual harassment.

Of particular interest to my study is the DoE comment on society's continued acceptance, and even encouragement of sexual relationships between teachers and school children:

'Inappropriate relations between learners and teachers are therefore fairly common and are never reported as abuse, unless something goes wrong with the relationship' (DoE, 2002a: 85).

4.5.1 Nature and scope of abuse

Officials of the South African Council of Educators (SACE) provided me with national statistics on teacher/learner sexual offences. I interviewed two SACE officials in the Gauteng Province. During the course of the interviews I began to understand the nature of the challenges that the SACE has to face in its attempt to regulate the teacher conduct. SACE officials mentioned that they sometimes have to work after hours and over weekends to resolve problems in this regard. According to officials who work in their Ethics Division, they have, over the years received a number of reports on the sexual abuse of learners by teachers, some of which involved rape.

In addressing reported cases of teacher-learner sexual abuse at schools, SACE follows its own disciplinary procedures. Every complaint received is investigated – telephonically, through written correspondence, or by conducting an investigation at the school. After the chief executive officer receives the complaint, it is forwarded to the disciplinary committee for consideration and investigation. The teacher concerned is then informed and given a specified period to respond to the alleged breach of conduct. If the teacher is found guilty of breaching the code of conduct during a disciplinary hearing with supporting evidence or witnesses, the panel makes recommendations regarding the appropriate sanction. The panel also considers previous convictions of the teacher, if any. The teacher may appeal against the sanction imposed upon him. Katlego (pseudonym), the person who provided me with the SACE statistics, indicated that cases are seldom directly reported to SACE. Usually SACE receives information from the media or via anonymous calls. Sometimes cases are reported long after the incident occurred, or with insufficient evidence to conduct disciplinary procedures. According to SACE, their disciplinary measures are not

punitive, but corrective measures which compel teachers to behave in an acceptable manner. Their primary aim is to ensure that teachers act professionally and maintain the highest ethical standards.

Table 4.3: SACE statistics on teacher/learner sexual abuse in the RSA

Abbr.	Name of Province	1 April 2008- 31 March 2009	1 April 2009- 31 March 2010	Total
EC	Eastern Cape	1	3	4
F	Free State	1	9	10
G	Gauteng	8	15	23
KZN	Kwazulu Natal	8	19	27
L	Limpopo	3	3	6
M	Mpumalanga	5	7	12
NC	Northern Cape	—	2	2
NW	North West	2	7	9
WC	Western Cape	5	7	12
	TOTAL	33	72	105

The SACE statistics for the period April 2008 to March 2009 (*see Table 4.3*) indicate that sexual abuse was most prevalent in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, with eight (8) cases each. It was lowest in the Northern Cape (no incidents), closely followed by the Free State and Eastern Cape, with one (1) incident each. In the 2009 to 2010 period this pattern changed. While Kwa-Zulu Natal still showed the highest figure, Gauteng dropped to second position and the Free State moved up to the third position. The relatively low numbers in the more rural provinces, the Northern and Eastern Cape and Limpopo, could be due to traditional taboos on sexual discussions or traditional ways of punishing offenders, but there is no evidence to this effect.

The SACE statistics show, moreover, that there has been a steady increase in teacher-learner sexual abuse in all provinces, with the total number of reported cases having doubled in one year. The biggest increase was in the Free State: incidents jumped from 1 to 9 in a single year. Limpopo figures remained stable suggesting that, apart from the Northern Cape, where there were only two incidents, the abuse of schoolchildren by their teachers is not really a problem in Limpopo. As indicated in the previous section, this is contrary to claims by the Limpopo media, police, Human Rights Commission, and Child Watch. The distortion may be due to under-recording, as the DoE indicated, or there may be other factors at play.

The prevalence of sexual abuse in the different provinces based on total figures for the period April 2008 to March 2010 is best illustrated by means of a graph (see Figure 2) since it facilitates comparison.

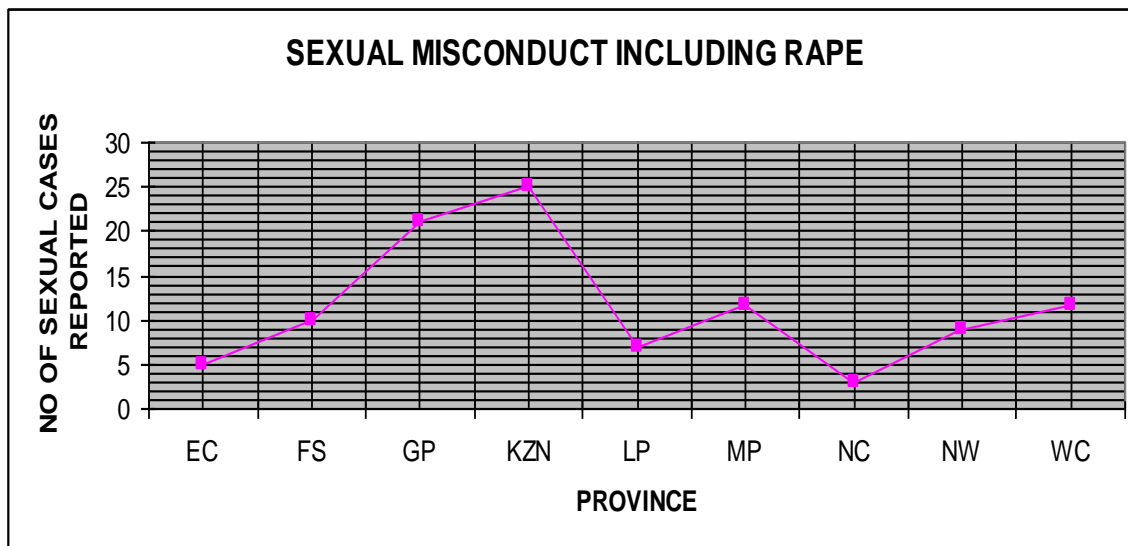


Figure 3: SACE statistics on teacher/learner sexual abuse (2008-2010)

What this figure suggests, but this is merely an inference, is that people in provinces with first world, money-oriented cities (like Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal), and in provinces that have been identified as prime tourist attractions

(Kwa-Zulu Natal, Western Cape, Mpumalanga) are more inclined to report teacher/learner sexual abuse than in the more traditional, rural provinces.

SACE (2000) is a statutory body whose primary aim is to enhance the status of teaching as a profession and to promote the development of teachers and their professional conduct. It therefore works closely with the government, in particular the Department of Education, and submits regular reports to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education. Using these reports as reference, SACE officials provided me with more information on the specific kind of abuse that occurs at schools (*see Table 4.4*).

Table: 4.4: Forms of sexual abuse per province and type (2008)

Province	Cases	Type of offence
Gauteng	3	Sexual harassment
	2	Teacher-learner sexual harassment
	1	Teacher-learner sexual relationship
	1	Teacher-learner rape
Total 7		
Western Cape	3	Teacher-learner sexual harassment
	2	Teacher-learner sexual assault
	1	Teacher-learner relationship
	2	Teacher-learner sexual assault
	1	Teacher-learner sexual harassment
Total 9		
Mpumalanga	2	Teacher-learner sexual relationship
	2	Teacher-learner rape
Total 4		
Free State	1	Teacher-learner sexual relationship
	1	Teacher-learner impregnation
Total 2		
KwaZulu-Natal	1	Teacher-learner sexual assault
	1	Teacher-learner sexual harassment
	1	Teacher-learner sexual relationship
	1	Teacher-learner sexual relationship
Total 4		

Limpopo	1	Teacher-learner relationship
	1	Teacher-learner sexual assault
Total 2		
North West	1	Teacher-learner relationship
Grand Total 29		

While one would expect sexual abuse cases to be mentioned in all provinces, SACE indicated that most cases are not reported. The highest number of cases is reported in Western Cape (9) followed by Gauteng (7), Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal (4 each), Free State and Limpopo (2 each) and the lowest North West (1). The lowest number of cases reported in Limpopo Province is questionable because media reports Matlala (2009: 7) indicate that teacher/learner sexual abuse is ever increasing. The reason for under reporting might be attributed to the fact that black rural communities in Limpopo are still rooted in their cultural belief and sexual matters cannot be discussed between parents and children (Govender, 2008: 1-2). The occurrence of sexual violence (assault and rape) in school situations is a matter of great concern and needs to be further investigated. These are not only criminal acts, but they do great harm to the image of the teaching profession. The SACE Code of Conduct states that teachers should behave ethically, 'in loco parentis', with the best interests of the child at heart.

Katlego also told me that many teacher offenders use the Employment of Educators' Act (RSA, 1998) as defence in cases where they are charged for sexual offences. More specifically, their defence is that the Act prohibits teachers only from entering into relationships with learners in their own schools, not with learners in other schools; hence such acts should not be considered sexual abuse. It is in defences like these that the SACE Code of Conduct is used as a counter measure, according to Katlego. More specifically, SACE uses reports of sexual abuse either to institute disciplinary proceedings against the offender, or to give evidence in court against him/her.

According to the officials who spoke to me, they are gradually making inroads in this situation. One of their successes involved a case where a teacher was accused of using his cell phone to take a photo of an eleven-year-old schoolgirl's vagina and then forcing her to lick and suck his penis. After following the disciplinary hearing procedures, the accused was found guilty on both charges, because he violated the clauses of the council's Code of Professional Ethics. The teacher was removed from the roll of teachers for a period of ten years because he had brought disgrace to the teaching profession. SACE is currently investigating two cases of teacher rape, one involving a former Deputy Minister of Public Works.

