

Quality Education News

Tel: 012-349-5006 ♦ Fax: 012-349-1232 ♦ www.saqi.co.za

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Do schools unwittingly encourage violence?

This really happened. I was at a school in one of our cities where I saw this notice pinned on the teachers' staffroom door:

Dear Colleagues

Remember that you are not allowed to give learners corporal punishment. If parents come and complain to me, I can't defend you.

*Mr X
Principal*

The principal's message was short and not so sweet! Corporal punishment has been banned for a number of years but it's still happening in South African schools. SACE (South African Council for Educators) deals with a number of complaints every year from enraged parents on this issue.

Many teachers have commented that learners of today are more 'difficult' to handle than a decade or more ago. They list valid points such as:

- There's an increasing break-down in the family structure where values used be instilled;
- Many adults deliberately defy legitimate laws and are poor role models of the need to respect authority (example: ignoring rules of the road);
- Physical, psychological and verbal abuse is used in domestic conflict situations.

Yet those who still use corporal punishment in their classroom and the principal's office are often fuelling further violence. The thrashed learner seldom believes that the punishment is given 'for their own good'. The hiding is humiliating; anger and rage are suppressed. The outlet for that suppression of negative emotions can be bullying, revengeful behaviour on those who can't or won't hit back.

The teacher who breaks the law forbidding corporal punishment is letting the learner know that it's OK to break the law ... if you can get away with it.

When a learner steps out of line, most schools have a pile of punishments in place. The schools include the list of punishments in their Code of Conduct manual. An unwritten policy guideline seems to be: 'You caused pain ... let us give you pain too!' It's the eye for an eye approach. There must be retribution. Schools with this retributive approach could find that the poor behaviours that they were trying to stop, continue but in more cunning ways. Retributive punishment can result in bullying, stealing and violence soaring.

A better way to deal with unacceptable behaviour is that of restorative discipline. This approach is not soft on discipline. In fact, it's very assertive and is determined to deal decisively with indiscipline. Wrongs have to be righted. However, the school doesn't try to beat the bad behaviour out of the miscreant. Rather, the perpetrator is made to understand why the behaviour is unacceptable and what's to be done about it. Relations between the perpetrator and the victim need to be restored. The victim is counselled too. Fairness rather than fear guides the school Code of Conduct. Restorative discipline nurtures a cooperative and happier school.

A school might not use corporal punishment but still deal with indiscipline in a retributive way. A better way is to use discipline that is restorative in style. By so doing, teaching and learning quality soars to new heights of professional excellence.



Richard Hayward



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What's Restorative Practice?

Eileen Young is principal of St Mary's College in Adelaide, Australia. She has built up a reputation in Australia and across the world for her approach to school discipline. At her school of over a thousand students there are no detentions, no suspensions and no time-out rooms. Yet the school discipline is excellent and there's an overwhelming demand for enrolment. What's her secret? Recently she was invited to South Africa to talk to teachers to share her winning formula.

At St Mary's College there's a distinctive approach on dealing with discipline issues. It has 'buy-in' from the whole staff and it's called Restorative Practice. This approach is radically different from the traditional approach towards discipline.

What's the traditional style of discipline to be found in a school? Richard Hendry (2009: 3) describes such a situation:

When I started teaching ... I had the option of hitting with a leather belt those pupils who did something wrong or who did not behave the way I wanted them to. Proud as I am of my refusal to resort to this punishment, at the time my stance simply reduced by one the very limited number of available options for responding to unacceptable behaviour. When humour, persuasion or reasoned argument failed, all I could resort to were lesser forms of punishment (... having the culprit right out lines, or detention), or else I could pass on the 'problem' for someone else more senior to deal with.

Richard Hendry doesn't say what happened at the next level. One can imagine that canings, suspensions and expulsions could have been used. There's a gradual move away from this retributive (punishment) approach to dealing with indiscipline. More positive approaches are being used such as praise and reward systems.

All incidents of unacceptable behaviour result in the breakdown of one or more relationships – the breakdown between the perpetrator and others as well as the breakdown of self-respect within the actual person.

A definition of Restorative Practice is (Hendry: 7):

Restorative Practice is a way of working with children that acknowledges the central importance of effective relationships in schools and promotes the school's role in developing these. It places particular emphasis on developing respect, empathy, social responsibility and self regulation.