The under- or non-reporting of sexual abuse incidents remains a problem. According to the interviewees, there is a great deal of interference in the cases they investigate. In some instances, departmental officials, unions and other stakeholders who have a vested interest in the outcome of a case, try to stop or intimidate SACE officials. In other instances, cases are withdrawn, or witnesses refuse to testify.

Katlego indicated that, in order to provide valid evidence in court, SACE conducted their own research into the reasons why learners engage in sexual activities with teachers. They found that many girls use sex with teachers as a poverty alleviation mechanism. Many of them come from poverty-stricken families, are orphans and/or stay with their aged grandmothers, who have to survive on a small social pension. Others are alone at home all week since their parents work on farms and come home only on Sundays. It is therefore up to the children to find their own food if they want to survive.

A case illustrating the role that poverty plays was mentioned by Kgothatso (pseudonym), also from SACE. A parent first encouraged her daughter to give evidence, and then withdrew the case when she realised that the teacher would not be able to pay maintenance if he was found guilty. The SACE research also found that learners who have been raped by teachers are often silenced with

incentives such as money, food and inflated marks. Some of them are also threatened as to what will happen if they ever disclose the abuse.

4.6 Current strategies

Various provincial education departments, as well as other bodies and organisations, have taken steps to prevent or reduce sexual abuse in whatever form. It is important to note the difference in focus, purpose and approach when comparing departmental and other strategies for the prevention and reporting of sexual abuse. As a rule, the DoE approach is managerial and often reactive, using legal and policy frameworks to control teachers, learners and schools. Other organisations seem to be more flexible and proactive, aligning their approach with their particular focus and target group. In most cases their aim is either to create a forum where people are free to talk about the abuse, or to create environments (school and community) where children feel safe and protected.

4.6.1 Education departments

In 1999, shortly after the receipt of the report of the Gender Equity Task Team, the DoE announced a number of strategies aimed at making schools safer. More specifically, the DoE launched the Safe Schools Project; urged teachers to use Life Orientation for the inculcation of values; amended the Employment of Educators' Act (to include a section on the abuse of learners by teachers); established SACE (to enhance the image of the teaching profession); and developed a module for schools and a handbook for teachers on the management of sexual harassment and gender-based violence (to sensitise teachers and learners to its negative impact).

At the time, the department's plans relating to the prevention and control of sexual abuse at schools were challenge/problem-oriented. More specifically, they intended to restore confidence in the teaching profession; encourage reporting of

sexual abuse and improve systemic responsiveness; support sexual abuse victims; empower girls to defend themselves; and develop a policy on sexual harassment.

In 2009 the DoE, in response to media reports and statistics on sexual abuse at schools, instituted various procedures aimed at the regulation of investigations into sexual misconduct at schools. In terms of these procedures, every public school should draw up and implement a code of conduct for learners, encouraging moral behaviour, self-discipline and exemplary conduct. Learners who violate the code should be reported to the SGB South African School Act (RSA, 1996b), which is obliged to inform the parents and the relevant head of department. S/he would then decide whether the learner should be suspended or expelled, depending on the seriousness of the offence. Teachers who violate the code would be charged with misconduct and would be subject to a disciplinary hearing and/or criminal prosecution, depending on the seriousness of the crime.

According to the DoE (2002b) the most serious sexual offences include some form of *violence* (rape/assault), while the least serious are *verbal* (sexual jokes/comments). Other offences fall between these, with pornography being less serious, and the forming of inappropriate sexual relationships more so.

Informed by this distinction, the DoE suggested that:

- *Sexual harassment* (verbal abuse) and the circulation of offensive material (pornography) warrant little more than a verbal or written warning, a prohibition from participating in sport or cultural activities, and/or having the offender perform a task that would assist the offended person.
- The forming of *improper sexual relationships* (between teachers and learners) should be dealt with by means of a disciplinary hearing.

- *Sexual violence* (rape or assault) should be reported to the police within 72 hours of its occurrence because legally Criminal Procedures Act (RSA, 1997) any form of violence is regarded as a *criminal act*.

The Department has, moreover, in conjunction with Soul City (IHDC), appealed to communities, irrespective of different cultures, to support schools in their attempts to curb all types of violence and harassment. Calling for participation of diverse stakeholders to ensure school safety at all times, the DoE and Soul City recommended the rollout of supervised social service and skills training programmes to parents and communities, with a view to moving them beyond the traditional culture of stereotypical thinking, arguing that such a shift will benefit society at large (DoE, 2002b).

Whereas the DoE approach is primarily managerial and often reactive, using legal and policy frameworks to control teachers, the approach of other organisations tends to be more proactive.

4.6.2 The South African Police Services (SAPS)

The Crime Prevention Sector of the South African Police in Limpopo (LSAPS) works hand-in-hand with schools to create school environments that are free of any form of violence or abuse. To this purpose it offers a number of programmes aimed at crime prevention and school safety, including, amongst others, *Captain Crime Stop*, *Adopt-a-Cop*, *the Youth Against Crime Club*, and *Child Protection Week*.

One of the female superintendents told me that they received two hundred and seven (207) cases of child abuse between January and December 2000, but that these numbers decreased after the introduction of their programmes. However she reported that they still face a number of challenges. To illustrate her point she told me about the monetary and food bribes that sex offenders use to silence parents, and the tendency of parents, especially those in deep rural areas, to regard such offers as altruistic punishment. In the eyes of the parents, paying for

one's sins and/or for the maintenance of children born out of wedlock ensures that social justice is served.

When I visited the LSAPS Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (LCJCP), officials there expressed their concern about the under-reporting of sexually-related crimes to the police by schools. They pointed out that such under-recording makes it very difficult for them to provide accurate statistics on sexual abuse, or to provide adequate counselling and support to sexual abuse victims. The superintendent did, however, mention a number of strategies that could be used to prevent sexual abuse. These include the establishment of school safety teams, the training of young people as school security guards, workshops on ways of tackling sexual abuse, and teaching children about gender violence at an early age.

Police officials suggested that communities should be involved in the prevention of violence. They could do so, officials suggested, by forming street committees, community forums, and neighbourhood watches to patrol houses and protect inhabitants from imminent damage/danger. Moreover, schools and communities should be encouraged to attend training in the Safer Schools Project.

4.6.3 Other organisations and bodies

Like the police, the Child Line Protection Unit in Limpopo Province has as its purpose the protection of children against all forms of violence and abuse. Its main aim is to create a culture of promoting children's rights. Child Line Protection is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which, although not working directly with teacher-learner sexual abuse, has access to informal reports. They work with the SAPS Provincial Crime Protection Unit in collecting information on child abuse and in rolling out prevention programmes.

The Human Rights Commission is an organisation mandated to pursue the promotion, protection and monitoring of constitutional human rights within the

Republic of South Africa (Kopanong, 2008). Kgalemo (pseudonym), the official at the Human Rights Commission with whom I had an appointment, invited one of his colleagues who sits on the Gender Equity Commission, to participate in the interview. Rebone (pseudonym) told me that the Human Rights Commission had recently been allocated a courtroom in the area where my research was being conducted. Public hearings on abuse would in future be conducted there.

During the interview, the two participants indicated that cases of abuse are not reported directly to them; rather, they learn about them through media and public hearings, or from 'whistle-blowers'. Some of their findings on teacher/learner sexual abuse have been documented. They referred to another study, conducted by the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP), in which 1227 child victims of sexual harassment were interviewed. The study found that 8.58% of these children had been sexually harassed by teachers, but that many of them voluntarily entered into sexual relationships with teachers (Kopanong, 2008).

The Human Rights Commission interviewees emphasised the negative effect of sexual abuse on school children, indicating that, in most cases, it made them fearful, affected their school performance, led to a drop in their self-esteem, and a loss of confidence in themselves, adults and the education system. To counteract such effects, they recommend that schools should include sexual education in their curricula as a means of breaking the silence around sexual discussions. This should not, however, be done in isolation. Rather, schools should establish themselves as centres of community life, involving the community in discussions about issues such as these and recruiting community members to help protect children.

During a conference organised by the Human Rights Commission (2009) in Polokwane (Limpopo Province) to which I was invited, I realised that the problem of child sexual abuse will be solved only if all structures and stakeholders work together to find a solution. In the keynote address (by Zingu) at this conference,

the importance of reporting abuse cases was strongly emphasised. Further, parents and teachers were warned to ensure that children are not misled or tempted to experiment with sex by reading books that illustrate how it is done.

Delegates at the conference agreed that a friendly school environment is crucial, not only in the prevention of sexual abuse, but also for the psychological recovery of abuse victims. They asked that conferences like that one should be held in the rural areas, where many chiefs and headman have little knowledge of children's constitutional rights. Finally, delegates formed a committee tasked with the promotion of children's rights, through, for example, organising regular workshops, establishing a forum for the reporting of cases, and identifying ways of removing perpetrators from children for the latter's protection.

SACE conducts workshops in order to make teachers aware of the Code of Professional Ethics. They have already conducted workshops in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Kwazulu-Natal. Some awareness campaigns are also conducted through national media. As mentioned previously, SACE is faced with the challenge of provincial department failing to report sexual incidents.

4.7 Lessons learnt

Statistics provided by various parties in the Limpopo Province (Department of Education, South African Council of Educators, South African Police, Childline Protection Unit, South African Human Rights Commission, Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication, and the Limpopo Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention) indicate that sexual abuse, in the form of sexual harassment, sodomy and rape, is a serious problem, not only in the Limpopo Province, but countrywide. Indications are that it is particularly rife in deep rural areas.

With a view to comparing my case study findings with the information provided by the provincial research participants, I have organised the lessons I learnt and/or the insights I gained, in terms of the following categories: provincial

attitudes to sexual abuse; factors causing or contributing to sexual abuse; the veil of silence; action taken; and preventive strategies. Each of these categories is discussed in the following sections.

4.7.1 Provincial attitudes to sexual abuse

Concern about child sexual abuse in the province has been expressed by stakeholders across the education system, from COSAS (Congress of South African Students) to the LDoE. All my sources indicated that the sexual abuse of children, in whatever form and/or context it occurs, is regarded in a very serious light by the organisations with which they are associated. The LDoE, as mentioned previously, describes teachers who abuse school children as ‘hobos’, ‘rapists’, and ‘embezzlers’, and states categorically that such teachers should *not*, under any circumstances be employed as teachers in the LDoE (Matlala, 2005).

4.7.2 Factors contributing to sexual abuse

Factors causing or contributing to child sexual abuse, particularly in rural areas, include ignorance of the law (even under tribal chiefs and/or headmen); stereotypical thinking (especially about the roles and rights of women and children); and adherence to cultural practices (such as material compensation for crimes rather than prosecution).

4.7.3 Veil of silence

Indications from secondary data are that silence is often bought with incentives (money, groceries, or inflated school grades), or enforced by threats (addressed at the victim and/or the potential ‘whistle blower’). A complicating factor, especially in deep rural areas, is that traditional African culture prohibits disclosure of sexual matters. Only those who are responsible for doing ‘virginity testing’, or those who are expected to train boys and girls in sexual matters, as part of their initiation into adult life are allowed to do so.

There are, however, indications in the secondary data that these traditional attitudes are changing: learners and their parents are increasingly reporting sexual abuse by teachers to the relevant authorities (police, welfare, human rights bodies, and the department). In some cases, parents are divided in their opinion, which can lead to divorce, ejection from the family home, or other forms of family conflict. While some of the decisions to report the abuse are motivated by anger, shame or greed, an increasing number of people seem to be reporting abuse because they regard it as a violation of human rights and a threat to the building of a new nation.

4.7.4 Action taken

The Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) investigates formal and informal reports of school-based sexual abuse and, where applicable, institutes disciplinary hearings. The LDoE has instituted various procedures to ensure fairness of investigations into school-based sexual misconduct and resulting disciplinary hearings. One of these is that all schools should have a code of conduct encouraging exemplary moral behaviour and self-discipline amongst learners and teachers (SACE, 2000). Violation of the code by learners could lead to suspension or expulsion, while violation by teachers could result in dismissal and/or deregistration.

The LDoE, in conjunction with Soul City IHDC, has recently embarked on a project in which stakeholders from all walks of life are invited to become involved in activities and programmes aimed at the prevention of all forms of violence and harassment. The purpose of these programmes, according to the Soul City respondent, is to equip communities with knowledge that will move them away from traditional, cultural and stereotypical ways of thinking towards a culture that promotes children's rights. These programmes and activities include organising workshops, creating a forum at which sexual abuse cases can be reported, and identifying ways in which perpetrators can be removed from children for the latter's protection. Particular examples of such projects are the 2002 TVEP *Break*

the Silence campaign, which taught learners how to disclose incidents of sexual abuse in an acceptable manner, and the 1997 Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Safe Schools Project.

Other programmes include those currently offered by the Crime Prevention Sector of the Limpopo branch of the South African Police Services (SAPS), specifically those aimed at the prevention of crime on school property. These include, amongst others, *Captain Crime Stop*, *Adopt-a-Cop*, *Youth Against Crime Club* and *Child Protection Week*.

The Human Rights Commission, an organisation mandated to pursue the promotion, protection and monitoring of constitutional human rights within the Republic of South Africa (Kopanong, 2008) has recently acquired their own courtroom, in a deep rural area, enabling them to conduct public hearings in the area where offences occur.

4.7.5 Future strategies

Other strategies, which have not yet been implemented but which are envisaged by the Limpopo Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (LCJCP), include the establishment of school safety teams, the training of young people as school security guards, workshops on ways of tackling sexual abuse problems, and teaching children about gender violence at an early age. Key to the success of strategies like these, according to the LCJCP, is the training and involvement of communities in violence prevention activities – such as street committees, community forums, neighbourhood watches, and patrolling houses – after school hours.

4.8 Conclusion

I first embarked on this study because I wanted to find out whether the media hype on teacher-learner sexual abuse has any solid basis. My experience in black

rural secondary schools in the Senwabarwana area has convinced me that sexual abuse features at most schools. The evidence I collected in sampled schools suggests that the primary perpetrators are peers rather than teachers. I gained further insights from talking to other people not directly associated with my cases, but officials directly involved in provincial and national activities related to sexual abuse. The findings have made me realise that the problem is as serious as the media portrays it.

The Department of Education concurs with non-governmental organisations that teacher-learner sexual abuse exists and continues to occur. The abuse contributes to a negative school culture, which inhibits learning and learners' development. The Department of Education encourages public schools to implement relevant policies and to protect learners at all times. The SAPS has initiated programmes and strategies which should be implemented in schools to ensure learner safety. Non-governmental organisations are not directly involved with schools, but they are knowledgeable about sexual abuse incidents at schools. They encourage people to disclose information about sexual abuse and to move away from a patriarchal, tribal culture to one focusing on human rights. School managers should strive for a positive school culture, which contributes to learner personal growth. NGOs call for the transformation of schools and urge all stakeholders to move away from socio-cultural and socio-economic influences which contribute to the existence of sexual abuse at schools.

My study led me way beyond what I initially intended to do. Instead of focusing only on the extent of and reasons for sexual abuse at schools, I branched off into other related avenues. In particular, I investigated the role that different cultures play in the perpetuation of, and secrecy around sexual abuse incidents. It was in the examination of these dimensions of sexual abuse that I began to realise how culture affects not only our sexual behaviour, but also other behaviours, thoughts and feelings. When this realisation dawned on me, I started wondering whether the key to addressing the problem of sexual abuse in schools might lie in the adoption of a cultural, rather than a managerial approach. Many communities in

South Africa are still rooted in tribal culture, especially with regards to gender and sexuality. It seems logical to consider the need for change agents to first gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural norms and patterns of different tribal groups (Cain, 2007). Such an understanding could perhaps open the gate to the introduction of new norms for sexual behaviour, norms that borrow from both traditional and liberal cultural capital.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 1, and reiterated throughout this report, I started my investigation into the extent of, and reasons for the sexual abuse of school children by teachers with two assumptions:

- *Firstly*, my own experience of this occurrence, both as a learner and as a teacher at rural black schools, coupled with media exposure of teacher/learner sexual abuse, led me to believe that teachers are the prime culprits in learner sexual abuse.
- *Secondly*, as a black African who grew up in rural areas, I have first-hand experience of both the benefits and the limitations of traditional culture, with specific reference to sexual behaviour.

Informed by these assumptions, and by my review of the literature on sexual abuse, I formulated three *working hypotheses* to direct my investigation into the nature and extent of sexual abuse in six rural schools in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

- The sexual abuse of learners in the Limpopo Province schools is socio-cultural in nature.
- The secrecy surrounding sexual abuse incidents at schools in the Limpopo Province could have a socio-cultural and socio-economic base.
- Strategies for the prevention of and/or elimination of teacher/learner sexual abuse in Limpopo schools will only be effective if they take cognizance of socio-cultural circumstances.

My reason for wanting to embark on an investigation of this problem in the schools concerned was that improper sexual encounters between teachers and learners have a negative impact not only on the academic performance of learners, but also on their psychological and social development, on the culture and climate of the school concerned, and on the teaching profession in general. I indicated specifically that I regard it as a matter of urgency that sexual abuse must be stopped, because it constitutes a violation of children's rights and it is morally reprehensible and socially unjust.

My original research purpose was to direct my investigation into sexual abuse at selected schools, to describe the extent to which sexual abuse is a feature in the schools concerned, and to identify at least some of the reasons for its occurrence. Having uncovered the underlying causes of sexual abuse, I believed I would then be able to offer one or more tentative suggestions on the most effective ways to address the problem in these schools.

5.2 Research purpose and process

My original intention was not to generalise, but merely to describe what happens in the schools serving as my case studies. However, in gathering the evidence, I was constantly confronted with information on sexual abuse in other Limpopo schools and in the country as a whole. I therefore decided to collect data on the 'bigger picture', since I believed it would help me to understand the sexual abuse problem better than merely investigating its occurrence in my sample of schools. For this purpose, I broadened the scope of my investigation to include officials in the Limpopo Department of Education, SAPS Provincial Crime Protection Unit, Child Line Protection Unit, the Human Rights Watch Commission and representatives of the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

I posed three questions to direct my discussions with all these people, as well as with the six school principals:

- Why does school-based sexual abuse exist?

- Why do schools and communities hide sexual abuse incidents under a veil of secrecy?
- What could be done to address this problem?

Apart from the semi-formal *interviews* I conducted with school principals, departmental officials and the representatives of the aforementioned bodies, I also issued selected Grade 11 learners in the sampled schools with semi-structured *questionnaires*. In addition, I made *field notes* of my impressions regarding the physical and emotional contexts of the sampled schools. The research questions that guided my interviews also informed the construction of the learner questionnaire and the focus of my observations.

The *triangulation* of data is only one of the ways in which I attempted to ensure that my research findings are trustworthy. As is common in qualitative research, I also laid down an *audit trail* of my data collection and analysis processes (see *Chapters 3 and 4*). The audit trail indicates in great detail not only what I did and how I went about the collection and interpretation of data, but also what my own thoughts were on emerging patterns, trends and attitudes. In doing so, I declared my own bias and ensured that future researchers could, should they wish to, replicate my study in their own contexts and for their own particular purposes.