So, what according to Hendry, can be restored? He tabulates it thus:

Interpersonal	Intrapersonal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication • Respect for others • Understanding another's perspective • Understanding the impact of one's own behaviour on others • Reparation for material loss or damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-respect or self-worth • Self-confidence • Feeling safer • Understanding the consequences of one's own behaviour for oneself • Dignity

In our own schools and offices we want to see justice carried out when someone crosses the 'thin blue line' of acceptable behaviour. Yet what type of justice does one wants to see being given to the culprit? Which of these two views best describe what's happening at your place of work? What type of justice is most common in 2013 South Africa?

Retributive Justice	Restorative Justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is a violation of the law and the state. • Violations create guilt. • Justice requires the state to determine blame (guilt) and impose pain (punishment). • Central focus is on 'offenders' getting what they deserve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is a violation of people and relationships. • Violations create obligations. • Justice involves those responsible for harm, those harmed, and other community members in an effort to put things right. • Central focus is on 'victim's' needs and 'offender's' responsibility for repairing harm.

Acknowledgement: Adapted from Zehr (1985)

Imagine a bullying incident in your place of work. Eileen Young observes that the traditional questions asked about the incident when applying retributive justice would be:

* What happened? * Who's to blame? * What do they deserve?

In restorative justice, the typical questions are:

* What happened? * Who's been harmed? * What needs to be done to restore some of that harm?

Note that both the restorative and retributive forms of justice have the same starting point question: 'What happened?'

When a school uses Restorative Practice, it uses two approaches: proactive and responsive. The proactive approach is curriculum-based where learners are formally taught about emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, circle time and the like. In the responsive approach there is a follow-through when there are incidents such as breaking of school rules and unacceptable behaviour.

Schools that use Restorative Practice maintain that if there's a strong focus on proactive activities, the need for responsive action is reduced.

In its broadest sense, Restorative Practice is about establishing and, when needed, repairing the break-down in relationships amongst people in the work place. In the normal school day there will be an ebb and flow between the proactive and responsive elements (Hendry: 33). A single example might be where proactively the teacher leads a classroom discussion on what it means to be an emotionally intelligent person. Later in the day that same teacher might have to deal responsively to two learners involved in a fight.

Type of relationship	Main activities	Approach
Building relationships	Developing emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills	Proactive
Strengthening relationships	Buddying, mentoring, checking-in circles, etc.	Proactive
Solving problems and challenges	Problem-solving circles, pupil councils, etc	Proactive and responsive
Resolving conflict	Adult/peer mediation	Responsive
Addressing harm	Including active listening, empathy, accepting criticism, taking responsibility, apologising and cooperative skills	Responsive

Acknowledgement: Adapted from Brookes (2005).

How does one bring about Restorative Justice?

The three most common methods are:

1 Mediation

A neutral third party such as a trained mediator teacher or learner helps the parties who are in conflict arrive at a mutually acceptable solution.

2 Circles

Everyone – including the facilitator – sits in a circle. The facilitator ensures that everyone has the chance to express their viewpoints and that participants abide by ground rules (for example: no interruptions when a person is speaking). Decisions are made by the group and not by the facilitator 'nudging' the discussion in a certain direction.

3 Conference

Here the offenders admit their guilt and explain what happened, how they felt and what should be done to repair the situation. The victims and those impacted by the event describe their emotions and feelings around the incident. They also indicate what reparations could be done. Agreement is sought as to a possible plan of action. This plan of action includes a time-frame for completion of the agreement.

Offenders are encouraged to accept responsibility and to empathise with their victims. The victims, in turn, have 'wrongs righted' and are encouraged towards healing and forgiveness. (Compare this method to our own post-apartheid 1996 Truth and Reconciliation Commission.)

Critics of the Restorative Justice methods allege that the meetings are, 'all sweetness and light'. Yes, the meetings will be so much fluffy candyfloss if there's no follow-through of decisions taken. Due dates for action need to be mutually agreed on. Compliance needs to be ensured.

Another criticism is the amount of time allegedly wasted in having mediations, circles and conferences. That criticism is fair if the sessions aren't structured with meaningful questions. A good chair or facilitator can keep everyone focussed on the main issues. Yes, the restorative sessions do take time ... in the short-term. There's much speaking and listening. Yet if managed well, the number of the same or similar transgressions by learners reduces significantly over time. Fewer meetings are needed.