5.3 Research findings

As indicated in Chapter 1, I approached the problem of school-based sexual abuse from a socio-cultural angle; using insights from the *interpretive* research approach as my frame of reference (see *Chapter 2*).

Given that my original intention was to conduct my research project only at selected schools in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, I opted to use a *case study design* for the collection of data at these sites. The case study data and the insights that emerged from its analysis are presented in Chapter 3.

In broadening the scope of my research I included the Limpopo Province and had to change my definition of a 'case', relating it to the *phenomenon* being investigated rather than to the *sites* where data would be collected. The data collected in the Limpopo Province, and the insights gained on the problem of child sexual abuse in general, and the abuse of schoolchildren by their teachers in particular, are presented in Chapter 4.

A summary of all the insights gained, both in the sites under study, and in the broader study of the phenomenon, is presented here as a point of departure for a general, more *theoretical discussion* of my research findings.

5.3.1 Case study picture

The following patterns/themes emerged from my analysis of data collected at the sampled schools:

- The extent to which learners engage in sexual encounters varies across schools. It is lowest in schools where learners feel emotionally safe and highest in those where they do not.
- Possible causal factors uncovered by the analysis of site-based data are school culture and climate, the values of the community in which the school is located, the use of incentives, the secrecy surrounding sexual encounters between teachers and learners, and the opportunity for private, uninterrupted sexual abuse presented by on-site teacher cottages. Factors most likely to prevent the occurrence of improper sexual behaviour are children's inclination to naturally good behaviour, disinterest in the opposite sex, respect, and self-esteem.
- Factors that neither promote nor inhibit school-based sexual activity are the size or location of the school; the socio-economic status of the community in which learners grow up; and the management style of principals.

- Typical responses to sexual abuse indicate a disjuncture in the frames of reference used by principals and learners on the one hand, and parents and the community on the other. Indications are that this disjuncture could be caused by differences in people's knowledge and understanding of human rights, differences in their interpretation of social justice and sexual abuse, and different opinions on societal gender roles.
- While principals and learners are concerned about the negative impact of sexual abuse on learners, the school and the teaching profession, parents (most of whom are poor, allegedly illiterate and unemployed) are more concerned about the immediate survival of their families, hence their willingness to 'trade' their daughters' honour and future for money or food.
- Currently preferred strategies for addressing the sexual abuse problem at school are fairly predictable and do not reflect innovative or creative thinking. Parents and communities frame their thinking in terms of traditional, patriarchal systems and solutions; principals and learners frame theirs with reference to the law.

5.3.2 Provincial picture

As indicated in Chapter 4, provincial data were provided to me by departmental officials as well as by representatives of various bodies (statutory and non-statutory) and non-governmental organisations. This information was derived mostly from official documents and reports prepared by the organisation concerned. In this sense, the data I collected from the province was secondary data. My analysis of this data was nevertheless informed by my own research questions. The insights I gained from the interviews I conducted with provincial research participants as well as from my analysis of the documents they provided to me, are therefore my own.

A number of patterns/themes related to sexual abuse and the ways in which it is experienced at the provincial level emerged from my analysis of the secondary data. A key theme is the apparent discrepancy between official statistics and media reports on the occurrence of sexual abuse and other inappropriate sexual behaviour at provincial schools. The concern expressed by stakeholders across the spectrum (from students organisations like COSAS to heads of department), and the many programmes run by stakeholders inside and outside government departments, suggest that the picture painted by the media is closer to the truth than the one revealed by official statistics.

All the people I interviewed emphasised the under-reporting of sexual incidents, pointing out that this results in incomplete or distorted statistical pictures. The lack of reporting or, put differently, the silence surrounding the sexual abuse of schoolchildren by their teachers, is the second theme that emerged from my analysis of provincial data. While there are signs that this attitude is changing, since more and more people are beginning to speak out, conflicting value systems are placing a great deal of stress on the already vulnerable social fabric.

The conflict between what used to be regarded as moral, and/or socially just, coupled with perceptions of new or emergent value systems is my third theme. Provincial research participants across the board acknowledged that there are marked differences between people who subscribe to traditional ways and patriarchal social systems, and those who have adopted 'global', modernist ways of living as their own. In this regard, differences in the frames of reference used by those in government and those far removed from government structures is of particular significance to my study.

This brings me to my fourth theme – the difference between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', and how this influences their understanding of social justice and their response to sexual abuse. At the upper end of the social scale are those who cry foul of any form of sexual harassment, demanding that the offender must be prosecuted and punished in terms of the law. At the lower end of the scale are

those who are struggling to survive at a material level on a day-to-day basis. They depend not on the law, but on the culture of committal to help them survive – justice to them is what will put food on the table. If this means that the sex offender goes free so be it, provided that he compensates them – in food or with money – for the offence committed.

The last and the most positive pattern emerging from the analysis of the provincial data is the effort and commitment of various stakeholders to stem the tide of child abuse, in innovative and creative ways. In this regard it is not the government – the education department in particular – who leads the way, but semi-state and non-governmental organisations. While the department seems determined to use legal and administrative means to control and remove perpetrators and to change the mindsets of those steeped in traditional, stereotypical ways of thinking (DoE, 2002b) other organisations are empowering communities to manage crime, violence and sexual abuse in their own communities by training and supporting them.

5.3.3 National picture

The national picture is much the same as the provincial one, with primarily rural provinces seemingly less inclined to report sexual abuse than urbanised or ‘tourist-oriented’ ones. Most of the reasons that the DoE (2002b) gives for the ‘resounding’ silence on sexual abuse – fear, unequal power relations, retribution, cultural taboos, confusion, and uncertainty – seem to be common at macro-, meso- and micro levels. The increase in the number of reported cases, illustrated by SACE statistics, as well as the 2009/2010 increase in a relatively conservative province like the Free State, could well be an indication of cultural change, and/or of a greater openness about issues that were previously regarded as private.

Current initiatives at national level are relatively standard, informed as they are by the intention to ‘manage’ schools and teachers, rather than to enable them to take responsibility for their own conduct and development. This is evident in the emphasis that the DoE places on policy development and implementation, and in

the terms they use to describe their initiatives – project, immediate management, addressing, restoring, responsiveness, and reporting. Even in programmes aimed at community involvement, the DoE appears to want to retain control – they want to mobilise the community, partner with stakeholders, and move communities from one way of thinking to another.

5.4 Research findings and conceptual framework

As indicated in the preceding discussion, I collected data at three levels – local (schools), provincial (employees of various organisations, including the LDoE), and national (documents and statistics). I also planned, as indicated in Chapter 1, to conduct my data analysis at three levels. Informed by the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach to qualitative data analysis, I started off by grouping related ideas together (*open coding*). I did this with regard to the data collected at schools, in the province and from documents. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapters 3 and 4. Following the grouping of data, I proceeded with the identification of emerging themes, contextual as well as generic (*axial coding*). The contextual themes are presented and discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively, and the common/generic themes in Chapter 5, in the section preceding this one. Using these themes as basis, I now relate the insights gained from their comparison to the various theoretical positions on, and explanations of sexual abuse (*selective coding*) presented in Chapter 2.

Given my proclaimed socio-cultural orientation, and intrigued by the arguments put forward in the literature, I toyed with the idea of framing my findings in terms of poverty and conflict theory. In the end, though, I decided to base my choice on the overwhelming message emerging from the analysis of data on sexual abuse and its impact at local, provincial and national levels. The message I could not ignore, the one that infuses all the themes, and which was conveyed to me, albeit in very different ways, by all my research participants, is the message of silence – silence on the abuse itself, as well as on the reasons for its occurrence. It is so pervasive that it is like a veil, covering up what is there, but being thin enough to let its presence shimmer through in conversations, in attitudes, and in actions

aimed at eradicating and/or preventing it from spreading any further. It is the nature of this veil, and the possible reasons for its presence, that is the focus of the next section.

5.5 The veil of silence

I draw on the conceptual framework in which Amadiume (2005) argues that the ambiguities regarding sexual abuse are an indication that there is a conflict between modernist (in this case the school) and traditional values regarding school-based sexual abuse. Modernist aspirations are based on the creation of a safe school environment and career success at school according to liberal laws, while communities concentrate on traditional values. Despite the modernist approach of seeking a conflict-free school environment, data gathered at one school show that parents hinted at encouraging fights among female learners and teachers. The fight in question resulted from confusion between cultural beliefs and the modernist context, where a learner and a female teacher fought over a male teacher.

According to Zuma's testimony in the court case referred to in Chapter 2 (Waetjen & Mare, 2010), it is culturally and traditionally acceptable for a man to have more than one partner. Both teachers and learners hold strongly to cultural beliefs that encourage women to compete for a man and further allow men access to multiple female relationships. This attitude is an indication that the school is potentially an unsafe environment. The conflict is worsened by the fact that people at all levels of the system, parents, victims, schools, and the community keep quiet about sexual abuse; and the sexual abuse of children in particular, is regarded as a *fait accompli*.

5.5.1 The veil of silence of parents

According to Krieg (2007) research into the effect of socio-cultural factors on sexual abuse suggests that the reasons for the silence could be found in the

deconstruction of social systems, values and norms. The abuse of women and children in patriarchal systems is accepted as the norm, hence talking about it would serve no purpose whatsoever. Again, the Zuma court case referred to in Chapter 2, reflects this. As argued by Waetjen and Mare (2010: 59), Zuma's claim that gender relations in his culture are 'matters of customary concern rather than of liberal, universal or human rights' gives the practice normative status. Rural communities who model their behaviour on that of the president might well follow suit.