When Eileen Young gave her talk to the South African teachers there were many nodding heads of agreement. Also, many members in the audience were already doing aspects of restorative justice in their own schools. The task is to move away from the traditional retributive fearful punishment practices in our schools. The challenge is to create cooperative, happy schools based on the principles of restorative justice.

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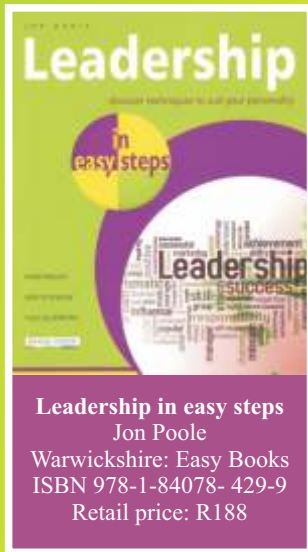
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Leadership is for everyone



The first page of the book states a truism of leadership. The principles of leadership are the same for everyone – whether one is leading a sports team or a huge organisation. The sub-title of the book is, “... discover techniques to suit your personality.” There's no intention by the author of changing the reader's personality to fit in with an idealised form of what leadership is all about. Rather, understand who you are and use your personality to be an excellent leader.

Part of every person's personality is the distinct, different behaviours on display. Outstanding leaders develop those behaviours that help

them achieve personal and organisational goals. Jon Poole gives clear descriptions of what he regards as the four main behaviour types. Each behaviour has four subsets, namely:

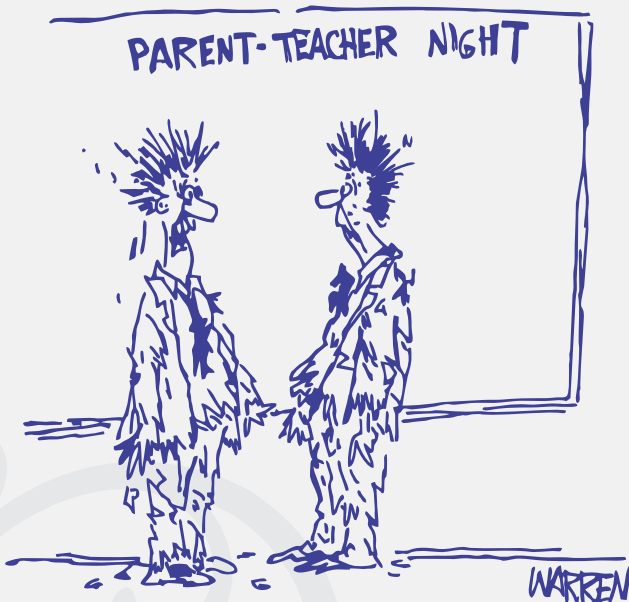
1. **Thinking:** (analytical, strategic, conceptual, client-oriented);
2. **Delivery:** (focus on achievement, attention to detail, tenacity, concern for excellence);

3. **Relationships:** (interpersonal awareness, adaptive behaviour, stakeholder relationships, influencing/persuading);
4. **Self-management:** (resilience, self-development, self-control, self-confidence).

Poole discusses how a person's set of values and beliefs impact on one's leadership. He calls them one's 'internal rule book'. Values and beliefs that definitely influence the decisions one makes, include:

- Political beliefs
- Beliefs about justice and fairness
- Beliefs about religion – in general and specific ones
- Reactions to obeying rules
- Values relating to freedom of expression

The book looks at crucial leadership topics such as empowering people, team building, change management, motivation and self-development. The book is insightful of the real-world of leadership. Material is presented in a visually pleasant and easy-to-understand manner. Academic jargon is kept to a minimum although the author has a thorough grasp of major leadership theories. There's much to learn in this book written in plain English by someone who deserves to wear the, 'Been there, done that' Leadership T-shirt.



“You must be Timmy's dad. I'm Timmy's teacher.”



“Your heart is slightly bigger than the average human heart, but that's because you're a teacher.”

Acknowledgement: Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen's *Chicken soup for the teacher's soul*.

Total Quality Education (TQE) programmes

SAQI (South African Quality Institute) has a range of education leadership and management programmes. The presenter, Dr Richard Hayward, is a former principal of two public Gauteng schools. Poor schools are sponsored. Courses are done across Southern Africa. If you'd like more details, please contact him at rpdhayward@yahoo.com or 011-888-3262.