Jackson et al., (2002), explaining the use of sexual abuse as a wartime tool, also suggests a link between hierarchical and unequal power relations (like those of patriarchal systems) and sexual abuse. The abusers, soldiers in this case, keep quiet about the abuse as a matter of 'national security', the victims out of fear for further abuse or retaliation from their own people.

The literature review refers to second-hand/hearsay evidence – such as some of the data gathered in my study from learner questionnaires and principal interviews. My data suggests that parents are afraid of being ostracised, which could occur if they were to break the taboos on sexual talk and gender roles, or if they use methods other than traditional ones to ensure that justice is served. Not only might community networks and resources no longer be available to them, but their 'modern' ways of thinking and doing may result in the break-up of their marriage, or, as indicated by the provincial data, be ejected from their family homes.

Mulaudzi (2003) indicates that cultural taboos prevent parents from discussing sexual matters with children. Sex and sexuality are only discussed at initiation schools administered by the elders who have been tasked to do so. On the contrary, modernists encourage openness and reporting of cases, yet parents tend to resort to their cultural values. Instead of discussing and reporting sexual abuse cases, they resort to silence. Any actions showing disrespect are punishable. They demand payment compensation for the damage (e.g.

pregnancy) or simply turn a blind eye to incidents of sexual abuse. The private ways of dealing with sexual infractions are aligned with tradition and culture.

The data yielded an example in which a woman was blamed, and faced with two challenges because her daughter became pregnant as a result of teacher sexual abuse. According to African tradition she was bound not to break the taboo by discussing sexual matters with her daughter. On the other hand, the school encourages open discussions on sex and sexuality. She was caught between the conflict of modernist and traditional values. In another incident of teacher/learner sexual abuse, there was also a conflict between modernist and traditional values: the principal wanted to report the case to the police (law), while the family opted to be compensated for the damage caused to their child.

5.5.2 The veil of silence of victims

Researchers Levitan, Rector, Sheldon and Goering (2003) ascribe a victim's silence to guilt, shame, and self-blame. My investigations at selected schools indicate that learners further describe their feelings as those of shock, hurt, hopelessness, worthlessness, anger, confusion and frustration. Modernist values regard school sexual abuse as an illegal, immoral act DoE (2001) which has a negative impact on the psychological, physical and educational development of the victim. Legalisation encourages victims to break the silence by reporting such cases.

Traditional culture regards sex as being part of nature (Waetjen & Mare, 2010). Sexual activities such as *ukuthwala* and *ukumetsha* (as discussed in Chapter 2) form part of these natural tendencies (Thornton, 2003). Hules (2005) indicates that children of all ages have been used as sex objects in silence. The abuser is not accused of committing a criminal offence; instead the matter is settled between the two families in the form of compensation payment.

I would argue that the reasons surrounding the silence on sexual abuse, and the abuse of women and children in particular, are encapsulated in cultural,

traditional beliefs. Evidence for this claim can be found in the reasons that school principals give for the silence on teacher/learner abuse; in the child victims' decisions not to tell their parents or teachers about the abuse; in the pressure that the community places on the victims and their parents, firstly to honour traditional taboos, and secondly, to accept the advice of male elders; in the parents' choice for material compensation rather than legal justice; and in the manipulation of disciplinary processes and outcomes by teacher unions. In fact, the reasons for the silence are neatly encapsulated in those given by the national Department of Education, namely fear, unequal power relations, cultural taboos, confusion, and uncertainty.

Child victims are afraid that reporting the abuse would lead to retribution by the teacher concerned (falling grades, harsh punishment, public humiliation), punishment by their parents (traditional values forcing children not to discuss sexual matters), inability to survive due to loss of income (termination of child maintenance payments), and alienation from the community and its (emotional and social) resources. The conflict between the modernist (urging to report) and the traditional values (against discussions about sex and sexuality) leaves victims caught in the middle, and as a result, they resort to silence.

5.5.3 The veil of silence of schools

Schools are modernist value institutions that exist in cultural value communities. All stakeholders are caught between western liberal laws and traditional values. The modernist approach encourages school culture to open sexuality discussions by breaking the silence, whereas African traditional culture prohibits such discussions. Although principals and teachers are bound by modernist values, some individuals take advantage of traditional values of the community, poverty, and the ignorance of the SGB, by abusing learners sexually. My research findings show that the sexual abuse of school children evokes fear in all concerned. Some of the principals who participated in the study indicated that their lives were threatened when they confronted the teacher culprits.

Others, like the former principal of School C, not only kept quiet, but did everything in his power to protect offenders, even transferring them to other schools, in order to 'make the problem go away'. In doing so, such principals ensure that culprits are not found out. Some principals even go as far as ensuring that the culprits' jobs are secured and that the image/reputation of their schools remains intact. Sexual abuse reported to principals and teachers by victims or parents is often ignored. Furthermore, the silence might be exacerbated by the fact that even some principals, according to the media, are culprits of learner sexual abuse. They use their engendered positions of power to abuse defenceless learners and silence them with incentives.

According to the hearsay evidence I collected from principals and learners, the perpetrators are afraid of dismissal, divorce, and loss of privilege; hence the offering of a whole range of bribes to the victims and their parents. Informed by the behaviour of these teachers I would argue that both the abuse, and the way they respond to possibly being found out, could be indicative of intra- and inter-cultural conflict. Not only are they living and teaching in closed communities, where patriarchal systems, unequal power relations, traditional gender roles, the sexual abuse of women and children, and (altruistic) social justice are the norm, but they are also expected to execute their professional duties in terms of a human and child rights culture derived from more liberal, individualised, European value systems. They too, are caught in the middle, and their confusion about who they really are is reflected in their behaviour.

5.5.4 The veil of silence of the community

The school is found within a community and parents are central players in the modernist institution of the school. Research findings from School D indicate that communities trapped in cultural, traditional values present a challenge for the implementation of modernist values. Instead of the community challenging the sexual abuse reported by the principal, they turned and accused primary school children of teasing pensioners and exchanging sexual favours for money. Primary

school children growing up in such communities could continue to face unchallenged sexual abuse as part of their daily life. This implies that the conflict between modernists and cultural, traditional values renders children vulnerable to sexual abuse. As a result, there is a need for strategies to curb this problem.

I agree with DoE (2001) that men (and some women) resort to culture to justify the use of aggression and sexual abuse against women and children. Although there may be some cultural variance in terms of sexuality, he argues that culture should not be used either to excuse or to dismiss sexual abuse.

5.5.5 Poverty and the veil of silence

As indicated in Chapter 2 (literature review), poverty is one of the contributing factors to the silence that prevails. In this regard Hules (2005), discussing changing societal attitudes towards sexual violence and abuse, points out that neither abuse nor rape was considered criminal in Biblical times; in fact, it was regarded as a minor transgression in most ancient cultures. In Biblical times it was not a matter for discussion because it was the norm; in ancient cultures, offenders were effectively ‘fined’ – they had to pay a ‘bridal price’ to the father of the woman concerned. Boyd, Gintis, Bowles and Richerson (2003), focusing on differences between open and closed cultural groups, explain the silence in terms of resistance, that is, the fear that, if their cultural codes are broken, their traditional ways of doing things might be threatened.

Following these claims, I would argue that, notwithstanding evidence to the contrary (Richter et al., 2004), there are indications in my research data of a correlation between sexual abuse and poverty. The communities in which the schools in my sample are located are all in deep rural areas and desperately poor. Children live either in isolated mountain villages without access to electricity or the means to seek employment, or in sprawling semi-rural settlements in which social activity occurs in and around the tavern (‘shebeen’). While none of the learners or principals who participated in my research indicated that they regard

sex as a means to acquire money or food, the SACE interview data (*Chapter 4*) indicates that there are girls who use sex as a poverty alleviation mechanism. In most cases, both their parents are 'absent' (working away from home), leaving their children to fend for themselves. Teacher sex offenders know about the poverty and manipulate it to their advantage, buying the silence of parents and children in exchange for sexual favours.

Data collected during the course of my investigation – at local, provincial and national levels – indicates that learners and their parents are willing to keep quiet about sexual abuse in exchange for food and/or money. Although they might not initiate sexual activity in exchange for incentives, some of the children in my sample, as well as some of those interviewed by SACE, indicated that they were offered incentives in exchange for sex. Most of the girls who fell pregnant as a result of their sexual engagement with teachers, played the 'victim' card afterwards, reporting the teacher either to the police or to their parents (resulting in an out-of-court settlement) in order to receive maintenance money for their illegitimate child. Parents are prepared to go to the extent of sacrificing their daughters' honour for food and money. This act is against modernist values which would regard such arrangements as prostitution.

Ironically, as poverty culture theorists Murray (1999) and Anderson (1999) argue, it is their 'pathological' victim mentality – their feelings of helplessness, inferiority, and low self-esteem – in conjunction with their selfishness, disregard for the law, and self-defeating cultural values and practices that will destroy their chances of ever improving their socio-economic condition. This attitude is also self-defeating in terms of overcoming their fears, stress and confusion. In particular, most of the girls who fall pregnant as a result of teacher/learner sexual intercourse tend to leave school to care for their babies. As a result, they might never get the opportunity of studying further, something that, according to Hunter (2010), is crucial to their upward mobility. By implication, their sexual behaviour traps them in an everlasting poverty cycle.

5.5.6 Silence versus speaking

The increase in the reporting of sexual abuse at provincial and national levels, suggests that the veil of silence can be penetrated and that, by implication, cultural conflicts can be resolved to the advantage of the poor. Indications are that the silence can be broken as a result of the fusion between managerial, legal and socio-cultural notions on the best way to approach the problem. The fusion is evident in recent joint government-stakeholder initiatives aimed at community and victim empowerment and support. This approach, I would argue, based on an awareness of cultural difference and the devastating effect that sexual abuse has on those who are most vulnerable, has the best chance of stopping the tide of child sexual abuse that is threatening to engulf the nation.

This study has shown that cases reported with evidence have been attended to. Perpetrators have been arrested and charged, and in some cases summons were issued, forcing them to maintain their born children. SACE indicated in particular, that it takes any form of reporting seriously, whether formal or informal ‘whistle blowers’.

5.6 Conclusion and recommendations

As indicated in Chapter 1, I embarked on this research journey because I wanted to find out for myself whether media reports on child sexual abuse were exaggerations or a reflection of reality. Not only did I want to determine the extent of school-based sexual abuse, but I also wanted to uncover the reasons for its occurrence.

What I found is that school-based sexual abuse is a national phenomenon, as is societal silence on its occurrence. My research findings indicate that the silence is most prevalent in provinces that are least urbanised, and in communities in deep rural areas. As argued above, the reasons for the silence are cultural in nature (socio-cultural and socio-economic) and strategies for breaking the silence should take cognizance of this fact. In attempting to change behaviour in terms of school-

based sexual abuse, it is necessary to create a balanced approach in dealing with sex and sexuality. One should consider addressing both cultural tradition on sexuality, and liberal laws in order to break the silence which makes learners vulnerable to sexual abuse and incurable sexual diseases (Bhana & Pattman, 2011).

Social capitalist theorists would probably ascribe the silence either to the 'pathology' of poverty cultures (Murray, 1999; Anderson, 1999) or the resistance capital of marginalised communities – capital that they use to manipulate social systems whose 'wealth' and 'power' would otherwise not be available to them (Solorozano & Delgado, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Social theorists with a particular interest in conflict and conflict resolution, would probably interpret the silence in terms of unequal power relations (between the state and the disenfranchised), cultural incompatibility or change (traditional cultures fearing that their values and norms will be destroyed or marginalised), or a fight for scarce resources (money, food, clothes and houses) (Yosso, 2005).

As to the reasons why school-based sexual abuse exists, my research findings suggest that there are various motivators. Some learners submit in exchange for material or scholastic benefits, some for pleasure, some to escape punishment or avoid being humiliated by the teacher concerned, and others by peer pressure.

As to the reasons why teachers continue with the abuse, irrespective of the laws and policies in place, I can only draw inferential conclusions because I did not include any teacher participants in my study. My conclusions are based on hearsay evidence, from principals and learners, and from insights I gained during my review of literature on the topic. Based on this information, I argue that there could be various factors at play: the unequal power relationship between teachers and learners, confusion about social roles, as well as conflicting positions regarding traditional and emergent/modernist value systems.

Based on these findings I can therefore conclude that my working hypotheses, all of which are informed by the assumption that sexual abuse is a socio-cultural phenomenon, have been confirmed, either partially or in full. School-based sexual abuse occurs in the context of changing socio-cultural systems, but the reasons for it are both socio-cultural and socio-economic. The strategies that currently have the greatest effect on both the abuse and the penetration of the veil of silence that hides it, are the ones that acknowledge this psycho-social mix. This evidence confirms my third hypothesis, namely that the prevention and/or elimination of teacher/learner sexual abuse in Limpopo schools will only be effective if they take cognizance of socio-cultural circumstances.

Research evidence on the effectiveness of current strategies aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse and the breaking of silence in this regard indicates that success has been mixed (DoE, 2002b). Government institutions have done what bureaucracies do best, that is, to create the necessary structures, procedures and processes to curb sexual abuse at schools, but these have not been particularly effective if official statistics are to be believed. Other initiatives, launched by organisations that focus more on empowerment and support rather than on management and control, seem to have been more successful. Based on these findings, I recommend innovative approaches that are not only culturally sensitive, but that regard the cultural capital of traditional communities as a resource for transformation rather than as a stumbling block in the way.

I further argue that one can only motivate and inspire people through communication. If the vision towards which they are being moved represents a radical change, such as rejecting customs and habits that people cling to, even when they have become redundant, verbal communication is not enough. Change agents should use carefully chosen symbols with which constituents can identify, since symbols have been proven to have much more energising power than words alone (Waetjen & Mare, 2010).

During the whole process of moving towards a solution, those who have to sacrifice what they hold dear need to be made to feel valued and worthy. Telling them that their ways are illegal and/or outdated will not endear the cause to them. Instead, it is best to think of noble ways of incorporating things that worked in the past into strategies for the future. Workshops could serve this purpose, but not if their focus is on laws, processes and procedures. Rather, they should serve as clearing houses where people feel safe enough to express their fears, anger, sorrow and frustration about the way things are changing, without worrying that there will be repercussions. Only when the air is clear should the transformational leader take their hands, metaphorically speaking, and lead them on new paths alongside him or her.

Communities that are close knit, with a common history and a common culture, that care about and for each other, are much more likely to consider changing their ways if the emphasis in workshops is based on sharing – sharing ownership, responsibility and values. Even parents with stereotypical thinking might reconsider whether they benefit or not. Perhaps then parents will have the courage to stand up against those who sexually abuse their children and intimidate the parents to keep quiet.

Finally, creating and maintaining a culture and climate that foster quality learning and teaching is crucial to the health of the school as an organisation and, by implication, to the health of education systems. What I first experienced during my visits to the six Limpopo schools (*see Chapter 3*) was the ‘feeling’ or ‘atmosphere’ in and around each school, that is – the school climate. It was reflected in the physical appearance of each school, the way staff and learners treated one another and me, a visitor. I noticed, too, that the school cultures differed in many ways. There were only two schools in my sample where the culture and climate could be called ‘toxic’. Both the culture and the climate of the other schools made me feel at home.

In toxic schools, according to Hunter (2010), every effort at improvement is poisoned. Toxic cultures destroy motivation, dampen commitment, depress effort, and change the focus of the school. Academic performance is discouraged or sabotaged; school spirit and focus are fractured or hostile; client service is sacrificed on the altar of self-interest; and there is a pervasive sense of helplessness (Hunter, 2010). This, according to learners from the two toxic schools, is how the sexual exploitation of learners by teachers makes them feel.

In healthy schools, staff and learners alike share the same sense of purpose and values, accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance, and share ideas, problems and solutions with one another. According to Hunter (2010), a positive school culture contributes to personal growth and enables all members of the school community to function at optimum levels. In such a school, educational and psychological outcomes are positive for students and staff alike (Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001). A negative school climate and culture, on the other hand, typically inhibit learning and development.

Learner responses to the questionnaire allowed me to realise how much children learn about themselves and society through their interactions with other members of the school community and the environment. In the case of learners who participated in my study, it is the lack of trust and respect, feelings of obligation, or concern for their welfare that affect their relationships with adults, teachers in particular, and their academic performance.

5.7 Suggestions for future research

My research did not include teachers as participants, although it is their behaviour that I wanted to understand. Thus there is room for other researchers who are interested in this topic to find out whether or not teachers' reasons for sexually abusing children have something to do with the situation they find themselves in, are part of the government's liberal democratic values, or are a result of African communities whose values are still traditional and communal.

Researchers who think that they could use my research process to conduct similar research in other contexts could also enhance the potential for generalisation regarding sexual abuse at schools.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1

Confirmation letter of student registration written by Supervisor

ANNEXURE 2

Permission requisition letter to the Department of Education (Limpopo Provincial Offices) with identified schools

ANNEXURE 3

Granted permission letter from the Department of Education

ANNEXURE 4

Permission requisition letter to the identified schools

ANNEXURE 5

A sample of six letters of permission granted from the identified schools

ANNEXURE 6

- Permission requisition letter to Department of Education, Human Rights Commission and SACE (interview)
- Permission requisition letter to Human Rights Commission with interview schedule
- Permission requisition letter to SACE with interview schedule

ANNEXURE 7

- Permission requisition letters to Parents/Guardian (English) Grade eleven learners
- Permission requisition letters to Parents/Guardian (Sepedi)(mother tongue) Grade eleven learners

ANNEXURE 8

- Permission granted letters from Parents/Guidance (English)

- Permission granted letters from Parents/Guidance (Sepedi)(mother tongue)

ANNEXURE 9

Principal Interview schedule

ANNEXURE 10

Principals ' response from interviews (notes)

- School A
- School B
- School C
- School D
- School E
- School F

ANNEXURE 11

Learners Questionnaire

Annexure 12

- Completed Questionnaire (English)
- Completed Questionnaire (Sepedi)(mother tongue)

ANNEXURE 13

- Department of Education response to interview (notes)
- SAPS response to interview (notes)
- Provincial Court proceedings (notes)
- Child Line Protection's response to interview (notes)
- Human Rights and Gender Equity Commission's response to interview (notes)
- Government and non-governmental organizations conference (notes)
- SACE's response to interview (notes)

ANNEXURE 14

- Abused Children Provincial Court statistics (Attached, see chapter 4)



ANNEXURE 1

Confirmation letter of student registration written by Supervisor



100
1930-2030



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudie

Student: Masehela B.M.
Student no: 26388342
Cell no: 083 438 9596
072 152 8819

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Senwabarwana (Bochum)
0790
(Relevant date to be inserted)

Supervisor: Dr. Malan B.
Cell no: 084 440 2828

The Principal and SGB
(Addresses of relevant schools)

Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR A Ph.D DEGREE

I hereby wish to request your permission to conduct part of my research for a PhD degree at your school. I am currently engaged with a research project which is aimed at the identification of strategies for the creation of school safe environments, with special reference to teacher-learner sexual abuse. The field of study focuses on rural secondary schools of Senwabarwana (Bochum, Limpopo Province).

My proposed research title is:

Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with specific reference to sexual harassment



The study involves no invasion of individual rights for privacy, nor will it apply any procedure that may be found ethically objectionable. No personal or institutional information regarding participants in the research will be made known.

Questionnaires will be distributed during (dates to be specified) 2009. Participants will include yourself plus all the Grade 11 learners (male and female) in your school. Envelopes and boxes will be issued to ensure the anonymity of participants.

Attached is my permission from the Department of Education (Limpopo Provinces), a letter from the supervisor as well as an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Pretoria (UP).

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Masehla Boledi M.

Dr Beverley M. Malan

Signature



100
1919 2019



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Department of Education
Limpopo Provincial Government
Corner 113 Biccard and 24 Excelsior Street
Private Bag X9498
Polokwane
0790

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: CONFIRMATION OF MASEHELA RESEARCH FOCUS


This letter serves to confirm that Mrs Boledi Masehela is currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria and that I am her supervisor. As indicated in the letter that Mrs Masehela wrote you requesting permission to conduct research in specific schools in the Capricorn District of Limpopo Province her study is aimed at the identification of strategies that will enhance the safety of learners at school, with specific reference to sexual harassment.

I am sure you would agree that learners should feel safe while at school. I can assure you that this study is not aimed at shaming any person or school. Rather, it is aimed at empowering managers, teachers, parents and learners to contribute to the creation of a safe teaching/learning environment. Once her research report is finalized she will provide you with feedback on her findings and her recommendations, both of which, we are sure, will be of benefit to education in your province.

Given the need to safeguard learners at school, and the benefits that this particular research study could have for schools in your province I therefore humbly request that you grant Mrs Masehela the permission she required. Should you wish to contact me in this regard or concerning any other matter related to her proposed research, you can reach me on my cell (084-440-2828) during office hours.

Regards

Yours sincerely



Supervisor

ANNEXURE 2

**Permission requisition letter to the Department of Education
(Limpopo Provincial Offices) with identified schools**



100
1929 - 2029



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Student: Masehela B.M.
Student no: 26388342
Cell no: 083 438 9596
072 152 8819

Supervisor: Dr. Malan B.
Cell no: 084 440 2828

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Senwabarwana (Bochum)
0790
24 May 2009

Department of Education
Limpopo Provincial Government
Corner 113 Biccard and 24 Excelsior Street
Private Bag X9498
Polokwane
0790

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SELECTED LIMPOPO SCHOOLS

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. As you know the conferral of a PhD degree is, amongst others, dependent on the successful completion of empirical research. My study, *'Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment'*, focuses on school safety, hence I need to collect data from schools. I plan to collect data by means of two instruments: learner questionnaires (Grade 11 learners of selected school), and one-on-one interviews with the principals of the same schools.

I realize that school safety and sexual harassment in particular is a sensitive subject and that I shall have to approach the issue with great circumspection. I have, therefore, attempted to frame the questions in my interview schedule (*copy attached*) and questionnaire (*copy attached*) in such a way that neither the principal nor the learners who agree to participate in my study should in any way feel threatened. You would have noticed from these questions that my study does not constitute an invasion of privacy – not of participating persons or institutions.

To ensure that my study will satisfy the most stringent of ethical standards I shall in no circumstance mention the names of the schools, principals or learners involved in the study. Instead, I shall use pseudonyms throughout. Moreover, I shall not start my data



collection process before the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria gives me permission to do so.

Anticipating possible resistance to my investigation from the side of parents, learners and principals I shall not approach anybody in this regard before I have obtained the permission of all involved parties – the Limpopo Department of Education, the principals of participating schools, the parents of learners, and the learners themselves. Also, since the majority of the learners who participate in my study will probably be minors, I shall issue questionnaires only to those whose parents have given me written permission to do so.

While the findings of my research will, hopefully, have relevance for the country as a whole I would like to feel that it would be of most benefit to the province in which I live and work. Being a Limpopo resident and a principal of a Limpopo school I would therefore like to ask you for permission to conduct my research in selected schools in this province. More specifically, since this would be most convenient to me time and money wise I would like to ask permission to limit myself to the following secondary schools in the Capricorn District, Senwabarwana Cluster, of the province:

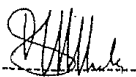
- SCHOOL A
- SCHOOL B
- SCHOOL C
- SCHOOL D
- SCHOOL E
- SCHOOL F

Should you give me permission to conduct my study in the afore-mentioned schools, I shall make the necessary arrangements regarding interviews and questionnaires with the principals of said schools. I plan to conduct interviews with principals and issue questionnaires to participating learners during the last two months of the second quarter, or the first two weeks of the third quarter, whichever you think is most appropriate. I shall conduct interviews after school hours and, if this is agreeable to the department and the schools concerned, I shall personally issue and collect questionnaires during break or during one of the Life Orientation lessons.


Attached are copies of my proof of registration, a letter from my supervisor, and copies of my proposed interview schedule and learner questionnaire.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully


Masehela Boledi M

27/05/2009
Date

 Date:
B.M. Malan
(Supervisor)



ANNEXURE 3

Granted permission letter from the Department of Education



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Enquires: Armer I, Telephone: 015 290 7951 e-mail: ArmerI@edu.limpopo.gov.za

B.M. Masehela
Rasekgala Secondary School
P.O.Box 1872
Senwabarwana
0790

Dear Researcher

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

1. Your letter of request bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that you are granted permission to conduct research. The title of your research project is "Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment"
3. The following conditions should be observed.
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerning the conduct of the study. Care should be taken to disrupt the academic programme at the schools.
 - 3.3 The study should be conducted during the first three terms of the calendar year as schools would be preparing themselves for the final end of year examinations during the fourth term.
 - 3.4 The research is conducted in line with ethics in research. In particular, the principle of voluntary participation in this research should be respected.
 - 3.5 You share with the Department, the final product of your study upon completion of the research assignment.
4. You are expected to produce this letter at schools/offices where you will be conducting your research, as evidence that permission for this activity has been granted.
5. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.


.....
Head of Department

10/06/2009
.....
Date



ANNEXURE 4

Permission requisition letter to the identified schools



100
1930-2030



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudie

Student: Masehela B.M.
Student no: 26388342
Cell no: 083 438 9596
072 152 8819

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Senwabarwana (Bochum)
0790
(Relevant date to be inserted)

Supervisor: Dr. Malan B.
Cell no: 084 440 2828

The Principal and SGB
(Addresses of relevant schools)

Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR A Ph.D DEGREE

I hereby wish to request your permission to conduct part of my research for a PhD degree at your school. I am currently engaged with a research project which is aimed at the identification of strategies for the creation of school safe environments, with special reference to teacher-learner sexual abuse. The field of study focuses on rural secondary schools of Senwabarwana (Bochum, Limpopo Province).

My proposed research title is:

Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with specific reference to sexual harassment



The study involves no invasion of individual rights for privacy, nor will it apply any procedure that may be found ethically objectionable. No personal or institutional information regarding participants in the research will be made known.

Questionnaires will be distributed during (dates to be specified) 2009. Participants will include yourself plus all the Grade 11 learners (male and female) in your school. Envelopes and boxes will be issued to ensure the anonymity of participants.

Attached is my permission from the Department of Education (Limpopo Provinces), a letter from the supervisor as well as an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Pretoria (UP).

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Masehla Boledi M.

Dr Beverley M. Malan

Signature



ANNEXURE 5

A sample of six letters of permission granted from the identified schools



Enq ;
Cell

Secondary School
P.O.Box
Senwabarwana
0790
11.06.2009

Masehela BM

Madam

Re : APPLICATION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH: SECONDARY
SCHOOL

In response to your application to conduct a research at our school your
application has been accepted.

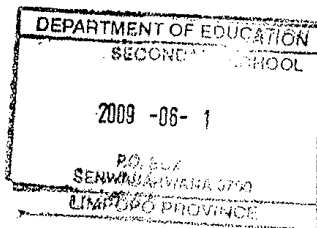
The following are the proposed dates :

☐ DATE 29.07.2009
☐ TIME 14H00-15H00 PRINCIPAL
☐ 15H15-16H30 GRADE 11 LEARNERS.

We hope the above mentioned dates and time will suit you.

Yours faithfully

.....
PRINCIPAL



ANNEXURE 6

- Permission requisition letter to Department of Education, Human Rights Commission and SACE
- Permission requisition letter to Human Rights Commission with interview schedule
- Permission requisition letter to SACE with interview schedule



100
1919-2019



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Oplewysbestuur en
Pedagogiek

Student: Masehela B.M.
Student no: 26388342
Cell no: 083 438 9596
072 152 8819

Supervisor: Dr. Beverley Malan
Cell no: 084 440 2828

(Relevant address to DoE, SACE, Human Rights)

Sir/Madam

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Senwabarwana (Bochum)
0790
(Relevant date to be inserted)

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FOR A Ph.D DEGREE

I hereby wish to request permission to conduct research for a Ph.D degree in the Department of Education (Provincial Level). I am currently registered at the University of Pretoria (UP), Groenkloof Campus.

I am currently engaged in a research programme, which is investigating strategies for the creation of school safe environments with special reference to teacher-learner sexual abuse. The field of study focuses on rural secondary schools of Senwabarwana (Bochum, Limpopo Province).

My proposed research title is:

Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment



As part of my data collection process I would like to conduct an interview with one of the SACCE Human Rights representatives who is able and willing to share information relevant to my research project with me. The main aim of the interview is to find out what the extent of the problem is in schools. More specifically it is aimed at finding out how many cases were reported, attended to, and/or are still pending. Available documents with relevant information will also be appreciated.

The study involves no invasion of individual rights for privacy, nor will it apply any procedure which may be found ethically objectionable. No personal or institutional information regarding participants in the research will be made known.

The researcher undertakes to share the outcomes of the study with the office of the DME District Manager - SACCE Human Rights

Any appointment date for the interview between the . . . and . . . (Month) will be highly appreciated.

Attached please find a copy of my proof of registration, a letter from my supervisor, as well as an ethical clearance certificate from the University.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Masehela Boledi M.

Dr Beverley M. Malan

Signature



100
1930-2030



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Enq. B.M. Masehela
Cell: 083 438 9596
076 494 0516

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Bochum
0790
Limpopo Province
03 September 2009

South African Human Rights Commission
P O Box 4431
Polokwane
0700

Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR OFFICES

I am a full time educator (school principal) and currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. My field of study, 'Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment', focuses mainly on school safety. Being aware of the fact that the Human Rights Commission has been involved in the investigation of sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment cases at schools I would appreciate it if you could see your way open to granting me an interview for data collection purposes.



Should you consent to granting me one or more interviews I undertake not to mention the names of either the schools, the victims or the perpetrators involved in the cases on which you share information with me. Instead I shall use pseudonyms in all instances.

The main purpose of my conducting interviews with relevant persons in your organization will be to collect detailed information on:

- i. Sexual harassment or abuse incidents in schools as investigated by your organisation, with specific reference to incidents where educators were accused and/or charged with the sexual harassment/abuse of learners.
- ii. Copies and reference numbers of court cases where applicable.
- iii. Statistics with regard to the extent of sexual abuse/harassment at South African schools.

The aim of the research is not only to determine the extent to which sexual-abuse/harassment is a feature of SA school in general and Limpopo schools in particular but also to identify some of the reasons for this. Having done so I plan to design a theoretical model for addressing such issues at SA school, thereby making schools safer and more conducive to teaching and learning. I am also prepared to share with The South African Human Rights Commission the final product of the research upon completion.

Any given date for conducting the research between the 20th and the 30th September will suit me. Letters of permission to conduct the research from the Department of Education as well as the University of Pretoria will also be submitted to you on the date given.

Your positive response will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Boledi Masehela



100
1930 - 2030



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Enq. B.M. Masehela
Cell: 083 438 9596
076 494 0516

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Bochum
0790
Limpopo Province
03 September 2009

The Management
South African Council of Educators (SACE)
Private Bag X127
Centurion
0046

Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR OFFICES

I am a full time educator (school principal) and currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. My field of study, 'Proposed strategies for the creation and maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment', focuses mainly on school safety. Being aware of the fact that the Human Rights Commission has been involved in the investigation of sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment cases at schools I would appreciate it if you could see your way open to granting me an interview for data collection purposes.

Should you consent to granting me one or more interviews I undertake not to mention the names of either the schools, the victims or the perpetrators involved in the cases on which you share information with me. Instead I shall use pseudonyms in all instances.



The main purpose of my conducting interviews with relevant persons in your organization will be to collect detailed information on:

- i. SACE findings about sexual harassment/abuse in schools more specifically between educators and learners.
- ii. Statistics thereof.
- iii. Reported court cases.
- iv. SACE codes of conduct as well as disciplinary procedures in place in this regard.

The aim of the research is not only to determine the extent to which sexual abuse/harassment is a feature of SA school in general and Limpopo schools in particular but also to identify some of the reasons for this. Having done so I plan to design a theoretical model for addressing such issues at SA school, thereby making schools safer and more conducive to teaching and learning. I am also prepared to share with The South African Council of Educators the final product of the research upon completion.

Any given date for conducting the research between the 20th and the 30th September will suit me. Letters of permission to conduct the research from the Department of Education as well as the University of Pretoria will also be submitted to you on the date given. The aim of the research is to safeguard learners in schools and as such your permission will be highly appreciated. I am also prepared to share with SACE the final product of the research upon completion.

Your positive response will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Boledi Masehela

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boledi Masehela'.

ANNEXURE 7

- Permission requisition letters to Parents/Guardian (English) Grade eleven learners
- Permission requisition letters to Parents/Guardian (English) Grade eleven learners



100
YEARS
1919-2019



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Enq. B.M. Masehela
Cell: 083 438 9596
076 494 0516

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Bochum
0790
10 June 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian

RE: PERMISSION FOR VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION OF YOUR GRADE 11
LEARNER IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. My field of study is 'Proposed strategies for the creation and/maintenance of safe schools, with special reference to sexual harassment'. It focuses on school safety, hence I need to collect data from schools.

Permission is hereby requested from you to allow your Grade 11 child to complete a questionnaire on this matter for purposes of my research. Your child will not be required to mention any names or to provide me with any specific details. The questionnaire focuses on the problem of sexual abuse in general as it appears in schools. There is therefore no threat to you or your child in this regard. Participation is voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be protected at all times. Questionnaires will be issued without names and be collected personally by the researcher immediately after completion.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Boledi Masehela



RESPONSE

Parent/Guardian

Student

Surname and Initials

I -----, the parent/guardian of
 -----hereby give/do not give

Mrs Boledi Masehela permission to issue my child/ward with a questionnaire on sexual abuse/harassment at school. I understand that my child's/ward's name will be permitted to complete the questionnaire anonymously and that her/his name not be mentioned anywhere in the research report or any articles based on such a report.

Parent/Guardian

Student

Signatures

Date



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education/Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management and Policy
Studies/Departement Onderwysbestuur en
Beleidsstudies

Dinyakišišo: B.M. Masehela
Megala: 083 438 9596
076 494 0516

Rasekgala Secondary School
P O Box 1872
Bochum
0790
10 June 2009

Motswadi

**KGPELO YA TUMELELO YA MORUTWANA WA GRADE 11 GO BA
MOTŠEAKAROLO DINYAKIŠIŠONG TŠA PROJEKE YA THUTO**

Ke moithuti wa thuto ya Bongaka bja Thuto Universiting ya Pretoria. Dithuto tšaka di mabapi le go 'Hlola le go tiišetša tšhireletšo ya barutwana dikolong kgahlanong le tlaišo ya thobalano'. Ka fao ke tlamega go kgoboketša tsebo ka go dira dinyakišišo dikolong.

Ke kgopela tumelelo yeo e sego ya KGAPELETŠO go ka akaretša morutwana wa Grade 11 diphatišišong tše. Batšeakarolo ba tla tiišetšwa tšhireletšo ka dinako ka moka. Matlakalapotšišo a ka se ngwalwe maina a bakgathateina. Wona a tla laolwa ke monyakišiši ka botlalo. A tla fiwa barutwana a ba a tšewa ke monyakišiši morago ga ge a tladišwe.

Thekgo ya lena e bohlokwa, ebile e ka lebogwa ka dinako tšohle.

Wa lena
Boledi Masehela



KARABO

	MOTSWADI	MORUTWANA
Sefane le Dihlakaina	----- -----	----- -----
	----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----	

	Motswadi	Morutwana
Mosaeno	-----	-----
Tšatšikgvedi	-----	-----

ANNEXURE 8

- Permission granted letters from Parents/Guidance (Sepedi)
- Permission granted letters from Parents/Guidance (Sepedi)(mother tongue)

Permission Granted Completed Forms from Parents (Sepedi, mother tongue/English) removed from Annexures because they have both parents and learners' names and signatures (Confidentiality purpose).



ANNEXURE 9

Principal Interview schedule



PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Greetings and Introduction

Background and explanation of interview purpose (background of sexual harassment in schools)

Request principals' permission to take record/notes

Ensure confidentiality

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I'm sure you are aware of the fact that learners are often sexually harassed, or even abused, in schools, either by teachers or fellow learners.

1. Do you think that this is a problem that should be addressed? Why/why not?
2. Do you know of any instances of sexual abuse in schools in Limpopo Province?
3. Have any such incidents ever occurred at your school? Please specify.
4. If there have been instances of sexual harassment or abuse at your school, how did you deal with it?
5. If it were to happen again, would you deal with it in the same way? Why/why not?
6. If there have never been any incidents of sexual harassment or abuse at your school to what do you ascribe this?
7. What would you do if it were to happen and why would you follow this course of action?

Thank you very much for your time and for helping me to get a better picture of your school and those involved in it. I promise to give you a copy of my research findings, so that we can together come up with strategies to assist the affected schools in our cluster.

I need to ask you one more favour, though. The Department of Education has given me permission to issue questionnaires to all grade eleven learners in the six secondary schools in my sample. I would like to request for your permission too, to issue them to your learners. I suggest that we use the Life Orientation period on a date that we agree on.



I am leaving a copy of the questionnaire with you so that you can see what type of questions I plan to ask. The Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria has approved the questionnaire but if you feel that can contribute to its value please let me know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. M. M.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

ANNEXURE 10

Principals ' response from interviews (notes)

- School A
- School B
- School C
- School D
- School E
- School F

Raw data removed from the document for safe keeping (School A-F)

ANNEXURE 11

Learners Questionnaire

Raw data removed from the document for safe keeping.

Annexure 12

- Completed Questionnaire (English)
- Completed Questionnaire (Sepedi)(mother tongue)

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ANNEXURE 13

- Department of Education response to interview (notes)
- SAPS response to interview (notes)
- Provincial Court proceedings (notes)
- Child Line Protection's response to interview (notes)
- Human Rights and Gender Equity Commission's response to interview (notes)
- Government and non-governmental organizations conference (notes)
- SACE's response to interview (notes)

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ANNEXURE 14

Abused Children Provincial Court statistics (see chapter 4)

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